

Do We Need a Category of “Musical Substance”?¹

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“Music is born of *voice* and not of sound.”
Jean-Jacques Rousseau²

These words from Jean-Jacques Rousseau caught my attention only in the final stages of my work on this article, which has extended over many long years. But it is precisely these words, I would like to believe, that might prove pivotal in understanding the question that has captivated me: what kind of “substance” is music as an art form possessed of? I have not been satisfied by the usual answers concerning “sound” and “intonation,” either as a musician or as an analyst of various types of music from around the world. As a logical consequence of my ever-deepening interest in the world of orality, I began to devote more and more attention to the topic of *voice* in culture. Foreign scholars have also devoted attention to this specific issue in publications spanning the course of approximately the last thirty-five years: one can simply point to the books of Paul Zumthor (1915-1995), already classics, which themselves grew out of the scholarly tradition initiated ninety years ago by Marcel Jousse (1886-1961).³ Zumthor convincingly underlined the role of voice as an all-important source of energy in the artistic act and, correspondingly, the place of voice as a mediator between the anthropological and culturological aspects of research on artistic tradition. In the most recent literature, we find more frequent mention of mythological beliefs that present the voice as a deity, or even as a young woman, etc.⁴ At present, there is a multitude of publications in various languages that treat the problem of voice and *voicedness* in culture, an overview of which is beyond the scope of this article⁵—all the more so since my own understanding of “voice” is much broader than the concept of “vocality” as such.

I have written a mountain of drafts, working out one approach to the problem after another, but in the end, I have opted for brevity—at least in comparison with what I originally intended. The composition of this article is unusual: I have inserted the introduction to the piece in the middle of it, and I have chosen to start off my exploration of the topic of musical substance with a reminiscence of my first encounter with peasant folklore. At the time of this first encounter, I was a student at two institutions of higher learning in Leningrad—the university (as a philologist) and the conservatory (as a musicologist and composer)—and I, a child of the asphalt of St. Petersburg, who had never lived in the country before—experienced, with no exaggeration, a cultural and psychological shock. For me, the shock of this first encounter gave rise to aesthetic delight; this delight led to an intellectual rapture that quickly developed into a love for folk culture and its practitioners; and this love turned, like magic, into the research activity that has turned out to be my life’s calling.

If “in the beginning was the Word,” then it follows that in the beginning were also *Voice and Hearing*, constituting the very foundation of musical culture. I am convinced, moreover, that in the beginning, there was also *Something Else*, and the pages that follow are dedicated to the substantiation of this claim.

1. From Sensation to Conceptualization

“...meaning never belongs to the past.
It can be checked in each man’s own present experience.”
Peter Brook⁶

The sensation of *musical substance* came to me much earlier than the ability to conceptualize it. I can even date this initial sensation—it happened at the beginning of July 1956, during my first folkloric (and simultaneously dialectological, according to my university plans) expedition to Vologda Oblast. The expedition took me to the village of Chernevo in the Ust’-

Alekseevsky District, where I lived with the Melekhins, a large, friendly family.⁷ Stepan Ivanovich Melekhin, who led the local clubhouse, invited me to go for a walk in a field where women, gathering as a group at the end of the workday, were singing to their hearts' content, without any kind of musical accompaniment whatsoever. They sang a cappella, except for the chirping of the birds that flew above them.

In order to understand why the living, expansive flow of sound of this collective in the open air made such an impression on me that day, why it—without exaggeration—so astounded me, it is necessary to remember that I arrived at this village with an exclusively city person's acquaintance with the Russian folk song. In other words, what I was primarily acquainted with was reworkings of this music for voice and piano or for academic choir, or even renditions for solo piano: that is, the strictly tempered and, as a rule, fully harmonic reworkings of the Mighty Handful and their disciples. The first lessons I ever had in Russian folklore, which were remarkable in their own way, took place in 1951 at the Musical College of what was then Leningrad Conservatory, in a course with Lidiya Mikhailovna Kershner (1905-1968), also to the accompaniment of the piano. But here in Chernevo there was folklore that was not meant for study or reworking—singing that was not for someone else, but for oneself. I remember very well the first sensation this elemental current of choral singing evoked in me—what sound, what structure, what dynamics! It was not just that these women were singing without any attempt to match the rhythm of the piano; in fact, they had never even seen or heard a piano! The song was taking form right here, in the pure country air, as if by itself, out of nothing... As a collective, these women existed in a particular context, in an atmosphere, even in an *element* of a distinct kind of *musical substance*. What I was witnessing, it occurred to me, was something akin to an ecological phenomenon.

I was stunned and enchanted by this flow of sound, but the women themselves were also passionately, artistically engaged in their performance, and they *dwelt* in its extraordinary energy with great apparent pleasure. There was a potent energetic field that emanated from their singing collective. It was as if they were “swimming” in this *element* of sound, something that was new for me but that for them was absolutely familiar, something they had grown up with. I noted as well that literally everything that resounded right now, in this moment, was being created by these women themselves, here and now. Moreover, this flow of sound united them, in spite of the differences between their individual timbres.

Thinking of how I was going to notate their singing, I realized that I was running up against an evidently polytimbral polyphony that made use of a unified “musical substance.” From this substance was created an organism that was alive in its own way, resounding as if it were doing so all on its own, independent of the singing women. With professional despair, I understood that there could be no talk of *notating* this flow of sound, or of what seemed to me then to be its elemental dynamics. There could be no notation of these sounds, which were determined by the individual timbres of the voices, by pitch, rhythm, and textural function—and certainly not of the whole of its resounding “substance,” precisely the thing that struck me most of all.

I did not know then how to formulate this sensation, which was so new to me: the sensation that this flow of sound was *predetermined* for the singers. On the one hand, they were creating it in the here and now, but on the other, they themselves were the creation of this substance. (In a similar way, the poet reciting his poems belongs to *the poems* no less than the poems belong to *him*.) And, in addition, there was the strange sensation that timbre—that miracle of individualization—turned out not to be “substance” at all: many different timbres could exist together in the element of a single musical substance, which was bigger than they were.

Of course, at the time, I did not fully realize the depth of what was happening, but the freedom of these women singing together was stunning. I could not help but pay attention to the fact that not only was their behavior in a music-making collective different from the standards of the academic choirs I had known up to that point, but the *behavior of the sound*, so to speak, in the choral texture these women were creating was different, too. The women of Chernevo did not *avoid* formal tempering; they simply did not know of its existence. They did not think about temperament or intervals, and overall, they did not think about notes, or about the rules familiar to me. Tentatively speaking, they seemed to exist in different kinds of “*performing*” complexes and think in different kinds of *musical-declamatory categories*—complexes and categories that I was yet to perceive, analyze, and perhaps someday even explain.

Listening to these women back in 1956, I felt as if I had plunged into a world that existed (or coexisted) parallel to this one, a world that had been unknown to me before. This parallel world was, in principle, independent of the musically tempered reality in which I had lived and worked up until that point. I fell into a world of different measurements and values, of a different “element” and—as I would say now—a different “substance.” Then, for some reason, I also remembered a completely different day, also a hot one in summertime, during my adolescence. It was the day my mother taught me how to swim.

It was at the Oredezh River outside St. Petersburg. My mother simply threw me into deep water from the bank, let me flounder, and then took me out and resolutely threw me in again until I myself could *grasp*, finally, the unforgettable, incomparable sensation of my own lightness in the water, my unexpected weightlessness and buoyancy. I was like a bird in the air, like a fish in water: each of these creatures, in the *element* of its substance, feels free of this substance, feels

itself the *master of* its substance. For me, this was the discovery of a new dimension of being: of being in water, alone with the element of water, and—even if only for a moment—conquering it.

That day, possibilities in my body about which I had never even guessed were revealed to me, and I discovered a new kind of happiness.

My mother was right—only a shock could have bestowed on me this hitherto unknown state of being, this *physical existence* in a particular *substance*.

And that first encounter with Russian peasant singing, with the open-air, village choral sound of those seventeen women from Chernevo, turned out to be the same kind of shock therapy—only for my *auditory existence*.

From that point on, and forever after, these two musical worlds have coexisted magically within me, just as I have held on, ever since, to that first sensation of my ability to hold myself up in the water and not drown. More and more, they have opened the possibilities of my musical hearing, possibilities that at the very beginning of my scholarly path I had never even suspected might exist.

Like a waterfowl, living equally in the water and in the air, I have existed, from that point on, equally in the magically tempered world of my great Western European predecessors and in the mysteriously untempered world of folk art, which materializes over and over again before your eyes, each time as if anew. But at the time, almost half a century ago, when I first found myself in a world defined by an exclusively oral tradition, a world of *free substance* in stark contrast to a world of predetermined flows of sound—those of the piano, the symphony orchestra, and the orchestra of folk instruments created in the latter’s likeness—nothing remained for me but to recognize that the range of “musical substances” was evidently not limited to what, up to then, had been my auditory experience, my auditory world.

Later, I began more frequently to notice that there are different types of *musical substances*. For example, there are such sharply dissimilar phenomena as Italian bel canto, which is generously saturated with “vocal-weightedness” [*vokalvesomost*] (to borrow Asaf’ev’s term); Mongolian *urtiin duu*, or long songs, with their gripping melodic range; Karelian-Finnish runic songs, which are almost spoken (compared to bel canto and *urtiin duu*) and literally spellbind; and the completely different type of “speaking melos” of the native peoples of Siberia and the Russian Far East, with their unbelievably delicate articulating; while on the other hand, there is the deep “substance” of Uzbek monody and Turkmen songs, both of which are characterized by unconventionally expressive “pinched” sounds. It became clear to me that the representatives of, e.g., Viennese classicism or Italian bel canto could not, on a fundamental level, *exist* in these other *musical substances*, upon which the oral traditions of the various peoples of Eurasia have based their art.

I have often returned to those first impressions inspired by the singing of the Vologda peasants from Chernevo: like a first love, they have not been forgotten. (Moreover, if it had not been for those people from Chernevo, whose voices to this day retain such a vivid hold on my memory, I may not have become a folklorist at all!) I had no doubt that both the Vologda songs I heard then and the songs of my beloved Schubert constituted music in equal measure; but from an aural perspective, they were clearly *made* out of different *substances*.

It was difficult for me to explain this difference conceptually. In the beginning, I thought that these substances simply differed in the same way that, for example, fabrics woven from silk or wool differed. The main thing that bothered me was the total impossibility of conveying in transcription the difference between these musical “fabrics” that had made such an impression on me. (Later, in Tashkent, I was quite shocked when I saw the European notation of Uzbek *maqoms*:

notated this way, they reminded me of the piano sonatas of someone like Muzio Clementi (1752-1832). What was this—the simple replacement of an Uzbek *chapan* with an Austrian court frock, or something deeper than the outward “clothing” of a given time and place?) Gradually, I came to the conclusion that these substances are not *fabrics* at all; they are not *clothing* of musical manufacture, but are rather the very essence of music-making. Furthermore, this essence dwells in both the performer and in that which is being performed—and certainly in the listeners, as well. And this essence, of course, does not lend itself to notation.

In any case, it is time to shift our focus from the practical problems of notation to something a little closer to the *sonic* phenomenon of real folk singing—to that which the genius Vladimir Odoevsky aphoristically formulated in 1866: “...we must...make record of the folk song as it sounds in *the voice* and *the hearing* of the people.”⁸

Translating this aphorism into the language of my current conception of music in the oral tradition, I would say this: *in the voice* means in musical substance; *in the hearing* means in ethnohearing.⁹ These two phenomena—substance and hearing—are, moreover, inextricably linked.

Ethnohearing is the organ that perceives a particular type of sonic material; it is the organ that *absorbs* the particular material I call “musical substance.” I am not referring to commonplace sound flow in general, but to that component of sound flow that occurs when a specific bearer of ethnohearing turns hearing (metaphorically speaking) into musically characteristic *sustenance*. Musical substance and ethnohearing are like communicating vessels in which a given substance constitutes the materialization of a given ethnic hearing.

Odoevsky, if I am reading him right, was profoundly correct. And could we not also discern his sentiment in the expression “voice of the song,” widely known among Russian peasants? This

expression perfectly captures the indissoluble coincidence of a “melody” and the “substance” out of which it is “made.” The phrase “voice of the song” reflects, in its own way, the *syncretism of the living substance of music*—a primordial syncretism, I would say. In this term, Russian peasants have captured something incredibly deep: the fact that the *soul* of the song (its melody, or, better, its *melos*) and the *body* of the song (its “substance”) coincide, form a *single living entity*—the song as a growing organism. This organism seems to exist as if it were independent of its performer, since in its own way, it is the performer’s ideal, the goal of the performer’s art; but at the same time, of course, it exists in a real flow of sound. In other words, without a performer, the organism does not physically exist.

At the time, I did not know that many years later, I would arrive at a notion of the *melosphere*, in which all ideal forms of music-making exist independently of concrete acts of performing [*ispolnitel'skie akty*] but creatively actualize themselves in those very acts of musical being.¹⁰

...I worked with the Chernevo chorus for a month. I had no tape recorder. My ears burned from the strain, my eyes from delight. Stepan Ivanovich Melekhin demonstrated his playing on the accordion for me. Young women sang other songs with him—generally, joking songs or soldiers’ songs, as well as *chastushki* and city romances, often in an original manner particular to that village. This repertoire, performed to the accompaniment of the accordion, turned out to be much easier to transcribe than the old-style a cappella long-drawn-out songs. The texture was also simpler, so much so that the very structure of the singing changed; it was as if the women, turning from one repertoire to the next, were living simultaneously in different musical worlds, professing different musical ideals. I began to understand that it would be a grave error to limit myself to the sharp opposition, all too common, of city versus country: both worlds, coexisting as if they were

parallel and independent, were in fact deeply interconnected. At any rate, each of the performers knew the contours of his or her own musical self-realization—contours of intonation and articulation, structure and texture—and each of them also knew of something I later began to call *performing behavior* [ispolnitel'skoe povedenie],¹¹ as well as of what I today call *musical substance*. As I conceive it now, substance is linked not only with articulation and ethnohearing, but also with the so-called *ethnic sound-ideal*.

In the triad of “music-making—intoning—articulating,”¹² which I have discussed at length elsewhere, there is also a place for musical substance, which to a certain extent determines the fate of articulation: with the loss or the alteration of substance, the style that corresponds to that substance dies or transforms. Dropping substance from the chain of “music-making—intoning—musical substance—articulating” leads to irreversible losses in the life of an oral tradition.

...Reminiscences of my fieldwork retain their hold on me. In fact, there are two more sensations, in particular, from my first folkloric expedition in 1956 that have been burned into my consciousness; I consider it unavoidable to return to them here.

The first sensation is linked to the realization that sonic substance resides in the music-making of peasant singers no less than does the untempered structure specific to them, with its harsh pitch system, its dense heterophonic texture, its different rhythmic nature, its exceptional dynamics, and the richness of its timbral palette. The song, to my hearing, progressed in an unusual way: it did not march, whirl in a waltz, or gallop. In fact, it did not move at all; instead, it hung, as if in the air... Considering this, I realized the implication: before, I simply had not discerned the sonic substance of the classical music I had grown up with and loved. That did not mean that *my* music was without any kind of sonic substance; it simply meant that I was naturally *dwelling* in it, just as the singing women of Chernevo naturally dwelt in theirs. Each of us accepted his or her

own substance as something understandable in and of itself, something that did not require any kind of verbalization. Therefore, working with the ostensibly ready-made substance of his or her genre and style, the musician turns into the Creator, for whom the original substance is neither hindrance or barrier. He or she speaks *by means of it*, not *about it*. Truly, all of us listening to music of a given style—and especially to music of an oral tradition—are always involved, even if unconsciously, with specific *musical substances*.

When we know a given style of music-making, we *read* it according to the substance of articulating it has employed. Above all, we welcome or reject the particular *substance of sound flow* depending on whether it is familiar or foreign to us, whether it speaks to us or irritates us. If the substance is something we are acquainted with, we recognize it almost instantaneously, as if it were the voice of a friend heard over the telephone after several years of separation. The American ethnomusicologist Mantle Hood (1918-2005) has called this effect “the two-second wonders”: it is a moment of recognition that lasts no longer than two seconds.¹³

I am reminded, in this connection, of an eloquent story told by Yi-Fu Tuan, a leading American geographer of Chinese heritage at the University of Wisconsin; he told me this story several years ago over a friendly lunch in Madison, in response to my explanation of the concept of musical substance. When he was teaching a class on Chinese civilization at a university in the American South, Professor Tuan ran up against his students’ total displeasure only in response to the sounds of Chinese opera. By that time, these students had already grown to know and love Chinese painting, they had studied Chinese literature and philosophy, and they were, of course, broadly familiar with Chinese cuisine, which is very popular in the United States. Yet straightaway, they experienced full shock at the music. Evidently, there was a Great Wall, absolutely impenetrable, between the musical substance of Chinese opera and the sonic stereotype

of the American South (and, correspondingly, the ethnohearing specific to that sonic stereotype). Almost everything in that foreign culture turned out to be easily surmountable for these students; only its musical substance was not. It seems that we are able to process a substance with which we are *familiar*, while we often reject, “right off the bat,” a substance with which we are *unfamiliar*. Of course, no art can be reduced to the material substance by which it operates, but we must allow that art simply cannot exist for us without considering and understanding musical substance.

The second sensation I experienced that summer in Vologda turned out to be connected with my musicological imagination. Listening to the women singing in Chernevo, I felt—and suddenly saw in my head—how this particular flow of sound, so unfamiliar to me, was *hanging* in that air, on that field, but...it was being produced not by *these* women, but by *others*, women I did not know and will never know, because they lived in other, earlier centuries... I was gripped by the sensation that the *musical substance* that had astounded me has existed on this earth from time immemorial—my Chernevo villagers did not create it. It belonged to them, like their native air, like the scent of their newly baked country bread, like the taste of their fresh milk or their just-gathered forest berries and mushrooms. This was their *mode of existence in sound*, as we would call it now.

I did not have such words back then. At that unforgettable moment, I only realized—or, more precisely, sensed, rather than understood—that music as an art form is not limited to rhythm and length, pitch and texture, timbre and dynamics, tempo and articulation. There is something else that creates music, and this something else is just as integral to it as length, pitch, volume, and timbre. Moreover, this something else is inexorably predetermined—in the final instance, we *do not create* music; we *dwell* in it (in accordance with the Latin phrase *sono ergo sum*: I sound, therefore I am), and this *dwelling*, this *being in* facilitates the birth of form. Indeed, “the substance

endures, and form is lost [*la matière demeure, et la forme se perd*],” as the great French poet Pierre de Ronsard said in one of his elegies from the 16th century.¹⁴

It is only now that I have begun to repeat to myself, as if bewitched, these evergreen lines by Osip Mandelstam, accentuating literally each and every word for myself:

And once again a skald will set down

Another’s words and pronounce them as his own.

(И снова скальд чужую песню сложит / и, как свою, ее произнесет.)¹⁵

Mentally highlighting the word “pronounce,” I hear in it now not only articulation, which is inseparable from song, but also its *musical substance*, in which we all, in one way or another, dwell, and in so doing locate ourselves. In a sense, we, as musicians, are born *before* substance; we exist in it, as yet unable to produce it (or, more accurately, *reproduce* it). Our musical hearing (i.e., our ethnohearing) *lives* in this substance, just as our eye *lives* in a familiar suite of colors and shapes, and our sense of smell *lives* in the traditional aromas of our national cuisine and native flora. It is evident that folk singers and instrumentalists also, in reality, create that which *exists before them* (to use Mandelstam’s enduringly splendid image), including the musical substance that also exists before them.

It is precisely this second sensation from years long past that brought me to the crux of the conception offered here—that is, to an understanding of the *existential mode of musical substance*. This mode is characterized by something remarkable: the fundamental property that it can be unperceived, in the same way that a healthy person does not notice the beating of his or her heart or the scent of his or her body. In this vein, musical substance renders separate the properties of any cultural form inherited by tradition. As Merab Mamardashvili has written, “...cultural form is

the ability of a person to work and function, and to think in a situation of incomplete knowledge. Or simply in the absence of knowledge.”¹⁶

As for the music of oral tradition, its musical substance appears not only as a *cultural* form, but also as an *anthropological* form. Both forms are taken, so to speak, in their musical coincidence. In this case, a musical substance can be perceived, in and of itself, as an a priori given—i.e., it may not be perceived *rationally* at all, much less comprehended terminologically or conceptually.

“You can’t compose that kind of thing,” a young interlocutor of mine once wisely observed after listening to a folk melody during a discussion we were having on the topic of “how to understand music”—a popular topic at the time. And it is true: folklore is not *composed*; people *live* in it. That is why, I would say, *substance* also functions within the realm of folklore as such a potent *leaven of civilization* and *existential force*.

2. A Belated Introduction

“... science advances only in disproofs. There is no point in making hypotheses that are not falsifiable because such hypotheses do not say anything. ... A theory is not a theory unless it can be disproved.”

John Rader Platt¹⁷

In comparison with my previous two apologias on ethnohearing and text,¹⁸ the following apologia may seem even more problematic. It concerns that quality of musical art which is least verbalized—though peasants in places like Chernevo, like other practitioners of oral tradition, do always take into account, for example, the difference between *thick* and *thin* voices (such a difference plainly goes beyond the bounds of a musical text’s traditional timbral divisions and, I am convinced, also indicates the coexistence of various “musical substances” in the makeup of, e.g., polyphonic texture).¹⁹ In any case, let us elaborate on the subject of collective intoning. When

it utilizes various substances, what is most tangible in collective intoning is the emergence of *contrastive polyphony*, while under the conditions of a single or uniform musical substance, what is most tangible is the emergence of *harmony*. It is also evident that the type of musical substance is just as closely connected to the quality of articulating as it is to the type of performance communication (for example, in the marking of a soloist's part, which makes use of a particular musical substance distinct from the substance of a choral drone, or in collective co-intoning within the bounds of a single substance, as in the texture of diaphony). All of these hypotheses call for detailed substantiation. However, such substantiation is beyond the scope of the present article, which is a preliminary invitation to discussion in, if you will, a contrastive-polyphonic style.

I consider it unavoidable here to make three short digressions, which, I hope, may give the reader a deeper sense of the meaning of the phenomenon of "musical substance." These digressions are connected to three names that have long been important and dear to me: Boris Asaf'ev (1884-1949), Vladimir Vernadsky (1863-1945), and Marc Chagall (1887-1985). (The fact that I list them in alphabetical order [in Russian] is not coincidental: these names came to me in precisely that order in the process of working on this article—a process that has extended over seven and a half long years).

I must confess that during the course of this article's composition, I completely forgot, perhaps for the first time in my career as a musicologist, about Asaf'ev, who raised the question of what he called *sonic substance* back in the 1920s.²⁰ I recalled the article in which Asaf'ev raised this question only after my own idea had already crystallized and the greater part of my article was ready in draft form. My forgetfulness can likely be explained by the fact that what Asaf'ev meant by this term was essentially different from my own notion, which developed independently along its own course. Nevertheless, not only in that article, which is little known and has never been

reprinted, but also in the first book of his famous monograph *Musical Form as a Process* [*Muzykal'naia forma kak protsess*], Asaf'ev carefully put forth this proposition: "...the manifestation of music takes place through a process involving the forming of sonic material (it seems to me that we can also take as given a notion of sonic substance)."²¹ In those years, Asaf'ev was writing about the continuous flow of substance, refining his understanding of the working term ("sonic substance" as a "complex of sound interrelationships").²² In his *Symphonic Etudes*, he even equated, in passing, "substance," "body," and "musical fabric."²³ However, in all of these formulations, Asaf'ev remained at an understanding of substance as something reflected by means of musical *notation*. My own understanding of the "materiality" of *musical* substance (and not merely of *sonic* substance) differs radically from Asaf'ev's proposition. Nevertheless, after carefully rereading this little-known article by a master, I understood not only why I had forgotten about it, but also why it was essential to remind my current reader of it. Asaf'ev persistently strove for an *aural* understanding of music versus a *visual* one, and without his efforts, all of us Russian musicologists would be different. In this sense, Asaf'ev's experience is of great importance today for our understanding of the paths we have been attempting to explore with our hearing and—to the extent that we can—subject to analysis.

While reflecting on this article about the phenomenon of musical substance and the corresponding term, I also made reference to the work of Vladimir Ivanovich Vernadsky. Reading over his works on what he called *living substance*,²⁴ I saw that they had no direct relation to my own conception of substance—they were too biogeochemical and too broad in scope. Nonetheless, it is Vernadsky, recalling the famous principle of the eminent Florentine doctor, naturalist, poet, and musician Francesco Redi (1628-1698)—that is, *omne vivum ex vivo* ("all life comes from life")—who makes it possible for us to link musical substance with the essence of living matter,

which he distinguished from inert matter. The substance of music, which exists in the dynamic of music-making as an active process, shares attributes with living matter.

In this way, although neither Asaf'ev nor Vernadsky wrote about the specific “musical substance” that I had and have in mind, their forays into neighboring intellectual space have been of great help to me. In the final analysis, they may also stimulate my readers’ thinking in equal measure, and perhaps lead them to similar or alternative but no less productive conclusions.

Both thinkers, Asaf'ev and Vernadsky, fighting for the development of concrete academic disciplines in their respective fields, were at the same time philosophers. This means that their conceptions of “substance” work on two levels at once: the philosophical and, ideally, the concrete-analytical—or, at least, their conceptions could theoretically work on those two levels. Alas, in my own field, the music of oral tradition, these conceptions have simply not been put to work. At any rate, in order to explain the essence of my approach to others, I still lacked something, something essential that comes from the depths of an artist’s creative process, rather than something that descends onto musical praxis from philosophical heights that encompass all that is living (Vernadsky) and musical as opposed to, for example, all that is architectural (Asaf'ev) and inert (Vernadsky).

I knew that in the final analysis I myself would come to an understanding of the *overall-musical* significance of my concept, but I had to *begin*, as always, from folklore, where all overall-musical properties are sharpened to the maximum and are presented, so to speak, in their bare essence. That “musico-folkloric substance” acted on me with an artistic aggression I had never before encountered (in my aesthetic experience), and this aggression cried out, in the end, for conceptualization. Then, for a long time, I paused my work on this article, having made a sharp turn to completely different artistic material that was neither musical nor folkloric, though it turned

out to be deeply connected with both music and folklore. This material was the painting of Marc Chagall, whose work had excited my imagination for a long time, constantly beckoning me and presenting riddles to my analytical mind. I surrendered myself to Chagall's world without reservation.

The results were not long in coming. In the process of reflecting on the magic of Chagall's colors and forms, but also as a consequence of acquainting myself with a mass of critical literature in art history, I came to a link in the chain of my argument that was inevitable but had been missing up until now. I myself perceived this almost as a revelation. It was a voice *from within*, from within the creative process and the experience of it.

This moment so took hold of me that I considered it fitting to date my notes from those days.

21 February 2004. Musical substance lives, so to speak, together with energy, which gives rise to it: substance is revealed in the process of energetic communication. Clearly, this is what Chagall insistently called *love* ("the color of Love").²⁵ And then it became clear to me that in the music of all epochs and styles—perhaps most clearly in oral tradition—musical substance distinguishes itself by that which, at all stages of its existence (creation, execution, reception), comes along with the energy that gives rise to it and—with musical substance and in musical substance—forms a composition as an artistic thought; i.e., what Asaf'ev, for his part, called intonation. Edmond Gegamovich Avetian²⁶ wrote beautifully about the luminescence of substance, but I would add to and refine his thought in the following way: we should speak about the *energetic luminescence* of the musical (or any other artistic) substance of an art form. Substance is innately associated with the energy of formal creativity as a process of energetic communication.

7 March 2004. I found a brilliant confirmation of my intuition in a book of memoirs about Chagall—a book referenced extremely rarely not only in Russian-language scholarship on Chagall but also in English-language scholarship on him, despite the fact that it was published in English.²⁷ The author of this book is Virginia Haggard-Leirens—“Virginechka,” as Chagall himself called her over the course of the seven years (1945-1952) she spent as his faithful life companion. Almost directly after the death of Chagall, Virginia published this highly interesting book of memoirs, which was based on her personal notes from those seven years. As it seems to me today, she, being an artist herself, probably understood Chagall’s technique more deeply than all scholars of Chagall. Regardless, it has sometimes seemed to me that she is literally speaking in my own words—though, as is well known, we often (perhaps also mistakenly) value these “coincidences” as the deepest insights another has to offer. I will cite an illustrative paragraph from her book, which made the strongest of impressions on me:

“He had an intrinsic understanding for the life of matter, for its vibrations and transformations. He respected its autonomous behavior and never abused it. Like a Taoist craftsman, he sought the mystery that lived in his material, and worked in harmony with it. The result is that his works can stand a comparison with nature. His famous test consisted of setting a picture in the grass or against a tree, to see if it held its own. It illustrated his idea that a good painting is made of authentic, living substances and explained his pet theory of the indispensable ‘chemical’ quality of a painting. What he meant was that there is a mysterious element, without which a painting cannot rise above the realm of pure matter into the realm of pure creation, without which it cannot become *a new living thing*. That element is like a piece of living tissue.”

In the art of the master painter, Vernadsky’s “living substance” is turned into a living tissue, acquiring its own being, full of authentic vibrations and transformations. The matter of art becomes

the life-bearing substance of art; it becomes a *second nature*, not mirroring the first, but coexisting with it. And if this holds as far as painting is concerned, then how much more evident must it be in music, where sounds turn into tones and sound combinations turn into intonations, where *voicedness* [*golosovost'*] reigns—a quality introduced into nature solely by humans.

The “chemistry” of art turns its substances into a living tissue of formal creativity, rivaling nature itself. However, in contrast to nature, the living substance of art is charged with the energy of love.

The scope of the problem has expanded.

3. An Invitation to Discussion

“Human creativity is directed toward the creation of material that does not, on its own, come into being by natural means...”

Merab Mamardashvili²⁸

Translating this philosophical position into the language of ethno/musicology (i.e., “musicology” and “ethnomusicology” in equal measure), I suggest making a distinction in music (and, more broadly, in art in general) between matter and substance. Speaking schematically, *matter* is something formless, inert, dead, while *substance* is something pregnant with forms of a predetermined type (duration, texture, articulation, dynamics, etc.) and is therefore alive. This formal potential is an essential quality of the substance preferred by a given tradition of music-making and is assigned to it, as it were, for that reason. In this lies its distinction from matter, out of which, in principle, any form could be created in any style and in any tradition. According to the definition of the sculptor and theoretician Vladimir Domogatsky (1876-1939), matter is “any kind of mass that, on a technical-artistic level, surrenders itself to formation...”²⁹ Between mass

that “surrenders on a technical-artistic level” and “pregnant” substance, there is an immense distance.

The following formulation is possible: each kind of art has its own matter, but within the bounds of each kind of matter, there exists a multitude of substances. There is a similar relationship between substance and timbre: each kind of substance realizes itself in myriad timbres. In this sense, an entire symphonic orchestra is one substance made up of a multitude of individual instrumental timbres, and this substance can be juxtaposed to the contrasting substance of other kinds of orchestras—for example, the traditional Indonesian *gamelan* orchestra.

It is necessary, however, to admit that in all of this (and beyond), there is still so much that remains unclear and under-researched that it would be rash to expect immediate support for the hypotheses I put forth here. “Whenever people agree with me,” quipped Oscar Wilde, “I always feel I must be wrong...” In the best scenario, I hope for an open discussion about the phenomenon of musical substance. Such a discussion could shed light on whether, underlying my sensations and guesses, there may be a nearly *intonational theory of musical substance*, taking as its subject music as sonic material that gives substance to intonation, not only articulationally³⁰ but also by means of the entire mass of sound-energy, as self-realization and communication.

Among the theses and hypotheses that could be brought into such a discussion, I would now suggest the following, as an addition to or further development of what I have said above.

First and foremost, we are presented with an obvious paradox regarding musical substance. On the one hand, substance goes almost unnoticed: it is taken as a given, as something inherently inseparable from the musical expression of given culture. On the other hand, tradition certainly endows substance with a particular meaning and a specific semiotic nature: for instance, the characteristics of a given genre or local style, or its function in a polyphonic texture. I am

convinced that the semantics and semiotics of musical substance in tradition should become a topic of specialist research—at the micro level of individual culture as well as at the macro level of broader comparative inquiry. The most fascinating aspect of such research is the analysis of folk terminology and existing conceptualizations of substance—for example, in the context of more general ideas about sound and its sacralization. In such instances, the researcher would be justified in asking ethnophores about the interpretation of substance in their traditional milieux. Such an interpretation, it seems to me, may also be educed if we analyze comparative musical material and reflect on all the nuances of folk terminology. It is extremely labor-intensive work, demanding extraordinary creative energy.

Another hypothesis concerns the nature of musical intonation. Let us assume that intonation, which is *perceivable* by hearing, is not only a melodic, harmonic, or other kind of *sound locution* that recalls the “musical word,” etc., but is also the *living substance* of music. In this sense, intonation gives the lie to any results of intellectual activity (including musico-intellectual) based on the study of final musical products: as Merab Mamardashvili wrote, “the production of thought is a living creature that has a body... and it does not coincide with the observable finished text...”³¹

If a musician *thinks intonationally*, then it follows that the musician is utilizing his or her *musical substance*. Substance and intonation are inseparable within a given style and a given tradition.

In my “Apology of the Text,”³² I have already written about the *fusion* of text and substance: substance inheres in text to the same degree that the type of authentic articulating does. For that reason, one’s native musical language constitutes not only language as such, but also

linguistic behavior as *life in language* and, it goes without saying, as that musical language's specific musical substance.

Substance is not something *extrinsic* to music-making—it is a *required condition* for performance behavior.³³

Just as genre is greater than function, so is substance greater than articulation, timbre, and acoustics. Musical substance possesses a certain kind of syncretic power, which is also realized in performance. That is, it is not imposed on music-making from without; the musician constantly dwells within it. (Speaking of which, this constant dwelling is also what hinders us from recognizing the omnipresence of musical substance.)

Musical substance does not exist independently of the musician in the way that clay exists independently of the potter or marble of the sculptor. When we adopt a concrete musical substance, we also take on its corresponding way of life (*modus vivendi*), which encompasses almost everything: a corresponding system of gesticulation, a manner of walking, a worldview, even a way of smiling. The musician *constantly dwells* in substance, *exists* in it as a musician making music. This distinct musical substance is always something predetermined for the musician—not in the way that clay has forever existed for the potter, but in the sense that it is the musician's own unique *modus vivendi*. A potter may work with clay; a musician, however, does not *work* with musical substance—he or she *dwells* in that³⁴—but with rhythm, pitch, timbre, tempo, agogics, intervals, texture, etc. Nevertheless, this substance has a fundamental meaning in any musical composition, in any act of music-making. Moreover, we can hypothesize that the genesis of music is connected to the phenomenon of musical substance, which in turn leads us to recall the remarkable idea suggested by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, given as the epigraph to this article.

Regardless, if the genesis of music, according to one of these many hypotheses, is truly connected to the genesis of musical (as opposed to verbal) intonation, then it “coincides” with the emergence of a new substance of musical articulating proper. This substance has always and repeatedly been tested as a *substance of intonation*, that is, as a substance of specifically musical exertion. “To hold a tone” also signifies “to hold” (to be located in, to dwell in, “to create”) a substance of articulated intonation. We can speak of a substance of musical articulating and of a substance of intonation/intoning.

But there is also less speculative evidence, it seems to me, from folklorists in the field, who speak literally of the “creation” of substance as the true beginning of specifically musical behavior. I remember well a lecture by Aleksandr Osipov, a Cheboksarian graduate student under Viktor Lapin in the folklore division of the Russian Institute of Art History, which he gave in December 1984. Osipov told us that according to Chuvash tradition, *one must begin by “producing sound,”* and only after that can one sing (as in a funeral lament). It is for that reason that among the Chuvash, in their vocal-instrumental genres of music-making, it is a fiddler or player of the bagpipe (the so-called *puzyr’*) who initiates, and only then does the chorus join in. In other words, as long as the substance of intoning that corresponds to the musical behavior (and genre) has not yet been created, the chorus will not sing. *To start with, substance is produced,* and only then does the music-making itself begin, in the context and mode of that substance.

I am almost tempted to modify the famous phrase and say: “In the beginning was Substance...”

The problem (and task) consists in distinguishing the specific character of these musical substances; their *nature*; and, of course, their purpose.

If genre, as per Mikhail Bakhtin, is the memory of culture, then substance is the base component of this memory's "mechanism." If substance itself is, so to speak, unseen, then the fact of its being is objectivized. This is accomplished not by the simple force of tradition alone, but also, more concretely, by the generic sphere of artistic work. Substance is fundamentally involved in the creation of the generic system of a tradition, and together with this tradition, it engenders its own kind of differentiation.

In my discussion of the following thesis, my aim is to get closer to uncovering the "mechanism" of the action of substance in tradition. I proceed from the fact that the living substance of culture is historically specific, just like ethnohearing. Hearing *rests on* the substance that stipulates a distinct type of musical form. Substance *bears* form. A change in substance leads to re-intoning as a law of tradition. The preservation of tradition is possible only on the condition that the tradition changes.

Zinaida Ewald (1894-1942), who remains underappreciated, showed this more deeply than anyone else.³⁵ If I have anything to add to what Ewald has shown, it pertains to the lengthy *coexistence* of multistage forms in tradition, the so-called initial and re-intoned forms. Their being is never uniform or parallel. Every "today" is the *coexistence* of "substances" within tradition. We may even speak of *the law of coexistence of musical substances in ethnic tradition*.

In this connection, I will express one more, extremely speculative thought. It seems to me that we can speak of the coexistence of something like different musical *civilizations* within almost every historically developed ethnic culture. I personally believe this is the case: such, for example, are the peasant and urban civilizations within the Russian or Hungarian musical cultures. These civilizations' differences within the common national framework (so to speak) are so fundamental

that aesthetic *dialogue* between them is practically ruled out: they engage each other by means of radically different channels of communication, which I would be wary of calling dialogue.

If this is the way things stand, then the phenomenon of the coexistence of diverse *musical substances* within a single tradition emerges as an indisputable and fundamental attribute of that tradition. In this sense, “substance” can be defined as a *door* into a civilization. A *change* in substance can result in, if not a change in epoch, then a change in style, or, once again, a change in civilization within a given national culture.

I differentiate between two basic types of change in substance:

1. Within a given civilization. We may compare, for example, opera with recitative and opera with spoken dialogue in place of notated recitative—an illustrative example is the fate of Bizet’s *Carmen* on the stage. Let us also recall the instructive example of Victor Zuckerkandl (not to be confused with Viktor Zuckerman, a Soviet Russian musicologist!), who drew a contrast between an operatic quartet and a conversation among four interlocutors.³⁶ His brilliant analysis of a Verdi quartet wonderfully conveys the shock of perception experienced by a person who goes from the world of conversation, with its speech-related substance, into the world of music, with its intonationally supramundane substance—from the chatting of four people to their singing in harmony with each other. (True, Zuckerkandl did not himself write here about the phenomenon of “musical substance.”)

2. Between civilizations, but within a single national culture. We may compare, for example, the poetry of Lomonosov, Trediakovsky, and Pushkin, when it is sung in peasant folklore in the form of folk songs. Even more illustrative is a comparison between examples of the way popular city romances are sung in the Pinezhsky District in northern Russia, treated by Ewald in her commentaries on the songs of the Pinega River. Variants of the well-known Russian melody

“Vania was sitting on the couch” (*Sidel Vania na divane*), as recorded by Ewald and as reworked in Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s string quartet, are further examples.³⁷

On the subject of Don Cossack song, Tatiana Rudichenko³⁸ uses the term “*throwing the voice over* [perekidyvat’ golos]” to mean “employing the device of throwing the voice over into falsetto” and the term “*to play, with interception* [igrat’ s perekhvatom]” to mean “to sing, throwing the voice over into falsetto.” If these terms denote a change in the substance of a single song as a process of its cantatory “effectuation,” then we can categorize this situation as a third type of change in substance. But this requires additional research, based on a broader selection of material.

Different musical substances not only alternate, but also, as a rule, coexist for a long period of time. I differentiate between three types of coexistence of musical substances:

1. Between various civilizations in a single national culture (e.g., peasant, urban, liturgical).
2. Within a single civilization (according, at base, to the genres of peasant folklore): we may compare the *substances* of laments, epics, ritual incantations, *chastushki*, lyric songs, etc.
3. Within a single polyphonic performance: we may compare the substance of the leader of the choir, which is often half-spoken, and the substance of the prolonged choral drone (cf. the flow of sound of Latvian drone songs, or of the Kakhetian drone in Georgia). Or let us remember the obviously different, contrasting substance of a chorus of girls versus the substance of a bridal lament.³⁹ In a similar vein, almost forty years ago, in my first publication about this surprising polyphony, I wrote about the collision of two musical substances (of the lament and of the song, of the soloist and of the group), which vividly demonstrates a specific moment in the drama of the wedding ritual.

There naturally arises a question about the mutual relationship between civilizations when they are understood in this unusual way.

Carlo Ginzburg,⁴⁰ drawing on Bakhtin, sums up the latter's observations in the term "circulation": between the cultures of the dominant and the "subjugated" classes in pre-industrial Europe, there were *circulatory* relationships that went in both directions, top-down and bottom-up. Therefore, Ginzburg stresses, it is not appropriate to speak of the absolute autonomy of, for example, peasant culture (or, in my terminology, peasant civilization).

Ginzburg's point, of course, is fair, and we might allude not only to Mikhail Bakhtin but also, in no lesser measure, to Aleksandr Veselovsky (1838-1906), whom Carlo Ginzburg, like the overwhelming majority of Western specialists, unfortunately did not know. But here is the curious thing: this circulation—between artistic activity, and in particular between works of art of various classes of any one national tradition—does not, according to my observations, have to do with their musical substance. The borders of *civilizations*, as I call them, are porous in almost all cases—for musical instruments, folk tunes, discrete songs and their subjects or motifs, etc.—for almost everything, except *substance*, since it is musical substance that is linked, above all, with ethnohearing and with the *ethnic ideal* of sound-making and music-making in general.

Only in the early modern and modern periods has peasant civilization taken on (and it continues to take on) the *dominant* musical substance of urban civilization, though it has by no means taken on its full richness. The city, in its turn, via individual enthusiasts, may attempt to reproduce a peasant musical substance, but this, too, is successful only in the rarest of cases. Substance remains a *wall* between civilizations that are otherwise broadly open to one another on other levels of mutual relation.

In this vein, what is exceptionally interesting is the role of so-called *secondary ensembles*: imitating the style (etc.) of one civilization within the framework of another civilization, they are in fortunate cases successful in many respects, including in the most difficult task, which is the reproduction of an intonational structure that is free from tempering, and of an articulation that is by nature unusual for them. This articulation is one they take on for the express purpose of imitating others; in the best cases, they try, like good actors, to relive others' lives theatrically, as though anew. But, we may ask, are they successful in *existing in the musical substance* of the civilization they are imitating, since the substance of any civilization is conditioned by myriads of highly subtle relationships that, in the final analysis, also determine the essence of that civilization? This, I believe, has not presented itself to secondary ensembles as a *modus vivendi*—i.e., in an existential way. No matter how strong of an appearance life makes displayed on the stage of a theater, theatricality will not—and by definition should not—turn into life.

When I speak of the *dominant* musical substance of urban civilization, what I have in mind is the real wealth of “substances” used, for example, by composers of various epochs and styles. Boleslav Yavorsky (1877-1942)⁴¹ wrote about the change of styles, which I principally interpret at the level of change in musical substance. To my hearing, the substance of Haydn's sonatas, for example, differs sharply from the substance of Chopin's nocturnes, just as these both, in their turn, differ sharply from the substance of Bartók's *Allegro barbaro*. In other words, we can speak about the change and coexistence of substances even within the framework of piano music. This is all the more obvious under the conditions of oral tradition.

I will offer some observations I made on July 8, 2002, in the United States, on the premises of the embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Washington, D.C. The embassy invited the Kazakh participants in the Smithsonian Folklife Festival *The Silk Road: Connecting Cultures*,

Creating Trust to a reception, along with the Americans who had worked with them. The embassy workers were not able to organize a traditional banquet: all the guests stood around a table that had been set with a cake, fruit, and typical American finger foods. The atmosphere was far removed from that of the ritual hospitality and music-making in a yurt to which Kazakhs are accustomed. All the same, Almas Almatov, the star of the Kazakh delegation and a famous epic singer of the Kyzylorda tradition, decided to perform a blessing typical of his local repertoire in gratitude for the reception. In terms of genre and content, this blessing went beyond the traditional “goi-goi” greeting song appropriate to such an occasion; in Almas’s performance, the blessing took on all the traits not of the lyric, but rather of the epic style, which in the Kyzylorda region is highly strained in manner and substance.⁴²

Almatov sang wonderfully, but as he performed, I saw that I was not the only one who felt a familiar awkwardness hanging in the air. This singing, so natural in its traditional environment, was deprived here of the pure melodic freedom of steppe bel canto, and it sounded both unnatural and, to be frank, out of place. The strained manner of the voice leading, along with the *musical substance* (according to my conception) that Almas used, both turned out to be in flagrant opposition to the relaxed atmosphere of the American “party,” as they call such official receptions here, which are moreover relatively short in comparison to traditional Kazakh hospitality. For the duration of his performance, it was as though Almas’s musical substance enfeathered those present; it did not let them breathe freely in an atmosphere that had already worked itself out into one of relaxed small talk. And at that point I thought to myself: what kind of singing would have sounded appropriate here? It would have to be something much lighter, like Neapolitan song, or something completely guileless and unstrained, for example set to a guitar...

But the epic style of Almas, marked by high pathos and a forceful form of musical recitation, was received in that context not so much as singing, even, than as speech become music and raised to the level of high-intensity intonational strain. I would go so far as to say that it was taken as speech *translated into the substance of intonational strain*, into speech that had been molten and stretched by this strained substance. And speech that has been translated into the non-speech substance of intoning brings forth its own conditions of musical behavior: it is precisely according to the criteria of this substance that speech vibrates in such a strained manner. *Vibration of substance* becomes *separation* of syllable/word/line, concluding in a prolonged wordless melody, what is called *qaiyrma* in Kazakh. However, these decidedly melodic conclusions, though they are beyond the word, still do not become music per se, because—and this is the crux of the matter!—they do not change the strained substance of the epic intoning.

As we can see, song melody cannot realize itself *in song*, given that it exists within the conditions of the *non-song substance* of intoning. Therefore, I would imagine that not only Kazakh but also, e.g., Kyrgyz free melodic singing—but certainly not the Kyrgyz epic *Manas*!—would have been more appropriate at the embassy, not only because these forms would have been understood as sonic images of the native steppe the musicians had left behind, but also because the musical substance of these forms, the substance of *melodic* singing of the cantilena type, *unites* all those present, while the substance of reciting immediately *separates* the soloist-bard from everyone and everything else: as soon as the rhapsodic substance of intoning—distinctly recognizable—is heard, the whole world turns instantly into a listener.

The variety of musical substance (even within the aforementioned epic tradition), like the variety of foods eaten within a given ethnic group, helps it to outlive tradition, to adapt elastically

to the constantly changing atmospheres of performance in our ever more sharply changing world. This kind of adaptation did not take place that day.

It has become clear to me that there are musical substances that are chiefly predisposed toward solo performance, while there are substances that are better suited to accompaniment, to co-intoning. It is curious that this division pertains to monodic as well as to polyphonic cultures. Thus, the style of recitation, even though it is strongly, frontally melodized, still does not constitute a substance of co-music-making: it is listened to and paid attention to. As for the style of song—people join in with it, if not by producing actual sound, then at least by singing “to themselves” in their heads. In short, the nature of musical substance, in accordance with the next of my theses, is also closely linked with something I have called performance communication.⁴³

The awkwardness brought about at the embassy by Almas Almatov’s singing, which was out of place in terms of style and substance (but, I stress again, not in terms of content and genre!), ultimately stimulated these theoretical insights, as well as an involuntary experiment in, as it were, the contextualization of musical substance.

Naturally, what stands behind this experiment is something bigger: the link between musical substance and a given epoch of music-making, to say nothing, in particular, of the dependence of musical substance on *syncretism*, which is something especially characteristic of the music of oral tradition. For example, orchestral melody—not only transposed into various tonalities but also *clothed* in the timbres of various musical instruments in the same symphonic orchestra—is not syncretic. All the variety of its timbral clothing cannot change the very nature of its musical substance, which is fundamentally suited to different kinds of sound-making—but all of them symphonic.

Indeed, in the conditions of oral tradition, “melody” emerges, born as though at a confluence, as a result of the active interaction between the function of the music-making, the type of performance communication, the ethnic ideal of sound-making, musical substance, articulation, memory, etc. In other words, the articulatory crucible of musical-syncretic substance has set the parameters for the *probable* realization of a “melody,” and so there always remains a place for this melody and its realization.⁴⁴ In this sense, syncretism is expressed in the fact that the musical form itself is defined by extramusical factors and functions. Not a single component of a syncretic whole can be realized as something independent of the other components. Therefore, under the conditions of syncretism, quasi-romantic ideas about the seeming fluidity of musical substance over time do not work. Instead, we find a functionally determined articulation that is just as probable as it is rigidly formulaic—articulation as a working nexus connecting substance and the remaining fundamental components of musical behavior: pitch (in a dynamic texture), length (tempo-rhythm), and timbre.

Another point of consideration is the difference between folkloric articulation and the application of solmization to “folk melodies” divorced from their real context. Solfège turns folk melody into what we might characterize as a flattened reproduction. The living articulation of oral tradition, on the other hand, *develops* (as in the photographic technique) melody, rhythm, form, etc., carving it out, so to speak, of the block of raw material that is musical substance.

Oral tradition knows only melody that is fused with substance and emerges from substance in a mode of syncretic articulation. Therefore, to the question of what exactly is being articulated and taking form, we may now respond: it is musical substance!

In tradition, the so-called sound-ideal does not function by itself: only the interaction between articulation and musical substance gives rise to a generically determined sound-ideal, which I call the ethnic sound-ideal.

Consequently, the process of articulating reveals itself to be *text-forming*, and the artistic text itself turns out to be the confluence of several factors, above all articulation, timbre, and the sound-ideal. All of these elements, moreover, are already contained in a living *musical substance* that, since it exists within a mode of conventional articulation, also structures itself according to the norms of a tradition.

Perhaps music is indeed born of voice and not of sound?

–Translated by Scott Bartling and D. Brian Kim, 2017

¹ Originally published as “Apologiia ‘muzykal’nogo veshchestva [Apology of ‘Musical Substance’].” *Muzykal’naia Akademiia [Musical Academy]*, 2005, No. 2, pp. 181-192. The present translation was made from the original manuscript.

² Cited in Jacques Derrida. *On Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976 (reprinted 1998), p. 195.

³ Marcel Jousse, “Études de psychologie linguistique: Le style orale rythmique et mnemotechnique chez les verbomoteurs,” *Archives de Philosophie*, vol. 2, cahier 4. Paris, 1925. See also the English translation: *The Oral Style*. New York: Garland Publ., 1990. Paul Zumthor. 1/ *Oral Poetry: An Introduction*. Minneapolis, 1990; 2/ *Toward a Medieval Poetics*. Minneapolis, 1992; 3/ *Performance, reception, lecture*. Longueuil, Quebec, 1990. It is not out of the question that Merab K. Mamardashvili, following the French academic tradition, may have spoken about the voice as a distinct material in his well-known lectures on Marcel Proust.

⁴ *Symposium of the Whole*. University of California Press, 1983, p. 95 (in the Indian tradition). According to one Islamic tradition, “The human voice was given at the same time as the highest part of the soul, called the ‘speaking soul’ (*nāṭīqa*), which only humans have” (see *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, vol. 6, p. 182; from the article by Jean During).

⁵ See, for example, a few books in English (in chronological order): Walter J. Ong. *Orality and Literacy*. Methuen, 1982; Deborah Tannen. *Spoken and Written Language: Exploring Orality and Literacy*. ALEX Publishing, Norwood, 1982; Eric A. Havelock. *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from the Antiquity to the Present*. Yale University Press, New York, 1986; Amin Sweeney. *A Full Hearing: Orality and Literacy in the Malay World*. University of California, Berkeley, 1987; Jack Goody. *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987; Ruth H. Finnegan. *Literacy and Orality*. Blackwell, Oxford, 1988; Rosalind Thomas. *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens*. Cambridge, 1989; David Olson and Nancy Torrance, eds. *Literacy and Orality*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991; Paul Carter. *The Sound in Between: Voice, Space, Performance*. New South Wales University Press, 1992; Duncan Brown. *Voicing the Text: South African Oral Poetry and Performance*. New York, 1998; Amanda Jane Weidman. *Question of Voice: On the*

Subject of 'Classical' Music in South India. Ph.D. dissertation at Columbia University (New York, 2001); Eero Tarasti. *Signs of Music: A Guide to Musical Semiotics*. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2002 (see Part 3). See also a significant collection of articles published in Russia: *Evraziiskoe prostranstvo: Zvuk, slovo, obraz [Eurasian Space: Sound, Word, Image]*. Ed. Viacheslav Vs. Ivanov Moscow, Iazyki slavianskoi kul'tury, 2003.

⁶ Peter Brook. *The Empty Space*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968, p. 11.

⁷ I have written about this trip and my first impressions of it in the local press (e.g., “Kolkhozni khor [Kolkhoz Chorus].” See “Stalinskii kolkhoznik [Stalin’s Kolkhoznik],” the newspaper of the Ust’-Alekseevsky District, Vologda Oblast’, 1956, 12 July, No. 56 [1675]), as well as, later, in the national press (“Vologodskie chastushki [Chastushki of Vologda],” *Sovetskaia muzyka [Soviet Music]*, 1958, No. 2, pp. 109-115—incidentally, my first article in this journal). When Aleksandr T. Tvardovsky was the editor-in-chief of *Novyi mir [New World]*, he commissioned a more general article on my impressions of the expedition, but this was never published, as Tvardovsky was discharged from his position.

⁸ V. F. Odoevskii. *Muzykal’no-literaturnoe nasledie [Musical-Literary Heritage]*. Ed. G. B. Bernandt. Moscow, 1956, p. 306.

⁹ I. I. Zemtsovskii. “Etnicheskii slukh kak kliuch k muzykal’nomu sushchestvovaniiu [Ethnic Hearing as the Key to Musical Existence].” In *Kul’tura narodnogo peniia: Traditsii i iskusstvo [The Culture of Folk Singing: Traditions and Art]*. Ed. L. V. Shamina. Moscow: Institut muzyki im. Al’freda Shnitke, 2001, pp. 4-14.

¹⁰ I. I. Zemtsovskii. “Tekst–Kul’tura–Chelovek: Opyt sinteticheskoi paradigmy [Text–Culture–Human: An Attempt at a Synthetic Paradigm].” *Muzykal’naia Akademiia [Musical Academy]*, 1992, No. 4, pp. 3-6; Izaly Zemtsovsky. “An Attempt at a Synthetic Paradigm,” *Ethnomusicology*, 1997, vol. 41, No. 2, pp. 185-205.

¹¹ I. I. Zemtsovskii. “O prirode fol’klora v svete ispolnitel’skogo obshcheniia [On the Nature of Folklore in the Light of Performance Communication].” *Iskusstvo i obshchenie [Art and Communication]*. Leningrad, 1984, pp. 142-150.

¹² Izaly Zemtsovsky. “The Ethnography of Performance: Playing–Intoning–Articulating,” *Folklor i njegova umetnička transpozicija: Referati sa naučnog skupa održanog 29-31. X. 1987 [Folklore and Its Artistic Transposition: Conference Proceedings 29-31. X. 1987]*. Beograd, 1987, p. 7-22; I. I. Zemtsovskii. “Etnografii ispolneniia: Muzitsirovanie–intonirovanie–artikulirovanie [The Ethnography of Performance: Music-Making–Intoning–Articulating].” *Traditsii i perspektivy izuchenii muzykal’nogo fol’klora narodov SSSR [Traditions and Perspectives on the Study of the Musical Folklore of the Peoples of the USSR]*. Moscow, 1989, pp. 94-106.

¹³ Ki Mantle Hood. “Music from Galileo to Einstein: A Quantum Leap.” *Progress Reports in Ethnomusicology*, vol. 2, No. 8. Baltimore, Maryland, 1989, pp. 1-14.

¹⁴ *Œuvres complètes de P. de Ronsard*, vol. 4. Ed. M. Prosper Blanchemain. Paris, 1908, p. 349.

¹⁵ Osip Mandel’shtam. *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh [Complete Works in Four Volumes]*, vol. 3. Moscow, 1994.

¹⁶ Cited in *Vstrecha s Dekartom [Meeting with Descartes]*. Moscow, 1996, p. 353.

¹⁷ John R. Platt. “Strong Inference.” *Science*, New Series, vol. 146, No. 3642. Oct. 16, 1964, pp. 347-353.

¹⁸ Cf. *Muzykal’naia Akademiia [Musical Academy]*, 2002, Nos. 1 (pp. 1-12) and 4 (pp. 100-110).

¹⁹ Evgeny Efremov has recently analyzed a particular usage of the term “thin voice.” The text of his lecture “‘Quiet singing’ and ‘thin voice’ in the song folklore of the Ukrainians” can be found in *Instrumentovedcheskoe nasledie E. V. Gippiusa i sovremennaia nauka [The Organological Heritage of E. V. Gippius and Contemporary Scholarship]*. St. Petersburg, 2003, pp. 127-129. *Thin voice* is not melody, but *voice*, strictly speaking. It comes about when the singer draws only on head voice and not chest voice. Because of this, the top part of the singer’s range broadens significantly, and her timbre becomes reminiscent of that of an academically trained soprano. This voice is used in ritual *gukan’e*, a characteristic form of shouting in which the syllable “gu-u-u” is protracted at the end of a call in certain calendrical genres (designated only for certain times—for example, this cannot be sung in winter). This voice is not one used in everyday settings: it is neither a singing nor a conversational voice, thereby demonstrating its special status in traditional performances by ethnophores.

²⁰ See Igor' Glebov. "Protseess oformleniia zvuchashchego veshchestva [The Formation Process of Sonic Substance]." In *De Musica*. Petrograd, 1923, pp. 144-164. The archive of B. V. Asaf'ev (TsGALI, fond 2658, opis 1, No. 234) holds a 1920 manuscript entitled "Stroenie veshchestva i kristallizatsiia (formoobrazovanie) v muzyke [The Construction of Substance and Its Crystallization (Formal Composition) in Music]," which has never been published in full.

²¹ B. V. Asaf'ev. *Muzykal'naia forma kak protsess [Musical Form as a Process]*. Leningrad, 1971, p. 26.

²² Introduction to Hans Joachim Moser. *Muzyka srednevekovogo goroda [Music of the Medieval City]*. Trans. [from German] Igor Glebov and N. A. Kriuchkov. Ed. Igor Glebov. Leningrad: Triton, 1927, p. 11. ("...sound-forms present themselves to consciousness as a kind of 'sonic substance'—a complex of sound interrelationships...")

²³ B. V. Asaf'ev. *Simfonicheskie etiudy [Symphonic Etudes]*. Leningrad, 1970, p. 113, footnote.

²⁴ Cf. V. I. Vernadskii. 1/ *Zhivoe veshchestvo [Living Substance]*. Moscow, 1978, p. 115, 311-319; 2/ *Zhivoe veshchestvo i biosfera [Living Substance and the Biosphere]*. Moscow, 1994, p. 241.

²⁵ *Marc Chagall on Art and Culture*. Ed. Benjamin Harshav. Stanford University Press, 2003; see pp. 128, 137, 151.

²⁶ E. G. Avetian. *Smysl i znachenie [Sense and Meaning]*. Erevan, izd-vo Erevanskogo Gos. Universiteta, 1979, p. 150. I quote this significant fragment in full: "The liberation and birth of essence is possible because of the luminescence of substance, which hints at its constitutive plan. Substance is therefore introduced in the role of a naturally occurring sign. And meaning does not impose itself upon it; substance naturally encounters meaning."

²⁷ Virginia Haggard. *My Life with Chagall: Seven Years of Plenty with the Master as Told by the Woman Who Shared Them*. New York: Donald I. Fine, Inc., 1986, p. 104.

²⁸ M. K. Mamardashvili. *Lektsii o Pruste [Lectures on Proust]*. Moscow, 1995, pp. 265.

²⁹ V. N. Domogatskii. *Teoreticheskie raboty. Issledovaniia, stat'i. Pis'ma khudozhnika [Theoretical Works. Research, Articles. Letters from the Artist]*. Moscow, 1984, pp. 108-130 (chap. 1: *Teoriia materiala. Vzaimodeistvie materiala s formoi [Theory of Matter. The Interplay of Matter and Form]*).

³⁰ I. I. Zemtsovskii. "Artikuliatsiia fol'klora kak znak etnicheskoi kul'tury [The Articulation of Folklore as a Sign of Ethnic Culture]." In *Etnoznakovye funktsii kul'tury [Ethnosymbolic Functions of Culture]*. Moscow, 1991, pp. 152-189. See the English translation: Izaly Zemtsovsky. "The Articulation of Folklore as a Sign of Ethnic Culture." *Anthropology and Archaeology of Eurasia*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (1996), pp. 7-51.

³¹ M. K. Mamardashvili. *Strela poznaniia [The Arrow of Cognition]*. Moscow, 1996, p. 163. I am inadvertently reminded of the performances of the Dogon tribe in Africa, which Victor Turner treats in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. The Dogon believe that speech, like the human body, also has its own body, and this *body of speech* consists of four elements: *water* (in the form of saliva, without which speech is dry); *air*, which gives rise to sonic vibrations; *earth*, which gives speech weight; and *fire*, which imparts warmth.

³² *Muzykal'naia Akademiia [Musical Academy]*, 2002, No. 4, p. 104.

³³ This is also what lies at the base of my work on an article for the new linguistic quarterly at St. Petersburg University: "Speech genres and the substance of articulating: an ethnomusicologist's take."

³⁴ N. Iu. Al'meeva, who has analyzed Tatar folk art with great success, likes to talk about the principle of "dwelling in sound," so important for traditional performers. See, for example, this fragment: "The prolongation of songs sung in a round looks almost like a goal in itself, since it results in *dwelling in sound* [author's emphasis]." Nailia Al'meeva. "Geterofonnaia faktura (opyt analiza arkhaischeskogo mnogogolosnogo peniia tatar-kriashen) [Heterophonic Texture (An Attempt at an Analysis of the Archaic Part-Singing of the Kryashens [Christianized Tatars])]." *Sud'by traditsionnoi kul'tury: Sbornik stat'ei i materialov pamiati Larisy Ivlevoi [The Fate of Traditional Culture: Collected Articles and Materials in Memory of Larisa Ivleva]*. Ed. Vera Ken. St. Petersburg, 1998, p. 198.

³⁵ Z. V. Eval'd. "Sotsial'noe pereosmyslenie zhivnykh pesen belorusskogo Poles'ia [Social Reinterpretation of the Harvesting Songs of Belorussian Polesia]." *Sovetskaia etnografiia [Soviet Ethnography]*, 1934, No. 5.

³⁶ Victor Zuckerkandl. *Sound and Symbol: Music and the External World*. Princeton University Press, 1973, pp. 332-33 (Bollingen Series XLIV).

³⁷ E. V. Gippius and Z. V. Eval'd. *Pesni Pinezh'ia [Songs of the Pinega District]*, vol. 2. Leningrad, 1937, pp. 397-98. Commentary to songs 15, 15a.

³⁸ T. S. Rudichenko. *Donskaia kazach'ia pesnia v istoricheskom osveshchenii [Don Cossack Song in a Historical Light]*. PhD dissertation, Rostov-on-Don, 2004. I am grateful to Tatiana Semenovna Rudichenko for graciously acquainting me with her highly interesting work in manuscript form.

³⁹ I. I. Zemtsovskii. *Toropetskie pesni: Pesni rodiny M. P. Musorgskogo [Songs of Toropets: Songs from the Homeland of M. P. Mussorgsky]*. Leningrad, 1967, No. 49.

⁴⁰ Carlo Ginzburg. *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*. London, 1989, p. xii.

⁴¹ B. L. Iavorskii. *Izbrannye raboty [Selected Works]*. Vol. 2, Part 1. Moscow, 1987.

⁴² For more on this style, see Alma Kunanbaeva. "Spetsifika kazakhskogo epicheskogo intonirovaniia [The Specific Character of Kazakh Epic Intonation]." *Sovetskaia muzyka [Soviet Music]*, 1982, No. 6, pp. 78-81.

⁴³ See also my article "O prirode fol'klora v svete ispolnitel'skogo obshcheniia [On the Nature of Folklore in the Light of Performance Communication]" (see note 11).

⁴⁴ I. I. Zemtsovskii. "Vvedenie v veroiatnostnyi mir fol'klora: k probleme etnomuzykovedcheskoi metodologii [Introduction to the Probabilistic World of Folklore: On a Problem of Ethnomusicological Methodology]." *Metody izucheniia fol'klora [Methods of Folklore Study]*. Leningrad, 1983, pp. 15-30.