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Kevin C. Karnes

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SOVIET MUSICOLOGY AND THE 'NATIONALITIES QUESTION': THE CASE OF LATVIA

Kevin C. Karnes

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With its annexation by the Soviet Union in the spring of 1940, Latvia became the latest testing ground for the array of cultural and political policies by which Soviet authorities had long sought to negotiate the Union's persistently troublesome 'nationalities question' (*natsional'nyi vopros*). At the heart of the matter was a problem familiar to Soviet officials from their knowledge and experience of Russia's old regime: how to maintain political control over a multinational empire during a period famously described by Eric Hobsbawm as the 'apogee' of European nationalism (Hobsbawm 1992, p. 131). Having gained independence from imperial Russia in the wake of the Revolution of 1917, Latvia was reabsorbed, during World War II, into a new multinational empire. And as was the case in much of the rest of the former imperial territory, the problems of control that had dogged Romanov officialdom for centuries in the non-Russian provinces newly confronted the Bolshevik inheritors of the Latvian lands.

In the months immediately following Latvia's annexation to the USSR, the republic's new leaders sought to quell local resistance with a show of force (Misiunas & Taagepera 1993; Plakans 1995). But they understood that future unrest would never be averted if they did not also win over Latvian hearts and minds. To this end, they embarked upon an ambitious cultural program that Stalin, as Lenin's Commissar of Nationalities, had broadly described as 'nativization' (*korenizatsiya*) in the immediate post-Revolutionary years. By deliberately imbedding Soviet symbols and ideology within the cultural artifacts and rituals of the Union's minority peoples, Stalin argued,

Correspondence to: Kevin C. Karnes, Emory University Department of Music, 1804 North Decatur Road, Atlanta, GA 30322, USA. Email: kkarnes@emory.edu

those peoples would be encouraged to regard the present Sovietization of their societies not as a foreign (Russian) imposition, but as a reflection of autochthonous traditions and values. The goal, as Stalin wrote in 1934, was to help the residents of minority republics recognize that ‘Soviet power and its organs are the affair of their own efforts, the embodiment of their desires’ (cited in Martin 2001, p. 12). The means by which this nativization program was pursued in Latvia were diverse and largely beyond the scope of this article (see Misiunas & Taagepera 1993; more generally, Martin 2001, pp. 9–15; Suny 1993, pp. 102–6). But in a republic where popular notions of cultural identity were so entwined with images of its musical heritage that many Latvians had taken to identifying their community as a ‘Nation of Singers’ (*dziedātājtauta*) nearly a century before (Bula 1996, 2000; Karnes 2005), it comes as no surprise that musicology figured prominently in the Soviet nativization campaign. This is the subject of the present essay.

In the pages that follow, I will attempt three things. First, I will analyze the imposition of Soviet authority upon Latvia’s musicological discourse in the immediate post-war years, as evidenced in the popular and academic press of the period. In doing so, I will argue that the Stalinist policy of nativization provided a principal ideological foundation – one not acknowledged previously – for the discipline’s Soviet-era refashioning.¹ Second, I will examine the impact of two pivotal events in Soviet cultural life upon the subsequent development of Latvia’s learned discourse on music: the scandalous premiere of Vano Muradeli’s opera *The Great Friendship* (*Velikaya družba*) in 1948, and the Twentieth Party Congress of 1956. Considering closely the academic discourse on the life and work of the Latvian composer Jāzeps Vītols (1863–1948) in light of these events, I will argue that Stalin-era prescriptions for scholarly work continued to shape the Latvian musicological discourse for decades after Stalin’s death and the attendant political ‘Thaw’. Third, I will examine briefly the musicological literature on Vītols published since 1991, in an attempt to assess the degree to which Latvian musicology has moved beyond the boundaries of Soviet-era academic discourse in the decades since the collapse of Soviet rule. I will conclude by suggesting that significant continuities persist alongside meaningful departures, and that the intellectual legacy of the Soviet era has, in the case of Latvian musicology, proven doggedly difficult to transcend.

Nationalities Policy and the Soviet Musicological Program

At the heart of Soviet thinking about the phenomena of nation and nationalism lay the Marxist-inspired conviction that neither is perennial or reflective of innate qualities of the human psyche. Rather, Soviet intellectuals regarded both as bourgeois phenomena, products of the urge toward cultural and individual particularism peculiar to capitalist societies (Smith 1990a; Suny 1993, 1998; Smith 1999; Martin 2001; Suny & Martin 2001). As Stalin argued as early as 1918, the explosion of nationalist rhetoric that accompanied the Revolution in many non-Russian parts of the Romanov Empire was little more than a smokescreen, fomented by counter-Revolutionary elements seeking to hide from working peoples the fact that their true enemies were not their fellow workers in neighboring republics (especially the Russians) but the scions

and institutions of capitalist society. In Stalin's view, the potentially destabilizing power of nationalist sentiment and rhetoric would eventually dissipate on its own, as the working peoples of all nations came to recognize their deceptive purpose and banded together in struggle against their common, bourgeois enemies. At that point, Stalin predicted, the 'merging' (*sliyanie*) of the proletariat of all socialist nations would occur.

Significantly, however, the merging of the Union's peoples that Stalin foresaw was not something for which he felt one must idly wait. Rather, he argued that their 'drawing together' (*sblizhenie*) be encouraged by aggressively promoting the cultural heritage of each as 'national in form and socialist in content' (cited in Frolova-Walker 1998, p. 331). By demonstrating overt respect for – and even encouraging – the celebration of local traditions and modes of creative expression, Stalin reasoned, the culturally particularist ambitions of the Empire's constituent peoples might be channeled in such a way that their sympathies toward the Bolsheviks' ostensibly anti-imperialist cause could be won. At the same time, invoking in cultural artifact and ritual images and ideas that resonated with the shared experiences of working peoples throughout the Union would enable those peoples to recognize their common interests and values, to overlook their cultural differences, and to unite together in struggle to build a supranational socialist society. Taken together, these endeavors constituted an ambitious attempt to implant the political and cultural values of the new regime within the national consciousness of the Union's minority groups. In Stalin's terms, those Soviet values would, in these ways, be 'nativized'.²

In recent years, thanks to the work of Frolova-Walker, Maes, Taruskin and others, we have begun to understand the ways in which Soviet composers worked to encourage the 'drawing together' of the Union's peoples through musical means (Taruskin 1997; Frolova-Walker 1998; Maes 2002). From the Central Asian Republics to the Caucasus and the Baltic, composers were alternately encouraged and compelled to produce works whose musical language hinted at traditional and local custom, but whose texts and musical imagery reflected upon the shared experiences of the Soviet peoples: Stalin's Five-Year Plans, collectivization, capitalist oppression and so forth. Even in those republics annexed to the Union as late as the Second World War, attempts to 'internationalize' the 'content' of their musics were hastily undertaken. The goal, in the words of Stalin's deputy Vyacheslav Molotov, was 'to initiate' them, as quickly as possible, 'into the Soviet system' (cited in Misiunas & Taagepera 1993, pp. 25–6).

Less than two months after Soviet tanks entered Riga in June 1940, an editorial ran in the newly founded daily *Brīvais zemnieks* (*The Free Peasant*) explaining the need for operatic reform. 'Henceforth', its anonymous author declared, 'the task of the theater will be to cultivate a dramatic art and to build a culture that is national in form but socialist in content' ('Teātri un opera' 1940, p. 7). When their hold upon the territory was solidified at the end of the war, Soviet authorities called upon the Georgian composer Aram Khachaturian to elaborate on this point – to explain to his Latvian colleagues that their music must be 'internationalized' if the Latvian people were ever to be brought into cultural communion with other the Soviet peoples. Khachaturian, who had earlier played an integral role in engineering the Sovietization of musical

life in the Caucasus and Central Asia (Frolova-Walker 1998), declared the following in a lecture to the newly founded Union of Soviet Latvian Composers in the spring of 1946:

The Great Russian school has demonstrated that music can be national and at the same time attain worldwide significance. And it is our good fortune that in our music there are united the national styles of the various peoples of the Soviet Union, who are dissimilar with regard to their histories but nonetheless assimilated into a unified and integral brotherhood of friends. Latvian music possesses all the elements necessary to enable it to overcome its narrow provincialism – without losing anything of its national character – and to weave itself into the fabric of the broad, Union-wide musical arena. ('Pervyi plenum' 1946, pp. 32–3)

From this point forward, 'national in form, socialist in content' would be the guiding principle for artists and musicians working in the newly annexed republic.

Alongside attempts to 'internationalize' the contemporary musical cultures of minority nations, another program, less familiar to Western scholars, was simultaneously undertaken by Soviet officials in an effort to integrate minority peoples into a spiritually united Soviet community: the refashioning of cultural history (Tillett 1969; Litvin 2001). As historians of Soviet culture have frequently observed, the writing of history in the USSR was, since the mid-1920s, an affair tightly controlled by the Communist Party (Mazour 1971; Litvin 2001; Markwick 2001). Treated as ideological 'weapons' in the struggle to build socialism, historical narratives were carefully crafted by academics and political figures in an attempt to ground Party policy and ideology within the historical consciousness of the Union's citizenry (Tillett 1969, p. 44). In Latvia and other minority republics, historians, including musicologists, were charged with refashioning local historical narratives so as to make them read like variations on canonical Soviet tellings of Russian cultural history. In this way, just as composers were instructed to infuse their 'national' works with a universal, 'socialist' spirit, so too were historians charged with elucidating the 'socialist content' posited to underlie the diverse national forms of their peoples' histories.³

In Latvia, the first attempts at 'truthfully reconstructing' the republic's history – as the task was described in a *Bol'shevik* editorial of 1945 (Tillett 1969, p. 90) – took place just months after the republic's annexation in the spring of 1940. As an essay published in the journal *Karogs* (*The Flag*) explained in September of that year, the Latvian people were henceforth charged with refashioning their nation's historical narratives in accordance with the guiding wisdom of Soviet society's leading intellectuals. In this article, entitled 'Work is Beginning', Žanis Spure, Second Secretary of the Latvian Communist Party, proclaimed:

Our history awaits true scholars, poets, and writers, who will study and write about all the beautiful things, heroism, and suffering that our people have experienced in the past. . . . But this reflection cannot consist of a mere registry of facts; writers and artists must be able to provide perspective as well. The content [of their work] must be deeply principled and artistic. Its foundation and guide must be the teaching of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin. (Spure 1940, p. 4)

Another *Karogs* essay of that year elucidated the essential tenets of Soviet Socialist Realist aesthetics for Latvia's largely uninitiated intellectual community (Vipers 1940). Yet another stressed the need for writers to adhere to the principles of Marxist–Leninist historical analysis so as not to be 'left behind' (*paliktu iepakaļ*) by their colleagues working in other republics (Upīts 1940). Soon, the fruits of such efforts would be brought before the public – not only in writings on literary and political history but also, and prominently, in the form of musicological research.

'Work is Beginning': Transformation of a Discipline

Khachaturian's speech cited above was delivered at the inaugural meeting of the Union of Soviet Latvian Composers, a local branch of the central Union established in 1932 in order to monitor and control the activities of composers and musicologists working throughout the USSR (on the latter, see Taruskin 1997, pp. 94–8; Maes 2002, pp. 254–5). Khachaturian's speech was reprinted, in its original Russian, in the central organization's monthly journal, *Sovetskaya muzyka* ('Pervyi plenum' 1946). A report on the meeting's proceedings appeared simultaneously, in Latvian, in *Literatūra un māksla* (*Literature and Art*), a collective publication of the Union of Soviet Latvian Composers, Artists, and Writers ('Atklāts' 1946). In the latter, an anonymous correspondent explained the ways in which new creative work must exhibit the 'international' qualities of which Khachaturian spoke. And he or she also suggested some principal lines of academic inquiry for music scholars in the new Soviet republic.

Henceforth, this anonymous author explained, scholars of music would be responsible, first and foremost, for cultivating their readers' appreciation for the 'deep ties' posited to exist 'between Latvian and Russian music' ('Atklāts' 1946, p. 1). Topics to be studied included the historical relatedness of Russian and Latvian musical languages, the historical indebtedness of Latvian musical culture to Russian cultural models, and evidence of broader cultural exchanges preserved in historic musical repertoires.⁴ Like their colleagues working in other fields of historical inquiry, Latvian musicologists were charged, in the words of Lowell Tillett, with projecting the 'alleged friendship of Soviet peoples... to tsarist times, even to ancient and medieval times'. They were called upon to emphasize those peoples' 'common struggle against enemies, both foreign and domestic', and to make clear that 'all peoples of the future Soviet state' had recognized the 'leadership' displayed by the Russian people throughout the preceding centuries (Tillett 1969, pp. 3–4). The goal of such historiographical endeavors, Tillett continues, was to construct an image of a 'historic commonwealth of peoples, fated by history to a common struggle which reached its victory in the October Revolution' – or, in the case of Latvia, in the republic's recent annexation to the USSR (Tillett 1969, p. 4).⁵

The first round of musicological work along these lines focused upon an obvious source: the vast corpus of Latvian folksong texts that had been collected and studied since the mid-nineteenth century as evidence of the Latvian people's historic cultural identity (Bula 1996, 2000; Vīksna 1996; Karnes 2005). In an essay of 1942 entitled 'Latvian Folksongs about German Lords, Backsliders, and Friends of the People', Jānis Niedre adduced the text of supposedly ancient Latvian folksong – without telling his

readers where he found it – that appeared to attest to the sort of age-old friendship between the Latvians and other Soviet peoples for which evidence was desired:

I gave my sister to a Russian,
and I myself took a Lithuanian bride.
Among the Russians, among the Lithuanians,
everywhere I find friends and relatives.

(Krievam devu sav māsiņu, / Pats apņēmu leišu meitu. / Iem krievos, iem leišos, /
Visur manim draugi, radi.) (Niedre 1942, p. 162)

In another essay, the ethnographer Roberts Pelše published the text of another supposedly ancient Latvian folksong (again without specifying his source), apparently suggesting that the Latvian people had received help from the Russians in their medieval struggles against the Teutonic Knights:

Russians, Russians, what are you waiting for?
The Germans are invading our land!
Sharpen your spurs, put on your boots,
saddle up your horses!

(Krievi, krievi, ko gaidāt, / Vāci nāca šai zemē! / Triniēt piešus, auniēt kājas, /
Seglojiet kumeliņus!) (Pelše 1947, p. 3)

Another essay from these years announced that Jēkabs Graubiņš, one of the leading Latvian musicologists of the inter-war Republican period, had recently embarked upon a search for evidence of ancient cultural ties between Latvians and Russians in the melodic structures of their traditional songs (Zālīte 1946).

This quest for musical evidence of an enduring friendship between Russians and Latvians was not limited to the study of ancient folksongs, however. As Jānis Sudrabkalns made clear in an essay of 1945, the Latvian people were also indebted to the Russians for their classical ('art' or 'professional') music-making traditions. Nearly every accomplished Latvian composer of the last half-century, Sudrabkalns reminded his readers, had been trained at the conservatories of St. Petersburg or Moscow. At those institutions, he explained, 'Russians, with all their hearts, encouraged and enabled the representatives of all other peoples to cultivate their own national traditions'. In St. Petersburg, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, professor of composition and an eminent figure in Russian musical life, 'taught this to Andrejs Jurjāns and [Jāzeps] Vītols', both of whom went on to become pioneering composers of Latvian choral and symphonic music. 'Armed with the knowledge acquired at St. Petersburg and inspired to patriotic work', Sudrabkalns reported, Jurjāns and Vītols 'applied themselves with great passion' to their creative endeavors. 'From their desire to raise Latvian music up to a place of honor and light . . . and from out of traditions inspired in St. Petersburg and the most wide-ranging ideals of Russian social humanism, there arose the greatest, most enlightened, and most distinguished works that had been created in a quarter-century, which enabled one to speak truly of a distinctly Latvian tradition' (Sudrabkalns 1945, p. 1). In essays such as these, we find the first statements on Latvian music and its history published in the post-war years. As we will see, such essays laid the ideological and rhetorical foundations for musicological writing in the new Soviet

republic, not only in its early years but throughout the course of the half-century that followed.

An Unexpected Turn: 'The Great Friendship' and the *Zhdanovshchina*

Significantly, Latvian musicologists trained and active in the inter-war Republic hardly contributed, initially at least, to the transformation of the academic discourse that we have sketched so far. None of the authors cited above – neither Niedre, Pelše, nor Sudrabkalns – had any formal musicological training.⁶ And Jēkabs Graubiņš, a trained musicologist who earnestly struggled, out of fear, to meet the Party's demands, fell out of favor before his promised study was published and was deported to Siberia in 1950 (Boiko 1994, p. 51; Bērziņa 2006, pp. 204–26; Boiko 2008). The other leading historical musicologist of Latvia's Republican period, Jēkabs Vītoliņš, was principally occupied, in the immediate post-war years, with writing and publishing critical essays on Riga's contemporary musical life (for example, Vītoliņš 1946a, 1946c). Soon, however, the musicological discourse received a powerful revivifying jolt, which encouraged not only the broader participation of trained musicologists but also a more thorough consideration of Latvia's classical musics from the pre-Soviet past. The impetus for this expansion of the discourse came from an unexpected source: the events of the so-called *Zhdanovshchina*, which was first felt within the musical sphere in February 1948.

In the prevailing present-day historiography of Soviet musical life, the period of the *Zhdanovshchina*, inaugurated by official reaction to the opera *The Great Friendship* by the Georgian composer Vano Muradeli, is depicted as an abrupt end to the relative freedom of cultural expression that had been tolerated during the war years (Taruskin 1997, pp. 489–91; Fay 2000, pp. 154–65; Maes 2002, pp. 308–17). After similarly condemning recent developments in Soviet literature (Suny 1998, pp. 369–75), Stalin's deputy Andrei Zhdanov publicly denounced the 'formalism' (traces of modernist musical languages) and 'falsification of historical facts' that he detected in Muradeli's opera (Maes 2002, p. 310). From there, Zhdanov embarked upon a scathing critique of recent works by the Union's most prominent composers, including Khachaturian, Dmitri Shostakovich, Sergei Prokofiev and Nikolai Myaskovsky. Five days after Zhdanov delivered his speech on *The Great Friendship* in Moscow, a Latvian translation of his address was published in *Literatūra un māksla* ('Par V. Muradeli operu' 1948). Mirroring what had happened a week earlier in the Moscow press, the publication of Zhdanov's speech in Riga was accompanied by denunciations of recent works by Latvia's leading composers (for example, Grīnfelds 1948; Vītoliņš 1948a). In March, Latvian musicologists were likewise implicated in the purported decline in musical standards, in an essay charging that they had failed to ground their scholarship and teachings sufficiently in Marxist–Leninist theory (Zviedris 1948; for a summary of Latvian responses to Zhdanov's speech, see Butulis 2004).

In a recent essay on twentieth-century Baltic music historiography, Urve Lippus has argued that the *Zhdanovshchina* was 'the most forceful event to establish Soviet

official demands and jargon' in the region (Lippus 1999, p. 58). To be sure, one can hardly deny the truth of Lippus' assertion. But in Latvia, this same event also marked the start of something else. For in their attempts to make the stylistic retrenchment and artistic populism for which Zhdanov called compatible with the broader program of cultural 'nativization' already well underway, those charged with implementing Soviet nationalities policies in Latvia found themselves in the paradoxical position of calling upon the republic's composers to examine more carefully and internalize more completely those musics already familiar to and beloved by the Latvian populace. They called, in other words, for a more thorough study of Latvia's pre-Soviet musical heritage. Twelve days after Zhdanov launched his attack against Muradeli and others, the journal of the Latvian Composers' Union described the new artistic climate in a manner that had provocative implications for the republic's musicological community. Referring to the series of political decrees that followed Zhdanov's proclamations, the anonymous author of this essay declared:

In the decrees of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) and the corresponding decrees of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party (Bolshevik), the people's demands of composers are formulated clearly and unambiguously: to create profound and ideologically saturated music, and to speak in a natural and effective musical language that the people can understand. To fulfill these demands requires that one turn to the best traditions of Russian and Western European classical music. . . . In addition, the experience of our Latvian classical masters and their connectedness to the people must also be taken as a model. The music of [Latvian composers] A. Jurjāns, E. Dārziņš, J. Vītols, A. Kalniņš, and E. Melngailis, while quite diverse stylistically, contains clear-sounding melodic and harmonic characteristics that are beloved by the entire populace. ('Mūsu lielajam laikam' 1948, p. 3)

In this way, the beginning of the *Zhdanovshchina*, recently described by one historian as marking the 'climax' of 'Great Russian chauvinism' in the post-war years (Markwick 2001, p. 40), was interpreted in the Latvian press as necessitating a closer look at the 'national forms' of the republic's own classical music-making traditions.

The first musicologist to answer this unexpected challenge posed by Zhdanov's declarations was Jēkabs Vītoliņš, who, along with Jēkabs Graubiņš, had been one of the leading musicologists trained and active in the inter-war Republic. Two years earlier, Vītoliņš had published an essay on 'Some Strands in the Development of Latvian Music', in which he had identified the composer Jāzeps Vītols (1863–1848) as the founder of a 'New Latvian National School' of composition. In that essay, Vītoliņš, like Sudrabkalns before him, had grounded his assertions of Vītols' significance solely in the fact that Vītols had studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory and had assimilated there the 'progressive tendencies' of the 'New Russian School' of Rimsky-Korsakov and others (Vītoliņš 1946b). Four months after the publication of Zhdanov's speech in February 1948, Vītoliņš published a second essay focusing largely on Vītols. And in the latter, the substance of his discussion differed in some important respects from what he had published two years earlier. Beginning his 1948 essay by repeating many of his earlier assertions, Vītoliņš went on to elaborate a sketch of Vītols' creative life and work that was unprecedented in Soviet times for its detail. He discussed

important events in the composer's biography and described a number of Vītols' compositions. He assessed the impact of Vītols' teachings upon his Latvian and Russian students, and he even discussed the composer's participation in the All-Latvian Song Festival of 1888 (Vītoliņš 1948b).

To be sure, Vītoliņš still framed his discussion within the context of a broader consideration of Vītols' 'tremendous significance as a forger of deep ties between Latvian and Russian music' (Vītoliņš 1948b, p. 5). And there was nothing in his 1948 essay that might be counted as the product of new, source-based research (none of the biographical assertions in his 1948 essay departed from those he had published during the inter-war years; cf. Vītoliņš n.d., pp. 529–49). But whereas previous Soviet-era discussions of Latvia's historic musicians and repertoires had trumpeted the latter as providing evidence of Latvia's historic indebtedness to Russian culture and its institutions exclusively, Vītoliņš' essay considered, in however limited and tentative a manner, Vītols' life and work as objects of historical interest in themselves. Its publication in the wake of the Muradeli scandal marked a watershed moment in the evolution of Latvia's musicological discourse. And significantly, Vītoliņš' new approach to writing on Latvian musical history went unchallenged in the press. Indeed, the thumbnail biographical sketch of Vītols that he published in 1948 was fleshed out with further historical details in the second volume of the official *History of the Latvian SSR*, completed in 1955. There, nearly a third of the discussion of the republic's musical heritage was dedicated to Vītols, with Vītoliņš apparently supplying the bulk of the discussion (*Latvijas PSR Vēsture* ii, 1955, p. 194).⁷

The Ambivalent Legacy of the Twentieth Party Congress

In his essay on Vītols of 1948, Jēkabs Vītoliņš pioneered an approach to musicological writing that would dominate the learned discourse on the art over the course of the four decades that followed. While the immediate post-war years had seen a concerted effort to demonstrate the 'socialist' or 'international' (in effect, Russian) 'content' of Latvian musics and musical institutions, Vītoliņš strove to balance that emphasis with a careful look at the 'national forms' of those musics themselves. Further impetus for historical explorations along these lines came in the months that followed Nikita Khrushchev's famous denunciation of the Stalin personality cult at the Twentieth Party Congress in the winter of 1956. In an article entitled 'The Problem of National Form in Music', the young musicologist Oļģerts Grāvītis, recently appointed to the faculty of the Latvian Conservatory, challenged his colleagues to examine more closely the events, figures, and repertoires that had shaped their republic's pre-Soviet musical history. Citing a cardinal tenet of Soviet Socialist Realist aesthetics reiterated in Zhdanov's 1948 decrees, Grāvītis declared that 'one of the most significant things that makes a work "of the people" – that is, its dearness to the masses, its comprehensibility, and its deep rootedness in their broad strata – is the national form that contains the ideologically rich content' (Grāvītis 1956a, p. 3).

Four months later, Grāvītis published a remarkable follow-up essay, in which he proclaimed and endeavored to exemplify a new *modus operandi* for his Latvian colleagues. In this article, entitled 'Musicologists Must Step into the Avant Garde',

Grāvītis framed his discussion of methodological issues around a discussion of the cantata *Tēvijai* (*To the Fatherland*, 1886) by the Latvian composer Andrejs Jurjāns (1856–1922). With respect to cultural policy in the Latvian SSR, Jurjāns' cantata made for a particularly problematic discussion for two reasons. First, the central portion of the cantata's text is overtly religious, taking the form of a prayer to God for the material and spiritual renewal of the Latvian nation. And second, the work, like its composer, had long ago become emblematic of the so-called 'national awakening' (*tautas atmoda*) of the 1850s through the 1870s, which was widely associated in the popular imagination with the birth of the modern Latvian nationalist movement.

Grāvītis began his consideration of Jurjāns' cantata with what sounded, at first, like a commonplace call for a more thoughtful elucidation of musical works according to the tenets of Socialist Realist aesthetics. But when he turned his attention to the music and text of *Tēvijai* itself, his provocative ideological agenda immediately became clear. Tackling first the work's religious imagery, he wrote:

Here one must note that religion does not always erupt wherever the word 'God' is mentioned. It is true that in the middle portion of the cantata the soloist intones a prayer to God, but with respect to the musical character this prayer reaches far beyond the bounds of the church. It is the deeply human, deeply heartfelt longing of the simple working man for better times, for freedom. Indeed, if an orphan can sing 'Go, sun, to God' (*Ej, saulīte, drīz pie dieva*) in a folksong, then why can't 'My God, I pray to you' be sung in Jurjāns' cantata? (Grāvītis 1956b, p. 3)

After this, Grāvītis turned to the thorniest problem posed by Jurjāns and his work: their status in the popular imagination as representatives of so-called 'bourgeois' Latvian nationalism. He wrote:

We have good reason to denounce Jurjāns for remaining caught up in the ideals of the period of national awakening while all around him life was rumbling with the stormy waves of revolution. But we have no right whatsoever to disparage a distinguished figure of Latvian music because he did not know how to think like a Marxist. The musical heritage of the past must be accepted as it was. If reactionary tendencies are readily apparent in it, then we are obligated to unmask them unflinchingly. If we see contradictions in it, we must clarify them. But to be satisfied with simply declaring 'this is acceptable' or 'this is unacceptable' is to misunderstand the past, to fail to comprehend what is greatest and most instructive in it. (Grāvītis 1956b, p. 3)

With these lines, Grāvītis came close to turning the means of Stalin's nativization campaign against its own desired ends. In his discussion, the search for a 'socialist content' underlying the 'national forms' of Latvian music became little more than a pretext for studying those national forms themselves. Indeed, Grāvītis even seemed to suggest that the presence or absence of socialist content must not be taken as a primary criterion for the critical evaluation of a work. In effect, musicological inquiry became, for the musicologist, an exercise in which the logic and rhetoric of Marxist–Leninist cultural criticism were harnessed for the purpose of advancing knowledge of and appreciation for the republic's pre-Soviet musical past.

With respect to both methodology and political subtext, Grāvītis' essays of 1956 were emblematic of the wave of optimism that passed among Soviet scholars in the wake of the Twentieth Party Congress, of which many historians have written previously (Litvin 2001, pp. 21–2; Markwick 2001, pp. 47–9). Indeed, Grāvītis' articles inspired a flurry of essays by his Latvian colleagues eager to follow his lead. One, writing on 'The Problem of Cultural Inheritance and Latvian Choral Music', reminded her readers of Lenin's conviction that a socialist future must be founded upon the feudal and capitalist past. For this reason, she wrote, 'We must be mindful of the fact that classical works must be evaluated historically. To attempt to subject past masters to the same demands that we impose upon our Soviet artists is to approach one's work from an improper perspective' (Albiņa 1956, p. 3). Another scholar sought to rehabilitate – as Grāvītis had done with Jurjāns – another maligned and problematic composer from the period of Latvia's national awakening, Jānis Cimze (Bērziņa 1956). Such optimism about the future course of musicological research reached its peak toward the end of the decade. The year 1958 saw the launch of *Latviešu mūzika* (*Latvian Music*), the first post-war forum for the publication of original musicological research in the Soviet republic. And the following year brought yet another hopeful development: the publication of the final installment of the *History of the Latvian SSR*, which included the first substantial post-war discussion of musical life in the inter-war Republic (*Latvijas PSR Vēsture* iii, 1959, pp. 365–7; cf. Vītoliņš & Grīnfelds 1954, pp. 26–7).

Yet as Aleksandrs Ivanovs has recently argued with respect to Soviet historiography of Latvia's wartime annexation, the Khrushchev 'Thaw', viewed in hindsight, seems not to have marked the birth of an age of radical change in historical scholarship so much as the beginning of a new period of stability and even, ultimately, stagnation. Following a brief period of liberalization in the late 1950s, Ivanovs observes, the principal components of most narratives of Latvia's history became essentially fixed. Thereafter, scholars worked not to revise or to challenge those narratives but to 'fill them in' (*papildināt*) with documentary evidence (Ivanovs 2003a, p. 78), to 'fashion them into an academic guise' (*zinātniski noformēt*) (Ivanovs 2004, p. 393).⁸ Indeed, as we have already seen with respect to the musicological literature, even Grāvītis' essay on Jurjāns' cantata only elaborated upon an approach to historical inquiry pioneered by Jēkabs Vītoliņš in 1948. And while a new era in music scholarship seemed to be signaled by the launch of *Latviešu mūzika*, the limits of musicologists' new-found freedoms were made clear in that journal's inaugural essay. There, Nilss Grīnfelds, Conservatory professor and founding Secretary of the Latvian Composers' Union, called for intensive research into Latvia's pre-Soviet past, and even into musical developments of the 'bourgeois' Republican period. But Grīnfelds also made clear to his colleagues that they must never lose sight of the political goals of their historical inquiries. 'Historical truth and an understanding of the decisive power of a period's social structures are helping our present-day working people to understand the musical works of Jāzeps Vītols', Grīnfelds wrote, reminding his readers of their duty to adhere to tenets of Marxist–Leninist historical analysis, and of their responsibility to undertake their work in the service of the Party and its propaganda efforts. The musicologist, Grīnfelds continued, must never lose sight of the essential fact that Vītols' compositions 'are tied to the people's healthy and

optimistic view of the world, and to the serene founts of the people's art' (Grīnfelds 1958, p. 8). Three years later, Grīnfelds fomented a scandal that cost Jēkabs Vītoliņš his professorship at the Latvian Conservatory after the latter had failed to vet his publications carefully enough for ideological 'errors' (Braun 2002, pp. 327–9; Boiko 2008). In doing so, Grīnfelds left little doubt about the consequences of transgressing the ideological boundaries of acceptable musicological research.

Barometer of a Discourse: The Case of Jāzeps Vītols

From the mid-1950s until the collapse of Soviet authority in 1991, the literature produced by Latvian musicologists was marked by what Roger Markwick has characterized more generally as 'constant tension between what was historiographically possible and what was politically permissible' (Markwick 2001, p. 49). If Grāvītis' essays of 1956 sought to codify a new paradigm of musicological research and writing in the post-Stalin years, then Grīnfelds' preface to *Latviešu mūzika* and his subsequent administrative actions against Vītoliņš made clear that scholars' new-found freedoms still had limits that could not be breached. And the post-Thaw Latvian musicological discourse was marked by ambivalence of another kind as well. On the one hand, the increasing accessibility of primary source materials fostered a highly productive academic culture with respect to archival research and the publication of archival materials (Ivanovs 2004, p. 398). But on the other hand, this substantial production of historical knowledge was not accompanied by any significant reevaluation of post-war narratives and views. To gain a sense of how the musicological discourse evolved during the remaining years of Soviet rule, we may consider briefly four decades of scholarship on the composer Jāzeps Vītols. Vītols makes for an apposite case study, for he was the most studied musician of Latvia's pre-Soviet musical past, in both the Republican and the Soviet periods. His position in the historical canon was secured not only by his artistic achievements, but also by the roles he played – as founding director of both the Latvian National Opera and the Latvian Conservatory – in Latvia's Republican history.

Among the first musicological fruits of the post-Stalin years was Oļģerts Grāvītis' pioneering life-and-works study, *Jāzeps Vītols and Latvian Folksong* (1958). In conducting research for this book, Grāvītis made extensive use of a broad array of primary source materials previously unavailable to Latvian historians. These included scholarship published in the nineteenth century and the inter-war years, as well as letters, memoirs, and other unpublished sources located in Latvian and Russian archives (see Grāvītis 1958, pp. 248–50). The bibliographical apparatus of Grāvītis' study was unprecedented in Soviet Latvian scholarship for its thoroughness and specificity. And the volume included the most detailed treatment of Vītols' biography ever published in any language (Grāvītis 1958, pp. 13–59). With regard to all of these issues, Grāvītis' work was a significant achievement, and truly a reflection of its time. But as a product of its time, *Jāzeps Vītols and Latvian Folksong* is also a deeply problematic text. Its problems are apparent not only in its biographical chapters, but also in its analytical discussions. For Grāvītis' analyses of Vītols' music are deeply ideological, collectively

elaborating a portrait of the artist as an anachronistic adherent to central tenets of Soviet Socialist Realist aesthetics, and of the composer himself as a model proto-Soviet artist.

In Grāvītis' portrayal, Vītols was, in Soviet parlance, a progressive realist, who could not resist the urge to comment in his music upon the oppressive pre-Soviet political milieu in which he spent most of his life. Indeed, Grāvītis wrote, 'The composer demonstrates', in his vocal works, 'his desire not to suppress the realities of life, but . . . to reveal the social causes of the experiences of the Latvian people, and to show just how much this profoundly oppressed people despised the Baltic German baronial class that ruled over them with fire and bared teeth' (Grāvītis 1958, p. 97). Considering one of Vītols' folksong arrangements, 'Aijā, Ancīt, aijā' (Sleep, little Ancis, sleep), from his *200 Latvian Folksongs* (1906–19), Grāvītis observed the following about the 'progressive' nature of Vītols' musical language and world-view:

It seems that the composer often found expressions of social protest even where the text at first glance does not suggest such an interpretation. This is demonstrated clearly by the cradlesong 'Aijā, Ancīt, aijā'. The text speaks about the child's future, yet the dark, heavy-hearted mood of the melody seems to contradict the character of the text. But this contradiction merely reflects the realities of life. In the mother's cradlesong there are indeed many pleasant wishes. However, the singer's wishes cannot possibly come true. For this reason there is a great deal of darkness in the cradlesong. The tendency of the melody to rise at the beginning of the song is muffled in the second measure, as if covered over by dust. The second half of the melody comprises a hopeless, downward-slinking intonation [*intonācija*]. (Grāvītis 1958, pp. 97–8)

In composing 'Aijā, Ancīt, aijā', Grāvītis argued, Vītols did more than craft a musical setting appropriate to the overt message of his chosen text. Indeed, he recognized, in the apparent contradiction between the happy poetry and the decidedly darker character of the traditional melody, an element of protest presumably voiced by a historical Latvian folk singer against the pre-Revolutionary conditions under which she lived. In response to his realization that the mother's dreams for her child would never be fulfilled so long as her land was ruled by Baltic Germans, Vītols created a musical accompaniment that highlights the ironic pairing of emotional messages conveyed by the textual and melodic components of the folksong. In this way, Grāvītis suggested, Vītols revealed his sympathies with the Latvian peasantry in their historic plight. Indeed, Grāvītis suggested, Vītols' musical 'distortion' of the singing mother's 'bright, dream-like fantasies about the future' mirrored the tragic way in which generations of Latvians' hopes for a brighter future were undermined by centuries of Baltic German oppression (Grāvītis 1958, pp. 98–9). The latter circumstance came to an end, of course, only with the Revolution of 1917.

Throughout the remaining years of Soviet rule, Vītols' music would repeatedly be subjected to this sort of analytical explication (for example, Grīnfelds 1978, pp. 47–54). But music, as is well known, is notoriously susceptible to widely divergent readings and interpretations, and so making a convincing case for Vītols' proto-Soviet convictions required corroborating biographical evidence.

Here musicologists faced greater difficulties, since Vītols had openly expressed his opposition to the Bolshevik Revolution in memoirs and letters, and he fled to Germany just prior to the Soviet rout of German troops from Latvian soil in the fall of 1944. In the years immediately following Latvia's annexation to the USSR, these complicating aspects of Vītols' biography were either ignored by Latvian scholars or else portrayed as the tragic outcome of Nazi machinations (Sudrabkalns 1945, p. 1; Pelše 1951, p. 222 n.). Even Grāvītis attributed Vītols' emigration to the effects of German propaganda upon the composer's elderly mind (Grāvītis 1958, pp. 43–5). But as historical archives were opened to an increasing number of historians in the late 1950s, and as the new climate of intellectual openness encouraged the publication of archival materials, scholars of Vītols were eventually compelled to confront these aspects of Vītols' history directly.

The first attempt at such a confrontation was made by Jēkabs Vītoliņš, who published a transcription of extensive portions of Vītols' previously unpublished memoirs in the first volume of *Latviešu mūzika* (Vītols 1958b). (Vītols had penned his memoirs, in fits and starts, between 1936 and 1943, and had left them with a friend in Riga immediately prior to his emigration in 1944.)⁹ Those portions of the memoirs that Vītoliņš selected for publication in 1958 did not touch upon politically sensitive issues. But four years later, Vītoliņš undertook the task of preparing further selections from the memoirs for publication, and here he encountered a different and troubling situation. For in what was left of Vītols' manuscript source, the composer recorded his despair over the Revolutions of 1905 and 1917 and recounted his flight from Bolshevik-controlled St. Petersburg for the newly independent Republic of Latvia in the summer of 1918 (Vītols 1962b).

Vītoliņš' solution to the problem he faced was vividly revealing of the tensions between scholarly ambition and political feasibility felt by many musicologists of his generation. He heavily edited his manuscript source, excising from his published edition all passages from Vītols' text that might belie the composer's supposedly proto-Soviet political sympathies. In Vītoliņš' edition of the composer's discussion of his departure from St. Petersburg, the musicologist omitted Vītols' remarks about the hardships of life in Bolshevik-controlled Russia (Vītols 1962b, pp. 165, 166, 167; cf. Vītols n.d., pp. 103–4, 105, 108). Vītoliņš likewise excised Vītols' characterization of Bolshevik soldiers as the 'enemy' (*ienaidnieks*), and the composer's account of the great 'mirth' (*jautribas*) he felt upon his departure by train from St. Petersburg in 1918 (Vītols 1962b, p. 167; cf. Vītols n. d., pp. 108, 106).

The most extensive cutting of material, however, is found at the end of Vītoliņš' edition. In a single rich passage, the composer recounted his experience of the 1917 Revolution, his resignation from the director's post of the Latvian National Opera in the fall of 1918, his thoughts on the founding of the sovereign Republic of Latvia on 18 November of that year, and his response to the storming of Riga by Bolshevik forces in January 1919. Below, I have provided a translation of the entirety of this passage from Vītols' memoirs. The complete text of Vītoliņš' edition, published in 1962, is given in the left-hand column; the ellipses are Vītoliņš'. The text as it appears in the composer's manuscript is provided in full on

the right. In that column, I have italicized those passages omitted from Vītoliņš' published edition.

My resignation went almost entirely unnoticed. Arbeņins wondered, 'why are you going?' The attention of all the others was focused upon the...political events of the new year: The occupying German army had left, as had the English warships. ...

The theater where the Latvian opera had begun its work was still smoking, in ruins. A Phoenix rose up from the ashes!...

*

I left behind a musical culture that had grown to one of monumental significance. ...

When I left St. Petersburg, I never thought that I would not see it again in my lifetime; my leave from the St. Petersburg Conservatory was limited to half a year, and my ties to it have still not been severed. ... (Vītols 1962b, p. 169)

My resignation went almost entirely unnoticed. Arbeņins wondered, 'why are you going?' The attention of all the others was focused upon the *bleak* political events of the new year: The occupying German army had left, as had the English warships. *In the dreadful glow of the burning opera house, control of Latvia fell into [the Bolshevik] Stučka's hands.* The theater where the Latvian opera had begun its work was still smoking, in ruins. A Phoenix rose up from the ashes! *But the sublime act of 18 November will nevertheless forever be connected to the theater on Kronvalds Boulevard. It is not my intention to say too much about that eternally unforgettable day. Will we ever see another 18 November? --*

In the Fatherland

I left behind a musical culture that had grown to one of monumental significance. *The Bolshevik regime had still not been able to destroy it. The calls for serious support of the PROLETKULT had still not been taken up.* When I left St. Petersburg, I never thought that I would not see it again in my lifetime; my leave from the St. Petersburg Conservatory was limited to half a year, and my ties to it have still not been severed. *But now there is no doubt, even for an instant. I feel that my proper place now is in Latvia. Indeed, the invasion by the Bolsheviks [Stučka, et al.] put our beautiful hopes in perilous jeopardy and threatened to shake our faith in the future. But the news received from St. Petersburg was every bit as wicked: anarchy constantly on the rise, even at the Conservatory; hunger becoming unbearable. I was sorry for my friends.* (Vītols n. d., pp. 110–11)¹⁰

Over the course of the next two decades, Vītoliņš and his colleagues would edit and publish a large corpus of archival materials related to Vītols and his work (for example, Vītols 1958a, 1962a, 1966). But to borrow a term from Ivanovs, the effect of all of this archival research was largely to achieve the 'filling out' of narratives and interpretive positions elaborated years and even decades earlier. In spite of continuous discoveries of archival materials that significantly complicated the image of Vītols as a model proto-Soviet artist, the image of the composer advanced in Grāvītis' 1958 book remained largely unchanged through 1991. In the first attempt at a comprehensive post-war history of Latvian music, published in 1972, Lija Krasinska, like Grāvītis before her, accounted for Vītols' emigration to Germany as an

elderly response to Nazi propaganda (Vītoliņš & Krasinska 1972, p. 266). In another attempt at a comprehensive history, published in Russian in 1978, Nilss Grīnfelds attributed Vītols' departure from St. Petersburg to his failure to 'comprehend the historical significance' (*ne ponyal istoricheskogo znacheniya*) of the Bolshevik Revolution (Grīnfelds 1978, p. 41). Even as late as 1988, when an attempt was finally made to publish the text of Vītols' memoirs in its ostensible entirety, Grāvītis, the editor of the volume, retained many of the cuts to the composer's text made by Vītoliņš a quarter of a century earlier (Vītols 1988).¹¹ And he too argued, once again, that Vītols' unsympathetic statements about the Bolshevik government 'indirectly reflect the impressions made by the anti-Soviet propaganda of the period, approaching a ferocious pitch on radio and in the press, upon Vītols' elderly mind' (Vītols 1988, p. 323 n. 170).

The Landscape Since 1991

As the Vītols case vividly demonstrates, the Stalinist policy of nativization provided a principal ideological foundation for musicological research and writing throughout the entire period of Soviet rule. To be sure, the scholarly discourse did evolve in tandem with the broader vicissitudes of Soviet cultural life, as we have seen with respect to responses to the Muradeli affair and the Twentieth Party Congress. But from Sudrabkalns' statements of 1945 through to Grāvītis' edition of Vītols' memoirs published in 1988, the study of Latvia's historical musicians remained tightly enmeshed with a political effort to demonstrate the historical rootedness of contemporary Soviet ideology and cultural policy in the republic's historic cultural artifacts and experience. In this respect, it is important to note that Vītols was not an isolated figure. Nearly every pre-Soviet composer and musician to receive significant post-war scholarly attention was treated in this same manner (Grāvītis 1953 [on Andrejs Jurjāns]; Lūse 1969 [on Ernests Viņners]; Klotiņš 1977 [on Emīls Dārziņš]). Given this situation, it seems fitting to conclude our investigation with a look at the scholarly landscape as it stands nearly two decades after the collapse of Soviet rule, in an attempt to assess the degree to which Latvian musicology has transcended the boundaries of Soviet historical discourse. To this end, we may turn once again to the exemplary but hardly singular case of Vītols.

To begin with, it is notable, given the intense focus on Vītols by scholars of both the Republican and the Soviet periods, that little work has been undertaken on the artist in the post-Soviet years. In a decade and a half, the sum total of published interpretive scholarship on the composer consists of two books, both authored by Oļģerts Grāvītis. The first consists of a collection of photographs with an accompanying introductory essay (Grāvītis 1995). The second is an extensive volume of reminiscences of the composer recorded by students, colleagues, and friends, likewise accompanied by copious editorial explication (Grāvītis 1999). To be sure, both volumes make attempts to correct the image of Vītols advanced in Soviet-era scholarship. But neither offers a clearly documented reassessment of Vītols' political sympathies, and neither confronts directly the biographical distortions perpetuated in a half-century of Soviet scholarship.

To take one example: in the introduction to his photographic collection, Grāvītis acknowledges that Vītols emigrated to Germany in 1944 'seeking to escape the threat of new repressions' (*glāboties no jauniem represiju draudiem*) (Grāvītis 1995, p. 7). But this statement, provided without reference to either archival materials or other published studies, only raises further questions. Most importantly, if the composer sought, as Grāvītis asserts, to flee *new* (*jauni*) repressions in 1944, then what *prior* repressions had he already witnessed or suffered under the Soviets, presumably in 1940–1941? Grāvītis provides no further commentary on this issue. The publication of the scholar's second post-Soviet book on Vītols, the 1999 documentary volume, would seem to have provided an ideal venue in which to address this subject in greater detail. But there the musicologist's account of the composer's emigration is even more ambiguous, for it recapitulates a common Soviet-era refrain: that Vītols himself had never wanted to emigrate at all, but had been pressured, in his mentally weakened elderly state, by his wife and friends to do so. 'The third and final period of [Vītols'] life', Grāvītis wrote in 1999,

was marked by the mournful day of 7 October 1944, when, persuaded [*pierunāts*] by his friends and supported by his wife, J. Vītols boarded a passenger ship overloaded with refugees in Riga's harbor. With tears in his eyes he bid *adieu* to his homeland in silence, like hundreds of thousands of others similarly orphaned by fate, believing in the War's end, in the driving off of the Bolsheviks, and in their own speedy return. The dreams of this loyal Latvian son did eventually come true. But, tragically, not in his lifetime. (Grāvītis 1999, p. 11)

Exculpated from responsibility for his own actions and decisions (he was persuaded by friends; his anti-Bolshevik sympathies were merely – and no more specific than – those of the masses), Vītols is reduced, in this account, to the status of a passive actor in the unfolding of his own destiny. But more significant than this problem of interpretation is an accompanying problem of documentation. For the musicologist does not cite a single study or archival document as the source for the account just quoted. The reader is asked to accept the validity of this narrative solely on the basis of his or her faith in the musicologist's trustworthiness and status as a well-informed scholar. But as we have seen, numerous hints are readily apparent elsewhere – including in the mention of 'new repressions' in Grāvītis' own 1995 book – that the situation surrounding Vītols' emigration was far more complicated than this most recent contribution to the literature suggests. In the end, the correctives offered in recent Vītols scholarship to Soviet-era narratives of the composer's emigration provide nothing in the way of clarification or insight into Vītols' motives. Indeed, all that they offer is further obfuscation.

Since 1991, significant musicological work has been undertaken on Latvian topics all but inaccessible to Soviet-era scholars, especially regarding the crucial role played by Baltic German musicians and institutions in the historical evolution of Latvian musical life. Much of this work has been archival in nature, and much of it has met the highest standards of bibliographical transparency (for example, Lindenberga *et al.* 1997; Lindenberga *et al.* 2004; Jaunslaviete 2007). Yet the fact that Vītols – a figure whose work has played such a central role, for over a century, in the construction of both popular and academic notions of Latvian cultural identity – remains in the shadows of

Soviet obscurantism makes clear just how much work remains to be done.¹² Unquestionably, to confront anew the favored artists of Soviet-era music scholarship will prove to be a difficult and painful task, for it will require a confrontation with that scholarship itself, many of the authors of which are still writing today. But to do so will be liberating as well. For it will mark an important step toward freeing the Latvian musicological discourse of the still-oppressive weight of the Soviet nativization campaign.

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Notes

- 1 Though there has recently been intense interest in the general topic of Latvian historiography of the Soviet and post-Soviet years (for example, Buholcs 2003; Ivanovs 2003a, 2003b, 2004; Strods 2003), there exists no post-Soviet literature on Latvian music historiography specifically. The only published consideration of the subject remains Joachim Braun's 'Some Preliminary Considerations on the Present State of Baltic Musicology', first published over a quarter of a century ago (Braun 1982; reprinted in Braun 2002, pp. 238–55).
- 2 What changed between 1918 and 1989 with respect to Soviet nationalities policy was, primarily, the degree to which the leadership at various times emphasized the *slijanie* (merging) or the *sblizhenie* (drawing together) of the Soviet peoples as the immediate goal of their efforts, and the degree to which it granted autonomy to local leaderships with regard to economic and cultural planning. These vacillations in policy and rhetoric are usefully summarized in Smith (1990b).
- 3 The canonical text that provided the model upon which minority histories were fashioned was, from 1938 through to the mid-1950s, the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik): A Short Course (Istoriya vsesoyuznoi kommunisticheskoi partii [bol'shevikov]: kratky kurs)* (Moscow, Gos.uchebno-pedagog. izd-vo, 1938). On the *Short Course*, see Markwick (2001, pp. 42–7). On its use in the framing of non-Russian histories, see Litvin (2001, p. 124); Mazour (1971, pp. 288–90); and Tillet (1969, pp. 40–9). With respect to the situation in Latvia specifically, see Ivanovs (2003a, 2003b).
- 4 It should be noted that the historiographical transformations described here were accompanied by radical structural reforms at the Latvian Conservatory and the University of Latvia. These included the dismissal and deportation of scholars employed during the inter-war years, administrative restructuring (the founding of chairs in Marxism–Leninism and Communist Party History), and the importing and promotion of Russian and ethnic Latvian scholars trained and formerly

residing in the Soviet Union (Ivanovs 2003a, pp. 78–9; Stradiņš 2004; Bērziņa 2006, pp. 210–17; Boiko 2008).

- 5 As Ivanovs has recently shown, this historiographical strategy had roots in Russian imperial historiography, one line of which argued that ancient ties between ethnic Russians and Latvians 'justified Latvia's annexation to imperial Russia' (Ivanovs 2003b, pp. 64–5). It should also be noted that to demonstrate the 'internationalism' of Latvian music (in the parlance of Khachaturian and other Party officials) typically meant, in practice, to demonstrate its indebtedness to Russian historical models. In this respect, the musicological discourse in Latvia reflected broader currents of Soviet thinking about the nationalities question – with Russia regarded as the 'first among equals' in the Soviet 'family of nations' – that prevailed in the Soviet cultural discourse from the late 1930s through to the late 1950s (see Martin 2001, pp. 451–5).
- 6 Niedre, who studied history and economics at the University of Latvia, served as secretary of the Union of Soviet Latvian Writers in 1941–1943. Peļše, a folklorist, was director of the Ethnography and Folklore Section of the Latvian Academy of Sciences from 1946 to 1955. Sudrabkalns, a poet, authored numerous propagandistic works and held a series of prominent Party appointments in the post-war years (Stašulāne & Rožkalne 2003, pp. 423–4, 440, 569–70).
- 7 The text of all entries on cultural topics in the volume is credited to the literary historian Emma Andersone. The volume's preface, however, indicates the participation of Jēkabs Vītoliņš in its compilation. Given that Andersone had no training or record of publication on music-related topics and the fact that Vītoliņš is the only musicologist whose name appears on the list of contributing scholars, it seems likely that Vītoliņš was responsible for supplying – or at least suggesting – much of the volume's musical content (*Latvijas PSR Vēsture* ii, 1955, pp. 3–4; Stašulāne & Rožkalne 2003, p. 28).
- 8 On the essential stability of historical scholarship in Latvia from the 1950s through to the mid-1980s and its continued dependence upon *Short Course* paradigms, see Ivanovs (2003a, 2004). As recent studies by Markwick and Litvin make clear, the situation in Latvia paralleled that in much of the rest of the Union with respect to this issue; see Litvin (2001, pp. 16–17, 21–2); and Markwick (2001, pp. 46–7).
- 9 The principal source for the memoirs, upon which Vītoliņš based his edition, is a manuscript preserved in the Rare Book and Manuscript Section (Reto grāmatu un rokrakstu nodaļa) of the Misiņš Library (Riga), Kārlis Egle fond, item 159 (hereafter cited as Vītols n.d.). This manuscript contains 23 chapters or parts thereof as designated by the composer. An additional chapter is preserved, in manuscript, in the Vītols archive at the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music in Riga. A copy – apparently incomplete – of the Misiņš manuscript, made by the composer's wife Annija and presently in private collection, was published in Sweden in 1963 in an edition by Jānis Rudzītis (Vītols 1963; I have not been able to examine Annija Vītols' copy of the manuscript). For a more detailed discussion of the sources, see Grāvītis' introduction to Vītols (1988). Transcriptions from the memoirs cited in the present article are my own, taken from manuscript held in the Misiņš Library (Vītols n.d.).
- 10 The text as it appears in the manuscript is as follows (Vītols n.d., pp. 110–11):

Mana demisija palika gluži nepamanīta. Vienīgi Arbeņins brīnījās: kamdēļ ejot? Visu citu prāti bīja saistīti pie Jaunā gada drūmiem politiskiem

notikumiem: aizgāja vācu okupācijas armija, aizbrauca angļu kara kuģi. Degošā operas nama drausmīgajā blāzmā, vara Latvijā pārgāja Stučkas rokās. ~~Operas~~ ^{^Teatra^} namam pa daļai vēl drupās kūpojot, ~~turp parvietojām [illeg.]~~ tur uzsāka Latvju opera savu nākamo posmu. Fēnikss cēlās no pelniem!

Bet cēlais 18. novembra akts tomēr uz visiem laikiem saistīts pie teatra Kronvalda bulvārā. Nav mans uzdevums lieku reizi stāstīt par šo mūžīgi neaizmirstamo dienu. Vai vēl piedzīvošu jaunu 18. novembri? – –

Tēvzemē

Aiz muguras bīju atstājis kalna galos pacēlušos muzikālu kultūru. Vēl lielinieku režīms nebija paspējis to ārdīt; sauciens pēc proletkulta nopeitna atbalsta vēl atradis nebija. Kad pemetu Peterpili, nebiju tais domās ka to vairs savu mūžu neredzēšu; mans atvaļinājums bija norobežots uz pusgadu – saites[*corr.*] ar Pēterpils konservatoriju nebūt raisītas vēl nebija. Bet gan ne acumirkļa nešaubījos. Jutu ka mana vieta ~~[illeg.]~~ ^tagad^ Latvijā. Gan iestājies lielinieku starprežīms bīstami apdraudēja jaukās cerības, varēja saškebīt pārliecību par nākotni. Bet tikpat jaunas bija arī direkti un indirekti no Pēterpils saņemtās ziņas: anarķija arī konservatorijā pastāvīgi pieaugot, bads topot nepanesams. Bij man savu dragu žēl.

- 11 Grāvītis preserved, for instance, almost all of the cuts made to Vītols's text shown in the long passage just quoted in the present essay (Vītols 1988, pp. 263–4; cf. Vītols 1962b, p. 169). The only lines that Grāvītis returned to this passage, in comparison with Vītoliņš' 1962 edition, are 'In the dreadful glow of the burning opera house, control of Latvia fell into Stučka's hands'; and 'But now there is no doubt, even for an instant. I feel that my proper place now is in Latvia'. The other cuts made by Vītoliņš in this passage are preserved by Grāvītis in Vītols (1988).
- 12 This work should be substantially aided in the coming years by the recent publication of a large selection of the composer's letters in an edition by Uldis Siliņš (Vītols 2006).

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Kevin C. Karnes is Assistant Professor of Music History at Emory University. He is the author of *Music, Criticism, and the Challenge of History: Shaping Modern Musical Thought in Late Nineteenth-century Vienna* (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2008) and co-editor, with Walter Frisch, of the revised and expanded edition of *Brahms and His World* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2009). He is presently working on studies of the Latvian rock-opera *Lāčplēsis* and aspects of post-Wagnerian Wagnerism. (kkarnes@emory.edu)
