



**JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY
FOR ORTHODOX CHURCH MUSIC**

Vol. 4 (2), Section III: Reviews, pp. 57-58

ISSN 2342-1258

<https://journal.fi/jisocm>

ORTHODOXY, MUSIC, POLITICS AND ART IN RUSSIA AND EASTERN EUROPE

Ivan Moody, Ivana Medić, eds.

University of London, Goldsmiths Centre for Russian Music

Institute of Musicology SASA, Belgrade

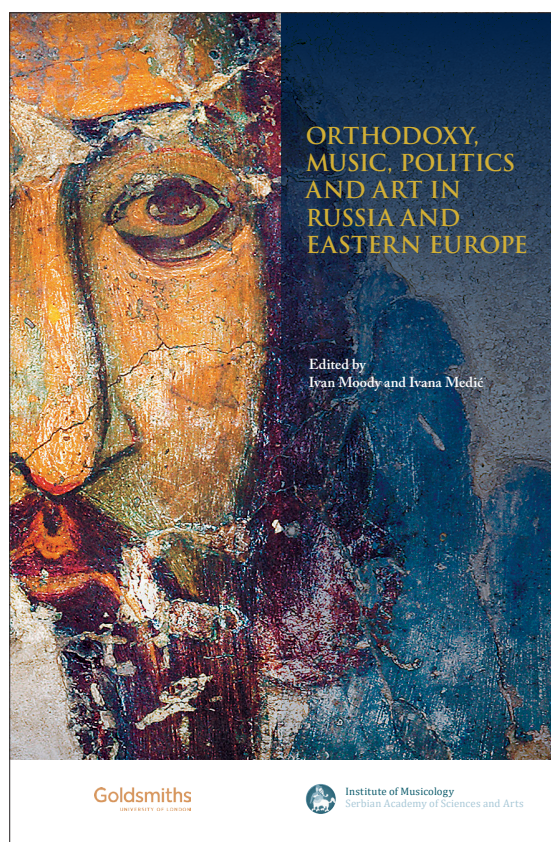
2020, 263 p.

ISBN 978-86-80639-57-4

<https://dais.sanu.ac.rs/handle/123456789/10390>

Edited volumes emerging from academic conferences have engendered their own genre of book reviews. Typically (and perhaps inevitably) one will summarize each of the constituent essays and make some overall comments. With this excellent volume it feels more important to focus on the global comments and leave the more detailed exploration to its readers.

The source material of this book emanates from the conference and festival “Orthodoxy, Music, Politics and Art in Contemporary Russia and Eastern Europe,” held at Goldsmiths, University of London in 2013, jointly organized with the University of Eastern Finland, by Alexander Ivashkin and Fr Ivan Moody, who was then Professor of Church Music at the UEF. It is warmly dedicated to Ivashkin, the scholar and virtuoso cellist, who died after a sudden illness in 2014. Ivashkin’s spirit lives in this book, populated as it is by several of his students including its co-editor, Ivana Medić.



Orthodoxy, Music, Politics and Art in Russia and Eastern Europe faces two distinct challenges. One is common to conference volumes: to bring together into coherence a collection of essays of different lengths, subjects, and regions. In a sense, this did not happen: reading the volume cover-to-cover with the expectation of a single coherent narrative will bring disappointment. The diversity of regions (though with a decisive preference for a predominantly Slavic Eastern Europe), subjects, and lengths of its constituent essays do not exactly yield a narrative arc. However, if approached more as a smorgasbord of which one could partake at will, the volume is immensely rewarding. The essays' diversity also means that no-one will leave this book without having learned something, without having explored brand new territory, such that their intellectual and aesthetic horizons are substantially expanded.

The other challenge more particular to this volume has to do with the subjects it treats. Orthodoxy, Music, Politics, Art, are each prone to the formation of ideologies, and therefore to internecine battles. Bringing them all together could have been a preview to a third World War. The essays here are substantive, and not immune to opinion. But they maintain a spirit of scholarly inquisitiveness and discovery, and their passion is that of engaged involvement rather than the staking and defence of territory.

With some notable exceptions, the theme of the political is most often only a subtext in these essays, albeit an important one. For example, several essays examine the influence of Russian Orthodoxy—its ethos, its texts, and its music—on 20th-century music. The sublime neo-classical bricolage of Vladimir Martynov is the subject of a fine closing essay by Tara Wilson. And the role—simultaneously complex and elemental—of a more syncretistic spirituality in Sofia Gubaidulina's oeuvre is sensitively explored by Boris Belge. Other explorations do not limit themselves to the "classical" sphere: we learn about film music and other incursions into broader cultural phenomena. But in these and other essays on Orthodoxy, as well as on the revival of sacred music generally, the political landscape, communist and post-communist, appropriately forms an important part of the analysis, rather than being the primary subject of inquiry.

But again, none of these scholars—most of whom are young, many of whom bring to bear their hands-on experience as musicians—is here to stake a claim or argue an ideology. They are here to share their insight and research, confident in the receptive curiosity of their listeners and readers. Surely this spirit of open inquiry—that has yielded such informative and interesting essays—is an inspiring testimony to Alexander Ivashkin, and his legacy in his students and his spirit.

Peter Bouteneff