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**Author:** Florinela Popa

**E-mail:** popa.florinela@unmb.ro

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Florinela POPA

## On Censorship and Other Ways to Control Music (III)

Censorship in Soviet and Romanian music was a strong thematic core of the international musicology conference *The Control of Music. Effects and Consequences of the Institution of Censorship on Music Culture and Education in Europe (late 19th century – 1990s)*, held at the National University of Music Bucharest, on October 27-28, 2022, coordinated by Prof. Nicolae Gheorghîță. The five studies included in this issue explore various forms of control imposed by the Soviet power and by the communist regime in post-war Romania.

Pauline Fairclough brings into question an entire mythology created and sedimented around Dmitri Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, as a result of the furious attack on the opera that began when Stalin saw it at the Bolshoy Teatr on January 26, 1936. The author critically examines a number of “myths and legends” perpetuated from the Stalinist era to the present day, such as the overwhelming complexity of the work for the general public, its “inappropriate” sexual content, the “immediate” banning of the work after the famous *Pravda* article “Sumbur vmesto muziki” [Muddle Instead of Music] appeared on January 28, 1936, and the presumption that the version Rostropovich performed in the West in 1979 was the “original” one, approved by the composer.

The figure of Shostakovich also remains in the foreground in Philip Ross Bullock's study, which analyzes the phenomenon of censorship in a more discreet genre compared to the monumental ones of opera or symphony: the Soviet song. The paper provides important insights into censorship patterns, from Stalinist censorship to the seemingly more relaxed practices of the “Thaw”. Musical works kept “in the drawer”, with no prospect of publication or performance, and the complex issue of how composers related to poets and their texts are followed by Bullock from the perspective of the impact of cen-

sorship. The difficulty of delving deeper into the multiple implications of this phenomenon resides largely in the limited access to archival documents and also in the existence of “gaps in the documentary record that are, even today, filled with speculation and misremembered facts”.

Another dimension of censorship in the Soviet space is tackled by Rūta Stanevičiūtė, who investigates musical exchanges between the Soviet Union and the Polish People’s Republic during the Cold War. Her case study seeks to establish the place that Lithuanian music had in official and unofficial music exports. In this context, she analyzes the involvement of institutions such as the USSR Union of Composers and *Goskoncert* – the latter responsible, in the USSR’s official foreign cultural policy, for music export and import – as well as the ideological, political, economic, interpersonal, etc. factors that influenced their activities. The marginalization of Lithuanian composers’ works in music exports or the assimilation of their most valuable opuses into the official Soviet music culture are the main conclusions drawn by the author.

The last two studies reveal the particularities of the communist censorship in Romania which, after World War II, entered the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union and faithfully copied the Stalinist model until the late 50s. Nicolae Gheorghîță shows how military music reflected the country’s new political positioning. In the context of the reorganization of the former Society of Romanian Composers, which became the Union of Composers in 1949, a Military Band Subsection was also established in 1957. The study investigates the activity of this Subsection, on the basis of documents from the archives of the Union of Romanian Composers and Musicologists, looking, among other things, at its structure and objectives, its various administrative, financial and professional relationships, the role it played in the professionalization of military music and, of course, the control mechanisms exercised over the Military Band Subsection.

In her turn, Antígona Rădulescu identifies a variety of manifestations of censorship and control over the musical university environment in Bucharest in the 1950s, in a research based on documents from the UNMB archive. The examples given by the author provide clear evidence of the ideologization of subjects such as Music History or Aesthetics, the loading of students with ideological and political education courses at the expense of their music training, the tabooization of Western music and techniques, and also the criticism of composition students who deviated from the official line of socialist realism.