Entrepreneurial Tapists

Underground Music Reproduction and Distribution in the US and USSR, 1960s and 1970s

Marsha Siefert

Abstract: This chapter takes a participatory approach to the reproduction of live music performance by looking at the history of "bootleg" sound recordings in two formations during the 1960s and 1970s. The first builds on the history of how opera lovers, mostly in concert and sometimes in conflict with formal opera institutions and commercial recording companies, created their own community for reproduced live opera performances through surreptitious live recording, record producing, distributing, cataloging, trading, and collecting. I will relate these activities to the world of *magnitizdat*, the live music recordings in the USSR that were also reproduced and circulated through trusted networks. The aim of looking at both of these twentieth-century forms of music reproduction is to ask questions about how music listeners responded to perceived limitations of formal music industries by creating participatory networks that identified, reproduced, and circulated recorded music that corresponded to their preferences and ideas about authenticity, aesthetics, and direct experience before the internet age.

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1 I would like to thank Joe Pearce, the late Ed Wolfe, and Seth Winner of the Vocal Record Collectors Society, who have taught me so much about the glories of the singing voice. I would also like to thank Yassen Zassoursky for the Melodiya albums from a wide variety of Russian music, which opened my sonic world. I am indebted to Victor Taki and Alexander Semyonov for helping me obtain recordings at Moscow's Gorbushka Market, to Karl Hall for an elusive copy of Lysenko's Ukrainian opera, and to Svetlana Kolesnik for a tape recording of Schnittke in the days before the explosion of online music. My musical pursuits were facilitated by my friends Elena Androunas in Moscow and in Philadelphia, the late Joe Pote. This chapter would not have been realized without Fritz Trümpi, who encouraged me to return to writing on music history. Finally, I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their erudition and careful reading of an earlier version of this essay.

nications history, particularly media industries and public diplomacy, from the nineteenth century to the present. Recent published work on Cold War culture appears in *Socialist Internationalism in the Cold War* and *Cold War Crossings*; her most recent edited book is *Labor in State-Socialist Europe, 1945–1989: Contributions to a History of Work*.

As a historian, reading about contemporary discussions of the digital revolution in music, especially the new modes of reproduction and distribution, I could not help but reflect upon these issues in the pre-internet world. Like the stimulating scholarly "rewinding of the phonographic regime,"[2] I, too, fastened onto the role of magnetic tape in revolutionizing post-World War II music and musicking. In music school, I learned about the role of tape technology in music composition and later studied how tape aided song dubbing and soundtrack production in Hollywood film.[3] In life, I encountered innovative uses of magnetic tape for music reproduction and distribution in two otherwise seemingly unrelated practices—American "private" opera recordings and the circulation of Soviet bard song on tape.

One might argue that these two forms from two contrasting, in fact oppositional, political systems of those years are not comparable, or that comparing them must begin from the high politics of capitalism and communism. But I propose to view the phenomena from the point of view of participatory music culture, as was the invitation for the first iteration of this text. Both practices engage people who do not find the established music industry that selects, produces, and distributes sound recordings to be sufficient or inclusive regarding music genre, performers, styles, or aesthetics. Those whom I have called "entrepreneurial tapists" adopted practices from the state or commercial recording industries to create their own sometimes parallel—and even complementary—versions of reproduced musical performances they deemed worthy.

The title of this chapter is emblematic of terms used in the discussion of both of these musical phenomena and practices. Talking about "tapists" builds on the nominative forms in English like artist and vocalist and helps to identify the link between technology and its human agency; paraphrasing Walter Benjamin, the mechanical reproduction of music requires someone to

2 Andrea F. Bohlman and Peter McMurray, "Tape: Or, Rewinding the Phonographic Regime," *Twentieth-Century Music* 14, no. 1 (2017): 3–24.

3 Marsha Siefert, "Image/Music/Voice: Song Dubbing in Hollywood Musicals," *Journal of Communication* 45, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 44–64.

produce the "master" copy.[4] Further, as Katz has rightly identified, Benjamin was "wrong" about how recording emancipated music from ritual. As explored here, "reproductions, no longer bound to the circumstances of their creation, generate new experiences, traditions, and indeed rituals, wherever they happen to be."[5]

Recording a music performance for personal use is an allowed form of participation in both societies, but reproducing it for trade is a "gray" area and selling it to consumers accounts for its "entrepreneurial" nature. The appellation of "bootleg" to this genre of reproduced LPs or tapes is also common, although strictly speaking, they are not "bootlegs," since they are not reproducing music that has been "legitimately" issued by official recording entities; quite the contrary. The term "bootleg" came to be used in the commercial recording industry outside of the USSR with reference to unreleased studio recordings, rehearsals, outtakes, alternate versions, and amateur live recordings that are reproduced and sold "illegally"; now in contemporary music it can even be used to sell these versions of a popular artist.[6] Nonetheless, "bootleg" has come to be applied to the reproduction of these recordings for sale or, in the Soviet case, especially in the reproduction of smuggled rock music.[7] Arguably, the term bootleg can be extended to the world of state-sponsored sound recording if private/amateur sound recordings are reproduced and distributed outside the state music recording industry.[8]

And how is it best to refer to and compare the circumstances of their circulation and perhaps even the "ritual" of their communal exchange and listening

4 Elaborations of Walter Benjamin's 1935 essay abound in research on sound recording. For an authoritative recent account, see Timothy D. Taylor, "The Commodification of Music at the Dawn of the Era of 'Mechanical Music,'" chapter 3 in his *Music in the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 50–73.

5 Mark Katz, *Capturing Sound: How Technology Has Changed Music*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 17–18.

6 See, e.g., *Bob Dylan: The Bootleg Series* (Columbia Legacy, 1991–2021), 16 vols.

7 The clearest definition, derived from American popular music, is offered by Lee Marshall, "For and Against the Record Industry: An Introduction to Bootleg Collectors and Tape Traders," *Popular Music* 22, no. 1 (2003): 58; for the economics of tape reproduction, see Anna Kan, "Living in the Material World: Money in the Soviet Rock Underground," in *Dropping Out of Socialism: The Creation of Alternative Spheres in the Soviet Bloc*, ed. Juliane Fürst and Josie McLellan (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2016), 267, 271, 273.

8 Andrea Bohlman uses the term to describe compact cassette tapes that were circulated in late socialist Poland prior to the Solidarity movement. She suggests that they were precursors to the "bootleg" economy of Solidarity itself. "Making Tapes in Poland: The Compact Cassette at Home," *Twentieth-Century Music* 14, no. 1 (2017): 130.

experience? In the Soviet case, even during Stalinism, the networks among musicians and performers were discussed in terms of official—meaning belonging to the musicians union—and unofficial, for music practices, from composition to performance to reproduction, that took place outside the union's imprimatur.[9] For the commercial recording industry, colorful catchphrases like "piracy on the high Cs" appear regularly along with "the musical underground."[10] Given the culturally overlapping play on words from Dostoevsky's "Notes from Underground," I have chosen to use that term in describing the cultural milieu for both.

The comparison might at first seem spurious—should we not compare forms of popular music, or similar genres at least? In this case, while seemingly far apart, both forms of recorded singing shared values in live performance, relied on an amenity to a taped version, and featured sung performances that, for reasons of content or performance style, would not be appropriate for or appropriated by the official music industry.

Choosing these two forms of underground circulated live vocal performances also helps to give agency, whether in a "democratic" society or "late Soviet socialism," to those who expressed dissatisfaction with the prevailing music industry choices. Their activities in taping live performances and developing appropriate modes for duplication, distribution, listening, and curating illuminate the formation of "trusted" networks of listeners. Admittedly, opera bootleggers and Soviet guitar poets are located in very different formal musical communities, much less political entities. However, by looking for the gray areas and paying attention to practices by these entrepreneurial tapists, we can ask whether there is a similarity in the fluidity and complexity of social relations. By looking at participation in these communities, the goal is to show some "complicity" or at least toleration/cooperation in the formal and informal systems of musical reproduction.

Another reason for choosing these two phenomena—bootleg opera and guitar poetry—is that the choice excludes rock music, which has dominated the analysis of underground music in this period. Not surprisingly, the Soviet and state-socialist rock scene attracted a great deal of attention from the late 1980s and early 1990s until today, as *perestroika* opened the USSR to on-site

9 For a useful discussion of these networks see Kiril Tomoff, "'Most Respected Comrade …': Patrons, Clients, Brokers and Unofficial Networks in the Stalinist Music World," *Contemporary European History* 11, no. 1 (2002): 33–34.

10 Peter Davis uses both terms in his articles: "Piracy on the High Cs," *Music and Musicians* (May 1973): 38–40, and installments of "The Musical Underground: A Brief Look at the Tape Scene," *Musical Newsletter* 6, no. 1 (1976): 17–18.

research.[11] The scholarly focus on rock, especially smuggled recordings of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, has played into the post-Cold War narrative about "how the Beatles rocked the Kremlin," the name of a widely circulated documentary film,[12] and emphasized music imported from the West. Perhaps the juxtaposition of pirated opera recordings with Soviet-produced "guitar poetry" can reveal participants' motivations and musical desires beyond the Cold War political frame.[13]

This comparison has some other advantages. It allows us to look at the way in which recording technology was used in creative ways to mirror the formal system of record production, distribution, and critique. The materiality of the recordings, whether they are LPs reproduced from tape or reel-to-reel copies, demonstrates how enterprising tapists establish their tapes or LPs as "authentic," documenting the performance, the tapist/producer, and later curated collections.

Of course, the response of the formal recording industry to these informal endeavors varies in each country but, as I will try to show, a certain leniency in both recorded music cultures operated within limits, depending upon who produced and who shared what with whom. In both cases the perceived audience was sufficiently niche that it was not deemed worth pursuing by the authorities except under certain circumstances that will be noted below. Often these same audiences also bought sound recordings marketed through record shops and formal organizations, so the authorities tacitly at least recognized a potential synergy for consumers, buyers, and collectors.

Nonetheless, before proceeding, the stark differences between the music industries—indeed, the political systems and social conditions—of the two Cold War superpowers must be acknowledged. The USSR was a one-party state and cultural industries were state controlled; in the postwar world, the Soviet

11 See Timothy W. Ryback, *Rock around the Bloc: A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and Soviet Union* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Irina Orlova, "Notes from the Underground: The Emergence of Rock Culture," in *Mass Culture and Perestroika in the Soviet Union*, ed. Marsha Siefert (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 66–71; Sabrina P. Ramet, *Rocking the State: Rock Music and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994); Thomas Cushman, *Notes from Underground: Rock Music Counterculture in Russia.* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995); William Jay Risch, ed., *Youth and Rock in the Soviet Bloc: Youth Cultures, Music, and the State in Russia and Eastern Europe* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015).

12 *How the Beatles Rocked the Kremlin* (dir. Leslie Woodhead, 2009).

13 For an elaboration, see Ewa Mazierska, "Introduction" in *Popular Music in Eastern Europe: Breaking the Cold War Paradigm*, ed. Ewa Mazierska (London: Springer, 2016), 1–27.

efforts to improve social conditions and provide desired consumer goods were put to the test in various exchanges. These conditions help to make the "West"—even "imagined"—as desirable to many in Soviet society.[14] Decades of research on the cultural Cold War, embracing metaphors like a "cultural contest" and a "nylon curtain,"[15] have emphasized relations conditioned by political systems. Here, focusing on bottom-up, participatory practices does not dismiss these very real differences. However, this essay attempts to look at everyday life as experienced within very real constraints and how active music listeners found ways to create their own cultural practices using the available technologies and creative energies. The perceived power of high politics can sometimes overshadow the vitality and even similarity of bottom-up practices.

The impulse to compare or contextualize the practices is not mine alone. In the introduction to a project on French, Italian, and Soviet "cultures of dissent," the organizers name it a "difficult comparison."[16] In one of the most stimulating analyses of the circulation of *magnitizdat*, literally tape publishing, in the USSR, the phenomenon is described in terms of its Soviet and post-Soviet existence, as well as in comparison to its paper counterpart: *samizdat*.[17] Of the manifestation that I will discuss in this article—"guitar poetry"—another scrupulous commentator recognizes the transnational limits of the genre. By comparing Soviet "guitar poetry" to other examples as a progressive or socialist transnational form, he finds complementary genres in milieus on both sides of the Iron Curtain during the Cold War; however, the songs themselves did not travel due to the linguistic embeddedness of the lyrics.[18] Still, the similarity of

14 See, for example, the discussion of the "imagined West" in Gyorgy Péteri, ed., *Imagining the West in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010).

15 Amidst the extensive bibliography on Cold War culture, for "contest," see David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); for variations on the "iron curtain," see György Péteri, "Nylon Curtain—Transnational and Transsystemic Tendencies in the Cultural Life of State-Socialist Russia and East-Central Europe," *Slavonica* 10, no. 2 (2004): 113–23.

16 Teresa Spignoli and Claudia Pieralli, "Forme culturali del dissenso alle due sponde della cortina di ferro (1956–1991): Problemi, temi e metodi di una difficile comparazione," *Between* 10, no. 19 (2020): i–xxxiv.

17 J. Martin Daughtry, "'Sonic Samizdat': Situating Unofficial Recording in the Post-Stalinist Soviet Union," *Poetics Today* 30, no. 1 (2009): 27–65.

18 Rossen Djagalov, "Guitar Poetry, Democratic Socialism, and the Limits of 1960s Internationalism," *The Socialist Sixties: Crossing Borders in the Second World*, ed. Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 148–66.

the phenomena warrants notice.[19] Live opera recordings, on the other hand, derived from one of the earliest transnational music phenomena when the language issue had already been debated and resolved in a variety of ways over the 400 years of opera performance. What will emerge as significant in both cases, as will be discussed, is the authenticity of the performance, whether marred by the risk-taking of live performance or the lack of a conventionally "beautiful voice."

The desire to compare is embodied in the question asked by the editors of the two-volume *Encyclopedia of Informality*: Is Russia a special case? This essay in the encyclopedia, which includes entries on *magnitizdat* as well as other forms of "underground" text and music circulation worldwide, including guerilla radio and bootleg recording, examines the embeddedness of informality and the way in which informality is associated with formal rules. It concludes that bending the rules may be more about social circle and context than about geography or one particular country and that seeking the area between "no but yes" is a way to examine both ambivalence and complexity.[20]

In the discussion that follows, I will describe each genre of bootleg recording in terms of its history and technology, its starred practitioners, its producers and distributors, and its relation to the authorities. The goal will be to see how viewing both practices as participatory can elaborate the concept in music cultures from below—and before digitization.

19 A comparison that might yield more similarities would look at the "recordings" of international socialism, such as the fifteen-year run of the US record label Paredon, which between 1970 and 1985 produced fifty albums of protest songs and speeches derived from one founder's friendship with Pete Seeger and Paul Robeson. The label was also produced in New York City, funded "on a shoestring," and obtained some of its material anonymously in "clandestine" ways through an intermediary. A difference with the current phenomenon is that it used a local pressing plant, was funded and distributed openly (although the founders had FBI files), and was not genre specific but political. The inventory was purchased by Folkways Records in 1991. Barbara Dane, "Paredon Records: Reflecting on 50 Years of Paredon" (2020), https://folkways.si.edu/paredon/reflecting.

20 Svetlana Barsukova and Alena Ledeneva, "Concluding Remarks to Volume 2: Are Some Countries More Informal than Others: The Case of Russia," in *The Global Encyclopaedia of Informality* (London: UCL Press, 2018), 2:487–92.

Bootleg Opera Recordings

History and Technology

Record piracy is coexistent with the development of the recording industry in the opening years of the twentieth century.[21] Fledgling sound recording companies dubbed records for distribution under another label and at least one opera fan bootlegged opera performances on cylinders from his prompter's box at the Metropolitan Opera between 1901 and 1904.[22] Edison's cylinder machine was capable of both recording and playback, but lost to the Victor Company's convenience and marketing of playback-only vinyl records.[23] Vocal records dominated due to their acoustic superiority and opera arias, while a small portion of the production, lent legitimacy to the recording industry.

The coming of radio and electric sound recording in the mid-1920s created a new situation for the recording industries and hence for recorded opera as well. "Electric recordings" relied on a microphone for amplifying the vibrations of the singer's voice but were still recorded "live." Radio had an immediate impact in presenting to the public the singing voice "amplified" by the microphone, thereby bringing new-style singers like crooners into the recording limelight. Opera gained its regular, though limited, place on the radio primarily through the "live broadcasts from the Met," which began in 1931. Importantly for pirate records, broadcasts of most radio programs through the 1940s, including the Met Opera broadcasts, were recorded on discs as "soundchecks" and often stored in the corner of a station or network. These soundchecks became a foundation of the opera live recording industry.

Enter magnetic tape in the late 1940s. Originally used for recording film soundtracks, magnetic recording made possible the mixing of tracks from several sound sources.[24] The arrival of magnetic recording meant several things

21 For more on the so-called Mapleson cylinders see Robert Angus, "Pirates, Prima Donnas, and Plain White Wrappers. The Record Underground from Mapleson to the Seventies," *High Fidelity* 26 (December 1976): 77–78.

22 Nicholas E. Limansky, *Early 20th Century Opera Singers* (New York: Ybk Publishers, 2016), "Introduction."

23 Marsha Siefert, "The Home Audience. Sound Recording and the Marketing of Musical Taste in Early 20th Century America," in *Audiencemaking*, ed. James S. Ettema and D. Charles Whitney (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1994), 186–214; Marsha Siefert, "How the Talking Machine Became a Musical Instrument: Technology, Aesthetics, and the Capitalization of Culture," *Science in Context*, Special Issue: "Technology: Culture, Politics, Aesthetics," ed. Alfred J. Rieber and Marsha Siefert (Summer 1995): 417–50.

24 Steve Jones, "The Cassette Underground," *Popular Music and Society* 14, no. 1 (1990): 75–84.

for those who were to become the opera pirates. First, and most obviously, the availability of consumer reel-to-reel tape recorders meant that for the first time since cylinders, recording live performances *in situ* was practical, even if awkward. Stories of how a reel-to-reel tape recorder could be smuggled into the theater in a briefcase, with the microphone up the raincoat sleeve began in this era.

Ironically, the arrival of magnetic tape in the recording studio gave the new opera pirates a reason for being. Magnetic tape allowed for the manipulation of recording through editing techniques. Rather than "dubbing" an original performance, now a single track could be dubbed, or several performances could be "edited together" to achieve a perfection not always available in nature. One of the most famous studio tinkerings was when Elizabeth Schwarzkopf supplied Kirsten Flagstad's high Cs in her recording of Isolde in the Wagner opera.[25] Opera afficionados felt they could no longer trust what appeared on disc as a "record" of a performance.[26]

The possibility of "over-engineering" also meant that some values, like spontaneity, risk, "presence" (a sound engineering term similar to Benjamin's term "aura"), and operatic vocal excess were devalued in favor of accuracy, consistency, and blend achieved, according to opera pirates, through technological tricks. In contrast, the bootleg recordings were valued for being "live." Live performance is "authentic, with all its flaws, where a studio recording is note-perfect but sterile."[27] In live performance, the stakes are higher than if mistakes can be corrected by tape. The flaws, the tempo, the high note held longer, the difficult passage taken faster—these "feats" of live performance become part of the thrill of listening.

Live recordings also circumvented the "legal" limitations of the recording industry: singers often had exclusive contracts with individual record companies—RCA, Columbia, etc.—and could not record together even if they sang together onstage. Ideal casts and occasional pairings onstage offered the potential for something new, something extraordinary to emerge on a "hot night," a performance known to opera fans for having superseded the ordinary to a peak experience.[28] Even around 1980, when the record companies began

25 Will Crutchfield, "In Opera, 'Live' Is Livelier, but Also Riskier," *New York Times*, July 15, 1990, 44.

26 The record industry also made use of voice substitution in more popular genres. See Marsha Siefert, "Image/Music/Voice," 44–64.

27 Alan G. Ampolsk, "Piracy on the High C's," *New York* (January 29, 1979): 95–96.

28 Crutchfield, "In Opera," 1.

to notice the market for live performances, they patched together various rehearsals and performances, sound-engineered into a whole.[29]

Finally, the pirate tapes of live performance allow for literally "collected memory." Being there—"I heard Callas in Dallas in '56"—is a memory that can be collected and re-collected in its retelling. The recording represents an equally important artifactual memory. It becomes part of the collection, and its very specific musical content is incorporated into the knowledge base that opera lovers share and debate. The act of collecting and the comparison of performances are considered an active, participatory way to be part of opera performance.

Therefore, not only did the bootleg tapes of live performances come to stand, for many of the operagoers of the time, as "real opera," but also the radio broadcasts, both contemporary and the airchecks of the past, took on added value as an "authentic" operatic experience. For a few enterprising men, these tapes became the foundation of a small distribution network that bound together singers, record producers, vocal record collectors, and listeners.

The Singers and their Songs

Tapes of complete live performances of operas were the norm. Some operas were rarely performed, others were obscure. Some were performed with famous conductors, performed with a distinctive cast, featured star singers, or were performed at a major opera house. Some were taped broadcast recordings, so common on the radio from the 1930s.[30] Wagner's "Ring Cycle" was a particular favorite, especially since it was less frequently recorded than Verdi or Mozart.[31] With all this in mind, however, the pirates became known particularly for their multiple recordings of the divas—the star sopranos—especially those who were less available on commercial recordings and who had voices that emphasized their performances as singing actresses.

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29 Nicholas E. Limansky, *Pirates of the High Cs: Opera Bootlegging in the 20th Century* (New York: Ybk Publishers, 2020), 71. In Jan Neckers's review of this book, he adds European details to Limansky's New York-centered descriptions. As he notes, "This is a book for us; avid collectors of pirated recordings from the mid-sixties to the end of the century." http://www.operanostalgia.be/html/Limansky-pirates.html.

30 For the role of the Metropolitan Opera in the hierarchy of performance venues as well as an important source of both commercial and private recordings, see Marsha Siefert, "The Metropolitan Opera and the American Century: Opera Singers, Europe and Cultural Politics," *Journal for Arts Management, Law and Society* 33, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 298–315.

31 Crutchfield, "In Opera," 23.

The one singer who crossed the boundary between the formal opera world of stardom and the pirate kingdom was Maria Callas.[32] At last count, there are at least sixty-five live performances with Callas. While now available on YouTube and remastered CDs, her high E-flat in the triumphal scene of Verdi's *Aida* is one of the frequently shared moments.[33] Other "must-haves" are her bel canto performances in Donizetti's operas.[34] While Callas also formally recorded many operas in the studio, the discussion of her weight and her interpretations backed the large sales of these live pirated recordings. Her voice in particular attracted comment: it was heard as "tortured," or "shrill," or "just plain ugly."[35] The scholarship on Maria Callas and pirate tapes is extensive,[36] but one example may illustrate. The recording company Emi had planned to record Verdi's *La Traviata* in the 1950s; however, they could not include their star, Maria Callas, in one of her most famous roles because she had already recorded it with the Italian label Cetra and was prohibited from recording it with another company for five years. Amidst complicated dealings among companies and agents, it still had not materialized as late as 1968. Into the gap came several pirated recordings that were hunted "with a vengeance," with three pirate labels issuing a live 1955 performance from La Scala, another of a 1952 Mexico City performance, and yet another of a 1958 Covent Garden performance; by the end of 1974 at least four different complete performances had been issued on "private labels."[37]

Magda Olivero, popular in Italy, was a second favorite, her singing available in at least seventy live performances. After dissatisfaction with professional life and the coming of World War II, she retired, but then returned to sing onstage ten years later in 1951. In the United States, she was known by the mid-1960s through her pirate recordings. According to one description, Olivero was willing to "mold, shove, and mangle" her voice "into countless colors and emotions in order to serve the music." She had to find ways to "make her voice

32 On the complexity of the stardom of Maria Callas in the American context, see Siefert, "The Metropolitan Opera and the American Century," 307–10.

33 Maria Callas, Act 2 Finale ("Gloria all'Egitto") from *Aida* by Giuseppe Verdi, Mexico, 1951, BJR LP 151, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTjUi_tSzjk.

34 Crutchfield, "In Opera," 23.

35 These adjectives and more are cited in Nina Sun Eidsheim, "Maria Callas's Waistline and the Organology of Voice," *The Opera Quarterly* 33, nos. 3–4 (January 2018): 251.

36 David Hamilton, "Who Speaks for Callas?" *High Fidelity* 29 (January 1979); Anthony Tommasini, "Critic's Notebook: Giving Those Callas Bootleg Tapes a Road Test," *New York Times*, January 9, 2003; Wayne Koestenbaum, "Maria Callas and Her Fans," *Yale Review* 79, no. 1 (1989): 1–20.

37 This story along with subsequent versions, including the 1980 Emi Lisbon *Traviata*, are told by Real La Rochelle, "Maria Callas and La Traviata: The Phantom of Emi," Asrc *Journal* 19, nos. 2–3 (February 1989): 54–61.

beautiful," as her art was often extreme and brutal.[38] Due to these qualities and her rarified repertoire, commercial companies were not willing to make the investment.[39] However, in 1975, at the age of sixty-five, she was invited to sing three performances of Tosca at the Met: "Her prodigious technique and breath control spoke of a bygone era."[40]

During the 1950s and 1960s, the Turkish soprano Leyla Gencer came to be known as "Queen of the Pirates." She was recorded in pirated live performances in over twenty different operas—some in "two salable versions by two rival pirates!"[41] She sang nineteen roles at La Scala between 1957 and 1983 but was often compared unfavorably as "the poor man's Callas" and so was "shamefully neglected by the recording companies."[42] When asked, Gencer was delighted that the pirate recordings exist and "keeps quite a collection [herself], supplied by [her] friends," even though she realizes that the "risk of a bad performance might end up on records."[43] According to the pirates, Gencer was perfect because her "uninhibited dramaticism was, aurally, extremely satisfying."[44] They loved her as "one who prowls a stage like a wild thing confined behind bars." Hurling "imprecations like no one in the business," she was perfect to wear the crown for those who valued singing over the top.[45]

As illustrated by the record catalogs created by the "live opera" record companies, however, the range of taste and popularity extended beyond these soprano divas. To take an example from one undated 1950s newsletter:

> The September release will feature two complete operas and a solo record. First of the operas is Rossini's *Zelmira*, initially produced in 1822 […]. The singers, headed by Virginia Zeani,[46] are excellent […]. Second opera is the most famous production by the Brazilian composer, Antonio Carlos

38 Limansky, *Pirates*, 103.

39 Limansky, *Pirates*, 100–10.

40 Ira Siff, "Magda Olivero, 104, the Last Great Verismo Soprano, Has Died," *Opera News* (September 8, 2014).

41 Susan Gould, "Leyla Gencer, Queen of Pirate Recordings," *High Fidelity* 26 (September 1976): 75. By 2020, over seventy-five of her performances have been reproduced on pirate CDs; Limansky, *Pirates*, 113.

42 Nicholas E. Limansky, "Vincenzo Bellini: Norma," *Opera Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (2005): 551–55.

43 Gould, "Leyla Gencer," 75.

44 Limansky, "Vincenzo Bellini," 552. Limansky considered Gencer to be a sort of "bel canto Magda Olivero," 554.

45 Limansky, *Pirates*, 112.

46 Almost all of Zeani's recordings in sixty-nine major roles were pirates; a commercial recording of selections ("Operatic Recital") from the 1950s was finally commercially issued (Decca 480 8187) over 60 years later in 2015 and reviewed by Scott Barnes in *Opera News* (March 2015).

> Gomes, *Il Guarany*, first produced at Milano in 1870 [...] this can also be recommended without qualm. [...] Had Kirsten Flagstad lived she would have been 70 in July. To commemorate her birthday [...].[47]

Or, to take a later example:

> "An Event of Unparalleled Importance!!" For the first time on records, absolutely complete and in very good sound, the famous 1954 La Scala production of Spontini's *La Vestale* [....] Maria Callas was at the height of her musical powers, while her dramatic talents burned more ferociously with each new performance [....] La Callas smolders with dramatic conviction."[48]

Whatever the performance, whomever the singer, one unwritten rule is that a tapist cannot use a tape "to ridicule an artist or to harm a reputation."[49]

Recording, Production, and Distribution Networks

Contextualizing operatic bootleg records in the 1960s and 1970s, especially for the United States, requires a market reality check. In 1974 figures, the proportion of the market allotted to classical music was four percent, with opera a very small subset of these sales.[50] The American center of this bootlegging and dubbing activity was the environs of New York City, with its Metropolitan Opera among its premiere recording sites. But the network of tapists was worldwide. Enterprising producers of "private" opera recordings received tapes of live performances at major opera houses throughout Europe and beyond. Performances were taped in house or from radio broadcasts, and then acquired by the pirates for their special, limited issues. Many tapists who tape for private listening come from the professions, from teachers and doctors to other professions.[51]

Among the first to capitalize this venture was Edward J. ("Eddie") Smith (1931–1984). EJS records copied the practices of a commercial company, including a catalog complete with numbers, different labels, and a newsletter with

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47 One-page postal announcement for "The Golden Age of Opera." These announcements were obtained from the R&H Clippings Collection of the Lincoln Center for Performing Arts Library, New York City.

48 One-page postal announcement for ERR Recordings, "Available on September 15, 1974, limited amount of sets."

49 Ampolsk, "Piracy," 95.

50 David Bicknell and Robert Philip, "Gramophone," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980), 7:625. For Great Britain, the figure is ten percent and for Germany, fourteen percent.

51 One source describes a tapist in the "European underground" who is a judge: "he's a real sneak, but his tapes are unbeatable." Ampolsk, "Piracy," 95.

reviews of new releases. He created several labels, such as "The Golden Age of Opera," (1956–71; 566 releases!),[52] Unique Opera Records Corporation (1972–77), A.N.N.A. Record Company (1978–82) and the Special Label issues (1954–81). Each of his labels were printed with a catalog number, e.g., EJS-122D, along with a notice at the bottom: "Private Record Not for Sale." He reissued historic recordings, including Toscanini's earliest Wagner recording with the New York Philharmonic in 1932 (EJS-444A, "The Golden Age of Wagner") and on the other side of the LP included selected opera house recordings from Covent Garden, the Vienna Staatsoper, and the Chicago Opera Company in 1930 (EJS-444B).

His sources were sometimes studio performances or rare broadcast tapes from the interwar period. Many of the singers loaned their own private unissued and broadcast recordings and some set up private concerts in apartments that were recorded in the singers' homes.[53] Smith sold his records in brown paper sleeves with the center cut out to reveal the label. Just as the major record companies like RCA Victor and Columbia, the pirates were able to request small-run custom pressings at various record producing plants, which further muddled relations between the labels and record companies.[54]

At the production site of Ralph Ferrandina, nicknamed "Mr. Tape," a popular New York City producer, the process of copying tapes was impressive. Twenty-six reel-to-reel tape recorders and later twelve double cassette recorders were operating at the same time. Limansky states that all copies were made double-time and of multiple operas. He got used to hearing *Aida* in one ear and *Tosca* in the other, while hustling to fulfill the customers' orders. He was also in charge of mounting the masters, checking the quality, and keeping the tape machines in working order.[55]

Other labels soon joined in the 1970s. Ed Rosen's label (ERR) belonged to a new generation of pirates. Some were hopeful singers who also befriended opera stars; Rosen's collection, for example, began in friendship with the tenor Richard Tucker. Rosen also used mailings, but added more professional packag-

52 William Shaman, Edward Joseph Smith, William J. Collins, and Calvin M. Goodwin, EJS, *Discography of the Edward J. Smith Recordings: The Golden Age of Opera, 1956–1971* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1994). This first of two volumes of curated descriptions of EJS recordings is 795 pages long, with an introduction illuminating in detail the history of both pirate records and recording enthusiasts.

53 Shaman, et al., *EJS*, xxix.

54 Raymond R. Wile, "Record Piracy: The Attempts of the Sound Recording Industry to Protect Itself Against Unauthorized Copying 1890–1978," ARSC *Journal* 17, nos. 1–3 (January 1987): 32.

55 Limansky, *Pirates*, 47–49.

ing, libretti, and photographs.[56] New distributors arose carrying many "private labels" and other collectors, like Charles Handelman, advertised "on demand taping" from their private collections.[57]

The private record producers created an informal distribution system with different notions of quantity/profit, different stars, and a different aesthetic for a community that not only purchased but also shared their knowledge and recordings. Information about pirate recordings sometimes surfaced in the press but during the 1960s and 1970s, it was often encoded in otherwise regular catalogs of record and tape sales, ephemeral newsletters, or classified ads. As in other "underground networks," members learned from each other how to recognize traces of this underground distribution system and, indeed, to use the Soviet expression, "read between the lines" in stories about opera stars to find evidence of desirable and available material.

For example, in the late 1970s during the opera season, a one-page weekly newsletter called "Diva" circulated gossip about the Metropolitan Opera and predicted the performances to see (and eventually to tape). An occasional magazine, *Opera Fanatic*, was born from the conjunction of an opera radio show on the Columbia University station, a circulating catalog, and an enterprising disc jockey.

Many members of the musical community made use of these pirate tapes. One tapist recounted that he "tapes on demand," often for performers who are studying roles.[58] But the largest audience—and customers—for the bootleg opera recordings are opera fans and collectors of vocal art, many of whom intersect the official music community as performers, critics, music journalists, radio show hosts, university lecturers, and sound engineers.[59] They are often collectors of tapes and through their detailed description of individual performances—from the interpretation of a given phrase by a given singer to anecdotes of performance disaster—may "leak" information that suggests the existence of a tape, which then adds to its value. Through their program notes and curation, the opera pirates saw themselves as patrons of the arts and as catering to collectors' legitimate demands.[60]

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56 For more on Ed Rosen and his recordings, see Opera Lounge, http://operalounge.de/history/opernfanatiker.

57 In requesting tapes of a performer for a birthday present from one of the distributors, I received a printout from an early dot-matrix computer, illustrating the record distributors' adaptation to technologies for maintaining their collection as well as their business.

58 Ampolsk, "Piracy," 96.

59 Peter Davis, "Live Performance Opera—Legal and Otherwise," *New York Times*, June 10, 1979, 23ff.

60 Angus, "Pirates, Prima Donnas, and Plain White Wrappers," 77.

Important communities of listeners[61] are represented by vocal record collectors. Early in the 1960s, several clubs were formed in New York City that brought together collectors and experts of vocal art, with opera and art song recordings as their primary object. Some focused on the singing itself, such as the Vocal Record Collectors Society,[62] which publishes an annual recording of selections from members' collections. Other collecting communities focus on sound engineering, especially remastering older recordings, with reports published in the ARSC (Association for Recording Sound Collectors) journal. These groups overlap, with recording engineers participating in collectors' meetings and remastering/reissuing collections for institutions like the Lincoln Center Library for the Performing Arts or the Sound Archive at the British Library. These groups also represent the curators of the recordings, especially from the collectors' communities.[63] While the role of collectors is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is worth noting here that the goals of collecting—such as the accumulation of knowledge, systematic classification, as well as "records" of experience—may duplicate the functions that Benjamin feared would be extinguished by mechanical reproduction.[64]

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61 One community of opera fans that gained attention in the late 1980s and early 1990s was represented by the "opera queens," gay men who attended the opera together and traded in opera knowledge as a form of banter. This opera community was portrayed in the plays of Terence McNally, notably *The Lisbon Traviata*, which chronicled a legendary performance that was rumored only to exist on a pirate tape; see Don Shewey, ed., *Out Front: Contemporary Gay & Lesbian Plays* (New York: Grove, 1988). Soon after the play premiered the tape was discovered and reproduced. Of the books on this fan community most prominent was Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1992).

62 Joe Pearce, "The Ramblings of a Once Young Record Collector—New World Version," *Record Collector* 63, no. 3 (September 2018): 199–214. *Record Collector* is a London-based magazine begun in 1979.

63 For a taste of the immense expertise of these "vocal historians," see the assessment of the performances of Wagnerian opera in Stockholm according to the Wagnerite perspective, the pure performance perspective, the general opera lover perspective and the vocal historian/collector perspective in Joe Pearce, "Wagner in Stockholm: Great Wagnerians of the Royal Swedish Opera Recordings, 1899–1970." *The Opera Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (2004): 472–505.

64 The standard work on record collecting is Roy Shuker, *Wax Trash and Vinyl Treasures: Record Collecting as a Social Practice* (Oxon: Routledge, 2017), although it is based primarily on collectors of popular music. An insightful study of collecting more generally is Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), see especially chapter 5: "Objects of Desire."

Bootleg Opera and the Authorities

Of course, such taping is illegal. "Bootlegging" (taping a live performance) and "copying" (dubbing tapes for distribution) were explicitly prohibited in the US 1976 copyright law revision and were highly suspect before then.[65] For the most part, however, theater ushers and opera singers regarded the tapists as harmless collectors of private memorabilia. But it is not coincidental that, in the cult French film *Diva* (dir. Jean-Jacques Beneix, 1981), in which a young Parisian opera fan is taping the live stage performance of an opera singer who refuses to record, the two persons sitting behind him are record company executives.[66] Seeking the potential star, enforcing copyright, contracts, and artist royalties all affected into how bootleg opera recordings were tolerated or persecuted at any given time.

The extended network of institutions involved in the production of opera and its recordings have vested interests in the performances recorded, their distribution, and their interpretation. What the pirates record, how they distribute, and how the fans interpret sometimes challenges the hegemony of the opera institutions in controlling these aspects. Everyone from ushers to record executives knew that taping was going on, but the story goes that most in the opera world turned a blind eye toward the practice as long as the trade was in audio tapes and LPs.[67] A couple of circumstances brought about a showdown. First, the arrival of opera videos raised the financial stakes of circulating illegal tapes. Second, in the early 1980s, the Metropolitan Opera Guild, the Metropolitan Opera's official organization of large donors, began to offer selected live broadcasts from their own vault of recordings as premiums for contributions and also began to sell videos of Met performances. They sued to prevent the sale of these recordings in pirated versions. Although the case settled out of court,[68] it scared many underground distributors from advertising

65 Edwin McDowell, "Record Pirates: Industry Sings the Blues," *New York Times*, June 30, 1978, D 1, 12.

66 Interestingly, an ethnographic study of people who make and collect bootleg tapes of popular music in the US, from Bruce Springsteen to the Grateful Dead, opens with a detailed description of this same scene in *Diva*, noting only that the singer is American but not that she is singing opera. Memorably, they comment that *Diva* is an "allegory of devotion in an age of technological reproduction." Mark Neumann and Timothy A. Simpson, "Smuggled Sound: Bootleg Recording and the Pursuit of Popular Memory," *Symbolic Interaction* 20, no. 4 (1997): 320.

67 Harvey Phillips, "Psss! I Have Bootlegged 'Norma' for Only...," *New York Times*, September 12, 1971, HF 1.

68 Crutchfield, "In Opera," 23. He also mentioned that one singer—Jessye Norman—initiated proceedings against a "pirate."

their Met Opera recordings.[69] The Met also addressed the problem in an oblique fashion by establishing an archive for taped performances at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center. Citing union contracts and royalties as reasons for the institutional costs of *circulating* these tapes, they made the tapes available for study but not for *collection*. The Metropolitan Opera now has an official "collective memory" but not one capable of being collected. The FBI closed down "Mr. Tape" in 1986, ostensibly because he was marketing "Live from the Met," "Dance in America," and American Ballet Theater performance videos,[70] another of the Lincoln Center performing arts groups.

But a crack in the legal scaffolding appeared abroad. In mid-1970s Italy, copyright bans were lifted from any performances over twenty years old.[71] This ruling is thought to have been tailored to release the live performances of Maria Callas, which could then be marketed in the US without restriction.[72] However, some Italian companies included among their CD collections Metropolitan Opera performances as well, marked in catalogues "not available in the US"[73]

According to one tape owner, there is some degree of guilt at the illegality of the pirate tapes, which encourages them to also purchase commercial recordings. And there is evidence from record store owners and even critics that opera fans are in fact the most knowledgeable buyers of these commercial recordings.[74] Other fans stress that they are performing a service by preserving important performances that would otherwise be lost, an important "collective" and "collected" memory of live performance and, importantly, of the star and less performed repertoire.[75] According to a curator of the EJS collection after enumerating the numerous taped performances still in the vaults of radio stations and opera companies, he affirmed that "there is an unchallengeable right

69 A chronological catalog beginning in 1933 of "The Metropolitan Opera on Pirate CD" compiled by Frank Hamilton in 2011 runs to 139 pages. Internet Archive, website captured on 13 September 2019., https://web.archive.org/web/20190913000208/http://frankhamilton.org/metro/index.html.

70 Limansky, *Pirates*, 68–70. Mr. Tape's arrest was announced in *Opera News*, January 17, 1987, 6; officials seized 6,833 alleged master videocassette tapes.

71 Sam H. Shirakawa, "'Backroom' Reissues of Rare Recordings," *New York Times*, October 21, 1979.

72 Crutchfield, "In Opera," 1.

73 But of course, they were: In the 1980s I was able to purchase one in a local record store and I was able to borrow a full pirate opera vinyl recording of Donizetti's *Poliuto* (MRF-31), with Callas and Franco Corelli, from the local Philadelphia "Free Library." This opera otherwise had not been commercially recorded.

74 Crutchfield, "In Opera," 1.

75 Limansky, *Pirates*, 67.

of afficionados to have access to the great performances of the past."[76] The tapists, producers, and purchasers of live opera recordings in effect were in dialogue with the official, commercial field of opera performance and recording, active participants in creating a community that respected and preserved the performances they valued.

Bootleg Music under Communism

History and Technology

Sound recording began in imperial Russia with record producers from the Victor Company arriving to record Russian singers in the first decade of the twentieth century. Before the October Revolution, Russian bass Feodor Chaliapin had joined Caruso as a "bestseller" for the international Victor Company[77] and three record pressing plants were established in and near Moscow.[78] Concurrently, gramophone records, especially from the international Gramophone Company, were illegally duplicated and distributed, inaugurating a history of musical piracy in Russia.[79] Despite (or perhaps because of) an emphasis on agitational recordings, the Soviet recording industry failed to thrive until the mid-1930s, when the state began production in earnest and increased record production exponentially in the areas of classical music, opera, folksongs, and mass song.[80] Imports from the west, notably jazz, were smuggled to aficionados, some even in the Soviet nomenklatura, through routes later amenable to rock music.[81]

In the late 1940s, intrepid record producers distributed popular music etched on used x-ray films. Hospitals were willing to give them away, because due to their flammability—and several hospital fires—x-ray films had to be

76 Bill Collins, "Mining the Musical Underground: Should buried treasures be left exclusively for the pirates?" *High Fidelity* 21 (November 1971): 76.

77 F.W. Gaisberg, *The Music Goes Round* (New York: Macmillan, 1942), 26–34, 69–76.

78 Alexander Tikhonov, "Moll, Kybarth, and Company," ARSC *Journal* 22, no. 2 (Fall 1991), 191–99. The Aprelevka plant, established in 1910, became the foundation of the Soviet enterprise.

79 Alexander Tikhonov, "Neizvestnaya 'stoletnyaya voyna': Iz istorii muzykal'nogo piratstva v Rossii" [The Unknown "Hundred Years War": From the history of musical piracy in Russia], *Zvukorezhisser* [Sound Engineer], nos. 3, 4 & 5 (2002), https://www.russian-records.com/details.php?image_id=62731.

80 A.I. Archinov, "A Brief History of the Recording Industry in the Soviet Union," *Journal of Audio Engineering Society* 18, no. 1 (February 1970): 20–22.

81 S. Frederick Starr, *Red and Hot: The Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union* 1917–1991 (New York: Limelight Editions, 1985/1994).

destroyed at the end of each year. These record producers built their own recording machines by rigging a gramophone to a second one with a recording stylus. They worked in secret, making records one at a time. These "bone records" or *Roentgenizdat*, could then be played back on a gramophone.

From the late 1940s, "distributors" of bone records stood outside of the department store GUM or under the Kuznetsky Bridge in Leningrad. Due to the flexibility of the x-ray plates, they could fit twenty-five in each sleeve of their coat! While colloquially called the "ribs of rock," most of the songs recorded featured tangos and popular songs, with a couple of jazz standards.[82] The few Elvis Presley tunes (like "Heartbreak Hotel") represented his vocal balladry not the rhythmic thrust.[83]

X-ray records were linked to "hooliganism" and made illegal in 1958, while some record producers were sent to prison.[84] The ruling may have also been a fallout from the World Festival of Youth and Students, held in Moscow during late summer of 1957, when for the first time live and recorded music of all sorts from all over the world was played and replayed in Moscow. The world's youth was perhaps less impressed with Soviet musical achievements than had been hoped by the authorities and the Soviet youth were perhaps less resistant to the charms of popular western music than decades of Soviet education would have preferred.[85]

The early 1960s saw changes, both organizational and technological, to the Soviet music recording industry. In 1964, the state enterprise Melodiya replaced the All-Union Firm and Studio of Gramophone Recording, uniting under its auspices the sound recording studios located in Moscow, Leningrad, Tallinn, Riga, Tashkent, Vilnius, and Tbilisi, and the manufacturing plants located in the first four cities. Melodiya also controlled the 30,000 retail outlets, wholesaling

82 Boris Taigin, "Rastsvet i krakh podpol'noy studii gramzapisi 'Zolotaya Sobaka'" [The rise and fall of the underground recording studio "Golden Dog" (1946–1961)], *Pchela* 20 (May/June 1999), https://cont.ws/@dachnik/430816.

83 Anton Spice, "X-Ray Audio: The Documentary," filmed by P. Heartfield, written by S. Coates and A. Spice, 2016, https://thevinylfactory.com/films/x-ray-audio-soviet-bootleg-records-documentary/.

84 Ryback, *Rock around the Bloc*, 32–33.

85 On music at the 1957 festival, see Pia Koivunen, "Friends, 'Potential Friends,' and Enemies: Reimagining Soviet Relations to the First, Second, and Third Worlds at the Moscow 1957 Youth Festival," in *Socialist Internationalism in the Cold War* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 219–47; Eleonory Gilburd, *To See Paris and Die: The Soviet Lives of Western Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2018), chapter 2. On the importance of educating music listeners to the Soviet modernization efforts, see Elina Viljanen, "Educating the New Listener" in *Philosophical and Cultural Interpretations of Russian Modernisation*, ed. Katja Lehtisaari and Arto Mustajoki (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 118–35.

branches, and arrangements with external recording companies from the west, such as EMI/Angel and Le Chante du Monde.[86] According to one estimate for the late 1960s, fifty-five percent of all record releases (about 1,200) were from the classical repertoire, although they accounted for only fifteen percent of sales. The rest were about evenly divided between *estrada* and folk music.[87] According to various estimates, by the late 1960s, between 170.5 and 200 million discs were produced per year.[88]

What changed—and challenged this state monopoly on recorded sound—was the affordability and ubiquity of tape recorders in the USSR The first viable home tape recorders became available—and legal!—in the early 1960s. By 1965, almost half a million tape recorders were produced per year and by 1970, they numbered more than a million annually.[89] Reel-to-reel tape recorders remained the norm, long after tape cassettes became the standard in North America, Europe, and Asia. The reason for this absence is that Melodiya feared that consumers might purchase classical recordings on cassette and then erase them to record what they wished. Even as late as 1984, blank cassette tapes were rare and very expensive.[90]

Magnitizdat, from a combination of the Russian words for "tape recorder" (*magnitofon*) and "publish (iz*da*(*va*)t)," describes a form of copying and self-distributing of tape recordings. The term covers a wide range of music-related practices in the USSR, from copies of rock albums from the west, music that was considered illegal in the Soviet Union, to home-grown music by Soviet musicians and sanctioned for distribution by the performers but not produced by Melodiya. In fact, according to Troitsky, who wrote about Soviet rock in the late 1980s, some *magnitizdat* recordings were sold right outside the Melodiya

86 John R. Bennett, Foreword to *Melodiya: A Soviet Russian LP Discography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood 1981); *Melodia: Celebrating 25 Years of Dedicated Service to the World of Music, 1964–1990*; https://melody.su/melody/history. In 1969, 170.5 to 200 million records were produced per year. Archinov, "A Brief History," 20–22.

87 Pekka Gronow, "Ethnic Music and Soviet Record Industry," *Ethnomusicology* 19, no. 1 (1975): 92–93.

88 Gronow, "Ethnic Music and Soviet Record Industry"; Archinov, "A Brief History," 20–22.

89 Ryback, *Rock around the Bloc*, 44; Brian A. Horne, "The Bards of Magnitizdat: An Aesthetic Political History of Russian Underground Recordings," in *Samizdat, Tamizdat, and Beyond: Transnational Media During and After Socialism*, ed. Friederike Kind-Kovács and Jessie Labov (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 175–89.

90 Harlow Robinson, "The Recording Behemoth of Tverskoy Boulevard (On the Soviet Recording Company Melodiya)," *High Fidelity* 36, no. 6 (June 1986): 64–65.

offices, as well as at train stations and other locations.[91] While ribs of rock were distributed in the tens of thousands, *magnitizdat* tapes numbered in the millions.[92]

The Singers and their Songs

Here I focus on one form of *magnitizdat* that epitomized the intimate connection between the vocalist, the performance, and its reproduction: "guitar poetry." In Russian it is called *avtorskaya pesnya* ("author's song," "authored song," or "songwriters' song"). As a genre it is distinguished from other forms of non-classical music like Soviet mass song, composed for individual or chorus, in service of the state;[93] from *estrada*, stage or variety songs; and from folk music.[94] Guitar poetry is also distinguished from *blatnaya pesnya*, songs from the criminal underworld, with which it shares some roots.[95] Importantly, guitar poetry is also distinguished from rock music, especially imported from the west, that also circulated in *magnitizdat*, starting from the late 1960s.[96] The audiences for these forms did not necessarily overlap. As anecdotal evidence suggests,

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91 Artemy Troitsky, *Back in the* USSR*: The True Story of Rock in Russia* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1987).

92 Yevgeny Yevtushenko, "Magnitofonnaia glasnost'," *Nedelia* 18 (1988): 16, http://bard.ru.com/article/8/print_art.php?id=8.14.

93 Gerald Stanton Smith,*Songs to Seven Strings: Russian Guitar Poetry and Soviet "Mass Song"* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), chapter 1: "Song in State Service."

94 See, for instance, David MacFadyen, *Red Stars: Personality and the Soviet Popular Song, 1955–1991* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), chapter 1: "Soviet Song after Stalin." For a helpful disambiguation of "popular" song in the Soviet context, see Zbigniew Wojnowski, "The Pop Industry from Stagnation to Perestroika: How Music Professionals Embraced the Economic Reform That Broke East European Cultural Networks," *Journal of Modern History* 92, no. 2 (2020): fn. 3.

95 Uli Hufen tells the authoritative story of "criminal" or "underworld" song from its origins in Odessa, with a focus on its most famous practitioner, Arkady Severnyi, but he does not discuss or include guitar poetry. *Das Regime und die Dandys. Russische Gaunerchansons von Lenin bis Putin* (Berlin: Rogner & Berhand, 2010). In his review of the book, Smith argues that *blatnaya pesnya* interpenetrates guitar poetry in both function and music. Gerald Stanton Smith, *Slavonic and East European Review* 89, no. 4 (2011): 731.

96 The bard Bulat Okudzhava persistently distinguishes this genre from the pop song (*estradnaya pesnya*, literally "stage song"), which he uses in 1988 to describe the domestic Russian rock music that emerged. Gerald Stanton Smith, "Okudzhava Marches On," *Slavonic and East European Review* 66, no. 4 (Oct. 1988): 557–58.

rock music tapes overtook bard song for many young people by the early 1970s.[97] In fact, the "textual meaningfulness" of guitar poetry was outright dismissed by one of the major subcultures listening to rock *magnitizdat*—the Soviet hippies.[98] The circulation of guitar poetry represents a particular network of taping, reproduction, and circulation that relied on live vocal performance for its sustenance and participatory community.

The practice of guitar poetry started in Leningrad in the late 1950s when the oldest of the Russian bards, Bulat Okudzhava, began performing his poetry to a seven-string guitar in private apartments. Gerald Stanton Smith, who provides a central and early account, first heard Okudzhava's voice in 1963 when a "fanatical jazz fan" in Leningrad played him an amateur tape. The fan's tape recorder, made in the GDR, was "without a cover; it needed endless cajoling and makeshift repairs."[99] Okudzhava had moved to Moscow, after his parents were "rehabilitated" in 1956, and he joined the Soviet Writer's Union in 1961. His songs were personal and, as a war veteran, anti-war, but not necessarily anti-Soviet, with cryptic references to the Soviet terror in which his father had perished. According to Stites, his performance style was simple and modest and his lyrics always authentic, whether in verses about the Arbat or an old jacket.[100]

However memorable the lyrics, they were received as music, the singing and guitar-playing central to their taped resonance and replication.[101] The acoustic guitar is central to its performance and symbolism. After Stalin's death, the seven-string guitar gained a reputation as a "democratic" instrument among youth.[102] It was also inexpensive, available, portable, and relatively easy to learn

97 Zhuk recounts that in Dniepropetrovsk, from the late 1950s, people could pay to record their favorite melodies as holiday greetings in recording salons (*muzykal'naya studya*) on a vinyl disc; by 1965, these recordings included the guitar poets. By 1970, however, ninety percent of the requests were for the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. The record store owner participated in the *magnitizdat* black market. Sergei I. Zhuk, *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City: The West, Identity, and Ideology in Soviet Dniepropetrovsk, 1960–1985* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2010), 82–84.

98 Juliane Fürst, *Flowers Through Concrete: Explorations in Soviet Hippieland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 243.

99 Smith, *Songs to Seven Strings*, 1.

100 Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society since 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 134.

101 Smith, "Okudzhava Marches On," 553.

102 Danijela Lugarić Vukas, "Living *vnye*: The Example of Bulat Okudzhava's and Vladimir Vysotskii's *avtorskaia pesnia*," *Euxeinos. Culture and Governance in the Black Sea Region* 8, no. 25–26 (2018): fn. 7, 21–22.

to play. [103] For the bards, the seven-string guitar "was the absolute object of the poet's devotion as well as the symbol of his artistic freedom and autonomy."[104] The bards themselves immortalized it in song as the "silver strings,"[105] or as a "faithful companion."[106]

It is also decidedly vocal—and sung. Recited and declaimed public poetry readings mattered then, as did those that briefly flourished in Moscow's Mayakovsky Square in the late 1950s.[107] But the singing voice itself became a marker, an identifier, as well as a dramatic gesture. Platonov describes it as "bad singing," relying on simple melodies, inexpert guitar playing and "untrained, often highly idiosyncratic voices."[108] And yet, it circulated as "sung" and could arguably invoke and evoke older singing traditions that were able to blend oral traditions of performance with aural traditions of song genres that gave *magnitizdat* a longevity as song.

Vladimir Frumkin, a musicologist and Shostakovich scholar, gave shape and legitimacy to guitar poetry as music. His manifesto, "Music and Word,"[109] read at the May 1967 all-Union seminar on the problems of amateur (author's) song, held near the Petushki (Vladimir region), predicted that future historians would turn to guitar poetry as one of the most sensitive indicators of the emancipation of the individual, of the spirit of the inhabitants of Russia, and he urged the many bards present to spread guitar song beyond the cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg. His 1980 publication of Okudzhava's songs offered his appraisal of Okudzhava's significance:

> Before Okudzhava, the Soviet song industry had virtually no competition from within the country […]. The state monopoly on songs seemed unshak-

103 The acoustic guitar was inexpensive in part because the USSR had hoped to encourage its use instead of electric guitars, which were produced in the GDR and Poland and hard to obtain. Engineering students set up a black market of "unofficial manufacturers" in the tens of thousands. See Starr, *Red and Hot*, 195.

104 Lugarić Vukas, "Living *vnye*," fn. 7, 21–22.

105 The title of a Vysotsky song ("Serebryanyye struny").

106 Okudzhava, cited in Vladimir Kovner, "Zolotoy vek magnitizdata" [The golden age of *magnitizdat*, part 1], *Vestnik online* 7, no. 345 (March 31, 2004), http://www.vestnik.com/issues/2004/0331/win/kovner.htm.

107 These informal readings, by poets such as Yevtushenko and Voznesensky, are also important to the personal voice emerging in *magnitizdat*. For more on this poetry, see Donald Loewen, "Blurred Boundaries: Russian Poetry and Soviet Politics during the Thaw," *Russian Literature* 87–89 (January–April 2017): 201–24.

108 Rachel Platonov, "Bad singing: *Avtorskaia Pesnia* and the Aesthetics of Metacommunication," *Ulbandus Review* 9, The 60s (2005/6): 88–89.

109 Vladimir Frumkin, "Muzyka i slovo" [Music and Word], report on a seminar in May 1967, Petushki, Vladimir Region (uploaded December 22, 1997), http://www.ksp-msk.ru/page_42.html.

> able. Suddenly it was discovered that one person could compose a song and make it famous, without the Union of Soviet Composers, with its creative sections and department of propaganda, without help of popular singers, choirs and orchestra, without publishing houses, radio and television, film and record companies, editors and censors.[110]

A second singer who anchored the genre is Vladimir Vysotsky, "the unofficial bard of the official word."[111] Vysotsky's career is emblematic of the gray area between a formal and informal relation to the official culture. He is characterized variously not as anti-Soviet but "dangerously un-Soviet," arousing "bureaucratic suspicions" whenever he was formally engaged—as a theater actor, as well as on film and television. Remarkably, before his death he acted in twenty-six television or cinematic films,[112] but it was his guitar poetry that helped propel him to a peculiar kind of celebrity, able to comment on everyday Soviet life in realistic terms—and get away with it![113] He was acquainted with Okudzhava and mentioned him many times in his performances, sometimes dedicating songs to him.[114] He was allowed to record a couple of "safe songs" in the state studio, to be distributed through Melodiya, but his formal albums of guitar poetry were recorded abroad.[115]

The quality of his lyrics is often skeptically evaluated,[116] but as a singer and performer, Vysotsky's influence was considerable. He managed his notoriety by organizing hundreds of unannounced—and unauthorized (!)—"concerts" scheduled in smaller towns to avoid the attention of authorities. His audience

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110 Vladimir Frumkin, *Bulat Okudzahva: 65 Songs* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1980), 15, cited in Ryback, *Rock around the Bloc*, 44.

111 Smith, *Songs to Seven Strings*, 173.

112 Christopher Lazarski, "Vladimir Vysotsky and His Cult," *Russian Review* 51 (1992), 60.

113 It is his commentary on everyday Soviet life, using the terms provided by Soviet ideology, that attracts contemporary commentators in reference to the key work on late Soviet socialism: Alexei Yurchak's *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). See also Lugarić Vukas, "Living *vnye*."

114 For a curation of this relationship, based on comments Vysotsky made at his performances, see A.E. Krylov, "Bulat Okudzhava i Vladimir Vysotsky: Istoriya znakomstva" [Bulat Okudzhava and Vladimir Vysotsky: the history of an acquaintance], *Russian Literature* 77, no. 2 (2015): 197–222.

115 The albums he recorded were recorded and published outside the USSR: in Sofia (1975), at RCA in Toronto (1976), and two in Paris (1977); Lida Cope, Natalie Kononenko, Anthony Qualin, and Mark Yoffe, "Sound Recordings in the Archival Setting: Issues of Collecting, Documenting, Categorizing, and Copyright," *Slavic & East European Information Resources* 20, nos. 3–4 (2019): 100, fn. 4.

116 For one summary of the critique, see Lazarski, "Vladimir Vysotsky," 70.

arrived with tape recorders in hand. To give one idea of the extent of these live performances, an online database lists 245 live recordings of his song, "*Ia ne lyublyu*"—with a high variability; the tapes also include his spoken introduction to a song (*avtometaparatekst*).[117] These spoken introductions not only created dialogue with the participating audience but also established the particulars of the performance situation, time, and place. These introductions added value to the individual performances and also allowed fans and collectors to develop expertise on the evolution of the singer and his songs. Toward the end of his life, Vysotsky recorded songs "for posterity on quality recording equipment in the homes of Mikhail Shemiakin and Konstantin Mustafidi,"[118] but they did not diminish the value of the live performances for fans and collectors; the ambiance of the "bad recording" was also part of the genre.

Vysotsky's earliest songs were related to the "camps," as gulag prisoners were beginning to share their stories upon their return to Moscow. He also leaned heavily on the genre of "criminal" songs, sometimes crude, and later added dramatic genres to his repertoire, accumulating an oeuvre of 500 to 600 songs.[119] The guitar was central to his composition. According to his mother, he picked up his guitar, immediately played, and never studied, a claim celebrated in the fan lore.[120] Vysotsky believed that writing the verses "with guitar in hand" created more dynamic and effective lyrics, with music emerging "as a final step in the creative process."[121]

Of the major bards, Alexandr Galich's guitar poetry fits best its interpretation as a genre of dissent. Like Okudzhava he was a member of the Soviet Writers Union and like Vysotsky he was involved in filmmaking, being formally trained as an actor but making his living as a screenwriter and member of the Union of Cinematographers. He had traveled to France in the late 1950s to co-write the screenplay for a French-Soviet co-produced film, *Nights of Farewell* (*Tretya molodost'*, dir. Jean Dréville and Isaak Menaker, 1965) on the life of French-born Russian choreographer Marius Petipa, a sign of privilege in Soviet cultural life. But this was not to last. Galich's first and last public concert was at the March 1968 national festival, sanctioned by the regime—the All-Russia Bard Concert with almost thirty performers. It lasted for three days and attracted 2,000 people, even though it was held far away from the center in

117 Cope, et al., "Sound Recordings," 88–91.

118 Cope, et al., "Sound Recordings," 100, fn. 4.

119 Smith's account of the sung antecedents of guitar poetry, range from the eighteenth-century Russian "gypsy" romance, also sung to the seven-string guitar, to the "cruel romance," as well as the criminal song. Smith, *Songs to Seven Strings*, chapter 4.

120 Lazarski, "Vladimir Vysotsky," 60, fn. 13.

121 Lazarski, "Vladimir Vysotsky," 62.

the Siberian town of Akademgorodok in the Novosibirsk region.[122] Among other songs like "Clouds" and "Ballad on Surplus Value," Galich sang "In Memory of B.L. Pasternak," which "castigated the hypocrisy of the literary establishment that let the great poet's death pass almost unremarked."[123] He was "virtually banned" from singing again in public.[124]

Compared to Okudzhava and Vysotsky, Galich's lyrics to his guitar poetry were more explicitly political. Two of his songs—"Night Watch" and "Stalin"—targeted the latter: "a bastard not a father." While in 1962 Stalin had been discredited, such direct criticism implied criticism of the communist system. His lyrics have also attracted much more analysis and elevation to poetry.[125] According to Garey, "the underground mechanisms that allowed Galich to dodge censors rendered the historical record of performative importance spotty."[126] As Platonov writes of guitar poetry overall,[127] Garey sees Galich's songs as a "dialogue" and emphasizes the communal aspect of the orality and evolution of his sung performance. While other guitar poets, such as Yuri Visbor, Alexander Gorodnitsky, and Yuli Kim, also performed guitar poetry during these years—and were represented in the tape repertoire—Okudzhava, Vysotsky, and Galich remain the most prominent in the genre.

Recording, Production, and Distribution Networks

Even though tape recorders had become available, their quality was not always the highest and increased re-tapings diminished the sound quality significantly.[128] The circumstances of recording and rerecording add to the sonic component of the genre. In Smith's eloquent description:

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122 Paul R. Josephson, *New Atlantis Revisited: Akademgorodok, the Siberian City of Science* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 299–300.

123 Seventeen Moments in Soviet History: An on-line Archive of Primary Sources. Accessed 5 June 2021. http://soviethistory.msu.edu/1956-2/literary-life-at-a-crossroads/in-memory-of-pasternak-1968/; for a translation of the "Ode," see Josephson, *New Atlantis Revisited*, 300–1.

124 Daughtry, "Sonic Samizdat," 40.

125 See, e.g., Smith's introduction to *Songs & Poems by Alexander Galich*, ed. and trans. Gerald Stanton Smith (Ann Arbor, MI.: Ardis, 1983).

126 Amy Garey, "Aleksandr Galich: Performance and the Politics of the Everyday," *Lumina: A Journal of Historical and Cultural Studies* 17 (2011): 1-13.

127 Rachel Platonov, *Singing the Self. Guitar Poetry, Community, and Identity in the Post-Stalin Period* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2012).

128 Soviet sailors and occasional travelers smuggled in preferred Japanese and Western machines that were then resold or traded. Aleksei Yurchak, "Gagarin and the Rave Kids," in *Consuming Russia: Popular Culture, Sex, and Society Since Gorbachev* , ed. Adele Barker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 83.

> There is usually considerable surface noise and distortion of sound, and quite wide variations in tape speed—repeated copying on different machines may render a voice quite unrecognizable, converting a baritone into a gabbling contralto; there is range of assorted clunks and pops as the microphone is shifted or bumped; and there is persistent background noise—some of it extraneous, like vehicles passing in the street outside, or the footsteps and voices of neighbors; and some that forms an integral part of the genre ambience—the creak of furniture, the chink of bottle against glass, the coughs and muttered comments, and, most of all, the semi-conspiratorial audience participation: requests, repartee with the singer, warm or bitter laughter, pregnant silence at the conclusion of a particular telling song followed by a bustle of relieved tension-breaking movement and murmuring.[129]

The Leningrad scene[130] is described by Vladimir Kovner, one of the most proficient and prolific tapists. He bought a tape recorder on his first payday in mid-1959 and installed it in his family's room in their communal apartment; he recorded Conover's VOA jazz programs and borrowed old records, taping romances and "gypsy songs" for his collection. In the fall, his friend brought him an Okudzhava recording made at a Leningrad party: "the tape recorder had been under the table and the recording was creepy," but "from that moment his songs became an integral part" of his life. In the early 1960s, Kovner's tapes were played on the radio at lunchtime at the Karl Marx factory where he worked until the party leadership happened to listen. He was also involved in the organization of Okudzhava's first "semi-official" concert in Leningrad arranged by two trade union activists at the Pulkovo Observatory. While it was not the success of later concerts, by the beginning of 1962, Okudzhava's growing popularity was indicated by the strength of the Komsomol newspapers' condemnation of his "permitted" concerts. Therefore, many future recordings were made live in apartments "with a couple of dozen attentive, understanding, loving listeners and, as usual, with a pair of tape recorders." Kovner speaks

129 Gerry Smith, "Whispered Cry: The Songs of Alexander Galich," *Index on Censorship* 3, no. 3 (1974): 11.

130 The Leningrad tapists, collectors, and distributors (Frumkin, Kushner, and Kovner) are known through their writings and memoirs published online after their emigration to the US. For more on the Moscow tapists, see Giulia De Florio, "Magnitizdat," in *Alle due sponde della cortina di ferro. Le culture del dissenso e la definizione dell'identità europea nel secondo Novecento tra Italia, Francia e URSS (1956–1991)*, ed. Claudia Pieralli, Teresa Spignoli, Federico Iocca, Giuseppina Larocca, and Giovanna Lo Monaco (Florence: goWare, 2019), 335–44, https://www.culturedeldissenso.com.

fondly of borrowing the Grundig tape recorder of his friend, the collector Mikhail "Misha" Kryzhanovsky, as they aimed for quality copies.[131]

Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, the bards performed their concerts in private apartments and were taped with their permission. Friends were offered the possibility of copying the tapes for their own use for free, usually supplying their own tape. Or tapes could be traded as part of the elaborate system of *blat*, or informal exchange, that operated in Soviet society.[132] Or tapists would become "publishers," distributing tapes hand-to-hand to someone they knew.[133] Sometimes an unannounced concert proved an opportunity for multiple tapings by several audience members, multiplying "master copies" for potential reproduction.

The tapists involved in early commercial operation—to distribute tapes for money—used the sound recording kiosks located in most cities that were established ostensibly to tape legitimate Melodiya records or authorized recordings from Eastern Europe. According to Kan, they were not regulated for a very long time.[134] Homemade tapes of the bards began circulating on a large scale in the major cities, especially among university students, the intelligentsia, and academic elites. As compared to other forms of popular music in circulation, *magnitizdat* recordings of guitar poetry began as essentially an urban phenomenon.[135] Its audience was, in Daughtry's words, "broader and more ideologically diverse," however and extended to music enthusiasts who might not otherwise be involved in *magnitizdat* circles.[136]

The tapes were listened to in private apartments, dorm rooms, and commuter trains. The songs themselves were added to the performance of "tourist songs" on the outdoor student campouts and long hikes that had begun in the late 1950s; admiring amateurs might perform the bard songs live, with guitar, helping to spread the songs, which could then be re-experienced on

131 Kovner, "Zolotoy vek magnitizdata."

132 Although she does not refer specifically to *magnitizdat*, Ledeneva's study of Soviet networking through material objects is the classic exposition: Alena V. Ledeneva, *Russia's Economy of Favours: Blat, Networking and Informal Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

133 Vladimir Kovner, "Zolotoy vek magnitizdata" [The golden age of *magnitizdat*, part 2], *Vestnik online*, 8, no. 344 (April 14, 2004), section 6, http://www.vestnik.com/issues/2004/0414/win/kovner.htm.

134 Kan, "Living in the Material World," 267. She also describes a well-developed Moscow system of tape duplication in which an apartment might utilize up to ten tape recorders for rock albums, but it is not clear whether such independent duplicating facilities were operating during the heyday of guitar poetry (271).

135 Laura J. Olson, *Performing Russia: Folk Revival and Russian Identity* (London: Routledge, 2004), 71–72.

136 Daughtry, "Sonic Samizdat," 31.

magnitizdat.[137] Many audience members brought handwritten songbooks to live performances or shared the lyrics in communal settings. In defending the importance of these songs for community participation, Garey remarked that "hundreds of people didn't get together in the woods and sing Beatles songs."[138]

Overall, guitar poetry "evolved not just as a song genre but as a sociocultural phenomenon [that] formed communities that were never entirely within, yet also never outside of the Soviet *kollektiv*."[139] Skirmishes with the authorities, whether in terms of unauthorized concerts or tape distribution, as well as the perceived (and sometimes real) threat of censorship or punishment, may have added cohesion to that community of tapists, their listeners, their collectors, and their imitators. As the official Soviet composer Ivan Dzerzhinsky wrote in 1965, the bards "are armed with magnetic tape. This presents [...] a certain danger since distribution becomes so easy."[140]

The Bards, *Magnitizdat*, and the Authorities

In 1974, when Vladimir Frumkin and his wife left the USSR, he brought among other things a selection of reel-to-reel tape recordings of Okudzhava's performances.[141] He had submitted his tapes to Soviet customs officials who, after several hours returned them with the assurance that they were approved for export. Upon arrival he discovered that the tapes had been de-magnetized and Okudzhava's voice erased, he assumed during their "stay" in customs.[142] This story is repeated by the protagonist as well as others to illustrate various aspects of *magnitizdat*. While undoubtedly a personal loss, Frumkin was not

137 Christian Noack, "Songs from the Wood, Love from the Fields: The Soviet Tourist Song Movement," in *The Socialist Sixties: Crossing Borders in the Second World*, ed. Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 167–92.

138 Garey, "Aleksandr Galich," 13.

139 Platonov, *Singing the Self*, 4.

140 Cited in Yurchak, "Gagarin," 83.

141 Kryzhanovsky and Kovner prepared these tapes for him. Kovner, "Zolotoy," part 2, section 7.

142 Kovner reports making another set of tapes in 1978 to send abroad, which also disappeared. Later he learned that someone in the American embassy had sent a full set of bard recordings to New York. Vladimir Kovner, "Zolotoy vek magnitizdata" [The golden age of *magnitizdat*, part 3], *Vestnik online* 9, no. 346 (April 28, 2004), section 8, http://www.vestnik.com/issues/2004/0428/win/kovner.htm. In a further irony, he learned that twenty years later, after he himself had emigrated to the US Melodiya Records used Kryzhanovsky's collection of guitar poetry to issue official recordings of the bards' guitar poetry; Kovner, "Zolotoy," part 2, section 7.

prohibited from leaving, demonstrating the relative tolerance of *magnitizdat* compared to its print progenitor, *samizdat*. Like *magnitizdat*, *samizdat* also used an improvised production process and underground distribution system. However, as numerous commentators point out, *samizdat* was most often intensely political and was viewed by its makers and readers in that way.[143] The songs of m*agnitizdat*, with the exception of some of Galich's songs, were not apolitical so much as they were un-political, indifferent, or even disinterested. Various trials marked distributors of Soviet *samizdat*, both physical and literal, while as Kovner remarked, "They didn't arrest you for distributing bard songs."[144]

It is not that the leadership liked these songs. But their children "belted out these songs at home and at their dachas with all the power their tape recorders could muster. The leaders themselves listened to them on their own, saying to themselves: 'He's really laying it on thick, the bastard! But that's the truth he's gabbling! Only what's the point? You can't do anything about it anyway.'"[145]

But neither was the practice without risk. Kovner relates a 1965 search of his apartment; while they seemed primarily to be looking for printed *samizdat*, his bard tapes were "for the first, but not the last time" in the hands of the KGB. He was then interrogated and summoned two months later for an "instructive" conversation. He received his tapes back, signed on the back "seized during a search." He was kicked out of his job as a teacher, though allowed to continue working at his factory.[146]

By the early 1970s, the bards themselves were targeted. Phone calls by the authorities to Okudzhava's workplace at *Literaturnaya gazeta* expressed "surprise to have a guitar player working in the poetry section."[147] He was expelled from the Party in 1972 and a book of his verse plus music was withdrawn from a planned publication, so he stopped performing until the late 1970s. Vysotsky was also critiqued for "profiteering" and urged to stop this "illegal entrepreneurial activity" by the influential *Sovetskaya kultura*.[148] It is probably not coincidental

143 On *samizdat*, see Peter Steiner, "Introduction: On Samizdat, Tamizdat, Magnitizdat, and Other Strange Words That Are Difficult to Pronounce," *Poetics Today* 29, no. 4 (2008): 613–28; and Daughtry, "'Sonic Samizdat,'" 49–54, among others.

144 Kovner, "Zolotoy," part 2, section 6.

145 Smith, *Songs to Seven Strings*, 98.

146 Three months later, in February 1966, the trial of Sinyavsky and Daniel for publishing their writings abroad (*tamizdat*) began, marking the end of the more tolerant Thaw period. Members of the youth group Kolokol were also prosecuted for *samizdat* distribution; see Sofia Lopatina, "From Komsomol Activists to Underground Reformists: The Leningrad Group Kolokol, 1954–1965" (Master's thesis, Central European University, 2017).

147 Cited in Lugarić Vukas, "Living *vnye*," 22.

148 Ryback, *Rock around the Bloc*, 47–48.

that in 1970 a "Songs Commission" was created within the Writers' Union's Poetry section.[149]

Galich's fate illustrates the price for being openly political. A bootleg copy of his songs was published in Frankfurt in 1969, which he did not disavow; this presumably was the excuse to expel him from the Writers Union in December of 1971 and from the Cinematographers Union the next year; he was forced to emigrate in 1974.[150] In the words of Soviet poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko, writing in 1988, "As soon as Galich began to sing, that is, as soon as he allowed himself to be himself, he turned from a successful dramatist quite acceptable to the bureaucracy to an unwanted person."[151]

Was it, at least in this case, all about politics? In a telling 2008 dialogue between two Soviet émigrés, Vladimir Frumkin and mathematician/poet Boris Kushner, Kushner describes his response to the bards: "the main source of the guitar poetry was not protest at all, but the natural, inherent impulse of creativity in a person [...] *Express yourself*." Kushner in the early years did not feel the opposition that Frumkin perceived: "There were good, talented songs, there were mediocre ones. And when I sat down to the piano, my favorite melodies arose under my fingers. [...] whether the author was a member of the Composers' Union or not—what did I care."[152]

Yevtushenko also recounts an impromptu concert in his home when Galich and Okudzhava met with the famous Belgian singer Jacques Brel. All sang for each other—and none sang their own songs. "Galich sang old romances, Okudzhava sang carriage songs, and Jacques Brel sang Flemish folk songs."[153] No tape exists, to Yevtushenko's regret, but their choice of repertoire suggests that it was the singing and the songs, the participatory experience, and the "romance" not of the forbidden but of the melody that invigorated these guitar poets of *magnitizdat*.

149 Smith, "Whispered Cry," 12.

150 In Paris, Galich joined Radio Free Europe as an announcer and was found dead in 1977; various theories of his death by electrocution—was he plugging in new electronic equipment?—still circulate.

151 Yevtushenko, "Magnitofonnaya glasnost'," 16.

152 "Vladimir Frumkin—Boris Kushner: A Dialogue," *Zametki po yevreyskoy istorii* [Notes on Jewish History] 5, no. 96 (May 2008) and 7, no. 98 (July 2008), https://berkovich-zametki.com/2008/Zametki/Nomer5/Frumkin1.php.

153 "Vladimir Frumkin—Boris Kushner: A Dialogue."

Some Closing Thoughts: Participatory Music Culture in the Era of Magnetic Tape

In writing about twenty-first-century hybrid economies of cultural production, Lessig sees western hybrid artistic economies as combining the commercial and the participatory[154]; here we expand these categories to "official" recording, whether commercial or state, to "unofficial recording" and participatory music reproduction and circulation. In both cases there is an economic component: tape recorders and tapes had to be purchased, these tapes, whether reproduced in like form or vinyl, had to be marketed, and some type of economic exchange initiated to maintain the informal system. The personal and participatory nature of both the opera and bardic communities of listeners, enhanced by the entrepreneurial activities of the tapists and distributors, linked the communal value of the live performance to the shared community of listeners to its reproduction.

The aesthetics in both forms stressed its "liveness," its humanness (including frailties and variations), over recording studio perfections. Even sotto voce comments or introductions were part of the dialogue with the audience and by extension the listeners to the recordings. Those valuing live recordings "listen through" the technological flaws to hear the singers and possibly listen more closely as well. Applause on both types of recordings helps to register affect and emotion, even if it breaks the musical spell. The live performance of opera can be listened to as a series of "songs," with applause coming at the end of familiar arias, the composer providing the interludes and recitatives. The curation of both forms—in terms of linking performances to variation in lyric or tone, routine or "over the top"—builds the collector and analyst into the larger community of value surrounding these forms.[155]

The remastering—and redistribution—of these live performances through commercial record companies in the immediate post-Cold War environment built upon the practice in both countries of recording radio broadcasts and reissues in "improved sound" of famous performances. These reissues became a marketing boon with the introduction of remastered and inexpensively produced CDs.[156] With new technologies of streaming and online communities of

154 Lawrence Lessig, *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy* (London: Penguin, 2008).

155 The way in which individual arias ("songs") aided Pavarotti's rise to fame is chronicled in Marsha Siefert, "The Dynamics of Evaluation: A Case Study of Performance Reviews," *Poetics Today* 5, no. 1 (Winter 1984): 111–28.

156 For a discussion of the post-Cold War surge in live recordings of famous Soviet musicians, Marsha Siefert, "Re-Mastering the Past: Musical Heritage, Sound Recording, and the Nation in Hungary and Russia," in *National Heritage—*

fans, the materiality of the vinyl and tape again becomes the property of and important to collectors, who also are curators of the heritage and producers of expert knowledge of the genres. The shaded area of legality of earlier material forms can be supported by the tapists as archivists and historians, supplementing as well as critiquing official recordings. In retrospect, the authorities, too, came to find value in these past performances, reissuing them when the heyday of their stars and performance styles had passed.

In 1990, Okhudzhava restated that the guitar poetry was "not just a song, but also rather a means of communication, a means of dialogue."[157] By recreating "live" performance, the entrepreneurial tapists were able to reconstitute the social relations of production, reproduction, and participation in a parallel recording enterprise. The communities were built through interpersonal rituals of listening together as well as listening separately but with a sense of audience. The trusted networks of distribution, the "romance of the forbidden," the "peer-to-peer" sharing whether at clubs or on campouts, enhanced the participatory quality of both genres.

Ending where I began—with the narrative of Cold War—how much has the "rule of law" discourse, incorporated into the rhetoric of democratization, been once again challenged to allow forms of participatory cultural creation in our current day. Let us leave with an overlapping of these phenomena. Like the timing of Galich's censure, in early 1971 the opera soprano Galina Vishnevskaya received the Order of Lenin and a few months later, her name and voice disappeared from the media. In 1974, she left the USSR with her husband, the cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, after being "hounded by the Soviet authorities for their liberal political views."[158] On November 18, 1993, she came to the Opera Club of Philadelphia and appeared onstage at the Academy of Vocal Arts to present her translated autobiography.[159] During the interview, much was made of her survival and triumph as well as the politicization of her singing abroad. Interspersed in the conversation, held in Italian, some of her recordings were

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National Canon, ed. Mihály Szegedy-Maszák (Budapest: Collegium Budapest, 2002): 251–80. Leo Records, begun by an "enthusiastic amateur" in 1979 in Newton Abbot, UK, began issuing live performances of Russian free jazz and experimental music already in 1979. They produce "music that refuses to be submitted to the market forces." See http://www.leorecords.com.

157 Video recording of a concert and talk at Middlebury College (Summer 1990), cited in Anatoly Vishevsky, "Timur Shaov and the Death of the Russian Bard Song," *Przegląd Rusycystyczny* 4 (2007): 67.

158 Jonathan Kandell, "Galina Vishnevskaya, Soprano and Dissident, Dies at 86," *New York Times*, December 11, 2012.

159 Galina Vishnevakaya, *Galina: A Russian Story* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984).

played by the host, the opera critic Robert Baxter. After the hushed audience listened to an aria recorded at La Scala, she exclaimed, "I have never heard that performance. *Un Pirata*?" The host nodded. Galina smiled.[160]

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160 The source is my notes from the evening, preserved inside my autographed copy of the autobiography.

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