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## Beyond Bellephonic Sound: Exploring Some Musical Diplomacies during the Ukraine War

By Frédéric Ramel

*Abstract-* British Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Nadine Dorries proclaimed culture and sport the “third front in the Ukrainian war”. Russia, Ukraine but also national institutions in Western countries recognize this strong dimension in their own strategic conducts. Music is clearly part of this War whether on the side of belligerents or of third party States, cultural actors and artists even though they try to escape the dilemmas they cause. What does mean listening music in such figuration? Does it entail a “bellephonic sound” dissemination that could not be transcended or are there some experiments of musical diplomacies that tend to have another representation of otherness even in a context of war? By focusing on several musical programs and institutions in Europe since the beginning of Ukraine War, this paper aims at shedding light on the role of music as a source of recognition in strategic context from public diplomacy to people-to-people diplomacy.

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BEYONDBELLEPHONICSOUNDEXPLORINGSOMEMUSICALDIPLOMACIESDURINGTHEUKRAINEWAR

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## INTRODUCTION

Music is closely associated with power, whether in peace or war times. For instance, Putin does not hesitate to rely on this art to promote the status of Russia and the prestige it can benefit from it by organizing a concert of the Mariinsky Orchestra of St Petersburg a few days after the capture of Palmyra on the Islamic State by Russian forces. Or, or course, by financing musical performances in the Donbas region after 2014. As the British Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Nadine Dorries proclaimed, culture and sport has become the “third front in the Ukrainian war”, along with the military fighting and economic sanctions. Indeed, the war itself is interpreted in acoustic terms by Zelensky, who, at the Grammy Awards ceremony in 2022, calls for filling “the silence of bombs and murdered people” with songs and melodies.

Putin and Zelensky, as many thinkers or political leaders (Gienow-Hecht 2009; Ahrendt, Ferrugato, Mahiet 2014; Ramel, Prévost-Thomas 2018), know the powers of music on souls and bodies. They are at work in armed conflicts for at least three purposes. 1. To stun the enemy. From the trumpets of Jericho to the use of acoustic torture in Guantanamo prison, the use of music aims to break the will of the opposing party, since it causes the physical destruction of infrastructures and the psychic disorientation of individuals. The broadcasting of soundtracks during psychological operations during the Vietnam war or the exposure of prisoners to metal music (or children’s songs...)

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broadcast above 160 dB are all examples that exploit this undeniable human vulnerability underlined by the philosopher Pascal Quignard: “ears have no eyelids”. 2. To galvanize the troops. At the front, the fife and percussion instruments that accompanied the armies have given way to the MP3s used by the soldiers to give themselves courage. But at the back too, music has its place. Performing a traditional Ukrainian song or even baroque music during bombings is an act of resistance. For the violinist Vera Lytovchenko, music becomes “the only weapon to show that I am not afraid”. So many proofs according to which the power of a nation is not measured by the military capacities in presence but by integrating the cohesion of a people. This is not quantifiable, which partly explains the failure of the main Russian prognoses that the war would be short. Undeniably, music favors the expression of this cohesion. 3. To support the effort. Music is linked to the surge of solidarity in times of confrontation. On the barricades established during the Maidan events in 2014 in Kiev, a piano is invested by the demonstrators. In the colors of the movement, it resounds Chopin under the fingers of a young virtuoso Antuanetta Mishchenkoou but also various songs, including Beatles to express the attachment to the values defended. In addition, music also serves the mobilization at a distance as revealed by the organization of concerts in support of Ukraine since February 2022, as many opportunities to collect funds for the populations remaining on site or in exile (Velasco-Pufleau. 2022a).

These three objectives are clearly strategic in nature. They are parts of military or civil sounds during war. Conceptually, parts of “belliphonic sound” that are expressed in everyday life in such contexts, as signals for informing peoples or to evaluate a situation (Daughtry 2015: 33 and s). The intensity of “belliphonic sound” varies depending to the level of proximity to the warfare (Kaltenecker 2017). But is it possible to consider music as a resource with another purpose, ie to alter this “belliphonic sound”? By way of illustration, the novelist Fedorovski points out: “In this desperate context culture remains the best bridge to peace” (Federovski 2022). But how could such a bridge be built and used? Does it even exist even though such a bridge has a name called music diplomacy, ie. this part of cultural diplomacy that uses music as a tool of relations in order to “help initiate or continue a dialogue, exchange cultural information, signal cooperation and ‘reach’ the people.” (Gienow-

Hecht 2012: 18)<sup>1</sup>? Can't we consider musical diplomacy as an instrument to fight against war? Is it not part of these bonds of love and identification with humanity in the broadest sense, as Freud evoked in his answer to Einstein's question "why war" in 1932? If "whatever makes for cultural development is working also against war" (Freud [1932] 1993), is not music also a source of hope?

Focused on the Ukraine war since February 2022, this paper is divided in four sections. After explaining the links between music and politics and the way to deal with them based on the concepts of audibility and resonance (I), I illustrate a situation of music diplomacy failure by coming back to a Stravinsky music work (*Pulcinella*) in March 2022 (II). This cancellation is different from another reception of a Russian opera *Boris Godunov* whose fate since the beginning of the war is more nuanced between categorical refusal, maintenance in certain programs and societal mobilization against organized performances (III). Finally, a few avenues are considered in order to clarify the conditions in which audibility and resonance can be developed even in war times (IV).

## I. HOW MUSICIANS AND MUSIC ARE "ALWAYS" LINKED TO POLITICS

### a) *Beyond two restrictive paths*

In 1940, Stravinsky published his six lessons dedicated to the *Poetics of Music* he delivered at Harvard. Clearly against misuses even abuses of music, he declares that a new sin is emerging. This sin is none other than the lack of knowledge concerning the instrumentalization of music for other purposes than itself. For him, musical art refers to musical mathematics. It is very dangerous to bend music to objectives that are not its own. These remarks compose the "secret world", that of the aesthetic conceptions, which represents the counterpart of the sound world of the composer. This world refers to the autonomous creative acts. Music thus appears doubly abstract: because of its nature (it embodies an immaterial product of the "pure" mind) and because of its imperviousness to any context (it does not depend on any historical, social, or cultural context). Stravinsky does not only criticized the Soviet music which uses this art to ideological ends, or the Marxist approach of music which initially does not recognize the reality above all ontological of this art<sup>2</sup>. His

judgment is addressed to all the musics, whatever the time or the place. It agrees with the famous assertion of the composer "music is incapable of expressing anything" and participates in the music theory in the United States whose opposition to the musicology in the middle of the 20th century was described by McCreless. Such position is still robust nowadays. For instance, the French composer Pascal Dusapin insists in his inaugural lesson at the Collège de France (Chair in Artistic Creation) on an analogous viewpoint by underlining that "music says nothing and we never say anything about music. To say about it is insane. So we say nothing about it. Never. For lack of being able to say it, we talk about it. But to speak about music always seems to plunge us in the darkness so much its subject slips away" (Dusapin 2007: 22). Stravinsky and Dusapin do nothing but deepen the "supreme mystery" that music represents for the social Sciences according to Claude Levi-Strauss. They express reservations concerning discourses dedicated to this art. They tolerate its mathematical treatment (Stravinsky), or underline the weakness of its verbal understanding because without common measure with its object (Dusapin).

From the 1920s on, some composers cultivated another posture that distanced themselves from this idea of autonomous gesture. They laid the groundwork for a "politically committed modern music with the expressionist music of the Novembergruppe (Stefan Wolpe, Vladimir Vogel, Hanns Eisler, Philipp Jarnach, Hans H. Stuckenschmidt)" (Rizzardi 2003: 158). Eisler's militant production qualifies as combat music in a context marked by a crisis of bourgeois music (from the point of view of compositional technique in particular): "the modern composer must pass from the status of parasite to that of combatant. In the interest of music, we must ask ourselves: what social attitude is most useful? If we have recognized that the present form of society has produced barbarism in music, we must try to change it" (Eisler 1996: 96). A generation is clearly inspired by such a political vocation, as illustrated by Nono, whose activity is not limited to writing music. In parallel, Nono objectified his aesthetic choices by expressing a revolutionary commitment. Moreover, he endeavored to situate his work in relation to his colleagues by elaborating a typology of relations between composers and politics: indifference to context (Boulez), revolution through culture and thus isolation of the creator from the rest of society (Kagel), deification of technique and subscription to capitalist ideology (Stockhausen), distrust of culture because class marking

<sup>1</sup> The Center of Public Diplomacy at the University of Southern California proposed some illustrations of Music diplomacies: <https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/story/10-great-moments-music-diplomacy>

<sup>2</sup> Such a simplified reading of the Marxist approach tends to deny the nuances formulated by Marx himself with regard to music or art in general. The Frankfurt School establishes a sociology of art whereas Marx seemed reluctant to undertake a study of the artistic field according to his analytical principles based on economy and market production (Bastide 1997 38). Composers inspired by Marxism also denounce this trap of a purely economic reading of musical

productions. Thus, Eisler affirms: "the evolution of the music is not concomitant of the general socio-economic evolution. This is why it would be difficult to directly link the evolution of musical forms to economic evolution. Even when such a parallel seems to exist, it is rather a matter of a relationship of successive mediations than of a direct mechanical link" (Eisler, 1998: 176.)

persists (left-wing musicians), rejection of aristocratic and Eurocentric values articulated with a conscious and reflective revolutionary will (Nono himself) (Nono 1993). But this perspective also appears in the sphere of the Jazz whose free movement criticizes the idealist aesthetic (Charles & Conolli 2000). Contrary to the positions defunded by Stravinsky and Dusapin, this second approach automatically lifts the "mystery" of the music thanks to the identification of the political intentions of the creator.

The present paper intends to cultivate a third way between the two postures formulated. On the one hand, it is appropriate to force open doors that the supporters of the first position would like to leave closed (going beyond the impossibility of a political discourse on music). The musical works offer indeed a "refreshing" material which allows to test a hypothesis on the political functioning of societies (Péquignot 1993). On the other hand, it seems reductive to rely only on the expression of commitments as an understanding of a musical piece as suggested by the second posture (necessity to widen the interpretation of the aesthetic act). If Nono or Cage prove to be coherent both in their discourse and in their works, other creators claim a revolutionary aim while reproducing neo-classical compositional schemes far from their ideological position. This is the case with Henze, for example. According to him, opera no longer corresponds to a bourgeois art form but to a modality of expression that is undergoing a profound transformation: "The idea that opera is bourgeois and an outdated art form is itself one of the most old-fashioned, tedious and musty ideas" (Henze 1982: 217). However, the properties of his works prove to be more conventional, especially through the frequent use of traditional sources. In other words, the link between musical material and engagement is not automatically proven (Rizzardi 2003: 158).

To trace such a third way is not an easy task, especially on the methodological level. Indeed, the analysis must articulate external and internal readings of music considered. According to Hugues Dufourt, since the 19th century, the discourse on musical art has opposed musicology (devoted to the internal logic of its language) and history (focused on the artists, the institutions, the practices). The 20th century accentuated this division of scientific work with, on the one hand, musical semiology inspired by structuralism and, on the other, positive sociology that describes the forms and distribution of cultural consumption (Dufourt 1987: 11-15). The academic literature has been enriched since and tries to think the relations between musical creation and society. It underlines the risks of a univocal (or unicolor) approach that would give priority to the historical context of the works. Such a perspective offers a framework but is not sufficient (Rosen 1998): because a minimum of endogenous "analysis" is always needed.

Besides, such a third way implies recognizing the always political character of musical actions and gestures. The latter are inserted into a public space in which both the speeches and the concert organizations confer a meaning on the musician's place within the city. These gestures can be implicit, as in the case of Daniel Barenboim. He never ceases to claim that the Divan orchestra created with his friend Edward Said does not correspond to a political normalization or a political project between young musicians in the Middle East. Nevertheless, the statements made in Israel as well as the will to organize concerts bringing together young Arabs, Israelis and Palestinians is not neutral. It is part of an undeniable process of transformation of the imaginary as to the reconciliation between the two parties. This Republic of the Divan offers in miniature a representation of what could embody the relations between the young generations having for the moment a heritage of armed conflict for decades. Beyond public statements of musicians, "music speaks" as Wittgenstein pointed out in his *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology* (I §888). Barenboim and Saïd's orchestra shows that "music is also a way of living, it signifies and realizes, not only what each of us feels individually but also what we can be collectively" (Donégani, 2011: 10).

#### b) *Injunction, Audibility, Resonance*

But these gestures can also be explicit, under the constraint of power itself. Thus, the president of the Duma, Vyacheslav Volodin, called for a commitment from artists, proclaiming: "the position of certain cultural figures who do not condemn neo-Nazis is nothing less than a betrayal of their people. As for the Ukrainian Minister of Culture, he turned to Western cultural institutions to prevent the distribution of Russian works" (Tkachenko 2022). These injunctions to take sides emanating directly from political power raise questions. First of all, they make the artists themselves vulnerable, as they can no longer envisage a middle way or even a position of neutrality. For example, the young Russian pianist Alexander Malozef, twenty years old, quickly found himself in a "hostage" situation abroad. He was forced to cancel three performances with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, even though he himself had publicly expressed his opposition to the war in very strong words: "The truth is that every Russian will feel guilty for decades because of the terrible and bloody decision that none of us could influence and predict" (Quoted in Roux, 2022). Another illustration corresponds to the sanction to which the Franco-Russian conductor Ivan Velikanov was exposed. Having played Beethoven's Ode to Joy, a work elevated to the status of a symbol of Western Europe, on Friday, February 25, he can no longer conduct the performances of Mozart's Marriage of Figaro at the Nizhny Novgorod Opera.



Secondly, these injunctions raise questions in terms of procedure: who can legitimately ask musicians to express their opinion on a war, whatever it may be? Which authority has the legitimacy to do so (Mahiet, Ramel 2022)? Is it not up to the artists themselves, in their innermost being, to cultivate their own position? This is what the prima ballerina Olga Smirnova, whose grandfather was Ukrainian, suggests when she left the Bolshoi, "I must be honest and say that I am against the war with all my soul. (...) I never thought that I could be ashamed of Russia (...) but today I feel that there is a before and after"<sup>3</sup>.

In order to apprehend these links between music and politics, we propose to mobilize two concepts. The first one is that of audibility: all the properties necessary for a sound to generate an auditory sensation: frequency situated in the field of audible frequencies, sufficient intensity, higher than the audibility threshold. The human body has a more or less extensive perception of frequencies according to its biological complexion. Above 20,000 hertz, the audibility of sounds disappears in most human beings. In fact, the threshold of audibility decreases in frequency with age; it also depends on the intensity. However, the important fact is that there are frequencies above which, whatever the intensity, acoustic waves are not perceived: they are called ultra-sounds. The more or less audible character of a sound has thus a foundation first and foremost physical. But in the pages which follow, it is another source of audibility that I wish to explore. The very activity of diplomacy rests on the ability to make oneself audible on the one hand and to cultivate one's own audibility with respect to what others wish to communicate. To be audible and to welcome audibility corresponds to a consubstantial faculty of diplomacy (Mahiet, Ahrendt, Ramel 2021). It is in the extension of this societal audibility that I wish to place my reflection. By focusing on musical works that are "audible" or not, I will highlight the will to play them, to receive them or, on the contrary, to refuse listening. This recognition of a variable degree of listening (refusal, relative acceptance, promotion) will constitute the first descriptive tool used.

The second concept is taken directly from the work of Hartmut Rosa: that of resonance. According to him, resonance is above all an attitude towards our world. As a response to acceleration which entails alienation in late modernity, this attitude proposes a new relation that "is always open. If this idea proves to be true, then it cannot be expected to be a perfect plan for reforming our institutions" (Rosa 2022b: 53-54). In relation to audibility, resonance introduces a sensitive factor: that of letting oneself be touched by a work, of opening oneself to an inner vibration produced by the listening itself. Much more delicate to appreciate in its empirical materiality since it is subjective, resonance

appears above all as a form of affective expression with regard to a work. This second tool will be apprehended in the prism of the degree of opening to the aesthetic production of others considered as the very expression of what it embodies.

## II. NON-AUDIBLE AS A FAILURE OF MUSICAL DIPLOMACY: STRAVINSKY AND THE 2022 MAESTRA TOUR BEGINNING IN POLAND

The first example I will take relies on a specific program in Poland after the Russian aggression in Poland, the country that welcome the first concert of the 2022 Maestra Tour<sup>4</sup>. This European tour supports the candidates of a competition organized by the Paris Mozart Orchestra and the Paris Philharmony in order to promote feminine conductors. The winner was a Polish woman who conducted *Pulcinella* of Stravinsky. At Katowice, for the first concert, this piece was cancelled because of the name of its creator. Let's coming back to this musical piece before introducing the main arguments that show a non-audibility phenomenon.

### a) *Pulcinella outside Russian inspiration in Stravinsky's trajectory*

Written between 1919 and 1920, *Pulcinella* was commissioned by Serge Diaghilev, Director of the Russian Ballet Company, to Stravinsky. After a rather successful experiment of producing ballets to music by the Baroque composer Scarlatti, Diaghilev gathered documents and manuscripts by Pergolesi (1710-1736): two comic operas, trio sonatas and other instrumental works. Stravinsky accepted because of the popular character and the Spanish inspirations of the Italian composer. The common thread running through the various scenes was the humpbacked Polichenelle from the *Comedia del Arte*, *Pulcinella*. The eight-scene ballet tells the story of *Pulcinella*, with whom several young girls fall in love, much to the dismay of their fiancés, who seek to put an end to *Pulcinella's* life. After faking his own murder, *Pulcinella's* prank becomes a source of revenge. The ballet ends with the celebration of his marriage and his detractors.

This piece is often called neo-classical as a reaction to the music of the late 19th century and also partly to the dodecaphonic movement, which from the Viennese school onwards is gaining momentum in Europe. Often short, the structures of such pieces were based on typical eighteenth-century ritornello, sonata form, variation, rondo and simple binary and ternary forms. But *Pulcinella* is much more than that. It opens a sequence in Stravinsky's artistic trajectory. It opens him to the music of the past while producing his own aesthetic gesture. The resulting works break out of preconceived categories. They also disconcert. They

<sup>3</sup> *Le Figaro*. March 16th 2022.

<sup>4</sup> On La Maestra, see <https://lamaestra-paris.com/?lang=en>.

translate first and foremost the very posture that Stravinsky intends to cultivate beyond his previous experiences. He himself insists in his third lecture given at Harvard in 1940: "We have a duty to music, and that is to invent it. Invention presupposes imagination, but should not be confused with it. For the fact of inventing implies the necessity of a finding and a realization" (Quoted in Lavallard: On Line). Invention is plural in *Pulcinella*. Stravinsky transforms the original musical material (which goes beyond Pergolesi's source by integrating other musicians such as Monza or Gallo) by extending the motifs or incorporating repetitive cells. The composer adds elements without systematic reference to sources of the time, elements of his own making... These innovations do not appear as a rupture with the stylistic balance of the Baroque but as subtle additions because "It is first of all in the interstices of the general structure that Stravinsky's stylistics unfolds in a demonstrative way, in these spaces free of rules, free of constraints" (Prévost 2017).

Finally, it is worth noting the exile that characterizes Stravinsky's personal trajectory. He did not live in the Soviet Union and became an American citizen. In other words, this Russian-born composer was on the one hand, an fully critic of Soviet power and, on the one hand, he never stopped exploring all possible musical forms, never reducing himself to the register in which he was very often kept with three of his works considered representative of the "Russian soul": *The Firebird*, *Petrushka*, *The Rite of Spring*. Let us remember that out of sixty years of musical production, "only" ten years correspond to a period that can be qualified as "Russian".

#### b) *Pulcinella* politicised

The emergence of a political problem is initially a matter of timing and circumstance. According to Favre (1992), four different types of emergence could be distinguished:

- Progressive emergence. A procedure originating from one individual, and operating through different channels.
- Instantaneous emergence. The emergence of a problem from one field to another is sudden, as the result of a catastrophic event such as a terrorist attack.
- Automatic activation. When confidential political matters are kept hidden, transmission occurs automatically when the secret information becomes public.
- Initiative for emergence. Apolitical institutions aim to bring about collective awareness of a specific problem and be considered the sole representative of the affected population.

To a certain extent, war between Russia and Ukraine causes an instantaneous emergence of music

as a political issue. But we must bear in mind that music is "already" political because of its symbolic component and the "way of living" it embodies (Okon 2014). Besides, music can also be a source of consensus or subversion (DeNora 2003). Since February 2022, the label of Russian music, that results from a social construction, becomes a source of political denunciation. In his model of politization, Favre distinguishes two types of actors: the mediators who try to set up a link between politics and a non-political phenomenon and the inhibitors who tend to avoid such process. In our case, the Russian aggression entails the adjunction of the Ukrainian Hymn before most of the concerts organized. It was the case of the *Maestra* tour. This additive piece expresses solidarity with Ukraine as a victim. But the mediators are present in order to cancel Russian works.

When the members of the *Maestra* tour arrive in Katowice for the first concert of their European tour they prepare their first concert on March 8 that will include Beethoven, Clara Schuman, Silvia Colasanti (a contemporary composer) and... *Pulcinella* of Stravinsky, conducted by the Polish laureate, Anna Sulkowska-Migon. The director of the Polish Radio having received a mission letter from the Polish government asking her to withdraw all Russian programming and the Ukrainian Cultural Institute having also made the same request to the Polish authorities, The program saw the disappearance of Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*. Admittedly, the director told the *La Maestra* team that she would try to give back small touches of Russian culture, in homeopathic doses in the coming weeks. Although this speech is conciliatory considering that in the future this work can be replayed, it is without appeal in this beginning of March 2022. Playing the work of a Russian composer is inappropriate, especially when Katowice is already beginning to receive a large number of Ukrainian families fleeing the country.

Such a decision anticipates the calls of the Ukrainian Minister of Culture regarding cultural programming outside his country: "Oleksandr Tkachenko calls on the West to blacklist Russian culture in its entirety until the war is over" (*The Guardian*, December 7 2022). The decision of the Polish radio is symptomatic. In a country bordering Ukraine and Russia, whose history is marked by a strong resentment towards Moscow, whose memory of the communist era remains vivid, there is a closure to resonance. Anything that is considered Russian music is not (any more) audible. People are reluctant to be touched by the aesthetics produced by others (whether the creator or his interpreter). It is thus a double failure of musical diplomacy which is shown in this precise case: a failure for the work (which has nothing to do with a Russian inspiration as we have mentioned) but also for the young Polish conductor laureate whose gesture consists

precisely in being diplomatic, in establishing a bridge between a musical piece and the public.

### III. BETWEEN AUDIBLE AND NON-AUDIBLE AS A FRAGILE PATH FOR MUSICAL DIPLOMACY: BORIS GODUNOV IN EUROPE

Contrary to the previous example, the opera Boris Godunov has benefited from diversified receptions which have shown a plurality of positions towards cultural banishment since the beginning of the war.

#### a) *An a-typical work, far away from a tsarist panegyric*

The libretto of the opera was written by Mussorgsky himself from a play by Pushkin (1830), who was inspired by the works of the historian Karamzin and the first monumental history of Russia he wrote. The story is focused on the troubled times (1598-1613), giving substance to the plot. It relates the succession of Ivan IV the Terrible leaving two sons Fedor and Dimitri. The latter died of a stab wound in obscure circumstances. Suspected of having ordered this assassination, Boris Godunov as a former minister of Ivan manages to be elected Tsar when Fedor dies. During his reign, calamities hit the country. Uprisings begin to emerge, blaming the situation on the crime that Boris perpetrated on the little tsarevich. The opera depicts the end of the reign and the opposition between a pretender to the throne (who pretends to be Dimitri) and the death of Boris in the Kremlin while his military forces help fight against the Polish troops supporting the false Dimitri. Mussorgsky remains faithful to Karamzin's interpretation, namely that of the assassination ordered by Boris to access to political leadership.

The composer made two versions. The 1869 version was censored by the Mariinsky Theater in St. Petersburg. The decision of the committee of conservative musicians is explained by the lyrical innovations, namely the disappearance of bel canto and the introduction of melodic recitative more in line with the Russian language. In addition, there is no leading female role.

The musical sobriety is also manifested through consistent choices, such as the first sounds of the bell in the coronation scene. Judged very severely by composers such as Rimsky-Korsavov, this sequence is not intended to be a demonstration of festivity but a premonition of the death knell that will be imposed at the time of Boris' death (it is a sound anticipation of the last scene). But in both cases, it is an opera that distances itself from *Life for the Tsar* composed by Glinka (1836), which was an apology for the Tsarist regime. Nothing of such an advocacy in Mussorgsky's work. On the one hand, progressive students were inflamed by his music in 1874. On the other hand, the Five, a famous group of musicians of which Mussorgsky was a member, broke

up after this new creation, even though it was considered the most representative of what Russian musical production should embody.

The second version of 1872 no longer focuses on Boris' psychological portrait in all its complexity, between tenderness towards his children and the torment of his conscience. The Russian people themselves become the central character. The end of the work no longer corresponds to the death of the tsar but to the revolt of a people but which is always instrumentalized, whether by a criminal usurper like Boris or by an impostor taking advantage of the situation like the false Dimitri who relies on the dynamics of popular protest.

If the musical treatment varies (there are fewer aesthetic innovations in the second version than in the first), the work is closely associated with a transformation of the lyrical language and the topic dealt with. This work was rarely performed during the lifetime of its creator and was even removed from the repertoire of the imperial theaters by Tsar Alexander III.

More fundamentally, three additional signals allow us to dissociate Boris from a panegyric in favor of the tsarist regime. When Shostakovich was commissioned to produce a new version in 1939, he accepted it while interpreting it as an implicit critic expression of the Stalinist dictatorship. Some composers thus saw the work as a vehicle for challenging an omnipotent power. A second indication corresponds to the rediscovery of Mussorgsky's original manuscripts, which had fallen into oblivion after Rimsky-Korsakov's consequent revision, which ensured the international dissemination of the work from 1908 outside Russia, and emphasizes the fundamental scenes through which Mussorgsky underlines his relationship with the Tsar, especially Saint Basil moment. Not only does the latter come up against the demands of his people, victims of famine and disasters that are multiplying, but he is challenged by the *Innocent* (*Yourodivy* in Russian meaning "madman of God" or mystic enjoying an aura within Russian society). He explains to the tsar the very cause of these disasters: infanticide. A first denunciation of the power exercised by Boris because of the illegitimacy of his access to the throne. Finally, the last words of the work are not pronounced by Boris but by this *Innocent*. The words can be considered prophetic, prohibiting any form of imperialist advocacy. Mussorgsky places himself from the point of view of the governed and not the powerful: "Sink bitter tears, weep Orthodox soul! Soon the enemy will come and it will be dark, dark to see nothing! Cry, Russian people, poor starving people "...

#### b) *From Warsaw to Milano: two different positions*

Several cancellations have been made. In Poland, the Theatre Wielki justifies this withdrawal from the program for memorial reasons, as director



Waldemar Dabrowski points out: "We are the National Opera, the Polish National Opera. Our headquarters are located in Warsaw, a city where the historical memory of the first bombs falling during the Second World War is still alive. still alive. We are experiencing a war in Ukraine, as well as the suffering of the Ukrainian people (...) Therefore, we are cancelling the premiere of Boris Godunov on April 8, as well as all other performances" (Quoted in Roux 2022: 27).

But one of the most important moments in which the divide over this work becomes apparent is the premiere at La Scala in Milan on December 7, 2022, in the presence of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen. Not only is the work not cancelled, but it is also an opportunity to formulate a position on the place of music in the context of war. The Italian president, Sergio Mattarella, said: "Russian culture is an unshakeable part of Europe" (Fedorovski 2022).

This first has generated a series of strong protests. A mobilization on the square of the Scala denounced the performance, holding up signs against "the Russian terrorist state". The Ukrainian philosopher Sigov does not hesitate to see an act of propaganda behind such a performance: "Going to this show is, in my opinion, participating in something vile and toxic" (Sigov 2022). And to continue on the necessary translation in justice of all the Russian artists contributing to "militarize the culture" (notably Gergiev): "the acts of these Russian ambassadors of culture, but also of journalists who spread Putin's propaganda. They must be judged by a tribunal similar to that of Nuremberg, in the same way as the generals who order in the Donbass the same butchery as in Syria".

As for the Ukrainian Consul in Milan Andrii Kartysh, he simply calls for its deprogramming (Hagemann 2022). Faced with these critical comments, the director Dominique Meyer remains unyielding. In interviews with the press, he insists that the institution "does not apologize for anyone and certainly not for V. Putin. And to add that La Scala had organized a benefit concert for Ukraine, welcomed children from the dance school in Kiev and their parents but also canceled the commitments with the conductor Valery Gergiev after his pro-Putin statements.

Boris Godunov is the emblem of a critique of omnipotent power. Several voices do not hesitate to emphasize the very trajectory of this tsar whose tragic outcome Mussorgsky has depicted. Starting with the director of the work, Kasper Holten: "With this opera, Mussorgsky defied the power, which is one of the reasons why it should be staged. (Quoted in Reuters 2022). On top of that, the version favored by La Scala is the first one (1869), which highlights the torment of an individual in power who knows he has done wrong.

Thus, the American naturalized Russian conductor Bychkov declares: Rejecting the treasures of

Russian culture in the name of Russian culture in the name of an emotional reaction will lead nowhere. nowhere. On the contrary, it deprives mankind of works that often resonate strongly with the present. And they also denounce barbarism or autocratic regimes. Like Boris Godunov" (Bychkov 2022).

#### IV. MUSICAL DIPLOMACY AS MEDIATION IN WAR CONTEXT: CULTIVATING RESONANCE BEYOND AUDIBILITY

The examples mentioned show that classical music is indeed instrumentalized for political purposes in war situations. Trying to decipher these uses sometimes exposes scholars to media censorship, as Luis Velasco-Pufleau experienced to his cost when he established points of convergence between the Kremlin's organization of the concert in Palmyra and the solidarity concerts for Ukraine (Velasco-Pufleau 2022b). This awareness also leads some distributors to be cautious. This is the case of the French producer of the Red Army Choir, Thierry Wolf, who decided to cancel the ensemble's Canadian tour. members of the choir who are above all artists. But they wear the uniform of the Russian army. Under these conditions, it is not possible to promote this ensemble while there is an armed conflict in Ukraine. This aggression is absolutely illegitimate in our eyes" (quoted in Filhol & a. 2022).

At the same time, Aline Sam-Giao, president of Forces musicales and general manager of the Orchestre national de Lyon, is keen to explain to the public the reasons for maintaining "Russian" works: "When we carefully read our programming, we realized that many of the works programmed referred, directly or indirectly, to When we looked at our program carefully, we realized that many of the works programmed referred, directly or indirectly, to the hegemonic history of Russia. Whether it be Russian composers born in what is now Ukraine, such as Prokofiev, or composers such as Sibelius, whose Symphony No. 2 has become the emblem of Finland's resistance to Russia. All these works, first and foremost the Russian ones, many of which have been able to serve as a counter-fire, can enlighten us instead of dividing our cultures" (Quoted in Filhol 2022).

Such decisions can be linked to benevolent conducts in international relations that does not rhyme with mawkishness and good feelings (Ramel 2022). They are above all a disposition that may (or may not) be translated into action in a subtle manner, even in this apparent decomposition of musical autonomy we described.

For instance, the Maestra tour described above was less exposed to the cancelation process. Pulcinella did not undergo deprogramming in the Netherlands and France for the rest of the tour. Besides, the competition welcomed the young Russian candidate Maria Kurochkina, having left Moscow the day after the



invasion by taking a flight to Budapest before joining Paris. She decided not to return to Russia, feeling guilty about the situation in Ukraine. And in addition, the Orchestra Award went to a young German of Ukrainian origin Ustina Dubitsky, who is in addition to being very talented, is particularly highly mobilized against the war.

Drawing these benevolent paths in cultural diplomacy does not mean considering benevolence as the backbone of politics or foreign policies. Benevolence must be compared to a brick, to a binder as a source of civility. It does not embody a keystone like justice in society. As a cement, benevolence connects even though it identifies a delicate path because nothing allows us to impose a benevolent behavior on a third party, except by example, inviting him to adopt this form of conduct. In culture, benevolence may be linked to the process of transculturation as a way to welcome the other and to develop a thick listening of what he gives into a relation. As the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz pointed out, transculturation "better expresses the different phases of the process of transition from one culture to another because this does not consist merely in acquiring another culture, which is what the English word *acculturation* really implies, but the process also necessarily involves the loss of uprooting of a previous culture, which could be defined as a deculturation. In addition it carries the idea of the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena, which could be called neoculturation". It takes distance with the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (2017) by proposing an alternative way relied on cultural exchange. That's also what Yo Yo Ma stresses when coming back to one of this album titled "Songs of Comfort and Hope" (2020).

The philosophy of *OneBeat* develops a similar perspective. This initiative of the US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs program in collaboration with the New York City Arts Organization Found Sound Nation, "brings musicians (ages 19-35) from around the world to a region of the US for one month (...) to collaboratively write, produce and perform original music, and develop strategies for arts-based social engagement". As Nicholas Cull underlines, this program goes beyond American musicians' promotion abroad by changing the focus, ie. to "produce a musical conversation".

All these transcultural programs illustrate a people-to-people diplomacy that extends a classical cultural diplomacy limited to the same professional categories between borders (the formal State agents). For the American case, Eisenhower's People-to-People International (PTPI) created in the 1950's progressively changed in the end of the Cold War. Individuals like students or ordinary people shaped international diplomacy at the grassroots levels. This evolution shows that "the people-to-people concept, which held ordinary individuals responsible for building bonds across

borders, was flexible and enduring even as it took shape at different historical moments and against different geopolitical realities. Private individuals have been drawn to the idea of mutual understanding as a pathway to peace".

When cultural diplomacy between States is made impossible by war, is it still possible to cultivate spaces of neutrality outside official institutions? This is what benevolent conduct in cultural diplomacy suggests. Apart from state structures, individuals and associations can take initiatives in order to develop mixed concert programs, or even the creation of transcultural works. Here, the grassroots cultural diplomacy would join what makes the essence of diplomacy. When benevolence does not aim at cultivating the social agency of others, paternalism arises. Such a restraint appears in the context of war as Lieutenant Colonel Harry H. Crosby decided to change military targets in 1943, after knowing that Bonn was the birthplace of Beethoven : "we do not attack Bonn" he said . But this thick recognition of the other in cultural diplomacy presupposes two processes that can be identified since last February 24<sup>th</sup> 2022: to respect the singularity of individuals beyond their national belonging, and to help people when they ask for it.

## V. CONCLUSION

In the so-called "post-conflict" period, making music is neither a substitute for politics (offering a practical alternative) nor a refuge from politics (dispensing some kind of drug to soothe one's pain) (O'Connel, Castel di Branco 2010). This would be too much to ask of the powers of music, even though music therapy was born to respond to the traumas of veterans after 1945... On the one hand, some people who have experienced war may refuse to practice music or simply to listen. The wounds are too raw, as the NGO Women to Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina has understood, which, organizing choral singing sessions, encounters women who are opposed to the very principle of making their inner chord resonate. On the other hand, post-conflict musical programs, although fueled by reconciliatory goals, find one of their main engines in a subjective search for joy, playfulness, a "normal" life ... in short, a set of reasons far removed from the goals set by donors mostly outside the field. This modesty in the pacifying effects of music does not prevent the expression of a real ambition for musical diplomacy, including in times of war. These diplomacies, which are no longer restricted to policies implemented by States, aim to weave links between individuals and communities through music. "Art should not be a weapon, but a bridge", said Maximilian Maier, a host of the Bavarian radio station BR Klassik (Dalley 2022). With the Russian aggression against Ukraine, this bridge is very delicate to build...

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