

2021

### From Tsars To Whales: Dmitry Kabalevsky And Russian Music Education

Jon Becker

Marina Goldin

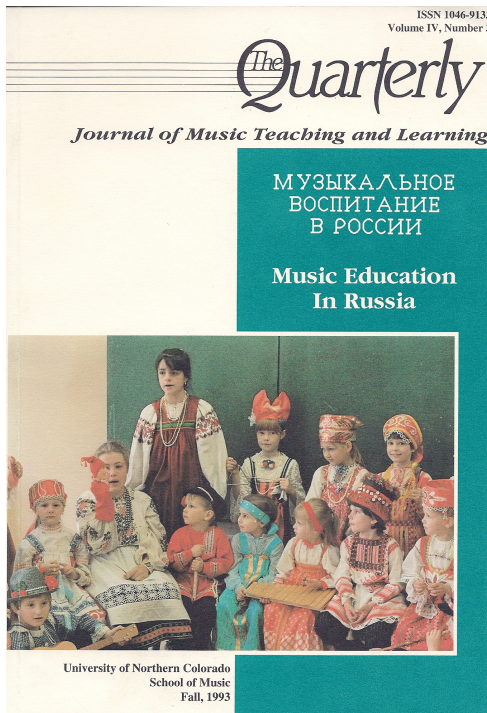
Ludmilla Leibman

Follow this and additional works at: <https://opencommons.uconn.edu/vrme>

---

#### Recommended Citation

Becker, Jon; Goldin, Marina; and Leibman, Ludmilla (2021) "From Tsars To Whales: Dmitry Kabalevsky And Russian Music Education," *Visions of Research in Music Education*: Vol. 16 , Article 31.  
Available at: <https://opencommons.uconn.edu/vrme/vol16/iss4/31>



**Title:** From Tsars to Whales: Dmitry Kabalevsky and Russian Music Education

**Author(s):** Jon Becker, Marina Goldin, and Ludmilla Leibman

**Source:** Becker, J., Goldin, M., & Leibman, L. (1993, Fall). From tsars to whales: Dmitry Kabalevsky and Russian music education. *The Quarterly*, 4(3), pp. 39-58. (Reprinted with permission in *Visions of Research in Music Education*, 16(4), Autumn, 2010). Retrieved from <http://www-usr.rider.edu/~vrme/>

*It is with pleasure that we inaugurate the reprint of the entire seven volumes of The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning. The journal began in 1990 as The Quarterly. In 1992, with volume 3, the name changed to The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning and continued until 1997. The journal contained articles on issues that were timely when they appeared and are now important for their historical relevance. For many authors, it was their first major publication. Visions of Research in Music Education will publish facsimiles of each issue as it originally appeared. Each article will be a separate pdf file. Jason D. Vodicka has accepted my invitation to serve as guest editor for the reprint project and will compose a new editorial to introduce each volume. Chad Keilman is the production manager. I express deepest thanks to Richard Colwell for granting VRME permission to re-publish The Quarterly in online format. He has graciously prepared an introduction to the reprint series.*

# ВЗГЛЯДЫ СНАРУЖИ Views from the Outside



# From Tsars To Whales: Dmitry Kabalevsky And Russian Music Education

By Jon Becker, Marina Goldin,  
and Ludmilla Leibman

Ask which twentieth-century composers contributed to music education and certain names come quickly to mind: Carl Orff, Zoltan Kodály, Heitor Villa-Lobos, and Leonard Bernstein. These composers developed innovative approaches to music education and the education of music teachers which have become influential beyond the borders of their native lands of Germany, Hungary, Brazil, and the U.S.A. Bernstein's televised educational concert broadcasts certainly inspired many in America and abroad.

It is unlikely that many Western music educators would nominate the Soviet composer Dmitry Borisovich Kabalevsky to this pantheon of renowned composers-educators. Born in St. Petersburg on December 30, 1904, Kabalevsky is best known in the former Soviet Union as the composer of op-

eras, cantatas, and vocal works; his reputation in the West is based on the *Colas Bruegnon Overture*, *Piano Concerto No. 1*, and various other works for piano, but he also contributed substantially to music teaching and learning. Remeta (1974), however, makes only brief mention of Kabalevsky, although the composer helped Remeta arrange visits to various types of music education institutions in Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev.<sup>1</sup> Even the *New Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1980) provides only a glimpse of Kabalevsky as a music educator, with a single, rather understated sentence: "Almost as influential in the USSR are his activities as a teacher, administrator, and writer" (McAllister, 1980, p. 761).

Kabalevsky had a remarkable and lasting impact on his country's system of music edu-

---

**About The Authors:** The overview of Soviet general and music education was written by Jon Becker, who also coordinated the organization and writing of the entire article. He has served on the faculty of the Oconomowoc (WI) Public Schools, Ripon College (WI), and Westminster Choir College (NJ) and is now an arts/education consultant based in Interlochen, MI. He delivered a paper on Soviet and American educational theories at the 1990 ISME Seminar in Leningrad.

The section entitled "Toward Children Thinking in Music" and large portions of "Friends and Foes" were written by Marina Goldin, a former member of the faculty in the Children's Music Schools of St. Petersburg who now teaches music in Our Little Friends of Children's Castle Day Care Center and Merkas Bnos High School in Brooklyn, NY. She also contributed to the section "Three Whales in the Basement."

Ludmilla Leibman, author of the section entitled "Don't Be Afraid!", was a leader of the Children's and Teen-ager's Music Club (under the auspices of the

Leningrad Composers Club), taught solfeggio and harmony at the Leningrad Conservatory, and also taught solfeggio and music history at the City Music School in Leningrad. She moved to the U.S. in October, 1991, and is now a resident of Minneapolis, MN. She began doctoral study in music education at Boston University in Fall, 1993.

Faina Bryanskaya provided materials for the preparation of the article and provided helpful criticism of the draft version. She teaches piano and piano pedagogy at the Longy School of Music in Cambridge, MA. She was a professor of piano pedagogy and a student-teacher supervisor for Leningrad Conservatory from 1967 to 1982. Before that, she taught at the conservatory's Moussorgsky College and the Central Children's Music School of Leningrad.

The authors give special thanks for the translation services provided by Victoria Mushkatkol, a member of Interlochen Arts Academy faculty, and to Julia Zatsarinskaya, a native of Volgograd (Russian Republic) who was a student at the academy.



cation. He began to reorganize the Soviet system in the late 1960s and early 1970s and pursued this goal to the day of his death in Moscow in February, 1987. Kabalevsky wrote articles, collaborated with others to devise and test a classroom music teaching system, taught demonstration classes which were broadcast on Soviet television, delivered lectures which were recorded by *Melodiya* and distributed across the Soviet Union, led teacher-education seminars attended by thousands of music teachers, and developed a syllabus for music education which remains in use today in thousands of schools in the formerly Soviet republics.<sup>2</sup> A British expert on Russian curriculum describes Kabalevsky as “an irresistible enthusiast ... [who] swept through the world of Soviet music teaching ... [t]he resultant ructions ... still echoing from the corridors of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences to classrooms in remote Siberia and Central Asia” (Muckle, 1988a; 107-108).

This article introduces Kabalevsky as music educator and provides a brief history of Soviet education, both general and musical, selecting features that best illuminate the innovative nature of the composer’s music education program. The evolution and mature features of Kabalevsky’s approach will be described in some detail, with attention paid to the reception it was given by critics and advocates in the former Soviet Union. The authors draw upon both personal acquaintance with and research into Russian music education, Kabalevsky’s personality, and the composer’s music education program.

### Two Tsars, a Revolution, and a Dictator

It is necessary to have some understanding of Russian and Soviet history to understand the milieu in which Kabalevsky’s program emerged. A thumbnail sketch of that very

rich history is all that is possible within the scope of the present article. The origins of modern Soviet education lie in the late 1700s and first half of the 1800s. Whittaker (1984) examines this era in her biography of Count Sergei Uvarov, an influential Christian liberal. Uvarov was, among other things, a teacher and later the minister of education. He vacillated between advocacy of revolt and reaction-

ary tendencies, the latter due in part to his perception of a negative “change for change’s sake” attitude in the West. Whittaker argues that Uvarov’s emphasis on centralization and loyalty, along with his opposition to dissidence, helped lay the foundations for some of the most troubling aspects of Soviet schooling.<sup>3</sup>

The period investigated by Whittaker was one of political upheaval and democratic yearnings in both the West and Russia. Likewise, the debate about slavery, which came to the fore during the 1850s in the United States and soon led to the Civil War, was paralleled in Russia in the

struggle which led to the abolition of serfdom in 1861. During this turmoil, however, the schools remained an important concern in Russia. Shturman (1988), in her insightful discussion of Russian education before the revolution of 1917, states:

In the 1860s, the problems of schools even rivaled the peasant question in popularity. The subject of the schools, which for a while had taken second place in topicality to the peasant question, greatly agitated Russian society after the 1861 reform which abolished serfdom. If the juridical emancipation of the people proclaimed by the reform was to be realised, then cultural emancipation was also necessary (p. 3).

Shturman (1988) describes a period of perfervid and idealistic educational experimentation in both public and private schools. Under the somewhat tolerant regime of

Why were those words “Don’t be afraid” spoken so often by Kabalevsky? He and other good teachers spoke these words with reason, because the usual Soviet pedagogical approach was founded on intimidation.

A measure of the Soviet educational system's success can be found in the nearly total absence of illiteracy in the republics that once were the Soviet Union ...

Alexander II, this experimentation was at first allowed, but then banned in 1862; the "temporary" ban stood until 1914. Although Alexander II eventually signed a liberal draft constitution, he was assassinated by members of the radical group, People's Will, in 1881. His son, Alexander III, abrogated the reform-oriented draft constitution, thus setting the stage for the 1917 revolution. Shturman points out that the liberal forces that advocated gradual, evolutionary social change were swept aside by the actions of extremists.

Long (1985) identifies an overall "arch" across Russian/Soviet education. Education under the tsar, when it was available, usually was heavily authoritarian in nature and emphasized knowledge of facts through repetition and rote learning. A movement toward "reform" occurred after the revolution, inspired by Marx's and Engels's educational ideas as well as those of progressive Russian and American educators such as Konstantin D. Ushinsky and John Dewey. A swing back to the tsarist approach took place in the 1930s and was solidly ensconced during Stalin's regime.

The reform era of the 1920s, led by the Commissariat of Enlightenment (*Narkompros*) and its commissar, Anatoli K. Lunacharskii, emphasized schoolwork organized around "complex themes" such as "Work in the Home" and "My Community." These themes were intended to be socially significant and relevant to the children's environment, personal needs, and interests. Each theme was to be studied under the broad headings of labor, nature, and society. "School children were to have a voice in running the school, and teachers were to be their friends and helpers" (Long, 1985, p. 3). By the mid-1950s, however, all the accoutrements of the tsarist, authoritarian approach (e.g., grades, homework, examinations, and textbooks) had once again returned to the classroom, and there was renewed emphasis on the authority and control of the teacher.

Long also identifies several long-standing

principles of Soviet education that persisted from the beginning of Soviet education through the progressive and reactionary cycles described above. These principles reflected the ideals of Communism, but the reality of the schools often either fell short of or contradicted these ideals. In a recent article (Rust, 1992), the current Minister of Education for the Russian republic, Edward Dneprov, states:

One of the weaknesses of Russians has always been the tendency to separate theory from reality. That was the problem during the past 70 years of Soviet rule. We had a beautiful theoretical orientation, but it was translated by technocrats and bureaucrats into a totalitarian state (p. 376).

One principle identified by Long was the "combination of ... aesthetic ... education with moral education." Another principle was the equation of moral education with "the communist ethical system delineated by Lenin" (p. 7).

This latter principle of Soviet ideology is also noted by Muckle (1988b; pp. 9-11), who cites an emphasis on *vospitanie*, a word without an exact English cognate, but which can be translated approximately as "ethical and moral upbringing." Moral education was considered "no less important than the academic and scientific" and was to be integrated into education; the phrase "unity of instruction and upbringing" was often used. Muckle summarizes the situation:

The aim of Soviet education, as any pedagogue there will confirm, is to create "a new type of person" who has certain moral attributes and ideological attitudes. This is Soviet patriotism, which is not meant to be mindless jingoism, but love for the first country in the world to embrace socialism and to create a workers' state; proletarian internationalism—support for the workers of the world in their struggle for liberation from capitalist exploiters and respect for their culture and tradition; socio-political awareness, involving strong communist convictions and a dialectical-materialist attitude; militant atheism; respect for labour and the skills of the

It is also true that some of the ideals and practices of Soviet education were fundamentally flawed, contradictory to the Soviet constitution, or distorted in service of political power.

craftsman, the desire to participate in socially useful work and the determination to learn the skills to be able to do so; a collectivist attitude and avoidance of egotistic individualism; strong ethical-moral principles, respect for the law and the duties of a citizen; acceptance of the responsibility of bringing up the next and future generations in the spirit of communism; a conservationist attitude to natural resources, natural beauty, the environment, historical monuments, and the achievements of culture. A Soviet citizen is expected, moreover, through his or her education to extend knowledge and mental horizons, *to improve aesthetic awareness* and to keep physically fit. This embraces every aspect of an all-round personality as perceived by Soviet orthodoxy. The overall aim of the system is often neatly summarised as the creation of *"a well-trained work-force of broad general culture"* (p. 9; italics added).

Muckle (1988) also states that labor training was part of all Soviet schooling. It was meant to provide students with information about the work world and to prevent prejudice against hands-on manual work, while providing workers for the economy without the need for a training period after school was finished.<sup>4</sup>

What are the connections among the Russian concepts of aesthetic education, moral education, and the ideology of labor? The answer can be found, perhaps surprisingly, in the Soviet conception of *tvorcheskiy*, the Russian word for creativity, and in understanding of the role which the arts were expected to play in education in the former Soviet Union. Soviet curriculum theorists Kraevskij and Lerner (1984) provide an overview of Soviet curriculum history. They state:

... since its inception, Soviet curriculum has had more classroom time for humanities (languages, literature, history, social sciences, geography, study of the constitution, elements of state and law, drawing and music) than natural sciences (mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy, technical drawing, and natural history) (p. 12).<sup>5</sup>

Later, in a discussion of the main elements of a subject and how these relate to curriculum, they reveal one continuing expectation of

arts education:

Thus the main element of subjects like [physics, chemistry, biology, geography, history and astronomy] is scientific knowledge, whereas the main element of subjects like foreign languages, draftsmanship, physical culture, as well as technology-related subjects, will be modes of activity (skills and useful habits). *In teaching fine arts and music the goal is to mold in the pupils a particular vision of reality* (p. 80; italics added).

The authors continue:

Since the functions of school subjects are associated with the dominant component of their content, that component may serve as a basis for their classification into: 1. Subjects with knowledge as a dominant component (physics, chemistry, biology, geography, history, astronomy); 2. Subjects with modes of activity (skills) as a dominant component (foreign languages, draftsmanship, physical culture, technical disciplines, manual training); 3. Subjects with an *evaluative and emotional interpretation of reality* as a dominant component (drawing, music) (p. 92; italics added).<sup>6</sup>

This desire to assign arts education to an important role in the control of the perception, evaluation, and interpretation of reality extends, of course, at least as far back as Plato's *Republic*. It remained an explicit Soviet educational ideal from the revolution of 1917 to the demise of the Soviet Union.

Arts education in the Soviet Union built its rationale on additional general responsibilities: to build appreciation for natural and cultured beauty; to foster the development of good taste and provide a "defence against artistic pollution, including art from abroad;" and to pass on the cultural heritage (Muckle 1988a, p. 105). Fine arts classes were also to provide experiences within the realm of the "spiritual" (*dukhovnyy*), a term that can be described as more affective and aesthetic than religious in nature.<sup>7</sup>

Consistent with the Soviet conception of creativity, absent from Soviet schools (at least until very recently) was any emphasis on "making" or "doing." Instead, creativity was

seen as having more to do with the nature of one's thinking and response to situations (see Muckle 1988a, p. 113). This Soviet emphasis on what might best be called "imagination" (rather than on the more "active" sort of creativity common to innovative British, Canadian, and American music education programs, and Orff-inspired programs everywhere), finds company in the writings of the American philosopher Harry Broudy.<sup>8</sup>

The importance of creativity and imagination with respect to the workplace is a long-standing Soviet belief. A recent example is provided by Kraevskij and Lerner (1984):

With the gradual development of society, the role of general education has become more important. This is especially true of a new socialist society. Indeed, it is in the process of education, the process of imparting the content of general education, that young people acquire the foundations of science, culture, and art, the principles of a scientific world view, socially acceptable morals and behaviour, and basic manual skills and habits. It is thought [that by this process] the pupil learns to think for himself and *acquires a creative approach to the work he is doing* (p. 11; italics added).

The Soviets also believed that of all the subjects, the fine arts were best able to foster creativity and imagination, qualities which were thought to be transferable to the workplace. This belief has provided a powerful, practical rationale for arts education, for it connected the teaching of the fine arts to three thoroughly entwined and fundamental aspects of Soviet educational philosophy: *vospitanie*, moral education, and labor.

### **Ideals and Necessary Evils**

Whatever the faults of the revolution, it represented a response to the failings of the tsarist regimes, including failings in the area of education. One important goal of the Soviets was the establishment of an educational system based on egalitarian principles, with access to all. Universal education eventually was provided through a system of "secondary general" schools, with the number of years of obligatory attendance gradually lengthening in response to both needs and resources.<sup>9</sup> A measure of the Soviet educational system's success can be found in the nearly total absence of illiteracy in the republics that once were the Soviet Union, a remarkable accom-

plishment especially when conditions under the rule of the tsars are considered.

It is also true that some of the ideals and practices of Soviet education were fundamentally flawed, contradictory to the Soviet constitution, or distorted in service of political power. Furthermore, historical developments (economic depression, war, industrialization, technological advances) and labor shortages often resulted in bitterly contested compromises. One such compromise was the development of "secondary special schools" to meet Soviet society's perceived manpower needs for engineers, foreign-language specialists, physicists, and other specialists. Dunstan (1988) comments on the tension inherent in the compromise that resulted in the secondary special schools:

Theoretically, and despite the related "contradiction" of better-life chances, there is every reason to secure the maximum development of abilities provided that in the first place there exists a societal demand for them. Thus there are no Soviet sports boarding schools specialising in cricket—the very idea is ludicrous—whereas a Moscow secondary general school has been developing the advanced study of aircraft construction. Individual abilities and needs are to be recognized as far as possible, but are subordinate to the requirements of society: this sums up the Soviet position. ... To make matters worse, during such unpropitious periods the contradiction of superior-life chances as the probable consequence of special provision for children of high ability is likely to appear particularly glaring. ... The fundamental dilemma is that from the official Soviet point of view the contradiction can only be resolved by making special provisions much more widely available; but apart from the resources problem, those with whom the contradiction carries the most weight reject a solution which they see as leading—and not necessarily in the short term alone—to an exacerbation of inequality (p. 59-60).

The existence of the secondary special schools thus created a conflict with egalitarian principles. Special schools were tolerated, but often as a necessary evil.<sup>10</sup>

It is not surprising that an ideological issue so fundamental to Soviet education would be reflected in the music education program. Shortly after the revolution, a "primary" or preschool/kindergarten system was pro-

The Soviets... believed that of all the subjects, the fine arts were best able to foster creativity and imagination, qualities which were thought to be transferable to the workplace. This belief has provided a powerful, practical rationale for arts education, for it connected the teaching of the fine arts to three thoroughly entwined and fundamental tenets of Soviet educational philosophy: *vospitanie*, moral education, and labor.

moted and subsidized, partly out of Communist ideals with respect to child upbringing and partly in pragmatic response to the pressing day care needs of the large number of employed parents. Remeta (1974) points out that by the 1960s music was usually a scheduled experience in the preschool, depending on the resources of the sponsoring factory or office building. That curricular presence continued to the end of the USSR, though the quality of such programs was generally low because many teachers were not graduates of professional music programs.

On the one hand, these preschool music programs had universal educational goals reflecting Soviet music pedagogy's opposition to the belief that musical talent is a natural gift possessed by few. Remeta (1974) notes:

The concept ... that musical talent is unique and responds little to outside influence cannot be accepted by Soviet pedagogues. Instead, Soviet music pedagogy is based on the optimistic view that all normal children have the potential for development in music.... Soviet educators believe that the foundation of a person's future musical culture is established during preschool years. The primary purpose of the music program at the kindergarten school is to draw all children into contact with the simplest forms of musical activity and to develop a "good ear" for music (p. 75).<sup>11</sup>

These broad goals are no doubt familiar to modern music educators, who probably would be in agreement with the "optimism" of Soviet music pedagogues.

Another important and seemingly contradictory responsibility of the Soviet preschool was the identification of children's musical talent, accomplished systematically through the use of simple tests administered by teachers from specialized music schools. The focus was on tonal memory, rhythmic skills,

and possession of perfect pitch. Those children identified as talented were steered toward "children's music schools,"<sup>12</sup> which usually included grades 1 through 7. Children thought to be extraordinarily talented were directed toward "special music schools," which provided grades 1 through 11. The curricula of these two types of schools included music performance, history, and theory. The children's music-school program was offered on a daily basis, following the regular secondary general school's hours. The special music school was self-contained and allowed much more emphasis on performance. Graduates usually proceeded to institutions of higher education that prepared music performers, conductors, dance accompanists, musicologists, and other specialists.

The vast majority of preschoolers, however, were bound for the "secondary general schools." These schools were the focus of Kabalevsky's reform of music education.

### Three Whales in the Basement

In order to understand how Kabalevsky's program differed from the traditional Soviet system of teaching music in the secondary general education school, and how his program was accepted, one must imagine the traditional system. The basic features of the tsarist/Stalinist educational program were not absent from either the goals or processes of the music program. The teaching style was authoritarian, instruction was almost entirely teacher-directed, and there was a good deal of emphasis on memory skills. Faina Bryanskaya, a renowned piano pedagogue, taught in a St. Petersburg (Leningrad) children's music school and was a professor/teacher supervisor in that city's Moussorgsky College and Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory from 1958 to 1982. The perceptions of



many are articulated by Bryanskaya's (1991) critical generalization: "[T]he classes were boring and dull" and "didn't develop any musical literacy." There were, of course, some music teachers who taught effectively and with enthusiasm, but their numbers were few.

Classroom lessons usually were limited to the learning of several musically simple songs, with emphasis on "required" ideological songs about Lenin and the Communist Party, or songs related to Soviet holidays. These simple songs quite often were musically weak.<sup>13</sup> Schools were generally supplied with some recorded music anthologies for listening—songs were the biggest part of repertoire—since most of the teachers could play on the piano no more than simple accompaniments to simple songs. The schools, it should be noted, rarely had good record players.

In reality, however, listening was not a part of music lessons, and the same can be said of instruction in the understanding of music notation. Even if a teacher did explain notation, sight singing skill was not an expected outcome. Broad musical literacy was not achieved, and students were left, at best, with a simplistic understanding of notation.

Marina Goldin, one of the coauthors of this article was a student in a secondary general education school in Kharkov, one of the most developed industrial and cultural centers of Ukraine, during the mid-1960s. Her personal recollection of the situation is that singing lessons, which comprised almost the whole of music in the schools, left no noticeable trace in the hearts or brains of graduates. Furthermore, music was not considered a "serious" subject.

Kabalevsky began to speak out on this issue during the crisis of the 1960s, when the inability of Soviet education to achieve the ideals of *vosпитание* became apparent. This and other ideals of the traditional Soviet education system figured in his (Kabalevsky, 1973) speech to the International Society for Music Education (ISME) in Moscow in which Kabalevsky emphasized the ideological foundations<sup>14</sup> of his belief in the need to bring music education to all students of the secondary general education schools. He added that providing music education for only the

talented would contradict the most basic tenets of a socialist people's government. He pointed out that the fine arts in school should be an important part of *vosпитание*, and that the main task of music teachers should not be the teaching of music, but rather attention to the growth of the students' inner lives and their sense of morality.

Kabalevsky loved light music and jazz, so he did not neglect to speak to the place of popular music in life of youngsters. He acknowledged that youngsters thrived on pop music, and he did not see this, in moderation, as a problem. (He did, however, feel that Western pop music had its own "policy," separate from that of Western government or society: escape from reality.) Kabalevsky felt that only a good education would bring the deep insights of great thinkers like Beethoven and Mozart to students, and he stated that the best songs of the Soviet youth were those that were ideological, patriotic, or able to instill revolutionary fervor.<sup>15</sup>

While it may seem that there is not much new or startling here, beyond a major Soviet composer's willingness to give a nod in the direction of students' musical interests by making a connection to *vosпитание*, Kabalevsky established a strong, ideologically based rationale for universal music education. He linked issues of deep concern to Soviet educators to his own agenda, which was the fostering of musical development in young students.

### Reforming School Music

In Kabalevsky's 1978 article, "The Main Principles and Methods of Experimental Music Programs for the Secondary General School," the scope of Kabalevsky's reforms became apparent. Also in this article (summarized and excerpted in the remainder of this section), he stated that he was uncomfortable with secondary programs as they existed, but that he was an optimist and believed that the time for reform had arrived. Kabalevsky indicated the broader scope of his approach by the renaming of music classes from "singing lessons" to "music lessons." Kabalevsky argued that it was necessary to keep children interested, use new methods to build this interest, and take time to figure out how to involve the students.<sup>16</sup>

Kabalevsky—and this was his enormous contribution—became aware of the necessity for change in Soviet society, the political system, and the Union; thus, many years before others became aware of these problems, he offered a peaceful way to bring about this necessary change through children, education, and music.

He argued for a method that would emphasize music as a living art, not entertainment but a real part of life. He asked: “What are the pedagogical concepts and music repertoire which will support this conception?”

Kabalevsky stated that part of the answer could be found in an ancient Slavic myth, which represented the world as resting on the backs of three whales. He set forth what he believed to be the three whales of music: song, dance, and march. Kabalevsky felt that this simple concept provided an opportunity to unite music with real life and with other subjects such as literature, thus contributing to aesthetic upbringing and historical knowledge. He saw “Music and Life” as the general theme of the school, the overarching task.

Kabalevsky felt that the three-whales concept allowed for the accomplishment of this important task while remaining more approachable than the larger genres such as symphonies or the more theoretical units, such as sonata form. The three whales were similar to the foundation of a house, which joins the structure of the house with the ground on which it stands. The whales connected the very rich and ornate “house” of music to its soil: the folk soul and the masses.

Kabalevsky envisioned the lessons of the first three grades of his program as finishing the basement of this house and starting the first floor, while also providing the basis for building additional floors. Later, the student would become aware that there is more to music than this foundation, but the three whales would never be completely absent because the essences of song, dance, and march are evident at the highest levels of art music. Since opera, oratorio, and ballet derive directly from song and dance, Kabalevsky felt that with these forms of music there was even less need to defend the usefulness of the whales, but he also argued that the three whales were to be found in all modern

and classical music, including symphonic, instrumental, and vocal music. He noted that even the music of Wagner and Scriabin, whose “art music” Kabalevsky felt was most removed from that of the masses, also included the three whales.

Citing evidence garnered from his experimental program, Kabalevsky claimed that first-year students would have had contact with song, dance, and march in their homes in villages, towns, and cities. The three-whale story made obvious the connection of the children’s preschool experiences to the world of art music; children were delighted to find that they knew something about the main principles of music. Students themselves were able to differentiate between song, dance, and march, so they began to learn the skills of analysis. It was not a problem if music examples contained qualities of more than one whale (e.g., both song and dance), and the class was divided in identifying these qualities, for the students then learned that the whales could meet. Thus the children experienced the ambiguity of the real music world; creative conflict was engendered, bringing discovery of a new, larger truth. From the first year, students learned the most important concept that school music can teach: not only to feel music or merely listen to music, but to “really hear” and to think about it.

The teachers in the experimental school didn’t point out the song, dance, or march to the children; instead, the students were allowed to discover these forms for themselves by listening to simple examples on the piano. This approach built the interest, self-confidence, and self-esteem of the students as well as trust in and sympathy for the teacher. Thus, the process was logically understandable and emotionally involving as well.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, Kabalevsky pointed out

Continued on p. 50

## *A Teacher's View of the Three Whales*

What was the impact of Kabalevsky's program on individual Soviet music teachers? A glimpse can be provided by this first-person account by Ludmilla Leibman, who was a teacher candidate in Leningrad when Kabalevsky visited to promote his program.

### ***Don't Be Afraid!***

I remember the day that Dmitry Kabalevsky first spoke of his new education program in Leningrad. His talk took place in our Composers Club<sup>1</sup> hall on Herzen Street. Kabalevsky spoke to the audience for over three hours, yet we all held our breath and were afraid of missing a word. What an excellent speaker he was! It was clear his ideas had matured.

How many years ago did that happen? Fifteen? Twenty? It was in my college (or post-graduate) days, so merely out of habit I jotted down notes. I kept these sheets of paper with care. In my teaching I used my synopsis, which I wrote soon after Kabalevsky's speech, although a draft of his program was published a few months later.

The program won both friends and opponents at once, and of course it had both pluses and minuses. The most remarkable thing about Kabalevsky's program was the precedent it set as a response to centralized authority. It was a new view, an individual's opinion that differed from the official view. The directives of the Public Education Ministry weren't examined before Kabalevsky. They were simply issued and implemented without discussion or question. Kabalevsky challenged the usual way of doing things, for he felt the necessity of change. And he offered a course of action. His program caused a re-examination of teaching throughout the curriculum and in all subject areas, not just music.

To my mind, Kabalevsky began his efforts toward reform of education in the secondary general school because, although music classes occurred only once a week, *all Soviet students* attended this lesson. He would have avoided a lot of unpleasant arguments if he instead had become involved with music education in the special music schools. Yet Kabalevsky—and this was his enormous contribution—became aware of the necessity for change in Soviet society, the political system, and the Union; thus, many years before others became aware of these problems, he offered a peaceful way to bring about this necessary change through children, education, and music.

Kabalevsky made many excellent proposals. First, he wanted students to believe in their creative power and to have faith in their musical abilities as well. Here's how he spoke to children:

If you don't have an ear for music, if you can't sing—don't worry about this. You really have. You really can. But you don't know about yourself. Come here to the grand piano. Don't be afraid! Please, try to press this key which is called "e of the 2nd octave" with this finger of the left hand and this key, which is called "e" too, but "of the 3rd octave," using the same finger of the right hand ... and do that at the same speed. Don't be afraid! You see, it isn't difficult for you. It is easy. Let's play together.

After those words, Kabalevsky played duets with the student, any piece where the teacher's part was very complicated and the student's part consisted of only one reiterated sound. "That's fine! That's beautiful! Well done!," Kabalevsky said, praising the student.

Kabalevsky often praised the children—he didn't skimp on praise. That was one of his rules. Oh, what "horrible" mistakes he made—at least from the point of view of Soviet dictators and the didactic ways of typical Soviet pedagogues!

Why were those words "Don't be afraid" spoken so often by Kabalevsky? He and other good teachers spoke these words with reason, because the usual Soviet pedagogical approach was founded on intimidation. For example, teachers punished students by giving low grades for behavior (not for lack of knowledge), or writing negative comments in students' notebooks for parents to read, or inviting parents to school for unpleasant conversations about their child, or investigating the students' actions at the meetings of the headmaster and all the teachers, or .... It is too many "ors", isn't it? I think you can begin to get a feel for the numerous restrictions on students' rights and the repressive nature of the Soviet pedagogical approach. There was little positive response to students' work in school.<sup>2</sup>

I knew this Soviet approach very well indeed, because I was a student myself, a teacher of students, and a student's mother. When I was 17, I began my first job teaching music at a public school. This school was not, however, a completely "regular" secondary general school, but the Leningrad Arts Academy School, a special school where only future visual artists of the Union studied. I felt the depressing nature of this approach to education, despite my youth. The school imitated the model of the state: As the student was shaped by the school, so the citizen of the state would become. Of course, one's person-

ality is formed not only at school; family and environment are important in this process as well. But it is easier to perceive the workings of a relationship such as that between “man and power” on the scale of the school. It is safe to say that Soviet students had neither rights nor freedom until *perestroika* began.

Kabalevsky tried to emancipate students. He began teaching music according to his own program at an ordinary Moscow school. First, the classroom design and desks and chairs were placed in the shape of an amphitheater, thus breaking up the traditional, ceremonious rows. The classroom became like a concert hall, for students took their seats as music was played by the teacher.

Kabalevsky used many simple musical instruments. During his lessons, students listened to the music, played music with the teacher, and listened to his stories about composers and their creative work. The charm of Kabalevsky’s personality, his extraordinary gifts as a lecturer, and his love of children worked wonders. Many teachers from all over the country came to Moscow to observe the lessons as the fame of the program spread. These teachers watched a miracle each time: Students became more intelligent and inspired.

The Education Ministry responded at last by allowing other teachers to use Kabalevsky’s program on an experimental basis, making printed copies of it available. Unfortunately, it is impossible to print rare gifts. Other teachers studied Kabalevsky’s program and watched his lessons, but in their classrooms the wonder didn’t always happen! One part of this problem was that the job of the Soviet teacher traditionally was considered unprestigious, and salaries were very small. The job of music teacher in the secondary general school was the least prestigious. Teachers of mathematics, Russian, or biology almost always had received higher education, while most teachers of music had not.

This situation existed because neither universities nor pedagogical institutes had music departments, and higher education at a conservatory or college of music was considered too specialized for teacher candidates. Future teachers of music were educated at music-pedagogical colleges. Often they studied at these schools not because they wanted to teach students, but because their gift for music was small. Thus the teachers of music for secondary general schools frequently had neither excellent musical gifts nor aptitude for pedagogy, and their prestige in the schools was the lowest of all teachers. Kabalevsky tried to reform the usual order, and his program demanded knowledge, skills, and soul from the teachers. Maybe the challenges were too great for most workers of the Secondary General Education Ministry.

Kabalevsky’s program began implementation 15 or 20 years ago. Today, it is not discussed as furiously as before; economic decline and political instability has postponed consideration of these problems. Yet the program has become a historical fact. When *perestroika* began, teachers understood that the country’s public education needed to be changed, and reform soon followed, taking different directions. Now children begin studying at age 6 or 7; that decision is up to their parents. An additional obligatory year of schooling was added, for a total of 11. Many different types of schools simultaneously appeared. Teachers now may teach in a more individualized fashion.

I left the Soviet Union on October 23, 1991. Only three days before, I stood in the Leningrad Composers Club, the hall full of teenagers. I knew that I might never return, and that I likely would never see those students again. I spoke to the group about the two-hundredth anniversary of Mozart’s opera *The Magic Flute*. In this work of genius, the positive qualities of light, kindness, harmony, and intellect win. At the same time I thought about real life, where darkness, cruelty, chaos, and lawlessness too often seem to win. Will music be the salvation of those students? Will it be so?

#### Notes

1. Creative professional unions (e.g., artists, writers, actors, etc.) in the major cities of the Soviet Union sponsored “clubs” that had access to state-provided buildings where meetings could be held, programs presented, and business accomplished. The Union of Soviet Composers and Musicologists sponsored a Composers Club in Leningrad which, as those who attended the 1990 ISME seminar know, meets in an old building, rather unremarkable on the outside, but possessing a beautiful interior trimmed in wood. Members of the union and others had access to a restaurant in the Architects Union’s building, located just across the street (where, at least during the seminar, food was certainly more plentiful than in the stores). The union also had access to a resort-like retreat located in Repino, a suburb to the northwest of Leningrad on the Gulf of Finland, with individual cabins and a central eating/meeting hall. This arrangement continues at present.

2. This description may not seem unusually “repressive” to non-Soviet educators, but *perestroika* visitors to the Soviet Union’s schools often used the word “inhuman” to describe the conditions, even when those visitors were familiar with the usual authoritarian school cultures which exist, unfortunately, all over the world. See Rust (1992) and Brodinsky (1992) for confirmation of these conditions by Russian educators themselves.

that since the concepts represented by the three whales were very broad, they were not limited to specific repertoire but could be useful in working with music from all around the world.

### **Freedom and Structure**

Kabalevsky wanted teachers to experience freedom in the use of his approach, but he also felt strongly about the need for a system that would prevent aimlessness in the music classroom. The experimental program was organized around a theme structure.<sup>18</sup> Themes were chosen for each of the seven years of the program, for each semester (two per year), and for each term (four per year). Examples of the themes include “the three whales, their expressive and representational meanings;” “perception and the understanding of musical image;” “song and dance as musical qualities;” “perception and understanding of intonation<sup>19</sup> as the seed of a piece;” “some features of music in your nation;” “general and distinct features in the music of different nations;” and “music’s influence on everyday life and its influence on human beings.”

Kabalevsky felt that it was more important for students to know these broad themes than to remember the details or particulars of the music. He recommended avoiding repeated use of the same musical material (unless done after some period of time and from a different point of view), and instead encouraged generalization from the themes, allowing students to choose different music on the basis of their likes and dislikes, so long as that music remained within the limits of the current theme.<sup>20</sup> Kabalevsky stated that these themes allowed unity in the lesson while permitting varied activities and different music. (See box above.)

“Musical literacy” was not included in the program in the lower grades. Kabalevsky argued against the prevailing approach to the teaching of musical literacy, which resulted only in simple ability to use music notation,

Music excerpts listed in the program provided by Kabalevsky were meant to be examples, guiding the teacher to the correct level of musical complexity for each age level, but not restricting choices. He reminded teachers that these choices should be made with great care and argued that the music employed should:

1. be real art;
2. be attractive to children;
3. provide the opportunity to teach something useful and necessary;
4. be pedagogically understandable; and
5. have the capacity for playing a role in the task of *vospitanie*.

what he called *muzikalnaya gramota* (music grammar). Instead, he called for the teaching of *muzikalnaya gramotnost* (music culture), achievement of which he argued did not depend on knowledge of music notation, though it potentially include this knowledge. Kabalevsky believed that students in the experimental schools reached a very high level of music culture without necessarily developing the ability to read music.

Kabalevsky also argued against giving written homework to first-year students.<sup>21</sup> Instead, he encouraged teachers to ask their students to listen to music and then share their feelings and thinking in class about all that they heard, especially after vacations.

### **Toward Children “Thinking in Music”**

Clearly, there were considerable differences between Kabalevsky’s system and the often disorganized, aimless, and weak system which existed prior to his efforts. At least six are very important:

First, Kabalevsky sought to develop musically literate listeners with a wide musical background and a closer relationship to real music. Quoting Asafiev, a Soviet musicologist, composer, and author, Kabalevsky emphasizes that teaching music is “not [the] teaching of some simplified children’s art, but systematic development of emotional senses and creative



abilities" (cited in Abdullin, 1974, p. 30).

Kabalevsky stressed the importance of the perception of "serious" music at an early age.

Second, the most important element of this approach was active listening and thinking about music at class lessons. Kabalevsky, from the very first lessons, asked children to think in purely musical categories, talking about genres and the historical roots of music. This approach was markedly different from his contemporaries' popular lectures and literature about music, in which everything revolved around either images that the music contained or extramusical topics such as the composer's life or the history of the creation of the piece.

Third, Kabalevsky's approach required the music teacher to have both skill in piano playing and knowledge of many compositions from different genres in order to illustrate for students technically complicated pieces and fragments from operas, symphonies, and other forms. This was in sharp contrast to the low expectations that were generally prevalent in traditional programs.

In addition, Kabalevsky's seven-year program was organized not only according to educational-thematic principles, but musical-aesthetic ones as well. These central themes united different facets of music into a whole, thus helping students perceive music composition and its elements. Such an approach also unified various kinds of musical activity that had been separated in the traditional program. Thus, the program often employed the same material for listening, singing, and accompanying.

Further, this approach of simultaneously building skills in singing, listening, and music literacy represents a marked break from Russian teaching traditions, not only in terms of the old singing lessons, but also from the traditional approach to education in general. In the 1960s and into the beginning of the 1970s, the Soviet system advocated moving from "the detail to the whole," that is, from teaching separate elements to developing understanding of the whole. Kabalevsky's approach instead begins with the general, or the whole, and moves towards detail (Barenboim, 1977; p. 75), from emotional impression to elements.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, another divergence from traditional

Soviet pedagogy lay in the fact that each of Kabalevsky's lessons was built upon questions and answers that encouraged children to discover the logic of the lesson. This was paralleled by new programs of research on other subjects and came to be called the "problem-solving" approach. After investigating the Soviet schools in the late 1980s, Muckle wrote that due almost entirely to Kabalevsky's initiatives, "It is music which perhaps best of all exemplifies the new spirit abroad in Soviet education" (1988a, p. 107).

Muckle's (1988b) description of Soviet education in the midst of Gorbachev's reforms provides further evidence that Soviet pedagogy continued to follow Kabalevsky's lead. After a discussion of the traditional Soviet emphasis on facts, Muckle described contrasting efforts to avoid unnecessary repetition of material and attempts to increase "the conceptual, as opposed to the factual content" (p. 16). Muckle states:

It is in the arts, music especially, that some of the most encouraging and adventurous work has been done in recent years, but this has not been without controversy and campaigning on both sides. Music lessons have been transformed from dull singing exercises and boring talks on composers' lives into lively occasions in which musical perception, emotional response, vocal and instrumental performance, and, to some small extent, compositional activities have improved pupil attitudes and teacher morale considerably. Something of the same is happening in art: much more creative work in several different media and much less drawing of "two apples on a plate" (p. 17).

### Friends and Foes

Kabalevsky's program of reform in music education was not implemented without controversy. Strong support and strong opposition arose, though none of Kabalevsky's opponents approached his caliber. Two points were discussed a great deal: 1) most teachers, because of their limited piano skills, had neither learned nor could sight read the amount of music that Kabalevsky suggested; and 2) there was strong support for continued emphasis on singing.

This discussion generally was not included in *Soviet Music*, the official national periodical; instead the battle took place at educational conferences, which by 1978 included

## ***But Will It Play In New Jersey?***

Kabalevsky's approach to music education is alive in the annual school concerts of the Bridgeton Symphony Orchestra's Educational Outreach Project, now in its fourth year. In 1993, the project's three school concerts were heard by over 1,800<sup>1</sup> rural, southern New Jersey students, almost all of whom were hearing a live performance of symphonic music for the first time. These students live in two of New Jersey's poorest counties, in which unemployment averages 15 percent.

In 1990, following the first year of the orchestra's school concerts, the musical director and general manager invited participating teachers to meet with them and two education consultants (the author and Dr. Lili Levinowitz) to devise program goals, a curriculum for the orchestra's concerts, and a process for evaluating the project's outcomes. At the meeting, each teacher expressed different and equally justifiable expectations of what their students would gain from the concerts.

It seemed the best solution was a "dynamic curriculum," a framework in which teachers were free to pursue topics relevant to their own instructional plans and to the desires of students. My task was to build that framework, and I felt that Kabalevsky's ideas<sup>2</sup> would serve some of the specified goals of the Bridgeton project. It was also decided that measurement of changes in student preference for symphonic music would be the main focus of program evaluation efforts.

I presented Kabalevsky's "three whales" to the project participants. The teachers agreed to use this approach when introducing symphonic music to their students prior to the concerts. The orchestra's director agreed to search for symphonic music that included song, dance, and march genres and to shape his concert narratives in part around Kabalevsky's approach, and I sent all participants more information about implementing Kabalevsky's approach.

Kabalevsky's concepts proved useful in designing the program. Increased student interest in symphonic music was determined to be the most important goal of the concerts, so repertoire having the elements which most seemed to appeal to young people (e.g., fast tempos, prominent melodies, moderate complexity, and so forth) was included, especially to open and close each concert.

Because of the Bridgeton region's population characteristics, a multicultural dimension was sought. South New Jersey's major ethnic groups have African and Hispanic (especially Puerto Rican) roots, so symphonic repertoire influenced by those cultures was selected for each concert. (In future years, repertoire influenced or composed by other ethnic groups will be included, as will music by female composers.) Because many of southern New Jersey's children are the sons and daughters of immigrants, some teachers were certain that their students would be interested in symphonic music by composers such as Leonard Bernstein and Aaron Copland, immigrant offspring who until very recently had lived in nearby cities.

In the spring of 1993, the third year of implementing Kabalevsky's approach, the orchestra provided each student with a copy of a concert guide called *Symphony!* for use in the school, with friends, and at home. Students could read on their own about the three whales and see drawings of the dances which inspired some of the concert music. The guide included lyrics and notation for songs such as "Baked Potato," a Creole folk song which Gottschalk employed in *Bamboula*, his version of the cakewalk that was later arranged for orchestra. Teachers might have their classes sing "Greensleeves" or "John Henry" before the concert and ask the children to imagine how a composer might treat these songs in a symphonic setting. Thumbnail sketches provided a social and historical context.

Analysis of the results of a 1991 preference assessment indicated that students who attended the project concerts demonstrated a marked increase in their preference for symphonic music.<sup>3</sup> Evidence<sup>4</sup> also indicated that the concerts had increased student interest in school instrumental programs and raised the orchestra's regular season-ticket subscriptions in the participating districts. Kabalevsky's principles, melded with research-based approaches to influencing preference and adapted for the cultural features of southern New Jersey, had proven its worth.

—Jon Becker

### Notes

1. Project audiences have grown from about 400 to over 1,800 in just four years. The ability to meet the demand for school concerts performed by a fully professional orchestra has been made possible by generous support from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, the Frank and Lydia Bergen Foundation, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the Gannett Communities Fund, the Prudential Foundation, the Music Performance Trust Fund/Local 595, American Federation of Musicians, school parent-teacher organizations, and south New Jersey businesses and clubs.

2. Presentation of a paper entitled "The 'Mozart of psychology' meets Mozart: A Soviet social psychological theory, an American theory of cooperative learning, and some implications for music education" led to Becker's conversations with Soviet music educators and his study of Kabalevsky's work. The paper was presented at the International Society for Music Education's seminar "Facing the Future: Contemporary Approaches for a Changing Curriculum," July 31 - August 5, 1990, Leningrad, USSR.

3. For more details about the preference evaluation results, see Lili M. Levinowitz and Jon Becker, "Good Partners: General Music and Local Orchestras" in the Fall, 1992 issue of *General Music Today*. For a copy of the Bridgeton Symphony Orchestra's 1991 *Educational Outreach Project: Final Report*, including information about the curricular design, contact Ann Gregory, General Manager, Bridgeton Symphony Orchestra, PO Box 872, Bridgeton, NJ 08302; phone (609) 451-1169.

4. S. Mencher and R. Singer. (1993). Bridges in Bridgeton. In *Symphony*, 44 (1), 45.

six All-Russian conferences and one All-Union conference. In the contents of *Soviet Music*, however, one could detect certain claims and doubts upon careful reading. Barenboim, a well-known expert on children's music and *vospitanie*, wrote in 1977, "There are those who with sympathy and good will and there are those with skepticism who call this program 'the tale of three whales'" (p. 75). Here the use of the Russian word for "tale" (*skaz*) reveals the skepticism and even sarcasm of the critics; *skaz* means both "fairy tale" and "untruth." Barenboim added that he anticipated "criticism from those who will not be able to understand this program and those who will not want to understand" (p. 77).

As for the latter sort of critics, Barenboim divided them into three categories. Undoubtedly, he was not predicting future critics, but answering real critics without naming names:

1. those who are used to teaching exclusively "practical" music, mostly singing. This category of teachers "can *imagine* that talks and discussion move practical music-making to the back burner" (p. 77);
2. those for whom the formal results hold most importance, for whom the goal is to learn something impeccably; and
3. those who doubt the "scientific" nature of Kabalevsky's approach because of the simplicity of his writing style and the clarity of his expression.<sup>23</sup>

Barenboim's article would ordinarily be of substantial importance, as *Soviet Music* served as a forum for the powerful Union of Soviet Composers and Musicologists.<sup>24</sup> And *Soviet Music's* editorial board sincerely supported Kabalevsky and advocated the new system to the state.<sup>25</sup>

The decisive factors in the success of the program, however, were not the published "votes" in favor of Kabalevsky (Abdullin, 1974; Mazel, 1974; Barenboim, 1974). In Soviet culture, only "official" education ministry decisions allowed (or denied) the promotion of an idea. The success of Kabalevsky's program in the face of this bureaucracy was due to various factors. The most important, the crisis in the Soviet music *vospitanie* in the 1960s, demanded a new program. That Kabalevsky possessed personal authority as a composer, political and party figure, deputy

of the Supreme Soviet, and honorary president of ISME was another crucial factor.

In 1969, Kabalevsky presented his views in the report of the Fourth Congress of the Union of Soviet Composers and Musicologists (see *Soviet Music*, 1969; No. 3). In 1970, the USSR's Ministry of Education's Collegium officially admitted: "The existing state of esthetic *vospitanie* of school students cannot be called satisfying."<sup>26</sup> In the same year, Kabalevsky's book *A Story of Three Whales and Many Other Things* was published and provided the general outlines of what eventually evolved into a finished program.

The Laboratory for Music Education and *Vospitanie* opened in 1974 at the Research Institute of the Russian Republic's Ministry of Education in Moscow. The head of the lab, Abdullin, worked to develop the new program and ascertain its effectiveness. The lab generated new methods books and detailed yearly and daily lesson plans for teachers, a sheet-music anthology, and an anthology of phonographic recordings. Abdullin also established a connection with the Moscow Pedagogical Institute with respect to coordination of a field program and the preparation of teachers. Laboratory personnel included musicians and teachers with specialties in theory, history, choir, eurhythmics, methodology, and psychology. The laboratory also organized special in-service programs for teachers, including a two-week seminar which annually enrolled about 500 music educators. Additional offerings for local teachers were provided under the umbrella of Moscow's Central Institute.

The growth of Kabalevsky's program was phenomenal, especially considering the usual rate of innovation in the Soviet Union during this period. In 1974, his approach was being used by teachers in 25 schools of the Russian republic; by 1978, 2,500 teachers were involved. In 1979, the number stood at approximately 10,000. Kabalevsky's program was included in the official school curriculum of the Russian Republic in 1981. The Education Ministry's publishing company *Prosvechenie* (Education) published 25,000 copies of the program for elementary schools. *Soviet Composer*, the official publication of state music, issued the same number of sheet-music collec-

tions, and the state-controlled recording company, *Melodiya*, pressed 25,000 record albums.

Kabalevsky himself was featured during the implementation of the three-whales program. Remeta (1974) mentions that a series of recordings of Kabalevsky's lectures offered by *Melodiya*, under the title *O chem govorit muzyka* (Of What Music Speaks), were used extensively in secondary general school music programs (p. 95). Kabalevsky also taught a group of students over a period of years, and his presentations, which Bryanskaya (1991) called "fascinating ... model lessons for students, teachers, and parents" were broadcast throughout the USSR on a weekly basis by the state-owned Central Moscow Television.

Kabalevsky's program was not only a matter of research and theory, but also a practical success in real classrooms. It is doubtful that today all Russian teachers have been retrained and all schools supplied with record and tape players as well as complete albums of records, even after some 20 years of work with the program. Nevertheless, the creation of a complete system that generated excitement and activity in Soviet education was a big accomplishment.

It is difficult to say which factor was more important: the preparation of teachers to use the program, or the preparation of textbooks, lesson plans, anthologies, and records. One must agree, however, that Barenboim made a correct prediction when he said, "I am convinced that this program, developed under the direction of Kabalevsky, is destined to start a new era in the development of children's music pedagogy" (1977, p. 73).

### Who Will Feed the Three Whales?

Kabalevsky's contribution to Soviet music education was firmly based on the former union's ideology, yet his pedagogical approach was also reformist and anti-establishment. The results of his efforts may have been inconsistent, at least in part because of the nature of music teacher education and the general conditions of the teaching profession throughout the former Soviet Union. But Muckle's (1987; 1988a; 1988b) recent reports indicate that the influence of Kabalevsky's program was far-reaching and, in many places, made a lasting and valuable differ-

The most remarkable thing about Kabalevsky's program was the precedent it represented as a response to centralized authority. It was a new view, an individual's opinion, that differed from the official view. Kabalevsky challenged the usual way of doing things, for he felt the necessity of change. . . . Kabalevsky's contribution to Soviet music education was firmly based on the former union's ideology, yet his pedagogical approach was also reformist and anti-establishment.

ence. Of that much, we can be sure.

One can be far less certain about the continued health of both special and secondary general music education in what was the Soviet Union. Special music schools face the same problems as other specialized schools. As was pointed out earlier in this article, Soviet special schools were regarded by some as a temporary solution in violation of egalitarian principles. As part of Gorbachev's advocacy of *glasnost*, there were signs that special schools were coming under increasing scrutiny, in part due to increasing economic problems, concern about "privilege" and "access," and increasing reports of abuses.

Dunstan (1988) states:

... when inequality of access to education is cited at the highest level—by Gorbachov [*sic*] at the 27th Party Congress in February 1986—under the rubric of social justice; and communists are bidden to "observe the norms of socialist communal life which are the same for everyone" and to "judge everything openly;" and the top Party leadership of Moscow is accused of complacency and that of Uzbekistan of corruption ("violation of socialist legality"): it is not surprising that some of the resented sacred cows of Soviet education should be called out for slaughter. True, they show no signs of dumbly obeying. But at least we may see their sheds being put in order, unless the priestly stockmen lack the will or the power to act (pp. 60-61).

After referring to several investigative reports on special schools in Soviet newspapers, Dunstan points out that special music schools did not escape this scrutiny:

Another enquiry, into the sacking of an allegedly incompetent chemistry teacher from the Upensky Music School in Tashkent at the instigation of a group of senior girls with the support of their Komsomol organiser, re-

vealed a dreadful collective egotism in the pupils concerned. This was fed by the school management's attitude toward chemistry as a general subject tailor-made for officially permitted absences for concerts or rehearsals, excessive tutelage exemplified in a staff-pupil ratio higher than one to two, and a lack of contact with the outside world apart from concerts (which were resoundingly applauded) (p. 58).

The philosophical, pedagogical, and economic issues raised in the newspapers of what was then the Soviet Union can only intensify in the new commonwealth. As the economic situation deteriorates, continued government support for expensive special schools must compete with other pressing needs. Furthermore, alternative educational institutions are becoming more available, both at home and abroad.

One can be even less certain about the prospects for Kabalevsky's innovative program. All fine-arts programs in the secondary general schools, including music, will have to justify themselves in the face of a precarious economic situation and without the rationale provided by communist ideology. The situation is exacerbated by the overall quality of the teaching force and the departure of many talented music teachers and musicians from the republics. Did Kabalevsky have time to lay the foundation for popular support of universal music education in any public school system which may evolve? Will there be anyone left in the republics who possesses the talent and intelligence to keep such programs alive?

Kabalevsky's program was based on lengthy experimentation and generated materials in several media, including televised les-



sons. The apparent success of the program points to its probable value to other music educators. Perhaps organizations and individuals from outside the former Soviet Union should work with the new republics to preserve the record of this enormous effort, especially in light of the perilous period of transition which lies ahead. Certainly, Kabalevsky's printed program should be translated into English, a task which can be accomplished at a relatively low cost. The three-whales concept has already been incorporated, with modifications, into the school outreach program of an American symphony orchestra, yielding very promising results (see "But Will It Play in New Jersey?", pp. 52-53). It is likely that this approach could prove useful in all countries where study of the Western symphonic music tradition is part of a general music program.

It is our hope that this brief examination of another educational system will illuminate, with the international community, discussions about core curricula, pedagogical approaches, reform, equality of access, specialization versus general education, school choice, fine-arts education, and so forth. While the primary intent of this article is to inform music educators throughout the world of Kabalevsky's role in the development of Soviet music education, perhaps more importantly the three authors hope the world community will be alerted to the precarious situation of fine-arts education in the republics of the new commonwealth and mobilize to help preserve the record of Kabalevsky's contribution. Both the celebrated successes of the Soviet special music schools and the enormous potential of Kabalevsky's program in the secondary general schools may be extinguished in the struggle for survival.

### Notes

1. During trips made to the USSR in 1969, 1979, and 1972, when Kabalevsky's music education reform efforts were beginning; see especially pp. 82-84, 95, and 295.

2. As this article was being written, the USSR was dissolved and a new Commonwealth of Independent States was proposed and ratified by several former Soviet Republics.

3. This period is also marked by the enormously influential and successful church-sponsored "choir schools," which were banned after the 1917 revolution. The story of this music

education program unfortunately lies beyond the scope of the present article.

4. Many others have pointed out that there were decades-old, deeply felt philosophical and ideological reasons for this preoccupation with labor training. In addition, the availability of students and teachers for labor was a crucial factor in state-planned agricultural production and industrial projects. The emphasis on labor continues in the new republics; see Brodinsky (1992), especially p. 382.

5. The curriculum also included manual training and physical education.

6. On the same page, the authors state: "There are subjects with two dominant components: mother tongue, mathematics (knowledge and skills); poetry and literature (knowledge and emotional attitudes)." Music is not identified as one of these subjects.

7. For a more detailed discussion, the reader is referred to Muckle's article (1987) or, better yet, his book on Soviet education (1988a; especially chapters 1-4 and 8).

8. Most recently, his Getty Center for the Arts publications (e.g., Broudy, 1987).

9. In the Soviet Union, the adjective "secondary" referred to the schooling that took place between the preschool or kindergarten level and higher education (in 1991, grades 1 through 11). This should not be confused with the American use of the term, which refers to the schooling that takes place after elementary school and before higher education, grades 7 or 8 through 12. Also, it should be noted that the Soviet national dropout rate is high; see Shturman for *glasnost*-era figures.

10. The reader is referred to Dunstan (1988) for additional discussion of this issue (see pp. 29-33 and pp. 58-61). This book will interest arts educators who seek information about education for gifted and special students, especially those who want to learn more about how the theories and work of psychologist Lev Vygotsky influenced the Soviet educational system. It should also be noted that the *glasnost* era allowed many voices to be heard in the newspapers, including the voices of those who saw negative aspects of egalitarian principles, such as the neglect of bright and gifted children.

11. Goldin investigated kindergarten music-lesson materials while in the Soviet Union during the 1980s. The materials (e.g., songs, musical games) used in these lessons were very poor, with the exception of a few folk songs. This was a factor that affected the quality of kindergarten music programs.

12. Children's music schools became very popular in the last two decades, and because parents paid tuition the schools accepted all children, including those who were not extraordinarily talented. This caused a problem for the teachers, because the professionally oriented curriculum, established during the 1920s

and 1930s, was intended for very talented children. The approach of Faina Bryanskaya was revolutionary in that it sought to meet the needs of all students enrolled in the children's music schools.

13. Especially the ideological songs, and with the exception of some very worthwhile folk songs.

14. Any initiative, small or large, in the Soviet Union had to be preceded by a formulation of its ideological basis. Teachers had to write both "educational" and "moral" goals in their lesson plans. Even a figure such as Kabalevsky had to play by the "rules of the game" and demonstrate that his ideas did not contradict official Soviet ideology.

15. This is probably another necessary bow to "the rules of the game." In materials for teachers, Kabalevsky opposed the use of ideological songs in lesson plans, ostensibly because this everyday usage would decrease the importance of ideological holidays and historical events. But Kabalevsky undoubtedly invented this rationale to call for a break with existing practice while not upsetting authorities. If patriotic songs were musically strong—and some were—Kabalevsky included them in his curriculum.

16. This is different from Soviet education's usual disregard for student interests.

17. This too represented a radical departure from the tsarist/Stalinist authoritarian approach.

18. An organizational device reminiscent of the 1920s progressive approach described earlier in this article.

19. The Russian word *intonazia* is similar in meaning to the English word "phrasing," though the meaning of the Russian word always includes a dimension of expressive shaping. *Intonazia* has no relationship to the English word "intonation," which is commonly used to refer to matters of tuning.

20. Again, allowance for student choice marks a departure from usual Soviet practice.

21. This too represents a departure from standard Soviet educational practice and harkens back to the progressive reforms of the 1920s.

22. Kabalevsky was not alone in this break with tradition. There were others in education who also called for new approaches; in the pedagogical literature they were called *pedagog-novators*.

23. In a 1983 article, Kabalevsky responded to this accusation in a seemingly unscientific manner: "The actual practice of this system—meaning, perception, reaction, and responsive behavior of children—was my criteria of right and wrong, and was the scientific base of my work with children from the experimental program" (p. 25).

24. Incidentally, Barenboim, who was a fan of Orff and an ardent supporter of Kabalevsky's


system as a whole, diplomatically advised Kabalevsky to increase (strengthen) the Orff element in the system: "I don't doubt that the logic of Kabalevsky's system will itself bring it to the point where it will broaden practical musical activities of children, making use (as an example) of high-quality children's music instruments—melodic and unpitched" (Barenboim, 1974, p. 77).

25. See "From the Editorial Board," at the end of the 1974 article by Abdullin.

26. Quoted by Kabalevsky (1983) in "Demand of the Time," in Kabalevsky (1986, p. 23).

## References

- Abdullin, E. & Tsipin, G. (1978) The program that looks ahead to the future. In *Soviet Music* 10, 45-56.
- Abdullin, E. (1974) The pedagogical symphony of Kabalevsky. In *Soviet Music* 12, 27-36.
- Barenboim, L., Ed. (1978) *Musical 'vospitanie' in the USSR*. From the series "Musical Vospitanie in the 20th Century." Moscow: All-Union Publishing Company, Soviet Composer.
- Barenboim, L. (1977) In order to study joyfully. In *Soviet Music* 2, 73-77.
- Brodinsky, B. (1992) The impact of *perestroika* on Soviet education. In *Phi Delta Kappan*, 73 (5), pp. 378-385.
- Broudy, H. (1987) *The role of imagery in learning*. No. 1 in a series of occasional papers. Los Angeles: The Getty Center for the Arts.
- Bryanskaya, Faina. (1991) Personal communication.
- Dunstan, J. (1988) Gifted youngsters and special schools. In J. Riordan, (Ed.), *Soviet education: The gifted and the handicapped*. London: Routledge.
- Long, D. (1985) Educational reforms in the Soviet Union. In the series *Special studies in comparative education* No. 14. Buffalo, NY: SUNY Comparative Education Center.
- Kabalevsky, D. (1986) *Thoughts on pedagogy: Selected articles and presentations*. Moscow: Pedagogika.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1978) Musical 'vospitanie' in the Soviet Union. L. Barenboim (Ed.). Moscow: All-Union Publishing Company, Soviet Composer.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1973) The ideological basis of musical 'vospitanie' in the Soviet Union. *Proceedings of the International Society for Music Education (ISME) Convention*, Moscow, July 8, 1970. Moscow: All-Union Publishing Company, Soviet Composer. First published in *Soviet Music*, 1970, No. 9.
- Kraevskij, V. & Lerner, I. (1984) *The theory of curriculum content in the USSR*. In the International Bureau of Education's Educational Sciences Series. Paris: UNESCO.
- McAllister, R. (1980) Dmitry Borisovich Kabalevsky. In S. Sadie, (Ed.), *The new Grove*

- dictionary of music and musicians*. London: Macmillan.
- Maezel, L. (1974) The grandmaster plays without a queen. In *Dmitry Kabalevsky: Creative meetings, essays, and letters*. Moscow: All-Union Publishing Company, Soviet Composer.
- Ministry of *Prosvechenie* of the RSFSR [Russian Republic]. (1988) *Program for the secondary general education school: Music, grades 1-3, primary school*. Moscow: Prosvechenie.
- Muckle, J. (1988a) *A guide to the Soviet curriculum: What the Russian child is taught in school*. London: Croom Helm.
- Muckle, J. (1988b) The educational experience of the Soviet young person. In J. Riordan, (Ed.), *Soviet education: The gifted and the handicapped*. London: Routledge.
- Muckle, J. (1987) Dimitri Kabalevsky and the three whales: Recent developments in music education in the Soviet general education school. In *British Journal of Music Education*, 4 (1), 53-70.
- Remeta, D. (1974) *Music education in the USSR*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California.
- Riordan, J., Ed. (1988) *Soviet education: The gifted and the handicapped*. London: Routledge.
- Rust, V. (1992) School reform in the Russian republic: An interview with Edward Dneprov. In *Phi Delta Kappan*, 73 (5), 375-377.
- Shturman, D. (1988) *The Soviet secondary school*. Tr. P. Shimrat. London: Routledge.
- Whittaker, C. (1984) *The origins of modern Russian education: An intellectual biography of Count Sergei Uvarov, 1786-1855*. De Kalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press. 

# Psychology of Music

David Hargreaves, Editor

## CONTENTS

Volume 21, Number 2, 1993

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Jane Davidson  | Visual Perception of Performance Manner in the Movements of Solo Musicians.               |
| Louise Buttsworth , Gerard Fogerty, and Peter Rourke | Predicting Aural Performance in a Tertiary Music Training Programme.                      |
| Luke Windsor   | Dynamic Accents and the Categorical Perception of Metre.                                  |
| Carla Giomo  | An Experimental Study of Children's Sensitivity to Mood in Music.                         |
| Hamid Hekmat and James Hertel                        | Pain Attenuating Effects of Preferred Versus Non-Preferred Music Interventions.           |
| David Boyle  | Review of <i>Some Approaches to Research in Music Education</i> , edited by Anthony Kemp. |