ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: "Vysotsky's Soul Packaged in Tapes": Identity and Russianness in the Music of Vladimir Vysotsky

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This study examines the relationship between music, identity, and Russianness as demonstrated by the songs of the *bard* Vladimir Vysotsky. The career of Vysotsky occurred within the context of Soviet Russia, but more broadly, his songs embody characteristics specific to Russian culture. For this study, I draw on the fields of ethnomusicology, history, and cultural studies to assist in the interpretation of music and identity in a cultural context. By investigating the life and career of this individual, this study serves as a method in which to interpret the identity of a musical performer on multiple levels.

I gathered fieldwork data in Moscow, Russia in the summers of 2003 and 2004. Information was gathered from various sites connected to Vysotsky, and from conversations with devotees of his music.

The role of identity in musical performance is complex, and to analyze Vysotsky's Russianness, I trace his artistic work as both 'official' actor and 'unofficial'

musician. Additionally, I examine the lyrics of Vysotsky's songs for the purposes of relating his identity to Russian culture. In order to define 'Russianness,' I survey theoretical perspectives of ethnicity and nationalism, as well as musical and non-musical symbols, such as the Russian soul (*dusha*), all of which are part of the framework that creates Russian identity.

In addition to Russian identity, I also address a performer's musical identity which focuses mainly on musical composition and performance. In determining Vysotsky's unique musical identity, I compare the compositions of his *avtorskaya pesnya* ('author song') to two other *bards* who were his contemporaries. This comparative analysis demonstrates that even within the same musical genre, performers employ distinctive compositional and performance practices particularly identified with that individual.

I conclude that identity is a multi-layered framework, and that this framework is, in actuality, comprised of different identities. In the case of Vysotsky, some songs display a national identity, whereas in others examples, he displays an identity based on social status or ethnicity. The arrangement of these identities can change, and interpretation of the identity framework is dependent on specific music examples and performance contexts.

"VYSOTSKY'S SOUL PACKAGED IN TAPES": IDENTITY AND RUSSIANNESS

IN THE MUSIC OF VLADIMIR VYSOTSKY

by

Heather Lynn Miller

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
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DEDICATION

To

My parents, for love and support,

My Friends in Moscow, for memories

and

In memory of Dorothy Miller (1920-2006),

Your love and support lasted just long enough to see this work complete

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This dissertation is a result of many years of studying music and Russian culture. I would like to acknowledge the continued support and friendship of previous professors who have shaped my focus and perspectives, especially Dr. Charles McKnight for introducing me to studies of Russian music, and Dr. Leslie Gay for introducing me to the field of ethnomusicology. I would also like to acknowledge my friends and colleagues at the University Maryland for their unwavering support and encouragement. I would particularly like to thank Mary Scott for her heartfelt friendship and to Victor Vicente for his encouragement and helpful advice through the years.

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The Library of Congress system (without diacritics) is used consistently for transliterating Russian Cyrillic words. All personal names of people deemed to be culturally Russian are presented according to this system, except where differing customary versions exist in English-language scholarship, such as Tchaikovsky and Vysotsky.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In a poem simply titled, "The Poet" written about the death of Vladimir Vysotsky,

Andrei Voznesensky expressed his admiration for the Russian *bard* by detailing the loss

of the actor/musician for the 'myriad people' in Russia who were devotees of his songs.

An excerpt of this poem reads: [1]

> Right as you enter the Vagankovo
> we dug for you your home in death.
> So now you, Hamlet of Taganka,
> are covered with Yesenin's earth.[2]
>
> The downpour puts the candles out…
> And all that's left – Vysotsky's soul
> Packaged in tapes, the countless crowd,
> like bandages off wounds, takes home.
>
> You lived and sang and acted, grinning,
> you Russia's love and Russia's pain.
> You will not stay in black-box limits –
> you will break out of all constraints.

These three stanzas refer to how countless people regarded Vysotsky after his death. The

poem connects him to the cemetery in which he is buried (Vagan'kovskoye), his famous

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[1] Published in Andreyev and Boguslavsky, 1990: 222-23.
[2] Sergei Yesenin, early twentieth-century poet, is buried in Vagan'kovskoye Cemetery in Moscow.

role as Hamlet at the Taganka Theater in Moscow, and his deep association to Russian culture. Most notably, after Vysotsky's death, his soul (*dusha*) is now 'packaged' in the cassette-tape recordings of live performances of his songs. Voznesensky's ode to Vysotsky alludes to numerous characteristics of the *bard's* persona – his acting and his singing, and particularly his role within Russian artistic culture.

This dissertation focuses on the issue of identity, specifically how identity is formed and affirmed through the music of Russian *bard* Vladimir Vysotsky. Of particular interest in this study is the notion of a Russian identity as it pertains to this musical genre, and principally how the musical genre expresses this identity within the historical context of the Soviet Union, as well as in contemporary Russia. I will also focus on concepts of cultural policies and aesthetics, specifically within the Soviet Union, and how *avtorskaya pesnya* ('author song') was associated with those policies of art and music. Except for recently formulated terminology, there does not exist in the Russian language a term that is comparable to the English word 'identity.' However, because my perspectives and analysis of Vysotsky's music and Russian identity are that of an outsider, the Western concept of 'identity,' as used in previous academic discourse, is used throughout this study.

In recent years, the subject of how music and identity relate have become the focal point for many ethnomusicological and musicological studies. Authors such as Stokes (1997), MacDonald et. als. (2002), Berger and Del Negro (2004), Olson (2004), and a host of others have broached this issue theorizing how people, individually or within a group situation, use music to create and affirm an identity. Past studies, including those listed above, focus on different types of identities, and many of those

studies tend to focus on areas such as nationalism, ethnicity, or gender identities as they relate to music and music-making. Any genre or style of music, from any region of the world, can be applied to identity as a function of music. Here, when I discuss the term 'function,' I refer to the theory of functionalism as articulated by A. R. Radcliffe-Brown who described music and dance, and argued that these cultural components continue to exist within a society because they function to maintain a social order (Radcliffe-Brown, 1922: 248-249, 252). Radcliffe-Brown's assessment of music and dance in connection to their function within society suggests that they are a part of social order, and therefore the function does not change. In my view, identity is always present as a function of music and musical performance, and this fact does not change. However, the specific sub-identities that may be on display change according to time and place.

There are numerous publications describing music and identity, but as of now there is no one universal theoretical model or method which describes how music is connected to identity. This may be related to the complexity of the multiple relationships between music and identity. Music may function on numerous levels which may be defined as manifest or latent (Kaemmer, 1993: 143). There are also numerous identities which may be extracted simultaneously from any one example of music or performance of that music.

Avtorskaya pesnya ('author's song') dates back to the 1950s in the Soviet Union, and continues to have an impact in present-day Russia. Because this style of music developed in the Soviet era, there are obvious connections to be made with music and politics in the Soviet period of Russian history. However, because I am looking at larger concepts of a 'Russian identity,' it is necessary to examine ideas of Russian identity in

avtorskaya pesnya beyond the Soviet era. This relates to the idea that although *avtorskaya pesnya*, as a genre of music, began in the Soviet period and that its prominent and well-known figures were living and prolific during this time, *avtorskaya pesnya* is not strictly relegated to a particularly Soviet identity. Instead, it extends to aspects of a Russian identity within a larger, historical perspective. It is important to look not only at the context of the Soviet era in terms of identity, but to extend the scope further back into Russian musical history to focus comprehensively on Russian musical identity. Vladimir Vysotsky, regarded as the most prolific of the *bards*, was a particularly popular individual during the Soviet era, and remains so in post-Soviet Russia. Although Vysotsky had a sometimes tenuous artistic position within the Soviet Union during his lifetime, since his death in 1980 he has taken on the role of a cultural icon in Russia, and as an icon, also serves as a symbol of Russian identity.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce theoretical and methodological foundations for this study, a basic background of *avtorskaya pesnya* and Vladimir Vysotsky, who serves as the primary individual for investigation. The goal of this chapter is to set forth to the reader the main influences affecting this dissertation, including the theories that influenced the research, the music and lyrics in *avtorskaya pesnya*, and the people who are devotees of Vladimir Vysotsky.

Avtorskaya Pesnya

In general, *avtorskaya pesnya* ('author song') provides for some interesting and detailed analyses of how Russians listen to and relate to this music. The genre includes a sung text which creates visual imagery for the listener. This dissertation primarily

focuses on the music of Vysotsky. As poetry written and performed by a Russian individual, Vysotsky's songs reflect the reality of everyday Soviet life that members of his audience experienced. Because this research is rooted in the idea that music and identity are socially and culturally constructed, there are many different sub-areas in terms of Russian identity that I explore; in particular, areas of ethnic and national identity in connection with what it means to be 'Russian.' In relation to this Russian identity, I focus on the identity of Vysotsky as an artist within the genre of *avtorskaya pesnya*, and also on how his audience and mass of admirers identify with him and his music.

The genre of music generally referred to as *avtorskaya pesnya* is drawn from earlier traditions in Russia, though as a specific genre, it became popular through concerts and recordings after the breakdown of Stalinism in the mid-1950s. The musicians of this genre are sometimes referred to as *bards*, which itself conjures up imagery of itinerant musicians from Western European musical traditions. There are a variety of genre names used to describe this type of music, as well as the musicians who perform it. The generic term 'Russian guitar poetry' has been used in English-language literature on the subject. Author Gerald Stanton Smith notes in his study of the genre, that as far as he was aware, he developed the term having not encountered any equivalent terms the Russian (Smith, 1984: 235). In the Russian language, there appears to be numerous phrases for this genre including 'amateur song' (*samodeyatel'naya pesnya*), 'tourist song' (*turistskii pesnya*), and 'student song' (*studentcheskaia pesnya*), and many other different titles have been used to describe the poetic and musical components. The terms listed above provide some insight into the nature of this genre; 'author's songs' assumes a type of music performed by the songwriter himself, and 'amateur song'

suggests a style of music that incorporates a grass-roots-style of artistic creation. Terms such as 'poet-singer' (*poet-pesennik*), 'balladeer' (*balladnik*), and 'bard' (*bard*) have been used to describe the musicians/poets who perform this music (Smith, 48). For purposes of this study, I will use the word *bard* (plural – *bards*) to refer to the performers, and *avtorskaya pesnya* to refer to the genre of music. 'Author song' was a term used by many *bards* because the songs were a personal expression by the author. This term gives prominence to the individuality of the author and his songs.

The musical elements of *avtorskaya pesnya*, from the standpoint of Western European 'common practice' system of music and notation, include melodic contours and harmonic progressions that are fairly simple in construction. The Russian seven-string guitar, the instrument generally used to accompany the sung poetry, and therefore the instrument primarily identified with *avtorskaya pesnya*, is tuned D-G-B-d-g-b-d´. Its open strings produce a G major chord when played together, and the closely related D (dominant) and C (subdominant) major chords can be produced without a great deal of agility. Typically, the *bard* strums the accompanying chords on the guitar in rhythmic ostinati while he sings the poetry. The formal structure for the songs is generally strophic, though there are occasional exceptions. Although the musical structure is relatively uncomplicated, there are stylistic differences amongst *bards* including vocal timbre, melodic structure, and rhythmic components of a melodic line.

There have not been a great number of musicological studies focusing on *avtorskaya pesnya*, and that may be due to the musical components of the genre being viewed as simple and 'primitive' by some. In the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd edition, the Russian seven-string guitar is identified as a specific regional

variation of the guitar (Timofeyev, 2005), and the genre of *avtorskaya pesnya* and

Vladimir Vysotsky are identified in a brief entry concerning another *bard*, Bulat

Okudzhava (Zemtsovsky, 2005). However, the first and foremost academic book on

avtorskaya pesnya in English to date is *Songs to Seven Strings* (1984) by Gerald Stanton

Smith. Smith's descriptions of the musical elements are basic as he states, "[the

accompaniment] patterns are made up of the most rudimentary elements: single bass

notes, roots and fifths almost without exception, on the on-beats, and simple triads on the

off-beats" (Smith, 1984: 97). However, Smith is uncomplimentary in his descriptions of

the music and vocal performance when he states:

> Very seldom is strict tempo maintained. There are pauses for dramatic
> emphasis, scurrying accelerandi for refrains and fills. Over this primitive
> rhythmic and harmonic scaffolding stretches the voice. It is manifestly
> untrained, tonally poor, uncertain in pitch, at times employing crude
> recitative or ordinary speech…(Smith, 97).

Smith's descriptions of these musical

elements are rather pejorative, as obvious with his use of the term 'primitive.' His other

descriptions of the vocal production of songs appear to compare the singing of *bards* with

other standards of vocal production, particularly from a trained, Western classical

perspective. Although Smith notes that his study is more concerned with the literary

components of *avtorskaya pesnya* as opposed to musicological, he admits through his

descriptions that the simplicity of musical structure and 'untrained' singing suggests that

avtorskaya pesnya is largely an amateur genre as opposed to singing genres that require

Western conservatory training. Overall, Smith's descriptions of musical sounds are not

from an ethnomusicological perspective. Even though there is an amateur aspect to

avtorskaya pesnya, there is a particular aesthetic system within this music. The

performances associated with these aesthetics will be investigated more specifically in this study through musical analysis.

The lyrics of *avtorskaya pesnya* written in the 1960s and 1970s were generally topical and on various issues dealing with subjects often considered taboo in Soviet literature and art: nostalgia for religious observances, the 'ever-watchful' neighbor, corruption, the tyrannical bureaucracy, and so forth. During the rise of *avtorskaya pesnya*, small, semi-private gatherings became new cultural communication centers where performances of this music would occur. The lyrics frequently contained a paradoxical combination of artistic optimism for life in the Soviet Union, as well as sardonically commenting on ideas and images presented in official Soviet *massovaya pesnya* (mass songs). In general, many of the songs demonstrated a two-faced side of the Stalinist epoch. These gatherings became a way for people to communicate and discuss their interests. Such gatherings also provided students a center in which to exchange ideas and created catalysts for thinking, asking questions and finding their own voices within 'official' Soviet life.

Because a great deal of this study is situated within historical perspectives, it is important to define the time periods that will be investigated. *Avtorskaya pesnya* has its roots in earlier pre-Soviet music, but the beginning of this genre during the 1950s coincides with the era of the 'Thaw' (*Khrushchovskaya Ottepel'*, 1953-1964). At certain points during this work I will address different Soviet and pre-Soviet time periods, but I will focus mainly on the time period generally referred to as the 'Era of Stagnation' (*Zastoya*, 1964-1982). This period was marked by the governing of Leonid Brezhnev, the setting for Vysotsky's height in popularity. Fueled in part by the Cold War,

westerners knew more about dissidents who struggled against Soviet ideologies such as physicist turned human rights activist Andrei Sakharov and writer Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, who was exiled from the Soviet Union during the 1970s. Oftentimes *bards* were also recognized as dissidents due to the occasional political content of songs.

Vladimir Vysotsky - Biographical Sketch

Vladimir Semyonovich Vysotsky was born on January 25, 1938 in Moscow. His parents divorced when he was one year old, and he was raised mostly by his mother in Moscow except from 1947 to 1949 when he lived with his father who was serving in the army during the Soviet occupation of East Germany. This mixture of life in Moscow, the subculture of its street life, and living with his army father proved an important influence for many of the songs Vysotsky would later write.   He wrote many songs that focused on war themes and the 'street life' of the Moscow underworld. However, contrary to the many rumors and myths during his lifetime, Vysotsky never served in the army, nor did he spend time in a prison camp.

Vysotsky spent one year studying at the Institute of Civil Engineering in 1955, but quit to join the Nemirovich-Danchenko Studio School of the Moscow Art Theater (MKhAT). He graduated in 1960 but was not given a place in the troupe of actors in the Arts Theater. Instead he joined the Troupe of Miniatures (*Teatr miniatyury*) in Moscow and later the Pushkin Theater (*Teatr imeni Pushkina*), also in Moscow. Despite these professional beginnings, Vysotsky's acting career did not take off until 1964 when he joined the Moscow Theater of Drama and Comedy on the Taganka, commonly known as Taganka Theater because of its location on Taganka Square in Moscow. The Taganka

Theater was formed in 1964 by director Yuri Lyubimov, and was particularly known for their commitment to experimentation onstage. Not long after Vysotsky joined, he became a central figure of the troupe, its primary star, and the embodiment for the Taganka approach to theatrical experimentation. As stated by Smith in his biographical outline of Vysotsky, "this approach was brash, dynamic, and athletic, a conscious antipode to the stuffy academicism of the Moscow Arts Theater" (Smith, 1984: 147). These descriptions can also be applied to the manner in which Vysotsky performed his *avtorskaya pesnya* onstage.

While Vysotsky continued his career in the Taganka Theater, he also worked in film and television. During his twenty-year film career, he played more than twenty-five roles. Some of his notable films included *Vertical* (*Vertikal* - 1966), *The Intervention* (*Interventsiy*a - 1969), *Dangerous Tour* (*Opasnye gastroli* - 1969), *The Fourth Man* (*Chetvertoe* - 1972), and on television his roles in Pushkin's *Little Tragedies* (*Malen'kie tragedii* - 1979) and *Can't Change the Meeting Place* (*Mesto vstrechi izmenit' nel'zya* - 1969) were also notable. Vysotsky also served as a musician and lyricist on some films, sometimes performing onscreen. One of Vysotsky's most popular songs, "Song about a Friend" (*Pesnya o druge*) was written for the film *Vertical*.

While his work in theater and film allowed him a means of making an income, his work as a *bard* was considered by Smith as his 'true' vocation. This assessment is due to Vysotsky's prolific output, as well as for his commissioned songs used in plays and film (Smith, 1984: 151). As mentioned above, Vysotsky wrote and performed songs both onstage and onscreen which suggests that these two vocations, actor and musician, were not completely separate. Vysotsky's interest in *avtorskaya pesnya* is believed to have

begun while he was a student in drama school. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, Vysotsky role as a *bard* was solidified in the Soviet Union; the popularity of his songs among the Soviet population was made possible through *magnitizdat*, the private circulation of cassette tape recordings. Vysotsky performed live concerts of his *avtorskaya pesnya* as often as possible given the restraints and difficulties of an unsanctioned musician within the Soviet system. Vysotsky's musical activities outside of the stage and film situations breached the regulations of the Ministry of Culture. Investigations by the ministry claimed that Vysotsky did not appear on the list of vocalists allowed to give solo performances, and that he gave 'extra' concerts that exceeded the limits permitted by the ministry. In the likelihood that he would be reprimanded for his actions and prohibited from performance altogether, Vysotsky would perform multiple concerts in one day for as many people as possible. Despite these issues, Vysotsky continued his work and performances of *avtorskaya pesnya* for the remainder of his life.

During his lifetime, much biographical detail of Vysotsky's life was wrapped in mythology and legend, most of which was and still is circulated by followers and devotees.[3] These myths and stories were due to Vysotsky's public persona, and also due to the Soviet system of information, sometimes lack thereof, which usually disregarded 'controversial' figures. Oftentimes, stories of Vysotsky's abuse of alcohol were well-known, and there were numerous stories of his forced hospitalization in order to 'dry him out.' The prevalence of alcoholism among the creative intelligentsia in Soviet Russia, as well as the country at large, was a taboo subject, and it is believed that it led to

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[3] One such myth of Vysotsky made its way into this obituary published in the *New York Times*. It stated that he had served time in a prison camp as a youth. However, this has been discounted by many individuals that knew him (Whitney, 1980: 22:4).

Vysotsky's premature death. Vysotsky died on July 25, 1980 from what many have speculated to be a heart attack mostly likely brought on by his alcoholism; Smith is one who notes Vysotsky dying from heart failure due to his excessive use of alcohol (Smith, 1984: 175). He was survived by his third wife Marina Vlady, two sons, and both of his parents. Although his death was initially ignored by the Soviet press, it was believed that thousands of individuals took part in three-day mourning ceremonies that extended from gatherings at Taganka Theater to Vagan'kovskoye Cemetery where he is buried.

Cultural Policy on Soviet Art

Within highly controlled political environments, such as the former Soviet Union, artistic output was determined by specific rules and regulations. The guidelines that established art and music produced within the Soviet Union were officially stated within cultural policy. This section focuses on those policies and how they affected the production and consumption of *avtorskaya pesnya*. In connection with cultural policies within the Soviet Union, these guidelines helped to establish what may be designated as 'official' art of the multiethnic state. Music, visual art, literature and the like were to uphold the ideals of Soviet ideology and philosophy and in turn helped to create an 'official' identity for the country and its people.

For the purposes of discussing cultural policies of Soviet art, I distinguish 'official' and 'non-official' art for the purposes of demonstrating that which adhered to the principles and ideals of cultural policies, and that which operated outside of 'official' life. By 'official,' I refer to all art which was sanctioned by the government and the operating institutions within the Soviet Union. The state was in control of all media, art,

and communication because of the socialist system that was in place. Some musical performances, as will be demonstrated later, were used by officials to display art that was deemed appropriate and reflected Soviet ideology, and in turn used nationally and internationally to promote the best examples of Soviet art. Even though 'unofficial' art denotes a concept of not being identified as existing by those in control, in reality there was a fine line between 'official' and 'unofficial' art, and sometimes that line is quite blurred. For example, although many of the songs by Vysotsky were not recognized by the state, government officials and the general population knew of his music and musical performances. Almost all of his music was circulated via *magnitizdat* recordings, and very few of his songs were recorded and released by *Melodiya*, the state-controlled recording firm. Those few exceptions were songs written for films. In general, Vysotsky's music was not used by the state for purposes of national image or identity. In the following chapters I will explain and analyze why some songs were not officially recognized.

Studies of cultural policy as a method of controlling and regulating artistic output and how they affect the consumption of 'culture' are relatively new to the broad area of cultural studies. Cultural studies as a field investigates cultural phenomena, particularly within industrial societies, and examines the ways in which people participate in certain activities (such as watching television or consuming and listening to music) in a given culture, as well as the meanings and practices that those activities have in everyday life. Most scholars within this field come from the disciplines of sociology, communication and media studies, and anthropology. The study of cultural policy encompasses many fields including areas such as radio, television, film, museums, and music all viewed as

products of a culture or society. Examples of such studies include Angela McRobbie's investigation of the connection between fashion and popular music within culture (1999), Richard Barbrook's look at the licensing issues concerning London radio stations (1990), and Shuker and Pickering's investigation of the popular music industry of native New Zealand artists (1994).

In general, cultural policy can refer to principles and values that guide a social institution within cultural affairs. Those social institutions can range from a government, to a corporation, to a community organization. Specific policies may be explicitly defined by an organization such as ministry of art or culture, as was the case in the Soviet Union. The policies may remain less formally defined. One of the earliest definitions of cultural policy was outlined by Augustin Girard:

> A policy is a system of ultimate aims, practical objectives and means, pursued by a group and applied by an authority. Cultural policies can be discerned in a trade union, a party, an educational movement, an institution, an enterprise, a town or a government. But regardless of the agent concerned, a policy implies the existence of ultimate purposes (long-term), objectives (medium-term and measurable) and means (men, money and legislation), combined in an explicitly coherent system (Girard, 1983: 171-72).

In connection to this definition and cultural policies within the Soviet Union, the state controlled all aspects of 'official' artistic production and consumption, and ideologically, art was to adhere to a system set up by individuals acting on behalf of the state. In the socialist system everything was governed and controlled by the state, and the ultimate purpose was to enculturate citizens in socialist ways of thinking and to uphold the ideals of communist ideology thereby reinforcing the identity and image of the nation-state.

Some studies in cultural policy also look at national and international organizations which support, or as viewed by some, police the products of culture. "Culture," as stated by Jim McGuigan (2003), exists within two broader fields of reference – 1) the arts and higher learning, and 2) the ways of life. In these two fields McGuigan designates culture on one level as actual art which is created and consumed by individuals, sometimes designated as 'high culture,' and culture as a part of everyday life, what some might refer to as 'popular culture.' But in reference to culture, McGuigan does not make a distinction between what is primarily cultural (McGuigan's estimation of 'high culture') and that which is not primarily of meaning or significance. The example provided by McGuigan is taken from economics:

> Economic arrangements are cultural: they are human constructs and they are historically and geographically variable in form and operation. They are not, though, primarily to do with production and circulation of meaning. Economic arrangements are fundamentally about the production and circulation of wealth [of] whatever is being produced, which is not to say they are without meaning (McGuigan, 2003: 24).

Given this perspective, one may look at culture as anthropologist Edward Tylor's 'complex whole,' and how it pertains to social constructionism. In an area such as economics, it is a part of culture, and different cultures will have different economic systems. In this view, economics may determine the *objects d'art* which are produced by a culture and estimate their value and worth. However, as part of the 'complex whole,' economics does not hold any particular symbolic meaning or significance within a culture, but merely a system for the production and circulation of wealth. This perspective is opposed to a Marxian view in which economics is a fundamental component of culture.

Like McGuigan, Toby Miller and George Yúdice also refer to culture as connected to policy within two areas, but they designate them as the 'aesthetic' and 'anthropological,' as opposed to higher learning and ways of living. According to Miller and Yúdice, the aesthetic criteria are framed by cultural criticism and history. The anthropological area uses culture as a marker of how people live their lives, "the sense of place and person that make us human – neither individual nor entirely universal, but grounded by language, religion, custom, time and space" (Miller and Yúdice, 2002: 1). They define culture policy as institutional supports that channel "both aesthetic creativity and collective ways of life – a bridge between the two registers [aesthetic and anthropological]" (Miller and Yúdice, 1). With this definition, Miller and Yúdice would therefore include the economic domain as an area that helps determine cultural policy, or attitudes, of a culture along with governments, trade unions, universities, social movements, foundations, businesses, and community groups. All these help aid, fund, promote, teach, evaluate, and sometimes control the creative individuals within a culture. Theoretical studies of cultural policy are still fairly new, and as demonstrated in the above definitions and concepts, there is not one standard system to which theorists in cultural studies have agreed. For purposes of this study, I tend to follow Miller and Yúdice's notion of cultural policy combining both the aesthetic and anthropological domains of a given culture.

Cultural Policy in the Soviet Union

After the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, and the beginning of the Soviet Union, cultural was legally, politically, and also financially determined by the state for the

purpose of building socialism. Initially the Bolsheviks viewed popular culture as part of

the old czarist regime, but as historian Richard Stites notes, the Bolsheviks soon saw that

in general, culture 'possessed the power to enlighten and ennoble the masses' and

therefore, popular culture served a useful purpose (Stites, 1992: 39). Mass appeal

became important for the purposes of gaining and sustaining support for the state, as well

as the objective of communism.

Ongoing debates about the direction of Soviet music and art continued into the

early 1930s, but the Resolution of 1932 instigated many changes in artistic creations, and

allowed cultural policies concerning music to fall under stricter governmental control.

This resolution disbanded proletarian organizations of the 1920s, replacing them with

unions intended to dominate the direction of artistic areas. The primary purpose for the

Resolution of 1932 was to promote the new concept of 'socialist realism.' At the First

All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934 Andrei Zhdanov, the Secretary of the

Communist Party and Stalin's cultural commissar, defined socialist realism in his keynote

speech by stating:

> Truth and historical concreteness of the artistic depiction must be combined
> with the task of the ideological transformation and education of the working
> people in the spirit of Socialism. This method of artistic literature and literary
> criticism is what we call socialist realism… (Zhdanov, 1934: 525).

Zhdanov also denounced Romanticism for its 'oppression of life to an unreal world' and

instead espoused an idea of 'revolutionary romanticism' that describes the struggle of the

working class.

Many of Zhdanov's ideas can be traced to an earlier essay, "On Socialist

Realism," originally published in 1933 by writer Maxim Gorky. Gorky's rather vague

definition of socialist realism states:

Socialist realism proclaims that life is action, creativity, whose aim is the unfettered development of man's most valuable individual abilities for his victory over the forces of Nature, for his health and longevity, for the great happiness of living on earth, which he, in conformity with the constant growth of his requirements, wishes to cultivate as a magnificent habitation of mankind united in one family (Gorky, 1973: 264).

Although definitions of socialist realism are fairly unclear as to a specific meaning of the concept, the main objective, as defined by Gorky and others, for artistic individuals was to now achieve and maintain this standard through artistic creation.

With this cultural policy and artistic ideology, works of art should be realist in form and socialist in content, celebrating the Socialist society. In areas of literature and visual arts, this ideology was easier to implement as it was felt that art should be easily accessible, understood by all, and focus on socialist themes. Within the area of music, implementing socialist realism was difficult in the case of non-programmatic music, music that did not entail some type of narrative. A possible explanation of how music could embody the ideals of socialist realism is music that is clear and understandable, accessible to the layman and upholds the ideals of Communism and the proletariat. Music, such as opera and the large varieties of popular songs, that have a narrative and often contain lyrics allowed for easier adherence to these guidelines. However, absolute, or non-programmatic music was not so easily judged on the criteria of socialist realism and would incur debate among the Soviet critics.

Providing a basic definition of socialist realism is complicated, and the theoretical concerns of it as an aesthetic system are problematic. As stated by Smith in his discussion of the range of songs produced within the Soviet Union, he notes, "the explicitly aesthetic element in the phrase, 'Realism,' itself indefinable in an unambiguous or constructive way in any context, has in practice managed to encompass a wide variety

of styles" (Smith, 1984: 11). Despite the narrative lyrics and simple music structure, *avtorskaya pesnya* was relegated to the status of 'unofficial' culture. The problematic system of socialist realism, including ensuing debate of the main component of Soviet cultural policy, will be looked at in greater detail in a following chapter.

Theoretical Perspectives

In consideration of theoretical issues surrounding music and identity, a primary school of thought from which my research draws is that of social constructionism. My views of social constructionism are related to the ways in which groups and individuals perceive reality. As will be discussed in a later chapter, this 'reality' (socialist realism) is an invention of a particular culture or society (the Soviet Union). Within this mode of thought and through my research, I investigate how an individual's identity is constructed in Soviet society through musical composition, musical performance, and resulting reception of such musical activity. Because my research mostly focuses on an historical figure within an historical time frame, it is important to construct the cultural and social aspects of that time period. As noted by Vivien Burr in her explanation of social constructionism,

> all ways of understanding are historically and culturally relative. Not only
> are they specific to particular cultures and periods of history, they are seen
> as products of that culture and history, and are dependent upon the particular
> social and economic arrangements prevailing in that culture at that time
> (Burr, 1995: 4).

Given the political climate of the Soviet Union, the cultural policies in effect, as well as the relationship to Vysotsky's music and its relationship to everyday Soviet life,

Vysotsky the musician is positioned within the particular culture and society, namely that of the Era of Stagnation.

The theoretical concerns of identity are closely aligned with, and often drawn from social constructionism, and various scholars and theorists within the social sciences have broached the concept of identity in their work. The result is a multitude of definitions or ways in which to interpret this idea. In general, we may think of identity as a way of positioning oneself and therefore marking difference from other people. From post-structuralist thought, Michel Foucault's notion of identity is something that is not 'real' within a person but something (a discourse) that is communicated to others through interactions (Foucault, 1972: 49). This view of 'identity' therefore relies on social interaction with others, and in Foucault's thought it is not a fixed object within a person, but is a temporary construction and constantly changing. Burr further solidifies this idea by stating:

> The person can be described by the sum total of the subject
> positions in discourse they currently occupy. The fact that
> some of these positions are fleeting or in a state of flux
> means that our identity is never fixed but always in process,
> always open to change. (Burr, 1995: 152)

This idea of constant change in identity is dependent on a multitude of conditions and criteria. Any interpretation of an identity that an individual is displaying is dependent on perspective and who is doing the interpreting.

However, in Foucault's interpretation of identity, he rejects the view that people possess an inner essence and characteristics held within that determine who that person truly 'is'. This idea is fundamental to Judith Butler's work on gender and identity in which she argues that 'there is no preexisting identity,' and that identity is essentially

formed 'through sustained social performances' (Butler, 1990: 141). In agreement with the notion of self-identity being created through social interaction and cultural context, I would also add that through 'social performances' in an individual's life and interactions with others, an inner essence, or core identity, is formed and that essence contains a variety of 'identities.' A person may draw upon these 'identities' at any given instance, or they may be interpreted by an outside observer. This perspective draws upon Richard Handler's view of identity as culturally specific (1994) and Stuart Hall's notion that identity is also historically evolving (1996). The belief that a person's identity is constantly developing would depend on the social performance and contextual situations he or she is undergoing at a given moment, and the people he or she comes into contact with during the course of a given span of time.

It is important to note that Foucault's perception of the self, identity, and discourse are related to power and subjectivity. I concur with Foucault's beliefs on Marxism and power. Whereas in Marxist theory, human historical development follows a strict order, and power is held by the social elites, Foucault views power in relation to knowledge, these two objects being inseparable. He believes that power is not a property of any individual or group, but it is something that can be employed by someone through various discourses (Foucault, 1980: 119). As a type of discourse, Vysotsky's songs, and the transmission of these songs via underground methods, demonstrates the power that subversive music and informal networks of people held within a highly controlled artistic environment.

Foucault was in opposition to Marxist thought, and as Burr noted, "his point was that in making broad generalizations of this kind [such as that found in Marxism] we tend

to mask the vast array of differences between people and their situations and the many different kinds of power relation in which they are caught up" (Burr, 1995: 70). For example, we may make the generalization that because of strict governmental control of the arts within the Soviet Union, there was 'official' music and 'unofficial' music, and various individuals would fall into either category as determined by the music they composed or performed. With this line of thinking, Vysotsky would have been deemed as 'unofficial' because the contents of most of his songs were viewed as un-Soviet. However, I believe some of his works did endorse the 'official' ideology, and therefore we cannot make sweeping generalizations of Vysotsky's identity only as an 'underground' musician. In articles about Vysotsky and interviews conducted with him, he never openly assumed an anti-Soviet stance, but often mentioned the plight of the Soviet artist in connection to censorship as a determining factor in his un-Soviet messages (Andreyev and Boguslavsky, 1990: 193). Therefore, we may postulate that because Vysotsky transgressed lines between 'official' and 'unofficial' art, within the discourse of music and politics, he and his work contain certain levels of power by managing to not be simply classified as 'official' or 'unofficial.' His identity as musician within this cultural context becomes much more complicated and will be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters.

Music and Identity

Music, as a culturally powerful phenomenon, has the capability of creating and conveying meaning of a culture or society. It serves numerous functions be they the enculturation of younger generations, the transmission of knowledge, accompanying

ritual processes that demonstrate a collective group's world view and belief systems, and a host of others. These functions, within a cultural context, help create and affirm identity. As mentioned before, music is multi-functional, and as such we may also look at identity as multi-functional. The idea of constant change in identity, as perceived by Foucault, is parallel to my conception of music being used to construct multiple identities, in that one example of music may serve or promote various identities. The manifestation of different identities is determined by different contexts.

Musical performance, as an instance when identity is on display, can provide exceptional insight into a person's identity, particularly because most performances rely on social interaction between performer(s) and audience. When viewing musical performances as related to identity, Hargreaves notes that a musician may become a 'different person' on stage than when in isolated rehearsals, and yet be different again when taking part in a number of non-musical activities (Hargreaves et. als., 2002: 10). This may be partially related to the sense that our identities only exist in specific interactions, such as a public versus a private persona.

Pirkko Moisala offers viewpoints that provide explanation of why musical performance is a special context for the performance of identity. Although she focuses her investigation in the realm of gender performance and music, her ideas can easily be transmitted to other types of identity. One of Moisala's ideas is that because music is generally performed publicly, it is thus subject to 'social control' (Moisala, 1999: 1). Because the performance of music, in my estimation either a live concert setting or through means of a recorded medium, is performed for a community of listeners, they in turn react to and assess the performance. This social situation of musical performance

provides affirmation for the identity of the individual, but also helps construct the identity of the audience through the reception of the music.

This study of music explores the concept of identity in two ways: the primary focus is that of the identity of the individual musician (his music and his persona), and the second focus is the identity of the audience. I view Vysotsky's identity as an individual within his social and cultural context via the words of his poetry, the stories they tell or scenes they describe, as well as his history and persona as put forth in published works such as books written about him and interviews to which he contributed. As a study grounded in the discipline of ethnomusicology, I also focus on Vysotsky's particular musical style, both compositional and performative – the components of his musical identity. Because Vysotsky is an individual of repute, the reception of his music via his audience and admirers additionally provides another layer to music and identity. My study of Vysotsky occurs in two frames, the historical context of Soviet society in which I am viewing Vysotsky's identity, and the context of post-Soviet Russia provides information as to how and why individuals identify with him and his music. Vysotsky is an individual of some fame and notoriety in post-Soviet Russia, it is important to investigate the how and why people continue to listen to his music.

In addition to the above ideas of music and identity, Martin Stokes emphasizes the concept of 'place' in conjunction with musical performance. He states:

> The musical event, from collective dances to that act of putting a cassette or
> CD into a machine, evokes and organizes collective memories and present
> experiences of places with an intensity, power and simplicity unmatched
> by any other social activity. The 'places' constructed through music involve
> notions of difference and social boundary. They also organize hierarchies of
> a moral and political order (Stokes, 1994: 4).

With this statement, Stokes marks the importance of music as a social phenomenon and its relation to 'place,' be it a physical space in which a musical event occurs, or the constructed sense of space where music is listened to and perceived. Both instances provide a 'place' for identity to be transmitted and negotiated. Therefore, I look at the instance of musical performance of Vysotsky as a 'place' where his musical identity was displayed, and I view the listening to his music as a 'space' in which his audience identified with the music.

Purpose of Study and Research Method

In terms of song output, Vladimir Vysotsky was the most prolific figure of the *avtorskaya pesnya* movement. It remains debatable as to who is the most important individual in the movement; in her study of Bulat Okudzhava, Magdalena Romanska describes her subject as, "arguably the most important figure in the *bard* movement," (Romanska, 2002: 12). This statement may be attributed to the fact that Okudzhava is often viewed as the artist who spear-headed the genre and that other bards followed. Without subjective pronouncements or comparisons of *bards* in terms of 'most important,' due to subjectivity, the reason I chose to focus on Vysotsky is due to his overwhelming popularity that he had within the Soviet Union, as well as in the post-Soviet period. This is estimated by various reasons including numerous biographical books that have been published, his prolific song output, and an official state museum in his name. As a musical style, *avtorskaya pesnya* may not be as popular as it once was during the 1960s and 1970s, the popularity of Vysotsky remains rather strong in Russia and the Russian diaspora. Many individuals whom I have come in contact since beginning my research and study of Vysotsky mentioned either their knowledge of his

work in film or in song, or in many cases their admiration and love for his music. These individuals comprised a large array of people either currently living in Russia or who formerly lived in Russia, other republics of the Soviet Union, or other countries in Eastern Europe.

Another reason for my focus on this particular individual is that little has been written about Vysotsky outside of Russia, and particularly little has been written in English. As an important figure within Russian popular culture, his artistic output remains an area not yet investigated with the methodologies found in the cultural study of music.

Sources for this study come from a combination of published works, field work data and musical analysis for the purpose of examining music and identity in Vysotsky's work. Although I am investigating music and culture from an ethnomusicological perspective, I do not rely solely on data collected from fieldwork. In addition to scholarly sources in developing my ideas of music and identity, I have also collected films in which Vysotsky appeared, videos that include musical performances, and numerous concert and studio recordings that have been released since the breakdown of the Soviet Union.

There is great literary importance in *avtorskaya pesnya* as a genre and in this study I address the literary components of *avtorskaya pesnya* as necessary. There are numerous publications of Vysotsky's lyrics, many of which I have collected during trips to Russia. However, because my research centers on the analysis and interpretation of music, the translations of Vysotsky's poetry included in this study are not my own. In

part this is because I am not a native Russian speaker, and his poetry tends to use a great deal of colloquial speech that is difficult to translate.

Using social constructionism as a means of interpreting identity, it is important to note that my own understanding of facts and observations must be accounted for within this study. Therefore, I feel it is important to identify myself with regard to my subject of research. Vivien Burr states that, "within social constructionism there can be no such thing as an objective fact. All knowledge is derived from looking at the world from some perspective or others, and it is in the service of some interests rather than others" (Burr, 1995: 6).

My perspective in the study of Vladimir Vysotsky and Russian culture is an etic viewpoint. I assumed this position not only collecting data during fieldwork, but also in the interpretation of information that I gathered. I was not born in Russia or the former Soviet Union, nor do I, to my best knowledge, have any ethnic heritage related to Russia. I am not a native Russian speaker, and in fact did not begin my studies of the Russian language until a graduate student. I was, however, raised in the United States during the end of the Cold War, and thus through news media and popular culture of the time formed ideas and opinions of what life 'must' have been like for Soviet citizens. However, these ideas and opinions have drastically changed through my own research and experiences with individuals I interviewed over time. Despite the etic perspective from which my observations and analysis derive, my position allows for a level of objectivity. Although I consider myself a 'fan' of Vysotsky and listen to his music for enjoyment, I refrain from making superlative and opinionated comments regarding his work.

Context of Field Site

My primary field site for this musical study is the city of Moscow. I identify this place specifically because Moscow serves as an important geographical location for studying Vladimir Vysotsky for numerous reasons. For one, it was the city of his birth and a majority of his formative years were spent there. Moscow was also the location of Vysotsky's drama schooling, and his subsequent work as an actor took place at the Taganka Theater. Numerous songs written by Vysotsky describe the people and environs of this city as well, and of the musical performances Vysotsky did manage, a majority of them occurred within this city. Most importantly, after his death in 1980, Vysotsky was buried in Vagan'kovskoye Cemetery in Moscow. It is there on the anniversaries of his death on July 25, and his birth on January 25, that a mass of admirers gather to take part in commemorations of this individual, be it laying flowers at his grave, reciting poetry, performing his music, and general comradeship.

I completed my fieldwork in the summers of 2003 and 2004, gathering information through observations and interviews with individuals of various backgrounds. I also visited sites within Moscow that are connected to Vysotsky, such as a house where he grew up, the museum recently opened in his memory, and the theater in which he worked. In addition to gathering information specifically pertaining to Vysotsky, my time spent in Moscow and its environs was also invaluable to my understanding of a Russian identity. Although the Soviet Union is no longer in existence, there are various remnants of that time period such as statues of Lenin still on display that alert one to question the identity of Russia be it in terms of nationality, ethnicity, or politics. In addition to information gathered during my trips to Moscow, I also spoke

with various individuals who formerly lived in other parts of the Soviet Union or other Eastern European countries. Information collected from these individuals demonstrated the far reaching impact Vysotsky and his music had both within and just beyond the Soviet Union.

The only requirement in selection of interviewees was that they knew of Vladimir Vysotsky and his work. This information provided me an understanding of the persona of Vysotsky within the Soviet Union, and because he is often regarded as an 'underground' musician but was so well known to the general population, the description of him as 'underground' is debatable. However, the most important information gathered from interviews was from individuals who identified themselves as devotees of his music and who listened to and knew his songs. This information provided great insight into understanding the reception of Vysotsky's music, why people listened to his songs, and how his admirers identify with the music. It is important to add that some interviews I conducted were done so with the aid of a translator. Even though I have an understanding of the Russian language and conversed with many of my non-English speaking interviewees, I relied on the help of a translator in order not to miss important nuances and vocabulary I might have otherwise not understood.

Defining Terminology for Study

Throughout my research of Vysotsky there are particular vocabulary terms and definitions that must addressed. For example, in some literature (see Lazarski, 1992 and Allen, 1971) concerning Vysotsky as musician, he is often referred to as an 'underground' artist and his music often deemed as 'unsanctioned' by the Soviet

government. Although specific songs may have been unsanctioned by authorities, simply referring to Vysotsky as an 'unofficial' musician misses a great deal of the complex issues within the Soviet artistic community. The term 'unofficial' means not having official authority or sanction, and an added association to this would envelope ideas that government officials never recognized the musical output by Vysotsky. This is however not the case, and as will be discussed in more detail in preceding chapters, some of Vysotsky's musical output was in fact sanctioned by the government. Therefore, simply using the label 'underground musician' does not provide adequate description of Vysotsky.

Therefore, throughout this thesis when I discuss 'official' culture in connection to music, I refer to music explicitly used and sanctioned by the government. At times this will include Vysotsky's music, though my primary focus on official culture will be in musical genres other than *avtorskaya pesnya*. Instead of placing *avtorskaya pesnya* in either 'official' or 'unofficial' culture, I follow Smith's description of the genre as part of the 'middle ground,' music that "lies between what is actively promoted and what is actively persecuted by the authorities" (Smith, 1984: 33). Smith notes that within the cultural and political context of the Soviet Union, defining 'middle ground' art is rather difficult because of the concept of neutrality. He states:

> ..the very concept of ideological neutrality is officially unacceptable in the USSR. The principle that 'he who is not for us is against us' may sometimes be held in abeyance for quite long periods, but it is never forgotten. Also, it is axiomatic that anything actually published in the USSR, whatever the medium, is in a real sense 'official,' since the state has an economic monopoly of the media and controls tolerate a good deal of material which, while not explicitly promoting official
>
> attitudes, does not actually say anything that could be interpreted as hostile to them or incompatible with them (Smith, 33).

In this respect, Soviet culture may have deemed Vysotsky's music as 'unofficial' as opposed to 'official' *massovaya pensya* which was promoted by the state. However, with the middle ground there was a level of toleration of artistic activity which more accurately describes Vysotsky's music. In an article about Vysotsky, Christopher Lazarski notes that although Vysotsky was never blatantly anti-Soviet in his *avtorskaya pesnya*, he was 'dangerously un-Soviet' (Lazarski, 1992: 65). Therefore, in order to make this terminology more logical, I view musical performances (an event) as 'unsanctioned,' whereas the music (the thing itself) is 'middle ground.'

Another definition that should be addressed is classifying of *avtorskaya pesnya* as it relates to popular and folk music. As a musical genre *avtorskaya pesnya* was often associated with amateur music-making. But as a form of folk music, it is also a part of popular culture. The term 'popular' is often disputed and Roy Shuker notes that,

> For some is simply means appealing to the people, whereas for others it means something much more grounded in or 'of' the people. The former usage generally refers to commercially produced forms of popular culture, while the latter is reserved for forms of 'folk' popular culture, associated with local community-based production and individual craftspeople (Shuker, 2001: 3).

Given this explanation, *avtorskaya pesnya* lies somewhere between both the 'popular' and the 'folk'. As a style of music, in 1960s and 1970s Soviet Union *avtorskaya pesnya* had a mass appeal, and because of the amateur relationship of the style, it is also grounded in the people.

As well as viewing *avtorskaya pesnya* as part of popular culture, I also theorize it as a type of popular music. As a term, 'popular music' defies any straightforward, specific definition. Richard Middleton comments that the question of what constitutes

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popular music is "so riddled with complexities...that one is tempted to follow the example of the legendary definition of folk song – all songs are folk songs, I never heard horses sing 'em – and suggest that all music is popular music: popular with someone" (Middleton, 1990: 3). Other definitions of popular music argue the importance of commercialization as integral in understanding what popular music is; Robert Burnett notes, "When we speak of popular music we speak of music that is commercially oriented" (Burnett, 1996: 35). Shuker notes that this approach to identifying popular music places emphasis on the 'popular,' and that determining what is construed as popular is quantifiable by commercial charts, radio airplay, and the like (Shuker, 2001: 6). However, the situation of Soviet cultural policies, and the alternate methods of transmitting *avtorskaya pesnya* from one person to another negates any commercial aspect in the 'popularity' of *avtorskaya pesnya*. Although the recordings were often sold on the black market, there is no method in which to measure the products that were produced and sold as opposed to those transferred freely from one person to another.

On the other hand, the popularity of Vysotsky the individual and the proliferation of home-made recordings of his music correspond to the notion of *avtorskaya pesnya* as a type of popular music and part of Soviet popular culture. I do not intend to add any definition to popular music, but instead insist that as a genre of music, *avtorskaya pesnya* fits into the above definitions of popular music, and more specifically as a genre, it is a variety of urban folk music. Therefore, much like Smith's categorization of *avtorskaya pesnya* representing a 'middle ground' genre in the context of Soviet cultural policy, it also serves as a middle ground between both popular and folk music classifications. The term 'folk' I relate primarily to amateur music-making, and as opposed to folk traditions

in Russia that occur in rural or village settings, *avtorskaya pesnya* is primarily a style of music that developed and was performed in large, urban settings. In her study of identity in Russian folk singing, Laura Olson also draws similar connections to folk music and *avtorskaya pesnya*, noting that this genre of music was a part of Russian folklore because it was performed and transmitted by the people, not organized or policed by bureaucrats of the Soviet era (Olson, 2004: 76).

Organizational Outline for Dissertation

This study is developed over the following eight chapters, and includes my research from scholarly and printed literature, data collected from fieldwork, and my interpretations and analysis. In Chapter Two, I provide an overview of literature that I have consulted for this thesis. The works I discuss provide me theoretical and methodological information as a background for my study. The literature, drawn from various disciplines, has helped me form conclusions about the connection of music, culture, and identity. I will focus not only on general musical theories and ideas presented by prior scholars, but will concentrate on scholarly works as they are connected to Russian and Soviet music and culture.

Chapter Three offers contextual and background information on the concept of identity as it relates to the geographical locale of Russia. This information is to provide background to preceding information specifically relating to Vysotsky and his music. In this chapter I discuss the ideas of ethnicity and nationality as it pertains to the construction of Russian identity. I also focus on the concept of the *narod* (the people or the folk), and how the *narod* as an idea has influenced scholarly definitions of what it

means to be 'Russian.' In this chapter, I also confront the issues of identity within the multi-national country of the Soviet Union and draw comparisons between Russia and the Soviet Union. This chapter also investigates the symbolism associated with both Russia and the Soviet Union that help form a sense of identity.

In Chapter Four, I analyze the aesthetic criteria of socialist realism and investigate the manner in which this system was implemented in musical works. With this aim, I analyze musical examples of 'official' Soviet culture, including *massovaya pesnya*, to reveal whether or not this aesthetic system is truly applicable to all musical sounds.

Chapters Five and Six operate jointly, and in both I present examples that demonstrate the complex layers of so-called 'official' and 'unofficial' art in the Soviet Union. Chapter Five focuses on Vysotsky's work as a sanctioned artist in the Soviet Union. This examination includes the discussion of Vysotsky's schooling in acting and how it relates to his musical performances. I also include examples of Vysotsky's work as an actor that contain musical performances in them; my examples draw from theatrical plays and films in which Vysotsky appeared as both actor and musician. In conjunction, Chapter Six discusses the unsanctioned performances of Vysotsky as a musician. In doing this, I present contextual information of dissident activities during the Era of Stagnation, and provide historical information of musical influences in Vysotsky's life.

In Chapter Seven, I present my musical analysis. In this chapter, I use recordings to compare the compositional and performance styles of the three famous *bards* of the 1960s and 1970s, Bulat Okudzhava, Alexandr Galich and Vladimir Vysotsky. I provide biographical information on both Okudzhava and Galich, and in the process of this analysis I pinpoint different musical styles for each of these three *bards*. I will also

provide a more in-depth exploration into Vysotsky's catalogue of songs, and relate his music and musical performances to contextual situations of Soviet life and Russian identity.

Chapter Eight evolves primarily from my fieldwork and observations, and in this chapter I explore the notion of Vladimir Vysotsky as a cultural icon in post-Soviet Russia. I describe the events that occur in memory of Vysotsky, mainly commemorations at Vagan'kovskoye Cemetery. In this chapter I also make connections between the iconic figure of Vysotsky to other symbols of Russian cultural and musical identity with the intent of grounding this person and his work in a specifically Russian identity.

In the conclusion, I revisit the concepts of music and identity as they relate expressly to the music of Vladimir Vysotsky. I explore the complex notion of identity as it relates to this example, and discuss the multi-functional concept of identity as it relates to music as a whole. I suggest possible reasons for the multi-functionalism of identity through the various layers and levels that a culture or society and its people may be perceived. Overall conclusions suggest that various identities, such as political, gender, economic, national, ethnic, and religious are all present within a musical performance or musical example. Some identities are more easily perceived than others, but how one recognizes a specific identity is dependent upon the perspective from which that person is viewing.

CHAPTER 2

SURVEY OF SCHOLARLY LITERATURE

My approach to this research is interdisciplinary; therefore I have used various theoretical methods and ideas as developed in regional studies of Russia and the Soviet Union, ethnomusicology and musicology, and performance studies.   The following chapter is an overview of sources that I consulted for my research. The sources are organized by theme: sources from ethnomusicological studies, publications pertaining to Russian and Soviet history, sources that focus on music in the Soviet Union, and literature centering on *avtorskaya pesnya* and Vladimir Vysotsky.

Sources from Ethnomusicology

I draw on ideas developed by Geertz (1973), Feld (1984), Sumarsam (1995) and Herndon and McLeod (1980) for viewing the cultural study of music in relation to how historic precedence and cultural ideas and symbols help construct identity. Feld's work on the Kaluli culture in Papua New Guinea and expression in song is influential for his combining of Claude Levi-Strauss' structural method and Clifford Geertz's interpretive approach to an ethnographic study of sounds within a cultural system. Feld's work is

more closely aligned with anthropological methods and principles of Kaluli myths, the focus on Kaluli poetics and aesthetics. His approach provides a perspective within a specific cultural context by merging the anthropological study of musical sounds with the study of music from perspectives of the social structure and organization of the Kaluli community. From Feld's study, I developed ideas about 'expression' in song, and in the case of Vysotsky's music, Feld's work provides a perspectives in understanding how Vysotsky's music contains the concept of Russian soul (*dusha*).

Virginia Danielson's study of Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum (1997) has provided me with great insight into approaching the study of a celebrated individual with respect to methodology. Danielson's work is based on a combination of fieldwork and interviews, and perusal of articles, concert announcements, and performance reviews. The author does not include detailed musical analysis; she does concentrate on the impact that social, political and economic situations had on Kulthum's work, and emphasizes the importance of this singer's audience and listeners. Although Kulthum was a well-known individual throughout the Arabic speaking world, Danielson focuses her documentation solely to Egypt; this is analogous to my study of Vysotsky who is famous in Russian speaking communities, but I focus primarily on the confines of Moscow. Danielson approaches her subject by placing Umm Kulthum in her specific economic, cultural, and historical contexts in which the singer lived. This method of viewing an individual within a recent historical time frame through ethnographic research explains issues of popularity and cultural identity.

As a study centering on identity as it relates to music and culture, a primary theoretical model I draw on from the field of ethnomusicology is Merriam's tripartite

model (1964) which details the interrelated connections of musical sounds, concepts and behaviors, and depends on the functionalist notion of how and why music operates within a culture or society. In addition to Merriam's seminal model, I also found Rice's theory (1987) on remodeling ethnomusicological theory to offer meaningful ideas for identifying a variety of musical processes, particularly within historical situations. Both of these models provide a method in which to break down various features of a culture and reassemble them in order analyze cultural identity.

In looking at *avtorskaya pesnya* as a genre of music, I found Slobin's concept of micromusics (1992) to be helpful in understanding the relationship of various categories of music within the Soviet Union, as well as how this genre might be conceived by the population of Russia today. The micromusics concept looks at the various levels at which musical genres or cultures exist within Europe, including Eastern Europe. In this work, Slobin avoids presenting a theoretical model per se, but offers terms to describe genres. His approach includes sociolinguistics methods and proposes terms in the form of schemes, typologies, and headings. This concept is important for looking at musical genres in minute levels of existence ('subcultures') and within a larger cultural structure ('supercultures'); Slobin focuses on the global as well as the local. He takes these various terms and applies them to different case studies. This concept is applicable to my study for the position that *avtorskaya pesnya* now takes within its 'home culture' of Russia, as it was an immensely popular musical genre in the Soviet Union of the 1960s and 1970s and though declining in popularity, it still exists within a smaller realm. Additionally, when comparing different 'official' and 'unofficial' music within the Soviet Union, Slobin's typologies are useful.

Analysis of musical style and thematic content of songs is an important component to my study, and this is done for purposes of exploring an individual's identity through musical sound, as well as lyrical content. In my investigation of song-style analysis I consulted Alan Lomax's *Cantometrics* (1976). Chapter Seven of this dissertation is primarily a comparative analysis of three *bards*, all of whom were prolific at the same time period: Bulat Okudzhava, Alexsandr Galich, and Vladimir Vysotsky. Lomax's study follows samples of folk songs from various cultures, and comparatively analyzes the acoustic sounds such as rhythmic organization and phrase structure. The classifications used for comparison are culturally specific but also unclear, such as 'sweet,' 'reedy,' and 'brassy.' My purposes in referring to *Cantometrics* were not in seeking theoretical principles, but for observing the design and methodology of a study comparing music and song styles. Although Lomax's usage of his cantometrics system was an attempt at cross-cultural analysis, my methods of comparison are not as complicated because my analysis of musical style is purely within one musical genre, and only recordings of three musicians are compared.

Music and Identity

There are numerous publications, both books and journal articles, which confront, describe, and theorize the connections between music and identity. The publication *Musical Identities* (MacDonald et. al., 2002) is a collection of essays that deal with various ways in which music as a 'channel of communication' relates to individual identities. The authors of these essays attempt to answer questions like: what are music identities, who encompasses these identities, and how are they formed and developed?

This is done more through a social psychological perspective than through a musicological approach. However, the essays provide an interesting approach, and of particular note are the essays "The solo performer's identity" by Jane W. Davidson and "National identity and music" by Göran Folkestad.

Davidson's essay narrows the scope of identity to the single performer because she views that "soloists typically are more exposed to performance pressures – they do not have co-performers with whom to collaborate" (Davidson, 2002: 97). Davidson's research explores areas relevant to her study such as role of peers, family, and teachers as outside influences, as well as the role of an individual's motivation and personality as factors in their identity as a musician. This information is coupled with Davidson's own experience as a performer resulting in a reflexive view of how an individual's identity is constructed in consideration of both internal and external changes. Such an approach offers a method in which to narrow the focus of identity to an individual.

Instead of focusing on the individual, Folkestad's article investigates national identity in connection to music, primarily from the perspective of music education. Folkestad offers a survey of previous studies relating to national, ethnic, and cultural identities, but primarily focuses on how the use of folk song, such as Kodaly's use of elements from Hungarian folk music, has played an integral part in forming national identity at a young age. He views national identity as a political concept, and suggests that recent movements of multicultural music education may result in less nationally-based identities and instead create more 'cultural' identities (Folkestad, 2002: 160). These Davidson and Folkestad's essays present an interdisciplinary method of viewing music and identity, particularly with perspectives found within music education. In the

case of Folkestad's views of nationalism and enculturation, it parallels how some songs were used in the Soviet Union to indoctrinate the masses.

An influential book in the study of music and identity is *Ethnicity, Identity and Music* edited by Martin Stokes (1994). The essays in this collection are wide-ranging dealing with topics concerning the relationship between ethnicity, identity and the nation-state, performance and place, hybridity and difference, and gender and identity. For purposes of this thesis, the essays that focus on the connection between music and state policy in the creation of national identity are of chief importance.

A notable essay from this book include John Baily's "The role of music in the creation of an Afghan national identity, 1923-73." This essay demonstrates the significant role music played in expressing and creating an Afghan national identity, and addresses the function of music as a means to give people a sense of identity. In his essay, Baily describes various genres and regional styles of Afghani music, and details how music played a role in expressing and creating an Afghan national identity. Baily also recounts the political changes within the country and noted that music development had stagnated to political upheaval within Afghanistan.

In addition to Baily's essay, Zdzislaw Mach's article provides a case study of a historical music figure used for purposes of national identity. "National Anthems: the case of Chopin as a national composer" describes how this individual was utilized by Communist party ideologists and propagandists to display a notably 'Polish folk culture.' Mach focuses on the symbolic meaning of music within a nation, and the music of Frederic Chopin, a hero of Polish romanticism. Chopin's music, which had roots in Polish folk culture, was used by the communist regime in the twentieth-century as

anthems for the Polish nation after contemporary composers could not sufficiently write 'socialist' music to rival Chopin (Mach, 1997: 68). Mach focuses on Chopin as the individual, and specifically his connection to the nation-state through music and reception of his persona by the masses. Thus, Mach demonstrates Chopin as a nationalist composer in Poland. Like Danielson, Mach's article provides a method of focusing on an individual to represent the cultural identity of many. Although I focus on identity as it relates specifically to Vysotsky, it is important to note that his songs represent the lives and experiences of many people within the former Soviet Union and Russia.

Another work on identity is *Identity and Everyday Life* by Berger and Del Negro (2004). I found Berger and Del Negro's theoretical approach to the study of music and identity to be very helpful in forming my own conclusions about how music, as an expressive art form, helps to construct and affirm identity. The authors of this study center on the place of music in 'everyday life,' which is best understood as an "interpretive framework defined in dialectical opposition to notion of special events" (Berger and Del Negro, 2004: 6). This notion of 'everyday life' I find applicable to my research with regard to the content of Vysotsky's songs as a reflection of everyday life, and with the exception of occasional concert performances, most individuals listened to his recordings, thereby making his music part of the everyday Soviet citizen's soundscape.

Berger and Del Negro theorize a great deal on the concept of identity in musical performance, and recognize that a performance context helps determine identity. This is done by analysis of a musician or participant's reflexive interpretation of his or her onstage performance. Interpretations of identities on display are made through the

interactive process between 'performer' and 'observer.' Additionally, Berger and Del Negro theorize that more that one identity of a performer may be present within a performance, and in that instance they are organized in a foreground/background structure.

A work pertinent to identity studies that focuses specifically on Russia is Laura J. Olson's *Performing Russia* (2004). Olson's view of identity within Russian musical performance is situated primarily within vocal folk music traditions, and attempts to address questions by studying both historical and contemporary context of how Russian folk music has been produced. This is done through situations of population migration from rural to urban areas, as well as the political contexts of transitioning from Soviet to post-Soviet eras in Russian culture. However, as a study involved with music, Olson does not concern her investigation of music and identity with much focus on specific musical sounds, and there is an absence of musical notation in her work. However, she does admit that her inquiry is not concerned as much with a written score, but how 'these sounds are situated in people's lives' (Olson, 2004: 13).

Each of the above studies on the relationship between music and identity offer insight into previous methods and theories, as well as proposing additional theories and concepts. Mach, Baily and Folkestad's work on national identity vary greatly, with Folkestad focusing on enculturation of national identity, Baily noting regional variations within a country as a means to create national identity, and Mach singling out how an individual is used by a governing body for that purpose. I am particularly drawn to Folkestad's argument of a 'cultural identity' due to multi-nation state of the Soviet Union. In discussing music of that period, such views examine the difference between

what is construed as 'national,' or 'cultural.' Additionally, I agree with many of the concepts presented in Berger and Del Negro's approach. However, I view the display of multiple identities not as foreground/background divide, but as concentric circles which are constantly fluctuating, and the outer-most circle representing the 'foreground' identity.

Russian and Soviet Histories

Because parts of this study are placed within the social and cultural context of the recent past, it is important to consult books that explore both Russian and Soviet history. There is a wealth of information relating to various subjects, though for my purposes I have attempted to narrow sources to those pertaining specifically to the time periods relevant to this research. In other instances I have consulted specific works that delve into issues of Russian nationalism, identity, and other significant cultural issues that are relevant.

Overall, my research assumes a stance that music expresses identity in a multi-functional capacity, and because I am focusing on what may be construed as 'Russian' within *avtorskaya pesnya* it is important to address matters relating to ethnicity, nationalism, and national identity. Therefore, the works on nationalism by (1983) and Smith (1998) are valuable in understanding the rise of nation-states and nationalistic movements. In addition, Hobsbawn and Ranger's work in *The Invention of Tradition* (1992) is useful for notions of certain rituals and symbols that have origins more recent than their 'histories' entail. The essays in *The Invention of Tradition* primarily focus on the creation of national or imperial traditions, such as Hugh Trevor-Roper's discussion of

the tartan in the Scottish national movement. The essays demonstrate how symbols and ideas develop into part of cultural and national identity. Drawing from these studies, I focus on Vysotsky's music as symbolic communication, specifically how his music can reflect both a national and cultural identity. Additionally, I view different symbols of Russian culture, both musical and non-musical, as invented traditions. However, through use of these symbols and the manner with which they are integrated into the culture over a period of time, I believe that they become components of Russia's cultural identity.

I also draw on the concept of nationalism discussed in Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1991). In Anderson's work, the author views the dissemination of nationalism through the printing press following the rise of print media and literacy as a means of creating national identity. In my view in the study of *avtorskaya pesnya*, I replace the printed page and literacy with the *magnitizdat* method of transferring *avtorskaya pesnya* recordings, which created a community of people who listened to Vysotsky's music, and thereby construct an identity that functions socially.

There are abundant publications dedicated to both Russian and Soviet histories. James Billington's *Icon and the Axe* (1970) is an interpretive study and makes connections to areas of Russian literature, music, and painting. Billington's sweep of Russian history and culture is taken from the era of Kievan times to the post-Khrushchev era. Particularly of interest to my study are the cultural ties Billington makes with the artist creations and Russian intellectual thought. He views artists, such as the composer Modest Mussorgsky and author Fyodor Dostoevsky, as products of philosophical views of their time and interprets the messages found in their works (Billington, 1970: 417-18). He often compares artists and their work in reflection of intellectual thoughts and trends

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found throughout Russian history, such as in the case with composer Alexander Scriabin and author Boris Pasternak.

Peter Kenez's *A History of the Soviet Union from Beginning to End* (1999) was helpful as a concise but factual summary in the history of the Soviet Union, and Ronald Grigor Suny's *The Soviet Experiment* (1997) was helpful in understanding the complexities of the Soviet Union's achievements and shortcomings. Orlando Figes' *Natasha's Dance* (2002) offers a cultural history of Russia and the Soviet Union, and the author traces cultural influences and trends in Russian history beginning with the reign of Peter I through the first half of the 20th century. He explores visual art, architecture, politics, but primarily focuses on music, dramatic arts, and literature. Much like Billington, Figes offers an interpretive view of Russian cultural history.

In Rancour-Lafferiere's account of 'moral masochism' in Russian culture, he provides historical and cultural narratives on the masochist element, which he feels is pervasive within Russian culture. He defines the element of moral masochism as "any behavioral act, verbalization, or fantasy that – by unconscious design, is physically or psychologically injurious to oneself, self-defeating, humiliating, or unduly self-sacrificing" (Rancour-Lafferiere, 1995: 7). There are some points that Rancour-Laffeiere posits with which I do not subscribe such as Russian culture as uniquely masochistic. Instead I consulted his descriptions of Russian culture which provide specific cultural patterns into what one may gleam as a 'cult of suffering.' Viewing these patterns provided me a method in which to notice other patterns in Russian culture, and a means to interpret Russian cultural identity.

In addition to Rancour-Lafferiere's work on the masochism in Russian culture, I found his work on identity in Russia to be informative. Rancour-Lafferiere's *Imagining Russia* (2000) provides a look at identity and ethnicity particularly from a psychoanalytical point of view. In this study, the author covers a large historic time frame and questions the issues of identity as related to nationalism, explores geographical relationships in the construction of Russian identity, and addresses issues of xenophobia. In addition to Rancour-Lafferriere, I also consulted James Billington's work on Russia and identity in *Russia's Search for Itself* (2004). In this exploration, Billington traces issues of Russian identity beginning in the nineteenth century to post-Soviet era Russia. A reoccurring theme that Billington uses is related to the Russian *matroyshka* doll, the nesting doll that has become a symbol of Russian culture. Billington uses this symbol to represent different 'faces' in Russia's search for identity in the post-Soviet era. Based on Billington, I also use this symbol to explain the representation of multiple identities of Vysotsky and his music.

In addition to the above historiographies, there are other sources that are particularly helpful in my research as it pertains to Russian identity. One such publication is Elena Hellberg-Hirn's *Soil and Soul: the Symbolic World of Russianness* (1998), a collection of essays designed to discern the ideas, images, and myths surrounding national self-consciousness in the Russian Empire until 1917. As a native Russian, Hellberg-Hirn presents various symbols and stereotypes of Russianness as a 'mind-map' that helps to construct a Russian identity. She presents the information in chronological order and dispels myths and ideas, similar to invented traditions, which are deeply embedded in Russian culture. Although the author focuses a great deal on pre-

Soviet Russia, she does make connections and references to how the symbols, myths, and ideas have carried on into the Soviet and even post-Soviet era.

Dale Pesmen's ethnographic account of the 'soul' (*dusha*) in Russian culture provides fascinating information about the concept of *dusha*, her primary field site being the southwestern Siberian town of Omsk. Pesmen gathered her information through interviews in everyday places like markets, buses, and apartments, and also recognizes certain practices like social drinking as 'soul-making' events. Pesmen also confronts the complexities of the notion of *dusha* in Russian culture in terms of how her informants view it with consideration to everyday life, as well as conceiving deeper philosophical and spiritual meanings of *dusha*. Along with Pesmen's work, the article written by Anna Wierzbicka, "Soul and Mind" (1989), provides valuable information and ideas concerning the linguistic view of 'soul' and *dusha* within different cultures. These three investigations provided my study with specific, but useful information tied to concepts of symbolism that I explore in more detail in following chapters.

In general, I find the interpretative views of Russian and Soviet history to be valuable tools for approaching my own study as a method for interpreting my own information collected from fieldwork. Billington's account is an idiosyncratic and personal interpretation of Russian history and culture, and though its focus is primarily on history and culture of the Russian elite, his work offers a detailed interpretation to culture as an outsider. Dale Pesmen's work on *dusha* provides a wealth of ideas and thoughts regarding how individuals perceive *dusha* within Russia, a concept I discovered in my own field work. Although her findings do not result in any strong conclusions as to the

exact role of *dusha* within Russian culture, it supports many of my own findings related to Vysotsky and his music.

Popular Music and the Soviet Union

In the past ten to fifteen years, there have been various publications concerning popular culture within the former Soviet Union, some even focus more specifically on popular music in the Soviet Union, post-Soviet Russia, or former Eastern Bloc countries. Richard Stite's *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society since 1900* (1992) offers a survey of various musical and stage genres, as well as actors and musicians who were part of popular entertainment in twentieth-century Russia. In addition to general popular music studies such as Frith (1991) and Shuker (2001), there have also been publications that center on popular music genres within Russia and the former Soviet Union. These books include Timothy Ryback's *Rock Around the Bloc* (1990), Sabrina Petra Ramet's *Rocking the State* (1994), and Artemy Troitsky's *Back in the USSR* (1988). Troitsky's book is a first-hand account by a music critic and concert promoter of the rock and popular music scene within the Soviet Union. Through interviews with musicians and fans, the author reveals the availability of such music despite censorship. He traces the development of the music from imitations of Western-styled rock music, to musicians creating their own sounds and writing lyrics based on their cultural situations in the Soviet Union.

Rocking the State is a collection of essays concerning various 'rock scenes' in the western USSR and Eastern Europe, and the authors have a tendency to contend that rock music played a role in the fall of communism. While the relationship between rock

music and politics may not be extremely critical to the fall of communism of this region of the world, it may be viewed as an important cultural catalyst for artists to express their views through music and lyrics. The authors of these essays analyze the lyrics to demonstrate the oppositional nature to communism within Eastern Europe; however they do not address the issues of audience reception to this dissident music, and therefore the level to which this music influenced the fall of communism is not fully revealed.

Each of the above publications mentions the genre of *avtorskaya pesnya*, in the case of Stites' work, *avtorskaya pesnya* and Vladimir Vysotsky are viewed as important elements of Soviet popular culture, and Troitsky's discussion of Vysotsky equates his songs and popularity on the same level as many rock musicians with regards to censorship as 'no formal ban, but no official support' (Troitsky, 1988: 63).

Another book that provided a great deal of information about Soviet popular song is *Red Stars* by David MacFadyen (2001). In his work, MacFadyen details the lives of seven singers, such as singer Alla Pugacheva, whose songs were widely disseminated throughout the Soviet Union, and in effect had profound social significance on the populace of the country. The author provides biographical information on each of the individuals and demonstrates how these individuals became famous within the context of Soviet culture. MacFadyen considers issues of national identity, gender, and development of the individual celebrity within a socialist state, and also confronts the concerns of artist self-expression with regard to the cultural politics in the Soviet Union. MacFadyen's work represents an area of Soviet popular culture which has not yet been examined in detail. However, the author's perspective are not from the musicological perspective as he does not address musical sounds specifically but focuses more on the

sociological and cultural impact of these performers. For purposes of comparison, this work is important in contrasting the careers of musicians who were sanctioned by Soviet officials, as opposed to the *bards* who were not. The subject matter of lyrics was the primarily reason these performers were sanctioned by the government, though MacFadyen does point out controversies in the history of some sanctioned performers.

Another book that provided information about the musical culture of the former Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia is Thomas Cushman's *Notes from Underground* (1995). Cushman's work is more connected to sociological perspectives, but offers interesting insight into issues surrounding the rock music counterculture in Russia by exploring the "unique paradoxes and ironies facing rock culture during the transition to a market economy" (Cushman, 1995: xiv). Cushman's study is based on interviews with well-known musicians, such as Boris Grebenshikov, who offer insight into the cultural and sociological aspects of the Leningrad rock music scene. Although the author's theoretical discussions prove to be quite dense, the information revealed through the interviews is helpful in understanding the social position of rock musicians within their cultural context. Interviews include personal anecdotes of musicians, the methods of obtaining recordings from the West, which Western artists influenced their own music, and the circumstances of their own public performances.

There is also a great deal of literature addressing the situation of art music within the cultural and political climate of the Soviet Union. Boris Schwarz's *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia, 1917-1970* (1983) chronicles art music and composers within the Soviet Union, and is full of facts and details about concert performances and careers of composers and musicians. In this book there is not much in the way of

commentary on the subject of sociopolitical history, and there is no considerable analysis of the relationships of music, politics, and culture; however, it serves as a good record of events specifically concerning art music within the Soviet Union and touches on some issues of Soviet cultural policy. A work that represents a much more substantial analysis of Russian musical culture is Richard Taruskin's *Defining Russia Musically* (1997). In a compilation of essays spanning the eighteenth-century Lvov-Pratsch collection of Russian folk songs to Dmitri Shostakovich in the 1930s, Taruskin's hermeneutical approach is to address and understand the myth of musical 'Russianness' through the culture and those who composed the music. Because Taruskin's study focuses primarily on classical music traditions, I do not draw ideas about Russianness as viewed through his examples. However, he does offer insight in the construction of Russianness through the composers that he addresses.   My reasons for consulting books on Soviet art music are for their discussions of Soviet cultural policies, and comparisons of 'official' and 'unofficial' music.

In addition to these sources, I also consulted other books and articles pertaining to a variety of both art and folk music in the former Soviet Union and Russia. This includes Timofeyev's dissertation of the Russian seven-stringed guitar (1999), and Susannah Lockwood Smith's dissertation on Soviet cultural policy with regard to a folk music choir. Other sources include Krader (1990), Djumaev (1993), Levin (1996), Zemtsovsky (1990, 2002) and Daughtry (2003). In Timofeyev's dissertation of the Russian seven-string guitar, he focuses on the nineteenth-century tradition connected to this instrument, but many of the above mentioned works provide insight into the connection between

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music and cultural policy, plus they reveal previous studies conducted in connection to Soviet-era and Russian music.

The various studies of popular music in Russia offer great insight into different styles and genres, and in the case of MacFadyen and Cushman's works, they focus on individual performers as a means of demonstrating the cultural policies of the Soviet Union. However, many studies, such as Ryback and Ramet, focus more on issues of politics than the role of music in everyday life. Political concerns are important within the context of the Soviet Union, but as a means to demonstrate the multiple functions found in Vysotsky's music, I avoid interpretations that deal strictly with the political context of communism.

Current Literature on *Avtorskaya Pesnya* and Vladimir Vysotsky

To date there is not a great deal of research which has been conducted on *avtorskaya pesnya* or Vladimir Vysotsky. In addition to the few scholarly publications concerning this genre of music, there are no exhaustive musicological studies of *avtorskaya pesnya* yet published. The only publication of a musicological nature is a collection of transcriptions of selected Okudzhava songs published by Vladimir Frumkin. This publication contains primarily transcriptions by Frumkin with a few notes as to the performance and compositional style of Okudzhava's songs. Even though scholarly studies are scant, there is a wealth of literature pertaining to this individual which bears mentioning.

As stated in the previous chapter, Gerald Stanton Smith's *Songs to Seven Strings* (1984) is the first major scholarly work to address the grass-roots movements of

avtorskaya pesnya in Russia. His investigation provides ample detail on three prominent figures within the genre: Okudzhava, Vysotsky and Galich. Smith provides biographical detail, as well as discussion of the poetic elements of the lyrics and types of songs written and performed by each *bard*. In general, his overview of these three individuals and their respective work is done so in a comparative manner. Despite dedicating a great deal of his book to the *bards*, Smith also provides a glimpse at the official mass song genre (*massovaya pesnya*) that conformed to state ideology. This is used as a point of comparison – *massovaya pesnya* as official culture, and *avtorskaya pesnya* as maintaining a dubious status with regard to cultural policies. For all the information present in Smith's chronicle, it does not treat the musical sounds as an important component of the songs. Smith's chief concern is analysis of literary themes of the poetry and his analyses are restricted to linguistic observations.

Similar to Smith's coverage of the three prominent *bards* is Hélène Blanc's *Les Auteurs du printemps russe* (1991). In this Swiss publication, Blanc explores the works of Okudzhava, Galich, and Vysotsky much in the manner of Smith. She analyzes the lyrics of their songs, describes the political climate in the USSR, and offers commentary about the *bards* in relation to life and politics in the Soviet Union. Her work includes excerpts of poems by each of the *bards* she discusses, analyzing the texts in detail. Complete poems appear in the original Russian, as well as in French translation.

One study that concentrates only on Vladimir Vysotsky is a masters thesis by Boris Max Vainer (1986). This study, like many others, obscures the musical dimensions, and focuses on *avtorskaya pesnya* as a literary genre. Vainer presents similar introductory information found in Smith's book, but adds personal views as a

cultural insider and as an individual listening to *bards* for over fifteen years (Vainer, 1986: 15). Vainer portrays Vysotsky as an artist with a tenuous position in official Soviet culture because his lyrics often touched on taboo subjects. The author does this through symbolic connections: the guitar representing a symbol of social protest, and drawing a parallel between Vysotsky and the *skomorokhi*, wandering minstrels banished by the Orthodox Church.

There have been a few articles specifically about Vysotsky or *avtorskaya pesnya* published in journals; both Allen (1971) and Lazarski (1992) have articles pertaining specifically to Russian and Eastern European studies. Both articles serve as introductions to Vysotsky's work as actor and musician, but also focus on the issues of censorship surrounding *avtorskaya pesnya*. Other articles that I consulted include short exposes published in literary journals such as those written by Fyodorov (1988), Latynina (2001), and in some instances I have consulted publications focusing on Soviet theater and film such as Beumers (1997), Gershkovich (1988), and Taubman (1993). Even though these sources are not strictly about Vysotsky and musical aspects of his career, they do provide information about the literary element of his *avtorskaya pesnya,* as well as accounts of his performance activities which at times included musical performances. In general, these publications offer information on cultural context and glimpses into the experiences of Soviet artists.

There are a large number of publications that serve as compilations of Vysotsky's poetry, both in the original Russian and translated into English. *Pesni i stikhi* (1981) is a two volume collection of Vysotsky's poetry in Russian and Nathan Mer's publication *Vladimir Vysotsky: Songs & Poems* (1991) is an assemblage of Vysotsky's poems

translated by Mer. There are also English translations of some poems available in journal articles such as Allen (1971) and Fyodorov (1988); other English translations are available on various internet websites dedicated to Vysotsky. A large number of books that contain Vysotsky's poetry have been published in Russia, most serve as anthologies of his work, though some occasionally include additional information such as anecdotes about Vysotsky by friends and acquaintances. *Koni priveredlivii* (2000) and *Ya ne lyublyu* (2000) both include anecdotes and recollections of Vysotsky in addition to his lyrics, and *Na bol'shom karetnom* (2003) includes a section of song transcriptions with melodies and guitar tablature.

Along with collections of Vysotsky's poetry, there are also numerous books about Vysotsky's life and work, many of which chronicle his private life and public persona. Some of these books include Vsevolod Khanchin's *Nocil on sovest' blizko k cerdtsu* (1997), David Karapetyan's *Vladimir Vysotsky: Mezhdu slovom i clavoi* (2002). A rare publication about Vysotsky that has been translated into English from Russian is *Vladimir Vysotsky: Hamlet with a Guitar*, compiled by Yuri Andreyev and Iosif Boguslavsky (1990). This book, a collection of articles written by family and friends, give insight into the *bard* as a human being rather than as an iconic actor/musician. Articles featured in this book include recollections by close relatives, friends and acquaintances, and this volume also includes biographical information and a compilation of poetry in English. In fact, all of the biographical publications offer understanding not only of Vysotsky's life story as compiled by these individuals, but also provides insight into the time period in which Vysotsky lived.

It is important to note that many of the publications about Vysotsky are not considered by many as 'scholarly' in the traditional sense and instead represent a journalistic style of writing. However, these publications are important in offering information, perceptions, and memories of an individual from a specific culture, time, and place. Because my research is fixed predominantly within the recent past, and focuses on the music and poetry of a man who can no longer speak for himself, I rely on publications to provide a depiction of Vladimir Vysotsky within his historical context. In my focus of musical identity, I am more concerned with aspects of audience reception, therefore the information from interviews was gathered by individuals who did not know Vysotsky personally, but through listening to his songs and playing his music identify with him and feel a strong connection. To date, there is no literature published concerning the reception of *avtorskaya pesnya*.

Conclusion

The literature I have consulted and surveyed for this dissertation, both historical and musicological, has allowed me to approach the study of *avtorskaya pesnya* within its cultural context, as well as understand areas that have not yet been addressed. With Smith's and Blanc's lyrical analysis, and other publications which position Vysotsky and *avtorskaya pesnya* in a political context, it is important to note that even though other authors have mentioned sounds associated with the music, none have treated the music with any comprehensive analysis. My analysis which appears in this study is not explicitly comprehensive, but a move towards the investigation of musical sounds found in this genre.

It is my hope that this study will offer to the field not only a means in which to view the relationships of music and identity, but also provide enlightening discussion into the musical sounds and aesthetics of this genre. Although Smith described the music of *avtorskaya pesnya* as 'primitive' and many individuals I interviewed often mentioned that the music is not the important factor, it is a significant feature that singing with instrumental accompaniment was the chosen method for *bards* to transmit their poetry.

CHAPTER 3

RUSSIAN IDENTITY AND SYMBOLISM

It is important to explore the concepts of 'Russia' and being 'Russian' in order to understand how music can represent 'Russianness.' Some theorists often interchange the terms 'nationality,' and 'ethnicity,' and meanings that theorists ascribe to those terms complicate what they signify. By understanding how nationality and ethnicity were perceived in pre-Soviet Russia and the Soviet Union we may better comprehend the concept of identity as it relates to this geographic region, and subsequently Russian culture and music.

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate various ideas of nationalism and ethnicity within the contexts of Russia and the Soviet Union. Additionally, I also explore associated musical and non-musical symbols, items that are physical and psychological. These symbols, I believe, are one part of the framework that creates identity particularly

on a large scale such as the nation-state. Much can be said about theories of ethnicity and nationalism within the contexts of culture, and I merely provide an overview of the topic.

Ethnicity, Nationality and Its Role in Russia

a. Ethnicity

The definitions of 'ethnicity' and 'nationality' contain much crossover meaning. One might say that a person cannot have one without the other; ethnicity is a vital element of nationality, and similarly nationality can also be a factor in an individual's ethnicity. Therefore the concepts of 'ethnicity,' 'nationality,' and even 'race' subsequently, have been popularly understood as 'descent and culture communities' (Fenton and May, 2002: 2). Because I focus on the 'Russian' identity of *avtorskaya pesnya* and Vladimir Vysotsky, and how this identity functions within musical performance and reception, it is important to explore how my usage of the term 'Russian' is positioned in connection to nationality and ethnicity. For the sake of clarity, I use the term 'ethnicity' to denote having common cultural traditions, and origin by birth or descent rather than nationality. Moreover, I view a definition of 'nationality' as indicating a status of belonging to a specific nation in connection to a political nation-state.

From a brief look at the history of the term 'ethnicity,' it is apparent that this word has evolved into numerous meanings. Ethnicity as a term has its roots in the Greek term *ethnos/ethnikos*, which was commonly used to describe pagans (non-Hellenic), and later non-Jewish or non-Christians (Malešević, 2004: 1). In a manner of speaking, the word 'ethnicity' was coined to demarcate a sense of cultural difference including Max Weber's

definition as "those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common

descent" (Weber, 1978 vol. I: 389). But over time, and particularly within the post-

colonial context, the meaning and usage of 'ethnicity' has become more confusing in

relation to questions of 'race' and 'culture.' Along with the old definition of ethnicity,

based on descent or territory, definitions encompassing 'immigrant minorities' and

'diasporas' were also used in discussing ethnicity (Malešević, 2004: 1). This includes the

use of 'ethnic conflict' to describe the wars in the former Yugoslavia, and additionally

the term 'ethnicity' has occasionally been used to refer to non-citizens who dwell in 'our

land.' (Malešević, 2).

As the concept of ethnicity has evolved other time, other factors such as

minorities, race, and class have become determinants in the definition of ethnicity.

Thomas H. Eriksen notes that this term is often used to refer to 'ethnic minority.'

Although the discourse surrounding ethnicity tends to focus on subnational groups, or

minorities of some type, Eriksen remarks that majority and dominant groups are no less

'ethnic' than minority groups (Eriksen, 1996: 28). In consideration of Eriksen's point

about dominant groups and Russian ethnicity, I would disregard the application of

minority to any definition of ethnicity because in the case of the Soviet Union, Russians

were the dominant group, and like all other groups, embodied ethnicity.

Paul R. Brass notes that ethnicity is 'a sense of ethnic identity,' and that an ethnic

group relies on cultural symbols as a self-conscious means to establish criteria for

inclusion into and exclusion from the group (Brass, 1996: 85-86). Additionally, ethnicity

can also involve a claim to status and recognition, and thereby result in the notion of a

'class' distinction. As such, class becomes an important component within the political

system, a group identified by class may control a piece of territory, or demand a country of their own with full sovereignty (Brass, 86). This relationship of ethnicity to class is particularly associated with early stages of modernization and nation-building. However, as an ethnic group uses cultural symbols as a means to represent the group, this association of class and ethnicity allows for cultural symbols to be later used as national symbols.

From the perspective of social constructionism, theories and definitions of ethnicity are constantly evolving, and depend on the context in which the definition is used. In an article about the construction of ethnicity Joane Nagel states:

> ethnicity is constructed out of the material of language, religion, culture, appearance, or regionality. The location and meaning of particular ethnic boundaries are continuously negotiated, revised, and revitalized, both by ethnic group members themselves as well as by outside observances (Nagel, 1994: 153).

The boundaries from one ethnic collective or group to another are created with recognition of differences with those other groups – be it a difference of language, religion, culture or appearance. In some cultures, such as the case of the United States, ethnicity is commonly viewed in biological terms.

Nagel also notes the mutability of ethnicity in everyday life, and that an individual's ethnic identity is an amalgam of the view one has on oneself, in addition to positions held by others regarding one's ethnic identity. As this individual moves through everyday life, his or her identity may change in accordance to different situations and people encountered throughout the day (Nagel, 1994: 154). In this respect Nagel defines ethnic identity as a "result of a dialectical process involving internal and external opinions and processes, as well as the individual's self-identification and outsiders'

ethnic designations – i.e., what *you* think your ethnicity is, versus what *they* think your ethnicity is" (Nagel, 154). The example of ethnic identification that Nagel points out is drawn from U.S. ethnic communities, the various levels of identity available to Native Americans: *subtribal* (clan, lineage, tradition), *tribal* (ethnographic or linguistic, reservation-based, official), *regional* (Oklahoma, California, Alaska), *supratribal* or *pan-Indian* (Native American, American Indian) (Nagel, 1994: 155).

In an example pertinent to this study, an individual may be a *russkii* or *russkaya* (male or female 'Russian'), have a regional identity, or what I would term as a *sub-Russian* ethnicity (for example a Chechen, Russian Tatar, or Volga German). A person who might be identified as Chechen, Tatar, etc., may by some not be considered as an ethnic Russian, but also may not consider themselves to be Russian. However, as an example of the flexibility of ethnicity, an outsider to Russian culture might construe an individual living within the country of Russia, speaking the Russian language as 'Russian.' During my time in Moscow, I often met many individuals who lived in the city and spoke the Russian language, but oftentimes would identify themselves as Azerbaijani, Georgian, or Ukrainian. This suggests that some years after the end of the Soviet Union, there are still many connections to the former republics. Additionally, the individuals who identified themselves as a non-Russian ethnicity would seem to place importance on where they are from as a means to construct their ethnic identity.

To mark language as an element of ethnicity, Russian language does owe much to its beginnings in the Church Slavonic language, thereby connecting aspects of Russian ethnicity and identity to Orthodox roots. Although at one time, being Orthodox linked one to 'being Russian,' that is not always the case in the present day. Nagel's notion of

'mutability' confronts the over-generalized notions of similarity and difference, or essentialism. A perspective of an essentialist model of Russian ethnicity would suggest that there is one clear, genuine set of characteristics that all Russians personify and that do not change through time. However, this is far from the truth. For example, Orthodoxy had been the primary method to represent Russian identity or ethnicity, but in the years after the rule of Peter I, religious or Orthodox identity was no longer a dominant characteristic to indicate one's 'Russianness' (Franklin, 2004: 102).

b. Nationality/Nationalism

Nationality as an indicator of identity relies on its connection to the formation of the modern state, and all modernist theories surrounding nationalism are focused on the emergence, creation, or development of nations within the formation of modern states. Most ideas conclude that nationalism was a modern phenomenon dating at the earliest to the late eighteenth century (see Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1990; Anderson, 1991; and Breuilly, 1994).[4] Ernest Gellner defines nationalism as:

> primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent…Nationalism as a *sentiment,* or as a movement, can best be defined in terms of this principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment. A nationalist *movement* is one actuated by sentiment of this kind (Gellner 1983, 1).

In addition, Gellner views nationalism as a "theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones" (Gellner, 1). Therefore, the

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[4] The term 'nation-state' is also commonly used in academic discourse, and much like 'ethnicity' and 'nationality,' the term 'nation' and 'state' have also been used interchangeably.

way Gellner uses the term nationalism, as is also used by other social scientists, refers to a distinctive link between ethnicity and the state. [5]

John Breuilly's definition of nationalism is similar to that espoused by Gellner as referring to "political movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such action with nationalist arguments" (Breuilly, 1994: 2). Breuilly's criteria for nationalism is conveyed as a 'political doctrine' including the existence of a nation with 'explicit and peculiar character,' interests and values connected to the nation that take precedence over all other interests and values, and that a nation is as independent as possible by attaining political sovereignty (Breuilly, 1994: 2).[6] In an effort to avoid being too vague and all-inclusive, Breuilly relies strictly on modernist thinking as to what constitutes nationalism.

E.J. Hobsbawm's definition of nationalism is aligned with Gellner's idea that political and national entities must be corresponding in character, but also adds to this definition. Hobsbawm does not regard the nation as a static social entity, but that it is only a social entity in connection to some type of modern territorial state, and notes that "nations do not make states and nationalisms but the other way round" (Hobsbawm, 1990: 10). Hobsbawm also adds that nations exist not only as functions of a territorial state, but also in 'aspiration' to establish one (unlike Breuilly's claim), and that nations are a 'dual phenomenon,' – they are constructed from above but cannot be understood unless analyzed from below. This 'view from below' reveals how the nation is viewed and nationality demonstrated not by governments, spokesmen and activists, but how ordinary people experience the actions from those above (Hobsbawm, 10-11).

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[5] It is important to note that there are various debates and criticisms surrounding Gellner's theories of nations and nationalism. (See Smith, 1998).
[6] Breuilly excludes from his definition political movements and struggles for independence that are based on universal principles; the example he provides is the creation of the United States of America whose leaders made few claims to a distinct cultural identity to justify claims to equality (see Breuilly, 1994).

However, Benedict Anderson's view of nationalism as 'an imagined political community' does not focus as much on the political aspects of nationalism but on the perseverance of national identity and feelings that individuals carry with them, thereby offering a postmodern reading of nationalism (Anderson, 1991: 3). By 'imagined,' Anderson does not indicate something that is artificial, but that nations are communities in which people experience a connection with other members of that nation even if they do not come into physical contact with one another. Anderson's definition allows for linguistic or ethnic groups that do not have their own territory (nation) or economic existence, but desire to consider themselves as a 'nation.' Therefore, this definition emphasizes that national identity is not just based on territory or economics, but also psychological; individuals identify themselves with a national group that makes those national collectives tangible. In this respect, *avtorskaya pesnya* operated as a type of alternative nationalism within the Soviet Union. Because the genre was not actively promoted by the state, it created a sense of national unity based on the informal networks of circulating music. The music created connections amongst a large group of people who all could identify and connect to the lyrics of the songs.

In his study of nationalism, Anthony D. Smith confronts the various theories articulated by Gellner, Breuilly, and Anderson, and postulates his own thoughts on the concept. Smith's conception of nationalism lies within ethnicity. He states, "…ethnicity, like history, is crucial to an adequate understanding of nationalism" (Smith, 1998: 45). Central to this focus on ethnicity concerns a nation's politically or culturally dominant ethnic group. Smith maintains:

> Though most latter-day nations are, in fact, polyethnic, many have been
> formed in the first place around a *dominant ethnie*, which attracted other

ethnies or ethnic fragments into the state to which it gave a name and cultural character. For, since *ethnies* are by definition associated with a given territory, not infrequently a chosen people with a particular sacred land, the presumed boundaries of the nation are largely determined by the myths and memories of the dominant *ethnie*, which include the foundation charter, the myth of the gold age and the associated territorial claims, or ethnic title-deeds (Smith, 1991: 39).

For example, within the multi-ethnic nation that was the Soviet Union, Russian was the dominant ethnicity. In addition, in the multi-ethnic Russian empire that existed prior to the Soviet Union, Russian was also the principal ethnic group. It is important to note that the current Russian Federation still exists as a multi-ethnic country[7]. As a result of political history, there are those who might identify themselves as ethnically 'Russian' but no longer live within the Russian Federation. Daniel Rancour-Laferierre noted that when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, approximately 25 million people who identified themselves as ethnic Russians were living outside of Russia in culturally diverse places like Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Lithuania, Georgia and Armenia (Rancour-Laferriere, 2000: 27). This figure does not include numerous Russian émigrés living abroad in the United States, Canada, Israel, France and Germany among other countries.

Smith also views *historical ethno-symbolism* as an important component for the understanding of nations and nationalism. This concept emerges from theoretical critiques of the modernist (i.e. strictly political and territorial) views of nationalism. For this notion, Smith believes that what gives nationalism its power includes myths, memories, traditions and symbols of ethnic heritages, and the methods in which a popular *living past* has been, and can be rediscovered and reinterpreted (Smith, 1999: 9). Smith

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[7] According to a 2002 census, 79.8% were identified as Russian, 3.8% Tatar, 2% Ukrainian, 1.2% Bashkir, 1.1% Chuvash, and 12.1 % unspecified. The unspecified percentage may include ethnic minorities such as Buryats and Yakuts, individuals from former Soviet republics, or other groups such as the Roma populations (percentages from CIA World Fact Book, 2005).

also notes that cultural identity is also necessary for nationalism because there is the need to accommodate different types of nationalism – religious, racial, linguistic and cultural (Smith, 1998: 90). Therefore, Smith views nationalism as having multiple functions and operating within multiple arenas.

Considering these various views and approaches to the terms of ethnicity and nationality, in conjunction with how my views of 'Russian' identity connect to Vysotsky's music, I draw primarily from Smith's theories of nationalism for its connections to political, ethnic, and cultural concepts. For example, within the multi-ethnic nation that was the Soviet Union, Russian was the dominant ethnicity. Many of the historic myths and legends used by the Soviet Union as national symbols were derived primarily from Russian culture.

In the case of current Russian scholarly literature, Daniel Rancour-Laferriere states that sociologists and political scientists tend to use the term 'national' when discussing that which is Russian, while anthropologists and psychologists prefer the term 'ethnic' when referring to 'Russian' (Rancour-Laferriere, 2000: 23). But it is Smith's notion of various types of nationalism that corresponds to my multi-functional view music and identity. Because of the historical context of the Soviet Union, and the political nature of Soviet culture, I would refer to Vysotsky's *avtorskaya pesnya* as serving both the identities of Russian ethnicity and nationality, depending on the context of a specific song. In the case of Vysotsky, his music will at times function for nationalistic purposes in supporting the state (within the context of Soviet Russia) – in the modernist, Gellner and Breuilly approach, but will also function for purposes of expressing a Russian ethnic identity.

From published articles and interviews, one may assume that Vysotsky viewed his role in Russian culture as an artist expressing his ideas and views of the world in which he lived. His songs never blatantly opposed the Soviet system, even though there were undercurrents of dissent in lyrics of his songs. Along with the 'un-Soviet' songs, Vysotsky wrote many which glorified individuals in the Soviet system such as cosmonauts and sports heroes. Along with his artistic role in the Soviet era of the 1960s and 1970s, Vysotsky also recognized the importance of poetry in Russian literature and often mentioned literary figures like Pushkin and Gogol as important influences on his own writing. In a 1974 interview published in the newspaper *Literaturnaya Rossii*, he remarked that Pushkin was his favorite poet. The interview followed by asking if love for Pushkin was not expressed to often in recent years, to which Vysotsky replied, "How is it possible not to love Pushkin?...if poetry has a fascination for a person, that means Pushkin first and foremost" (Andreyev and Boguslavsky, 1990: 197). Vysotsky may not have viewed his poetry as equal to that of Pushkin, but many people I talked to in Moscow often mentioned that Vysotsky, as a poet, should be thought of on the same level as Pushkin.

My perspectives of 'Russianness' equally refer to both nationalism and ethnicity. This is greatly influenced by Anthony D. Smith's argument of *historical ethno-symbolism*, in which ethnic and cultural symbols are a means to construct national identity. I view Vysotsky's Russianness on various levels – there is his connection to the city of Moscow, a city often connected to Russia as a religious and political center. As a Russian, Vysotsky sang in the Russian language, this is in comparison to another *bard*, Bulat Okudzhava, who also expressed himself artistically in Russian language and is

definitively a part of Russian culture, despite that his parents were Armenian and Georgian. This is not to say that Okudzhava does not embody 'Russianness' on the same level of Vysotsky, but there are different methods in which one can construct a cultural identity based on ethnicity and nationalism.

Within the context of the Soviet Union, Vysotsky often sang about the 'Soviet experience,' but some of his songs relate to cultural ideas and symbols associated with pre-Soviet, Russian culture. In his song "Bath-Hut" ("Ban'ka po-belomu"), Vysotsky addresses the issues relating to both Soviet collectivization and the ritualistic experiences of the Russian bath-hut (*banya*).[8] The song tells of a Siberian peasant branded as a *kulak*[9] who resisted arrest and was deported from his native village. Another example of Vysotsky's connection to Russian culture is his song "The Domes" ("Kupola"), which includes the imagery of cathedral of the Orthodox Church, and the mythological birds Sirin and Hamayun[10] taken from Russian folklore.

Such examples demonstrate a connection between Vysotsky and Russian culture. Although the Soviet political context is often present in his songs, such as in the case of the "The Bath-Hut," he manages to incorporate ideas and symbols that were transferred from Russian culture to the Soviet era. As ethnic and cultural symbols are a means to construct national identity, then the vast array of subjects covered in Vysotsky's *avtorskaya pesnya* demonstrate multiple levels of his Russianness.

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[8] The Rusian bath-house is used by Daniel Rancour-Laferriere as an example of the masochistic rituals that are part of Russian culture. In this instance, the ritualized self-flagellation using birch tree branches is viewed by Rancour-Laferriere as a means by which Russians cleanse the body and soul (see Rancour-Laferriere, 1995: 181-201).
[9] During the era of Soviet collectivization, the term *kulak*s was used to denote a wealthy or land-owning peasant, and during Stalinism people identified as kulaks were subjected to particularly harsh measures.
[10] Both Sirin and Hamayun have origins outside of Russia but overtime became part of Russian folklore thus demonstrating an example of a borrowed tradition.

National Identity in Russia and the Soviet Union

a. Russian Nationalism

The existence of nationalism within both Russia and the Soviet Union is an interesting case given historical, geographical, as well as political influences. There is no exact point at which nationalism or a nationalistic consciousness was conceived, though scholars point to the influence of the Petrine period (1689-1725) and the various measures of Westernization that Peter I undertook as initial steps towards nationalism. James Cracraft notes that any emergence of a national consciousness in Russia was forestalled by Peter I and an absolutist ideology was in place that was more imperialist than nationalistic (Cracraft 1994, 224). Cracraft views this ideology with reference to the annexation of non-Russian territories, and that it was fairly tolerant of diversity and drew from a combination of foreign and local sources, but also helped determine the subsequent ensuing development of nationalism. Other scholars note that the relationship between Russia and the West was an important factor in the development of post-eighteenth century Russian nationalism. Howard F. Stein noted that Russian nationalism was 'unthinkable apart from the 'ambivalent' relationship between Russian and the West (Stein, 1976: 405).

James Billington states that prior to the nineteenth century, there was no real sense of a secular national identity in Russia, though there was a feeling of cultural distinctiveness. This distinctiveness was based on a combination of faithfulness to the Orthodox Church and the closeness to nature of a peasant culture (Billington, 2004: 19). The *narod* (the folk, or people) are an important component of Russian national identity, and after squashing a nationalistic revolt in Poland in 1831, Nicholas I added the word

'nationalism' to the other two traditional terms, 'autocracy' and 'orthodoxy' in creating a trinity of ideals that became the official ideology for his empire in 1833. Given that the Russian word used for nationalism in this creed (*narodnost'*) was derived from the word for 'the people' (*narod*), it conveyed an impression of anti-imperialism. The *narod*, or the people, were an important element in creating nationalism, and one significant factor in the development of a Russian national identity was the abolition of serfdom in 1861 which expanded the possibilities for new employment and travel within the country. This allowed some of the peasants to seek work and social contacts in areas far from their native village or birthland (*rodina*), and thereby permitting them to imagine a larger birthland of which their locality was just a part (Rancour-Lafierre 2000, 5). As Robert Kaiser notes, "localism was giving way to nationalism among the more upwardly mobile young peasants…" (Kaiser 1994, 88).

The sense that the *narod* was a crucial element to nationalism has been discussed by many scholars in Russian studies, but as Liah Greenfeld noted in her work on nationalism, "This spirit of the nation resided in the 'people' but rather paradoxically, was revealed through the medium of the educated elite, who, apparently had the ability to divine it" (Greenfeld 1992, 261). It was therefore the elite and aristocracy who constructed the ideals of Russian nationalism, partially based on the romantic ideals of the *narod*. Gellner's theories of the nation and nationalism correspond to this view of nationalism; he felt that national identity was a method for identification of citizens within a public, particularly urban high culture, and that the nation is the expression of that high culture within social and political arenas.[11] It has been noted that mass

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[11] There are detractors to Gellner's thoughts on a 'high culture' influence of nationalism and questions issues of power and education within a culture (see Smith 1998, 38-39).

awareness of a Russian identity, or a mass awareness of the existence of the Russian nation came late in comparison to Western European countries, it was the case in Russia that an educated elite possessed Russian identity long before the masses attained it. Although the nobility in the eighteenth century was Westernized, spoke French, wore Western European fashions, the connection to Western Europe help to shape an awareness of Russianness. The educated elite were ethnically Russians who held images of Russia, but they saw Russia not only as a 'patrimonial extension of the tsar, but a people (*narod*) in addition to themselves as part of this national identity (Rancour-Laferriere 2000, 6).

James Billington notes that, "no nation ever poured more intellectual energy into answering the question of national identity than Russia (Billington 2004, 12). Literature was an important component in discovering, or creating this identity. Works like Nicholas Karamzin's twelve-volume *History of the Russian State* (1819-1826), Alexander Pushkin's work evoking Russian life and history, and Nicholas Polevoi's *History of the Russian People* (1829-1833) in six volumes are but a few of the literary works, both fiction and non-fiction, that were significant in nineteenth-century Russia. It is interesting that some view Karamzin's work as imperialistic by focusing more on the government as the focal point for Russian, whereas Polevoi's work is perceived as a romantic account of the people's loyalty to imperialist policy (Rancour-Laferriere, 16).

During the nineteenth-century nation building, the then vast and multi-ethnic Russian Empire turned inwardly in search of a unifying identity; this is opposed to the homogeneous, smaller countries in Western Europe who concentrated on building new empires overseas. Under Tsar Alexander III, Russia attempted for the first time to create

a secular nationalism based on language and ethnicity (Rancour-Laferriere, 200: 16). In addition to asserting Russian culture, Orthodoxy was as a means of assimilating large parts of the empire. However, Anthony D. Smith has stated that while assimilation of a Russian national identity was occurring "the gulf between rulers and ruled within the dominant Russian ethnic core widened despite the abolition of serfdom; the westernized culture of the aristocracy and the Orthodox beliefs and rituals of the peasant masses expressed antithetical visions of 'Russia'" (Smith, 1991: 103).

b. Soviet Nationalism

For the Bolsheviks issues of class were more important than national identity; proletarian internationalism was intended to replace national ethnic allegiances. However, nationalism did become an issue early on within the Soviet Union. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Russian Marxists believed that national differences would gradually disappear and that the continuing rise of the proletariat would cause them to vanish even faster (Suny, 1998: 140). With this, Soviet patriotism became a form of nationalism and was launched in the 1930s in connection to celebrations of a successful air rescue operation of shipwrecked sailors from an ice floe (Suny, 64)[12]. Along with the 'artic flyer' heroes, the shock worker Aleksei Stakhanov, and other Soviet accomplishments such as the building of the Moscow Metro, patriotic themes inclusive of all Soviet citizens were created and helped build a Soviet national identity.

The German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 changed the nature of Soviet patriotism by stressing a specifically Russian history and culture as the primary point in

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[12] For a more detailed look at Soviet national policy and national identity during the Stalinist years, see Brandenberger, 2002.

national identity. Russian historical figures like military heroes and saints from Kievan-era Rus' were portrayed as 'older brothers of the other Soviet nationalities' (Suny, 1998: 64). In actuality the Soviet Union possessed around one hundred and fifty different nationalities within its borders, however in the process of creating a national 'Soviet' identity, the Russian nationality and ethnicity became dominant. Although other Soviet republics were encouraged to celebrate their own historic experiences and national cultures, they were expected to highlight the ties with Russia and the achievement of annexation to a Russian Empire (Suny 1998, 288). Roman Szporluk notes that the purpose of creating these 'nations' or 'republics' was a means of promoting the creation of the Soviet man and Soviet woman, citizens of one *Soviet* people, residing in one *Soviet* state (Szporluk 1994, 5). These non-ethnically Russian Soviet citizens adopted the Russian language as an important identity marker.

Many scholars have noted the importance of language as a central feature for marking difference of ethnicity, culture or nationality (see Hobsbawm 1990, 51-63 and Smith 1991, 172-174). In eighteenth-century Russia, as a facet of Westernization, the aristocracy and elite spoke French or Italian, though they would speak in Russian to servants or the serfs. During the nineteenth-century Russification inside the empire, particularly within Ukraine[13], the Russian language was one means of creating homogenization within the multi-ethnic empire. This practice continued during the Soviet period. In the early years of the Soviet Union the state promoted education of non-Russian languages in order equalize the education levels of developed and non-developed peoples. Soviet scholars created more than 40 written languages for small Soviet

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[13] In 1863 the Russian Minister of Interior prohibited educational, scholarly, and religious publications in the Ukrainian language, and also refused to admit that a separate Ukrainian (separate from Russian) language existed (Moss, 1997: 465).

populations including many who had never had an alphabet or written language of their own. With regard to codifying languages, Ronald Suny also notes that, "To make the written word more accessible to ordinary people and to cut the modern language off from its Islamic roots, a movement began to Latinize the languages of the Turkic and Persian people who used Arabic script (Suny 1998, 286). However, the program of Latinizing alphabets ended and was replaced with Cyrillic.

Over time the Soviet government promoted Russian language instruction throughout the Soviet Union, and ethnic minorities were no longer compelled to study their own native languages and instead could study in Russian. Even though national languages within the various republics were still in use, Russian language became increasingly important and the language of Sovietization. Mastering the Russian language became essential as a means to employment access within the government. In connection to this 'flowering' of Russian language within the country, individuals were allowed to choose one's nationality and as a result the Russian Republic became more Russian in ethnic constitution as more people began to identify themselves as Russian; between 1926 and 1939 it was estimated that 10 million non-Russians adopted Russian nationality (Suny, 289). Therefore, the governmental structures and system of cadres in conjunction with the use of the Russian language, dictated the national identity set forth in the multi-ethnic and multi-national Soviet Union.

Much like the aristocracy and elite creating and defining nationalism within the Russian Empire, in the Soviet Union similar patterns are present. In general, it was the Soviet elite, those in positions of power who created and defined a 'Soviet nationalism'; it was created by an elite few who held power. If we consider Smith's notion of

nationalism and his theory of *dominant ethnie*, than in the multi-national Soviet Union it is apparent that Russia as the largest republic would hold greater influence over other collectives within the Union. Generally speaking, Soviet Patriotism, or nationalism as it functioned, was an ideological construct providing a hybrid national identity for a large, diverse nation without any historical precedence or tradition. However, because of Russian cultural dominance, through language and cultural ideas and symbols, one might say that Soviet nationalism was identifiably Russian nationalism at its core.

However, imposed Russification on non-Russians was also prevalent within the Soviet Union. While the terms 'Russian' and 'Soviet' became synonymously used in the country and abroad, fear of assimilation or even Russophobia, suggested the unwillingness of some non-Russian groups to identity with the system and society that some viewed as backward and inefficient (Prazauskas, 1994: 155). By the 1980s, many of the nationalist movements within individual republics of the Soviet Union were a factor is the dissolution of the country.

Music and Nationalism

Through an assortment of methods, music and musical performances function as a display of nationalism. In the field of historical musicology, particularly with regard to art music traditions, nationalism in music coincides with the use of local 'folk' elements, themes, and ideas. In this sense, nationalism is used more to distinguish a musical style rather than a political function. Thomas Turino notes that in ethnomusicological studies the term 'nationalism' usually refers to phenomena that are connected to 'national sentiment' or nationalism; how the music functions in connection to the nation or nationalism. I would then adopt Turino's definition of the relationship between musical

nationalism in which he defines as "the conscious use of any preexisting or newly created music in the service of a political nationalist movement, be it in the initial nation-building stage, during and after the moment of arrival to build and buttress the relationship between the general population and the state" (Turino, 2000: 190). This definition allows for a functionalist use of nationalistic music, not defined solely on style or sound. It also presumes that musical nationalism is context-specific, as it applies to the user, but not necessarily the artists or originators of a style or genre of music (Turino, 2000: 191).

Given Turino's definition, it can be said that composers of classical music pieces who employed local folk music elements demonstrated nationalism sentiment, as would performances of a national anthem or songs entered into the Eurovision Song Contest. Stylistically, the music in those examples covers various genres. However, the nationalistic function is present in each. In the case of national anthems, Philip V. Bohlman notes that what is considered stylistically 'national' about national anthems is a difficult question to answer because many national anthems sound alike, especially those from European nations (Bohlman, 2004: 155). Bohlman provides a list of reasons why national anthems are musically ambiguous including their usage in ceremony and ritual which generates similarities in tempos or even melodic themes, and many composers of anthems avoided musical elements that would 'exoticize' their nations, and in the case of European nations, would call into question their 'Europeanness' (Bohlman, 155).

In general, national anthems as a genre became increasingly important during the nineteenth century in Europe just as nationalism was becoming an important concept in relation to newly formed nations. Anthems were also not always adopted by a nation, but in some cases were the result of public competitions in which the winning composition

became a nation's new anthem. Bohlman also notes that in some cases national anthems were abruptly dropped from their position, such as in cases of defeat in war or after the dissolution of an ostracized government (Bohlman, 155-56). Musically the generic style of anthems with similar tempos, melodic themes, forms and structures does not display what one may think of a 'nationalistic' style because such similarities do not represent separate nation-states. However, it is the function and context of national anthems that is important in demonstrating the national sentiment of this musical genre.

Some national anthems, such as the United Kingdom's "God Save the King/Queen" which is believed to have dated back to at least 1745, have retained a strong presence in nationalistic functions, others anthems have had a more altered existence. Such is the case of the national anthem in Russia. By the end of 2001, there were ongoing debates over which anthem should represent Russia (for detailed accounts of the debates see Daughtry 2003, 42-67). From the beginning of the nineteenth century, Russia and the Soviet Union had selected around five different songs to serve as the national anthem including "God Save the King" (prior to 1833), the "Internationale" (1917-1918), and after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, a textless anthem by nineteenth-century nationalist composer Mikhail Glinka supplanted "Unbreakable Union of Free-Born Republics" by Aleksandr Aleksandrov. It is important to note that the lyrics of "Unbreakable Union" were changed during the history of the Soviet Union. Daughtry notes that the lyrics of the original Soviet anthem were removed by Nikita Khrushchev after the 1953 death of Stalin as part of the denunciation of Stalin and his cult of personality. Not until 1977 were alternate, politically satisfactory lyrics more in line with post-Stalin ideology added to the existing melody. In 2000, after unpopular response to

the wordless Glinka-themed anthem, it was decided by a committee established by president Vladimir Putin that the original Aleksandrov melody would be reinstated with amended lyrics.

However, despite the changing of lyrics and what the national anthem now represented in terms of current political circumstances within the country, there is the issue of how individuals within Russia felt this anthem represented their country. If many people came of age with a specific national anthem, with particular lyrics symbolizing Soviet times, it may be likely that when one hears a melodic line, the original lyrics would still come to mind (Daughtry, 2003: 60). This example of a national anthem shows the complexity that surrounds issue of nationalistic music. In this respect, there is no doubt that the 'new' version of the Russian national anthem functions as nationalistic, but the Aleksandrov's original anthem had too many associations with historical moments, including the uneasy Stalinist era. It raises the issue as to what extent a country, its history and past glories, are signified by musical sounds.

Another such instance that offers an interesting example of nationalism in music is the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) held annually in Europe since 1956, and is essentially a song competition in which popular music, loosely defined, as national entries serve as the basis for an international music competition. Early in the contest's history, the 'Europe' referred specifically to Western Europe as it became known during some of the more intense years of the Cold War. However, by the end of the 1980s and early 1990s countries of Eastern Europe also had begun to take part in the competition. The ESC becomes an important indicator of nationalism in various ways, one in which

concerns how large numbers of people come together to view the contest. In discussion

of the ESC as a display of European nationalism Bohlman notes that:

> It is equally unthinkable not to join with fellow viewers who share some
> measure of belief that song can stir a common national pride. Watching
> the ESC is not unlike viewing an international soccer match: The quality
> of play or performance, athleticism or musicianship notwithstanding, in
> the end it's all about winning…Even those who reject its overt display of
> kitsch and patriotism make no bones about the fact that they love to hate
> the ESC (Bohlman, 2004: 3-4).

Therefore, the yearly broadcasting of the ESC is a demonstration of nationalism, though

rarely has it been discussed as form of musical nationalism.

Unlike the case of national anthems, songs that have been part of the ESC are a

mixture of musical styles and elements, and lyrical content is varied as well. Many songs

begin and end with typical themes of love, but there are also those songs in the contest

that focus on political messages. In his accounts and descriptions of the Eurovision Song

Contest, Philip Bohlman notes particularly that since the mid-1990s, the entries from the

Balkan nations, who despite the ongoing war with Serbia were able to submit songs,

often exhibited blatant political statements. Musically speaking, some of the national

entries employ musical and stylistic elements associated with specific nations while

others avoid such musical ties. In addition, national styles are also negotiated by

choosing to perform in one of the preferred international languages.

However, Bohlman notes that whereas some chose folk music elements, they can

in fact hinder the entry's chance of winning as more recently, those musical elements

identified with a specific country are melded with musical components that suggest

something more global (Bohlman, 7). For example, in the 2001 contest, Estonia's

winning entry mixed Jamaican dancehall and African-American vernacular styles

together. The case of the Eurovision Song Contests then, in consideration of Turino's definition of musical nationalism, demonstrates another point of functionality. Although specific song entries may stylistically represent a nation based on folk music elements, many do not within the context of the ESC and within the context of European history through the latter half of the twentieth century. Instead, many of these entries demonstrate national sentiments.

The question of where Russia's music corresponds with nationalistic movements is also a complicated case of identity issues. Tied to the Romantic notions of nationalist movements of the nineteenth-century, Russia was not void of composers using folk melodies, and the works of nineteenth-century Russian composers has been well documented. Even folk music standing on its own, apart from the art music traditions, had its usage for nationalistic purposes. In the case of nationalism and music in Russia, the nineteenth century is often noted for the nationalist phase in classical music genres. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Russian music was dominated by Western European imports such as Italian musical directors for the imperial court and chapel (Taruskin 1997, 186-87). The rise of the Russian Empire in the nineteenth century also brought the rise of nationalistic styles and native Russian composers such as Glinka and Dargomyzhksky, but by the latter half of nineteenth century classical music genres were identified chiefly by the nationalistic tendencies of the *Moguchaya kuchka* ("Mighty Handful")[14]. The nineteenth-century music critic Vladimir Stasov, who was not only connected with the group, but is credited with the group's moniker, noted that a characteristic feature of the group was an independence of thought and critical thinking

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[14] The term "the Mighty Little Heap" was coined by Vladimir Stasov but used by critic Alexander Serov in a pejorative manner (see Maes 2002, 42-43).

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of authoritative opinion. The *Kuchka* developed themes from Russian history, folk tales, and legends and transcribed and studied Russian folk melodies. The example of the *Moguchaya kuchka* demonstrates the historical musicological approach to music and nationalism as defined by compositional tendencies rather than music functioning for purposes of the nation.

Folk music in Russia did not become particularly nationalistic until the end of the nineteenth century with the institutionalization of some forms of folk music. One of the more well-known examples is that of the Russian Folk Music Orchestra which centers primarily on the balalaika, the triangular-shaped, 3-stringed lute instrument. The story of the balalaika in the orchestral context involves Vasily Andreev who, as story has it, heard peasants on his family's estate play on the instrument (Belevich, 1989: 34). Andreev later persuaded a violin maker to replicate the instrument in various sizes, thereby creating an ensemble reminiscent of a Western symphonic orchestra. Over the years, from the 1890s to the early 1900s, the group performed throughout Western Europe displaying the 'folk' music of Russia. Similar ensembles were also formed in national institutions such as military academies, and the balalaika also became part of military bands (Belevich, 36). In addition to these orchestras, there was also the formation of folk choirs such as the Piatnitskii Chorus, and thus part of a folk music revival just prior to the 1917 Revolution (see Olson, 2004: 32).

However, the Soviet era in Russia had a great impact on the nationalistic purposes of music. The issues of cultural policy as set down by the Soviet state, which will be discussed in Chapter Four, created an inherent national function for music and musical performances. This is of course related the theoretical principles of a socialist state; not

only did music come under the auspices of the state, but in the process, particularly after 1934 it had to uphold certain criteria for the state. For example, folk music, such as the orchestral and choral groups mentioned above, were used by the Soviet state as demonstrations of the nation's folk music, and however contrived, restructured, reformatted, or re-composed this folk music was, Soviet nationalism was on display. In the process of using such folk music ensembles, the state turned what once were strictly amateur traditions and activities into increasingly professionalized practices (Olson, 2004: 52-53).

Along with the Soviet's use of folk traditions and music, sometimes referred to as Soviet 'fakelore,'[15] the proliferation mass songs (*massovaya pesnya*) was also important as a display of Soviet nationalism and patriotism. This genre of song, which is closely tied to the aesthetics represented by socialist realism, was an indispensable component of official Soviet mass culture. *Massovaya pesnya* were stylistically strophic choral songs, hymns or marches espousing the glories of the Soviet state and culture. They therefore conspicuously have much in common with most national anthems. Musically, Amy Nelson notes that some of these songs from the 1930s incorporated elements of the *tsyganshchina* (gypsy) tradition, Jewish and Russian folk music giving an element of ethnic diversity to this genre (Nelson, 2004: 245). Gerald Stanton Smith notes that the most popular of the *massovaya pesnya* songs were adopted for particular institutional or ceremonial purposes by the Communist Party or the state (Smith, 1984: 14). Possibly the most famous songs of this genre include "Song of the Motherland" ("Pesnya o rodine"*)*

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[15] The 'fakelore' movement of sanitized and restructured village folk music was countered by a folk movement revival in the 1960s and 1970s which was a reaction to propagandistic folk music in which writers and scholars traveled to remote areas of the country to collect directly from village musicians. Dmitri Pokrovsky was one such individual credited with 'authentic' representations of Russian folk music (See Levin, 1996).

written 1935 by Lebedev-Kumach. This song became incredibly popular during the Great Patriotic War, but even before the war it was estimated at being published in editions of twenty million copies (Smith, 14). Generally speaking, themes for *massovaya pesnya* included the war or politics, but by no means were these songs explicitly political, themes of love were commonplace, but an archetypal 'Soviet' love demonstrating the stability of home and family life were described (Smith, 1984: 21). Many songs of this genre were heard in performance by professional groups like the Red Army Ensemble, which strengthens the nationalistic image and function of this music.

Not only were the mass songs performed by professional groups and used for ceremonial purposes directly tied to the state, but also amateur choral groups at factories or collective farms were set up as a part of various artistic clubs in the Soviet Union. Oftentimes composers or conductors would lead amateur music groups in singing of Soviet mass songs. To encourage participation in such musical endeavors regional and national competitions, called *olympiady* or *smotry*, were held. Such mass artistic activities had multiple purposes with regards to creating and nurturing national sentiment. For one, involvement in such clubs was viewed as hobbies or interests that would occupy people's leisure time in a productive manner and in the process generate feelings of belonging to a larger, national collective. Additionally, there was an important nationalist/educational function of the amateur music clubs as Laura Olson states, "the activities were meant to re-educate the masses in communist ways of thinking, to 'fight the capitalist birth-marks in people's consciousness'" (Olson, 2004: 47).

There are various other genres of music within the Soviet era which, as will be discussed later, could at times fall into the category of nationalist music, again based

more on function than on stylistic elements. Nationalistic functions again would depend how 'nationalism' is defined. Then the question becomes whether or not *avtorskaya pesnya* as a genre and Vladimir Vysotsky's music specifically serves nationalistic purposes. If Turino's definition of musical nationalism is taken into consideration, the context-specific notion and music used 'to build and buttress the relationship between the general population and the state,' then there are occasions in which Vysotsky's music does display national sentiments. Although Vysotsky is well-known for a rather dissident persona and un-Soviet lyrics, he did write numerous songs that centered on war themes. The imagery and specific themes of his songs differed from the *massovaya pesnya*, and did not share the same status as *massovaya pesnya* with regards to how the music was used by the state, the 'war songs' category of Vysotsky's music nonetheless represents nationalism in music. Additionally, if we consider Anthony D. Smith's notion of nationalism with its all-encompassing approach to different types of nationalism, it may be said that despite censorship by authorities, Vysotsky songs that do not fall into the category of official Soviet song are nonetheless explicitly Russian because they expressed the everyday experiences of Russian people.

Cultural Identity in Russia

Since the construction of ethnicity and nationalism is subjective and mutable, just as identity can be, it would seem difficult to locate Russian identity within the space of the Russian nation. However, one method that scholars use in identifying that which makes a culture distinguishable from others is through symbolic expression, both tangible and intangible. Through observing symbols, ideas, and concepts that have dominated

both Russian and Soviet culture, one may begin to understand how designate a 'Russian' identity. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the ideas, myths, and symbols that are identifiable with Russian culture, and for these purposes I adopt one of the definitions offered by Clifford Geertz where he regards cultures as "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (Geertz, 1973: 89). Although identity can be viewed as fluctuating and heterogeneous, we may also view those pervasive themes which help distinguish 'Russian' from the 'other.' Of course there are numerous symbols, ideas, and myths that one encounters within any culture, I will focus on those that are prevalent and most applicable to my study of *avtorskaya pesnya*.

a. Contrasting Views

As a case study, the nation or culture of Russia provides a complex view of the changing state at which identity is expressed. The question 'What is Russia?' has been posed by numerous scholars and authors over the years, and when taking into account the notion of identity, it is an extremely multifaceted question because of numerous complexities. There is a great deal of complexity in defining Russia, a noticeable issue is related to geography. A question that usually looms with regard to Russia is whether it is part of Asia or Europe, and this is partially interconnected with Russia's historical past. Customarily the Urals serve as a boundary between Europe and Asia, therefore a majority of Russia lies within Asia. This geographical quagmire was magnified by the Westernizing process Russia underwent during the reign of Peter I, including military

reforms such as creating a navy, the building of St. Petersburg with its Western

European-styled architecture, and reformations within the Russian Orthodox Church.

Additionally, the growth of the Russian empire and inclusion on non-Russian ethnicities

and expanding the multi-ethnic nation furthered the Asiatic ties of the Russian culture.

Many have emphasized this aspect, Russian nationalist writers like Dostoevsky and

Alexander Blok viewed Asia as the focal point of Russia's future power (Rancour-

Laferriere, 2000: 59).

The issues of geography led to the nineteenth century debates between the

Russian Slavophiles (*slavofily*) and Westernizers (*zapadniki*), a group of intellectuals

who debated the nature of Russian civilization. In general, the debates of the Slavophiles

and Westernizers focused on the reforms set by Peter I; Slavophiles believed in the

supremacy of Orthodoxy[16] and pre-Petrine Russia in addition to their belief that Peter I

had harmed Russia in attempts to westernize it. In contrast, Westernizers deemed the

reforms of the Petrine era as advantageous in positioning Russia to join the

modernization of Western Europe.[17]   One idea central to this controversy was the

viewpoint that the Petrine reforms had created a cultural schism between the elite and the

Russian *narod* (Hellberg-Hirn, 1998: 198).

The debates between the Westernizers and Slavophiles continued throughout the

nineteenth century and were mirrored in both the literature and music of the time. Much

like debates over the Westernizer's and Slavophile's disputes over the past and future of

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[16] The importance of Orthodoxy in the Slavophile's view was an essential identity indicator for Russia, Orthodox Christianity had been inherited by the Russian state from Kievian Rus', and for some time Orthodoxy was a means of demonstrating a Russian identity prior to nationalist movements based on the nation-state.

[17] Various individuals were noted as being part of the Westernizer/Slavophile factions including Peter Chaadaev, Alexander Herzen, Vissarion Belinsky, Nikolai Danilevskii and Fyodor Dostoevsky (see Moss, Walter G. 1997, 361-364 Rancour-Laferriere 2000, 59-63)

Russian culture, the two largest cities in Russia, Moscow and St. Petersburg, came to

represent Russian identity in contrasting ways. In 1712, Peter I moved the capital of

Russia to the newly founded St. Petersburg on the Baltic Sea opening the country up to

Western influences. St. Peterburg itself was modeled after Amsterdam complete with

canals, and overtime dominated by Rococo and Neo-Classic architecture. St. Petersburg

remained the capital of Russia until 1918 when it was moved back to Moscow, but the

two cities represented divergent views of Russian identity and philosophy; whereas

Petersburg was viewed as embodying the Enlightenment, Moscow was anti-

Enlightenment.

Further dualities mark these two cities: Moscow was viewed as 'the purity of

blood and soil,' Petersburg was 'pollution and miscegenation;' Moscow was sacred while

Petersburg was secular; Petersburg viewed as Russia's head, Moscow its heart (Hellberg-

Hirn, 1998: 41). As historian James Billington notes,

> The 'heart' was more important than the 'head' for the mystical romantics
> of the new Muscovite culture [referring to the rebuilt Moscow after the
> city was burned during Napoleon's invasion]. Their attempts to find truths
> hidden in the physiognomy of a city were an extension of the occult
> fascination with statuary and phrenology….The very uniqueness and asymmetry
> of Moscow appealed to their imagination…(Billington, 1970: 303).

Concepts such as 'occult' and 'mysticism' would not be found in rational, Enlightenment

thought.

However, while the debates of 'Russianness' between the two cities is ongoing,

there are those who say 'true Russia' lies within the countryside, and lives in the *narod*,

or the people or folk. As Nancy Ries has demonstrated, the term *narod* conveys for many

in Russia a mythic conception of Russianness. It encompasses both national identity and

class identity; it can imply 'people' who are distinct from those with power or wealth and

it can refer to any collective body of people. But the term also implies 'faithful,' 'devout,' 'simple,' 'self-sufficient,' and 'long-suffering.' Moreover, some intellectual Russians might not include themselves in this idea of the *narod*; they might however identify some of those characteristics within themselves (Ries, 1997: 27-28, 30). It was those intellectuals involved in the populist movement during the latter half of the nineteenth century who, along with the attitudes of the Slavophiles, were occupied with the invention of the *narod*. Not only were the populists 'going to the people' taking literacy and medical care, but also discovering and describing the *narod*. The ethnographic accounts about the *narod* were not detailed and were purely observational, as Elena Hellberg-Hirn notes, "presumably many observations, taken from many vantage points, are conflated into a single, constructed product, which becomes a sort of ideal, a Platonic performance. The *narod* was a cultural fiction based on systematic, and contestable exclusions" (Hellberg-Hirn, 1998: 212). Although the *narod* was sentimentally viewed by some intellectuals as the "carriers of typical Russian virtues," as a component of Russian identity, others viewed that identity as pastoral idylls and what one might now describe as 'folkloristic kitsch' (Jahn, 2004: 56). It is true the *narod* did exist, but as the essence of Russian identity, was highly romanticized.

The notion of the *narod* changed during Soviet times, partially through the continued migration from rural to urban areas. Official Soviet policy also altered the views of the *narod* as rural life, rural people, and rural culture became important and were brought to the forefront. In addition, since policy decreed that peasants in the Soviet Union were now agricultural workers and on par with industrial workers, the term

narodnyi now referred to all people and was best translated as 'people' or 'popular' as opposed to 'folk' (Olson, 2004: 39).

b. Cultural Identity in Soviet Russia

With the coming of socialism in Russia, there were various changes that occurred in terms of cultural identity. Most obvious changes were of course related to the role, ideologies and control of the state in relation to the people (as mentioned above). There are an abundant amount of cultural changes that occurred during the Soviet years, I will touch briefly on a few of the shifts in Russian culture.

A significant occurrence after the 1917 Revolution was the restoration of the seat of government in Moscow, a more buffered city closer to the center of Russia than St. Petersburg (then Petrograd). Whereas Petersburg became the 'crucible' of cultural rebuilding, power was transferred to Moscow where it had been in the pre-Petrine days (see Clark, 1995). As Elena Hellberg-Hirn notes

> During the 1930s, when the Soviet Union consolidated itself as a nation, it sought to establish a new, unique identity for the country. Moscow as the seat of Soviet power had to be recast and purified; its cent[er] was remade and aggrandized, and Leningrad's [Petersburg's] role as the cent[er] of Russian intellectual life was increasingly undermined, when many of its scientific institutions, the headquarters of the Academy of Sciences among them, were moved to Moscow (Hellberg-Hirn, 1998: 51).

But Katerina Clark notes that Moscow was rebuilt into a Petersburgian city with a straightening out of the iconic, crooked streets of Moscow, this was viewed as a sign of modernization. Where fires and various invaders over the centuries were unsuccessful, the Soviets, during periods of reconstruction and restructuring, had succeeded (Clark, 1995: 300). Elements of medieval Moscow disappeared, such as the tower and chapel

protecting the holy icon of the *Iverskaia* Mother of God at the entrance to Red Square, and the presence of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior which stood in the Moscow skyline for over a century (though to be resurrected in post-Soviet times). Red Square, which had been the site of many historical events in pre-Soviet Russia, by the 1920s had been converted into a public square and cemetery with the Lenin mausoleum as one of the major focal points. It became "a symbolic manifestation of the ancestor cult and also the hero cult at the heart of the imperial mythology of Moscow" (Hellberg-Hirn, 1998: 52). In the Soviet era the Mausoleum became a spiritual center of Red Square and Moscow, and joined St. Basil's and the Kremlin as symbols of Russianness.

Another transformation that occurred after the establishment of the USSR involved the affects on culture and society. The early years of the Soviet Union, particularly the era referred to as the New Economic Policy (NEP) of the 1920s, is generally regarded as a period marked by fruitful production and open policies towards the arts. This would change by the 1930s as the Soviet leadership did not tolerate the autonomy of art and culture. After the implementation of Socialist Realism, the function of art changed; instead of contradicting or questioning reality, it was used as a means of education and upholding the ideologies of the socialist system. Socialist Realism as a doctrine affected all facets of Soviet artistic production including literature, music, visual art, film, and theater. This would also lead to the production of 'counter-culture' artistic works, or underground works that were not sanctioned by the state. Generally speaking, *avtorskaya pesnya* falls into the counter-culture category.

However, the establishment of the Soviet Union did not completely eradicate facets of Russian cultural identity. There were periods in Soviet history, such as the

NEP era of the 1920s and the Stalinist era of the 1930s and 1940s, in which spheres of Russian culture were greatly overhauled, and there were persistent 'Russian' ideas from previous generations that remained. The views of the Slavophiles and Westernizers endured the Soviet era. During the latter part of Soviet history, dissidents Andrei Sakharov and Alexander Solzhenitsyn embodied those ideals; Sakharov was seen as the secular Westernizer advocating a 'Union of Soviet Republics of Europe and Asia,' and Solzhenitsyn the religious Slavophile of pre-Petrine Russia decrying for a spiritual renewal to Orthodox ways of thinking (Dukes, 1998: 345).

Another symbol that persisted into the twentieth century was the personification of Russia. Although the concept has been used to designate a 'fatherland' (see Rancour-Laferriere, 2000: 39-40), there was the prevalence of genderizing Russia in the feminine which came into use in the eighteenth century. The concept of 'Mother Russia' (*Rossiia mat´* or *matushka Rus´*) is often used by the largest form of the Russian 'we' (Rancour-Laferriere, 40). There are clear maternal connections to the feminine Russia, it is mothers and not fathers who give birth (*rod*). There is thought to be a connection between the female Russia and the ancient pagan goddess that predates the established Kievian Rus´ (see Hellberg-Hirn, 1998: 113-116), but as historian Rancour-Laferriere notes, "Russia is a woman because she is a mother, of at least a potential mother…[she] is not a mother because she is a woman…Russians do not normally see themselves in a gendered relationship with their nation of their ethnicity. But they do see themselves is a parent-child relationship with such" (Rancour-Laferriere, 2000: 42).

The symbol of Mother Russia altered overtime, the concept was used during the Soviet era. 'She' appeared on revolutionary and wartime posters represented as a middle-

aged peasant mother calling on her offspring to make sacrifices and fight for her. Mother Russia was also personified in some *massovnaya pesnya* such as "Song of the Motherland" (*Pesnya o rodinye*). Additionally, she was embodied in the sculpture of the Motherland (*Rodina*) at the top of *Mamaev Kurgan*, the site of one of the battles for Stalingrad (now Volgograd). This statue, dedicated in 1967 and erected to commemorate the Battle of Stalingrad, is an immense landmark; at 52-meters tall, she can be seen from every part of the city, boats on the Volga river, and from trains as they pass by.

This personification of Mother Russia in the Soviet era is also coupled with the *Matreshka* souvenir. The brightly painted figure of a peasant woman (*baba*), whose inside is filled with similar, smaller figures was in fact not part of an old Russia folk tradition, but designed by the painter Sergei Maliutin in the late 1890s (Hellberg-Hirn, 1998: 117) and therefore exemplifies an 'invented tradition.' Despite its origins, the *Matreshka* was sold abundantly to Western tourists once the Soviet Union opened up in the 1960s, and is still sold today. Despite its invented origins, this symbol peddled so often during Soviet times is still widely used as a symbol for Russia.

c. Musical Identity in Russia and the Soviet Union

In a brief overview of the musical ideas and symbols, we see similar patterns with regards to cultural identity in Russia. The nineteenth century debates between the Slavophiles and Westernizers were mirrored in the classical music of nineteenth century Russia. Along with Mikhail Glinka and Alexander Dargomizhsky, the aforementioned *Moguchaia kuchka*, as nationalist composers, spear-headed of the Slavophile ideology infusing their compositions with folk themes and storylines representative of Russian

history and folk tales. The Western-looking view was represented by Anton Rubinstein, a virtuoso performer and composer of German schooling, founded such establishments as the Russian Musical Society and the St. Petersburg Conservatory. He also called for Petrine-like program for Russian music and as noted by Richard Taruskin, Rubinstein had inclinations to equate Russian musical nationalism with dilettantism (Taruskin, 1997: 123).

This led to harsh debates amongst the musical intelligentsia of the nineteenth century. The musicians and composers who had inherited the Western European classical forms and styles would seem to be locked in the same predicament with regards to geography and established a 'Russian' identity. Art music as a tradition was imported from Western Europe and musicologist Richard Taruskin notes that "from within the world of Russian music there has been a great tendency to celebrate or magnify 'difference,' in compensation for an inferiority complex that was the inevitable product of [Russian] history" (Taruskin, 1997: xiv).   At times Russia was an East turning to the West and personifying the Germanic musical traditions, but it also was positioned as a West turning East in a study of Orientalism.

The codification of Russian folk music dates back to the end of the eighteenth-century. Francis Maes lists the important collections of Vasily Trutovsky (published 1776-1795), Nikolai Lvov (1790-1815) and later collections of Ivan Rupin (1831) and Daniyil Kashin (1833-1834) (Maes, 2002: 15). Lvov's collection received most attention both inside and outside of Russia as it served as a source for foreign composers wishing to embellishment compositions with different melodic material, such as Beethoven's *Razumovsky* Quartets, op. 59) (Maes, 15). However, Lvov's collection brought Russian

folk music into the urban environment through piano accompaniments added by Lvov's collaborator Ivan Pratsch, and their subsequent scores were performed in the salons of the Russian aristocracy.

These performances, of an inauthentic variety, are coupled with the latter nineteenth appearance of the previously mentioned folk music orchestras such as the one created by Vasily Andreev. The origins of the balalaika instruments are unknown, though various theories abound (see Kiszko, 1995). Questions surround the 'Russianness' of the instrument, some believing the instrument has Tatar roots. It can be said that the Western-style orchestral arrangement, as well as the Western-style tuning system and arrangement of songs, was not exactly an 'authentic' representation of Russian folk music. Moreover, Laura Olson notes that one of the most characteristic and commonly borrowed features of the Russian folk orchestras, its rendering of a melody by the method of playing on a sustained tremolo on one string, is not in fact a Russian manner of playing, but was borrowed by Andreev from the Neopolitan mandolin orchestra (Olson, 2004: 17). Therefore, the balalaika, as an embodiment of 'Russianness' in music, is much like the *Matreshka*, an invented tradition.

The Russian seven-string guitar, the instrument that Vladimir Vysotsky used in performance of his *avtorskaya pesnya*, has been traced to at least the 1790s, though it often existed in opposition to the six-string guitar (Timofeyev, 1999: 5). While this instrument enjoyed some popularity during late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in public concerts and private performances, it was originally identified with the intelligentsia circles and the repertoire mostly included Russian folksongs, operatic arias, and some original compositions. The use of the term 'Russian' to designate this

instrument was used in literature throughout nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, during the pro-Russian nationalism phase of the Soviet years, the instrument received limited attention from scholars.

In his extensive study of the Russian seven-string guitar, Oleg Timofeyev traces the history and tradition of this instrument in its late eighteenth and early nineteenth century's classical tradition. Timofeyev remarks that Soviet scholars who broached the history of the Russian seven-string guitar felt that the additional string (in comparison to the six-string guitar found predominantly in Western Europe) was a progressive (i.e. further developed and therefore superior) trait of the instrument, but in actuality a reason the popularity of this instrument declined in the beginning of the nineteenth century were the excessive number of strings (Timofeyev, 48). If we were to point out the traits that make this instrument identifiably 'Russian' it may be found in the number of strings, though the chordal tuning (D G B d g b d′) is probably the most original feature of the seven-string guitar (Timofeyev, 59).

Timofeyev notes that the guitar was introduced to the Russian ruling class in the mid-1790s, and then it "steadily 'descended' to the 'simple' people" (Timofeyev, 114). At the beginning of the nineteenth century the balalaika, in the pre-orchestra context, was perceived as an instrument of the peasant but it increased in popularity and by the early twentieth century was mass produced. However, the Russian seven-string appeared to decline in popularity according to Timofeyev and was neglected largely outside of Russia. Although the balalaika may be said to be more identifiable as 'Russian' because of its increase in popularity, the triangular-shaped appearance of the balalaika enhances its 'otherness' as opposed to the seven-string guitar which upon initial appearance is

similar to Western-style guitars. Although the seven-string guitar declined in status according to Timofeyev, the instrument was still mass produced during the Soviet era. In an article about the guitar in Russia, Mikhail Ivanov documents that in 1937 the Soviet industry produced 2,135,000 folk instruments, including 1,093,000 guitars (quoted in Timofeyev, 1999: 47). In more recent years, the seven-string is most identifiable with *avtorskaya pesnya* of the 1960s and 1970s and was the chosen instrument of Okudzhava, Vysotsky, and Galich.

This overview of symbols and ideas attached to Russian and Soviet society through the centuries demonstrates the complex layering of cultural identity. The most obvious issue related to this cultural identity is the geographical position of Russia. Much debate over cultural identity was been related to the European and Asian matter. This cultural identity is also complicated by the multi-ethnic composition of the Russian nation, the largest country in the world in terms of land. Identity issues were even further compounded in the multi-ethnic and multi-nation structure of the Soviet Union. James Billington notes that within all of this complexity in Russia culture, there are three forces that are helpful when observing the history of Russian culture – the natural environment, the Christian heritage, and Russia's contact with Western Europe (Billington, 1970: ix-x). These three influences did much to shape the ideas and philosophies of Russia, even during the Soviet era.

Music as a part of Russian culture has reflected the similar issues of geography, it nonetheless has established a distinctive musical culture. Despite some traditions, such as the Russian folk orchestras featuring a peasant folk instrument, have tendencies of invented traditions, overtime with a preponderance of history they become exclusive to

Russian culture. As a tradition, *avtorskaya pesnya* is tied to the musical precedence of the seven-string guitar in Russian musical history, and as will be demonstrated later, the poetic element of this genre is also part of the important history of Russian poetry.

Concepts of the Russian 'Soul'

An additional, though intangible, symbol of Russia that I would like to explore is the notion of the Russian soul, an idea pervasive in literature, music, and various other facets of Russian culture. This is of course not to say that the concept of 'soul' is only applicable to Russian culture, there is of course the philosophies WEB DuBois postulated in his *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903). Nonetheless, the Russian term for soul is *dusha*, but there lays great complexity when transferring this term from one language to another. To translate the English term 'soul' to Russian is *dusha*, but to translate *dusha* into English results in various idioms like 'soul,' 'heart,' 'feeling,' 'spirit,' or 'inspiration.' *Dusha* can mean much more within a Russian context. In an article noting differences is the usage of meaning of 'soul' and *dusha*, Anna Wierzbicka notes that *dusha* can have a religious or quasi-religious meaning corresponding to 'soul,' but it also has meanings related to the more mundane aspects of everyday life, a more secularized sense of usage. For example, the adjective *dyshyevnii* implies 'sincerity' and 'openness' which suggests actual or good feelings towards others (Wierzbicka, 1989: 52). In her ethnography of the soul as found in Russia, Dale Pesmen notes that the souls she 'found' involved what have been treated as issues of personhood, of self in the reflexive sense, and identity in the Romantic/idealist folk psychology concept (Pesmen 2000, 16). In addition is the belief of suffering within Russian culture and its connection to *dusha* and as stated by Pesmen

"Suffering for others, compassion, empathy, [are] often mentioned as the essence of soul" (Pesmen, 54).

Although the complexity of meaning for *dusha* never disappeared over time, the perception of it did. In Soviet schools and Soviet culture in general, *dusha* was openly criticized as being obsolete and superstition. Evidently, this belief tied to the anti-religious ideologies of socialism. However, *dusha* did appear in usage in a Soviet context in both the Stalin years and later Soviet periods when faithful communists used *dusha* in referring to the moral and psychological aspects of a person (Wierzbicka, 1989: 45). Pesman notes that in post-Soviet times, some dismiss *dusha* as a 'hackneyed' notion irrelevant today. "Some mourn it, implying that whatever is was died. Some figure good riddance" (Pesman, 2000: 6). It would therefore seem that the multiple layers of what *dusha* means and its subsequent associations to Russian culture are mirrored in the complex structure of Russian identity.

There have been various literary connections to Russian *dusha* such as nineteenth-century writer Nikolai Gogol and his novel *Dead Souls*, which submerged the Russian 'soul' into the Slavophile-Westernizer debate and discussions of national essence in the 1840s through his usage of the term (Williams, 1970: 582). Also the works of Fyodor Dostoevsky, Leo Tolstoy, and Anton Chekhov's work have all been traced to the idea of *dusha*, though more so in the religious perspective (see Figes, 2002: 325-354). The term *dusha* also appears in various lyrics of Vysotsky, though in different connotations, an area I will address in more detail later.

It has been noted that *dusha* can best be expressed by music either through folk songs or artistic compositions employing folk melodies (Olson, 2004: 220). In Pesmen's

ethnographic research of *dusha* in post-Soviet Russia, she found many relationships between *dusha* and music. For one, she not only lists music as a term used synonymously with *dusha*, but notes that "music was felt to be a two-way channel of representation to and from *dusha*" (Pesman, 2000: 83). People singing together, playing instruments or even listening to recorded music are all important parts of ritual gatherings, and this social context, Pesman notes, demonstrates the 'soulful power of music' (Pesmen, 84). Additionally, interviewees explained to her that a lack of love for music can cause a tendency towards illness, and that performing or listening to songs helps to warm the *dusha* and make it more alive (Pesmen, 88).

In my research of Vysotsky, not only does *dusha* appear in the text of his lyrics, but from my ethnographic work in Moscow, the concept of *dusha* plays an important part in reasons why admirers of Vysotsky celebrate and pay homage to him and his music at his gravesite. If we take into consideration the complex notion of *dusha* as stated above, and that *dusha* is embodied by a person, and acted out through musical performance, then the soul is part of the framework that creates identity, as well as an expression of that identity.

Conclusion

For the purposes of my study, I view 'Russianness' as being synonymous with both nationality and ethnicity. The construction of Russian nationalism and Russian ethnicity is dependent on the creation and use of cultural symbols and ideas, whether or not they are invented traditions. Additionally, nationalism and ethnicity as demonstrated through music and musical performance may be determined by context and function.

Vysotsky's Russianness simultaneously embodies nationality and ethnicity, and as he and his numerous songs demonstrate, he embodies Russian cultural identity.

With respect to the differences between the Soviet and Russia period in the history of this geographic area and in terms of the 'Russian' identity, I view the period of the Soviet Union (1917-1991) as a part of Russian history from a macroscopic perspective as opposed to the Soviet Union dismantling and rebuilding the structure of the nation. I say this not to imply that there were no marked differences between these two entities, because there were tremendous changes that occurred under different regimes. Not only did the political structures change immensely, but in conjunction with politics, some cultural features changed as well. However, there were numerous aspects of Russian culture that persisted through the Soviet period, such as *dusha*. Therefore, in viewing the history from a macroscopic perspective view, the Soviet era is an extension of Russian history because not only did Russia as a state continue to exist, but Russian ethnic culture was propagated to non-Russian Soviet citizens.

With this in mind, I believe that the music of Vysotsky demonstrates a Russian identity, but also because of the context of the Soviet Union and the time period in which he lived, he concurrently expresses a Soviet identity as well. His music and poetry functions as nationalistic, but at times also functions counter-hegemonically in opposition to established Soviet cultural policy. In the subsequent chapters I will demonstrate how Vysotsky as a public and popular persona expressed these multiple identities, as well as elucidate the connections his devotees have to Russian identity.

CHAPTER 4

SOCIALIST REALISM AS CULTURAL POLICY AND AESTHETIC SYSTEM

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the political situation of the Soviet

Union created a highly controlled atmosphere with the edicts of socialist realism. This

policy served as a formula in which creative artists were expected to adhere, and it in turn

became an aesthetic system. Socialist realism as a cultural policy had stronger presence

during the Stalin years, but the essential guidelines of this system became a mainstay in

Soviet culture until 1991.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the concept of socialist realism in two

ways: first as a cultural policy that was implemented by the 'powers that be' and affected

artistic productions. Secondly, I will explore this concept as an aesthetic system and

ideology that when put into practice, in some instances, is rather transparent. My intent is

to demonstrate the arbitrary features of Soviet cultural policy with regards to the aesthetic

system of socialist realism and the vague definitions of 'official' and 'unofficial' art.

With this mind, I view the poetry and additionally the music of Vysotsky and other *bards*

of his time as artists who adhered to the aesthetic principles.

Socialist Realism as Cultural Policy

In comparison to later time periods in the Soviet Union, the NEP (New Economic Policy) era of the 1920s was relatively tolerant in artistic matters, and policies towards the arts were comparatively free from limitations considered the latter years when censorship was the norm. During the early years of the Soviet Union, the government focused on both political and economical issues, but also concentrated on production of new Soviet art. However, less stringent cultural policies that were in effect during this period allowed for the 1920s to be a time of experimental and fruitful production in music.

Anatole Lunacharsky, who served as Commissar for Culture in the USSR from 1917 to 1929, controlled many of the artistic policies of the 1920s. His views of art, especially music, were quite open-minded compared to later, more stringent policies. Some scholars view Lunacharsky's role with great significance, regarding him as the founder of the aesthetics for the Soviet state (Sitsky, 1994: 2). The economic crisis throughout the country affected the performing arts, including the reduction of operational budgets for musical centers. Although there were financial constraints, there was still a great deal of performances in both the realms of classical music and popular culture. During this period, the theremin, one of the earliest electronic instruments, was invented by scientist Leon Theremin, and composers such as Paul Hindemith and Darius Milhaud were also invited to conduct their own works (Schwarz, 1983: 44).

In more popular culture, urban folklore and songs were prevalent among workers in both small and large towns, and taken out to the peasants into the countryside. These songs included 'cruel songs' (*zhestokiye pesnya*) which were simple-constructed songs

about unrequited love, and a sentimental appeal for pity (Stites, 1992: 48). Closely related to this genre were the harsher underground songs (*blatnye pesnya*), literally 'criminal songs.' These narrative popular songs told of convicts and criminals, as well as youth gangs and homeless children. Although these are but some of the varieties of popular song forms, the underground songs have often been noted as a forerunner of *avtorskaya pesnya* as sung by Vladimir Vysotsky (Smith, 1984: 70 and Allen, 1971: 27). Other forms of music and entertainment also reappeared or continued in popularity during the 1920s including jazz and *estrada*, a form of popular stage entertainment which reappeared after the war and revolution.

During the Cultural Revolution of the 1920s, there was a wide range of musical and general artistic developments such as those mentioned above. Although Lunacharsky eventually brought all the performing arts under government control, he endeavored to keep the arts free from internal political strife. However, strife within the professional music organizations was rampant. There were two groups who argued over the direction that new Soviet music should take, the Association for Contemporary Musicians (ACM) and the Russian Association for Proletarian Musicians (RAPM) had differing views and opinions on content and stylistic traits, as well as ideologies about music. Formed in 1923, ACM guidelines included a preservation of the national artistic heritage while striving to keep Russia in contact with the West. ACM also worked to maintain artistic freedom from censorship.

Established around the same time, RAPM's aim was to disregard the West, do away with 'bourgeois' culture, and instead create music specifically aimed at the working class. During the 1920s, a great deal of Soviet music criticism and discussions of the

ongoing disputes and opinions between these two organizations were circulated in numerous journals of the time (Schwarz, 1983: 51). Richard Stites notes that RAPM, as a voice for the proletariat, began to oppose all music except for its own party songs: classical for its association with a bourgeois past, jazz for its links to the West, gypsy music and other related genres for roots with the bourgeois, and folk for its supposed 'backwardness' (Stites, 1992: 47). RAPM held little power in music matters until the fall of 1928 when the first Five-Year Plan commenced and the organization took over control of the Moscow Conservatory; the music of Tchaikovsky, Chopin, Scriabin and Rachmaninov was banned, and there were also attempts to abolish chamber music on the basis that only a small number of people, at any given time, could perform it (Makanowitzky, 1965: 268). Additionally, RAPM members condemned the modernism of Western contemporary music such as 'light music' and jazz. Proletarian writers also had unwavering views similar to RAPM. Proletarian writers exposed corruption, portrayed cynicism among Communists and attacked bureaucracy. Member of The Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP) were dogmatic in their beliefs and opposed the 'varnishing of reality' and wanted literature that "reflected the world as it was as well as the internal psychological conflicts of individuals" (Suny, 1998: 270).

The Resolution of 1932 absolved all of the proletariat organizations like RAPM and RAPP and replaced them with unions that regulated artistic output. Stalin restored unions, which had been banned in 1919 because Lenin felt they were breeding grounds for independent thought, what Ian MacDonald describes as "an ideal machinery for intellectual coercion" (MacDonald, 1990: 80). In contrast, unions were Stalin's answer to monitoring the intelligentsia in the arts, as well as other technical and scientific fields.

Even though the establishment of the unions was aimed mostly towards the proletarian writer's organizations, it was the creation of the unions that promoted 'socialist realism,' and in 1934 Andrei Zhdanov defined socialist realism as artistic depictions of 'truth and historical concreteness' (Zhdanov, 1998: 525). Socialist realism then became the officially sanctioned mode of artistic expression; the avant-garde in any form was cast out as Western bourgeois decadence, and often branded with the term 'formalist.'

Socialist Realism in Implementation

A huge influence on the developments of socialist realism was author Maxim Gorky who chaired the new Union of Soviet Writers. Gorky's perspective was that aesthetic and literary models created and practiced by the bourgeoisie would be viewed as historical, not universal models. In his examination of socialist realism in literary theory, Gary Saul Morson lists six features of socialist realist novels: 1) two-dimensional psychology of its heroes, notably the 'positive heroes,' 2) a highly formulaic plot and style, 3) themes that to Western readers would not be amendable to novelistic treatment – for example, instead of rivals in love, the plot might center around rival plans for constructing a machine, 4) the inclusion of political sermons, 5) a lack of irony in the plot – the novel avoids any kind of ambiguity or individualized point of view from characters, and 6) strong sense of closure and a mandatory 'happy' ending (Morson, 1979: 122). Many 'official' novels during the Soviet era incorporated these characteristics, but Morson does point out that the features of the list were not always followed in the Soviet novels, most notably *The Quiet Don* (*Tichii Don* – 1928-1940) by

Mikhail Sholokhov which exhibits not only romantic themes, but also has a fairly ambiguous ending (Morson, 122).

In addition to literature, visual representations of socialist realism are also apparent in many works of the time. Visual art encompassed the themes and content relating to the edicts of 'nationalist in form, socialist in content.' The painting *Roses for Stalin* (*Rozi dlya Stalina* – 1949) by Boris Vladimirski, pictures a group of children presenting bouquets of flowers to a fatherly-looking Stalin gazing off into the distance. Another example is the Stalin prize winning *Letter from the Front* (*Pis'mo s fronta* – 1947) by Aleksandr Laktionov which depicts a young boy, surrounded by a pleasantly smiling audience, reading a letter. A great deal of socialist realist art portrayed both the fatherly figures of Lenin or Stalin, and representation of workers and agriculturalists, usually displaying a utopian depiction of life.

Similarly, this policy extended towards the architecture as well.[18] Without embracing strictly modern designs, architecture from the 1930s to 1950s (sometimes referred to as Stalinist architecture) was pragmatic and reflected style of classicism and constructivism. The main building of Moscow State University (Figure 4-1) completed in 1953, represents one of many architectural symbols of this time period. The central tower is flanked by four large wings for students and faculty accommodation, and the building's facades are ornamented with huge clocks, barometers and thermometers, Soviet crests, and carved wheat sheaves. Additionally, there are statues of male and female students on terraces staring off into the distant horizon, or future.

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[18] In addition to the unions, the Soviet Academy of Architecture was established in 1933.

Figure 4-1:   Main Building at Moscow State University

Correspondingly, this architectural feature is displayed at the All-Russia

Exhibition Center (*Vserossiiskii Vystavochnyi Tsentr* or *VVT*).[19]   The site was originally

established in 1939 but did not open until 1959. It served as an exhibition for

agricultural, scientific, technological, and cultural achievements from the assorted

republics, and also included various pavilions representing the cultures of the different

republics. An additional element to the exhibition was the 'Friendship of Nations'

fountain (Figure 4-2) featuring sixteen larger-than-life maidens in gilded bronze adorned

with national costume (one per republic) surrounding sheaves of gilded bronze wheat.

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[19] In 1992 the name was changed to *VVT*, its former name during the Soviet era was the Exhibition of Achievements of the National Economy of the USSR (*Vystavka Dostizheniy Narodnogo Khozyaistva* or *VDNKh*) and is sometimes still referred to by this name.

Wheat was an important feature in socialist realist art, as it also appeared on the Soviet national crest.

Figure 4-2: Friendship of Nations Fountain at *VDNKh*, Moscow

This fountain demonstrates the 'socialist' aspect of socialist realism as all encompassing. The architecture of the various pavilions incorporated themes from their individual regions, such as decorative motifs stemming from 'folk' sources. However, there was a unifying architectural component in each of the buildings as most were generally based on neo-classical design. In his look at applications of socialist realism on the *VDNKh* during its gestation, Greg Castillo mentions that as a developed national style on display at the exhibition, socialist realism was now "billed as an architectural style of

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opposition, a counterforce to the imperialist advance of Western modernism…" (Castillo, 1997: 114). In other words, modernism as a style was equal to 'bourgeois' and the antithesis to socialist realist thought.

The implementation of this new ideology not only ushered out the avant-garde and modernistic tendencies of the 1920s, but promoted a return to the traditions of nineteenth century Russia. In literature, the complete works of Puskin, Chevkov, and Tolstoy were released, and landscape painting of nineteenth-century artists Levitan and Kuindzhi were embraced as influences on socialist realist art (Figes, 2002: 480-81). Similarly in music the nineteenth-century nationalists such as Glinka and the *Moguchaia kuchka* were used as models for the future of Soviet music. Thus, everything that was old now became the basis of future artistic creations.

Socialist Realism and Music

From literature to architecture, socialist realism as a policy dominated multiple spheres of Soviet society. It was also implemented in musical production and composition as well. As a cultural policy socialist realism dominated all genres of music during the Stalinist periods. Ideologies were demonstrated in *massovaya pesnya*, art music, and performances of Russian 'folk' music. Soviet musicologists and critics espoused the new ideology by noting that it was necessary to compose music that was accessible and simple enough to be understood and enjoyed by the layman.

The early effects of socialist realism as a policy have been greatly detailed within the study of art music, most notably Western musicologists who have researched the condemnations of certain compositions or individual composers. In general, the usage of

the new system in music proved to be much more difficult than in other facets of Soviet art. For one, the formation of the Union of Composers in 1932 was more difficult than the Writer's Union. One problem was the lack of a figurehead, such as Gorky was for literature, who could unite opposing factions. Lunacharsky had been removed from his post as Commissar of Enlightenment in 1929, and replaced by Andrei Bubnov who had no previous experience with music (Schwarz, 1983: 111). Upon the dissolution of RAPM, the new association was named the Union of Soviet Composers (*Soyuz Sovetskikh Kompozitorov*) and only a select few were admitted, those who wrote music (composers) and those who wrote about music (musicologists).[20] The category of musicologists was broadly defined as it included critics, theorists, historians, and lecturers. Boris Schwarz notes that joining the composers and critics was purposefully done to promote creative stimulation; however, the results were not as promising since composers did not want to be criticized creatively and critics feared to disapprove of works by well-known composers (Schwarz, 113). The union did have its own journal, *Sovetskaya Muzika*, which began monthly publications by 1934. The editorial policies of the journal were based on the principle that intra-musical factions were eradicated with the 1932 resolutions. In addition, discussion and debates of theory, history, aesthetics, and performances were allowed but dissent of the policies was not.

However, since the launching of socialist realism and its manifestation through the arts over the years, there was little certainty of how to truly define it, and even more troublesome was the application of this system in musical compositions. In genres such as opera, ballet, or *massovaya pesnya* which entails a narrative, or at the least words to

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[20] In 1957, the name of the organization was changed to the Union of Composers of the USSR (*Soyuz Kompozitorov SSSR*).

describe and represent something, are fairly uncomplicated. In other genres, such as a symphony or chamber music, the issues are more problematic. Therefore, by the parameter of socialist realist art, 'art for art's sake' would not have been valid, and thereby making the rules for applying this creative method to certain kinds of musical composition somewhat arbitrary and difficult to follow. Composer Dmitri Shostakovich voiced his concerns over the edicts of this policy through vehement protest in his 1933 article "Soviet Music Criticism is Lagging" in which he wrote, "When a critic writes that in such-and-such a symphony, Soviet civil servants are represented by the oboe and the clarinet, and Red Army men by the brass section, then you want to scream!" (quoted in Tarskin, 1997: 480-81). This statement hints at the complexities of a critic analyzing the composer's symbolic intentions in instrumental music. In the case of Shostakovich, following socialist realist thought, or at least remaining in the dictates of official policy, proved difficult during his career.

Just as a return to nineteenth-century Russian past became important in providing examples, folk music was also an important source in creating socialist realist art. The Piatnitskii Peasant Choir, created in 1911 by Mitrofan Piatnitskii, changed drastically during the 1930s. The choir originally constituted strictly of peasants performing folk music from their own regions. However, the group became very popular on radio and in live performances by 1936. In accordance with the new policies, the choir was heavily promoted as a professional group singing newly-composed songs about Soviet life. Additionally, the government changed the name of the choir by dropping the word 'peasant' from the title and renamed it the Piatnitskii Russian Folk/Popular Choir, and under the new leadership of composer Vladimir Zakharov, the choir members, who

previously had not read music and sang in an improvisational manner, were forced to learn to read music and therefore were not able to improvise (Olson, 2004: 53). Though folklore, especially folk music, was used as a tool to strengthen patriotism and to create a new type of 'popular' culture, it had to be edited, sanitized, and reconstructed in order to be appropriate for a socialist society. Furthermore, folklore was used as a foundation for socialist realist art came from the rural culture because urban folklore – songs of bars and cabarets, criminal songs, jokes and stories of the workplace and street – included content deemed depraved and politically dangerous by the Soviets (Olson, 41).

The background and beginnings of the cultural policy of socialist realism are important to convey given that it remained policy for the arts throughout the span of Soviet history. However, the context of the Stalinist period was different from successive eras, the Thaw (*Khrushchevskaya Ottepel′* - 1953-1964) and the Brezhnev period (*Zastoya* – 1964-1982). Whereas policies were still in place throughout the Soviet era, the periodic crackdowns on artists who did not always abide by the party line were well-known. Innovative theater director Vsevolod Meyerhold was arrested and executed during the Stalinist purges, and during the *Zhdanovshchina* (1946-1948) when Andrei Zhdanov had taken control of all artistic matters in the Soviet Union, composers including Dmitri Shostakovich and Sergei Prokofiev had been deemed as 'formalists' by the officials and made to offer public apologies for their art (see Schwarz, 1983: 204-48 for a detailed account). Post-Stalin cultural policies post-Stalin did become less stringent; it was not always a matter of complete openness.

The Thaw period took its name from Il'ya Erenburg's novel of the same name, and though the term 'thaw' suggests a process of openness after the Stalinist period, it

was actually erratic in nature. Publication of Erenburg's novel in 1954 has been described by Julie Curtis as "courageous enough to allude to the fact that a great gulf between official art and true genius had developed in the Stalin period" (Curtis, 1991: 169). On the other hand, Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* which was similar to *The Thaw*, although more entrenched in Christian faith, was denied publication in 1956, therefore exhibiting the disparities of cultural policies of the time.

Socialist Realism as a Musical Method or Aesthetic?

Providing a few examples of music that satisfied the requirements of socialist realism will offer insight into the use of this ideology within musical compositions. Examples from different genres discussed are to demonstrate how this cultural policy of socialist realism was implemented, or at the least attempted by Soviet composers and performers. In actuality these pieces were part of officially sanctioned Soviet music, by which one would assume the criteria of socialist realism was achieved.

The first example which is part of the *massovaya pesnya* genre of music is highly indicative of socialist realist music from the 1930s. In his study of the *massovaya pesnya* Gerald Stanton Smith classifies sub-genres within the mass songs movement; classics of the Civil War, anthems of the construction period of the 1930s, and song of the Second World War. He considers the utmost layer of these songs to consist of anthems or hymns that were used for particular institutional and ceremonial purposes by the Party (Smith, 1984: 13-14). Within this layer is "Song of the Motherland" (*Pesnya o rodine*) written in 1935 by Lebedev-Kumach (lyrics) and Dunayevsky (music). The lyrics are as follows:

> From great Moscow to the farthest border,
> From our Arctic seas to Samarkand,

Ev'rywhere man proudly walks as master
Of his own unbounded motherland.
Ev'rywhere life courses freely, broadly,
As the Volga's ample waters flow;
To our youth now ev'ry door is open,
Ev'rywhere our old with honor go.

Soviet land, so dear to ev'ry toiler
Peace and progress build their on thee
There's no other land to wide world over
Where man walks the earth so proud and free

Refrain

Our broad fields, rich valleys stretch unbounded,
Ev'ry day new mighty cities grow
And throughout our land the proud world, Comrade
Is for us the sweetest sound we know.
This world ev'ry door to us flings open,
We do not distinguish color, race;
Far and wide in all tongues it is spoken,
It makes friends for us in everyplace.

Refrain

Soft spring breezes gently kiss our country,
Bright our future, as the blue above,
And no one on earth today can teach us
How to smile, to labor and to love!
But should any foe attempt to smash us,
To lay waste the land we love so dear,
Like the thunder, like the sudden lightning,
We shall give our answer loud and clear!

Refrain[21]

The primary purpose of this song and many like it was as Smith notes, "to promulgate and propagandize a set of myths and dogmas from the orthodox ideology, just as religious hymnody does" (Smith, 1984: 15). The first two verses are descriptive of the Soviet landscape (the Volga River, Samarkand) and culture (the growth of cities, the sweet sound of 'comrade'), and are rather benign, but the final verse contains aggressive

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[21] The above lyrics are from a 1960 Moscow publication, and in viewing a version from a 1977 publication of the same song, Smith notes that original third verse of the song that references 'Stalin's nationwide law' were removed by the mid-1950s during de-Stalinization of the Soviet Union (Smith, 1984: 15).

threats which Smith deems as a 'mandatory' element in most Soviet hymns of this type (Smith, 1984: 15).

The music to "Song of the Motherland" is typical of most *massovaya pesnya* hymns, centered in a major key, following standard chordal progressions and ending on a V-I cadence. This song became immensely popular, and in May of 1939 became the station signal for Radio Moscow and played on the Kremlin chimes for numerous years. Estimations have this song selling editions of 20 million, and it was also heard among leftist organizations in Western Europe and the United States (Stites, 1992: 90). "Song of the Motherland" is characteristic of many *massovaya pesnya* of the time, providing concrete images and places, and music that has a clear verse-chorus structure. It is also in accordance with cultural policy, provides images of a 'Soviet' land that will be aggressively defended.

The most prominent theme of *massovaya pesnya* was World War II, a theme that both official and popular opinion embraced as both sides viewed the Soviet cause as just and that the war was won by effort of a united collective. Not all *massovaya pesnya* were centered on political themes, another prevalent subject in officially approved songs was love. As Smith notes, this was an 'archetypal' Soviet love which was respectable, often requited love that ultimately leads to a stable home and family life (Stites, 21). Along with the family life, the nuclear family itself was sacred; only death in war condones spousal absence and a one-parent home. The popularity of *massovaya pesnya* was ensured within the USSR due to the economic monopoly, and that within the public system there was no actual competition. In general, the imagery of *massovaya pesnya*, such as that in "Song of the Motherland" was a carefully selected and cleansed version of

Russian folk song. M*assovaya pesnya* became part of Soviet folk culture as Laura Olson notes that as the leaders were building up socialism, folklore's original function became obsolete as it should revolve around state-sponsored ideology; "tractors, not wood-nymphs or sacred springs, were to be celebrated" (Olson, 2004: 42).

The next example is by Sergei Prokofiev who returned to the Soviet Union after a fifteen year absence, having been one of many artists to leave after the Bolshevik revolution because they did not agree with the 'guidance' as suggested by the newly formed government (Schwarz, 1983: 19). Upon his return to the Soviet Union, Prokofiev like many other composers struggled with new policies towards musical composition. A safe arena to which many composers of classical music turned was film scoring. The added benefit of visuals and a narrative helps position the music within a specific context.

Film in general was another means of transmitting Soviet cultural policies. *The Radiant Road* (*Svetliy Put'* - 1940) features a Cinderella-like story of Tanya who becomes a Stakhanovite worker[22] able to run hundreds of looms simultaneously beating world records, and then making the pilgrimage to Moscow to be decorated for her achievements. Richard Stites notes that this film emphasizes that this is not a fairy tale, but real life and in the finale, a chorus sings the aviation song "Ever Higher" (*Kogda-libo vyshe*) which opens with the words "We are born to make fairy tales come true" (Stites, 1992: 91). This is but one of many films that focus on the Soviet citizen rising above through hard work and dedication to the nation. *Alexander Nevsky* (1938) was a case of drawing on a storyline from a historical Russian figure.

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[22] The Stakhanovite movement was named after Alexsei Stakhanov who in 1935 set a record for mining coal. The movement was a state-initiated, and changed methods of how teams worked. Numerous competitions were set up with the goal of breaking production records (Suny, 1998: 248).

One of Prokofiev's notable contributions to film scores is *Alexander Nevsky*, directed by Sergei Eisenstein. The film depicts the thirteenth-century conflict between the Teutonic Knights and the Russian people of Novgorod. There is no lack of subtlety in the message of the film as a propaganda device because it reflects the sinister-like qualities of the Germanic invaders, while presenting the hero of Nevsky, played by Nikolai Cherkasov, is stern, brave, and one with the people. There were present-day symbols used to make the connections between the Nazis and Germanic knights, including the use of the swastika on a priest's helmets. The film, along with other anti-German films, was pulled from theaters after its initial release due to the Nazi-Soviet pact in 1939. However, it did reappear by the 1941 Nazi invasion and became exceedingly popular.

Prokofiev utilized thematic motifs to signify the two opposing forces in *Alexander Nevsky*; the Russians are identified with the folk-like tunes versus the German invaders' Catholic hymn. Rousing choruses, slightly reminiscent of those one might find in the *massovaya pesnya* genre are also present in Prokofiev's score. Most notable is "Arise ye Russian People" (*Vstavaite, liudi russkie*). The lyrics are:

> Arise to arms, ye Russian people
> In battle just, in fight to death!   *Refrain*
> Arise ye people, free, and brave
> Defend our fair, our native land

> To living warriors high esteem
> Immortal fame to warriors slain
> For native home, for Russian soil
> Arise ye Russian people

> *Refrain*

> In Russia great, in our native Russia
> No foe shall live

Rise to arms
Native mother Rus!

Refrain

This song is scored for mixed choir, and there is a simple 3-part ABABA structure to this piece. The melodic content of the A section is written in E-flat major and features the strong rhythmic drive of a march, whereas the B section is transposed to D-major and provides a contrasting melodic theme to the A section. Overall, the structure is simple, and the lyrics straightforward providing a militant-like stance to any foreign invaders of Russian land. The corresponding scenes in the film depict men, even a woman, taking up arms to defend their land against the invading Teutonic Knights. Scenes of people marching into Novgorod accompany this march, therefore visually representing the musical sounds.

Alexander Nevsky as a complete presentation of film visuals and musical score is permeated with the ideas of socialist realism, similar to those Gary Saul Morson noted in literary works. The film contains the 'positive hero' of Alexander Nevsky, the political sermons delivered by Nevsky in rousing the Russians to defend their land, clear distinctions between good (Russians) and bad (Teutonic Knights) which is heightened in the musical score, and a strong ending with the Russians defeating the Germanic invaders after the climatic battle on the ice. In addition, like much socialist realist art drawing from work of the nineteenth century, the filmmakers used a Russian historic figure to mirror the threat of Nazi aggression. One important aspect of Eisenstein's film is that the dialogue never mentions that Nevsky was a Christian prince and later canonized as a Russian saint. However, the Christian elements of the historical figure are subtlety alluded to in the crosses on top of the Novgorod cupolas in certain scenes (Merritt, 1994:

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36). The initial withdrawal of the film from circulation was not for a lack of adhering to cultural policies, but had more to do with international relations. Discussing the use of music in Soviet film, David C. Gillespie notes that Soviet cinema did not view sound and music as passive to the storytelling, but the film sounds were provided with organizing and structural function. This was because film was intended to educate the masses in cultural values and offer a concrete depiction of reality (Gillespie, 2003: 473).

There are various other musical examples that might be explored in connection to socialist realism. Both popular music styles, which include *massovaya pesnya*, and folk music were affected by the cultural policies of socialist realism. Overall, cultural policies in the Soviet era, though somewhat vague and arbitrary, provided directives for composers and musicians to follow; artistic enterprises not meeting the criteria of socialist realism or not sanctioned by officials would only exist in the 'middle' or 'underground' spheres of Soviet art.

The Obscurity of Socialist Realism

The foremost issue with socialist realism was that though definitions for this cultural policy were formulated by officials, the definitions were at times confusing and imprecise. The term 'formalism,' used extensively during the *Zhdandovshchina* campaigns against composers in 1948, akin to 'modernism' and 'bourgeois decadence,' seems a fairly unsuitable term as it would assert that a preoccupation with form, in and of itself, is modernist or bourgeois when in fact all art – literature, paintings, sculpture, architecture, and music – has form and structure. When used by officials, 'formalism' was oppositional to 'ideological commitment,' and therefore ascribed a self-sufficient

role for a work of art; an artist was not to go astray from the official decrees (Heller, 1997: 53).

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of socialist realism is that it was much easier for officials to state a theory than explain how to apply it to art, more so with musical compositions. The term 'formalism' was used so loosely that Sergei Prokofiev notably quipped, "Formalism is music that people don't understand at first hearing" (quoted in Schwarz, 1983: 115). The difficulties of policy, and practice of that policy, are evident in Dmitri Shostakovich's opera *Lady MacBeth of Mtsensk* (*Ledi Makbet iz Mtsensk*) which in 1934 was considered the embodiment of socialist realist art, only to be officially condemned in 1936 as 'decadent formalism.'

Whether or not socialist realism is considered a method or an aesthetic is dependent upon which perspective it is viewed. Leonid Heller considers the three-part elements of 'ideological commitment,' 'Party-mindedness,' and 'national/popular spirit' to be the core of socialist realist aesthetics (Heller, 1997: 52). However, some view the cultural policy more as a method, especially when ascribed to music, because of the lack of clear definition as to what encompassed socialist realism (Makanowitzsky, 1965: 269). As in the case of *Lady MacBeth of Mtsensk*, within the span of two years the opera was pronounced as a fine achievement of Soviet art to being denounced as the exact antithesis of socialist realism.

If socialist realism serves as an aesthetic system, then it would be most logical to consider it in terms of functional aesthetics (see Herndon and McLeod 1990: 177-79). The function of socialist realism is principally nationalistic within the context of a socialist state. Art that was produced was expected to focus on the ideologies promoted

by the state (which would thus be reinforced by socialist realist art). Additionally, in conjunction with a socialist society, socialist realism was to accommodate the tastes of millions by creating a new culture that integrated the Russian heritage of the nineteenth century with the average tastes of the masses. A chief aim of socialist realism was to synthesize the classic and folk traditions thereby dissolving the opposition of 'high' and 'low' art (Olson, 2004: 45).

In essence, what socialist realism did offer was a set a rules and regulations established by the governing few. It provided a method and a means for creating art in service of the state; a prototypical blueprint for nationalistic art. However, it is imbued with various problems and paradoxes. The issue is threefold. First, there is reaching back to nineteenth-century Russian art, literature and music, resurrecting the old as models for new artistic creations. This includes the use of historic figures like Alexander Nevsky for the purpose of promoting nationalism. Espousing the glories of the Russian people in literature and songs demonstrates exclusivity within the multi-ethnic and multi-national Soviet Union, and it does not embrace 'all' the masses.   Secondly, there is symbolizing the future through the lyrics of songs ('Bright our future, as the blue above' – from "Song of the Motherland"), and in visual representations such as the sculptures of students atop the Moscow State University building gazing into the distance (a prominent feature in a variety of statues and sculptures). A further example of this is the relief of the monument to the cosmonauts located at the Memorial Museum of Cosmonautics (*Memorial'nyi Muzei Kosmonavtiki*)   near the *VVT* in Moscow (Figure 4-3).

Figure 4-3: Relief wall from cosmonaut memorial, Moscow

This relief shows a collection of various workers, soldiers, scientists, and a larger figure behind which perhaps symbolizes Mother Russia. These figures are presented all facing the same direction providing forward movement, focused on a future. Additionally, the Stalinist architecture itself provides a sense of forward momentum as if reaching upwards. Thirdly, as a provided set of directives for artistic creations, the art itself becomes somewhat stultified, there is no real progression. Art that is always to be 'national in form, socialist in content' does not leave room for any creative growth beyond work that serves a fairly specific purpose. Therefore, the focus towards a 'bright future' and sense of forward progression is not really attainable within the strictures of socialist realist art. Though different themes and subjects were permissible, the overall objective of art was the same.

Another paradox in this system surrounds the issue of the 'high' and 'low' culture. It may seem somewhat contradictory that the Soviet system promoted various

genres of classical music, which is fairly synonymous with bourgeois cultures in Western Europe. There was an attempt to eradicate the distinction between these two areas with the cultural policies. However, the integration of the 'high' and 'low' cultures does not seem to have been equally successful. In an article observing the effects of socialist realism on cultural tastes, Evgeny Dobrenko notes that the mass consumer's response to musical arts such as opera and ballet was an 'aggressive anti-aestheticism.' Dobrenko notes the reviews by a worker-correspondent of opera and ballet "represented the extreme expression of the cultural impasse reached by the mass consumers' efforts to 'master the cultural'" (Dobrenko, 1997: 137). In reference to a performance of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* (*Ozero lebedya*), one worker was quoted as saying:

> The viewer watches a story of a prince's love for a princess, and, as a result of his betrayal, the dance of a dying swan. That's how this most boring of all boring stories takes place in four acts, a story of the love of a 'prince' for a 'swan princess' which nobody needs (Dobrenko, 138).

Though this quote in from 1926, prior to the implementation of socialist realism, it is important to note that *Swan Lake*, and similar pieces were kept in the repertoire of many ballet and opera companies in the Soviet Union.

In his study of the aesthetic categories related to socialist realism, Leonid Heller remarks that everyday Stalinist culture included many bourgeois elements, including the concept of refinement that was close to kitsch (Heller, 1997: 63). In this instance, kitsch art imitates the methods of high art, but is mainly aimed to an accessible audience. Olson also follows the connections of socialist realism to kitsch noting that performances by Soviet folk choruses, including their orchestras and dance ensembles, exemplify kitsch. She notes that:

> Instead of challenging audiences, the performances of the Soviet folk choruses offered a pat, refined view of ethnic heritage, rendered in the form of a pleasant multi-sensory experience…They represented the core values of the political regime (such as optimism, professionalism, discipline, the glory of working collectively), and they called upon mythical patterns with deep roots in the culture (the folk) (Olson, 2004: 62).

Writing on the origins of this cultural policy in 1963 while socialist realism was still in effect, Max Rieser notes that the aesthetics of socialist realism were not from the proletariat, but from the bourgeoisie of nineteenth-century Russia. The aesthetic system became 'socialist' with the addition of party spirit and popular character. However, Rieser also notes that it easily became a tool of indoctrination, as well as political propaganda (Rieser, 1963: 51).

The main drive of socialist realist art came during the Stalin years of the 1930s and 1940s, it did continue past those decades and even flourished during the Brezhnev years in the 1960s and 1970s. However, as a method or aesthetic system, socialist realism was constantly in a state of flux, partly because the official concept of the policy changed during the Soviet era. Many factors influenced socialist realism: economic conditions within the country, international relations, internal politics amongst officials, and even the personal taste of the leaders. It has been noted that the condemnation of Shostakovich's *Lady MacBeth of Mtsensk* occurred in print the day after Stalin, and other Party officials attended a performance of the opera, leading to speculation that the denunciation had more to do with personal taste, than adhering to cultural policy (Schwarz, 1983: 124).

Vysotsky as a Socialist Realist Artist

By most standards and definitions of this cultural policy, *avtorskaya pesnya* in general would not be considered the embodiment of socialist realist art. However, I would argue that in fact some songs by Bulat Okudzhava and Vladimir Vysotsky, as well as others, do in fact reflect elements of socialist realism. In the specific case of Vysotsky, a majority of his musical works were not sanctioned by the government for satirical, ironic, or generally un-Soviet content. This might also be accompanied by his passion and unrestrained live performances. However, some of his songs were used in official works, in films or onstage. If we take into consideration the simplified definition of socialist realism as 'realist in form, socialist in content,' then in fact some of Vysotsky's songs actually fall within this designation. Some scholars have even noted that one reason why Vysotsky was able to continue his music output was because a number of his songs promoted the party line (Smith, 1984: 171-172 and Lazarski, 1992: 65).

As will be discussed in more detail in chapter six, many of Vysotsky's songs are divided into categories based on subject matter: sports songs, songs about the criminal underworld, labor camp songs, as well as a large collection of war songs. Although the lyrics of his songs display a more realistic portrayal of the war in comparison to the *massovaya pesnya*, they do not always reflect the similar kind of Party-minded optimism. However, they do express the 'realism' of socialist realism. An example of one of Vysotsky's war songs is "We Turn the Earth" (*My vrashchaem zemlyu*)[23]:

> From the frontier we made the earth turn in reverse
> (That was at the beginning)
>
> But our squadron commander corrected its course
> As his boot sent the Urals spinning

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[23] This translation by Kathryn Hamilton, published in Fyodorov, 1988: 121-22.

At last we were given the word to attack,
To retake every inch that we prized so—
But we never forgot how the sun, turning back,
Almost sank off the Eastern horizon

Without feet our advance we don't measure,
Nor vainly the flowers do we crush.
With our boots we apply all our pressure,
And we push! And we push!

In the wind from the east the stacked hay is laid low
And the sheep huddle up to the rocks as,
Without using a fulcrum, directing the blow,
We turn the earth round on its axis

Have no fear when the sun fails to set in the West,
For Doomsday's a tale for the old ones
The earth's just rotated wherever is best
At the will of our marching battalions

We cling to the low hills for protection—
Hating this evil so much
We press down on the earth, our knees flexing
And we push! And we push!

In this place shall you find not one solider alive,
Ready to hand himself over
But the corpses are useful to those who survive
To the living the dead offer cover

Will this stupid lead finish us all off at once,
From the rear, or point-blank find its billet?
Ahead someone's stormed an emplacement for guns,
And the earth has stood still for a minute

My footsteps I've left with my fellows—
I mourn for each poor fallen soul
In turn the earth's sphere with my elbows—
And I pull! And I pull!

A soldier stands up, and then instantly falls,
Got by a slug in the gizzard.

But westward, still westward our company crawls
To make sure that the sun rises eastward

We crawl through the mud ignoring the stench
With which the dank marsh is infested
The sun from its usual path does not flinch,
For we've burst through the battle-lines westward

Like wedding guests, fresh dews we sample
Careless whether our limbs are still whole
Our teeth take the earth by the stubble,
And we pull! And we pull!

The lyrics of Vysotsky's song describe the scene of fighting on the battlefield, and poetic tinges of the earth stopping its rotation due to the immense struggles of the war, and there are some elements of satire in his song. This song lacks the glorifications and descriptions of the land in the same way that "Song of the Motherland" does; however, this song serves as a continuation to the last stanza of "Motherland." The last stanza of "Song of the Motherland" reads as a threat to invading foes who attack the motherland, and Vysotsky's song describes those scenes, 'like the thunder, like the sudden lightning,' the battle that occurs against those enemies. Additionally, the collective element that is such an important factor in many *massovaya pesnya* is also present in Vysotsky's song. Although there is the minor focus on the individual 'I,' a majority of the song centers on the effort of 'we.'

Looking specifically at the musical sounds and performances, there may be reasons why Vysotsky would not have been regarded as a promoter of socialist realism. For one, the genre of *avtorskaya pesnya* was a sole endeavor with particular focus on the individual who wrote, composed, and performed his own songs. Although there were many solo performers in the Soviet Union considered 'official,' they were usually part of the composer-lyricist-performer effort, not a purely individual effort.

In consideration of the compositional style of *avtorskaya pesnya*, despite simple chord progressions and verse-refrain structure also found in *massovaya pesnya*, it is likely that it would not have been viewed as the embodiment of socialist realism. This aspect comes across primarily in live performances. In the case of Vysotsky, his guitar was oftentimes out-of-tune, and his 'untrained' voice and harsh vocal timbres stand out greatly from the controlled and restrained performances of 'official' music. This contrast can be seen in the cases of sanitized folk music, whose vocal timbres were changed, and when the music was written down, the improvisatory quality disappeared. *Avtorskaya pesnya* contains elements of improvisation, and in certain ways, is more like folklore than that promoted by the state. Additionally, Vysotsky was noted for his 'raw,' and 'passionate' live performances and by standards of socialist realist art, he was not practical or rational in his approach to musical performance (Lazarski, 1992: 65). However, when comparing the descriptions of Vysotsky's live musical performances to those onscreen, his film performances and recordings are much more restrained, in-tune, and frequently supported by extra music in background of his vocals and guitar. With the inclusion of Vysotsky's music in officially released films, it suggests that in those instances, his work satisfies the requirements of socialist realism.

It is for these reasons, the lyrical component and some music performances, that I would consider some of Vysotsky's songs to be following the prescriptions of socialist realist art. Moreover, if socialist realism as a cultural policy, or a method and its subsequent definitions were always in flux within the Soviet system, it is logical to think that what is perceived as socialist art would also change. In an essay published in 1990, Yury Andreev situates socialist realism in the traditions of literature that reflected a

process of humanization and democracy, noting that the priorities of socialist realist art altered from focusing on issues of class to the overall human and a peaceful coexistence. Andreev lists Vysotsky's work, among other eminent literary figures, as an example of elevating the stories of those who are of a lower, non-elite class (Andreev, 1990: 394). This would also imply that all songs by Vysotsky embody some aspects of socialist realism.

a. Alternative Realism

However, I would additionally agree with the concept Valery Tuipa illustrates that in twentieth-century there were two kinds of realisms: 'socialist realism' and 'alternative realism.' Despite the conservative quality of socialist realism in the 1930s to 1950s, Tuipa views it as a direct descendant of the avant-garde and leftist movement in art. Tuipa considers socialist realism to be grounded in political beliefs rather than on ideological ones, whereas 'alternative realism' is grounded on the 'aesthetics of actualization.' Actualization refers to art that reflected everyday life as opposed to that which revealed an idealized vision based solely on political ideologies as found in socialist realism. Among many examples of this variety of 'realism,' Tuipa lists Vysotsky's lyrics (Tuipa, 1990: 370). The actualization that is present in Vysotsky's lyrics would be telling an 'alternative' reality of Soviet life, one that was not described in the official *massovaya pesnya*. Therefore, the songs of Vysotsky that were recognized by official culture, whether part of a film or stage production, could be categorized as socialist realism, whereas the other songs display an alternative realism, a substitute to sanctioned art of the Soviet Union. It is important to note that of the examples Tuipa

provides, not all of them would be labeled as 'unofficial' as Tuipa's assessment of alternative realism also incorporates examples promoted by the state including *massovaya pesnya*.

Conclusion

It is most likely the case that *avtorskaya pesnya* was a reactionary effect to the state-created, state-sanctioned song production. As will be discussed in a subsequent chapter, *avtorskaya pesnya* was part of the amateur movement in music beginning in the post-Stalin years. Although the majority of Vysotsky's songs were not recognized as part of 'official' culture because they did not promote the ideology of state cultural policy, it still had a profound effect on the masses as is evident by his popularity in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. Vysotsky's popularity transcended the intelligentsia circles of metropolitan cities, and instead had mass appeal throughout the Soviet Union.

I believe that Vysotsky viewed his *avtorskaya pesnya* as a necessary artistic outlet for himself, not specifically for advancing any political agenda. This is because he wrote so many songs on various topics, and originally performed these songs for small groups of friends in private gatherings with no intention that they be recorded and spread so far throughout the country. Over time his popularity as an actor helped to propel his songs to larger audiences, and despite this fact Vysotsky viewed all of his listeners as friends ('comrades') and the small, private performances became larger concert gatherings.

In general, the typologies of sanctioned and unsanctioned music, and the existence of two types of 'realism' as portrayed in a variety of Soviet art, reflect the complex issues found in of Russian identity. Although 'sanctioned' and 'unsanctioned'

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or 'official' and 'unofficial' music, and socialist and alternative realisms represent

binaries, there is, in actuality, a multiplicity of categories that obscure any simple

dichotomous system of classification. The paradoxes of the socialist realist system of art,

the multiple 'realities' expressed in music and literature, and all consequent ideas of the

aesthetics or methods employed by socialist realist art link to the multiple layers of

identity existing within Russian culture. The Vysotsky songs that belong to the

'alternative realism' allow for an artistic innovation not permissible in the constraints of

cultural policies in socialist realism. It thereby permits an additional view of Russian

identity.

CHAPTER 5

SANCTIONED PERFORMANCES – VYSOTSKY ON STAGE AND IN FILM

The tenets of socialist realism continued as cultural policy during the remainder of the Soviet era, and not until *perestroika* (reconstruction) in the 1980s were apparent changes made with respect censorship and control of artistic matters. By 1988 some Soviet literary journals such as *Oktiabr*, *Literaturnaia gazeta*, and *Novyi mir* published several articles challenging the position of socialist realism (Milojković-Djurić, 1991: 62). However, in the Brezhnev era during the 1960s and 1970s, censorship was widespread, and it was during these years that Vysotsky was active as a *bard*. Although Vysotsky is known for his music as being 'unsanctioned' or 'underground' due to restrictions of censorship, his 'public' occupation as an actor on stage and in film helped increase his notoriety in the public eye in an official capacity. Additionally, some of his stage and screen performances utilized his songwriting abilities and performances of his original songs were often incorporated into productions. Therefore, there are occasions in Vysotsky's career in which the official and unofficial were fused together, when he could be viewed as the actor performing as musician.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the 'sanctioned' performances of

Vysotsky's music, all of which were integrated into stage and film. This chapter also

provides background into Vysotsky as an actor, which is an important component of his

identity as an artist. His education and accomplishments as an actor, I believe, were also

an important aspect of his other, 'unofficial' guitar poetry. Additionally, this chapter will

contextualize the period in which Vysotsky was active as an artist, which is important to

the cultural politics that the early *bards* confronted.

Vysotsky's Work at the Taganka Theater

After short stints at the Troupe of Miniatures (*Teatr minatyur*) and the Pushkin

Theater (*Teatr imeni Pushkina*) in Moscow, Vysotsky joined the Taganka Theater in

1964. This setting provided Vysotsky numerous opportunities by participating in

innovative theatrical stagings. Yuri Lyubimov, who became director of the Taganka

Theater in 1964, undertook bold and inventive performances of plays during the rather

conservative Brezhnev era. Lyubimov's ideas of theatrical staging often led to disputes

with Soviet officials, and also led to the occasional banning of productions. In some

respects, the Taganka Theater seems a ideal setting for Vysotsky's theatrical work since

much like Vysotsky's 'occupation' as a *bard*, productions at the Taganka Theater were

often subject to censorship and castigation by officials.

The Taganka Theater of Drama and Comedy was founded in 1945, and like many

theaters in the Soviet Union was affected by the cultural policies of Andrei Zhdanov, but

also profited from the Khrushchev's Thaw. After Lyubimov staged Bertolt Brecht's *The*

Good Person of Szechwan (*Khoroshii chelovek Sichuan*) in 1963 at the Vakhtangov

Theater, he was appointed director of the Taganka. Lyubimov added to the name of the theater *na taganke* (at Taganka), taken from its location on Taganka Square (*Taganskaia ploshchad'*). This new name was not officially recognized as it was still listed for many years as 'Theater of Drama and Comedy.' Lyubimov's renaming of the theater demonstrated his protest against standardized theater names referring to writers and directors (Pushkin Theater and Stanislavsky Theater), or referencing a specific repertoire. Instead, the theater title suggest Lyubimov's desire to address the 'local' people, and supporters of the theater refer to it simply as 'the Taganka' (Beumers, 1997: 2).

Like Vysotsky, Lyubimov himself had studied acting, and in 1934 entered the theater school at the Second Moscow Arts Theater which had grown of the First Studio of the Moscow Arts Theater (Gershkovich, 1989: 37). With his directorship at the Taganka, Lyubimov formed a new ensemble, with the inclusion of Vysotsky, and created his own repertoire which consisted of plays and adaptations of poetry and prose. In addition to the standard usage of lighting techniques and set design, Lyubimov also included various forms of theatrical arts into his production including music, choreography, mime, song and dance. Additionally, he revived some of the theatrical traditions of the 1920s developed by Vsevolod Meyerhold and Yevgeny Vakhtangov. This included theatrical ideas and philosophies that were repressed during Stalinism and forcibly replaced by the Stanislavsky system of method acting. Lyubimov's perspective of the function of theater was much like Brecht, to create a consciousness of the spectator as being in the theater, as opposed to the audience members being transported to another time and place. With the view that the audience should feel they are in a theater, viewing a presentation, there would be no need for the actor to completely embody a character or portray emotions

artificially. Instead, Lyubimov felt the actor should bring his or her own personality to

the role and respond to the role and the reaction of the audience. Birgit Beumers notes:

> [Lyubimov's] style was frequently criticized by orthodox and conservative
> critics for lack of psychological portrayal and for superficiality, since his
> theater was not a psychological theater, but an intellectual one – it was based
> on Brechtian *predstavlenie* (demonstration) rather than Stanislavskian
> *perechivanie* (emotional experience) (Beumers, 1997: 7).

With Lyubimov's approach, he thus created a new theatrical genre, the 'poetic' theater,

which evolves around one metaphor and integrates historical and biographical

perspectives (Beumers, 8). Lyubimov's unorthodox approach, which recalled earlier

theatrical innovators like Meyerhold[24], often led to disagreement and criticisms from

Soviet officials.

Functioning under the auspices of socialist realism, Soviet theaters were expected

to disseminate state ideology, and also were strictly controlled by both the state and the

Party. The Ministry of Culture was issued directives from both the Council of Ministers

and the Secretary for Ideology in the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

Additionally, the Main Administration of Culture of the Moscow City Council Executive

Committee, a lower level in the state apparatus, controlled theater repertoires, allocated

budgets, gave preliminary consent to each new play considered for production, and gave

final consent to a stage production subsequent to viewing. This hierarchy of councils and

committees assured that cultural policy was upheld, and censorship was tightly

controlled.

As Artistic Director of the Taganka Theater, Lyubimov was exposed to various

controls at both the state and Party levels. Therefore, he relied on the Artistic Council of

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[24] Vsevolod Meyerhold came under harsh criticism in the 1930s for his theatrical productions. Though he
survived the worst of Stalin's purges, he was arrested in mid-1939 and executed in 1940. He was
posthumously rehabilitated in 1955.

the Taganka which operated as an advisory board, motivational body, and defense committee for the theater. To counteract official interference of productions, Lyubimov assembled leading writers and critics, artists and scientists in the Artistic Council to help him contest state and Party demands. Many of these individuals were prominent members of the intelligentsia, some even considered dissident (Beumers, 1997: 3). From 1964 to 1984, Lyubimov established the Taganka Theater as a main center for avant-garde art in Moscow. He never created or took part in obvious political theater, but was more preoccupied with his perspectives and theories of theatrical production. However, Taganka was, as observed by Beumers, "theater created with and for the dissident intelligentsia and existed in conflict with officials" (Beumers, 8). In 1984, Lyubimov was stripped of his Soviet citizenship and worked abroad before returning to the Taganka Theater in 1989.

The reputation of the Taganka Theater was built to a large degree on the staging of Brecht play's which had been viewed by some as too 'colorful and challenging' to stage during the Stalin years (Smith, 1984: 147). Beyond the Brecht productions, various other performances gained the theater notoriety for experimentation. The first 'poetic performance' was *Antiworlds* (*Antimiri*) in 1965. This 'play' included Andrei Voznesensky reading his poetry at the beginning of the performance and then the poems were presented and enacted on stage by the actors. This production was followed by *Ten Days that Shook the World* (*Desyat′ dhei, kotorie vstryakhnuli mir* - 1965) loosely based on the book by Daniel Reed about the 1917 Revolution; *The Fallen and the Living* (*Pavshie i zhivie* – 1965), another 'poetic performance' presented as a montage of Russian war poetry, letters and memoirs; a return to Bertolt Brecht in a production of *The*

Life of Galileo (*Zhizn′ Galileya* – 1966); and Sergei Esenin's *Pugachev* (1967) about the historical account of the eighteenth-century Cossack rebel.   Other Taganka productions included *Mother* (*Mat′* – 1969) based on the novel by Maxim Gorky; *What Is to Be Done?* (*Shto delat′?* – 1970) based on the novel by Nikolai Chernyshevsky; *Protect Your Faces!* (*Zashchitite vashi litsa!* – 1970) the second montage based on poems by Andrei Voznesensky; *Hamlet* (1971) based on the translation by Boris Pasternak; *The Cherry Orchard* (*Vishnevii Sad* – 1975) by Anton Chekov; and *Crime and Punishment* (*Prestuplenie i Nakazanie* – 1979) based on Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel.

From the above list of Taganka productions, as well as numerous others, the repertoire predominantly focused on Russian or Soviet themes, though there was the occasional 'foreign' production added to the repertoire. In addition, Vysotsky had prominent or leading roles in the above mentioned productions, and by the 1970s was considered one of the key actors and the embodiment of the Taganka approach to theater (Smith, 1984: 147). In *Ten Days that Shook the World* he played the role of Kerensky, and in the *The Life of Galileo* and *Hamlet*, played the lead roles. He was also lauded for his performances in *Pugachev* as the runaway convict Khlopusha, and as Svidrigailov in *Crime and Punishment*. Perhaps his most well-known performance at the Taganka was as Hamlet which ran from its premiere in 1971 until Vysotsky's death in 1980.

Because music was such an important theatrical component of productions at Taganka, there were numerous times when Vysotsky would sing on stage, including the occasional use of his guitar. In the production of *Protect Your Faces!* in 1970, Birgit Beumers notes that it was the first time he had sung before a large audience. He sang his original song "The Wolf Hunt" (*Okhota na volkov*) which resulted in a great deal of

applause and enthusiasm from the audience (Beumers, 1997: 82). Vysotsky also appeared onstage in the opening scene of Taganka's production of *Hamlet*, sitting against the back wall of the stage, reciting Pasternak's poem "Hamlet," and accompanying himself on guitar. This opening scene, Beumers observes, breaks the fourth wall of the auditorium, bringing the audience in to not just observe the actions of a prince, but of an ordinary man from the street (Beumers, 1997: 111). Gerald Stanton Smith described Vysotsky's portrayal of the Danish prince as "a Hamlet of the street or even the gutter" (Smith, 1984: 149). In Lyubimov's production of the Shakespearean play, he had the actors wear neutral costumes so the audience would not remember the clothing, and portrayed Hamlet as someone aware of the events that had happened instead of an individual unraveling a mystery of his father's death. In this sense, Hamlet knew everything that had happened and just merely had to act. Therefore, the famous soliloquy of 'to be or not to be' was not so much a philosophical reflection as it was an exclamation (Beumers, 112). With Lyubimov's direction, Vysotsky portrayed a Hamlet who was more an 'everyman,' not a prince in an extraordinary situation. Similarly, this theme is also evident in a great deal of Vysotsky's *avtorskaya pesnya* as well.

Therefore, there were performances in which Vysotsky was seen onstage as a musician, the occupation that was not recognized by officials. However, this is not to say that censorship was not a problem with the productions staged at the Taganka, and those censorship measures were not solely due to the inclusion of musical performances. In reaction to *The Fallen and the Living*, the officials criticized the production for not containing formal innovations and a lack of insightfulness in its message. The officials viewed the inclusion of fascism as equaling Stalinism and the personality cult, and the

production included texts that were deemed controversial or unpublished such as Pasternak's poems from *Doctor Zhivago*. In all, nineteen changes were made to the production before it could premiere on November 4, 1965 (Beumers, 36). *Protect Your Faces!* only received one performance and was banned by the officials. Along with other issues to which officials objected, Vysotsky's performance of "The Wolf Hunt" was also viewed as controversial. There are various examples of censorship of Taganka productions, but in ways to counteract this, Lyubimov turned to Soviet classics such as Gorky and Chernyshevsky, stories that were construed as 'safe' and the embodiment of socialist realism.

The connection that Vysotsky had to the Taganka Theater was important as it served as his 'official' stage in the public eye. Vysotsky stated that he remained with Lyubimov at the Taganka Theater because of the troupe's commitment to experimentation (Smith, 1984: 147). Additionally, the reputation of the Taganka as a theater that was dynamic and provoking often coincided with Vysotsky's 'unofficial' music, and the theater stood in opposition to the conventional academicism of the Moscow Arts Theater. Vysotsky was trained as an actor at the Moscow Arts Theater and in the Stanislavsky method. This background, as well as the experimental work he engaged in at the Taganka, I believe are important factors in the guitar poetry he wrote and performed.

The strong relationship between Vysotsky and the Taganka Theater was evident in the impromptu gatherings for the actor that were held at the theater in July of 1980 on the occasion of his death. Not only did masses of people congregate at Taganka after hearing the news of Vysotsky's death, but Lyubimov held funeral services at the theater

and individuals were allowed to pass by his coffin. In conjunction with the funeral services, Lyubimov and the Taganka troupe assembled a production in memory of the actor titled *Vladimir Vysotsky* (1980).

This production consisted of seven sections, and a text that was comprised of poems and songs by Vysotsky, comments from his fellow actors, excerpts from Hamlet, and additional accounts of the artist, and transitional passages. The first of the seven sections placed Vysotsky within the contexts of Soviet culture, and is comprised of recorded songs and recited poems, and included a recording of Bulat Okudzhava's song "About Volodya Vysotsky" (*O Volodaia Vysotskii*). The second part included Vysotsky's 'street' and 'criminal' songs, the third section included Vysotsky's composed 'war' songs and poems, and ended with the reading of a superlative questionnaire from 1970 that all Taganka actors completed. The fourth section integrated the theme of 'fairy-tales' and dialogues amongst the actors in *Hamlet*, while the fifth section contained examples of Vysotsky's songs that exemplified Soviet life, such as his song "Dialogue in Front of a Television" (*Dialog pered televizorom*). The sixth section incorporated extracts from Taganka's *Hamlet* production, and the final segment centered on Vysotsky's premonition of death and included Lyubimov's favorite Vysotsky songs, "The Wolf Hunt" and "Unruly Horses" (*Koni priveredlivye*) (Beumers, 1997: 175-6).

Officials at the Main Administration on Repertoire objected to most of the songs included in the homage because the themes of alcoholism, death, and Stalinism. Most of these songs were never recognized in an official capacity by authorities and often appeared on *magnitizdat* recordings (self-made tape recordings). The production itself was banned by officials and was not performed for the public until much later. The

condemnation of the Vysotsky tribute provided official position of the artist's work as he had not been recognized for his *avtorskaya pesnya* during his lifetime, and even after his death his poetry was still not accepted as part of 'official' Soviet culture.

The Taganka went through various changes during the Soviet years including an additional, newly constructed stage, but typical battles with Soviet officials also plagued the theater. Between the years 1964-1984, four productions at the Taganka had been banned, including *Vysotsky*, but there were numerous concessions that Lyubimov had to make in various productions. While working on a production abroad in London in January of 1984, Lyubimov had been removed as Artistic Director of the Taganka Theater, expelled from the Party for not paying annual membership fees, and in July of 1984 was stripped of his Soviet citizenship. Despite this setback he continued to work abroad in various stage productions in Western Europe. In Lyubimov's absence Anatoly Efros was named director, though his direction of productions often resulted in struggles between Efros and Lyubimov's Taganka actors. Upon Efros' death in 1987, former Taganka actor Nikolai Gubenko was named director of the theater with the consent of the theater's ensemble. During Gubenko's tenure he revived older Taganka productions, but also managed to obtain official approval for a production of *Vladimir Vysotsky* which premiered in 1988. This had become possible with the changes in Soviet culture after Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms during *glasnost′* (openness). By 1989, Lyubimov returned to Moscow and his citizenship restored; he had regained his directorship of the theater while Gubenko had been appointed USSR Minister of Culture.

In the 1990-1991 season, theaters underwent reforms to assist the transition to market structures. By 1991 Gubenko had lost his ministerial post with Gorbachev's

resignation in December of 1991, and attacked Lyubimov for not staging enough productions. He formed his own troupe, "Fellowship of Taganka Actors" (*Sodruzhestvo Akterov Taganki*) in the same month. This new troupe consisted of individuals who were displeased with Lyubimov's new contract with the then Moscow mayor. This contract was intended to introduce a contract system for company members, but some members of the Taganka ensemble were upset because of Lyubimov's long absences for productions in the West undertaken since his return to Moscow. By September 1992, Gubenko's Fellowship appealed to then president Yeltsin to divide the theater, and after a vote the division was confirmed in April of 1993 (Beumers, 1997: 248). In July 1993 Gubenko occupied the new stage of the theater with the support of a militia unit by shutting off all connecting entrances and corridors between the old and new stage. Disputes between the two groups continued in courts for some time after, but to this day remain as two separate entities. The original theater (Figure 5-1) continues to be associated with Vladimir Vysotsky, and the Fellowship is also associated with the former actor as they have staged *Vladimir Vysotsky* in their performances[25]. Additionally, the official museum dedicated to Vysotsky is also located directly behind the adjoining theaters.

In general the Taganka Theater of the 1960s through the 1980s was classified by many as 'political theater.' However, this description is more of a misnomer as Birgit Buemers points out in a detailed study of performances at the Taganka Theater. She states that:

> although his [Lyubimov] productions were deeply rooted in the political
> reality of their time, this alone does not create political theater. Lyubimov
> has spent almost thirty years at the Taganka fighting for each production
> against either officials or press campaigns. Although this steeps some of

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[25] I attended a performance of *Vladimir Vysotsky* on August 14, 2004. The performance was sold out, with individuals sitting on the stairs of the aisles.

his productions in a cloud of scandal, making him the 'enfant terrible' of Soviet theater, it does not mean that his opposition was essentially political (Beumers 1997, 275).

Thus, productions at the Taganka Theater were not purposefully political in content, but due to stringent cultural policy and censorship within the Soviet Union, the reputation of the theater was eclipsed by the political nature and control of Soviet officials and bureaucracy. Therefore, the identity of Taganka Theater as a political entity is not by any means an unreasonable label due to historical context, but it is merely one of many factors that can be used to describe this artistic organization. This is the similar situation in which Vysotsky's 'unsanctioned' work as a guitar poet has been viewed, primarily as a political dissident than as simply a poet/musician.

Figure 5-1: Taganka Theater, Moscow

Vysotsky's Work in Film

In addition to Vysotsky's work onstage at the Taganka Theater, he was also visible as a film star in the 1960s and 1970s. Gerald Stanton Smith notes in his study of *avtorskaya pesnya*, Vysotsky was the nearest equivalent to a media superstar in the West (Smith, 1984: 145). This was due to a combination of stage and film appearances, in addition to his notoriety as an underground *bard*. In his twenty-five year career as an actor, he performed in more than twenty-five films. Along with his acting in movies, he also served as a songwriter or lyricist, and in some instances is seen on screen performing with a guitar. Therefore, there are some displays of Vysotsky as a legitimated *bard* in Soviet culture.

In addition to theatrical stagings, film and television appearances were important venues for the public to view Vysotsky as the 'media superstar.' One statement to attest to the impact of Vysotsky's star persona was reported by Pavel Leonidov:

> …in the film *Two Comrades Served*, Volodya played a WhiteGuard lieutenant in such a way that the terrified Ministry of Film immediately issued an order never to film Vysotsky in negative hero roles, because when this White Guard lieutenant, on the point of leaving his motherland, shot himself, the audiences started weeping. Soviet people feeling sorry for a White Guardsman! (Leonidov, 1980: 3).

This quote demonstrates not only the political issues of a famous actor portraying a White Guard (in this scenario, a non-communist escaping the country at the end of the Civil War), but the sympathies the audience demonstrated towards this non-communist character were definite signs of un-Soviet displays of affection.

Vysotsky served as a lyricist or songwriter for several film productions, some in which he also appeared as an actor. Among the films that include Vysotsky listed as a songwriter and actor include *I Came from Childhood* (*Ya priyekhal ot detstva* – 1966),

Vertical (*Vertikal* – 1966), *Dangerous Tour* (*Opasniye Gastroli* –1969), and *The Intervention* (*Interventsiya* – 1969). There are other film productions which list Vysotsky only as a song writer such as *Sasha-Sashen'ka* (1966), but in general there are numerous songs of his associated with Soviet films. These songs, of course, were often more benign in subject matter compared to the subversive, politically charged songs that appeared more often on *magnitizdat* recordings. One might say that like composers of art music using film scores as 'safe' methods of composing within the guidelines of socialist realism, Vysotsky also used film to compose *avtorskaya pesnya* guitar that was considered ideologically 'safe' by official standards.

An example of one of Vysotsky's film songs is "Song about a Friend" (*Pesnya o druge*) which appeared in the film *Vertical*. This film about mountain climbers features Vysotsky in the role of Volodya, an aid to the climbers on their quest to ascend a mountain together before an unpredicted snowstorm threatens their lives. "Song about a Friend" is one of many Vysotsky songs that center on the theme of mountains. *Vertical* also includes the Vysotsky song "Saying Goodbye to the Mountains" (*Proshchanie s gorami*), which stresses the importance of leaving the noise and bustle of the city to go to the mountains (or return to nature) as an escape. In *Vertical*, Vysotsky's *avtorskaya pesnya* serves as a contrast to the film score composed by Sophia Gubaidulina; however, the rendition of his songs in the film employs additional orchestral music (not composed by Gubaidulina) which was added in studio recording. The orchestral additions, including an accompanying xylophone, are not indicative of his live performances which usually consisted of only guitar and voice.

The lyrics of "Song about a Friend" are musically set in a strophic format, and fairly simple melodic and harmonic structures of the song are musically reminiscent of what one might hear in any type of Soviet *massovaya pesnya*. However, Vysotsky's song is sonically different from that genre in instrumentation and musical texture. The lyrics to "Song about a Friend"[26]:

> If your friend just became a man,
> Not a friend, not a foe - just so,
> If you really can't tell from the start,
> If he's strong in his heart,-
> To the peaks take this man - don't fret!
> Do not leave him alone, on his own,
> Let him share the same view with you -
> Then you'll know if he's true.
>
> If the guy on the peak got weak,
> If he lost all his care - got scared,
> Took a step on the frost - got lost,
> Tripped and screamed in exhaust,-
> Then the one you held close is false,
> Do not bother to yell - expel,-
> We can't take such aboard, and in short
> We don't sing of his sort.
>
> If the guy didn't whine nor pine,
> He was dull and upset, but went,
> When you slipped from the cliff,
> He heaved, holding you in his grip;
> If he walked right along, seemed strong,
> On the top stood like he belonged,-
> Then, whenever the chances are slim
> You can count on him!

Lyrically, "Song about a Friend" does not hit on the political issues, but instead comments literally on the reliance of mountain climbers, as well as metaphorically describing the relationship between two people, and stresses the 'collective' effort of mountain climbers. As stated in the previous chapter, the 'collective' notion is an

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[26] This translation published in: (Kneller, 2006).

important element in *massovaya pesnya* lyrics, as well as a tenet of socialist realism. In a speech at one of his concerts, Vysotsky stated that for this film and for writing the songs, he had to climb mountains, spend nights in a tent, and also listened to stories of mountain-climbers to understand their relationships and friendships in this way of life (quoted in Andreyev and Boguslavsky, 1990: 215).

The film performance of this song is much more subdued in comparison to the live performances for which Vysotsky was known. However, in the film, not only is his song heard as soundtrack, but he is seen with Russian seven-string guitar in hand performing. The role and performance of Vysotsky as musician is made evident to the audience, not hidden purely by film montage of the mountain climbers.

Another such film in which Vysotsky was very visible in his role as musician was in *Dangerous Tour*. Vysotsky portrayed George Bengalsky, the leader of a touring drama troupe of actors and musicians who secretly circulate communist literature for the cause of revolution in turn-of-the-century Russia. The storyline and characters of this film allow Vysotsky ample screen time as musician because he is seen quite a few times as George performing onstage, again with guitar. The storyline, and film itself as a work of art fit into the confines of sanctioned art, but the character of George Bengalsky provides Vysotsky with a musical outlet onscreen and allowing the audience to view him as a *bard* in official circles.

The songs that appear in *Dangerous Tour* include "Bengalsky's Couplets" (*Kupleti Bengal'skovo*), "A Ballad about Colors, Trees, and Millonaires" (*Ballada o tsvetakh, derev'yakh i millionerakh*) and "Romance" (*Romans*), all of which are sung by Vysotsky in a performance situation in front of an audience. In the case of "Bengalsky's

Couplets," Vysotsky is seen on camera holding a guitar, but it serves merely as a prop as he does not actually play the instrument during the performance. Nevertheless, the use of even a prop guitar symbolizes Vysotsky's 'other' occupation as a *bard*.

A final example of Vysotsky performing in films is *The Intervention* set in the last days of foreign involvement against a newly established Soviet Russia. The police are searching for a Bolshevik named Brodsky, and Vysotsky portrays Michel Voronov (Brodsky). In this film, he is also credited as a songwriter. Most of the songs are performed by other actors in the film, but Vysotsky sings the final song, "Brodsky's Song" (*Pesnya Brodski*). At this point in the story, Brodsky (Vysotsky) and another Bolshevik have been caught by opposing forces and are awaiting interrogation and execution in the jail cell. The lyrics to "Brodsky's Song"[27]:

> Like everyone, we are cheerful and sullen sometimes,
> But if there is the need to choose
> And making the choice is difficult –
> We choose wooden coats
> People! People!
>
> They will be offering us for a long time not to miscalculate:
> "Ah" they will say "what are you saying!
> You have not lived!
> You only need to start!"
> Well, and later they'll offer like: either – or!
>
> Either beaches, exhibition openings even
> Steamboats, in which are filled holds,
> Crews, horse riding, receptions, voyages –
> Or simply wooden coats
>
> And they will be cheerful and sullen,
> And will be in the role of wicked jesters and kind judges –
> But we will be offered wooden coats
> People! People!

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[27] English translation of lyrics obtained from the film *The Invention* (2001).

We can be offered to smoke:
"Ah" they will remember "you didn't smoke for a long time! Not so?
Yes you have not started living!"
Well, and later they'll be offered something

To smoke of a cigarette blew something over
One draw – more cheerful than a thought
Feeling like smoking!
But wooden coats need to be chosen

And they will be so polite and affectionate that,
They will offer [a] ready-made happy life,
But we will refuse and they flog very cruely,
People! People!

In the film, this song ends with the sound of a gunshot to symbolize Brodsky's execution. The character sings of choosing death for his convictions, rather than giving in to the captor's demands and living. Although the lyrics do not display any sense of optimism as found in *massovaya pesnya*, in the context of this scene Vysotsky's character, an outlaw Bolshevik, accepts his fate of death for political activities in which he greatly believes.

One Vysotsky film that was not released due to censorship was *Brief Encounters* (*Korotkie Vstrechi* – 1967). Though Vysotsky wrote songs for the film, the nontraditional film structure, by Soviet standards, and a lack of linear narration with random flashbacks proved ideologically problematic upon the film's completion and it was not released until 1987. Issues of a plot that incorporated a love-triangle between Valentina, Nadya, and Maksim (Vysotsky) proved difficult for Soviet censors (see Taubman, 1993: 369-71). The censorship case of *Brief Encounters* was due to issues of the storyline more so than Vysotsky's musical content, and it demonstrates the widespread censorship practices associated with any artistic venture.

Conclusion

The appearances of Vysotsky as a musician, performing his own songs on stage or in film, demonstrate his ability to negotiate the line between 'official' actor and 'unofficial' musician. Because of the sporadic concerts performed by Vysotsky due to political constraints, films such as *Vertical* were therefore a sanctioned method in which his fans could view him as musician. One Muscovite I interviewed in the summer of 2004 reinforced this point by mentioning that at one time she had a ticket to see Vysotsky perform in concert but it was cancelled by authorities. She mentioned that going to see Vysotsky's films gave her the opportunity to hear his music, and in some instances actually see him perform as musician. Even though it was not a live performance, for her it was a semblance of a live performance.

It is also important to note that songs used in theatrical or film productions, thus being recognized as 'official' Soviet culture, were just as popular as those that were mass consumed by underground recordings. In gatherings at Vysotsky's gravesite in Moscow, I witnessed groups of people singing "Song about a Friend," in addition to the more 'un-Soviet' songs. The incorporation of this song, once officially part of Soviet life demonstrates that Vysotsky's songs are equally revered by fans. It is definitely not a case in which the songs that parodied or questioned official Soviet ideology are not held in higher esteem because of their weightier subject matter.

In the context of dissident culture of the 1960s and 1970s, his status in the Taganka Theater allowed Vysotsky a public outlet for his *avtorskaya pesnya*. Acting as a occupation was an important aspect in the songs Vysotsky wrote. In concerts of his *avtorskaya pesnya*, he mentioned that theater, particularly Brecht, had a great impact on

his songs, and that as an actor, he could play different roles and therefore his songs were written on behalf of different characters. Additionally, he stated that the method of reciting his poetry in rhythm over the sound of his guitar to create a specific image came from his theatrical background (quoted in Andreyev and Boguslavsky, 1990: 208-9). With regard to censorship and specifically addressing songs for film and theatrical productions, Vysotsky noted:

> It also sometimes happens that songs written especially for a film or a theater production are not included in the film, for some reason, or a theater production may be suppressed, and then the songs live an independent life, going beyond the boundaries of the theater (209).

Therefore, Vysotsky acknowledged the censorship issues surrounding theatrical productions as problematic to his song output, but this statement also recognizes that despite the issues of suppression, his songs were listened to outside the intended performance context. His use of officially sanctioned films and theatrical performances served as only one outlet for his unofficial role of *bard*. This is not to say that Vysotsky purposefully wrote songs for films or theater with the aim to receive official approval for his *avtorskaya pesnya*; as with artists like Vysotsky and Lyubimov, producing art was the utmost importance, and dealing with the limitations of Soviet censorship was managed through alternative measures.

The theatrical and film scenario also demonstrates a case in which cultural policy differs from cultural practice given that an artist's official and unofficial role within the artistic community is oftentimes blurred. Moreover, the above illustrations reveal the complexity of cultural politics in a politically controlled environment. The complexity lies in what is the official state-sanctioned practice, as opposed to what exists in sub-cultural practices. Artists usually have found ways to circumvent sanctioned cultural

policies and practices, and allow their work to exist in alternative arenas, such as in the case of *magnitizdat* recordings.

CHAPTER 6

UNSANCTIONED PERFORMANCES – VYSOTSKY AS MUSICIAN

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the official occupation of Vysotsky as

an actor, and his unofficial position of musician coincided from time to time in stage and

film productions. Despite the fact that he was credited as songwriter or lyricist in some

films, he was never recognized in an official capacity as a performer of music and

therefore, due to restrictions set by the Ministry of Culture, Vysotsky was not approved to

present solo concerts as a musician. Because very few of Vysotsky's songs were released

by Melodiya,[28] the state-controlled recording firm, most recordings circulated by means

of *magnitizdat* methods. As a form of underground transmission of music, *magnitizdat*

recordings ensured that Vysotsky's many admirers were able to listen to his songs,

particularly the songs that contained messages that were un-Soviet in nature.

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[28] Gene Sosin notes that a Soviet record based on the songs from the film *Vertical* was produced in the mid-1960s (Sosin, 1975: 302). Additionally, the album sleeve to this recording is located in a display case at the Vysotsky Museum in Moscow, the album art consisted of a scene from the film and the Melodia insignia printed on the front cover.

This chapter will explore *avtorskaya pesnya* as a genre of music that began during the 'Thaw of the 1950s, and came to prominence through *magnitizdat* recordings during the Brezhnev era in the 1960s and 1970s. Additionally, I will address the phenomenon of *magnitizdat* recordings as an important factor in the dissident movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Finally, I will examine a sample of songs by Vysotsky which were 'un-Soviet' in comparison to songs of a more benign nature. With this aim, I hope to express the nature of Vysotsky's *avtorskaya pesnya* as part of the dissident movement and furthering his connection to concepts of 'alternative realism' as expressed by Valery Tuipa (see Chapter 4).

Era of Stagnation and the Dissident Movement

In the context of the Soviet period, *avtorskaya pesnya* is primarily situated within the Era of Stagnation of the 1960s and 1970s. This period of Soviet history combined many paradoxes which included economic growth followed by slowdown and stagnation. Culturally policies were more relaxed regarding artistic and musical creations (mostly in comparison with earlier periods such as under the leadership of Joseph Stalin), this period was known for the denunciation of dissident movements. Due to the political and social topics addressed in *avtorskaya pesnya*, this activity was viewed as a form of dissidence, therefore the dissident movements become particularly important for the cultural and political context of Russian *avtorskaya pesnya*.

In general, the dissident movements in the Era of Stagnation began with reforms implemented by Nikita Khrushchev who denounced many offenses that occurred under Stalinism (1928-1953). During the years of Stalinism, the state attempted to control

Soviet society, and Communist party organizations such as voluntary associations, trade unions, clubs and independent political organizations were strictly forbidden and much social activity was organized and run by the state. However, in the early post-Stalin period of the 1950s young people and intellectuals began to create and seek out activities outside of those sanctioned organizations. Similar dissident movements in Eastern Europe, particularly in Poland and Hungary, inspired Soviet students to form circles within the university setting.

The Brezhnev era marked a new stage in Soviet politics. By the 1960s, the top echelons of the state and party chain of command were completely dominated by a new generation of Soviet leaders. Their careers began under Stalin's purges of cadres in the late-1930s, and they had been promoted to replace Communists who had been part of the revolutionary struggles at the inception of the Soviet Union. In contrast, the new generation of leaders represented by Brezhnev were brought up, trained, and promoted completely within the Stalinist system. As Alexander Chubarov explains, "Most of them [the new leadership] were pragmatic and mediocre functionaries, a product of a long-term personnel selection carried out by the dictator. They were not inclined to take risks or follow through on big objectives, but excelled in bureaucratic intrigues and politicking" (Chubarov, 2001: 143).

Additionally, the Era of Stagnation was marked by the economic circumstances in the country. During the 1960s, the Soviet economy continued to follow the course of forced industrialization implemented by Stalin in the 1920s, and the years of Khrushchev and Brezhnev represented extended industrialization and an attempt at spreading it to all branches of the economy. However, as the Soviet Union continued to industrialize, other

developed capitalist countries entered a postindustrial stage and reaped the benefits of the technological revolution. While advanced Western countries utilized new technological methods, the Soviet economy continued to develop by putting more human and natural resources into production which resulted in a labor shortage and even led to a growing demand for unskilled manual labor. Although the country had pioneered space flight and was a world leader in some areas of science and technology, manual workers accounted for 40% of the entire labor force in industry, 60% in construction, and 70% in agriculture (Chubarov, 2001: 145). This also led to issues of wage leveling at the expense of better qualified engineers.

Even though the Thaw was much less stringent than the earlier Stalin years, many view the Era of Stagnation as a return to a more conservative cultural system. Richard Stites notes that as the Soviet cultural structure became more rigid, counter-systems appeared to offset the official culture. This included the second economy of the black and gray markets, and dissident intellectual and political undergrounds (Stites 1992, 148-49).

Most dissident views expressed early in the Era of Stagnation were not expressly anti-socialist, but verged more on pointing out the deficiencies of the Soviet apparatus. On the whole, dissidents were a small minority of the population, but the impact of their work was felt beyond the 1960s and 1970s. They also received attention in the West as filtered through Cold War media. Additionally, most dissidents were professionals and intellectuals who directed the various political, cultural, and economic activities within the Soviet Union (Suny, 1998: 431). There were also various movements among dissidents such as the socialist dissidents who proposed a purer form of Leninism. Early

on in the movement the most pronounced views were those encompassing liberal, conservative, and nationalistic ideals. One of the more well-known voices of the dissident movement was physicist Andrei Sakharov who opposed the monopoly of the Communist Party and favored a rule of law, human rights, and intellectual freedom. Ronald Suny notes that most dissidents such as Sakharov, and author Alexander Solzhenitsyn, included an 'eclectic' mix of personalities and often circulated their own typed journals (Suny, 1998: 430). The Brezhnev government often repressed threats to its rule, sometimes through minimal use of violence.

At the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, the dissident movement also turned towards a conservative, neo-Stalinist, and Russian nationalist direction. Growing numbers of intellectuals drew their views from nostalgia for the Russian past and an idealized love for the 'lost' Russian village. Many writers during this phase of dissidence longed for the authenticity of the Russian peasant life and celebrated rural and nature themes in their works. But from this movement also came malevolent ideals of the loss of what was regarded as truly Russian at the hands of 'foreign' elements such as the Jews, the Bolsheviks, and Western influences (Suny, 433). The dissident movement also suffered with the imprisonment and incarceration in mental hospitals of the more steadfast proponents, as well as the exile of Solzhenitsyn.

By the mid-1970s, the dissident movements had been splintered into the nationalistic right and the liberal left. The leftist dissident movement that focused on the progression of human rights within the Soviet Union received the most attention from the West, but inside the country the groups that made up this movement were small in numbers and generally cut off from the larger population. Mostly, the nationalistic

movements, particularly those of non-Russians such as in Ukraine, received more broad support within the Soviet Union. On the whole, the Soviet population remained indifferent to the critiques of the dissidents, and to politics in general during this period. With regard to the dissident movement, the middle-class in general was optimistic about the Soviet system in the 1950s and 1960s, and though there were the occasional complaints of inefficiencies, shortages, and lack of freedom, people observed that their own lives improved significantly over time. The occasional political leader, such as Nikita Khrushchev in the early 1960s, would be singled out and blamed for the short comings of the system, but despite faults of the system, there was also a sense of optimism amongst the population with material achievements, a sense of superiority of the Soviet system over Western capitalism, and patriotic pride in scientific successes like Sputnik and the space flight of Yuri Gargarin (Suny, 1998: 431).

Although the Era of Stagnation was noted for its idling economic situation, and aging politicians and bureaucrats, one area that flourished a great deal was the 'shadow' or 'second' economy, more widely referred to as the black market. An institutionalized black market existed since the beginning of the Soviet Union. During Khrushchev's tenure, the black market emerged as a crucial element alongside the official economic system. The growth of the second economy occurred so quickly that officials created harsh penalties for those who moonlighted and made an income on the side of their official occupation, or for those viewed as 'parasites,' people who had no official occupation but allegedly made a living from the black market (Malia, 1994: 368). Nonetheless, this economy thrived under Brezhnev and provided retail goods that were offered by the system but in short supply. It also offered imported and luxury items that

were not supplied by the state apparatus. Within this black market system, *magnitizdat* recordings (home-made tape recorded cassettes) of unsanctioned musicians like Vladimir Vysotsky were made available for purchase. In the case of Vysotsky, the recordings were mostly from concerts he performed and included a majority of songs that were never released by Melodiya, the state-controlled recording company. The availability of such recordings increased the popularity of figures like Vysotsky, and also allowed for large numbers of individuals to hear unsanctioned music.

Avtorskaya Pesnya as Musical Genre

As a genre, *avtorskaya pesnya* began during the post-Stalin era of the 1950s, but at its height was most popular during the 1960s and 1970s. The genre has its roots in earlier musical styles including 'gypsy song' (*tsiganskiya pesnya*), 'cruel romance' (*zhestokii romans*), and 'criminal songs' (*blatnaya pesnya*). Each of these styles has its own history and origin, and in some cases date back to eighteenth-century Russia (See Smith, 1984: 60-87). In various ways, each of the above song-styles was an influence on *avtorskaya pesnya*, particularly that written by Vysotsky. For instance, Smith notes that of the major *bards*, Vysotsky most overtly personified the gypsy style sometimes performing with the 'unbridled, passionate emotion' that was often characterized by gypsy songs (Smith, 63).

Richard Stites remarks on the importance and popularity of gypsy songs in pre-Soviet Russia noting that an upper-class fascination with Gypsy culture related to ideals of 'freedom' and 'looseness' in Russia. This sense of freedom was not tied to political liberty, but as gypsies were viewed as homeless and encompassed a sense of wandering

from an unknown homeland, they evoked the Russian mood of *toska* – an "ineffable longing for something lost or far away" (Stites, 1992: 13). Additionally, Stites notes that the gypsy song-style musically contained "violent and rhythmically exotic flourishes of uncontrolled passion – intimations of sex, hysteria, flights of fancy, and floods of champagne" (Stites, 1992: 13). Two leading musical example of this genre include "Dark Eyes" (*Ochi chorny*) and "Two Guitars" (*Dve gitari*), both of which employed sudden tempo changes, and accelerando and crescendo melodic phrasing that is characteristic of this musical style. Vysotsky even wrote a song with direct connection to the gypsy-style called "Gypsy Song" (*Tsiganskaya pesnya*) in which he employed many of the themes and sounds found in the gypsy song-style.

Additionally, each of the three aforementioned musical styles had an impact on the development of twentieth–century urban popular songs in general. The early gypsy songs helped popularize the seven-string guitar in Russia (Smith, 1984: 61), the cruel romances were a ballad-type song containing strong narrative elements sometimes with parody and irony, and the criminal songs focused on the criminal underworld including stories of betrayal and revenge. In particular, the latter genre flourished during the NEP period of the 1920s which was rife with 'underworld' activity, and was also believed to have flourished in the Soviet labor camp system (Smith, 70).

The above mentioned genres, considered to be part of Russian folklore, were labeled as bourgeois and did not reflect the idealized vision of Soviet life that authorities wanted to depict. Thus objectionable folklore, including genres that reflected pagan or Christian worldviews, existed underground. This was in opposition to what has been deemed by some as Soviet 'fakelore' and 'pseudofolklore,' folklore that was often

contrived or sanitized to correspond to established ideology (Olson, 2004: 42). Olson states that under the Soviet system, Russian folklore "became bleached of its particularity and its local flavor, and lost its connection to the natural and spiritual worlds (including both Christian and pagan supernatural foundation)" (Olson, 2004: 42). Examples would include 'folk' music as performed by the Piatnitskii Russian Folk/Popular Choir, the Red Army Chorus and Dance Ensemble among many other state-sponsored organizations. Accordingly, most folklore of this period was not a spontaneous manifestation of people's lives, but a manufactured and idealized version of everyday life.

Along with the constructed genres in the Soviet musical canon, the genre of *estrada* also received official support from authorities. In general, *estrada* refers to staged performances encompassing a variety of entertainment, though in this instance the term refers specifically to Soviet pop music. Whereas *massovaya pesnya* focused on a collective group performance including folk and dance ensembles, *estrada* tended to focus on individual stars, and two famous names from the later years of the Soviet period include Alla Pugacheva and Valery Leontev (see MacFadyen, 2001). As in *avtorskaya pesnya*, the text of *estrada* is held in high regard, and a majority of *estrada* songs centered on themes of love. Despite official recognition, it is important to note that *estrada* was not completely devoid of criticism by authorities from time to time (McFadyen, 2001: 46). Most notable was the persona of Pugacheva who became a female cult figure during the Brezhnev era, and had been branded by the intelligentsia as 'vulgar' and deemed 'wild' by authorities with occasionally open disapproval of her work (Stites, 1992: 157).

During the 1960s and 1970s, *avtorskaya pesnya* existed alongside officially recognized genres like *massovaya pesnya* and *estrada*. However, *avtorskaya pesnya* was a form of urban folklore in comparison with much 'official' folklore. Olson notes that 'truly authentic' folklore as a spontaneous expression of groups of people did exist in the Soviet era and consisted of such practices as the songs of Soviet prisoners, witty or crude *chastushki* (Russian limericks) of urban areas, and children's rhymes (Olson, 2004: 43). One key element that distinguishes genres such as *avtorskaya pesnya* and various demonstrations of 'fakelore' is the notion of spontaneity, amateurism, and simplicity. Therefore, one may say that as a form of urban folklore, *avtorskaya pesnya* was a reactionary genre embodying those elements that were in direct opposition to sanctioned traditions.

As a musical style this genre symbolized the antithesis of official songs in both musical characteristics and performance. Whereas *massovaya pesnya* were often rousing choral compositions full of thick textures and large orchestral accompaniments, *avtorskaya pesnya* is quiet and more intimate with emphasis on the text of the songs and usually accompanied by a solo guitar. The amateur-like nature of *avtorskaya pesnya* also contrasted with Soviet *estrada*. In *avtorskaya pesnya* the rhythms and melodies are often determined by the lyrics, *estrada* lyrics are viewed as a separate exercise from the music thus relying on a trio of poet, composer, and performer (MacFadyen, 2001: 46).

Avtorskaya pesnya as a genre is generally accepted as an amateur art. During the Soviet era, folk traditions that were once viewed as amateur activities became increasingly professionalized, as was the case with the Piatnitskii Chorus. As such, Laura Olsen views *avtorskaya pesnya* as part of the young people's music culture that

paralleled the folklore revival of the 1960s. This revival saw young academics, including the notable Dmitri Pokrovsky, in search of 'authentic' folklore as it existed in the rural areas of the country, and was precipitated by ethnographic journeys seeking out Russian folk music. Olson notes that the music of the 'bard movement' was not folkloric in the sense of rural folk music traditions, but that it constituted folklore because its sources were drawn from the folk-like gypsy and underworld songs of urban folklore. Additionally, many of the songs constitute folklore because they were memorized and played by 'ordinary citizens' (i.e. amateurs) and became part of oral culture (Olson, 2004: 72). Alexander Fyodorov viewed Vysotsky's songs as a folkloric because the absence of 'official' printed texts and sheet music made Vysotsky's song officially anonymous and therefore belonging to everyone (Fyodorov, 1988: 116).

It is important to note that amateur musical activities were typical in the Soviet era, and were often part of music clubs linked to various industrial enterprises or Houses of Culture. These establishments served and organized cultural activities at local levels. Leisure interests at such locations included group activities like choirs, theatricals, dancing, and musical ensembles that usually focused on folk instruments like the balalaika. Creative writing groups also existed in such places. Additionally, numerous leisure activities like camping or hiking provided settings for the singing of songs in an amateur setting (Smith, 1984: 43). The *avtorskaya pesnya* movement began in such circumstances in the 1950s, the amateur music-making activities, and by the 1960s had flourished. The nature of homemade recordings also reinforced the amateurism of the movement. The portable cassette-recorder which could be taken to a gathering of any

size audience could also be used to either record performances or playback for others to hear.

I would stress that amateurism as related to *avtorskaya pesnya* does not connote music that is substandard. Even though the focus of *avtorskaya pesnya* is on the poetry component of the song, the musical accompaniment on guitar provides a necessary rhythmic and chordal foundation for which the poetry is then sung. Descriptions made by previous scholars are unflattering with regard to the musicality of *avtorskaya pesnya*. Gerald Stanton Smith employs descriptives such as 'primitive,' and 'tonally poor,' in reference to the voice. In Smith's view the guitar is no more than functional and serves primarily as a 'rhythmic prop' (Smith, 1984: 97). Laura Olson notes that the music of *avtorskaya pesnya* was "characterized by its underscored lack of professionalism, and the casual, even mediocre guitar technique" (Olson, 2004: 72). These explanations are somewhat comparative views based on the various musical genres found in the Soviet Union of the time, such as *massovaya pesnya* and *estrada*, and even in Olson's comparison of the 1960s revival of Russian folklore. The amateurism of *avtorskaya pesnya* was recognized by the *bards* themselves. Smith does note that Bulat Okudzhava admitted, even boasted, that his guitar techniques were mediocre and his voice untrained (Smith, 1984: 120). Thus, musical proficiency was not a requirement for *bards*, but musical expression through voice and instrument helps to define the genre.

Smith's and Olson's views of the music of *avtorskaya pesnya* are correct in estimations of simplicity of both guitar accompaniment and melodic content. However, I would underscore that because the lyrics are of the utmost importance in *avtorskaya pesnya*, it is imperative that the musical accompaniment be simple. In my research of

avtorskaya pesnya, it is apparent that the musical sounds not be a distraction for the message of the poetry to be clearly understood. The *bards* did employ the use of musical accompaniment in different ways. There is also another rationale for the simplicity of musical sounds in *avtorskaya pesnya*. As an amateur musical activity, the guitar accompaniment of simple chordal patterns and ostinatos can be achieved with minimal knowledge of the instrument or technique of positioning the hand on the fingerboard. The guitar is also a portable instrument which allows for a variety of performance sites with large or small audiences, and it was also produced in high numbers in the Soviet Union.

The simplicity in *avtorskaya pesnya* is then part of the aesthetics of this genre. It stands in contrast to the diverse musical genres of the period, but particularly with the stylized, or sanitized versions of Soviet songs. The aesthetic system of *avtorskaya pesnya* includes the musical sounds, as well as the lyrical content. In general, themes of songs varied greatly; war was a popular topic and addressed by many *bards*, the ever watchful neighbors, nepotism, or the hypocrisy in the Soviet system. Important literary devices such as satire and irony were not expressed in 'official' songs but copiously used in *avtorskaya pesnya*. The use of such literary tools helped *bards* convey the realities of Soviet life, and therefore demonstrate the paradoxes found in *massovaya pesnya*.

When compared to performances of *massovaya pesnya*, or even to Western tuning practices in general, *avtorskaya pesnya* does wander 'out of tune' from time to time. This is however found more often in live performances than in the studio recordings that exist. There are perhaps assorted reasons for the 'out of tune' sound in the guitar, most importantly because this genre was thought of as an amateur enterprise and *bards* were

not as concerned with virtuoso skills on the guitar. Additionally, because the lyrics were of more importance than music, accuracy in pitch would not have been as much of a concern. Additionally, the voice as 'tonally poor' is an unfair description for an amateur genre, and assumes that *bards* were expected to achieve a level of mastery in vocal technique. I would assert that the voice, the instrument transmitting the poetry, is an extremely important element in *avtorskaya pesnya* because it gives the *bard* and his message permanence when recorded, and as will be discussed in the following chapter, singing was executed in different manners by individual *bards*. Thus it is not a matter of being 'untrained,' but simply a voice espousing the 'true' concerns and frustrations of Soviet life. The timbre of the voice becomes important sonically as it helps to distinguish one *bard* from the next, therefore serving as a distinguishing identity marker. The vocal timbre is important because the uncertainty of pitches in the melodies, or dramatic effects employed by specific *bards* matches the messages conveyed through the songs that were also outside the strictures of Soviet ideology.

Scholars like Smith state that musical sounds are not the focus of *avtorskaya pesnya*, and Vysotsky admitted that he viewed his *avtorskaya pesnya* not so much as 'songs,' but as poems with a rhythmical base (Andreyev and Boguslavsky, 1990: 201). However, the chosen method of singing the poetry and accompanying it with rhythmic guitar chords emphasizes that this method of transmitting the poetic message itself defines the importance of communication in a musical manner. Although Vysotsky recognized the importance of lyrics over music, he also acknowledged the value of rhythmic speech. Bulat Okudzhava who began singing his own *avtorskaya pesnya* in the 1950s, was an important influence on Vysotsky who had heard Okudzhava sing poetry

and noted, "I saw that lines of poetry which I had previously read with my eyes became much more effective when he [Okudzhava] sang them to a guitar" (201). It is for this important reason that *avtorskaya pesnya* as a genre is a significant musical style. In a singing format these dissident messages were conveyed to numerous people throughout the country.

It is also important to mention that the use of song format with the repetition of melody lines and stanzas would help in the aid of memory. In the situation of not having readily printed texts as a memory aid, the melodic component helps to imbed the words better into the memory, and therefore facilitate the audience understanding of the stories and ideas being transmitted by the *bards*. In the case of Vysotsky, he often revealed a reality of Soviet life, and at times exposed the darker aspects of the Soviet experience that would never be found in *massovaya pesnya* or *estrada*. Because a great many of the topics *bards* chose to address in their songs remained outside of official ideology, the untrained voice and slightly out-of-tune strings on a guitar correspond to the themes of the songs that were slightly, sometimes overtly, outside of 'official' Soviet life. Therefore, the aesthetic sounds of this genre which did not fall into Soviet ideology do not always fit into standard tuning systems or academic practices of trained vocal techniques.

Magnitizdat Culture

Within the restrained artistic climate of Soviet society, artists creating works outside the limitations of Soviet cultural policy had to find alternative means of disseminating material. Gerald Stanton Smith noted four basic measures that artists in

the Soviet Union employed in order to adhere ideological constraints: choosing silence and withdrawing from artistic ventures, ignoring rules and sending work abroad, emigrating – either a voluntary emigration or enforced exile, or opting to circulate materials through private methods (Smith, 1984: 91-2). Not each of these methods was available at all times. For example, in the Stalin years silence was the safest method.

Due to the underground status of *avtorskaya pesnya*, most of the music was circulated through means of *magnitizdat*. The term is a contraction of the words *magnitofon* (magnetic tape) and *izdatel´stvo* (publishing). This phenomenon is linked with *samizdat* (distribution of uncensored writings of one's own) literature that emerged in the late 1950s. The term *samizdat* was credited to a Moscow poet who described the bound, typewritten publication of his own poems as *Samsebyaizdat* (publishing house for oneself), and was derived as an analogy from the acronyms for official publishing houses such as *Gosizdat* (State Publishing House) (Skilling, 1981: 53). However, underground literature such as that circulated via *samizdat* or *magnitizdat* methods was not a new occurrence because the Bolshevik party and other revolutionary movements had relied on underground publications to disseminate their viewpoints and help advance the cause of revolution. However, in the case of *samizdat* literature, the issue was not merely a question of distributing political material, but literature that did not meet the approval of state-sanctioned art.

Samizdat as a term does not have any one precise definition for it has been used to refer to works that were 'typewritten copies,' 'hand-written copies,' 'or 'unapproved material reproduced unofficially' either by hand, typewriter, mimeograph or occasionally Xerography (Skilling, 54). As for recordings, in the Soviet Union little was known about

the magnetic tape recorder prior to the 1960s, and copies of banned jazz music and gypsy romances were unsophisticatedly scratched on medical X-ray plates and played on phonographs (Sosin, 1975: 276). *Magnitizdat* recordings were made possible beginning in the early-1960s when large-scale Soviet manufacture of tape recorders began. Gene Sosin noted that prior to 1960 there was no documentation of tape recorders produced in the country; however, in 1960 over one hundred thousand machines were produced, and in 1965, over four hundred and fifty thousand recorders were produced, and by 1969 that number reached over one million (Sosin, 277).

Magnitizdat, which often contained unsanctioned music, Western music, or spoken verse, was reproduced either from foreign broadcasts or reading and playing at home. The recordings could be acquired either through the black market or via acquaintances and friends; often through a chain of such contacts one might receive a recording of a recording, and so on. Unlike *samizdat* literature which either took a large amount of time or necessitated difficult to obtain machinery, tape-recorded music was accessible to those who did not own a tape-recorder because of convenience and quick reproductions. Although the songs of *bards* were not the sole content of *magnitizdat* recordings, it is believed to be the first subject reproduced in millions of copies and dispersed throughout the Soviet Union (Yurchak, 1999:34 83).

The tape-cassette recorder was a device whose usage coincided with the dissident movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and made the circulation of un-Soviet thoughts and ideas possible. A crucial fact remains that the technology of the tape-recorder was more conducive for transmitting unofficial art. The technological demands of television and film necessitated that they were completely controlled by state monopoly in the Soviet

Union, and because of these issues there were no significant dissident attempts in these areas (Smith 1984, 92). In comparison, the tape-recorder was more affordable and easily portable which allowed for the tapings of various concerts and small intimate gatherings where *bards* performed their *avtorskaya pesnya*. The recordings produced by these devices were circulated either through the informal networks of friends or sold on the black market. During one of his tape-recorded concerts, Vysotsky remarked on passing by a gentleman who was selling *magnitizdat* tapes of *bards* including his songs. Upon recognizing the *bard*, the man offered Vysotsky a percentage of his profits (Andreyev and Boguslavsky, 1990: 207-8).

Authorities acknowledged the presence of *magnitizdat* 'publications' that circulated and they occasionally acknowledged the existence of recordings. Soviet publications occasionally recognized *magnitizdat* by criticizing the practice and the *bards* whose music the cassettes contained. In the mid-1960s articles appearing in Soviet literary journals ridiculed over twenty underground *bards* such as Bulat Okudzhava and Alexander Galich, and referred to *magnitizdat* as an uncontrollable epidemic. Additionally, journals criticized Vysotsky for singing on behalf of alcoholics and criminals, individuals deemed disgraceful in Soviet society (Ryback, 1990: 46). In 1965, Soviet composer Ivan Dzerzhinskii commented in the journal *Literaturnaia gazeta* that the distribution of magnetic tape presented a 'danger' because distribution was so simple. The danger that Dzherzhinskii cautioned focused on the glorification of 'shameful' and 'bitter' indiscretions of one's youth which was an ongoing theme in many *avtorskaya pesnya* (quoted in Vail and Genis, 1988: 114).

The quality of the cassettes was by no means superior or professional. The typical transmission of *magnitizdat* in the informal networks consisted of a friend of a friend, and so forth, who acquired the recordings and passed them on to others. Thomas Cushman notes that with this method of transmission, the recordings were 'decidedly inferior' compared to mass produced tapes from the West. This problem was increased by the poor quality of recorders available and the poor quality of recordings which oftentimes would be recordings of recordings of recordings, and on and on (Cushman, 1995: 40). Gerald Stanton Smith even equates the quality of the recordings to the amateur sounds of the music (Smith, 1984: 97). It is true that many of the recordings from live concerts or even intimate gatherings were amateur in nature, though there are various reasons for this, namely the fact that *magnitizdat* recordings were created 'underground,' and subverting the one state-sponsored recording company that existed.

The circulated *magnitizdat* recordings were a combination of formal concerts or informal gatherings in which a cassette recorder happened to be present. In the formal concerts Vysotsky performed, he often addresses the audience, discussing either the songs or anecdotes about himself and his background, or occasionally referencing his popular persona. Other recordings demonstrate a more intimate, even spontaneous atmosphere. In one recording of Vysotsky singing the popular gypsy folk tune "Dark Eyes" (*Ochi chorny*), there is small conversation between Vysotsky and his 'audience,' and in the background a sound of falling dishes, as if recorded in a restaurant or café, can be heard. The audible sounds demonstrate an amateurish quality in the recordings, but also the impromptu situations that people recorded.

It is important to note that *avtorskaya pesnya* were just one of many items that were transmitted with tape recorders. There were significant portions of Western pop and rock music that circulated as well. In his work studying musicians in the rock music counter-culture of Leningrad, Thomas Cushman notes that what most musicians learned about musical styles from the West was done through the tape-recorder culture, and this network started with musicians wanting to learn what was new on the scene, and through the informal networks, it easily spread to throughout the country (Cushman, 1995: 41). Thus, the informal networks became lifelines for the transmission of various content including musical styles and sounds, as well as the messages within song lyrics. Smith also points out that *magnitizdat* and *samizdat* was something of a necessity and did not always contain politically subversive content (Smith, 1984: 96). Supply shortages were commonplace in the Soviet Union, therefore the practice of publication and transmission 'for oneself' became essential when supply could not meet demand. It is common to find *magnitizdat* recordings of Vysotsky songs that were viewed as acceptable, such as "Song about a Friend."

An interesting parallel can be drawn between the *magnitizdat* movement, and the tape-cassette culture of India that Peter Manuel discusses in his 1993 publication. In his case study, Manuel notes the new forms of mass media that have occurred in India, specifically the impact that the cassette media had with regards to the dissemination of music. Manuel sees the advent of such media as a 'democratic-participant' medium based in grassroots movements. He notes that, "cassettes, unlike films, can be used at the owner's convenience and discretion; they thus resist various forms of control and homogenization associated with the capital-intentsive, monopolistic 'old' media of

television, cinema, and radio" (Manuel, 1993: 2). With a democratic-participant control, individuals, not state or capital monopolies could decide what contents would be included and transmitted via a cassette tape. Similarly, *magnitizdat* recordings could be assembled at the discretion of the individual who recorded a performance, or the person who was rerecording the contents to be passed on to others. In the Soviet Union, such practices diverted the state monopoly and control over media.

The cassette-recorders and *magnitizdat* recordings did have many advantages by allowing the *bards* to declare their words and simultaneously give them permanence by averting Soviet censorship. They also became a memory aid for people listening because the tapes facilitated the learning of songs by heart (Caute, 2003: 85). The copying of tapes was also easy, though exact numbers of *magnitizdat* recordings will never be known. Some estimates of *magnitizdat* recordings note that recordings of Bulat Okudzhava reached around one million in the 1960s, and several million recordings of Vysotsky in the 1970s (Lebedewa, 1991: 235). Despite the quality of these recordings, they remain an important statistic of Soviet censorship because they contain the ideas and thoughts that were not expressed in 'official' culture. Even though the quality of these recording may be comparatively substandard to studio recordings, one cannot belie the importance of the tape-cassette recorder in the history and transmission of *avtorskaya pesnya*. If it was not for this mechanism, the recordings of many *bards* would not be available today, and perhaps the *avtorskaya pesnya* movement would not have existed as it did.

Vysotsky as 'Un-Soviet' Musician

In his study of the *bards*, Smith recognizes Vysotsky's work as a *bard* to be his 'real' vocation (Smith, 1984: 151). The justification for this may be that although Vysotsky was well-known throughout the Soviet Union as an actor, it is more likely that people would have been exposed more to his songs on *magnitizdat* than they would his film and stage work. Vysotsky himself viewed his songs as just important an endeavor as his acting noting in a 1974 *Literaturnaia Rossiia* article that he did not view his songwriting as a 'hobby,' but something that is just as serious as his work in theater (published in Andreyev and Boguslavsky, 1990: 197). It may be for this reason that Vysotsky often fused his two 'occupations' of actor and *bard*.

The exact number of songs written by Vysotsky differs greatly from one source to another. Smith estimates Vysotsky's catalog to be over five hundred songs (Smith, 1984: 175), Christopher Lazarski notes that Vysotsky left approximately six hundred songs (Lazarski, 1992: 61), Nathan Mer includes songs and poems in his estimation of seven hundred works (Mer, 1991: vii), Alexander Fyodorov's estimate is around seven hundred to one-thousand songs (Fyodorov, 1988: 115) and Arem Troitsky, a music critic from Russia, gives a higher estimate of over one-thousand songs (Troitsky, 1987: 63). All the estimates are large but they do not specify whether the songs include those in which Vysotsky only wrote the lyrics, though most likely do. It is probable that upon his death in 1980, Vysotsky did leave hundreds of songs on a variety of topics, and cataloging the exact number proves to be difficult due to the profuse dispersion of *magnitizdat* recordings.

Vysotsky began writing his own songs in the 1950s after hearing Okudzhava perform. He originally started out writing songs more akin to the *blatnaya pesnya*, and other urban genres. He deemed these early songs to be 'unsophisticated' and simple songs about a man's desire for truth, a love for his friends or love for a woman. It was later that the content of the songs became more complicated, though he noted that the 'essence' of the message remained the same (Andreyev and Boguslavsky, 1990: 201-2). Overtime, Vysotsky's songs were categorized by themes he explored. This included the war songs, sea songs, sports songs which include "Song About a Friend" for its connection to mountain climbing, fairy-tale songs which employ images from Russian folk tales, and songs that reflected everyday Soviet life, and generally stood in opposition to *massovaya pesnya*.

Vysotsky's early songs were written with the intention that they would only be heard by his small circle of friends. While addressing the audience at one of his concerts, he noted:

> The atmosphere was one of trust, complete ease and, what is most important, of friendliness. I saw that they needed my songs, that they wanted to hear what I was going to tell them in my song. In short, it was a way of telling my close friends something, of talking to them (Andreyev and Boguslavsky, 203-4).

The sense of trust and having a conversation with people through song continued when Vysotsky became popular via his *avtorskaya pesnya*. About *avtorskaya pesnya*, Vysotsky noted that the songs do not have to contain anything external for a performance such as a stage or spotlights. Performance of *avtorskaya pesnya* could occur anywhere; Vysotsky noted he had performed in such places as airplane hangars, airports, fields, stadiums, or even in ordinary rooms (Andreyev, 204). This demonstrates the spontaneity of many of Vsotsky's performances.

In many of his songs, Vysotsky did challenge the conventions imposed by official patronage on cultural activity. Many lyrics did not reflect official optimism and instead revealed an unpleasant side of Soviet life. In addition, his passionate performances were not considered appropriate either. Life of a Soviet citizen was expected to be predictable and rational, and as noted by Christopher Lazarski in an article about Vysotsky, "…apart from the great enterprises, which the Party periodically promulgated as the next step in building up Communism, the Soviet citizen should not have anything to be passionate about…" (Lazarski, 1992: 65). Lyrics such as those often found in *massovaya pesnya* demonstrated how the citizens were to focus their energy and passion. Furthermore, Vysotsky's 'unauthorized' fame, as well as what was deemed an 'extravagant' lifestyle also upset the authorities. This included rumors and myths about Vysotsky owning an extravagant Mercedes-Benz which he wrecked twice, and he was once declared clinically dead for three minutes (Ryback, 1990: 47). Additionally, Vysotsky's third marriage to the French actress Marina Vlady, was somewhat fairytale-like for Soviet citizens. Although Vlady was a Communist, she was still viewed as a foreigner and lived in France. As a descendant of Russian emigrants, Vlady was allowed to travel between Paris and Moscow, though for six years after their 1968 wedding, Vysotsky was not allowed to visit her abroad (Lazarski, 1992: 65).

Vysotsky did travel rather extensively outside of the Soviet Union, he occasionally went on tour with the Taganka troupe, or to visit Vlady in Paris. He also traveled to the United States and performed a concert at Brooklyn College, a performance that was recorded and subsequently released as an album in the United States in 1979. An article published in the *New York Times* detailed that along with the performance at

Brooklyn College, he also performed at Queens College in New York which would be followed by concerts at universities in Boston, New Jersey and Philadelphia. Concerning the Queens College performance, a college official noted that there had been no advertising at all on the campus, and that Vysotsky's appearance was spread by word of mouth, and by an advertisement in a local Russian-language newspaper. The over two thousand set hall was filled by an almost entirely Russian speaking audience (Rockwell, 1979: 9:3). Vysotsky's 'tour' in the United States suggests that at that time, he was in good standing with the authorities to be allowed to travel abroad.

Although Vysotsky's unofficial position as a musician brought him into conflict with cultural and political authorities, on the whole, whereas his songs may have been un-Soviet, he was never candidly anti-Soviet. The reality of his survival in Soviet cultural life in perhaps tied to the methods in which he traversed the fine line between 'official' and 'unofficial' artistic status – he was able to preserve a balance between his actions and predicting official reactions to his work. During the Khrushchev era and the beginning of his career, the status of Vysotsky's parents as good communists protected him from any 'youthful' transgressions. As his career continued, his fame and increasing popularity shielded him from any castigation, though occasional minor reprimands occurred. Therefore, his songs exist primarily within the 'middle ground' of cultural life; his songs were not official, but he was not actively persecuted to the extent as were other dissidents of his time.

Sometimes Vysotsky was able to count on the support of his devotees who served in high governmental positions. Leonidov recounts the action of a chief of the Moscow KGB who once sent 'his boys' to prevent an operation of a different branch of the KGB

who intended to catch Vysotsky performing at an illegal private concert (Leonidov, 1983: 85). In a brief testimony about Vysotsky, Valerii Perevozhchikov noted some of the instances in which Vysotsky was questioned by members of the KGB, and was occasionally asked to perform during his interrogations (Perevozhchikov, 2000: 62-7). Such stories about Vysotsky spread throughout the country much like the *magnitizdat* recordings, though how much truth in the stories may never really be known since very little about Vysotsky's life was published during his lifetime.   In general, Vysotsky opposed the system on moral grounds instead of political ones but he never attacked a political leader personally. As Alexander Fyodorov explained in his memoir of Vysotsky's life, he stated that the *bard* 'passionately' loved his country as his many songs about the war can attest, but despised 'jingoistic patriotism' and 'blind,' uncritical attitudes towards one's own homeland (Fyodorov, 1983: 117). This attitude could help define Vysotsky's un-Soviet songs in which he satirized and parodied aspects of Soviet life.

In order to perform public concerts, Vysotsky often deceived the authorities concerning when and where his concerts would take place. He was frequently able to sing for mass audiences even though he usually had to forgo performing in big cities, only an estimated nine concerts occurred in Moscow.[29] Instead, he concentrated his efforts to middle-sized towns. Because he was not able to perform at the same place in the future, Vysotsky would often perform up to five concerts in a day, occasionally for several days in a row. In his memoir of Vysotsky, Pavel Leonidov recalled a particular event in the winter of an unspecified year when Vysotsky played in the town of

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[29] This estimate is based on a map displayed in the Vysotsky Museum in Moscow which marks the various locations in which Vysotsky performed.

Kuibyshev, located about five hundred miles southeast of Moscow. A large crowed greeted Vysotsky at the train station, and included relatives of soldiers who had been killed during World War II. At the Kuibyshev Sports Palace, another large group of people gathered with recorders in hand. Vysotsky was to perform three concerts for about six thousand audience members. Most people were not able to acquire tickets for the concerts which had been sold out, and during the first concert the crowd began to break windows demanding that the outside loudspeakers be turned on. According to Leonidov, the authorities consented and the next concerts were broadcast outside the venue for all to hear (Leonidov, 1983: 111-116).

An important element in the lyrics of Vysotsky's songs was that he often spoke in the first person, but not as himself. He would sing the words of the character, the 'I' in most songs, giving a specific point of view. Due to this method, additional myths about Vysotsky's background emerged. Some believed that he actually served in the army during the war (though he was born in 1938 making him far too young), that he has also served time in a Soviet labor-camp, that he had been a mountain climber, and a pilot (Larzarski: 1992: 62).[30] Having spent some time growing up around his father, an army officer, it is possible that Vysotsky heard many of the stories about the war during his childhood. Vysotsky himself often denied these rumors, and noted that singing songs about the war was due to how much it had affected everyone in the country (Andreyev and Boguslavsky, 1990: 204). By and large the subjects he wrote about were issues and

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[30] During my time in Moscow in 2004, I witnessed a conversation between two women who were discussing Vysotsky. One noted that her neighbor in the apartment building often boasted that in the 1970s Vysotsky had wanted to live in her apartment which overlooked the Moscow River. With an interested look on her face, the other woman in the conversation responded that she had never heard this story before. It would seem that stories and myths about Vysotsky continue to be spread throughout Russia.

problems common to a majority of Soviet people, therefore the general populace could identify with the songs.

Because of the vast number of songs Vysotsky wrote, it is difficult to provide an exhaustive investigation within this study. The songs featured below are but a small sample of the hundreds of songs that he wrote and performed which contained subject matter that was un-Soviet in nature. The songs below were specifically chosen because of the lyrical content, and because of their occurrence on posthumously released recordings. The discussion below concerns primarily the lyrical content as the musical considerations of Vysotsky's songs will be addressed in the following chapter. A more complete cataloging of Vysotsky's songs is available on various websites, some of which contain audio files, as well as alternative lyrics or variants of performances.[31]

The first example of one of Vysotsky's earlier songs is "Bolshoi Karetnom" (*Bolshoi Karetnom*) written in 1962. This song is more akin to the *blatnaya pesnya* style songs, and includes an autobiographical subtext. The title of the song refers to the street in north-central Moscow where Vysotsky had lived during his adolescence. The lyrics bemoan a squandered youth in the Moscow environs that is now in the past. The lyrics for "Bolshoi Karetnom":[32]

> Where were you at seventeen?
> On Bolshoi Karetnyi
> And where've your troubles always been?
> On Bolshoi Karetnyi.
> Where's your big black .38?
> On Bolshoi Karetnyi
> And where aren't you today?

Refrain

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[31] A large collection of Vysotsky songs can be found online at "The People's Library of Vladimir Vysotsky" (*Narodnaya biblioteka Vladimira Vysotskovo*). This website contains information about the *bard* including his work in film, and includes a forum in which individuals can discuss Vysotsky and his work.
[32] This English translation by: (Elnitsky, 2006).

On Bolshoi Karetnyi

Do you still recall that
House, my friend?
You'll remember always
Where it stands.
I would say that anyone's life was lived in vain,
If he never walked Karetnyi Lane –
Because….

(*Refrain*)

Now, Karetnyi Lane is
Not the same;
It has been repainted
And renamed.
But any place you go and no matter what you find,
Karetnyi Lane is always on your mind –
Because…

(*Refrain*)

This example is one of Vysotsky's 'criminal songs.' It demonstrates the

connection that Vysotsky's *avtorskaya pesnya* had to the earlier popular song styles, and

more notably is apolitical – the lyrics do not contain direct or metaphorical reference to

political issues found in his later songs. Despite the dark images provided in the text of

this song, one person I interviewed in Moscow described it as her favorite. Upon asking

her why of all the Vysotsky songs, this was her favorite she explained that she and

Vysotsky were born in the same year and she grew up near the same street, and it

reminded her of her childhood. She additionally noted that musically, she loved the

rhythm of the song, and that is very 'lively.'

There are various other 'criminal' songs in Vysotsky's catalog including "The

One Who Was with Her Before" (*Tot, kto bil s neyu prezhde*) and "Ginger Moll"

(*Ryzhaya shalava*). "The One Who Was with Her Before" is a song of vengeance whose

main character is a criminal who has been injured in a gang fight after trying to get even with the man whom the girlfriend had replaced.

For all the war songs Vysotsky wrote that were more aligned with concepts of socialist realism, an example of a war-related song that is situated in opposition is "Song about Serezhka Fomin" (*Pesnya o Serezhka Fomin*). This song serves as a contradiction to official war songs as it points out issues of nepotism, privilege, and social inequality that were part of Soviet reality. The lyrics to "Song About Serezhka Fomin"[33]:

> I grew up like the entire street gang,
> We drank vodka, sang songs at night,
> And we disliked Serezhka Fomin
> Because he was educated and bright.
>
> We once sat in his apartment –
> There we used to meet to have fun –
> And comrade Molotov said on the radio
> That the war with Germans had begun.
>
> The military board told me: "Listen, kid,
> You'll get saved from draft by the factory "Compressor."
> I just refused, while Serezhka Fomin
> Was saved from army by his daddy, the professor.
>
> I am spilling blood for you, my country,
> And yet my heart's indignant with misgiving:
> I'm spilling blood for Serezhka Fomin,
> While he sits and enjoys the living.
>
> Right now, maybe, he visits movie theaters,
> There they show war chronicles a lot.
> Somehow I wish Serezhka Fomin was here,
> So he could get the taste of the German front.
>
> But finally the war came to an end.
> Each one of us returned from the bloody battle.
> So I meet Serezhka Fomin one sunny day,
> And on his chest – the most ranking Soviet medal.

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[33] This English translation by Mer, 1991: 31.

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The 'I' of this song is a dutiful Soviet citizen going to war, as is typical in many war songs in *massovaya pesnya*. The main character qualifies his heroism by fighting for his country, and though he admits disdain for the character Serezhka Fomin, who because of connection and privilege is not undergoing to same ordeals, he does not dwell on resentment or bitterness (Smith, 1984: 171). Although this song addresses issues that counter Soviet cultural practice, it does not become anti-Soviet because the main character maintains a positive view of the Russian people, and does not explicitly malign the 'achievements' of Serezhka Fomin. This example demonstrates Smith's category of 'middle-ground' music because the song simultaneously speaks of a dutiful soldier defending his country, but also exposes the unfair treatment of those with rank and privilege.

An example of a Vysotsky song which was often performed in the un-Soviet 'passionate' manner is his song "The Wolf Hunt." This was the song featured in the censored Taganka staging of *Protect Your Faces!* in 1970. One of my informants in Moscow described to me how Vysotsky was summoned to play before Brezhnev at the premier's *dacha*, whereupon Brezhnev asked Vysotsky if his song "The Wolf Hunt" was about them [the government officials], to which Vysotsky replied affirmatively. A translation of the lyrics from "The Wolf Hunt"[34] written in 1968:

> Going in rage with my sinews strained,
> But today is just like yesterday,
> They trapped me, sieged me, all around me,
> Driving me crazy and making me pay.
>
> There the shots are heard from the fir trees,
> There the hunters are hiding in the shade,
> The wolves are somersaulting in the snow,
> Turning into living targets: ready-made.

---

[34] This translation by Mer, 1991, 115.

There goes on a wolf hunt, a wolf hunt,
For grey predators on all the tracks.
The hunters are yelling, the dogs are barking,
We, cubs, who sucked out mother's milk, came to know,
That we can't dare run beyond the red flags.

Refrain

The hunters don't give a chance to us wolves,
But the hand doesn't tremble anymore,

They enclosed our freedom by markers and flags
Shooting at us, without missing for sure.

For the wolf must never break a tradition,
In childhood the cubs were blind and had weak legs,
We, cubs, who sucked our mother's milk, came to know,
That we can't dare run beyond the red flags.

(*Refrain*)

Our legs and jaws are hot and speedy.
Why, leader, explain to us – now –
We are tired running from each shot,
Why not try cross the forbidden zone?

A wolf just can't go in a different way,
My time is now coming to an end.
And the hunter who had my number,
Smiled and aimed a rifle in his hand.

(*Refrain*)

I have broken loose from obedience –
Beyond the flags…The thirst for life only began.
Only behind me I joyously heard
The surprised screams of all men.

Going in rage with my sinews strained,
But today is not like yesterday.
They trapped me, sieged me, all around me,
But the hunters were left with nothing at all.

(*Refrain*)

The imagery provided in this song serves as a metaphor for those artists whose works were censored by the government, and particularly Vysotsky. In this instance, the wolves represent the 'unofficial' artists subverting authority who are portrayed as the hunters. Gerald Stanton Smith views this song, and its sequel "Where are You, Wolves?" (*Gde – vy, volki?*) as 'direct ancestors' to a poem by early twentieth-century poet Sergei Esenin who identified himself as a hunted wolf (Smith, 1984: 160). This example written in the late-1960s, and included in the Taganka Theatre's 1970 production of *Protect Your Faces!*, exhibits Vysotsky's feelings towards artistic freedom and constraints as an artist due to censorship. By this period in Vysotsky's songwriting, he obviously became more concerned with artistic limitations as it was a reoccurring theme in his later songs.

An important literary aspect of Vysotsky's poetry was his use of satire and parody, elements not found in *massovaya pesnya*. Along with these components, the language Vysotsky often wrote in was closer to colloquial speech and even the use of some slang terminology. One of Vysotsky's well-known satires of official Soviet life is in the songs "Comrade Scientists" (*Tovarishchi Uchenye*). The song reflects on Soviet intellectuals who were sent, along with the rest of the urban population, to help harvest crops on collective farms. The lyrics to "Comrade Scientists"[35] written in 1972:

> Comrade Scientists, academicians, candidates and such!
> You're nuts on x's, y's and z's – watch out, they'll be your death!
> In labs and stuffy libraries for days on end you mope and slouch,
> Without a thought for tons of taters rotting in the earth.
>
> You want to turn mold into balm, you put all trash to use,
> And every blessed day you try to find the cubic root,
> But while you're playing all them tricks, which really amuse
> Good folks, potatoes in the fields just lie about and rot.

---

[35] This English translation by Roy, published in Andreyev and Boguslavsky, 1990: 57-61.

We ride as far as buses' wheels can get us,
And then, look smart, folks! At a trot!   *Refrain*
I guess – when mushed with eggs and salt.

Come on, you can set records here, you gain European fame,
And digging spuds, you can display your patriotism, too,
Instead of ganging up on dogs – we know the way you maim
Them curs, and carve them up with knives – a nasty thing to do!

Dear comrade scientists, stop all this carving critters with your blades,
Knock off all those experiments on mammals and reptiles,
Pile into lorries, come out here, it's time for you to swing a spade,
And gamma radiations, they can surely wait awhile.

(*Refrain*)

Come over with your families and friends – it'll be your home from home.
There will be room for everyone, and when the job is done,
To hell with molecules, you'll say, and blast the genes and chromosomes,
We've done a job of work – it's time we had a little fun.

Dear scientists, our precious Einsteins and our clever – clever Bohrs,
Beloved Newtons, there's one thing that I would like to ask:
D'you know where all our mortal remains go? Just think on it, because
It's all the same to Mother Earth – dung, phosophorites, or us.

So come in ranks and columns, dear! Remember you're welcome, straight!
Of course you are smart-elecs all, and atheists to boot,
But with those cyclotrons around you'll like as not soon suffocate,
And here we have fresh air for free – and what a beauty spot!

Dear scientists, you can rely on us – we're with you all the way:
If things do not run smooth with you – you get the wrong effect –
We'll get our spades, we'll get our forks, and hurry to your aid,
We'll use our noodles – in one day we'll clear any defect!

This song provides wry commentary about the Soviet scientific system of

research and technology. It questions the relevance and focus of experiments by

scientists and academics who seemingly disregard the practical needs of the country like

collecting food for everyone. In comparison to "Bolshoi Karetnom," where he avoids

political commentary altogether, and "Song About Serezhka Fomin," when he still

demonstrates elements of socialist realist art, "Comrade Scientists" is a more overtly

political song. It demonstrates Vysotsky's lyrical ability to criticize the Soviet system,

but at the same time not completely pronouncing anti-Soviet sentiment, he does not state

specific names of individuals, or condone any specific actions.

One final example of Vysotsky's more un-Soviet songs is his display of a banal

conversation between a man and a woman watching television. The song is entitled

"Dialogue in Front of the TV" (*Dialog u televizora*), and is an ongoing conversation

between Vanya and Zina about mundane conversation topics including alcoholism and

the black market   An excerpt of the lyrics for "Dialogue in Front of the TV":[36]

> "Ooh, Vanya, just look at them clowns,
> Their mouths look as if they need bandaging,
> They're so made up, aren't they, Vanya,
> And they've got voice like alkies.
> And that one looks like my brother,
> A drunkard just like him, I'm right, aren't I,
> No, go on, have a look, go on, have a look,
> I'm right, Vanya!"
>
> "Listen, Zina, hands off brother,
> I don't care what he's like, he's still family.
> And you're all made up yourself,
> Just watch what you say to me!
> Why don't you quit fretting
>
>
> And get yourself down to the shop?
> No? Well, I'll go myself,
> Move yourself, Zina."
>
> "Ooh, Vanya, just look at them dwarfs,
> That's jersey they've got on, not cheviot.
> Down at our garment factory
> We'd have a job making that up.
> But honest, Vanya, I'm telling you,
> All your friends are such layabouts,

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[36] Full English translation of this song appears in Smith, 1984: 163-5.

First thing in the morning they start drinking
That rotgut."

"My friends might not wear smart raincoats,
But they don't make their families go short.
They drink that filth to save money,
And if they do start in the morning, they pay their way.
And who are you to talk, Zina.
Once you had a boyfriend from the tire factory
And he used to drink gasoline.
Remember that, Zina?"

"Ooh, Vanya, just look, little parrots,
A-a-a-gh, it's going to make me scream honest.
And who's that wearing that short vest?
Can I have one like that, Vanya?
Vanya, I bet you could get me one
Down at the street corner, couldn't you?
What d'you mean, give over, it's all you ever say,
It's not nice, Vanya."

This song reveals a great deal about Soviet life that would never be expressed in

official Soviet songs in the context of socialist realism. In one sense, the song objectively

portrays a bickering couple by simply displaying who they are with all their faults. It

also provides a glimpse into the reality of everyday Soviet life. As Smith comments, "It

implies that the people have not been ennobled by their history, and that the massive

effort that has gone into indoctrinating them has been a complete failure" (Smith, 1984:

165). Smith views political suggestion of this song, but unlike "Comrade Scientists," he

avoids any direct reference to the government, and does not target a specific group.

However, Vysotsky's song provides a point of reference for those who felt

disenfranchised by the Soviet system, "Dialogue in Front of a TV" is a song that people

identify with as it reflects their everyday social interactions.

In the above examples, as well as many others, it is easy to comprehend the issues

of 'un-Sovietness' surrounding a number of songs by Vysotsky. The dual positions of

'official' and 'unofficial' musicians[37] were not ignored by officials who in an article published in 1968 asserted that Vysotsky had a double repertoire, one for the public which was used for film and theater, and one that was private and used for solo performances. The article also admonished Vysotsky's contortion of the Russian language, and for glorifying alcoholics, criminals, and other depraved individuals (Mushta and Bondaryuk, 1968: 3). While alcoholics and criminals were on the fringes of Soviet society, their presence in Vysotsky's lyrics testifies to the realities of Soviet life; these individuals were never recognized in official songs though they were nonetheless a part of Soviet culture.

Gerald Stanton Smith recounts the circumstances around Vysotsky's closest confrontation with Soviet authorities in 1979 in what Smith refers to as the '*Metropol* affair' (Smith, 1984: 154). In this occurrence, a group of writers who had been entirely refused publication in the Soviet press, or told to make extensive revisions decided they would demand publication of their work in the form in which it originally appeared. The name of the collection was *Metropol* ('Metropolis') which Smith called a 'triple pun.' The term 'metropolis' refers to the 'capital city,' the 'underground railway' (metro), and the famous hotel in the middle of Moscow of the same name (Smith, 154). In all, twenty-three authors, including Vysotsky, were involved in the project with the intention that it would be published later in the West. However, the collection was not published in the Soviet Union, and was sent abroad for publication in smaller numbers. Smith speculated that the *Metropol* affair was a test case for the system, and showed no doubt that

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[37] Vysotsky was not distinctive in his dual positions of 'official' and 'unofficial.' The two other *bards* prolific at the same time, Okudzhava and Galich, also had official positions in the Soviet system as writers, but also performed their *avtorskaya pesnya* on the side.

authorities were not willing to modify their policies and restrictions on questionable material.

Vysotsky included nineteen of his songs in the *Metropol* collection including some *magnitizdat* recordings. The songs provide a varied representation of Vysotsky's work. Some of the nineteen songs consist of "The One Who Was with Her Before," "Bolshoi Karetnom," "Parody of a Bad Detective Story" (*Parodiya na plokhoi detektiv*), "The Wolf Hunt," "Dialogue in Front of the TV," and "Song about the Neutral Zone" (*Pesnya o neutral′noi polose*) which is a parody of some official Soviet *massovaya pesnya* telling the story of a Russian and a Turkish soldier who by chance meet in no-man's land to pick flowers for their respective weddings. It is interesting to note that due to the rather un-Soviet qualities of "Dialogue," it was surprisingly published in a posthumous Soviet collection of Vysotsky's work, and noted by Gerald Stanton Smith, was probably the only song from the *Metropol* collection to be published in the Soviet Union.

The above examples demonstrate Vysotsky's subtle application of un-Soviet ideology in his lyrics, and his ability to 'speak' for a variety of individuals who shared similar events or ideas concerning the Soviet experience. Thus, as stated by Valery Tuipa, Vysotsky's words signify an 'alternative reality' of Soviet life. This reality was juxtaposed with the official principles of socialist realism. Vysotsky could sing about the realities of war such as in "We Turn the Earth" which depicted the valiant struggles of soldiers fighting for the motherland. To counteract this, Vysotsky composed a song called "Penal Battalions" (*Ugolovnii batal'ony*) in which he paid tribute to wartime

detachments of soldier-prisoners who were sent to the front lines of battle and had little chance of survival.

Criticism of this song appeared in a 1968 article in which the authors noted that Vysotsky sang about former criminals whose effort was necessary in defeating the enemy, and portrayals such as this were a 'slander' to reality (Mushta and Bondariuk, 1968, 3). This reality existed in socialist realism, but was also threatened by censored songs. In such un-Soviet songs, Vysotsky portrayed an alternative reality of occurrences in everyday Soviet life and history. His songs and the *magnitizdat* recordings gave voice to those people who were disenfranchised from the Soviet experience and whose reality was not exhibited in *massovaya pesnya* or other approved songs. Critics condemned Vysotsky's songs because he sang on behalf of criminals, thieves, or alcoholics, but his audience as a whole contained various types of individuals who would never be identified as embodying any of those characteristics. It can therefore be assumed that many people identified with the 'alternative reality' Vysotsky portrayed, he sang about issues or problems people understood, and through parody and satire provided his audience with a humorous or ironic view of Soviet reality. As a tour guide at the Vysotsky Museum in Moscow noted, "his songs are like small plays." Vysotsky's songs contain characters in which he acted out through song, providing images and stories based on Soviet reality.

Conclusion

Vysotsky recorded relatively few of his songs in studio, some of which were released in France including *Chansons* (1977) and *Le Corde Raide* (1977), and in the Soviet Union even fewer recordings were released on Melodiya including *Vysotsky V.*

Ballads and Songs (*Vysotsky V. balladi i pesnii* - 1978). However, these studio recordings generally have additional instrumental tracks added to the songs, in some cases percussion, piano, or sometimes strings reinforcing the melodies. The studio recordings may be 'in tune' and are of higher quality, but they lack the sense of spontaneity and unrestrained emotion which are found more often in performances on *magnitizdat* recordings.

Most publications of Vysotsky's poetry in book form, or additional recordings were done so posthumously after 1980, and now are easily available within post-Soviet Russia. The profusion of *magnitizdat* recordings perhaps aided in the continuing popularity of Vysotsky's music. Irina Orlova noted that the technology of the tape-recorder allowed musicians and audiences the ability to circumvent the Soviet system of censorship thereby permitting a level of autonomy in what music individuals could listen. It also allowed *bards* to 'release' their songs to a demanding public, and in the case of Vysotsky, due to the profuse numbers of *magnitizdat* recordings, he was dubbed 'the poet of tape recorders' (Orlova, 1991: 67-68). Additionally, some former *magnitizdat* recordings have been released in recent years.[38]

Avtorskaya pesnya served as an artist's outlet during the dissident movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The *bards*, and most notably Vysotsky, used musical performance as a method in which to proclaim their views about Soviet censorship, artistic freedom, and the reality of Soviet life from their perspectives. The *magnitizdat* recordings and their contents remain a testimony to the dissident movement as related to musical performances, as well as bear witness to an alternative Soviet reality. Also, the newly

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[38] A 32-CD collection was released in 2000 by Moroz Records and includes numerous songs recorded by *magnitizdat* methods.

released recordings primarily contain the live performances, and in comparison to few studio recordings that exist, they demonstrate the aesthetics of *avtorskaya pesnya*, and also contain the recorded musical identities of the *bards* that will be analyzed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 7

PERFORMANCE STYLES AND MUSICAL IDENTITIES

The performance style and musical composition in *avtorskaya pesnya* become

important factors when considering the repertoire of various *bards*. The musical

components used in this genre are limited, usually only utilizing the voice and guitar

accompaniment; however, there are occasional live recordings of Vysotsky in which

violin or piano can be heard in the background. Those instruments in recorded songs are

less frequent and were played by additional musicians. Despite limited resources utilized

by the musicians in the performance of the poetry, different *bards* created their own,

unique song-styles. This is done through differences of rhythmic configurations, tempo,

phrasing, and above all the timbre of each singer's voice.

Although Vysotsky was extremely popular during his lifetime, he was not the

only notable *bard* of this period. Two other well-known individuals of *avtorskaya*

pesnya, prolific during the same time period, were Bulat Okudzhava, who some

individuals described to me as Vysotsky's 'spiritual father,'[39] and Alexandr Galich. Both of these musicians incorporated un-Soviet themes into the lyrics of their songs, though Galich's more overt criticism of the Soviet system led to his exile from the country. In addition to Okudzhava and Galich, there are other notable *bards* of the period, such as Yuli Kim, though for the purposes of this study I focus my musical analysis on Vysotsky, Okudzhava, and Galich. Any number of *bards* from the *avtorskaya pesnya* genre may be used for a comparative study, but both Okudzhava and Galich were equally notable as *bards* during the same period as Vysotsky. Additionally, the literary components of these three have already been compared in previous studies by Smith (1984) and Blanc (1991), therefore my musical analysis provides a further point of comparison as covered by the two previous scholars. The particular styles of each of the three *bards* also differ greatly and therefore provide interesting points of comparison.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the notion of a 'musical identity' by analyzing the songs of three well-known *bards*. I use the idea of a 'musical identity' to refer specifically to identity as it relates to musical sounds, and compositional and performance techniques as employed by a specific person; these components help create an individual's musical identity - stylistic and performance traits that originate to a known individual. I first provide biographical information on Galich and Okudzhava in order to place their work within historical context. Through musical analysis of song and performance styles, I identify distinct musical identities of the three performers. The comparison of these individuals will be through transcriptions made from recordings. Songs chosen for analysis were either studio or live recordings; this is difficult to fully

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[39] This phrase is also used by Hélène Blanc is her description of Okudzhava's role in *avtorskaya pesnya* (Blanc 1991, 26).

determine because of a lack of information on liner notes. However, the songs by Okudzhava and Galich were chosen based on the notoriety of the songs, and that they were songs were mentioned in previous studies. The Vysotsky songs chosen were also based on popularity (based on numerous inclusions on recordings), but also songs that have been discussed in previous chapters of this study. All of the recordings chosen for this analysis included only vocals and guitar accompaniment in the performance and therefore excluded some studio recordings of Vysotsky due to added instrumentation.

Biographical Sketch of Bulat Okudzhava

Bulat Shalovich Okudzhava was born in Moscow in 1924 to a Georgian father and Armenian mother. Despite his multi-ethnic background, Okudzhava's upbringing and life in Moscow solidified his connection to the city, a connection that was prominent in his songs. Examples of the Moscow association include "Song of the Arbat" (*Pesenka ob Arbate*) about the famed street on which he lived, "Song about the Moscow Metro" (*Pesenka o Moskovskom Metro*), and "A Moscow Ant" (*Moskovskii myravei*). Okudzhava's father was a Party functionary who was arrested and executed during the purges of the 1930s. Additionally, his mother was arrested and spent eighteen years in the labor camp system. Okudzhava began as part of the privileged elite in Moscow, but after his parents' arrests he became the son of 'enemies of the people.' Interestingly, this autobiographical detail was never applied to his own works.

The most important autobiographical influence on Okudzhava's work was his service in the army for which he volunteered at age seventeen. He spent the war years in the infantry ranks, and was wounded several times. Songs such as "Forgive the Soldiers"

(*Prostite Pekhote*) and "Song of Soldiers' Boots" (*Pesenka o soldatskii capogakh*) are a testimony of the influence the war years had on Okudzhavan's work. After the war, he attended the University of Tbilisi, graduating in 1950. He spent four years as a school teacher in a village near the town of Kaluga not far from Moscow. After his parents were rehabilitated in 1955, he and his mother obtained the right to settle in Moscow. During this period he also became a member of the Communist Party, a decision which Smith described as "an alacrity that is quite incomprehensible to people outside the system" (Smith, 1984: 113). By 1956 he had settled in Moscow whereupon he held down a succession of literary jobs such as the poetry editor for *Literaturnaya gazeta* (*Literary Gazette*), a paper controlled by the Union of Writers.

Okudzhava's literary debut was in 1946 as a poet, and he continued to publish poetry in print format throughout his career. All in all, he wrote more poems for reading than those written for musical performance, and in general was a well-known poet in the Soviet Union. Collections of his poetry appeared throughout his career though there were occasional disruptions in his output. His first book called *Lyrics* (*Lirika*) was published in 1956, and was followed by *Islands* (*Ostrova*) published in 1959. These two volumes do not include any texts that are identified as songs; however, the first book that did incorporate songs was *The Merry Drummer* (*Veselyi barabanshchik*) which was published in 1964. Additionally, two later publications, *Magnanimous Month of March* (*Mart velikodushnyi*) published in 1967, and *Arbat, My Arbat* (*Arbat, moi Arbat*) published in 1976 contained a subsection labeled 'My Songs' ('Moi pesenki'), both of which included the texts of songs Okudzhava performed.

In addition to his poetry, Okudzhava was also noteworthy for his prose. He first received recognition as a prose writer with an autobiographical story regarding his wartime experiences called "Good Luck, Schoolboy!" (*Bud´ zdorov, skolyar!*). The story was published in a collection entitled *Pages from Tarusa* (*Tarusskie Stransitsy*), a book published in 1961 edited by Konstantin Paustovsky, a liberal writer. Gerald Stanton Smith noted that the addition of Okudzhava's story was one of the most controversial items in the collection due to his treatment of the war theme in comparison to most officially produced literature. Criticism of Okudzhava's story was typical of most he received about his works; he did not adhere to ideological 'firmness,' and his work did not contain a positive hero (Smith, 1984: 114). Magdalena Romanska describes the heroes of Okudzhava's work as:

> a common person full of emotions that are acknowledged and not ignored
> for the sake of Soviet ideals to be unfeeling as a dead corpse….[his]
> characters do not live for and their actions are not governed by the high
> purpose of creating the *great new world*, or at least affirming State-sanctioned
> Soviet reality (Romanska, 2002: 6-7).

Gerald Stanton Smith considers Okudzhava the 'patriarch of Russian guitar poets' and the *bard* with the highest literary standing amongst all others (Smith, 1984: 111). The volumes of officially printed literature are evidence of Okudzhava's literary position among other *bards* of this period, and he is often regarded as the first to bring the genre of *avtorskaya pesnya* to notoriety in Russian cultural life with the first public performance of his poetry occurring in 1956 (Stites, 1992: 134). Okudzhava's literary career had greater span than Vysotsky or Galich; he had become a member of the Union of Writers in 1961, and in addition to prose and poetry, he also wrote film scripts and novels. He had also written commissioned songs for plays and films similar to those

written by Vysotsky. Even though much of his work was transmitted via underground, *samizdat* or *magnitizdat* methods, Okudzhava remained in fairly good standing with Soviet literary authorities.

Despite Okudzhava's standing and publications in official Soviet culture, he also had difficulties with authorities over his works. Okudzhava did not release any 'official' publications during 1967 to 1976, and also did not produce many new songs during this period. For the duration of these nine years certain occurrences impeded his publications. In 1964 the anti-Soviet publisher Posev released a volume of Okudzhava's work, and later released a two-volume collection in 1967. Okudzhava also released a recording during a trip to Paris in 1968 that brought him substantial recognition in Western Europe and the United States, and his songs were translated and published extensively outside of the Soviet Union (Smith, 1984: 117). Okudzhava also signed well-known protest letters of the dissident period of the 1960s including a letter signed by sixty-two writers addressing the expulsion of Alexander Solzhenitsyn from the Union of Writers in 1969.

These letter signings, publications (both underground and foreign), and consequent notoriety as an underground *bard* brought reprimands from authorities. Gerald Stanton Smith notes an instance in which Okudzhava was required to sign a letter opposing publications of his works abroad and reaffirming his loyalty to the Party (Smith, 1984: 117). However, a more severe warning came in 1972 when Okudzhava was expelled from the Communist Party for anti-Party behavior and refusing to condemn the publication of his work abroad. Okudzhava was quickly reinstated to the Party, this occurrence demonstrates the difficult environment under which artists worked in the Soviet Union.

Okudzhava continued publishing despite the occasional setbacks and difficulty with censorship. One such example was a compilation of songs by musicologist Vladimir Frumkin who compiled an edition of Okudzhava's songs, including words and music. Frumkin prepared the work for publication in the late 1960s but it was denied on the grounds of the music being 'incompetent' (Smith, 118). This collection was finally published in the 1980 in the United States, and contains additional songs not part of the original edition. In the introduction to this 1980 publication, Frumkin noted the difficulties of publishing Okudzhava's songs in the Soviet Union, and suspected that for an official Soviet publishing house to print Okudzhava's song in the manner they were performed with lyrics, melodies and guitar accompaniment, would mean to officially recognize what was generally regarded as an 'unofficial genre' (Frumkin, 1980: 15).

Despite reprimands by authorities and censorship of his works, many of Okudzhava's songs did move from underground to official acknowledgment during his career, particularly by the 1980s. In comparison with Vysotsky and Galich, Okudzhava had more of his work officially published during his lifetime; more than half of Vysotsky's *avtorskaya pesnya* output was underground and all of Galich's work was unofficial. In the 1980s, Okudzhava continued to publish including a novel *The Show is Over* (*Pokaz Zakonchen*), and continued working after the fall of the Soviet Union. He died in Paris on June 12, 1997 and is buried in Vagan'kovskoye Cemetery in Moscow, Russia. A monument of Okudzhava was erected at building 43 on the Arbat in Moscow where he had lived (Figure 7-1).

Figure 7-1: Monument to Bulat Okdudazhava, Old Arbat Street, Moscow

Biographical Sketch of Alexandr Galich

Galich was the pen name adopted by Aleksandr Arkad´evich Ginzburg during his literary career. He was born in 1919, and like Vysotsky and Okudzhava was originally from Moscow, though Galich spent many of his formative years in various towns in the southern parts of Russia before his family settled in Moscow in the mid-1920s. Galich's varied literary career began in 1935 with the publication of one of his poems in the newspaper of the Communist Party youth organization, *Komsomol'skaya Pravda*. Despite showing early promise with a literary career, he chose to pursue acting and studied under Stanislavsky in his last teaching endeavor. After Stanislavsky's death in

1938, Galich joined the Arbuzov-Pluchek troupe, an experimental theatrical group who adopted an approach of collective development of plays.

Galich volunteered for the army when the war began but he was denied on medical grounds. He then spent the war years honing his performance skills by traveling extensively as an entertainer for the armed forces. Smith notes the early experiences in literature followed by his acting and performing ventures contributed to his later work as a *bard* because these 'layers of experience' added to the lyrics of his songs considerably (Smith, 1984: 182). After the war, Galich began a career that lasted a majority of his life; he worked as a Soviet writer concentrating on plays and film scripts. His first success was a vaudeville-type play that he co-wrote in 1948 called *Taimyr' Calling* (*Vas vyzyvaet Taimyr'*). Galich continued to write dramas and screenplays into the mid-1960s, and despite restrictions imposed on writers, he had a great deal of success. He also wrote the lyrics for some *massovaya pesnya* including "Goodbye, Mommy, Don't Be Sad" (*Do svidan'ya, mama, ne goryui*) and "Oh, Northern Sea" (*Oi ty, severnoe more*).

In spite of his successful writing career in official Soviet culture, in 1962 Galich began to create and perform songs that were never published in the Soviet Union. Smith notes that there was no discernable moment or reason for Galich's move from accepted writer to dissident (Smith, 1984: 183). However, one notable occurrence was the banning of his play *Matrosskaya tishina*, named after a street in Moscow. The play follows the history of a Russian Jewish family through three generations, and encompasses an overall theme that Jews in the Soviet Union should integrate with the Russians and other nationalities for the cause of Communism. Galich, who was Jewish, originally wrote the play after the war but put it on hold after the anti-Semitism phase in the last years of

Stalinism. The play was brought back out in the relaxed atmosphere of the Thaw and

went into production, but it was banned before receiving a public performance. Galich

wrote about the incident in a book entitled *The Dress Rehearsal* (*General'naya*

repetitsiya), and noted that the reason why his play had been banned was that it was not

permissible to portray a Jew as a hero of war. This censored play occurred in 1958 and

demonstrates that even during a period of relative relaxation from stringent government

control, censorship was always enforced.

During this time, Galich began his 'career' as a *bard*, and as part of the literary

intelligentsia in Moscow most likely came across the songs of Okudzhava. Galich was

not new to musical performance due to his work entertaining troops during the war, and

similarly to Vysotsky, his earlier phase as an actor afforded him a level of performing

experience that was different from Okudzhava's singing and playing. Smith notes that

Galich began his work as a *bard* in 1962, and that with this new venture Galich was

'reborn' as an artist. Smith states, "…nothing that he wrote as an orthodox Soviet writer

has any lasting merit. It is the most dismal hackwork" (Smith, 1984: 184). The change

for Galich as an official writer to a dissident was not sudden as he continued to work in

Soviet media for some time. Thus, for awhile he lived a dual life by retaining good status

as a Soviet writer and published his songs via *magnitizdat* methods.

By the late-1960s, various events including the Soviet invasion of Czechoslavakia

in 1968, created discord within the intelligentsia circles and Galich indirectly addressed

such incidents in his songs. Other events occurred which took Galich further from his

status as an official writer including the *samizdat* publication of some of his songs by the

anti-Soviet publisher Posev. One evident sign that Galich had changed his views of

Soviet society was his conversion to the Russian Orthodox Church. Also in 1972 a volume of his songs entitled *Generation of the Doomed* (*Pokolenie obrechennykh*) was published in West Germany, and contained roughly one hundred lyrics to songs such as "Stalin" and "Kaddish." Many of the songs in this volume, as is typical of Galich's work, tend to focus on various aspects of Soviet culture and the 'doomed generation' that lived through the experiences of Stalinism. This is achieved through satire, and the society that Galich's songs describe is in direct opposition to socialist realism. Specifically, the society Galich portrays is a place where the individual is struggling alone against collective others, and society is divided between elite who have power and privilege, and the masses who are oppressed. Furthermore, in Galich's songs the escapes from this world was primarily through suicide or alcohol (Smith, 1984: 203). Example of songs that are counter to the cultural policy of socialist realism include the Gulag themed "Clouds" ("Oblaka"), and "Night Watch" ("Nochnoi Dozor"), which warns how easy it would be for Soviet society to return to Stalinism.

Galich performed most of his songs in small, intimate gatherings that were recorded, as opposed to larger concerts in which occasionally Vysotsky performed. Galich's songs attained notoriety through *magnitizdat* recordings and with the unofficial publications of the lyrics of his songs, Galich was expelled from the Union of Soviet Writers in December of 1971. He was also expelled from the Union of Cinematographic Workers. Reasons given for his expulsion from the Union of Writers included not renouncing the publication of his works abroad, and promoting the emigration of Soviet Jews to Israel. The latter was often a subject of his songs such as in "Kaddish."

Galich forcibly left the Soviet Union in 1974, and spent a year in Oslo, Norway.

There he recorded his only studio album entitled *A Whispered Cry*. He also began

performing concerts in the West, and made broadcasts over Radio Liberty (Smith 1984,

213). After working in Munich for Radio Liberty, he transferred to Paris in 1976 to

become director of the radio's cultural section. While in exile, he toured to Israel, the

United States, and made numerous appearances throughout Western Europe. Galich gave

his last concert on December 3, 1977 in Venice. After returning to Paris, he died on

December 15; official reports have Galich being electrocuted by a short circuit from a

new tape recorder. Rumors often circulated that the 'real' cause for his death was at the

hands of the KGB, though in Smith's account of Galich's life the inquest conducted by

the French police cited the death as accidental (Smith, 214). Galich was buried in the

Saint Genevieve de Bois Cemetery, a Russian Orthodox cemetery in Paris where various

other Russian exiles were interred. Unlike Vysotsky and Okudzhava, there is a

noticeable absence of plaques or statues in Moscow dedicated to Galich.

The official careers of Vysotsky, Galich, and Okudzhava were considerable

factors in their activities of writing *avtorskaya pesnya*. Both Okudzhava and Galich had

literary careers which transition well into artistic ventures of poetry writing.

Comparatively, Vysotsky and Galich had both formally studied acting and had

experience performing in front of an audience. However, it is peculiar that Okudzhava as

the pioneer of the *avtorskaya pesnya* movement had no performing experience prior to

concerts of his songs. There appears to be no specific impetus for Okudzhava to sing his

poetry. Like many *bards*, he did not view himself as a singer or a guitarist, but noted that

musical accompaniment gave the words the proper mood. He noted that he was perhaps

returning to the 'original, musical form of poetry' (Frumkin, 1980: 22). In this case, presenting poetry in a musical format would necessitate either the performance or recording of the songs so that they may be heard in the intended manner.

In general, the three *bards* wrote songs concerning the realities of Soviet life, sometimes focusing on situations of the dispossessed or those individuals who felt disenfranchised from the Soviet system. Each of the *bards* had slightly different approaches to the topics of their lyrics, and this may also reflect how they were treated by authorities. Both Vysotsky and Okudzhava imbedded un-Soviet topics and perspectives in their lyrics, but were never candidly anti-Soviet. On the other hand, Galich's views and opinions of the Soviet system were more blatant and condemning, and resulted in harsher penalties and eventual exile. In addition to the treatment of poetry written by these three *bards*, they each had their own manner of performance, in both singing style and accompaniment, that are important factors in their individuality.

A Comparison of Musical Styles in *Avtorskaya Pesnya*

a. Comparing Musical Styles – Okudzhava, Vysotsky, and Galich

Much can be written about the stylistic differences among these three *bards* with regards to literary elements, my focus with the comparison of Vysotsky, Okudzhava, and Galich primarily concerns the musical sounds and how musical elements were employed by the three *bards*. Although voice and guitar were the primary means to performing the words, there are subtle variations present.

Transcriptions focus primarily on melodic and rhythmic components of the vocal line, and though the chords are given, they simply represent chord changes; the guitar

accompaniment is generally a rhythmic ostinato. Also, for purposes of stressing the

musical elements of the songs, the lyrics are absent in transcription but in generally the

lyrics are sung syllabically. It should also be noted that the quality of recordings can

affect the quality of the notes and guitar chords that are heard, though in the genre of

avtorskaya pesnya oftentimes the guitars were out of tune when played. The three songs

used for comparison are Vysotsky's "Na Bolshoi Karetnom," Okudzhava's "The Last

Trolley" (*Poslednii trolleibus*), and Galich's "When I Return" (*Kogda ya vernus'*). For

complete song transcription, see Appendix I.

   Some musical characteristics are common to the music of all three *bards*. For

one, there are few chords employed and generally they result in the tonic and dominant

chords being of most significance. The melodies of each in *avtorskaya pesnya* are

regularly conjunct, and also have little range within the notes, though Vysotsky's songs

are occasionally the exception. Additionally, the melodies in these songs are sung

syllabically, usually one note per syllable in a word thus creating melodic lines with a

great number of pitches. The structure or form of the songs of Okudzhava, Vysotsky, and

Galich do differ greatly. A stanza format is typical but not always followed, though most

often Vysotsky wrote his songs in this structure. Okudzhava often wrote multiple verses

and sang one melody with some alterations to each verse, and Galich's songs are for the

most part through-composed. Thus, upon first glance, or initial listening the *avtorskaya*

pesnya songs are simple and similar, though upon closer look, there are slight differences.

   The first song to be discussed is Bulat Okudzhava's "The Last Trolley"

("Poslednyi trolleibus") sometimes also referred to as "Midnight Trolley." This is one of

Okudzhava's songs set in Moscow, and describes a nameless hero who finds some solace

with the city despite being 'shipwrecked' and suffering 'pain.' The lyrics to "The Last Trolley"[40]:

> When I haven't the strength to master my misfortune,
> When I feel despair coming on,
> I hop on the passing blue trolley,
> The last one
> The chance one.
>
> Midnight trolley, rush along the streets,
> Circle the boulevards,
> Pick up all those who were shipwrecked
> In the night,
> In the night.
>
> With them more than once I've left my troubles behind,
> We've rubbed shoulders together…
> Just imagine – what kindness there is
> In silence,
> In silence.
>
> The midnight trolley sails through Moscow,
> Like a river, Moscow calms down,
> And the pain which pecked at my brain like a starling
> Dies down,
> Dies down.

There is some sense of optimism in the lyrics, an important trait of *massovaya pesnya*, there is also an overwhelming feeling of melancholy in the lyrics and in Okudzhava's performance. The color of the trolley is blue which often represents a sense of melancholy or depression, and as the 'last' trolley bus in the evening it offers one last hope for rescue.

Okudzhava employs five chords throughout this song and briefly shifts from a-minor to C-major with the chord progression alternating from i-iv-i to I-V7-I. The time signature in the transcription alternates between 6/8 and 9/8, but this is primarily to accommodate the lyrics within the melodic phrases. Because the words determine much

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[40] This translation by Eve Shapiro, published in Frumkin, 1980: 39.

of the sung melody, rhythmic phrases are important musical elements within the songs. In the case of "The Last Trolley," the main rhythmic pattern of four eighth notes followed by a tied dotted-quarter note is employed, as seen in the example below (Figure 7-2).

Figure 7-2: First three measures of "The Last Trolley," by Okudzhava

This rhythmic pattern predominates throughout the melody in each verse, though in each sung verse there are some alterations in pitches, as is typical in this genre. The lyrics of the song are about this individual finding solace within a somewhat melancholic setting are mirrored by the by the slight ascent and descent of the melodic line, but primarily by the inflection of Okudzhava's voice in performance.

The next song is Vysotsky's "Na Bolshoi Karetnom" (see Chapter 6 for translation of lyrics). This is one of Vysotsky's more well-known songs as it appears numerous times on post-Soviet issued recordings. This song is typical of many songs by Vysotsky that are fast-paced with very little tempo variation. In general, Vysotsky performs his songs with a faster tempo than do Okudzhava and Galich. The rhythmic drive of this song is propelled by the syncopation which is common in many of Vysotsky's songs, in this instance a dotted-eighth, sixteenth note configuration is heard throughout (Figure 7-3).

Figure 7-3: First four measures of "Na Bolshoi Karetnom," by Vysotsky

Additionally, whereas Okudzhava and Galich generally have conjunct melodies with few leaps and more narrow ranges, Vysotsky more often jumps octaves, as demonstrated in the melodic line in Figure 7-3.

One interesting aspect of this song is that in the form, it inverts the usual stanza format by beginning with the refrain rather than the verse. This gives the song an impression of being 'in progress,' and adds to the sense of forward momentum as evident by the rhythmic drive in the song. This format structure is not typical for Vysotsky songs, but it does demonstrate the variety that can be found in *avtorskaya pesnya*. The fast tempo of the song continues until the last few measures when it noticeably slows down before ending. It should also be noted that in many of Vysotsky's songs with a fast-paced tempo, transcribing the rhythms can be difficult because of the speed with which he performs, the syllables within the Russian words, and the sometimes 'speech-like' quality in his singing which gives it a slight *sprechstimme* quality.

The songs of Okudzhava and Vysotsky are quite different from those written by Alexandr Galich. Whereas Okudzhava and Vysotsky have more typical song-structure, employed the use of reoccurring melodic and rhythmic patterns in the construction of their songs, Galich's work is much more unorthodox. Performances of his songs are at times more like recitations of poetry accompanied by guitar than a performance of poetry in a song-format. The result of this is an occasional *sprechstimme*-like sound in Galich's

'singing,' much more obvious than Vysotsky's faster tempo songs. An example of one of

Galich's songs that exemplifies his approach to the performance of *avtorskaya pesnya* is

"When I Return," a song written between the year Galich was expelled from the unions

and the year he was expelled from the country. The lyrics for "When I Return"[41]:

When I shall return
When I shall come running
not leaving a trace in the snow a-melting
Retracing my steps
hardly seen, to some warm place and shelter
And, starting with joy
at your sweet birdish call shall I turn
When I shall return

Hey listen
Please listen, don't laugh - when I really return
And straight from the station
as quickly as smart with the customs -
Right into this paultry
this damned, inconsolable, blusted
Rush into the City
I'm blamed for and cursed by my own
When I shall return
Oh, when I shall return...

Yes, when I return
I will come to the only one Home -
That even the Heavenly Dome
can't compete with in power
And smell of incense
like the orphanage bread, hard and sour
Will flow into me
and start gleaming inside me, so warm
When I shall return...

Oh, when I return
Larks will sing in the winter at ease
That very old tune
that forgotten, that uncounterfeited -
And then I will fall
by my victory overdefeated

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[41] This translation by Kovalenin, 2006.

And bury my head, like a ship
'gainst the berth of your knees
When I shall return...

So -
When shall I return?

The lyrics have obvious religious elements with the imagery of the 'heavenly dome,' or cupola of an Orthodox church, and the 'smell of incense.' The line 'when I shall return' is repeated throughout, but left unresolved with the coda of asking the question, 'when shall I return?' which gives the song an ominous quality since Galich never returned to Russia after his expulsion.

The most noticeable element of this song is the non-metric rhythm. There is a rhythmic pattern of two quarter notes, two eighth notes and a quarter note, a pattern that predominates (Figure 7-4):

Figure 7-4: First four measures of "When I Return," by Galich

Figure 7-4 shows this rhythmic pattern, and is the primary melodic motif for the song with regards to there being a reoccurring pattern within the song. Not all of Galich's songs are non-metric, though in some cases during the course of performing a song, Galich moves in and out of metric phrasing. Perhaps the principal reason for the free-rhythm in some of Galich's songs is due to his performance style, which borders between singing and speaking.

The transcription of this performance is in e-minor, and Galich only employs three chords on guitar to accompany the melody, mostly playing on tonic and dominant. Additionally, the tempo of this song is markedly slower than Vysotsky's songs. In general, Galich's musical-style of *avtorskaya pesnya* is a great deal different than Okudzhava and Vysotsky. However, the music of Galich's songs mirrors his situation as an artist in the Soviet Union. Of the most well-known *bards* whose songs were circulated via *magnitizdat*, the lyrics of Galich verged more on anti-Soviet than others. Thus, sounds that do not fit into strictures of a countable meter, and whose verse structure is more free-form epitomizes Galich's writings that did not fit into strictures of Soviet cultural policies.

b. Improvisational elements in Vysotsky's performances

Along with particular stylistic traits in the songs of *bards*, as briefly discussed above, there is an improvisational component in the performance of *avtorskaya pesnya*. Improvisation is a subtle aspect of performance in this genre, but it creates variations in the songs and thereby one song can have numerous versions. Because of this element there would appear to be no one fixed version of a song, thus adding to the genre's placement within oral, urban folklore. In his edited collection of Bulat Okudzhava's songs, *65 Songs* (*65 Pesen*), Vladimir Frumkin notes that performers of Okudzhava's songs "should be advised not to approach the written notation as a rigid dogma" because of the multiple variations of that exist (Frumkin, 1980: 18). These variations can include individual pitches, tempos, rhythmic patterns, melodic contour, harmonic changes, and

the arrangement of guitar accompaniment. Such variations occur fairly regularly in

Vysotsky's performances of his own songs.

An example of variations in Vysotsky's performances is transcriptions from two

different performances of the same song, "Na Bolshoi Karetnom," the song discussed

above. Both of these recordings were compiled from *magnitizdat* recordings, and there is

no specific information provided on when and where the performances took place. The

overall framework of both performances is the same; chord progressions are fairly

similar, and phrases end on the same scale degree, usually on the tonic or dominant.

Also, the stanza structure of the song is similar in both versions, but this is most likely so

because the performance of the song is determined by the words of the lyrics[42].

However, there are no variations with regards to lyrics in the following Vysotsky songs.

One noticeable difference between these two versions is a change of key from c-sharp

minor (version 1) to b-minor (version 2), though this may also be the simple result of

tuning the guitar a whole tone lower.

There are some distinct changes in the melodic line of the each version; the first

refrain in both versions demonstrates these differences. In the first version (Figure 7-5),

the melody begins on the dominant (g-sharp) and then drops an octave in the third

measure. This same beginning refrain in the second version (Figure 7-6) moves up a

major-fifth in the third measure. There are also small rhythmic differences between the

versions. A syncopated dotted-eighth, sixteenth note pattern dominates both versions,

whereas in measure nine with the triplet-rhythm is identical, measure 10 differs between

the two versions. In the first version the figure is altered slightly from the previous

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[42] There are occasional variations of lyrics in performances; in his edition of Okudzhava songs, Vladimir
Frumkin notes variations in the lyrics (Frumkin, 1980).

measure, though in the second version the exact rhythmic figure from measure nine is repeated.

Figure 7-5: "Na Bolshoi Karetnom," first refrain, version 1

Figure 7-6: "Na Bolshoi Karetnom," first refrain, version 2

There are various melodic and rhythmic changes like those described above throughout both performances. There are other minor differences between the two versions of "Na Bolshoi Karetnom," such as with tempo. Version 2 is faster in tempo than the first version, though both performances slow down just prior to the ending of the song. Many of these differences are minor, they point to the variations, and non-fixed approach that *bards* used with regard to the performances of their songs.

Another example to point out these musical variations is two performances of Vysotsky's "Song about a Friend" ("Pesnya o druge"), discussed in chapter 5. This song has a standard stanza format with the same music used for each verse and each refrain. The two performances of this song have many similarities such as the key in which they are performed, the tempo, and many of the rhythmic figures in which an eighth-note chiefly represents one syllable within a word. On closer inspection, there are some minor differences between the two. The first version was recorded at a concert in November, 1967 (version 1), and the recording for the second version (version 2) does not provide any detailed information on when the performance occurred.

One such difference is in the rhythmic patterns: there is a slight difference in the refrains. In the first version, there is a dotted-eighth, sixteenth note motif in measure 18 (Figure 7-7):
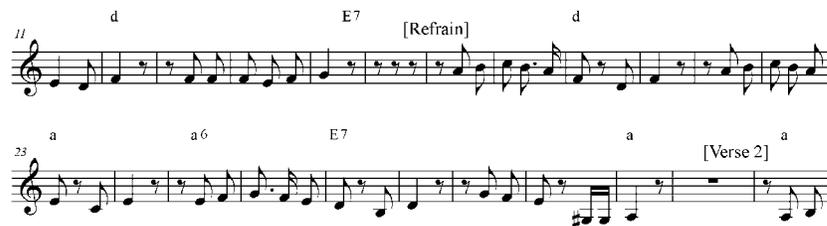
Figure 7-7: "Song about a Friend," first refrain, version 1

This same pattern is repeated in measure 26 of version 1. However, in the second version of the song, the same refrain uses a straight eighth-note pattern (Figure 7-8):

Figure 7-8: "Song about a Friend," first refrain, version 2

Similar repetition in rhythmic patterns is repeated in measure 26 of both versions. However, the repetition of such patterns is not uniform within the verse of the same version. For example, in the second refrain of version 2 instead of repeating the straight eighth-note pattern, the dotted-eighth, sixteenth note pattern of version 1 appears.

In addition to the slight differences in rhythm between the two versions, there are also minute changes that occur within the performance of the verses in both. On the surface, the pitches of each verse sound similar; however, the last note in each verse changes. This occurs in both performances. In the first version the last note in the verse changes from g to f, and in the second version it changes from g-sharp to f.

A final difference between the two versions of "Song about a Friend" concerns the form of the song. Both versions have essentially the same structure until the ending of the song. During the last refrain in version 1, Vysotsky repeats the refrain by whistling a couple phrases before returning to singing the last few lines. In version 2, Vysotsky simply repeats the refrain by singing all of the lyrics without whistling.

These differences are rather subtle, it again suggests the alterable performances found in *avtorskaya pesnya*. The variations in the songs such as those found in multiple performances of "Na Bolshoi Karetnom," and "Song about a Friend," positions this genre

of music within oral, folk culture due to the numerous versions of songs that exist. It is possible to say that within the *avtorskaya pesnya* genre there may be no *urtext* edition of a song. Although each of the three *bards* discussed above did record studio versions of their songs, usually outside of the Soviet Union, various versions exist on *magnitizdat* recordings. In discussing rock music, Theodore Gracyk noted that "studio recordings have become the standard for judging live performance" (Gracyk 1996, 84). Within the genre of rock music it may be true that the culture of rock music is arranged around recorded music, and that a live performance of a song is evaluated and compared to that studio-recorded version. However, with the underground transmission of *avtorskaya pesnya* there are not many studio recordings of the *bards* to compare with live recordings. In some cases, the *magnitizdat* recordings of some songs are the only recorded versions that exist. Additionally, because this genre is considered an amateur genre, and the *bards* were not professional musicians, and precise execution of the music is not of utmost importance.

Musical Identity in *Avtorskaya Pesnya*

With the concept of a 'musical identity,' I look specifically at musical elements frequently utilized by a composer or performer which then become characteristic traits of their compositions or performances. The musical elements found in the individual songs by Okudzhava, Vysotsky, and Galich may not reveal drastic differences in style, but distinctions can be viewed in small nuances. Okudzhava tends to sing very conjunct melodies, *moderato* tempos, and has accompaniment built on arpeggios more often than the other two. The tempo of Vysotsky's songs tends to be much faster; he often employs

syncopated rhythms more often than the other two, and his guitar accompaniment is more often ostinati than arpeggios. On the other hand, Galich's songs do not always fit into typical song-structures, the tempos often vary within the course of a performance, and the vocal delivery is markedly different than the other two. However, the most distinguishing difference amongst the three *bards* is the timbre of the voice and how a *bard* performs his words.

The quality of sound in the voice is possibly the most important musical component in *avtorskaya pesnya* due to the importance of the poetry that is sung. As an amateur art, the authors of the poetry are the individuals who sing the words, therefore the delivery of the words, the expressions, intonation, and the quality of tone in the voice become individual stamps of that *bard's* performance. Even though the lyrics are of primary importance in *avtorskaya pesnya*, the delivery of those words via singing puts more emphasis on them. Simon Frith notes that "to sing words is to elevate them in some way, to make them special, to give them a new form of intensity" (Frith, 1996: 172). Frith's study is focused on the aesthetics of popular music forms; he also states such examples as singing used to signify the importance of words within a religious context in comparison to the same words used in everyday life. In the case of the *bards*, singing the poetry as opposed to strictly speaking it, gives those words more prominence.

Timbre of the voice is a complex element and is difficult to measure. However, it is a key factor in assessing an individual's musical identity. As such, descriptive terms have often been used to illustrate a singer's timbre. Okudzhava's voice is smooth and delicate, but imbued with a sense of melancholy. Galich's complex vocal delivery, half-speech and half-sung, has a slight nasal sound to it at times. Also, Galich tends to roll out

r's and s'es on occasion. On the other hand, Vysotsky's vocal timbre is exceedingly

prominent in comparison. Words like 'harsh,' 'coarse' and 'raspy' have been used in

describing the timbre of his vocal style (Vainer, 1983: 35). Donald Wesling has noted

the importance of the voice in *avtorskaya pesnya*, and in particular that because the *bards*

presented their poetry in their own words, it expressed a sentiment of 'shared cultural

knowledge' of Soviet life that was not described in *massovaya pesnya* (Wesling, 1992:

104). Wesling notes that Vysotsky's vocal performances with a 'wrenched,

semidestroyed voice' help to express an energy and honesty to his words (Wesling, 104).

In addition to Vysotsky's vocal sound quality, another identifiable trademark of

Vysostky's performances is how he sang and elongated the constants as opposed to

vowel sounds in words. He especially rolled out his r's, stretched out his m's and n's,

powerfully launched out k's and hissed on his s'es.

This aspect of vocal timbre was noted by *bards* themselves, and as such was

viewed as an important element belonging to a certain individual. Okudzhava was

quoted as saying:

> Many professional singers have attempted to perform my songs, and they
> have done it, of course, very correctly and professionally. They have good
> voices and good training, but they didn't take one thing into account: that
> these were not just songs, but poems plus accompaniment plus intonation.
> They robbed my songs of my intonation and the genre was lost. I think that
> in this genre…intonation plays a very important role (quoted in Frumkin, 1980:
> 107).

In this statement, Okudzhava uses the term 'intonation' (*intonatsiya*), though when

discussing a trained, professional singer 'robbing' the intonation of his songs, it is most

likely that the comment indicates not only intonation, but also a singer's vocal quality

and manner of singing the words. During one of his concert speeches, Vysotsky relayed

an anecdote of imitations of his vocal timbre and intonations. He noted that there were many imitators of 'the Vysotsky style,' and the supposed method of acquiring this vocal sound was to 'breath cold air at a window in winter,' and 'drink cold beer' (Andreyev and Boguslavsky, 1990: 207). Timbre becomes a part of a singer's identity, and as described by Okudzhava, is a necessary element for a performance to be considered as *avtorskaya pesnya*.

The concept of vocal timbre has been discussed in other musical genres. Peter Manuel notes the importance of Lata Mangeshkar's voice in Indian film song. He describes it as 'distinctive' and 'girlish,' remarking that it became one of the most characteristic features in both Indian popular music and film culture due to the frequent use of her abilities as a playback singer (Manuel, 1993: 53). David Brackett also notes the importance of vocal timbre of a singer. Brackett addresses the popularity and uniqueness of country and western singer Hank Williams was due to the timbre of his voice combined with a 'pronounced southern accent' (Brackett, 2000: 90). Timbre of a singer's voice becomes an identifiable characteristic of a performance and also an important indicator of a singer's identity.

The importance of vocal quality in *avtorskaya pesnya* cannot be overstated, and Gerald Stanton Smith even noted that a *bard's* performance is an indispensable element of the song's semantics (Smith, 1984: 219). When Galich weakly strains the question 'When shall I return?' it gives the meaning of the words a stronger sense of foreboding for a man on the verge of exile from his homeland. In the case of Vysotsky, he combines a strong, raspy vocal quality with unabashed and driven rhythmic patterns in "Na Bolshoi

Karetnom," and captures the youth and vivacity of a place of his formative years. The vocal delivery matches the signification of those words.

The *magnitizdat* recordings of Okudzhava, Vysotsky, and Galich also become important objects that embody musical identity because they transferred the songs to more people who listened to the cassette tapes than heard the *bards* perform in person. Due to the difficulty in conducting live performances, these recordings not only transmitted the words of the singer-poets, but they contained the musical identity as well. Although *avtorskaya pesnya* is often regarded as an oral art form, this is not solely the case. Because the *magnitizdat* recordings exist, the singer's identity is known and transmitted via these cassette tapes. The *bards* may not have written down their songs in a traditional manner of songwriting, the recordings contain their *vocal imprint*; the vocal timbre, intonation and performance manner that distinguishes one *bard* from the next. Although these descriptions of timbral quality of the voices can use further quantifiable information, my intention is primarily to connect theoretical ideas of identity to musical sounds. Furthermore, in-depth analysis of such matters may reveal more precise associations between music and the identity of a performer.

Conclusion

The voice and vocality become important factors of identity in musical performances, and discussion of voice and singing recalls Roland Barthes' essay, "The Grain of the Voice" (1977). Barthes claimed that 'the grain' is the body in the voice when it sings, comes through the voice in performance, and then affects the listener by creating an emotional response. The audience of *avtorskaya pesnya* listened to the grain

of a *bard's* voice, and was affected by the performances contained on *magnitizdat*

recordings. Many of the individuals I spoke with in Moscow never saw Vysotsky in live

performance, but still felt a strong emotional connection to his songs through the sound,

or grain, of his voice. In this respect, timbre exists as both an acoustic phenomenon, as

well as a social phenomenon. As Feld and others have noted, the voice is the 'embodied

locus of spoken and sung performance' and 'vocality,' the act of using the voice, is a

social practice. As part of a social practice:

> the ability to differentiate one voice from another, the ability to recognize
> that each and every voice is different, the ability to hear oneself at the time
> as hearing others, the ability to silently hear oneself within, the ability to
> auditorally imagine the voice of another in the absence of their immediate
> vocalic presence – these are all fundamental human capacities (Feld et. al.
> 2004, 340-41).

The human capacity to hear these multiple voices demonstrates the importance of

the method of performance for this literary genre. When the words of a poem are hand-

or type-written on paper and read by a person, the reader assumes a voice within himself

or herself, 'the ability to hear oneself within.' However, when the poem is sung, and

particularly by the author who wrote it, the voice of that author provides specific sounds

to those words, and therefore reinforces identity of both that song and its performer. In a

foreword to his English translations of Vysotsky's lyrics, Sergei Roy noted the

importance of the voice, that when one reads the lines of Vysotsky, the *bard's* voice

begins 'rumbling in his head,' making the printed text merely an aid for memory. Roy

notes, "on first seeing poem-songs in print, that reading them without hearing the voice

was a bit like smelling a rose while wearing a gas-mask" (quoted in Andeyev and

Boguslavsky, 1990: 13).

Okudzhava, Vysotsky, and Galich never performed each other's songs, consequently emphasizing their own, individual identity. The *bards* were aware of each others' works, particularly in the case of Vysotsky and Okudzhava. Vysotsky recognized Okudzhava as a pioneer of the *avtorskaya pesnya* movement and referred to him as a 'spiritual father.' In addition to Okudzhava's ode in memory of Vysotsky after the latter's death in 1980, Vysotsky wrote "A Parable of Truth and Lie" ("Pritcha o pravde i lzhi"), dedicated to Okudahava.

The meaning of *avtorskaya pesnya*, 'author songs,' implies a sense of ownership which is reinforced by the voice of individual *bards* through performance. Additionally, the words and stories that comprise the poetry are from the experiences and perspectives of one *bard*, even though the experiences may be shared by many people. If the audience of *avtorskaya pesnya* connects printed words to the sounds of an individual *bard's* voice, and hearing that voice from within, then the voice is synonymous to the lyrics of a song. The *magnitizdat* recordings that circulated these songs gave permanence to the identities of the *bards* because of the imprint left on the magnetic tape. As will be discussed in the following chapter, the timbre and musical identity of Vysotsky become important means by which his admirers emulate him sonically.

CHAPTER 8

DEATH AND REMEMBRANCE – VYSOTSKY AND RUSSIAN CULTURAL

IDENTITY

The previous seven chapters of this dissertation have focused on Vysotsky as an

individual situated within the historical context of Soviet Russia. However, his status

within present-day Russia, and particularly in Moscow, is still elevated. In his seminal

work on the three popular *bards*, Gerald Stanton Smith questions whether or not

Vysotsky's significance would outlast his epoch – the late 1960s and the 1970s (Smith,

1984: 179). Smith's book was published only four years after the death of Vysotsky, but

twenty-five years later, it is apparent that the *bard* has remained noteworthy in Russian

cultural life. Memory of Vysotsky is evident in Moscow due to various statues and

plaques of the *bard* that can be seen around the city. It is also now easy to find numerous

books of his poetry and recordings for purchase through official channels. For these

reasons, Moscow is the fundamental locale for a study of Vysotsky, it was the city in

which he was born and spent most of his life. His theatrical work at the Taganka also

occurred in Moscow, he wrote many songs about the city's environs and inhabitants, and it is the city in which he is interred. It is for these reasons that Moscow served as a field site for this research.

In the summers of 2003 and 2004, I spent a total of eight weeks in Moscow for the purpose of understanding Vysotsky's prominence in Russian culture. Although he and his work were exceedingly well-known in the Soviet era, I was interested in Vysotsky's popularity outside the time period of the height of *avtorskaya pesnya*. Accordingly, I examined how people inside Russian culture view this *bard* some twenty years after his death. Because a majority of his songs dealt specifically with issues of Russian society within the frame of the Soviet experience, I was interested to know and understand how Vysotsky is regarded in contemporary Russian culture. Additionally, my research was planned to determine how and why Vysotsky's admirers identify with this individual and his music. This information would explain Vysotsky's identity within Russian culture.

It was from the viewpoint as both tourist and researcher that I entered Moscow. I use those terms to focus my perspectives – as the 'tourist' I observed various sights, sounds, encounters with individuals that were new to me, and as the researcher I analyzed many of these experiences and observations.

The intent of this chapter is twofold: first, I provide an overview of post-Soviet Moscow from my outsider viewpoint for the purpose of contemplating the identity of this large city. Second, I focus on various places and events that are identified with Vysotsky, specifically Vagan'kovskoye Cemetery (*Vagan'kovskoye Kladbishche*) where Vysotsky is buried. It is at this cemetery where people gather on the anniversaries of his birthday

and his death. The informal gatherings give much insight into how people view this figure.

In this chapter, I will make connections to the concept of the Russian 'soul' or *dusha* as it is a pervasive element in the identity of Vysotsky and to Russian culture. To this end, I hope to position Vysotsky within Russian identity, and how his admirers identify with the artist and his music. Although Vysotsky was a musician who was subjected to censorship by the Soviet officials, I believe that his songs transcend the context of the Soviet era and instead demonstrate a particularly Russian identity.

A Glimpse of Post-Soviet Moscow

The Moscow I learned about as a school-age child was a place of paradox in my mind. During sixth-grade social studies, we were taught that people in the Soviet Union were atheists, and then shown pictures of famous Russian locations including St. Basil's Cathedral. I found it strange that a people who 'did not believe in a god' would have such an ornate cathedral in the capital city. In retrospect, this was a rather Cold War-era representation of a country and its people, though I have remembered the presentation very clearly. This memory has stayed with me, and though my knowledge and understanding of Soviet history and culture has drastically changed over the years, the sense of paradox, or duality between Soviet and post-Soviet Russia, was pervasive in my journeys around Moscow. Many places I visited and events I witnessed in Moscow provided me a glimpse into the complex structure of Russian identity in a post-Soviet era.

The sense of duality, referring generally to pre-Soviet and Soviet eras, exists some years after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. There are numerous examples, too

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numerous for this dissertation. I will, however, point out a few instances. Most notable are the powerful images of the former Soviet Union that are still on display around Moscow, including various depictions of Lenin. Contemporary Moscow now contains layers of its pre-Soviet past, as well as the more recent Soviet period. Numerous statues of Lenin remain in Russia despite the removal of some of these effigies after the fall of the Soviet empire, especially in many Eastern European countries. It is expected that in Moscow, the capital of the former communist country, celebrations of communism and its leaders would have permeated the city, and many are still intact. A large monument to Lenin is situated in the middle of October Square (*Oktyabrskaya ploshchad*), a junction of three large roads in southern Moscow (Figure 8-1).

Figure 8-1: Lenin statue, October Square

This statue was erected in the 1980s, and depicts the leader towering over peasants and workers, and like most socialist realist art, Lenin is looking off in to the distance. This site becomes a gathering point for rallies especially on November 7, the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. Additionally, similar monuments are commonplace in Moscow,

such as one located at the *VDNKh*, the exhibition center discussed in Chapter Four. Possibly the most significant example of tributes to Lenin is the Lenin Mausoleum (*Mavzoley V.I. Lenina*) located in Red Square.

Debate over removing and burying Lenin is not new, though proposals and debates increased during the 1990s with then head-of-state Boris Yeltsin often being the most vehement voice for Lenin's removal. Even the Russian Orthodox Church supported burying Lenin but abstained from stating whether he would be buried as a 'Christian' (Verdery, 1999: 44). It is likely that much of the recent debate over the fate of Lenin's body is a mixture of politics and religious sensibilities associated with the Orthodox Church. The mausoleum is still present in Red Square, not far from St. Basil's Cathedral. When visiting the mausoleum, I stood in line for roughly two hours to file past the body, which only took about five minutes. The morning I ventured to the mausoleum, a majority of those in line were tourists, though not all. Most striking for me was the reverence still paid to Lenin. Walking through the mausoleum, one is not allowed to stop and stand, should not have their hands in their pockets, nor should one talk. Two men in line directly behind me were briskly hushed by a guard for merely whispering.

The two examples above of Soviet culture are quite striking, and though they are remains of the Soviet past, they do not indicate that communism nor Soviet culture is no

longer a living part of Russian life. For example, the communist party still exists in the country, and a noticeable demonstration of its presence is the occasional group of communist protesters. In the two summers I visited Moscow, I saw both large and small gatherings of communists in and around Revolutionary Square (*Ploshchad' Revolyutsii*). On weekends it was typical to see groups protesting various issues in front of the former Lenin Museum, with the addition of an occasional person hawking Soviet memorabilia. Also on the weekend, I often witnessed communist groups marching around the square and the adjacent Red Square holding various banners, and hammer and sickle flags of the former Soviet Union. The groups marching around were often singing "The Internationale" in unison (Figure 8-2). This area of Moscow draws a large number of tourists, and such displays almost become tourist attractions themselves with many people snapping photographs or video-taping the scene.

Figure 8-2: Communist Protesters in Revolutionary Square

Along with the remnants of Soviet Russia that I viewed while in Moscow, there were also many pre-Soviet sights in different areas of the city. Although there are also far too many examples, I will point out one as a direct comparison to the Lenin statue mentioned above. An emblem of Moscow that endured the Soviet years is the bronze statue of Alexander Pushkin, the beloved nineteenth-century author (Figure 8-3). The statue stands in Pushkin Square (*Pushkinskaya ploshchad*) and was erected in 1880. On Pushkin's birthday, sixth of June, it becomes a place for huge throngs of admirers to gather and recite his poetry. As at many similar monuments, floral tributes are often found.

Figure 8-3: Pushkin Monument, Pushkin Square

It is important to note that Pushkin remained an important cultural figure during the Soviet era. This was demonstrated by the national celebration surrounding the Pushkin jubilee in 1937. Among numerous events, editions of his works were republished along with other nineteenth-century Russian literary classics (Fitzpatrick, 1999: 88). It was explained to me by individuals I spoke with in Moscow that every school-age child learns Pushkin's poetry and should be able to recite it from memory.

As already stated, the Pushkin statue is an example of pre-Revolutionary imagery that remained through the Soviet years. There are also examples of items that have been reinstated to their former status such as in the Kremlin where a statue of Alexander II was restored to its previous place supplanting one of Lenin (Mulvey, 1999: 225). Another case of reclaiming a Russian past in Moscow was the reconstruction of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior (*Khram Khrista Spasitelia*) that had been demolished in the 1930s. The cathedral (Figure 8-4) was rebuilt during the 1990s and in some ways demonstrates the complexities of Russian identity in the post-Soviet years. The project was promoted as 'a monument to national unity,' but it also elicited both support and condemnation from religious dignitaries, workers, the new elite, and the intelligentsia. Whereas the supporters

Figure 8-4: Reconstructed Cathedral of Christ the Savior, Moscow

of the rebuilding viewed it as a return to the glorious Russian past and a means of

repentance for Soviet wrongs, others viewed the new cathedral as unnecessary, thinking

that the money could have be used for repairing existing churches or various social needs

(see Boym, 1999: 155-57).

The reconstruction of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior displays a pattern

previously seen in Moscow. As discussed in Chapter Three, the imagery and symbols of

in the cultural identity have changed, and this is quite dramatic in Moscow. Whereas

during the twentieth century, the Soviets dismantled parts of pre-Revolutionary Moscow

and eradicated some of its past, the post-Soviet era has also removed parts of Soviet

Russia as well. The replacement of the cathedral, in its original location, reduces some of

the impact of Soviet history on Moscow. It is obvious that the building of the 'new'

cathedral is not a sign that Moscow, or Russia, disregarded its Soviet past. This is, of course, apparent in those Soviet symbols which are still part of the city's landscape. The 'new' cathedral does demonstrate the layers of cultural identity that permeate Moscow and Russian identity, namely the connection of Russian culture to its Orthodox past. It is evident from the various sights one sees in Moscow, that the legacy of the Soviet years is still very much present, but in essence, is part of the complex layers of Russian identity, as demonstrated in social constructionist thought.

Vysotsky in Moscow

Throughout various areas in Moscow, indications of Vysotsky's role in Russian culture are evident. Recordings and books of poetry that were once 'illegal' are now easily obtained in various bookstores, music stores, and kiosks around the city. The cemetery in which Vysotsky was interred is an extremely important locale for his mass of admirers, as will be discussed in detail below. There are also other locations in Moscow that mark his affect on the city.

One such notable place is the State Cultural Center and Museum of Vladimir Vysotsky (Statuya Kul´turnii Tsentr i Myzey Vladimira Vysotskovo) located behind the Taganka Theater (Figure 8-5). The museum opened in 1992 and includes a permanent exhibition devoted to Vysotsky. This exhibition includes documents, pages of theater scripts, playbills and posters, photographs, and a few costumes of famous characters he

Figure 8-5: Sign at State Cultural Center and Museum of Vladimir Vysotsky, Moscow

portrayed. The exhibition also includes Vysotsky's personal manuscripts of his poetry

donated by family members, a detailed map of the Soviet Union marked with his travels

and concerts, and his seven-stringed guitar is prominently displayed in a case. In addition

to the personal exhibition, the museum also serves as scientific, research, and cultural

center.

Another place where Vysotsky is memorialized is the house where he grew up on

Bolshoi Karetnii Street in north Moscow. Three different plaques on the building at

number fifteen, mark it as Vysotsky's home. One plaque (Figure 8-6), on front of the

building, reads 'Here from 1949-1955 lived Vladimir Vysotsky.' Another sign by the

doorway includes the first few lines of lyrics from the song "Na Bolshoi Karetnom"

which reads "Where were you at seventeen? On Bolshoi Karetnom," which identify specifically the place Vysotsky referred to in his song.

Figure 8-6: Sign at No. 15 Building on Bolshoi Karetnii Street, Moscow

A similar monument appears in front of the apartment building on Malaya Gruzinskaya Street in northwest Moscow, just across the street from a Catholic church. The last apartment in which Vysotsky lived is located in this building, and on the front of the building is a relief of Vysotsky's profile surrounded by plaques. The ivy on the building has grown over most of the plaques, but in front of the relief are floral tributes that have been left. It was explained to me by my guide to these sights that those memorials were completed by friends and family, not public donations. However, such memorials are well-known by many of Vysotsky's admirers as the person who showed me around Moscow is one such individual.

Another monument to Vysotsky is a statue (Figure 8-7) located at *Petrovskiye Vorota* near the Pushkin statue mentioned above. This statue displays the *bard* with arms

fully extended, head towards the sky and a guitar hanging from his back. This statue provides an interesting comparison to many of those identified as socialist realist art in that Vysotsky is not looking away into some distant future, but rather looking upwards (the heavens) with extended arms as if in receiving. Similar to other such places, there are

Figure 8-7: Vysotsky statue at *Petrovskiye Vorota*, Moscow

often floral tributes left. In addition to Vagan'kovskoye Cemetery, this statue becomes an important congregation point for people on the anniversaries of his birthday and death. However, the gatherings here are more structured with organized concerts, some seating, and when I attended, there was a far stronger police presence than at the cemetery.

In addition to the plaques and statues, productions of *Vladimir Vysotsky*, the theatrical tribute that Yuri Lyubimov prepared after Vysotsky's death, are still being

staged. I attended a performance of this production at the Fellowship of Taganka Actors (discussed in Chapter Five) on August 14, 2004. The performance was sold out, with numerous people sitting in the aisles. The first song, Okudzhava's "About Volodya Vysotsky" (*O Volodya Vysotsky*) was performed by Nikolai Gubenko, the director of the troupe.

Such tributes and statues are evident of the impact that Vysotsky's artistic works had on Russian cultural life in general, and particular within the city of Moscow. Vysotsky's reputation during the Soviet era as a censored, underground artist would never have allowed such acknowledgments. Although the *perestroika* (reconstruction) phase of the late-Soviet period and the conditions of post-Soviet Russia permitted such memorials, their presence around Moscow demonstrates Vysotsky's significance as an artist who has outlived his epoch. The above examples are just a few indications of how individuals remember and commemorate Vysotsky, another manner of commemorating the *bard* can be viewed on certain days at his gravesite in Moscow.

Vysotsky in Remembrance

a. Vysotsky's Death

Vysotsky died on a Friday morning, on July 25, 1980 in Moscow, at the age of forty-two. The cause of death was attributed to heart failure, though many people I have interviewed or talked with mentioned his alcoholism as a contributor to his early death. His death coincided with the Summer Olympics being held in Moscow at the time. As news of Vysotsky's death spread by word of mouth, people began abandoning the stadiums and their homes to head towards Taganka Theater, where Vysotsky's body was

laid the day after. By the following Monday, those without special invitation were permitted to pay respect and allowed inside the theater to file past his body. It was estimated that thousands of individuals lined up to view his body, even though some did not get the opportunity to see him (Merridale, 2000; 276).

The private service at the Taganka Theater included the Bolshoi Theater's choir, recordings of Vysotsky's voice, and various speeches by some in attendance, all of which was coordinated by Yuri Lyubimov (Smith, 1984: 175). The funeral was held on July 29, and much like the news of his death, drew thousands to Taganka. Similar numbers were present as pallbearers removed him from the theater. An article published in the *New York Times* noted that a large security force was present, including around twenty mounted police. The article estimated ten to thirty thousand were present in the crowd, some of whom jeered or shouted 'shame' at the police who attempted to disburse the crowd (Whitney 1980, A-1, A-8). Film footage from some of these scenes appears on the Vysotsky documentary *Ya ne lyublyu* (*How I Detest*); most notable are the scenes of people lined down Radishevskaya street to file past Vysotsky's body as it lie in the theater.

The scenes at the Taganka were followed by similar situations at the gravesite where police presence strictly controlled access; people were required to hand flowers to the police who were to place them on the grave later (Smith, 1984: 175). Vysotsky is buried at Vagan'kovskoye Cemetery located in the *Krasnaya Presnaya* district in northwest Moscow. Possibly because of his status with officials and his un-Soviet undertakings as an artist, he was not regarded prominent enough to be buried in Novodevichy Cemetery where leaders in politics, the arts, military and a host of others

are interred. Vagan'kovskoye does include some well-known Russian individuals in addition to Vysotsky; the poet Sergei Esenin, scientist and social reformer Andrei Sakharov, and Vysotsky's contemporary Bulat Okudzhava. Additionally, both of Vysotsky's parents were buried in the cemetery following their deaths.

The funerary services described above were quite out of the ordinary in Soviet times as many services for famed individuals were generally unassuming, and ironically some have stated that such public outpouring had not been seen in Russia since the death of Stalin in 1953 (Smith, 1984: 175). Since his death, Vysotsky's gravesite in Vagan'kovskoye has become a pilgrimage site and flowers are constantly replenished throughout the year. Footage of such commemorations was part of the documentary, *A Matter of Trust* (1991), a film that details the travel of American rock musician Billy Joel touring throughout the Soviet Union in 1986. In one scene, Joel and his translator view a mile-long line of people whose primary purpose is to give policemen flowers to put on Vysotsky's grave. Thus, visiting the gravesite appears to be a tradition for his mass of admirers.

b. Vysotsky in Remembrance – Vagan'kovskoye Cemetery

Vysotsky's grave is quite prominent as it is the first grave one comes to after entering the cemetery, and there is a fairly large open area in front of the grave. The current grave marker was erected in 1985 (Figure 8-8):

Figure 8-8: Vysotsky's Gravesite, Vagan'kovskoye Cemetery, Moscow

The monument, chosen by his parents, displays the image of Vysotsky shrouded with arms bound and a guitar placed inverted over his head, as if to signify a halo. It is typical to visit the grave at any time of the year and see fresh flowers lying on the grave. Just by the entrance to the cemetery there are various flower vendors with signs marked *tsvetii* (flowers), and most notably there is a small *lavka* (Figure 8-9), or shop, just outside the

cemetery entrance that sells books of his poetry, CDs, and other memorabilia. At the times I visited the cemetery, I often heard recordings of Vysotsky coming from the *lavka*. This shop seems to be a permanent fixture as I saw it both years I was in Moscow.

Figure 8-9: *Vysotsky Lavka* outside Vagan'kovskoye Cemetery, Moscow

The largest crowds gather in Vagan'kovskoye to commemorate Vysotsky on his birthday, January 25, and the anniversary of his death on July 25. My observations are divided into two sections. The first observations are from my visit of Vagan'kovskoye Cemetery on July 25, 2003, and the second are from July 25, 2004. There is no structured manner in which people gather at Vysotsky's grave; police no longer bar individuals from the grave, though I did notice a small assembly just outside the cemetery entrance. Because of the free-form movement of people and the spontaneous performance of songs, collecting information was difficult. It often became a matter of noticing the right event at the right moment, and most interviews I conducted were brief. In conversing with different individuals at the cemetery, the most pressing questions for me to ask were:

1) Why is it important for you to come here [to Vagan'kovskoye] on this day?
2) What does Vysotsky's music mean to you?

July 25, 2003

The summer of 2003 was my first trip to Moscow, and I felt somewhat reluctant to ask people detailed questions due to the language barrier. Therefore, one of my primary purposes of this initial visit was to observe peoples' movements, interactions, and importantly how musical performances were conducted. This particular day was a Friday, and I spent roughly three hours in the cemetery, from about one to four in the afternoon.

In general, there were a lot of people coming in and out of the cemetery, which unlike Novodevichy Cemetery does not collect an entrance fee, so estimating the number of people in attendance at any one given time is difficult. At one point in the afternoon, a television crew appeared and interviewed a couple musicians before they quickly left. Additionally, I was asked by one woman if I was a journalist after she saw me taking notes. I did observe that some people came into the cemetery and laid flowers at the grave, always in even numbers per Orthodox tradition. Some came directly to the gravesite, stayed a few minutes and briskly left, while others lingered about for quite some time. Oftentimes those who stayed longer began conversations with others in attendance, listened to those performing songs, and even took part in impromptu sing-a-longs.

The grave was marked off by a fence that appears to be a permanent fixture as I saw it there on other days. Many people tended to congregate around this railing while

others took turns walking up to the grave to lay flowers. There were a couple of women rearranging the abundant amount of flowers, and continuously watering them. The flowers were mostly red carnations, and the closer one got to the grave, the smell of fresh flowers permeated the air. In addition to the flowers, there were pictures and photographs of Vysotsky in various sizes, lit candles – those used in Orthodox churches, a few packs of cigarettes with accompanying lighters, and I also noticed a small bottle of vodka. I found it interesting that most musical performances did not occur right by the grave. I did notice an occasional person would stand beside the grave and delivery a poem written about Vysotsky, and only one man performed a song with his guitar. Such an occurrence was out of the ordinary as most musical performances occurred in areas a bit further away from the gravesite.

One of the most obvious events I noticed was the number of musicians, those with guitar in hand who performed various Vysotsky songs. There was no stage, nor did these individuals take turns in performance, performing was done spontaneously. My field recording included moments of two simultaneous performances. Some musicians appeared to be more popular than others by the crowds they attracted. One group of two men, each with a guitar, drew the largest crowd during my stay. One of them had a baseball cap with the Rebel flag associated with the U.S. Civil War, and given my own background I found this somewhat amusing. Individuals with larger crowds generally induced group singing by those circling them, and when group performing occurred, it usually resulted in heterophonic-style renditions of the songs. Occasionally, a person would shout the title of a song to the performer with the guitar. Sometimes the musicians complied with the request, sometimes he did not. The songs I did hear in the hours I

attended were all songs that are very well-known and appear on numerous recordings that I have acquired over the years: "Tovarishchi ucheniye" ("Comrade Scientists"), "Spasite nashi dushi" ("Save Our Souls"), "Na Bolshoi Karetnom," "Pesnya o starom dome" ("Song about the Old House"), "Ochi chernye" ("Dark Eyes" – Vysotsky's version), and "Koni Priveredlivie" ("Fastidious Horses"). Some of the songs were heard more than once during the afternoon.

Additionally, some of musicians performed with guitars slightly out-of-tune, though in general, they were more in tune than some live recordings of Vysotsky. I did notice a few men meticulously tuning their guitars in between songs. Importantly, all of those I saw performing with guitars were men, in the few hours I was in attendance I only saw women recite a poem, or sing along with others. Of all the musical elements I heard in the afternoon, the most striking was how a majority of the men performing with guitars sound like Vysotsky, the manner in which they enunciated words and the timbre of their voices was conspicuously similar to the sound of Vysotsky. This aspect of the musical performances becomes important when discussing the issues of identity.

July 25, 2004

One year later, I made my second trip to Moscow and again on the anniversary of Vysotsky's death, I ventured to Vagan'kovskoye Cemetery. Since my first experience in this setting was strictly observational, during this trip I spent more time talking to those in attendance. In 2004 the anniversary fell on a Sunday, and there were noticeably more people in the cemetery which was most likely due to the anniversary falling on the weekend. I would estimate that hundreds of people walked in and out during the course

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of time I stayed in the cemetery, though the total is most likely closer to a thousand. I spent about six hours in the cemetery on this day, and I took a Bulgarian friend with me to help me translate. She had known about Vysotsky growing up in Sophia, Bulgaria, but as we walked into the cemetery and saw the throngs of people around, she mentioned to me that she was unaware that his popularity was so vast in Russia.

There were many familiar sights and occurrences that I had observed the previous year. Like before, people laid flowers at Vysotsky's grave, as well at his mother's new grave which now lay beside him – she had died during the year. Again, the area directly surrounding the grave was noticeably quiet and rather solemn compared to the revelries and singing that occurred around it. The make-up of the crowd was similar to that the year before; primarily there were middle-aged men and women, but also large numbers of teenagers, and even a few children as well.

Because I spent much more time at the cemetery the second year, I noticed many additional nuances concerning the musical performances. Just as there were more people in the cemetery in 2004, there were also more performers. At one point, I noted a total of six performers singing at the same moment, each singing different songs and with various sized-crowds surrounding them. Like the previous summer, I heard many of the same songs in performance, but also I heard, "Song about a Friend" ("Pesnya o druge"), "How I Detest" ("Ya ne lyublyu"), "We Turn the Earth" (My vrashchaem zemlyu) "Ships" ("Korabli), and "Dialogue in Front the TV" ("Pered televisorm").

Some singers approached their 'performance' differently, some looked at books in which the lyrics were printed, though most sang from memory. Occasionally, I noticed that one of the musicians would forget the lyrics, but was usually prompted by a

spectator. In some instances individuals with guitars took requests usually consenting, but not always. In one case, after a musician finished singing one of Vysotsky's famous war songs, someone in the crowd asked for 'something lighter,' and the musician commented, "I can't, they're all heavy…" and proceeded with another war song. People tended to be appreciative of all those who performed by often clapping after each song, though they did seem to gravitate towards and circle around performers who sang at louder volumes, or to whom they particularly enjoyed listening. It was explained to me by one gentleman I spoke with that musicians are not competing for attention or crowds; their main purpose is to remember Vysotsky through song.

However, one of the more interesting aspects is that many of the musicians performing with guitars often tried to emulate Vysotsky's sound in imitation of his singing style, a factor I had noted the previous year. The harsh and coarse sounds heard in Vysotsky's voice emanated from various people, as if in the process of commemoration they are trying to embody the singer. There was even a group of teenagers recreating the voices of Vanya and Zina from "Dialogue in Front of the TV" (see Chapter 6). Two people I spoke with noticed the way in which people attempted to imitate Vysotsky and pointed it out saying "they try so hard to sound like Vysotsky, they should sing with their own [voice]." With this, one of my informants pointed out to me a specific musician and she informed me he was her favorite, because he did not sound like Vysotsky, he has his own sound. The issue of imitation is quite interesting since the singing style and timbre of Vysotsky makes him so identifiable. Whereas some may draw themselves closer to him by emanating his sound, others celebrate his songs in their own performance manner.

In asking some people why they make the pilgrimage to this commemoration, many say it is something they feel compelled to do because Vysotsky the person, as well as his songs, means so much to them. One woman I interviewed is a native Muscovite. She explained that she comes to visit Vysotsky every year, on his birthday and the anniversary of his death, and she makes it a point to also visit the grave of Vysotsky's father who is also buried in the cemetery.

Another individual described how he had sat on a train for twelve hours from Belgorod just to come to Moscow to be at the cemetery. This is a trip he makes twice a year, just for the purpose of visiting Vagan'kovskoye. He noted that he began listening to Vysotsky when he was thirteen years old, when he felt he was old enough to understand the words. He was now in his mid-twenties and explained to me that one can hear the songs and understand emotions. While talking to him, he informed me that once I improve my Russian language, I will understand Vysotsky better than him. He explained that Vysotsky sings 'from the soul,' not from the head, and women understand better from the soul. In connection to this, he made connections to Mother Russia and that the Motherland is female, therefore Vysotsky was 'truly' Russian. Additionally, he told me that everyone in Russia knows who Vysotsky is, and he remarked that Vysotsky's surname is derived from the Russian term *vysokii* (tall) and indicated the link between Vysotsky's name and his popularity.

One musician I spoke with, a veteran of the Afghan and Chechnyan Wars, responded that he comes to the cemetery to be closer to Vysotsky, because it 'frees his soul.' In talking with him, he also mentioned that he felt that Vysotsky was truly 'a holy man' and should be made a saint. He told me that, "when you start singing Vysotsky

songs, your soul goes away from your body." He also mentioned that sometimes he was scared to sing because his soul would 'just fly away,' as to lose control. He also described how as a soldier, he and many of his friends would listen to Vysotsky's songs quite often. He also took a guitar with him when he was deployed and wrote many of his own songs and poems in 'the style of Vysotsky.'

Many answers from people about why they come to commemorate Vysotsky were usually just as poetic. Some people explained that they came to remember and honor Vysotsky, others expressed how they could not explain why they come to Vagankov, they just they felt compelled to be there. Some people explained to me that so many people identify with Vysotsky because times are still bad, people are still struggling, and Vysotsky himself struggled and sang about it a great deal.

During the afternoon, there were many other occurrences during the afternoon which I found quite interesting. At one point during the afternoon, a larger group of people began to surround the grave and there was a great deal of commotion. My friend and I were told that the politician Vladimir Zhirinovsky had gone to put flowers on Vysotsky's grave. The commotion was, as someone explained to me, because he is a rather controversial figure in Russian politics. I also witnessed more than just musical performances as some people would recite poetry they had written about Vysotsky. One of the singers that afternoon also recited from memory Khlopusha's monologue from Sergei Esenin's play *Pugachev*, a role the Vysotsky's was known for during his years at the Taganka Theater. After the recitation, a man said rather loudly, "you should be on stage at Taganka."

It was explained to me by one man that everyone who comes to the cemetery for this purpose creates a community. He said to me in English, "Everyone here is a friend, you can talk to anyone because we all love Vysotsky, we all have something to say." This sense of community is marked by the numerous 'strangers' that meet in the cemetery, as well as those who are old friends. Most people join in and connect through singing songs or laying flowers at the grave. Oftentimes when I talked to people, others would surround us and listen to stories, and in turn would begin to converse with one another about the own Vysotsky-related stories and events. Some people appeared to be old friends by their greetings for one another. These gatherings are impromptu, there is no organization or committee supporting it, it is a much like the spontaneous gatherings that occurred at Taganka Theater after Vysotsky's death.

Analysis of Vysotsky Commemorations – the Sacred and the Secular

From my observations of statues, plaques, an official state museum, and most importantly the commemorations for him at his gravesite in Moscow, it would appear that Vysotsky's significance has outlasted the era in which he lived. The *bard*, whose music was once part of underground movements, has remained a vital part of Russian cultural life as demonstrated by how people in Russia remember him and his work. This is done so through state-sanctioned methods, such as in the case of the museum at Taganka. However, it is most interesting that many events surrounding celebrations of Vysotsky do not have any organizing committees and are done without orders from official, state-sanctioning.

The twenty-fifth anniversary of Vysotsky's death occurred on July 25, 2005, and as every year since his death, there were various celebrations. For that anniversary, the commemorations had a wider geographical range into other provinces. Although various celebrations outside of Moscow did occur, they were usually on a much smaller scale. To mark the occasion, the first major Vysotsky museum outside of Moscow opened on July 25th in the southern city of Krasnodar. Unlike the museum at Taganka, it is private, and sponsored by a local businessman and Vysotsky devotee Alexander Zubov (Malpas, 2005). Additionally a statue of Vysotsky was unveiled in the city of Novosibirsk in western Siberia (Malpas, 2005).

On this particular anniversary, there were also people gathered in Vagan'kovskoye Cemetery. An article published in the online edition of *The Moscow Times* centered on some of the people in attendance at the gravesite. Some noted that the number of people present in Vagankov was a demonstration of how beloved the *bard* still is in Russia. Others commented that he "spoke the whole truth…which is what real art is," and there was also discussion by one woman who stated that 'modern' Russia was in need of a poet of Vysotsky's stature as much as ever (Boykewich, 2005).

The issue of the generation gap from the time of Vysotsky's career to present day was addressed in the article, and one individual in his early thirties noted that the passage of time in no way made Vysotsky's work inaccessible to younger people (Boykewich, 2005). Similarly, in the two summers I visited Vagan'kovskoye Cemetery, I saw a wide range of generations from school-age child to teenagers, and middle-age individuals to elderly. In 2004, I even noticed a young boy request that one of the musicians perform a specific song that he wanted to hear.

In a 1987 *Pravda* article, Vysotsky's mother, Nina Vysotskaya, remarked on her displeasure with individuals selling photographs of her son, among other items, as *bezvkysniye* ('tasteless') and deemed the practice as *koshchynstvennii* ('blasphemous') (Golubeva, 1987: 6-1). Although that practice occurs just outside the cemetery grounds now, it does broach the issue of how the commemorations of Vysotsky fit within the confines of a sacred setting like Vagan'kovskoye Cemetery. On the surface, this event may appear as rather secular in nature for a multitude of reasons. Most songs performed are of a secular character, and there is no formal arrangement of activities with people milling around, impromptu singing, a constant flow of people coming in and out of the cemetery, and there is even an occasional display of drunkenness. However, despite the informality of this ritual for commemoration, there is a constant sacred element in its purposes for some individuals.

There is an inherent sacred element underlying the responses people gave me as to why they visit Vagan'kovskoye Cemetery, and how they experience Vysotsky's songs. Whereas the secular components of this ritual may include one's casual evaluation of musical performances and the companionship of other Vysotsky admirers, the obvious sacred elements are also present. An important note in terms of a soundscape is that the area directly around Vysotsky's grave, cordoned off by a small fence, remains eerily quiet compared to vast amounts of music and talking surrounding it. There may be an occasional speech or poem delivered from this point, but as if almost in reverence there is a noticeable lack of musical performances directly within this area. Elena Hellberg-Hirn notes that monuments erected in areas that are open and accessible still keep 'worshippers' at a distance. She notes, "This distance is inscribed into its function, and

therefore approaching the monument always involves a sort of transgression of a sacred zone" (Hellberg-Hirn, 1998: 121). It would seem that passing into the cemetery would mark the 'sacred zone,' but with the amount of talking, singing, and even occasional displays of drinking and drunkenness, that is not the case. However, the area directly around the gravesite marks this sacred zone. It would therefore seem that this commemoration of Vysotsky's death is simultaneously within both secular and the sacred realms.

In a speech at one of his concerts, Vysotsky commented on the melodies in his songs by stating:

> I simplified many melodies on purpose…I believed that nothing should
> interfere with the perception of the text, with the meaning, with that
> which I want to express. I wanted the songs to enter not only the ears but
> the souls as well (Andreyev and Boguslavsky, 1990: 202).

Vysotsky's desire to reach the 'soul' (*dusha*) appears to have been a successful endeavor as many people I have spoken to about his songs often commented to that effect.

Additionally, a poll conducted in 2004 by The Public Opinion Foundation[43], a non-profit organization conducting sociological inquiries in Russia, carried out research to discover how Russians felt about Vladimir Vysotsky in the years after his death. A response they received to an open-ended questioned concerning Vysotsky as a musician read, 'a voice, music, songs that penetrate one's soul' (Klimov, 2004). Thus, music that is viewed as reaching one's soul and individuals noting that coming to Vagan'kovskoye Cemetery and singing helps to 'free their souls,' are proof that Vysotsky's simple melodies had such as effect. This is similar to Pesmen's findings on the relationship to *dusha* and its relationship to music and group singing (Pesmen, 2000: 84).

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[43] This poll was conducted nation-wide in forty-four regions across Russia, with over a thousand respondents. (See Klimov, 2006).

As discussed in Chapter Three, the concept of *dusha* (soul) is a very complex notion in Russian culture. *Dusha* has multiple meanings, both religious and quasi-religious meanings (Wierzbicka, 1989: 52), and is also treated as a way for one to impart his or her own identity through a variety of methods (see Pesmen 2000, 16). It would therefore seem that the multiple layers of what *dusha* signifies, and its subsequent associations with Russian culture, is mirrored in the complex structure of both the secular and sacred attributes of Vysotsky's songs, as well as in the in ritual commemorations of him. As for direct connections to *dusha* in terms of identity, not only does Vysotsky help 'free a person's soul,' as explained to me by the war veteran I spoke with, but Vysotsky often sang about it as well in his songs such as "Save Our Souls" and "How I Detest." A line from his song "Song of a Microphone" (*Pesn' mikrofona*) reads:[44]

> Sounds were sifted through me, and went flying
> off the stage, through the air, to your soul.

If we take the notion that *dusha* can only refer to a person, not a thing, and is embodied by that person, and acted out through musical performance, then the soul is part of the framework that creates identity and also an expression of identity. In the case of commemorating Vysotsky, these individuals 'freeing their souls' through visits to his grave are thereby expressing their identity. It is in musical performances that *dusha* can be experienced. An eleven-year old boy interviewed by Dale Pesmen during her ethnography of *dusha* in Russian culture noted, "When Vysotsky played songs, he put *dusha* in them – that means he brings the song to life." (Pesmen, 2000: 74). His performances were then recorded, and subsequently his *dusha* was transferred onto the cassette-tapes.

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[44] From a translation by Sergei Roy, (Andreyev and Boguslavsky 1990: 79).

This Russian identity as constructed by time, place, history and *dusha* as once performed by Vysotsky, is now re-enacted by those at the cemetery who try to sound like him by growling out harsh vocal timbres. Vysotsky's vocal timbre is perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of his musical identity, and his voice is the method which he used to 'penetrate one's soul.' Those at Vagan'kovskoye who imitate his vocal sounds can be viewed as putting *dusha* into their own performances of Vysotsky's songs by embodying this aspect of his identity. Conversely, those who sang Vysotsky songs at Vagan'kovskoye with their own vocal timbre assert their own musical identity. This is not to say that those individuals do not express *dusha*. A few people I interviewed explained to me that they preferred a particular musician who did not sound like Vysotsky and 'sang with his own voice.' In the view that *dusha* is something within a person, and can be expressed through musical performance, then such performances can also convey a feeling of *dusha*.

There is also the connection to traditions of Russian village singing which has been described by Laura Olson as something where the text was most important while relatively simple melodies served as a means of conveying something (Olson, 2004: 20). This connection between the village singing and Vysotsky's objective in writing simple melodies in order for the text to reach the 'soul' strongly embeds his songs in Russian musical identity. We may then say that although Vysotsky's songs focused particularly on the issues of life in the Soviet Union and at times dealt with politics of censorship, his songs transcend anything particularly defined as 'Soviet' but instead have stronger connections to a macroscopic view of Russian culture and music. During the period of time I spoke with people about Vysotsky, only the occasional mention of censorship was

brought up, and no one ever directly connected Vysotsky or his music to politics and political issues. Despite this, many people explained to me, "We continue to listen to his songs today because they are still relevant. Life here is still a struggle." As demonstrated at these commemorations in Vagan'kovskoye, musicians embody Vysotsky's musical identity through vocal timbre and enunciation, as well as express their own.

Conclusion

James Billington notes that after 1991, Russians had to alter many facets of their thinking, including politics, economics, history, and their place within the world. This period of adjustment has, in Billington's view, created the "most wide-ranging discussions of a nation's identity in the modern history" (Billington, 2004: 48). This search for identity is an ongoing process as can be seen in the co-existence of pre-Revolutionary and Soviet symbols within Moscow, and how the cultural artifacts from the Russian past, such as the rebuilding of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, have been reclaimed. The search for Russian identity in post-Soviet times is not a unique circumstance to the country or culture, and instead demonstrates a pattern within Russian history. Just as nineteenth-century debates between Westernizers and Slavophiles raged over the direction of Russian culture, and the struggle between Moscow and St. Petersburg over the embodiment of 'true' Russian culture, Russian identity in the post-Soviet time period reflects similar struggles.

Although Vysotsky's work reflected the times in which he lived, his work and his significance as an artist has outlasted that time period. Much of this is evident by the numbers or people who visit Vagan'kovskoye on his birthday and the anniversary of his

death, and also by the growing recognition of him through museums, and statues. People identify with his music because it reflects Soviet reality, but for younger generations his work resonates with themes and ideas that extend beyond just the Soviet era. Vysotsky's own identity through his songs is often viewed by people as expressions of *dusha*, and for some, being at his grave is also a means by which something occurs to one's *dusha*.

The resonance of Vysotsky's work has thus extended twenty-five years after his death, and by the increasing number of tributes to him, it is likely that his prominence as part of Russian cultural history is likely to continue. The extent of Vysotsky's popularity was explained to me by an individual who identified themselves as someone who was not an 'admirer' of Vysotsky. She told me about his popularity when she was at university, that everyone listened to him, and her friends wanted to see him in concert. She said, "I did not like his music. Although I did not like him, I still know his work. He was very popular. We all know Vysotsky, even young people who do not listen to him know Vysotsky." The varied responses I received about Vysotsky as embodying Russian cultural identity, a 'national hero,' or 'a poet on the level as Pushkin' suggests that Vysotsky embodies all these titles and characteristics.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

Defining Music and Identity

In this dissertation, I have explored factors that create various identities of the Russian *bard* Vladimir Vysotsky. These identities encompass a wide range of categories such as Russian ethnicity, Soviet nationalism, official actor, unofficial musician, censored artist, and Russian artist. Additionally, with the remembrances of Vysotsky and how Russian people relate to him, both sacred and secular cultural elements appear. The ties to Russian culture are quite strong and placing Vysotsky only within the context of the Soviet era, and as a censored artist, disregards many elements that help form his Russian identity.

The relationship between music and identity necessitates a deep understanding of both external and internal forces which help to shape the identity of a musician, or determine what identity a musician embodies within a performance context. However, the identity on display is mostly determined by the interpretation of an outsider. I view

the use of the term 'identity' in two ways. First, there is the identity a person carries with them, and how he or she views this personal identity, and secondly, how the use of identity is tied to musical sounds, specifically, one's musical identity.

The first instance encompasses answers to broad questions like 'Who are you?' 'Where are you from?' and to an extent, it may be revealed by outward, physical appearance. These answers may divulge information pertinent to one's ethnicity, race, or nationality, and how that person rationalizes the differences of those terms. It may also include economic background, political affiliations, religious beliefs and world views. In essence, a person's 'identity' can break down into multiple identities. A performance situation, as revealed through actions and mannerisms onstage, the message of lyrics, and even the dress or costuming of a performer displays which identities are being exposed at that moment.

Studies that approach how music and identity intertwine focus on a large number of issues, not just an overarching sense of one existing identity. Sometimes the term 'identity' is used to represent something that can be specific, such as nationality or gender, or it can generally refer to 'what something represents.' Identity, as a thing unto itself, is a complex and difficult idea to position within a culture. It can represent both an individual and a group (either a larger social group or an entire culture), it can be fixed (something that is a reoccurring pattern within a culture), but it can also change depending on context.

By looking at Vladimir Vysotsky, I focus on the individual within his own culture, and studying how he is currently viewed within that culture reinforces his Russian identity. As a performer living in the context of Soviet Russia, Vysotsky

embodies numerous characteristics that are specifically Russian. This includes performing songs in the Russian language, relaying events of everyday Russian life of the Soviet era in his lyrics, as well as recalling people and symbols of earlier Russian time periods in his *avtorskaya pesnya*. This is not to say that Vysotsky is uniquely Russian in comparison to other *bards*, but as a performer, he is one example of a figure who displays his 'Russianness.'

In my second use of identity, I address how musical sounds are tied to one's musical identity. This is presented through the manner in which a *bard* performs the lyrics of his poetry, including the melodic lines, rhythmic configurations, and most notably the timbre of the voice. Comparing Vysotsky with other *bards* demonstrates a particular method in which he performed phrases of poetry and intonations that are specific to him. As demonstrated at the commemorations of Vysotsky in Vagan'kovskoye Cemetery, musicians attempt to embody Vysotsky's musical identity through vocal timbre and enunciation.

Concurrently, his voice is believed to express his *dusha*, whether it was in live performance, or transferred onto magnetic tape. The analysis of timbre as related to individual musical identity demands a thorough understanding of the interplay between text and melodies in the aesthetics of Vysotsky's music. In terms of studying musical identity, I feel that we should not overlook the importance of the sonic element of music-making within culture, but also equally incorporate it into the framework of how culture affects and creates identity through music.

Identity in Russian Culture

To understand the multiple identities that Vysotsky represents, there are various aspects of Russian culture to consider. Michel Foucault's notion of identity is something that is not real, or tangible within a person, but communicated to others via social interaction. Likewise, Judith Butler formulates ideas that there is no existing identity, and that it is fundamentally created through social performances. In the case of Russian culture, I argue that in fact there is a core identity, represented by *dusha*. This core contains multiple sub-identities which radiate from the core and are displayed through different contexts and different social performances. Some of these sub-identities may be more visible, or noticeable, than others depending on various circumstances.

In addition to the idea of a *dusha* representing a core identity, is my view of both Russian and Soviet cultures creating a layered framework in which Russian identity operates. Primarily, I borrow an idea used by Sumarsam in his study of Javanese gamelan of Indonesia, specifically the concept of 'cultural pluralism' (Sumarsam, 1995: 2). Sumarsam uses cultural pluralism as key to understanding musical culture within its historical perspective, and in the case of Javanese history, the culture and people have been continuously exposed to foreign ideas and cultures including Europeans, Eurasians, Chinese, Malay and Arab. These different outside forces affect a culture's traditions. Sumarsam notes:

> Traditions are man-made and are therefore invented, developed, and
> changed according to the perspectives of their carriers. Cultural changes
> affect the worldviews of those who sustain a tradition and produce
> continuity, development, or change in traditions (Sumarsam, 2).

The view of Russian culture that I assume does not incorporate as many different foreign contacts as found in the Javanese example, but similarly, differing cultures

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throughout history are layered, one subsequent culture radiating out from an earlier culture, to affect cultural traditions and also construct a cultural identity.

In the case of Russia, there are various examples that converge in creating Russian cultural identity. The pagan heritage included a conglomeration of myths and beliefs that determined people's relationship to nature and the earth, and becomes manifest through Russia as the 'Motherland.' The adoption of Orthodox Christianity from Byzantium, which became a separate denomination during the mid-eleventh century, was important in bringing literacy to the culture, as well as the churches constructed in Byzantine style. These churches, infused with cupolas, are now recognized as 'Russian' in style. Waves of Western European influence had a great impact on Russian culture affecting the rule of Peter I and the building of St. Petersburg, introducing Western classical music to the culture, and also bringing the philosophies of Karl Marx. The Soviet era changed political and economic structures, changed the policies of art, and thereby affecting both visual art and music. However, Soviet culture was deeply entrenched in Russian culture, for there was still a veneration of the soil and the Motherland, and reverence for Russian national heroes such as Pushkin. The above examples are but just a few that one can point out to demonstrate the layering of cultural identity.

Therefore, Russian cultural identity is in fact represented by numerous identities determined by time, place and both internal and external influences. These identities are not always fixed; such is an example of cities' names. Names are an important marker of identity and in the case of two Russian cities, names have changed over time – St. Petersburg became Petrograd during civil war, then Leningrad during Soviet times, and

then back to St. Petersburg after 1991. In southern Russia, Tsaritsyn became Stalingrad, but now referred to as Volgagrad. Although these examples are primarily political, each of these names changes represents an historical context, and a layer of cultural identity.

The Nesting Principle

Elena Hellberg-Hirn discusses the 'nesting principle' prominent in Russian culture that demonstrates 'the layers of cultural meaning encoded by ethnic histories and traditions into Russian national symbols' (Hellberg-Hirn, 1998: 233). This is established by the walled security of the Kremlin in Moscow, and in the *Matreshka* doll. I would also add that the city of Moscow also displays the nesting principle because the city is built in concentric rings, visible by the road structures, with the Kremlin symbolizing the center. The various layers in the nesting principle can reflect the numerous identities present within a culture.

In his 2004 study of the ongoing search for Russian identity, James Billington refers to the *Matreshka* nesting doll to demonstrate the different 'faces' that have been represented in the country throughout the centuries. Billington's use of the *Matreshka* centers on the principle of the total ensemble representing a complete family. The outermost doll is a mother, with the innermost representing a child (Billington, 2004: 148-49). I also draw on the symbol of the *Matreshka*, albeit an invented Russian tradition, it is nonetheless now representative of Russian culture. My use of this symbol coincides with my views of cultural identity. In this instance, the dolls represent concentric circles and distinctive identities. Although the original *Matreshka* dolls contained only eight pieces, dolls that are produced today come in a variety of styles,

paintings, colors, and can vary in the number of dolls within a set. Each individual doll

within a set is distinctive in that they are not duplicates of one another as they diminish in

size (Figure 9-1).

Figure 9-1: Two sets of *Matreshka* dolls

Instead of the *Matreshka* representing a family, as Billington sees it, I perceive

the *Matreshka* representing identity, either a Russian cultural identity or an individual's

identity. In this case, the smallest doll is symbolic of the core identity from which all the

others emanate. Of course, this explanation is an outsider's construction of a means to

explain cultural identity. The core may center on one's *dusha*, and as it was explained to

me in Vagan'kovskoye Cemetery, one can become afraid when one's soul (*dusha*) goes

away from the body when performing Vysotsky's songs. In this instance, one is losing

his or her core identity for that moment in time.

Identities in Vysotsky's Songs

Vladimir Vysotsky, as a Russian artist living in the Soviet period, embodies multiple identities on various levels. He was both actor and musician, and by enacting various 'characters' in his songs also combined those two. A poll regarding Vysotsky conducted in 2004 by The Public Opinion Foundation in Russia found that over ninety-percent of the people surveyed throughout the country know Vysotsky's name which suggests his permanence in Russian culture. In the poll, of over one thousand people, seventy-two percent recognized Vysotsky as a singer and poet, whereas only fourteen percent identified him as an actor. Additionally, eighty percent of those polled agreed that Vysotsky's songs are important as a cultural phenomenon in Russia during the twentieth-century (Petrova, 2006).

Berger and DelNegro's (2004) view of identity in performance organizes it in a foreground/background structure. This is when more than one dimension of identity is present. I believe that there is more than one dimension present at all times because that identity is constructed by context, which in turn creates the other layers of identity. In this respect, Vysotsky's identity in Russian culture may be viewed in concentric circles (9-2).

This diagram demonstrates a manner in which to view Vysotsky's multiple identities based on how he is perceived in this study, my own interpretation. At the center is his core identity, his *dusha*, from where all other sub-identities radiate. Next is his Russianness. Because I view ethnicity and nationalism as being expressed simultaneously, Vysotsky's Russianness is bound by the context and culture in which he lived. Even in the context of the Soviet Union, this identity was profoundly Russian.

This particular identity is prominent at all times, but is placed near the core because of the relationship to *dusha* and how it is perceived in Russian culture.
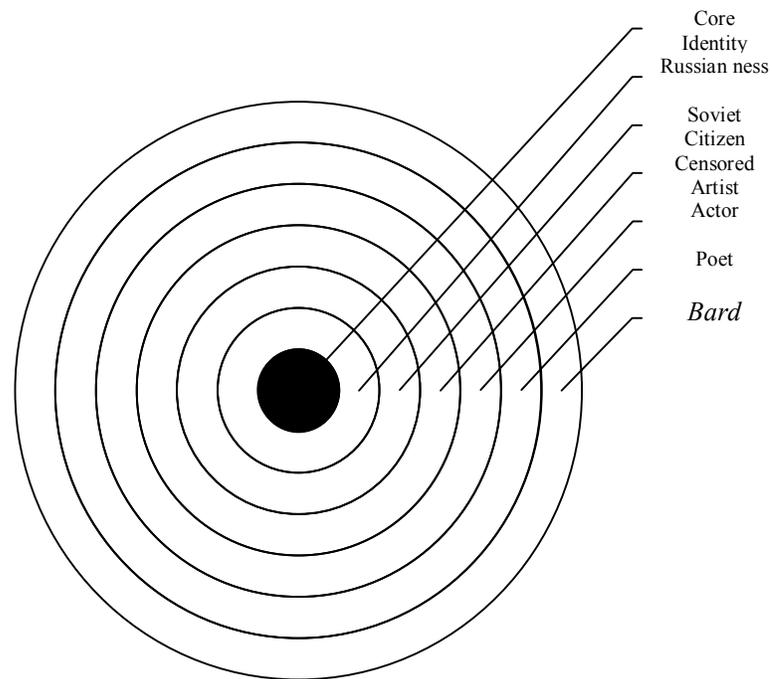
Figure 9-2: Identities of Vladimir Vysotsky

Following his 'Russianness,' is his identity as a Soviet citizen which grounds his life and career particularly to the era of Russian history in which he lived. This is followed by his identity as a censored artist as demonstrated by the topics of numerous songs, but also the transmission of his *avtorskaya pesnya* via *magnitizdat* recordings. The next identity is Vysotsky's 'official' role as a Soviet citizen, as actor. It was his work as a stage and screen actor that was viewed as his legitimate occupation, but he also

used this as a means to write and even perform some of his songs. The next most-outer layer of identity is Vysotsky as poet, as many people view him. This identity is prominent because the lyrical content of his *avtorskaya pesnya* is deeply embedded in poetic traditions of Russian culture. The last and most prominent identity of Vysotsky is his role as a *bard*. This corresponds to the large number of people who identify Vysotsky as a musician, a singer, and one who 'puts *dusha* in his songs.' Although people often note the unimportance of music sound in *avtorskaya pesnya*, I stress the importance of singing and guitar accompaniment as the method of transmission for the words in the poetry. For purposes of explaining his musical identity, his role as a *bard* is most important.

In conjunction with Vysotsky's role as a *bard* and the important position of his songs within Russian culture, the *magnitizdat* recordings are a significant symbol of Vysotsky's identity. The magnetic tape on these cassettes contains his songs, his *vocal imprint*, and also his *dusha*. Therefore, his Russian identity is packaged on these recordings. As a grassroots movement, *magnitizdat* recordings allowed millions of individuals to transmit and hear Vysotsky's songs, and in so doing strengthened his role in Russian culture.

The diagram of concentric circles can change based on interpretation and from which perspective one views Vysotsky's life and career, I offer but one possible example. To transfer this idea, and the notion of how one's identity can change, I will use the same diagram to explain Vysotsky's identity through two of his songs. For example, in a performance of Vysotsky's "Na Bolshoi Karetnom," there are multiple identities present

in this song (Figure 9-3). This interpretation in based on the lyrics of the song (see

Chapter Six for lyrics). In this diagram, the innermost section represents the core and

dusha. Following the core is the Russian ethnicity defined by performance in the Russian

language and a Russian musical tradition, as well as defined by the ethnicity of the

performer. The next layer of identity concerns an 'urban identity,' which is part of the

setting, and a reoccurring theme in many *avtorskaya pesnya*. In this instance, the urban

setting shapes the environment of this individual. Following the urban identity is

Core
Identity
Russian
Identity
Urban
Identity
Youth
Identity
Muscovite
Identity
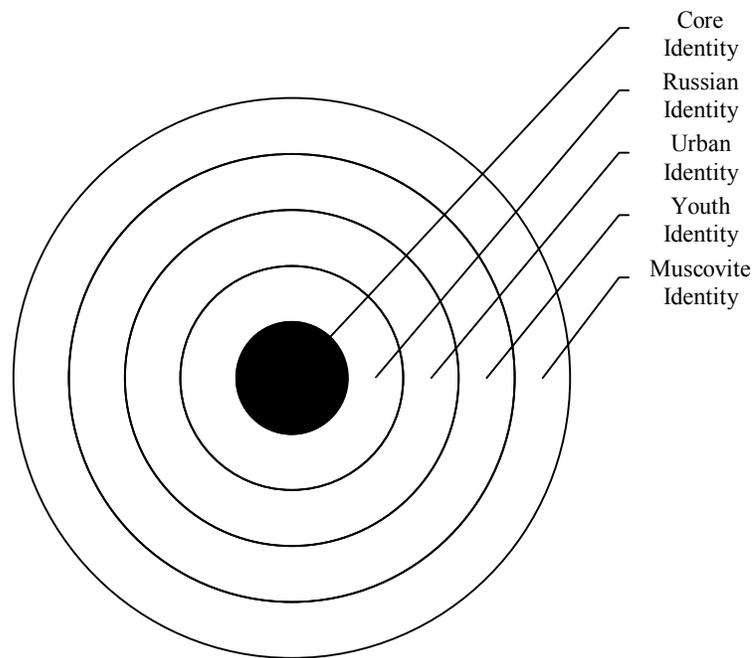
Figure 9-3: Identities in Vysotsky's "Bolshoi Karetnom"

the 'youth identity.' This identity functions in two ways 1) as a means to demarcate the

age of this individual, as opposed to middle-age or elderly, and 2) this song is an example

of one of Vysotsky's early *avtorskaya pesnya*, written in his 'youth.' The lyrics also

focus on issues of youth, and growing up in the urban setting of Moscow. The outermost

layer of identity is labeled as 'Muscovite,' also related to both the performer, and the lyrics of the song. The lyrics focus on the place, a specific street in Moscow, which serves as the primary setting of the song. The autobiographical nature of this song also lends itself to this understanding. Vysotsky was from Moscow and spent his youth in this specific place, his identity as a Muscovite is quite prominent in this song.

A comparison to "Na Bolshoi Karetnom," is one of Vysotsky's war songs, "Song About Serezhka Fomin" (see Chapter Six for lyrics). This song displays a different set of identities, although some overlap (Figure 9-4). The two innermost layers are repeated from the example above, even though the core representing *dusha*, is always present. Again, the Russian identity is apparent by the language chosen and the specific musical tradition that is the chosen style for performing the lyrics. Also a part of the identities is youth, although in this instance, it is strictly from the 'character' of the song rather than from Vysotsky. The lyrics tell of an individual enjoying his youth 'in the street gang,' and 'having fun,' until the onset of war. This identity places him within a specific generation of young men who volunteered for the Second World War. Following this is a Soviet nationalist identity. This particular identity is demonstrated in the lyrics 'I am spilling blood for you, my country,' and displays an allegiance to the Soviet nation by defending her in war. Songs written about the war and the duty of defending the country were found in both *massovaya pesnya* and *avtorskaya pesnya*, a theme that both official and popular opinion embraced as both sides viewed the Soviet cause as just and that the war was won by effort of collective group of people.
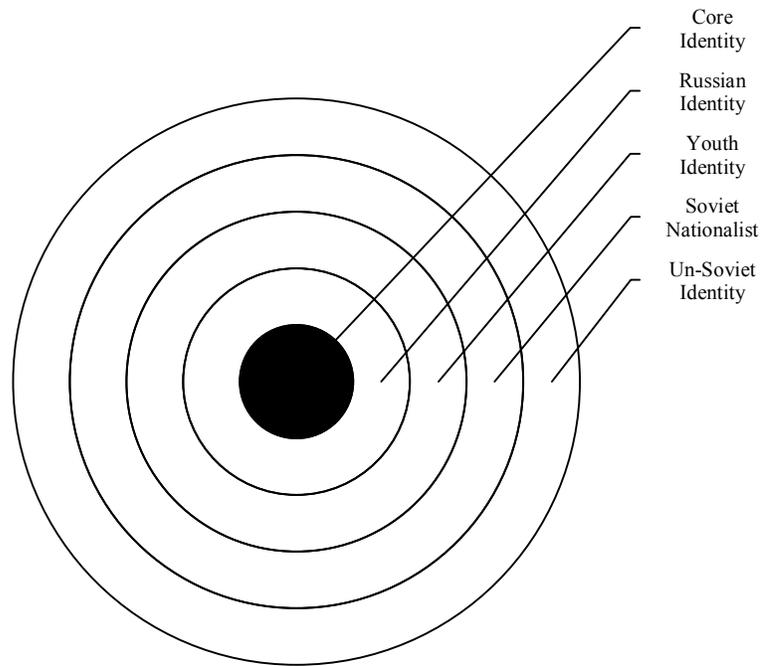
Figure 9-4: Identities in Vysotsky's "Song About Serezhka Fomin"

However, the most prominent identity in this song is the 'un-Soviet identity.'
This is shown by comments about the character Serezhka Fomin, who avoids the
harshness of war because of privilege and nepotism, but still receives medals for his
'accomplishments.' Vysotsky's song stands as un-Soviet because although the main
character reveals disparities in a socialist system, he never criticizes Serzhka Fomin for
his achievements and maintains a positive vision of Russian people. The un-Soviet
identity as most prominent does not reinforce the idea that Vysotsky was primarily a *bard*
of political songs. This is demonstrated in the example of "Na Bolshoi Karetnom," in
which politics is not a factor.

These interpretations of identity in Vysotsky's songs are my own, and dependent upon my own perspective. Not only is identity constantly evolving, but how a person views the dimensions of identity that are displayed may differ from one person to the next. In my view, a Russian identity, or Russianness, is always present in Vysotsky's songs, and it is determined by both language and cultural contexts which serve as a basis for his poetry. Furthermore, how Vysotsky's admirers identify with his songs and the manner in which he performs them is dependent on shared cultural knowledge and experience.

'Russianness' pervades Vysotsky's *avtorskaya pesnya*, but his identity as a *bard* is also prevalent within Russian culture. Not only is he recognized primarily as a *bard* in Russia, but in most depictions of Vysotsky, he is displayed with a seven-string guitar. This is seen on the sign to the official Vysotsky museum in Moscow, the statue at *Petrovskiye Vorota*, in Moscow and most importantly at his gravesite in Vagan'kovskoye Cemetery. The association with his guitar symbolizes his connections to the *avtorskaya pesnya* movement, the songs he wrote, and the music as the primary method in which to transmit his poetic messages.

In Closing

There is more research to be conducted about Vysotsky and his connection to music and Russian identity. I have focused chiefly on the historic individual and people who connect to his songs. As a singer who 'taught' others how to sing on consonant sounds and is particularly known for the timbre of his voice, much can be learned about his influence within musical communities in Russia. This includes the contemporary

avtorskaya pesnya scene, as well as other styles of popular music. The view that present-day musicians have about Vysotsky may reveal his impact on current musical styles, as well as the continuing influence he has on Russian music culture.

TRANSCRIPTIONS OF *AVTORSKAYA PESNYA* EXAMPLES BY OKUDZHAVA, AND ALEXANDER GALICH, and VLADIMIR VYSOTSKY

Midnight Trolley (*Poslednii trolleybus*)

Transcription from Recording:
Bulat Okudzhava, luchshiye pesni (1998)

Bulat Okudzhava

(First Verse)

When I Return (*Kogda ya vernus'*)

Transcription from Recording:
Rossiiskiye Bardy: Alexandr Galich (1999)

Alexandr Galich

(First verse)

"Na Bolshoi Karetnom" (version 1)

Transcription from Recording:
Vladimir Vysotsky, tom 1: Tatuirovka (2000)

Vladimir Vysotsky

♩= about 120

[Refrain]

Gde tvo i sem nad tsat' let? Na Bol' shom Ka ret nom Gde tvo i sem

nad tsat' bed? Na Bol' shom Ka ret nom

Gde troi cher nii pi sto let? Na Bol' Shom Ka ret nom A gye te bya se

go dnya ne et? Na Bol Shom Ka ret nom? [Verse 1] Pom nish' li to va rish___ e tot dom?

Net, ne za by va esh' ty o nem Ya ska zhu chto pol___ zhiz___ ni po te ryal,

kto v Bol'shom Ka ret nom ne by val eshe by bed' Gde tvo i sem nad tsat' let? [Chorus] Na Bol shom Ka ret nom

Gde tvo i sem had tsat' bed? Na Bol' shom Ka ret nom Gde tvoi cher nyi pi cto let
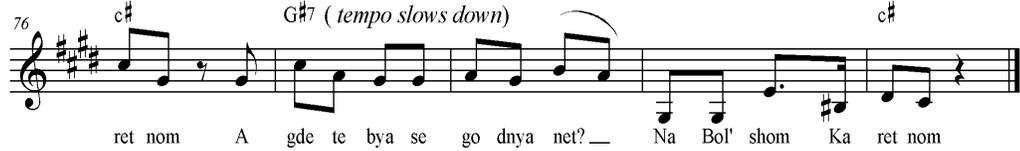
Na Bol shom Ka ret nom A gde te bya se go dnya le et? Na Bol shom Ka ret nom

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"Na Bolshoi Karetnom" (version 2)

Transcription from Recording:

♩ = about 135   *Vladimir Vysotsky, tom 2: Formulirovka* **(2000)**   **Vladimir Vysotsky**

B7   e   b

Net, ne za byi va esh'   tyi o nem   Ya ska zhy chto tot pol zhiz___ ni __ to ryal

61   F#7   [Refrain]

kto v Bol' shom   Ka ret nom ne   byi val   eshche byi bed'   Gde tvo i sem nad stat' let?

67   B7

Na   Bol'   shom   Ka   ret   nom   Gde   tvo   i   sem

70   e   ⌐3¬   ⌐3¬

had tsat' bed?   Na Bol' shom Ka re et nom   Gde tvo i cher nyi pi sto let?   Na Bol' shom Karet

76   b   F#7   *(tempo slows down)*   b

nom   Gde   teb ya   se   go   dnya net?   Na   Bol'   shom   Ka   ret nom

Song About a Friend (*Pesnya o druge*), version 1

Transcription from Recording:
Vladimir Vysotsky, tom 11: Kontsert v DK <<Mir>> (2000)

Vladimir Vysotsky

♪ = *about 190*

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Song About a Friend (*Pesnya o druge*), version2

Transcription from Recording:
Vladimir Vysotsky, tom 27: Rechechka (2000)   Vladimir Vysotsky

♪ = *about 190*

[Verse 1]
Es li drug o ka zal sya vdrug I ne drug i ne vrag a tak Es li
sra zu ne raz be resh' plokh on i li kho rosh

[Refrain]
Par nya v go ry tya ni risk
ni Ne bro sai od no go e go Pust' on v svyaz ke vod noi sto boi tam poi

mesh' kto ta koi

[Verse 2]
Es li par en' v gor akh ne akh Es li sra zy ras
kis i vhiz Shag stu pil na led nik i snik Os tu pil sya iv krik

[Refrain]
Zna chit rya dom sto boi chu zhoi Ty e go ne bra ni go ni Vverkh tak
ikh ne ber ut i tut Pro tak ikh ne po yut

[Verse 3]
Es li zhon ne sku lip ne
nyp Pust' on khmur byl i zol no shol A kod ga ty u pal so skal On sto

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nal no der zhal   Es li shel on sto boi kak vboi   Na ver shi ne stro yal khmel'

noi   Zna chit kak na seb ya sam ogo   Po lo zhils' na ne go   Es li

shel on sto boi kak vboi   Na ver shi ne stro yal khmel' noi   Zna chit kak na seb

ya sam ogo   Po lo zhils' na ne go

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