

Key Words

Boleslav Yavorsky, Hugo Riemann, Georgy Catoire, Sergei Protopopov, Anatoly Lunacharsky, modal rhythm, ladovy rhythm, functional harmony, tonality.

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Reexamining the 1930 Conference on Boleslav Yavorsky's Ladovy Rhythm and the Early Politics of Soviet Music Theory*

In February 1930, the People's Commissariat for Education in the Soviet Union convened a conference in Moscow on Boleslav Yavorsky's theory of music, the "theory of ladovy rhythm." The conference stands out as an example of how Marxist theory struggled to take hold not just in musicology, but in the arts generally. Very little musicological work on this conference has appeared in English, or in Russian for that matter. Gordon McQuere and Ellon Carpenter have both written about the conference in English, while various Soviet edited volumes also discuss the conference to an extent. None, however, examine the "Zaklyuchitel'noye slovo" (Closing remarks) from Yavorsky's final speech at the conference itself. In this article I take these remarks into account. To a large extent, Yavorsky was pushing back against an encroaching Riemannian harmonic functionalism, which was represented in Russia by Georgy Catoire. Notably, the pedagogical aspect of the conference, namely, the publication of Sergei Protopopov's *Elementy stroeniya muzikal'noy rechi* (Elements of the structure of music speech), was a key motivator for Yavorsky's efforts. In this article I try to come to a better understanding of what this conference was about, and how the surrounding politics shaped early Soviet music theory.

* I would like to thank Olga Panteleeva, Daniil Zavlunov, and the two anonymous reviewers of this journal for their helpful commentary on earlier drafts of this article.

Конференция по ладовому ритму Болеслава Яворского (1930) и ранняя советская политика в области теории музыки: опыт переоценки

В феврале 1930 года Народный комиссариат просвещения созвал в Москве конференцию, посвященную теоретической концепции Болеслава Яворского, известной как «теория ладового ритма». Эта конференция — показательный образец того, как марксистская теория одержала верх не только в музыкознании, но и в искусстве вообще. Конференция слабо освещена в научной литературе не только на английском, но и на русском языке. По-английски о ней писали Гордон Мак-Куир и Эллон Карпентер; некоторую информацию можно найти и в советских изданиях. Однако пока никто не анализировал «Заключительное слово» самого Яворского. В настоящей статье я обращаю особое внимание эту речь Яворского. Она в значительной степени направлена против римановской функциональной теории гармонии, основным приверженцем которой в России был Георгий Катуар. Примечательно, что усилия Яворского были мотивированы прежде всего педагогическим аспектом конференции, а именно публикацией «Элементов строения музыкальной речи» Сергея Протопопова. В своей статье я пытаюсь осмыслить содержательную сторону конференции и то, как ее политическая составляющая воздействовала на формирование теории музыки в СССР на раннем этапе.

Introduction

From February 5 to 8, 1930, the Soviet Union's *Narkompros* (People's Commissariat for Education) and its former Commissar, Anatoly Lunacharsky, convened a conference in Moscow on Boleslav Yavorsky's theory of music, the "theory of ladovy rhythm."¹ The conference, the first of its kind in the USSR, stands out as an example of how Marxist theory struggled to take hold not just in musicology, but in the arts generally. In a sense, the conference was a model for how the arts might be interpreted in the new communist state. However, there were other musical and political forces at play, forces that significantly shaped the future of Soviet music theory. Very little musicological work on this conference has appeared in English, or in Russian for that matter. While Gordon McQuere's "The Theories of Boleslav Yavorsky" fleetingly discusses it, Ellon Carpenter, in "The Theory of Music in Russia and the Soviet Union," does a more thorough job of telling the story of the conference.² She bases her retelling on secondary sources that give details of the presentations made and the resolutions passed. Much of this material is contained in Boleslav Yavorsky's *Stat'i, vospominaniya, perepiska* (Articles, remembrances, correspondence), which presents useful and reliable, but incomplete, information on the conference.³ Missing, for instance, is Yavorsky's "Zaklyuchitel'noye slovo" (Closing remarks), preserved in the Russian National Museum of Music in Moscow as a transcript

- 1 Though normally translated as the "theory of modal rhythm," I translate the phrase as the "theory of ladovy rhythm," which I explain in great detail in "On the Russian Concept of Lad, 1830–1945" // *Music Theory Online*. 25.4 (Spring 2020). All translations from Russian to English are my own unless stated otherwise.
- 2 McQuere G. *The Theories of Boleslav Yavorsky* // *Russian Theoretical Thought in Music* / Ed. Gordon McQuere. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2009 (first published 1983). P. 149; Carpenter E. *The Theory of Music in Russia and the Soviet Union*. PhD diss. University of Pennsylvania, 1988. P. 763–786.
- 3 Яворский Б. Статьи, воспоминания, переписка. Т. 1 / Ред.-сост. И. Рабинович. Общ. ред. Д. Шостаковича. М.: Советский композитор, 1972.

of his final remarks and concluding resolutions of the conference—a document that sheds some light on previously undisclosed events.⁴ For instance, Carpenter does not explain one of the main reasons for some of the controversies during the conference, namely, the encroaching Riemannian harmonic functionalism, represented in Russia by Georgy Catoire. Further, though Carpenter does discuss how Yavorsky's strange conception of tritone resolution made his theory untenable (in the eyes of his adversaries at any rate), there are some telling aspects that she leaves out, aspects contained in the transcript of Yavorsky's final speech. Finally, the pedagogical aspect of the conference, namely, the publication of Protopopov's *Elementi stroyeniya muzikal'noy rechi* (Elements of the structure of music speech), was a key motivator for Yavorsky's efforts, which neither Carpenter nor McQuere address in detail. Through examining Yavorsky's Closing Remarks, recent Russian sources, and other relevant documents published after Carpenter's work in 1988, I try to come to a better understanding of what this conference was about, and how the surrounding politics shaped early Soviet music theory.

Yavorsky's Theory of Ladovy Rhythm and the Tritone-Resolution Dilemma

Yavorsky's entire system of pitch organization in the theory of ladovy rhythm came down to two systems based on tritone resolution: the single symmetrical system (Example 1) and the double symmetrical system (Example 2).⁵ Two elements were paramount: 1) symmetrical motion, and 2) semitonal motion. Example 1 needs no explanation other than to mention that this system could happen on any of the twelve notes and that Yavorsky assigned "D" and "T" designators, which signified dominant and tonic. Example 2 is where Yavorsky ran into trouble however, which was highlighted at the conference, as I explain below. In the example there is motion from a perfect fifth, D–A, to a doubly diminished fifth, D#–Ab, to a minor third, E–G. Embedded within the "S" (subdominant) function are two interlocking tritones—D–Ab and D#–A—which I have shown in

- 4 Яворский Б. Заключительное слово. Российский национальный музей музыки. Ф. 146. № 976–983 К8Л, 8 февраля 1930 года. Л. 1–14.
- 5 For more on Yavorsky's theory see my "On the Russian Concept of Lad, 1830–1945" as well as my "Rethinking Octatonicism: Views from Stravinsky's Homeland" // *Music Theory Online*. 18.4 (December 2012). Yavorsky's counterpoint teacher in Moscow, Sergei Taneev, was also intimately involved in developing the idea of the importance of tritone resolution in functional harmony. Both Yavorsky and Taneev got this idea from François-Joseph Fétis. For more on this connection, see my "On the Russian Concept of Lad, 1830–1945," (Section 4, specifically, 4.4–4.9).

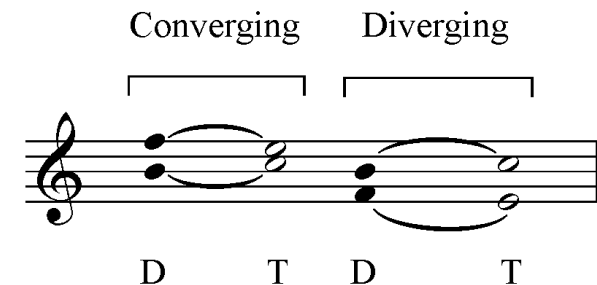
Example 2 with diagonal lines. These are the two active tritones in the Double Symmetrical System, both of which required further resolution to the minor third E–G. In these systems closed noteheads are instabilities and open noteheads are stabilities. What Yavorsky is saying is that the *perfect fifth*, D–A, is *unstable* in the double system. These interlocking tritones were problematic at the conference on ladovy rhythm. In a bizarre passage from his Closing Remarks, Yavorsky defends the Double Symmetrical System, and says that the double system existed for both Beethoven and the ancient Greeks. The exasperation in his remarks bespeaks his frustration that one of the most basic elements of the system has yet to be fully adopted or even understood. Here is the passage, in which Yavorsky speaks of the four (converging) instabilities in Example 2:

Here at the conference I had to deal with the fact that whenever they talk about the double system they say that seven semitones from D to A are unstable. The instabilities of the double system are the four notes D–Ab and D#–A.... D, against Ab, resolving a semitone upward moves to D#, which against A resolves in turn a semitone upward to E; in exactly the same fashion A, resolving against D# a semitone downward, moves to Ab, which against D resolves in turn a semitone downward to G. In exactly the same way you enter a trolley car, most of the passengers hand over their ten-kopeck coins not straight to the hand of the conductor but, rather, ask their neighbors to pass the coin to the conductor. When two instabilities a tritone apart intersect, in the resulting tightness A knocks on the back of Ab, D knocks on the back of D#, and in this fashion they all safely arrive in the conductor's bag, that is, to E–G. It has been said here [at the conference] that the double system existed already with Beethoven, and it already existed with the ancient Greeks, as their musical treatises (Greek chromaticism) attest to.⁶

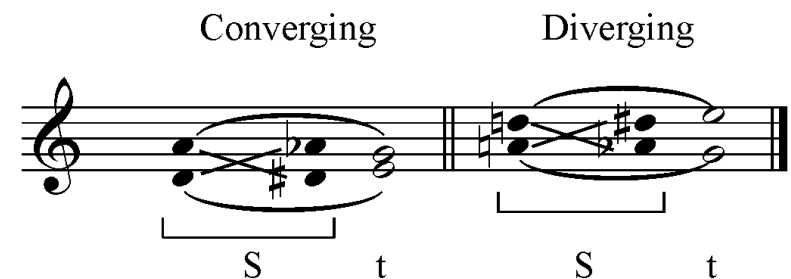
Note that, by putting together the four stabilities, that is, the four open noteheads (a tonic “T” plus a subtonic “t”) from Examples 1 and 2, a C-major triad is formed. In fact, Examples 1 and 2 together represent what Yavorsky called a “ladotonicity,” in this case the C-major ladotonicity. This is where Yavorsky was going with his two systems—he wanted a new method to explain the major/minor functional tonal system. His invocation of the payment method on a Soviet trolley car, in which money got passed to the conductor, makes a certain sense. But what is so difficult to justify to readers, and it seemed that this was the case at the conference as well, was how a perfect fifth D–A could in any way be seen or heard as unstable. And herein lies the fatal flaw of Yavorsky's system. It is perfectly reasonable to speak of a tritone and its resolution to a major third, that is, the Single Symmetrical System, but to speak of

a minor third as the result of two interlocking tritones, as in the Double Symmetrical System, is strange. As shown in Example 2, the Double Symmetrical System represents Yavorsky's solution for the existence of the minor third, born of symmetrical motion by semitone. If one were to play the example at the piano, however, it is impossible to hear two tritones. The only way to hear them would be to isolate them and play them in succession. If the entire system is built on the gravitation of the tritone, and that gravitation is imperceptible to almost everyone—Yavorsky would have claimed that he heard the tritones—then the system lacks a basic efficacy. Based on Yavorsky's comments on the double system at the conference, it is clear that that particular element of his theory was being attacked.

Example 1: Single Symmetrical System in Converging and Diverging Forms



Example 2: Double Symmetrical System in Converging and Diverging Forms



Harmonic Functionalism in Russia

The main competitor to ladovy rhythm in the early twentieth century was Riemannian harmonic functionalism. It was, in effect, a traditional way to analyzing music, as compared to Yavorsky's new method, which was seen as compelling and exotic. It is useful to understand functionalism's Russian history in relation to Yavorsky's work, which arose in significant part as a counterbalance to Riemann (1849–1919). Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, with his *Uchebnik garmonii* (Harmony Textbook) (1885), is sometimes cited, in Russia, as one of the originators of harmonic functionalism. In a 1950 review of a new edition of Rimsky-Korsakov's textbook, one post-WWII Soviet author, Iosif Rízhkin, went so far as to claim that it was a mistake to credit Riemann, a German, for creating functionalism and that Rimsky-Korsakov should be given credit for doing so.⁷ This view was ultimately understood as revisionist, and Riemann is generally given the same credit in Russia as elsewhere for his role in the history of harmonic functionalism. This is instructive insofar as Rízhkin was instrumental in Yavorsky's ultimate downfall, which began already in May 1931.⁸

The first true proponent of Riemannian theory in Russia was Georgy Catoire (1861–1926) who, at the suggestion of Tchaikovsky, went to Berlin in 1885 to study piano and composition, ultimately with Otto Tiersch and Philipp Rüfer. After Catoire's return to Russia in 1887 he studied with Rimsky-Korsakov, among others, so it was only natural that Catoire combine his experience in Germany with his studies with Rimsky-Korsakov.⁹ Catoire's *Teoreticheskiy kurs garmonii* (Theoretical course of harmony) became a bedrock of music theory in Russia, and the main text against which Yavorsky was being asked to pit his views in the 1930 conference. Early in Catoire's textbook, which he used for his classes at the Moscow Conservatory, he lays out the tripartite system for chords in a diatonic system.¹⁰ Catoire's was the first Russian text to clearly label that tripartite system as "T," "S," and "D," using Latin letters (Rimsky-Korsakov used roman numerals for the three functions). Significantly, Catoire had several students at the Moscow Conservatory who would go on to write the most important and enduring harmony textbook in

7 Рыжкин И. Новое издание учебника гармонии // Советская музыка. 1950. № 2. С. 108.

8 Carpenter E. The Theory of Music in Russia and the Soviet Union. P. 783.

9 Catoire was significantly influenced by the Belgian François-Auguste Gevaert and his *Traité d'harmonie theorique et pratique*, from 1905–1907.

10 See, specifically, chapter 2, "The formation of chords in a diatonic system." Катуар Г. Теоретический курс гармонии. В 2 томах. Т. 1. М.: Музсектор Госиздата, 1924. С. 14–34.

Soviet Russia, the *Uchebnik garmonii* (Harmony textbook), usually called the *Brigadnyi uchebnik* ("Brigade" textbook). Its authors—Iosif Dubovsky (1892–1969), Sergei Evseev (1894–1956), Vladimir Sokolov (1897–1950), and Igor Sposobin (1900–1954), who all studied with Catoire—essentially created what is called the "Moscow School" of music theory with this book. Remarkably, it is still the harmony textbook, in revised and updated form, that is widely used in the Russian Federation today.¹¹

The Conference

The write-up in the new musicological journal *Proletarskiy muzikant* (Proletarian musician) stated the aim of the conference clearly: "The main question of the conference on the theory of ladovy rhythm <...> was to what extent this theory, at its fundamental premises, corresponds to the principles of dialectical materialism and whether it can be a starting point for a Marxist musical science."¹² Yavorsky opened and closed the conference, giving speeches totaling roughly eight hours. Many spoke in favor of Yavorsky, such as former students and mentees Leah Averbukh, Arnold Al'shvang, Nadezhda Bryusova, Sergei Protopopov, Isaak Rabinovich, and Viktor Tsukkerman. However, there were dissenting voices as well.¹³

As I mentioned above, Yavorsky's theory was based entirely on the motion created by the tritone. This position allowed the musicologist Mikhail Ivanov-Boretsky to mount an attack on ladovy rhythm from a historical standpoint. Stating that there was nothing new about tritone resolution, Ivanov-Boretsky linked ladovy theory to "impressionism" and, with it, "bourgeois" ideals, which were of course antithetical to Marxism.¹⁴

At the end of the conference, Lunacharsky, who was a lifelong friend to Yavorsky, weighed in on Yavorsky's side:

Though I would not call the theory of ladovy rhythm a Marxist theory of music, I am firmly convinced that it is the theory most closely related to Marxism. Likely, the development of Marxist musicology will move precisely along the lines of the further development of the theory of ladovy rhythm and the further adoption of dialectical materialism to its principles.¹⁵

11 Дубовский И., Евсеев С., Соколов В., Способин И. Учебник гармонии. В 2 томах. Москва: Искусство, 1939.

12 Конференция по теории ладового ритма // Пролетарский музыкант. 1930. № 6.

13 For a complete list of presenters for the conference see: Яворский Б. Статьи, воспоминания, переписка. Т. 1. С. 665.

14 Конференция по теории ладового ритма. С. 7.

15 Луначарский А. Несколько замечаний о теории ладового ритма // Пролетарский музыкант. 1930. № 2. С. 13.

Notably, Stalin had just dismissed Lunacharsky as Commissar of Culture in late 1929, but Lunacharsky still seemed to have sway in cultural circles, at least enough to have decided the matter in Yavorsky's favor in February 1930.

Despite its alleged purpose of determining its Marxist underpinnings and pedagogical use, the conference was actually meant as a defense of Yavorsky and his theory from increasing attacks. At stake was the pedagogy behind Yavorsky's ideas. In 1921 Lunacharsky had invited Yavorsky to lead the Music Faculty of *Narkompros*, whereupon he immediately oversaw a restructuring of music education.¹⁶ In 1930 Marxist musicology, however, was still in its infancy, and it was entirely unclear whose ideas would win out. Olga Panteleeva has shown how Soviet musicologists began to embrace Marxism willingly and openly in the 1920s through examining music through scientific inquiry, dynamic development, and social reality.¹⁷ At that time, however, Soviet music theory was still firmly rooted in the German traditions and German harmonic analyses. More specific, Riemannian harmonic "functionalism" was gaining ground, and it was against this type of analysis that Yavorsky and his adherents had to defend the theory of ladovy rhythm. The famous battles over Russian nationalism in music that played out in the nineteenth century continued into the twentieth—one could reasonably argue that they continue now in the twenty-first—and were especially fervent in pedagogy, going back to 1862 and the founding of Russia's first conservatory of music in St. Petersburg under Anton Rubinstein. It comes as no surprise, then, that the basic music theory that would explain music in Soviet conservatories came to represent another nationalistic flashpoint. Once Riemannian harmonic functionalism came to Russia the Soviets had to determine how to handle this decidedly German method to understand music. In fact, one might say that Yavorsky's ladovy theory, in contradistinction to Riemann's theories, was something of an antidote to Russia's complete reliance on German music-theoretical thought before Yavorsky. Nevertheless, despite the fact that this conference turned out favorably for Yavorsky and his theory, within two years he had fallen out of favor and functionalism had won out.

16 Мстиславская Е. Достижения Б. Л. Яворского в контексте музыкально-педагогических исследований // Проблемы художественного творчества. Сборник статей по материалам Всероссийских научных чтений, посвященных Б. Л. Яворскому и приуроченных к 105-летию Саратовской консерватории / Под ред. И. Полозовой. Саратов: Саратовская государственная консерватория имени Л. В. Собинова, 2017. С. 62.

17 Panteleeva O. How Soviet Musicology became Marxist // The Slavonic and East European Review. 97/1 (2019). P. 96–97.

In the final analysis, Yavorsky's method was always influential in the Soviet Union, and is most prominent today in what is known as the "Leningrad School" of music theory.¹⁸

Conference Resolutions and Soviet Music Pedagogy

At the conclusion of the conference six resolutions with respect to ladovy theory were adopted and published.¹⁹ Generally, they praised the potential of this new system and stated that work must continue along the lines set forth by Yavorsky. The resolutions added that ladovy theory was still not to be considered a fully developed Marxist system. Strangely, there were nine resolutions published at the end of the transcript of Yavorsky's Closing Remarks, but in the 1972 volume on Yavorsky cited above—a volume that includes letters, articles, and other material—only the first six resolutions appear, and with certain elements omitted. Missing entirely from any discussion of these resolutions are the last three unpublished resolutions, numbered 7–9:

The conference proposes to the advocates of the theory of ladovy rhythm to attend to the speedy publication of corresponding textbooks so that its popularization and accessibility to the masses are possible.

The conference directs the attention of GLAVPROFOBR and Narkompros to the necessity of taking measures to prepare theoretical faculty in the theory of ladovy rhythm.²⁰

The conference considers it advantageous to publish proceedings to the conference.²¹

18 The Leningrad School, now also called the "St. Petersburg School," of music theory began when Boris Asafiev took Yavorsky's theories and promoted them in Leningrad until his death in 1949. After Asafiev the most important figures in this school have been Yuri Tyulin, Khristofor Kushnarev, and Tatyana Bershadskaya. For more on the Leningrad School see: Бершадская Т. Ленинградская-Петербургская школа теории музыки // Санкт-Петербургская консерватория в мировом музыкальном пространстве / Под ред. Н. И. Дегтяревой. СПб.: Издательство Политехнического института, 2013. С. 9–15. See also my "Music Theory à la Leningrad: An Interview with Tatiana Bershadskaya," interview with introductory essay // Contemporary Musicology. 2019. No. 4. P. 121–164.

19 For the original Russian see: Яворский Б. Статьи, воспоминания, переписка. С. 666. For an English translation see Carpenter E. The Theory of Music in Russia and the Soviet Union. P. 776–777.

20 GLAVPROFOBR refers to the "Glavnoye upravleniye professional'nogo obrazovaniya" (Main directorate for professional education).

21 These nine unredacted resolutions are available at the Russian Museum of Musical Culture; see Яворский Б. Заключительное слово. Л. 14.

With these final three resolutions one of the reasons of this conference becomes clear: the approval of the publication of Sergei Protopopov's *Elementi stroyeniya muzikal'noy rechi* (Elements of the structure of music speech), which was published later in 1930 under the general editorship of Yavorsky, who mentions the lack of textbooks in his Closing Remarks to the conference: "Many of you have rebuked me in that there are no textbooks [on ladovy rhythm]." ²² So the idea of a usable textbook for his new theory was certainly a primary concern of the conference. Yavorsky also mentions that Protopopov's *Elementi* are in press. ²³ In his dissertation on Protopopov, Anton Rovner devotes 20 pages to a discussion of Protopopov's *Elementi*, but Rovner does not get into the troubles that Protopopov may have run into in publishing this work, nor does he discuss the history of music theory textbooks and pedagogy in the 1920s. He does speak of the close partnership that Yavorsky had with Protopopov, and that the book was essentially cowritten by them.

Grigory Lzhov has shown how Protopopov's *Elementi* was something of an amalgamation of Yavorsky magnum opus, his *Stroyeniye muzikal'noy rechi* (The structure of musical speech) and an influential article Yavorsky published in 1923 called "Osnovnye elementy muziki" (The foundational elements of music, 1908). ²⁴ Protopopov's work on the *Elementi* was ready before the conference. Still, Protopopov was a composer and author of limited repute in his time. ²⁵ Aside from his *Elementi*, he published only one other written work, an article in response to something Yavorsky had published on Bach's French Suites, so Yavorsky's involvement in the project was crucial to its success. ²⁶

One of the main goals of the conference was to form a music education system that supported the new Marxist ideology—the "quest for a Soviet Musical Identity," as Marina Raku calls

²² Яворский Б. Заключительное слово. Л. 6.

²³ Яворский Б. Заключительное слово. Л. 9–10.

²⁴ See Лыжов Г. «Основные элементы музыки» Б. Яворского: ключи к ладовой теории // Сто лет русского авангарда / Ред. М. Катунян. М.: Московская государственная консерватория, 2013. С. 114.

²⁵ For more on Protopopov see McQuere G. "The Elements of the Structure of Musical Speech" by S. V. Protopopov: A Translation and Commentary. PhD diss. University of Iowa, 1978; Ровнер А. Сергей Протопопов: композиторское творчество и теоретические работы. Дисс. ... кандидата искусствоведения. Московская государственная консерватория, 2010.

²⁶ Протопопов С. Примечания к работе Б. Яворского «Сюиты Баха для клавира» // Яворский Б. О символике «Французских сюит» Баха / Под ред. В. Носиной. М.: Классика XXI, 2006. С. 66–77.

it. ²⁷ Had there been a clear alternative path aside from ladovy rhythm, it could have provided a sound basis for comparison. The German music-education models of Tsarist Russia, already under fire from nationalist quarters in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, was not in line with Marxist thinking, despite the fact that German classical music—by Bach or Beethoven, for example—continued to be taught at the conservatories. Yavorsky hoped that his system could be adapted to Marxism, yet the uncertainty of the situation was witnessed at the conference. As Carpenter writes, "The conference on [ladovy] rhythm is keen testimony to [Soviet music theorists'] inability to provide a strong new direction for their discipline." ²⁸ Before Yavorsky all music theoretical methods were firmly based on German models and, especially, those of Georgy Catoire, so it stands to reason that Soviet authorities were trying to find something uniquely Russian, and less western, to teach music in their institutions.

Mark Aranovsky explains some of the confusion surrounding this conference and its aftermath in terms of a misconception in its purpose:

The presentation of the theory of ladovy rhythm, like the polemics surrounding it, was particularly active in the first half of the 1930s and was connected, it seems, with an aberration that arose at the time. Yavorsky's theory was painstakingly antithetical to traditional theory. However, this antithesis carried with it, as it now seems to us, a tactical character. Despite the fact that Yavorsky's theory certainly put forth a new approach, it still came from the same tonal music of a homophonic-harmonic style, the same as traditional theory. Yavorsky's conception not only did not "cancel" the meaning of major, minor, and classical functional harmony, but set out on a search for the rules of this system inside of its very structure, a system that had escaped the attention of specialists. ²⁹

This simple yet significant point is rarely made: Yavorsky was not seeking to cancel out major/minor tonality, but simply to explain it further and in a new way. Perhaps Yavorsky's thinking was tactical insofar as a complete denial of functional tonality was never on the table for Soviet authorities as it was for atonal western composers

²⁷ Raku M. The Phenomenon of "Translation" in Russian Musical Culture of the 1920s and Early 1930s: The Quest for a Soviet Musical Identity // Russian Music Since 1917: Reappraisal and Rediscovery / Ed. Patrick Zuk and Marina Frolova-Walker. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

²⁸ Carpenter E. The Theory of Music in Russia and the Soviet Union. P. 782.

²⁹ Арановский М. Теоретическая концепция Б. Л. Яворского // Искусство музыки: теория и история. № 6. 2012. С. 48–49.

of the Second Viennese School and beyond. In this sense Yavorsky's defense was successful at the conference—no one could accuse him of seeking to destroy tonality, which was beginning to be understood as a crucial means of reaching the Soviet masses. Aranovsky makes another useful point that is paramount in Yavorsky's theory. After discussing the scale theories of certain contemporary theorists, Aranovsky mentions that such scale theory was unimportant to Yavorsky, and that it was "important to him to prove the *connections* between tones, having already confirmed their gravitation."³⁰ What Yavorsky's system was trying to do was to find the linear connections in music within a functional-harmonic framework.³¹

In fact, this drive to understand the left-to-right aspect of musical composition is, at once, what is unique about Yavorsky's theories, as well as what is suspect. It is a well-known fact among theorists that Yavorsky's system hinged upon one simple idea: the motion created by the tritone. Further, Yavorsky is known for separating consonance/dissonance from stability/instability—for instance, many of tonics in the lads of his system feature dissonances including the tritone, second, and seventh.³² To Yavorsky, the tritone featured a dual nature as both stability and instability, about which Tatiana Svistunenko writes:

The tritone [to Yavorsky] as a "basic cell of musical speech" is the center of rich characteristics and tendencies, namely: on the one hand, its instability demands resolution, that is, a continuation of motion, which emphasizes the naturalness of the process of the development of musical thought. On the other, the tritone, of and by itself, "possesses" the effect of absolute stability, insofar as it divides the octave in half and can symbolize the stable tension contained within.³³

30 *Арановский М.* Теоретическая концепция Б. Л. Яворского. С. 51 (italics original).

31 At precisely the same time Heinrich Schenker was making similar discoveries, though I hasten to add that Yavorsky published his work first, in 1908. Schenker's *Harmonielehre*, from 1906, contained virtually none of the linear elements that came out in the two volumes of *Kontrapunkt*, from 1910 and 1922, or *Der freie Satz*, from 1935.

32 Ewell P. Rethinking Octatonicism: Views from Stravinsky's Homeland // *Music Theory Online*. 18.4 (2012). P. 2.11–2.14.

33 *Свистуненко Т.* О значимости тритона как «основной ячейки музыкальной речи» в учении Б. Л. Яворского // *Проблемы художественного творчества. Сборник статей по материалам Всероссийских научных чтений, посвященных Б. Л. Яворскому и приуроченных к 105-летию Саратовской консерватории* / Под ред. И. Полозовой. Саратов: Саратовская государственная консерватория имени Л. В. Собинова, 2017. С. 22.

Yavorsky's Historical Argument

Yavorsky's opponent Ivanov-Boretsky (1874–1936) who, like Catoire, studied with Rimsky-Korsakov and spent time abroad, was an adherent of Riemannian theory.³⁴ Ivanov-Boretsky faulted Yavorsky's methods, claiming that he simply added Marxist language later because Marxism had become the governing ideology. Yet Lunacharsky vigorously defended Yavorsky against this line of attack—after all, everyone was adapting to the new government and the new ideology.³⁵

As Aranovsky stated in the quotation above, Yavorsky was not trying to cancel out tonality. In his Closing Remarks Yavorsky seems to confirm this line of thinking when he invokes his predecessors. Specifically, Yavorsky upbraids Ivanov-Boretsky for not mentioning François-Joseph Fétis, on whose theories Yavorsky's relies heavily: "When Professor Ivanov-Boretsky quotes my predecessors he forgot to mention many of them. In Fétis's theories he could have found confirmation that every modulation happens when a tritone occurs between any one of the three notes of the tonic triad."³⁶ From here Yavorsky gives the example that, in C major, E natural, the third of the tonic triad, becomes unstable if Bb is introduced, thereby necessitating a modulation to F major. He then cites the polemics between Fétis and Franz Liszt on this very issue, first in an article by Fétis, then in a forum in Paris at which both Fétis and Liszt were present.³⁷ In so doing, Yavorsky adds historical weight to his arguments. Yet he goes back far enough in the history of European music—to the mid-nineteenth century—such that his argument is insulated from a Marxist attack. That is, by providing historical proof for the bases of his theories, Yavorsky is showing how his theory is both old and new at the same time. By being part of a tonal past, he claims that his method has precedent, thus it can apply to tonal repertoire from

34 To Ivanov-Boretsky belongs the first mention in the Russian literature, in 1931, to Heinrich Schenker's theories, which he relates to lad. As the general editor of a translation into Russian of Lucien Chevailler's *Les théories harmoniques*, Ivanov-Boretsky said that Schenker, in his *Harmonielehre*, strove "for an expansion of the boundaries of lad." See: *Шевалье Л.* История учений о гармонии / Пер. З. Потаповой, под ред. М. Иванова-Борецкого. М.: Госмузиздат, 1931. С. 152. Further, Ivanov-Boretsky claims that Schenker "establishes the possibility of so-called tonicization, that is, the striving of the lad's scale degrees to transform into their own tonics with their own dominants and subdominants" (*Шевалье Л.* История учений о гармонии. С. 152). One senses lad's history as "tonality" in these quotes but, in 1931, there can be no question that lad already meant something more than just tonality—this is in large part due to Yavorsky.

35 See *Яворский Б.* Статьи, воспоминания, переписка. С. 37–39.

36 *Яворский Б.* Заключительное слово. Л. 4.

37 *Яворский Б.* Заключительное слово. Л. 5.

the past that was still relevant to Soviet musical authorities. Yet he is also showing that there is newness in his method that can be adapted to Marxist doctrines. Finally, Yavorsky adds Garbuzov to his criticism of this ahistorical denunciation of ladovy rhythm:

I note that Professors Ivanov-Boretsky and Garbuzov, in their fervent attack on ladovy rhythm, constantly relied on the terms and concepts of ladovy rhythm. It would be better if they spoke of the terms of my predecessors; it would be more logical since it is strange to base one's objections to ladovy rhythm on the basic foundations of the very same ladovy rhythm.³⁸

This is a convincing point. If Ivanov-Boretsky and Garbuzov wanted to criticize ladovy rhythm then they must do so in contrast to another theory, whether contemporary or not. But by criticizing it by using its own logic they have proven nothing. This gets to a deeper issue at the conference. If one wants to criticize a new theory in light of Marxist thought, it becomes difficult if the Marxist thought itself is entirely new and ill defined. It seems that Yavorsky used this logical loophole to his advantage in making this argument.

Yavorsky vis-à-vis Riemann

With ladovy rhythm Yavorsky significantly enlarged the Russian musical lexicon by coining musical terms: *tyagotenie* (“gravitation”), *sopryazhenie* (“conjunction”), *predikt* (“retransition”), *peremenniy lad*, and *uvelichenniy lad* (“mutable lad” and “augmented lad”), for example. Yavorsky also introduced *intonatsiya* (“intonation”), a term Boris Asafiev would essentially stake his reputation on in his two-volume *Muzikal'naya forma kak protsess* (Musical form as process), the second volume of which bears the title *Intonatsiya*.³⁹ Yavorsky made a big impression on Asafiev (1884–1949), the so-called “father of Soviet musicology,” when they met. Asafiev was profoundly influenced by Yavorsky. On May 3, 1915, the day he met Yavorsky, Asafiev wrote to Vladimir Derzhanovsky:

Today I met Yavorsky: this is literally an inexhaustibly interesting person. To listen to him is pure joy.... In his method I have found that which I have long sought—a substantial scientific fundament for music theory, because I have been completely unsatisfied

³⁸ Яворский Б. Заключительное слово. Л. 5.

³⁹ Асафьев Б. Музыкальная форма как процесс. Книги первая и вторая. 2-е издание. Л.: Музыка, 1971 (parts 1 and 2 first published 1930 and 1947, respectively). For an English translation of *Muzikal'naya forma kak protsess*, see Tull J. B. V. Asafiev's “Music Form as a Process”: Translation and Commentary. PhD diss. Ohio State University, 1977.

with that which the conservatory and textbooks have given me, nor do I myself have the strength to create a uniform basis for such a theory.⁴⁰

Asafiev would go on to be, arguably, the most important Soviet musicologist in the twentieth century and the founder of the “Leningrad school” of music theory. In fact, he was the key link between Yavorsky, who never taught or lived in St. Petersburg, and the Leningrad School. Through Asafiev's work in Leningrad, Yuri Tiulin and Khristofor Kushnarev continued to promote Yavorsky's ideas and formed this notable school of music theory.⁴¹ Asafiev himself was clearly inspired by Yavorsky, while at the same time he took a hard line against the intruding harmonic functionalism represented by Riemann and his proponents in Russia:

Among theorists it was the Russian musician-thinker Boleslav Yavorsky who undertook a deep analysis of “tritonality” and discovered the meaning of its intonational purview in contemporary music. On the other hand, Riemann's system of “functional harmony,” which has slavishly subordinated the minds of many theorists, subjugates the composer's hearing and consciousness with its conservative, mechanical “predetermination.” This system is the sad legacy of the so-called “general bass,” figured bass, i.e., the teaching of harmony born of the practice of organ and piano accompaniment, some kind of “accompaniment school.”⁴²

Asafiev almost certainly took his anti-Riemannian cues from Yavorsky who, after criticizing Riemannian functional theory, said that Riemann had “neither ears nor brains,” for example.⁴³ Yet early in life Yavorsky turned to Riemann's theories for inspiration. When he was only 22, Yavorsky translated Riemann's *Systematische Modulationslehre als Grundlage der musikalischen Formenlehre* into Russian, for example, so he clearly valued Riemann's writings.⁴⁴ Later, Yavorsky soured on Riemann's overly scientific, scholastic, and “harmonic” ways. Asafiev

⁴⁰ See Яворский Б. Статьи, воспоминания, переписка. С. 296–297.

⁴¹ For more on this lineage see my “Music Theory à la Leningrad.”

⁴² Асафьев Б. Музыкальная форма как процесс. С. 243–244.

⁴³ See Яворский Б. Статьи, воспоминания, переписка. С. 456. With thanks to Patrick Zuk for alerting me to this quotation.

⁴⁴ I was able to examine this translation at the Rossiyskiy Natsional'niy Muzei Muziki (Russian National Museum of Music) (Fund 146, No. 480). In a small notebook, 18 cm wide by 22 cm high, Yavorsky writes out his German-to-Russian translation in black ink. It is clearly a final draft, since there are no sketch or draft marks. Whether he intended this for publication I do not know, but the level of detail—in the text, the musical examples, and the figures—is remarkable. However, the notebook contains only 31 pages of translation, which is certainly incomplete—Riemann's 1887 publication runs some 209 pages. It is unclear whether he finished this translation and, if he did, where the remaining notebooks are.

goes on to further rebuke Riemann and his denial of the “physiological” and “intonational” aspect of music.⁴⁵ As is well known, Asafiev continued Yavorsky’s legacy of “intonatsiya,” which moved away from a scientific acoustical view of music to one based on the human experience, music psychology and cognition, and musical emotions.⁴⁶

Conclusion

The early politics surrounding the 1930 conference on ladovy rhythm represent a prime example of the difficulties Soviet musical authorities faced in adapting music to Marxist doctrine. Music was nothing special—they had to adapt all aspects of their new society to this doctrine. Yavorsky’s Closing Remarks shed new light on these politics by highlighting the polemics surrounding the new ideological system. Yavorsky was forced to defend his ideas on both historical and acoustical—one might say “theoretical”—bases. The exasperation he felt was palpable in his comments. And the primary rival to the theory of ladovy rhythm, Riemannian functional tonality, emerges as a key counterpart to Yavorsky’s beliefs. Ultimately, Yavorsky was saved by Lunacharsky at the conference, but the fact that he and his system soon fell from grace shows just how difficult it was to contrive a new system to rival that of Riemann. As the first new music theoretical system put on trial by the Soviets, Yavorsky’s theory was bound to forge new paths, but it was also bound to fail. The vast majority of tonal musical analysis in Russia today is based on the Brigade textbook and the “Moscow” school of music theory, and the dependence on Riemann’s theories, though usually unacknowledged, is heavy. No one really uses or speaks directly of the “theory of ladovy rhythm” now—and, more specifically, of the tritone basis that is the core of all motion in music according to Yavorsky. Rather, Yavorsky and ladovy rhythm live on in the language that Russians use to speak of music, most notably, with “lad” and “intonatsiya.” They also live quite vibrantly in the Leningrad–St. Petersburg School of music theory, which represents a refreshing departure from the overwhelming influence of Moscow. And through this language and a separate school of music theory, Yavorsky’s undeniable impact on musical thought in Russia is not in question.

⁴⁵ Асафьев Б. Музыкальная форма как процесс. С. 245–246.

⁴⁶ Protopopov’s *Elementi* features an entire chapter on *intonatsiya* (Vol. 1, Chapter 10), which is likely where Asafiev drew inspiration for the second volume *Muzikal’naya forma kak protsess*.

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