TEORIA MUZYKI 22–23 (2025), ISSN 2299-8454
DOI: 10.26377/22998454tm.24.22-23.070

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The Georgian-Polish Music "Contact Zone" (The Example of the 1960s)

The Significance of Music Contact Zones: Exploring Focus Areas and Rationale

In 1991, Mary Louise Pratt wrote her essay "Arts of the Contact Zone"[1] in which she originally used this concept to describe spaces where different cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often resulting in the creation of new meanings, identities, and forms of expression. Back in the 1990s Pratt argued that contact zones were important because they offered opportunities for exchange, and for negotiating meanings**.** While Mary Louise Pratt did not specifically focus on isolated political regimes like the Soviet Union, her concept of the contact zone holds significant implications for various socio-political contexts, and might be used toward the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was a tightly controlled entity, effectively creating a closed world that confined the understanding of global boundaries to the borders of its 15 Soviet republics. Thus, the isolation of the Soviet Union carried not only political implications but also profound cultural challenges. Isolated political regimes necessitate a heightened emphasis on cultural exchange and information sharing. This need becomes particularly pronounced

1 Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone", *Profession* (1991), 33–40.

in politically repressive cultures that stifle vibrant cultural activity, impose strict controls on cultural expression, and where information is scarce or controlled and access to vivid musical processes restricted. In general, these contact zones played a pivotal role in navigating cultural crises and shaping both the cultural and political landscapes of the Soviet Union.

Much like the broader concept of "contact zone" discussed by Mary Louise Pratt, a **musical contact zone** under Soviet rule used to be a dynamic space where "cultural goods were exchanged"[2] and where diverse musical practices and expressions came into contact, intersect and influence each other. Within this dynamic space, individuals from various artistic backgrounds and cultures could engage in dialogue, resulting in a rich tapestry of ideas, sounds, and techniques. Moreover, these musical contact zones served as fertile ground for dialogue, collaboration, and the sharing of knowledge among individuals with diverse perspectives, thereby contributing to the ever-evolving landscape of global music. However, contact zones in isolated regimes have ambivalent meanings, bearing both positive and negative connotations. It should not be overlooked that Soviet Union utilized contact zones as mechanisms to control ongoing cultural processes, reinforcing standardized rules, and upholding socialist realism within the empire and consolidating its control. However, after Stalin's death, these contact zones took on a new and critical role, allowing participants to taste forbidden fruit and try to deviate from the standardized canon imposed by the regime.

One might ask the following question: Why focus on the Georgian-Polish musical contact zone? What makes Poland significant in this context? What renders the Georgian-Polish contact zone significant in the post-Stalin era and subsequent musical developments?

Hence, there are specific reasons for the focus on the Polish-Georgian relationship in the 1960s: the initial aspect to consider is the rich historical foundations of Georgian-Polish cultural relations, dating back to the 18th century. These contact zones in culture have played a significant role in shaping history, particularly during the challenging times of Russification in Georgia and the brief independence of that country at the beginning of the XX century, marked by notable milestones in art, architecture, music, art education, and more. Despite the fact that this historical connection has been the subject of a thorough examination, it is unfortu-

2 Lisa Jakelski, *Making new music in Cold War Poland: the Warsaw Autumn Festival, 1956–1968* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 80–83. Lisa Jakelski, "Pushing Boundaries: Mobility at the Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music," *Eastman School of Music, East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 29 (2015), 189–211.

nate that the realm of musical contacts has been largely neglected. Furthermore, important historical and political developments in both countries in the XX century (Poland and Georgia)[3] encompassing various historical upheavals made an imprint on the main principles governing their musical development. Additionally, Poland, took on a pivotal role in the 1960s as a musical trailblazer, bridging the gap in knowledge and information exchange not only between the Western and Eastern political blocks but also towards the Soviet republics.

Another aspect to consider is that the 1960s marked a period of change and opportunity, offering a breath of fresh air in the Soviet cultural landscape. The Polish compositional school and Penderecki in particular were of vital importance for post-Stalinist Soviet art music since it implied the probability that this music would be challenged by the different aesthetic values of sonic exploration and ongoing technical innovation […] however it destabilized presumptive hierarchies of cultural influence within the Soviet sphere and mitigated Cold War divisions […].[4] Thus, in post-Stalinist times it consisted of a wide range of "cultural goods" in its origins, including stylistic pluralism, language, compositional techniques, and musical aesthetic. As Poland's significance as a cultural mediator became apparent, it became equally crucial to recognize its unique position within the Eastern communist political bloc. Despite being a member of this bloc, Poland held a distinct status, akin to being seen as "abroad" by Soviet people and artists. Following Stalin's death, Poland assumed the role of an icebreaker, particularly in the realm of music, daring to challenge the musical reality of socialist realism and openly acknowledge and confront the obstacles inherent in operating within a closed environment. The generation of Georgian composers often referred to as the "60ers," benefited greatly from the lifting of the Iron Curtain, experiencing newfound artistic freedoms; They began to gain access to information about music from the West that had previously been out of reach (works by Bartok, Penderecki, Stravinsky, the Second Vienna School, the post-war European avant-garde). This marked a significant shift, highlighting the enhanced importance of contact zones, especially following Stalin's death.

3 After a brief period of independence (1918–1921) Georgia was occupied by Russia (1921) and forcibly incorporated into the USSR until 1991. Poland suffered two occupations in the XX century (Germany, The Soviet Union). After the Nazi occupation during World War 2, Poland fell within the sphere of Soviet influence, experiencing a communist take-over (1944–1948), followed by Polish Stalinism (1948–1956), and National communism (1956–1980), and its fall (1989), preceded by the years of Solidarity movement and Martial Law (1981–1983).

4 Lisa Jakelski, "Pushing Boundaries: Mobility at the Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music", in *Eastman School of Music, East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 29 (2015), 189–211.

The Georgian-Polish musical contact zone is a significant realm of cultural exchange, spanning over 200 years of shared history. However, particular emphasis in this article is placed on the Soviet era and, as a consequence, on Soviet Georgia. We divide the history of Georgian-Polish relationships into several stages: during the Russian Empire, during the Soviet period, and in the post-Soviet era. Under Soviet rule, interactions between Georgians and Poles were closely monitored and influenced by the overarching presence of the Soviet regime, ensuring that cultural connections were never purely independent but were always under the watchful eye of "big brother."

Musical Contact Zone: Concept, Meaning, Types and Ambiguity

Let us start with the main question: how did the Georgian-Polish musical contact zone originate? and how did it function under Soviet rule?

As we navigate the intricate dynamics of cultural exchange under Soviet rule, it becomes clear that defining the types and boundaries of these zones presents a formidable challenge. The terms "internal" and "external" contact zones carry nuanced meanings, evoking a spectrum of interpretations in the context of music. "Internal" typically pertains to interactions within the confines of the Soviet empire and its Eastern political bloc, while "external" applies to spaces beyond this sphere of influence. Georgia and Poland were both under Soviet rule, yet they exhibited subtle differences.

Despite Poland's status as an independent state in terms of national sovereignty, its alignment with communist ideology and political dynamics situated it within the broader sphere of Soviet influence. Consequently, Poland served as a conduit for cultural exchange and cultural tourism from the Soviet Union, indicating a unique dynamic within the Soviet sphere. Within this framework, I advocate for delineating two types of contact zones in Georgian-Polish musical relationships.

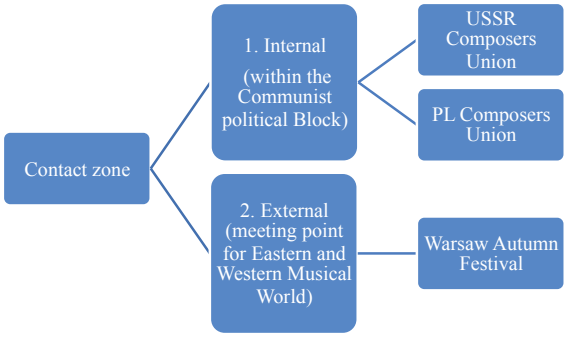

Figure 1. Diagram illustrating the "contact zone" in the musical sphere, highlighting its dual function: internal and external

The internal contact zone historically functioned as a point of rendezvous between Polish and Soviet composers, including representatives from each republic, while also facilitating meetings with the composers' unions of individual republics. Meanwhile, the external meeting point represented a contact zone between the creative minds of the Eastern and Western political blocs.

When did the contact zone between Georgia and Poland originate during the Soviet regime? We can quite confidently asset that musical relations between the two countries began to take shape following Stalin's death; the exact beginnings of these contact zones can vary depending on the specific context and nature of these interactions, which may have evolved gradually over time. However, insights gleaned from the archives of Polish Composers' Union and Warsaw Autumn Festival (WAF) provide valuable evidence to support the assertion that the first meeting took place in 1958.[5]

5 The Polish Institute of Culture in Tbilisi made it possible for me to work in the Musicological Department of the Institute of Art at the Polish Academy of Science (ISPAN) as well as at the Polish Music Information Centre POLMIC (Polskie Centrum Informacji Muzycznej POLMIC) of the Polish Composers Union (ZKP) in January-February, May, 2019 and examine the WAF archives from 1956–1991. My sincere gratitude goes to the staff of the POLMIC (Izabela Zymer – Assistant Director, Wiktoria Antonczyk and Agnieszka Cieślak) for their invaluable help as well as to Dr. Beata Bolesławska-Lewandowska from the ISPAN for materials and consultations. The research visit was supported by the Polish Institute of Culture in Tbilisi.

Table 1. Composers featured at WAF, including those both performing and attending as official and ZKP guests[6]

WAF official delegation			**WAF ZKP delegation**
Year	**Performed**	**Attended**	**Guests**
1958	O. Taktakishvili		V. Muradeli
1959	S. Tsintsadze		
1962		A. Machavariani, F. Glonti, N. Svanidze, G. Kancheli	
1963		T. Kvirikadze (musicologist)	
1969	O.Taktakishvili	B. Kvernaze	
1971			N. Gabunia, P. Khuchua (musicologist)
1972		A. Balanchivadze	A. Balanchivadze, B. Kvernadze, A. Matchavariani, S. Nasidze, G. Kancheli
1973			O. Gordeli
1974			G. Orjonikidze (musicologist)
1975			N. Gabunia, G. Kancheli
1986, 1991, 1995, 1997, 2007	G. Kancheli		

6 Information and more detailed analyses about Georgian musicians' pilgrimages to the Warsaw Autumn Festival (WAF) can be found in Nana Sharikadze's 2019 article titled: "Global Music Processes: About Influences and Analogues in the Georgian Music of the 60s of the Last Century", Georgian Electronic Scientific Journal: Musicology and Cultural Science (2019), 16–28, http://gesj.internet-academy.org.ge/en/list_artic_en.php?b_sec=muz&issue=2019-12 (last accessed: 14.03.2024).

The table[7] above contains officially recorded information.[8] Based on this investigation, it can be inferred that nearly all composers of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s – not included on the list of official delegations – visited the Warsaw Autumn Festival (WAF) at least once, with some attending multiple times.[9]

Through the WAF Soviet Georgian composers encountered a much broader musical world than they were familiar with. The Warsaw Autumn Festival provided young musicians with the opportunity to explore music from both sides of the Iron Curtain. It was during this period that Polish composers began crafting their own response to musical trends in the West, particularly regarding twelve-tone composition, serialism, and pointillism. G. Kancheli was 29 years old when he first attended the WAF in 1962, an experience that turned out to be profoundly transformative in his life. As G. Kancheli noted in 1962: "I have crossed a political boundary […] because Poland was a socialist country where people felt free to do things that were inadmissible in another socialist country – the Soviet Union."[10] That truly marked a crossing of musical borders, as it was the year when Kancheli and his colleagues (A. Machavariani, F. Glonti, N. Svanidze)[11] first had the opportunity to hear compositions from different generations of Polish composers[12] including representatives of formalist music.[13] It was a significant period marked by the discovery and recognition of the challenges posed by this music.

The aforementioned archives provide us with evidence that these visits were reciprocal; members of the Polish Composers Union visited their Georgian colleagues in

7 Ibidem, 16–28.

8 However, WAF was also treated as a tourist destination by representatives of Soviet culture. Unfortunately, no members of any delegation as a tourist group were officially recorded, and there is no information available in the archive of the Georgian National Composers Union.

9 It can certainly be argued that the only composer who was never part of any Georgian delegation was Mikheil Shugliashvili – a representative of the unofficial musical scene.

10 Krzysztof Droba, "Spotkania z Gią Kanczelim" [Meetings with Giya Kancheli], in *Duchowość Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej w muzyce końca XX wieku* [The Spirituality of Central and Eastern Europe in Late 20th-Century Music], ed. by K. Droba, T. Malecka, K. Szwajgier (Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, 2004), 335.

11 There is little information about Natela Svanidze, the most neglected woman composer, another representative of unofficial Georgian musical life, who changed her compositional style drastically after WAF.

12 Bacewicz (*Concert for Orchestra*), Baard (*Variations Without a Theme*), Barber (*Summer Music*), Dobrowolski (*Music No 1*), Górecki (*Concerto for 5 instruments*, *Quartet* op. 20), Kilar (*Riff 62*), Kotoński (*Canto per complesso da camera*), Mycielski (*2nd Symphony*), Nono (*Epitaphium*), Penderecki (*Kanon for orchestra*, *Psalmus*), Schaeffer (*Musica ipsa*).

13 The concert program of the 1962 WAF program also included other composers from the XX century avantgarde, among them: Cardew (*Third orchestral piece*), Carter (*Eight Etudes and a Phantasy*), Castiglioni (*Apreslude*), Dalapiccola (*Cinque canti*), Kagel (*Transicion I*), Varese (*Arcana*), and Xenakis – *Pithopracta for orchestra.*

Tbilisi on multiple occasions and facilitated through various channels, including Polish cultural days in Tbilisi (1959, 1973); Polish cultural days in Kiev, Tbilisi, Vilnius, Riga, and Leningrad (1973); concerts featuring Polish composers in different Soviet cities (such as Lutoslawski's Concerto for Orchestra, in Tbilisi, 1969); events like *muzyczny Zakavkazka wiosna w Tbilisi* (1965); the Polish Composers Union's visit to Tbilisi (1974); the appearance of Polish composers in different cities of the USSR including Tbilisi (1975, 1978, 1979). Typically, two reciprocal visits were carried out each year: one between July and November, and the other between December and May.

During the course of various gatherings and events held both in provincial Soviet cities and in the center, Moscow, the following composers performed their works: Henryk Czyż, Andrzej Dobrowolski, Zbigniew Wiszniewski, Henryk Swolkień, Władysław Szpilman, Eugeniusz Dziewulski; Michał Spisak, Grażyna Bacewicz, Witold Lutosławski, Bolesław Szabelski, Ryszard Bukowski, Edward Bury, Tadeusz Kaczyński, Władysław Słowiński, Piotr Perkowski and others.[14] In 1966, Georgian Soviet composers attended a meeting at the Leningrad Composers House, where works by Penderecki and Bogusław Schaeffer were heard on tape recordings. In 1967, almost all Soviet composers listened to Penderecki's "Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima;" The premiere of Penderecki's 1st quartet took place in 1968 in Leningrad, while a concert featuring Lutosławski's "Concerto for Orchestra," was held in Tbilisi in the spring of 1969. It is worth mentioning that the most frequently performed composer during the Polish cultural days organized in the USSR was Lutosławski (whose work was performed in Tbilisi 4 times in the 1960s alone – in 1963/64/66/67), followed by Grażyna Bacewicz, Bolesław Woytowicz, Kazimierz Serocki, Karol Maciej Szymanowski, Wojciech Kilar and others. In addition, Penderecki's "De Natura Sonoris" had its premiere in the USSR during the Polish cultural days in Minsk in 1978. Despite the fact that these works were heard in various cities across the USSR (Mainly in the cities Moscow, Leningrad, Tbilisi, Vilnius, Minsk, Kiev, Erevan, Baku and others) composers from the Soviet Brotherhood of Nations also attended these events.[15]

What were the underlying reasons behind the creation of this contact zone?

14 It is well documented that Krzysztof Penderecki never visited Georgia.

15 The details regarding the annual artistic exchanges between Poland and the USSR is sourced from the ZKP archives. It provides the names and works of Polish composers and performers who visited the Soviet Union or whose works were performed there, as well as the names of those who visited Poland from the USSR. Unfortunately, we lack information about mobility within the USSR; in particular, we do not have any records of which composers from the various republics attended events and gatherings in other cities. Regrettably, no archival materials are preserved in the Georgian Composers Union that could provide us with a comprehensive overview of the attendees

There existed a significant information gap regarding musical trends and novelties within the USSR. However, after Stalin's death, contact zones became increasingly topical, providing avenues for cross-cultural exchange and the sharing of artistic insights. The concept of the Georgian-Polish musical contact zone involves the process of drawing parallels or uncovering similarities between different cultural phenomena. One notable similarity lies in the crises that both countries' creative minds faced after World War II and Stalin's death.

The Stalinist regime, with its Iron Curtain and policies of isolation, significantly damaged the broader cultural landscape and musical scene, impacting not only the Soviet republics but also the countries within the Soviet influence zone. It should be pointed out that contact zones within in the Soviet Union served an important party-administrative and ideological function. They were instrumental in spreading the virus of a standardized canon universal for all and maintaining its official status. While it may seem that music, with its universality and unique language, enjoys a certain degree of guaranteed freedom, it is essential to recognize the underlying dynamics at play. As T. Tobin aptly points out, conquest, dominance, hegemony, and the pursuit of power extend beyond mere territorial control. They encompass the imposition of one way of life over another population, often through the transformation or replacement of aspects of the target population's culture. This process, described as the forced extension of a nation's authority beyond its own boundaries, highlights the intricate power dynamics inherent in cultural exchange and domination.[16] The introduction of Socialist Realism as the only permissible creative method, a linguae franca for art in Soviet Union and its satellite countries, is an obvious example of this. Poland, in particular, faced the brunt of socialist realism's effects and acknowledged the importance of cultivating a reservoir of ideas to address the crises it confronted after the Second World War. The main concept underlying this crisis is best described by the well-known Polish composer Zygmunt Mycielski:[17]

> Unfortunately, we live in a world that is closed – and practically speaking – isolated from the artistic life surrounding us. Even numerous official visits, congresses, or conventions, which only a few – usually the same – artists and virtuosos attend, do not help here. This is not true artistic contact. Artistic con-

of these meetings in different cities. It is possible that such information may be archived in Moscow, but access to these records is currently unavailable to us.

16 Theresa Tobin, "Cultural Imperialism [Encyclopedia Entry]", in *Philosophy Faculty Research and Publications*, 2007, https://epublications.marquette.edu/phil_fac/343 (last accessed: 15.03.2024), 537.

17 Zygmunt Mycielski (1907–1987) – Polish composer and music critic; co-editor of journals such as *Res Facta*, *Rocznik Chopinowski (Chopin Yearly)* and *Chopin Studies*; chief editor of this magazine. He was co-editor and, later, chief editor of *Ruch Muzyczny (Music Motion)*.

> tact means concert life, and concert programs in which a person can determine the best achievements of music from around the world; it means easy access to publications, exchanges of the finest soloists and conductors. […] [W]e are becoming a provincial land, in which we cannot imagine either how or what is being played or produced in other places. […] Here in Poland the majority of musicians are not acquainted with Prokofiev's Sinfonie-Concertante for cello and orchestra, and we do not know all of Shostakovich's symphonies, or even the compositions of Janacek or Bartok, or the current works of Honegger, Stravinsky, Britten or Messiaen. […] Such is the state of things.[18]

The situation in Georgian art music during the 1960s closely mirrored that of Poland Akaki Bakradze, a prominent Georgian publicist and writer, echoed similar sentiments in literature, which as Sharikadze noted[19], can also be readily applied to Georgian art music.

> Any doctrine was an expression of Russia's interest. […] What is good and admissible for Russia is good and admissible for Georgia (and for all non-Russians). We have become one of Russia's provinces like the Tambov or Kaluga regions.[20]

The standardized canon deemed universal for all, "a canon of approved texts"[21], imposed strict control over culture, shaping the mindset of society. Music served as a potent tool in this process of sense-making. If colonialism entails control over freedom, the term "decolonialization" suggests resistance and liberation from established dogmas in music, thereby embracing cultural and artistic pluralism.

If we assume that the fundamental nature of the center-periphery relationship in the Soviet Union was characterized by "the practice of domination, which involved the subjugation of one people to another,"[22] then it becomes evident that there was little recognition of the importance of fostering cultural and artistic pluralism. Instead, the system embodied strict mechanisms of control, suppressing diversity and enforcing conformity.

18 Zygmunt Mycielski, "Biography", in Polskie Centrum Informacji Muzycznej, https://mycielski.polmic.pl/en/life/biography (last accessed: 18.12.2024).

19 Nana Sharikadze, *Introduction to Georgian Art Music. Sense-making Through Music* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2023).

20 Akaki Bakradze, *Taming Literature* (Tbilisi: Giorgi Leonidze State Museum of Georgian Literature, 2019).

21 Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, edition 3: *History as Ritual* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 344.

22 Margaret Kohn, and Reddy Kavita, "Colonialism", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2022), ed. by E.N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/colonialism (last accessed: 25.03.2024).

In this context, the concept of the contact zone signifies more than just the possibility of acquiring information beyond what was officially allowed. It represents a space in which individuals and cultures could challenge the hegemonic narratives imposed by the center.

Furthermore, when considering the concept of a musical contact zone, in particular the Georgian-Polish musical zone after Stalin's death, we must take into account a certain spectrum of nuanced elements. Is it valid to suggest that the crises following Stalin's death experienced on the Soviet periphery, such as in Georgia, or in Poland as a satellite country, could be overcome with the support of a contact zone? In reaction to the crisis that socialist realism as a lingua franca created for all those living under Soviet rule, these zones encompassed such actions as direct interaction, the sharing of ideas, beliefs, practices, identities, ongoing processes, and information, which did not necessarily need to be transformed into influence or analogies. In light of these circumstances, what defines the essence of such a contact zone? Is it primarily a platform for the transmission of influence or the exchange of analogies? Does it primarily facilitate inspiration drawn from shared experiences, or does it foster a dynamic dialogue between diverse musical traditions? Moreover, does it predominantly serve as a reservoir for uncovering commonalities that bind cultures together, or does it offer a space for the exploration of differences, enriching our understanding of diverse musical expressions? Is this about the influence of individual composers? Or does it come down to forging a distinct trajectory within the system, diverging from established norms to carve out its own unique path? However, I would argue that within the Soviet system and under Soviet rule, the concept encompasses all of these aspects and much more. Ultimately, such a contact zone functions as a dynamic arena in which interactions, exchanges, and negotiations shape individuals, cultures, and societies. Remarkably, its effectiveness transcends circumstances, making it equally impactful in any context.

This leads me to interpret Krzysztof Penderecki's famous quote, "Music is not just a series of sounds or notes; it is an experience that touches the soul, evokes emotions, and transcends language barriers. It is a journey that takes us to places beyond the physical realm, connecting us with our innermost selves and with others in profound ways,"[23] thus implying that contact zones serve as a canvas for understanding music as an experience. In the context of music contact zones, where diverse cultures and traditions intersect, this idea becomes even more pronounced. Indeed, music contact zones were also about how we perceive music as

23 Mieczysław Tomaszewski, *Krzysztof Penderecki and His Music: Four Essays* (Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, 2003).

an experience. Music has the power to resonate with us on different layers, from the emotional to the intellectual. Sometimes, these meeting points served as the most accurate descriptors of the state of art under the Soviet rule while simultaneously inspiring further developments. These meeting points acted as icebreakers, providing musicians with much-needed connections and opportunities for collaboration, telling the stories of music as an experience. They offered a breath of fresh air, enabling musicians to exchange ideas, share experiences, and find inspiration from diverse perspectives. These interactions not only provided a sense of community and camaraderie but also fueled artistic growth and innovation. In this context, music as an experience became a means of transcending isolation, forging connections, and navigating through challenging circumstances, ultimately allowing musicians to grasp new opportunities and move forward in their creative journeys.

When discussing the cultural landscape of the 1960s, the names that inevitably come to mind are, among others, Kancheli, Schnittke, Gubaidulina, Denisov, Pärt, along with the Polish avant-garde school led by Penderecki. This is far from mere coincidence; Indeed, during the 1960s, these names stood at the vanguard of progressive cultural movements within the Eastern political bloc. Their prominence not only speaks to their individual contributions but also underscores the forward-thinking musical ideas within the Eastern political bloc. Moreover, their willingness to challenge established norms and foster artistic freedom resonated deeply with the broader cultural and political climate of the time. Within the confines of the Eastern Bloc, there was a growing desire for individual expression. Moreover, it highlights the contacts and collaborations between like-minded individuals, which played a crucial role in shaping the cultural landscape of the time. Importantly, this dynamic fostered a pool of equal relationships, eschewing dominance and embracing a center-peripheral approach. In this environment, creative exchange thrived, allowing for a rich interplay of ideas and influences, ultimately contributing to the vibrancy and diversity of Eastern Bloc musical culture during the 1960s.

"What" and "How"?

Besides the shock that Georgian composers experienced in attending the Warsaw Autumn Festival in 1962, the Polish music experience was important for an additional reason: Penderecki composed his "Fluorescences" in 1961–62 for orchestra, which marked a departure with its more radical orchestration that featured the use of a saw and a typewriter. Preceding this work were compositions such as

"Emanations" (for 2 string orchestras, 1958), "Anaklasis" (for 42 string instruments and percussion, 1960), "Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima" (for 52 string instruments, 1962), and "Polymorphia" (for 48 string instruments, 1961), followed two years later by *St Luke Passion* (1964–66), a brilliant synthesis of modernity and tradition. We can state with some certainty that even if Soviet composers were unaware of these pieces, it would not have been possible to close the borders to these influences. They had already shaken the "sustainability" of the ideologically-driven Soviet understanding of music as art.

Undoubtedly, the recollection of the music "as an experience" in these works of Penderecki came down to a revolutionary exploration of colorism in Polish music. It began in the early 1920s with Szymanowski, and resurfaced with renewed vigor in the 1950s and 1960s as a response to the confinements of strict serialism, spearheaded by Krzysztof Penderecki. Besides him, other notable composers such as Grażyna Bacewicz, Henryk Górecki, Kazimierz Serocki, Wojciech Kilar, Witold Szalonek, Witold Rudziński, Zbigniew Bujarski, Zbigniew Penherski, and Zygmunt Krauze have also explored the realm of Sonorism, contributing to its evolution and prominence.

I am hesitant to formalize these discussions strictly in terms of similarities and analogies. However, it is worth noting that the experiences of Georgian composers in the 1960s differed somewhat from those of their Polish counterparts. Georgian art music had only recently begun to establish itself during the country's brief period of independence (1917-1921). Unfortunately, this fledgling progress was disrupted by the occupation in 1921 and the imposition of the aesthetics of Socialist Realism, which forcefully introduced new artistic norms leading to a 30-year crisis in Georgian art music.[24] For over 30 years following the Soviet occupation of the country, many Georgian composers chose a more subdued path. Unfortunately, the era of Socialist Realism, characterized by an extremely isolated aesthetic platform, often hindered the pursuit of individual artistic aspirations. The inability to break free from strictly imposed rules resulted in a scarcity of quality compositions.

These periods, obscured by the Iron Curtain, not only constituted an era of omission but also of a missed opportunity for exploring different compositional techniques and experiments. In light of the experience of omission that characterized these decades we might ask ourselves not only what was excluded during this

24 As an isolated concept Socialist realism had a detrimental impact on the artistic quality of music created between the 1920s and the 1950s. Regrettably, none of the pieces produced during this period have endured on the contemporary musical scene or in today's concert life.

time, but also what elements, and trends, were essential for our perception of the world and what music as an experience resonated with our collective consciousness. Indeed, a shared awareness led not only to a desire to fill the gaps but also to explore a world previously uncharted or introduced, at least within the realm of Georgian art music. In the 1960s, the contact zone was primarily a place for exploring the themes of God, spirituality, death, sorrow, and the search for the meaning of life. From the perspective of Georgian musicians of the 1960s, music as an experience equated with a quest to find the essence of life, not only in how it was expressed but also in what it conveyed.

The most challenging aspect of this exploration lay in its engagement with profound and painful themes of trauma in general and generational trauma in 1960s Georgia in particular. Kancheli proved brave enough to address these issues through his music, which delved into the profounder aspects of human existence. These traumas were intertwined with themes of religion, life, death, identity, and national consciousness, all expressed through musical language and chants that were banned under Soviet rule. This reflection encapsulated the essence of the human experience. The entire history of culture and human existence has been played out in a battle between life and death, vanity and passion, earth and heaven, a process of creation that comes always from one's roots.

When discussing the Georgian-Polish contact zone, there's an inherent temptation to compare and seek analogies between Penderecki and Kancheli. While direct comparisons between these two giants of 20th-century music may not be immediately apparent, what holds the most value is their individual expressions in different contexts and how they conveyed their artistic vision. The declarations of Penderecki and Kancheli, with the former acknowledging that he would never have composed his Polish Requiem if he had lived in New Zealand,[25] and the latter asserting that his sole inspiration is Georgian traditional music, underscore the deeply rooted nature of their music in their cultural backgrounds and personal perspectives. For both of them, roots serve as the foundation from which they draw inspiration. These statements highlight how their compositions reflect their unique experiences and perspectives, shaped by the roots they navigated. Kancheli's second symphony, *Chants*, was inspired by *Church Songs* published in 1968–70. Although Kancheli titled the symphony *Chants*, he did not directly incorporate any

25 In a 2013 interview for the Louisiana Channel, an online video channel run by the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark, he said: "I was not living in easy times. If I had been born in New Zealand, maybe, I would never have written Polish Requiem or pieces connected with the history of war." See "Interview for the Louisiana Channel," in *Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark*, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atz2MODHe5Q (last accessed: 23.01.2024).

quotations from actual chants.[26] Kancheli was deeply fascinated by the polyphonic songs of Georgia, often expressing his admiration for the mysterious and intangible spirit they carried – something he felt he could never fully comprehend.[27] Instead, the symphony is built on song-like thematic fragments of Kancheli's own devising, deployed and contrasted with unusually colorful orchestration. Aside from this, the Second Symphony is a further logical step in his stylistic development.

Kancheli's 3rd Symphony (1973) opens a new chapter in exploring identity, featuring the voice of renowned Georgian folk singer Hamlet Gonashvili and the traditional quotation from the Svan zari (a funeral song-lamentation). However, its resemblances with the melodic line lack any tragic emotions, but instead create a quiet, tranquil atmosphere. It is quite challenging to discern where the boundary between the collective and the personal lies. Perhaps that is the essence of music as an experience: it unites the collective and the individual, weaving them into a universal narrative that resonates with all.

Tomaszewski's opposition between good and evil, beauty and ugliness, underscores the dichotomy prevalent in the generation of the 1960s.[28] Amidst fear and boldness, the stark reality of black and white, perhaps this contact zone identified a common stance on the world and a shared pain. "The country of sorrow is doomed, and what remains of this sorrow and pain should not linger in the depths of the heart,"[29] This feeling of grief resonates deeply with Penderecki as well. His threnody serves as a "wailing ode of grief," a reflection on the unbearable pain caused by Hiroshima.

Indeed, this is the pain of loss, experienced through buried hope, that Kancheli, a composer raised in an environment of two faiths (Orthodoxy and Catholicism), imprints into his music with additional spiritual depth: "[…] My generation," – admitted Kancheli, "was indoctrinated with the notion of two almighty gods: one in the mausoleum and the other in the Kremlin. All verses, music, and poetry were dedicated to them. When I first became aware of my actual surroundings and the ideology under which we lived, I realized that my entire life had been spent try-

26 For more information see Nana Sharikadze, *An Introduction to Georgian Art Music*.

27 Giya Kancheli, "A critical selection", https://www.siue.edu/~aho/musov/kancheli/kancheli3.html (last accessed: 18.12.2024).

28 Mieczysław Tomaszewski, *Penderecki. Bunt i wyzwolenie* [*Rebellion and Liberation*], volume 2: *Odzyskiwanie raj*u [Reclaiming Paradise] (Kraków: PWM, 2009).

29 სევდისფერი ქვეყანა (sevdisferi qvekana) – land in the colors of sorrow, blue country – an expression of Kancheli, which he used to describe his well-known piece Night Prayers (from Life Without Christmas), which is a reflection on the turbulent times of 1990s Georgia. [8, 98].

ing to comprehend what it is like to live without Christmas. That was life without Christmas."[30]

Indeed, Life Without Christmas – consisting of four parts (morning, day, evening, and night prayers) – was written in the early 1990s, a brutal period in Georgian history after which the composer emigrated, first to Germany and then to Belgium. For Kancheli, the emergence of the barge directly from silence symbolizes the composer's representation of this transformation. Is music as an experience capable of transforming thoughts into the energy of joy and excitement through prayer? Regardless of the fact that the composer was raised in both the Orthodox and Catholic faiths, with both religious attributes present in his home – protest against any religious or spiritual meaning in his music was always part of his outlook. Kancheli viewed *Life Without Christmas* as more spiritual and soulful than overtly religious. As Julie Williams noted: "Whilst these may be «prayers» in the broadest possible sense – of an invocation of rising out of spiritual need – they also embody estrangement from the traditional Christian view of divine incarnation and look at that perspective quizzically. They are questioning rather than devout, and embody a characteristic ambiguity. If God is here, he is independent of history, although in his concealment from human experience there is somehow also a consoling remnant of hope."[31] Hope that transcends human existence, and ultimately speaks to the essence of life.

Hope, the symbolism of life, is represented by a child's voice, which was recorded before the composer's departure for Berlin; the child's voice utters a phrase from Psalm 129 in Latin, "Domine" ("Lord, hear my voice"). This particular recording is used both in *Night Prayers* and *Morning Prayers*. The duration of the angel's/child's voice reminds us of the longest nights of the year when angels invoke the Creator of the world and establish peace on earth forever. There will always be a struggle between good and evil – noted Kancheli – but still I hope that the time will come when my descendants will live in a different society, that they will find life.

… And that is when music as an experience transcends individual lives and cultures, embracing a journey through the ages and representing a collective human experience that extends beyond the confines of any single individual or culture. I am referring to Penderecki's *Stabat Mater* composed in 1962, and later integrated into *St Luke Passion* in 1966. Penderecki mobilized a vast musical history,

30 Nana Sharikadze, "Giya Kancheli – Night prayers", *Musicology and Cultural Science* 14 (2016), 28–33, http://gesj.internet-academy.org.ge/en/list_aut_artic_en.php?b_sec=&list_aut=1204 (last accessed: 14.03.2024).

31 Gyia Kancheli, "Musical profile by Julie Williams", 2023, http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2008/Mar08/Kancheli_profile.htm (last accessed:18.12.2024).

incorporating elements from the Renaissance, sacred music, Gregorian chant, sonorism, atonality, dodecaphony, avant-garde, as well as both creating and cherishing the meeting point between modernity and traditional styles; and it seems to me that this music as an experience is not about Almighty God anymore but rather about Man.

Conclusion

The Polish compositional school extended beyond Poland's borders, inspiring composers and musicians throughout the Eastern Bloc to explore new avenues of creativity and expression. The association of such names as Penderecki, Kancheli, and others with progressive cultural movements in the Eastern Bloc in the 1960s was not coincidental. Rather, it reflects the vital role played by the Polish compositional school in driving forward new ideas and pushing the boundaries of artistic expression within the region. Furthermore, the willingness of the Polish avant-garde to challenge established norms and foster artistic freedom resonated deeply with the broader cultural and political climate of the time. This climate, characterized by a growing desire for individual expression within the confines of the Eastern Bloc, led many composers and musicians to look to the Polish school as a beacon of inspiration and innovation.

Within this contact zone, where the cultures of the East and West converge amidst the labyrinth of earthly and heavenly realms, the musical experience serves as a vital platform for dialogue among like-minded individuals. It facilitates shared ideas and the exploration of common themes.

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Summary

This paper examines the Georgian-Polish musical contact zone of the 1960s as a vital site of cultural exchange within the Soviet Union's ideologically constrained environment. Drawing on Mary Louise Pratt's concept of the "contact zone" and Lisa Jakelski's notion of spaces for exchanging cultural goods, it explores how these encounters subtly challenged hegemonic control while opening new artistic horizons.

While broader Georgian-Polish cultural ties have been studied, musical contacts remain largely overlooked. This paper argues that the generation of 1960s Georgian composers – Giya Kancheli, Nodar Gabunia, Sulkhan Nasidze, and others – played an indispensable role in redefining Georgian art music. Through newly accessible contact zones, particularly the Warsaw Autumn Festival, they encountered alternative artistic realities and pluralistic aesthetic values.

The significance of Polish composers – especially Krzysztof Penderecki – lay not in direct influence but in their embodiment of radically different sonic and technical explorations, which, as Lisa Jakelski notes, destabilized cultural hierarchies within the Soviet sphere. For Georgian composers, these exchanges were less about imitation and more about witnessing how others navigated artistic constraint.

Framing the contact zone as a space of negotiation, reflection, and mutual provocation, this study highlights how 1960s Georgian composers used these encounters to address generational trauma, existential themes, and suppressed national identities. Ultimately, the Georgian-Polish musical contact zone emerges as a microcosm of broader cultural negotiations within the Eastern Bloc – a space where music transcended isolation and reclaimed expressive freedom.

Keywords: Georgian art music, Polish avant-garde, contact zones, Warsaw Autumn Festival, Kancheli, Penderecki

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