

# The Impact of Soviet Music on Society Under Lenin and Stalin

Music played a vital role in Soviet society under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin. It was used as a powerful tool of propaganda, social engineering, and cultural control. This article explores the complex relationship between Soviet music and society during this period.



## Soviet Music and Society under Lenin and Stalin: The Baton and Sickle (BASEES/Routledge Series on Russian and East European Studies Book 9)

by Scott D. Wurdinger

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## Music as Propaganda

Under Lenin and Stalin, music was used extensively as a means of promoting the communist ideology. Composers were encouraged to create works that glorified the Soviet Union, its leaders, and its achievements. These works were often performed at mass rallies, parades, and other public events.

One of the most famous examples of Soviet propaganda music is the "Internationale," which became the anthem of the Soviet Union. This song was written by Eugene Pottier in 1871 and was originally intended to be a revolutionary anthem for the international working class. However, it was adopted by the Bolsheviks in 1917 and became a symbol of the Soviet regime.

Another popular form of Soviet propaganda music was the "mass song." These songs were typically simple and easy to sing, and they often contained lyrics that praised the Soviet Union and its leaders. Mass songs were often used to motivate workers and peasants to increase their productivity.

### **Music as Social Engineering**

In addition to its role as propaganda, music was also used as a tool of social engineering in the Soviet Union. The government believed that music could be used to shape the minds and behavior of the people. Composers were encouraged to create works that would promote the socialist values of collectivism, equality, and internationalism.

One example of Soviet social engineering music is the work of Sergei Prokofiev. Prokofiev was one of the most famous Soviet composers of the 20th century, and his works often reflected the political and ideological shifts of the period.

In the 1920s, Prokofiev wrote a number of works that celebrated the October Revolution and the early years of the Soviet Union. However, in the 1930s, Prokofiev's music became more somber and reflective, as he witnessed the rise of Stalinism and the Great Terror.

## **Music as Cultural Control**

Music was also used as a tool of cultural control in the Soviet Union. The government strictly censored all forms of music, and any music that was deemed to be "bourgeois" or "decadent" was banned.

The government also used music to promote its own cultural values. For example, the government encouraged the development of folk music and traditional dance, which were seen as symbols of the Russian people.

The government also promoted the development of socialist realism in music. Socialist realism was a style of art that was intended to glorify the Soviet Union and its achievements.

## **The Impact of Soviet Music on Society**

The impact of Soviet music on society was profound. Music was used to promote the communist ideology, to shape the minds and behavior of the people, and to control the culture of the Soviet Union.

Soviet music also had a significant impact on the development of music in other countries. For example, the works of Dmitri Shostakovich and other Soviet composers were performed and studied all over the world.

The legacy of Soviet music is complex and controversial. However, there is no doubt that music played a vital role in the shaping of Soviet society under Lenin and Stalin.

Music was a powerful tool of propaganda, social engineering, and cultural control in the Soviet Union under Lenin and Stalin. It reflected the political

and ideological shifts of the period, and it had a significant impact on the development of music in the Soviet Union and beyond.



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