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## **RUSSIAN PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT ABOUT MUSIC AS A SOURCE OF HUMAN HEALTH**

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### **Abstract**

The article attempts to examine the ideas of Russian philosophers about music as a source of human health. It is noted that Russian philosophers constantly pointed out the possibilities of music in strengthening bodily, soulful and spiritual health of a person, understanding the unity of these types of health as an expression of the harmony of human existence in the world. Russian thinkers' ideas about music span the period from the time of the birth of the Russian philosophy of music (mid-15 – early 16 century) to the present day. The article's material may be useful to philosophers, cultural scientists, art historians, psychologists, physiologists, and physicians.

**Keywords:** music; Russian philosophy; bodily, soulful and spiritual human health; harmony; world

## **РУССКАЯ ФИЛОСОФСКАЯ МЫСЛЬ О МУЗЫКЕ КАК ОБ ИСТОЧНИКЕ ЗДОРОВЬЯ ЧЕЛОВЕКА**

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### **Аннотация**

В статье предпринята попытка рассмотрения идей русских философов о музыке как источнике здоровья человека. Отмечается, что русские философы постоянно указывали на возможности музыки в укреплении телесного,

душевного и духовного здоровья человека, понимая единство этих видов здоровья как выражение гармоничности существования человека в мире.

Рассмотрение представлений о музыке русских мыслителей охватывает период от времени зарождения русской философии музыки (середина XV – начало XVI века) до наших дней. Материал статьи может быть полезен философам, культурологам, искусствоведам, психологам, физиологам, медикам.

**Ключевые слова:** музыка; русская философия; телесное, душевное и духовное здоровье человека; гармония; мир

Russian philosophers paid great attention to music, seeing in it a huge potential in strengthening the bodily, soulful and spiritual manifestations of man<sup>1</sup>. They saw the stability of these manifestations in the *harmony of human existence in the world*.

**St. Nil Sorsky (1433-1508)** was one of the first to draw attention to the role of music in bringing a person to a harmonious life.

Nil Sorsky, of course, is not a philosopher – thinker, he does not yet use the word «music», but instead uses the concept of «prayer singing» («singing of prayer»). Prayer singing, according to Sorsky, promotes human unity with God, which means that a person finds harmony with the world. Nil Sorsky teaches that man's ascent to God (to the Harmony of being) is facilitated by *singing in the temple* «some canons and troparia» [14, p. 168], while it is necessary to «stand without laziness in singing» [14, p. 175].

The philosopher, writer, and musician **Grigory Savvich Skovoroda (1722-1794)** speaks expressively about music as a force that harmonizes human life.

In understanding this power, Skovoroda proceeded from the Pythagorean idea of the existence of Celestial music – the Harmony of the spheres.

According to Skovoroda, Heavenly music (Harmony of the spheres) is God. Skovoroda reflects: «Isn't God the One who contains everything?.. He is a true tree in a tree, grass in a grass, music in a music» [16, p. 134]. Skovoroda believes that this music is God, and it is most clearly manifested in man-made music – instrumental and singing. And this “human» music, which contains God, is a

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<sup>1</sup> We use the concepts of «bodily», «soulful» and «spiritual», including in relation to human health, in accordance with the philosophical tradition and use them along with a wide range of concepts used in various sciences: sociology, psychology, physiology, biology and others.

«great healing» that leads to Harmony [16, p. 113]<sup>2</sup>.

The next one who vividly declared his understanding of music as a healing element leading to Harmony was the philosopher, writer, and composer **Vladimir Fedorovich Odoevsky (1803-1869)**.

V.F. Odoevsky is an important figure in the conversation about Russian philosophers' understanding of the harmonizing possibilities of music. Russian philosopher G.V. Odoevsky lived in the era when the «awakening of Russian philosophy» (G.V. Florovsky) took place, and at the same time, the definition of the views of Russian philosophers on music and its harmonizing potential.

It is significant that Odoevsky considered his philosophical task to be the construction of an integral Universe, the embodiment of which was *harmony* for him.

Odoevsky understood harmony as *the unity of the Spirit and the objective world*. By the objective world, Odoevsky meant the unity of nature and the human soul. But how, according to Odoevsky, is the harmony of the Spirit and the objective world achieved?

According to the philosopher, *harmony is determined by the existence of the Bezuslov [Uncondition] (the Absolute, i.e. God)*. Odoevsky writes: «The existence of an *Bezuslov* is not only in nature, but the thought of it is in the very soul of man, this thought is native to the soul, it is a property of the human soul» [15, p. 157]. On this basis, Odoevsky believes, the human *soul strives to merge with the Bezuslov*.

According to the thinker, *music is the shortest path to harmony*, since music, Odoevsky emphasizes, is the sound embodiment of the harmony of *living and deadening* principles. The living and deadening principles «in music are under the guise of *agreement and disagreement ... (or. – A.K.) consonance and contradiction (consonantia – dissonantia)*» [15, pp. 157-158]. At the same time, Odoevsky argues, *music is «the direct language of the soul», which means it is a direct expression of the fusion of the soul and the Bezuslov*.

Then there is a whole galaxy of thinkers who explained in their own way *the birth of harmony from the spirit of music*. Let's name them.

**Pavel Alexandrovich Florensky (1882-1937)**

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<sup>2</sup> The Harmony of the spheres, according to Skovoroda, is the embodiment of Cosmic Harmony, which he called a *Symphony*.

Florensky was a philosopher, scientist, engineer, and art critic, but the main thing that determined all his talents was that he was *a priest*.

Florensky was always attracted to music — he knew the works of Mozart, Beethoven, and Bach well. The music lived in him. As the thinker recalled: «I was always full of sounds and played out complex orchestral things in my imagination in a symphonic way, and streams of sounds were constantly asking for my soul, day and night, and as soon as I was left without a very pronounced interest in another area, my orchestras began to delight me, and I conducted them. (And anyway. — A.K.) I've thought many times that... maybe the work of a conductor was my true vocation» [3, pp. 59, 60].

In music Florensky primarily appreciated *the rhythmic organization of sound*. For him, this organization was a reflection of the organization of Cosmic Sound — a Cosmic Symphony performed by an Invisible Orchestra that he wanted *to conduct*.

In the mind of Florensky, the conductor-priest, the Cosmic Symphony was a Heavenly Liturgy, the embodiment of which was the earthly, ecclesiastical Liturgy.

According to Florensky, the earthly Liturgy is musical through and through, it is *a musical drama* [2, p. 379]. Florensky argued that the musicality of the earthly Liturgy turns it into a Heavenly One, preparing the Christian listener to hear Heavenly music, which now becomes his whole life for the Christian listener. According to Florensky, this “music of life” is an expression of the harmony of human existence<sup>3</sup>.

### **Alexey Fedorovich Losev (1893-1988)**

A.F. Losev is the author of a huge number of works belonging to various fields of knowledge: philosophy, aesthetics, cultural studies, musicology. In the field of musicology, Losev is primarily known as a follower of the Pythagoreans<sup>4</sup>. But this is not the main thing in Losev's understanding of music. More importantly, Losev proceeded from the connection of music with prayer, arguing that prayer is an «experience of communion with God» [10, p. 376], «only through prayer can one

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<sup>3</sup> Florensky emphasized that the supramundane «music of life» is not felt, but is experienced by man. Interestingly, in a letter to V.V. Rozanov, written on January 18, 1913, Florensky, as if anticipating his conclusion, notes that «this music flows into ears *other* than those that grow on the head, and they hear it with their whole being» [8, p. 97]. A person's life begins to «be built ... in the image and likeness of this Heavenly music» [8, p. 98].

<sup>4</sup> Following the Pythagoreans, Losev considered music as a growing number. Losev's design has received wide support from scientists, especially from Moscow. See, for example, [4].

ascend to God», and «those who do not pray do not know God» [9, p. 501]. And so, according to Losev, it is precisely this prayerful striving of man towards God that constitutes the content of music, its creative human life, and nature.

### **Nikolai Onufrievich Lossky (1870-1965)**

N.O. Lossky was a philosopher, the founder of the *Russian branch* of philosophical teaching – *intuitionism*. According to Lossky, «intuitionism (provides. – A.K.) *a direct vision* ... of an object by a cognizing subject... referring to the object in the original, and not by means of a copy, symbol, construction, etc.» [12, p. 137]. The word «intuition» is used by the thinker to mean «this is a direct vision... of an object». As Lossky writes, his «doctrine of intuition ... is ... a theory (which. – A.K.), asserting that knowledge is the direct contemplation by the subject of the most authentic transsubjective (external. – A.K.) being ... puts even the most ordinary sensory perception (of an object. – A.K.) on the same level with *clairvoyance*» [12, p. 138].

The main thing, Lossky believes, is to break into the sphere that resides above the world, the philosopher calls it the Superworld. According to Lossky, «communion with the Superworldly principle is a high manifestation of religious life and religious experience. In it, the Super-universal principle is revealed as the super-existential fullness of being» [12, p. 261]. This Superworld, according to Lossky, is the Kingdom of God.

Music, according to Lossky, leads a person to the Kingdom of God. The thinker asserts: «Music ... introduces (man. – A.K.) into the inner life of the elements, chemical and physical processes, into the life of crystals, dust particles dancing in the rays of the sun, into the life of plants and animals, rivers, streams and seas ... into the life of planets and solar systems and, finally, even into life The Kingdom of God» [13, p. 327].

But staying in the Kingdom of God, Lossky is convinced, is an absolutely harmonious human existence, in which «everything is immanent to everything» [11, p. 94], which means that music, the philosopher is convinced, is the way to a harmonious human existence.

### **Ivan Ivanovich Lapshin (1870-1952)**

I.I. Lapshin was a philosopher, musicologist, pianist, and singer. Lapshin's philosophy is usually attributed to *Russian neo-Kantianism*, which focused on questions of knowledge of the transcendence of the world: the nature of things, man. At the same time, the peculiarity of Lapshin's neo-Kantianism was that Lapshin saw the possibility of knowledge of the transcendence of the world in the

*act of creativity* [7].

Lapshin believed that overcoming the boundaries of the world in creativity occurs due to the fact that the creative person *feeling* an object and thus finds unity with it. (Lapshin calls this «the transfer of the psyche to objects».) Feeling, according to Lapshin, leads to *an understanding of the “alien self”*. The philosopher believes that the direct form of penetration into the “alien self” is *transformation*.

Lapshin divides creativity into two types: *philosophical* and *artistic*. In each of these types of creativity, according to Lapshin, *transformation* is necessary, but it is especially required in artistic creation, therefore, according to Lapshin, *it is transformation in artistic creation that provides a breakthrough to the transcendence of being* [6].

Exploring the topic of artistic creation, Lapshin mainly talks about *music*. The works of N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov, M.P. Musorgsky and A.N. Scriabin are in his field of vision. The thinker emphasizes that for all the difference in the creative attitudes of these composers, the focus of their work was the same – *in the sphere of the transcendent*.

Being in the realm of the transcendent leads to a person's experience of harmony with the world, which Lapshin, close to Lossky's attitude, defined as a state of «everything is in me, and I am in everything» (Tyutchev). And according to Lapshin, the music of Rimsky-Korsakov, Musorgsky and Scriabin adds to this harmony. Rimsky-Korsakov's music evokes *universal feeling*, Musorgsky's music encourages *mystical fusion with the world*, and Scriabin's music reunites with *Universal Consciousness*.

### **Evgeny Nikolaevich Trubetskoy (1863-1920)**

E.N. Trubetskoy was a philosopher, publicist, and public figure. His main philosophical aspiration was the search for the sense of life. Reflecting on the sense of life, Trubetskoy comes to the conclusion that in order to gain sense, one must *realize it*. «Sense», says Trubetskoy, «is inseparable from consciousness» [17, p. 17]. At the same time, on the one hand, the material of consciousness is «a variety of psychological experiences — sensations, impressions, feelings (constituting, according to Trubetskoy, psychological consciousness. – A.K.)», on the other hand, there is something superpsychological in consciousness, which «is ... a necessary assumption ... of consciousness as such» [17, p. 10]. It is in this «consciousness as such», states Trubetskoy, that the sense is hidden.

Trubetskoy calls consciousness, which preserves sense, *Bezuslovnym*

[*Unconditional*] (or: *All-one, Absolute*). This is the *Consciousness of God*. Thus, according to Trubetskoy, *man's acquisition of the sense of life lies in the unity of man with God*.

According to Trubetskoy, *music* greatly contributes to the unity of man with God. And Trubetskoy experienced such unity himself — it happened at a concert where Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony was performed under the baton of A.G. Rubinstein.

This is how the philosopher describes the event: «It is difficult to convey the state of delight that I experienced then at the symphony concert. Just a few months earlier, a dilemma inspired by Schopenhauer and Dostoevsky had appeared before my youthful consciousness. Either there is a God, and in him is the fullness of life *above the world*, or it is not worth living at all. And suddenly I saw this very dilemma deeply, vividly expressed in brilliant musical images. There is also something infinitely more than posing a dilemma, there is *a life experience* of the other world, *a real feeling of (eternal. – A.K.) peace*. Your thought... perceives the whole world drama from that height of eternity, where all the confusion and horror are wonderfully transformed into joy and *peace*. And you feel that (this. – A.K.) eternal peace, which descends from above onto the universe, is not the denial of life, but the fullness of life. None of the great artists and philosophers of the world felt and revealed this as Beethoven did» [18, p. 157].

The unity of man with God “as Beethoven succeeded” is, according to Trubetskoy, the acquisition of Harmony by man<sup>5</sup>.

Nowadays, the theme of music is the harmony of man developed by the **Author of this article (b. 1954)**.

The Author proposes a model of music's existence, which is now known as *the New Synergetic Philosophy of Music*.

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<sup>5</sup> I would like to draw your attention to one thing: Trubetskoy felt the presence of God while listening to *the symphony* – Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony. And the word «symphony» has the most significant meaning in Trubetskoy. A symphony, according to Trubetskoy, is a kind of Cosmic Harmony that unites the earthly and the heavenly (Divine). The philosopher recalls: «The symphony that unites the whole world of heaven and earth sounds already at the very beginning of the Gospel – in the story of the evangelist Luke about the Nativity of Christ. The *Good news* preached to *all creation* is precisely the promise of this symphony» [17, p. 208]. This symphony is not complete, it is only a hint «at ... the symphony of the world to come» [17, p. 209]. The forerunner of such a «symphony of the world to come» was Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony for E. Trubetskoy.

*About the model*

The model has two components: «Theory» and «Practice».

## Theory

Theoretically, the model is based on the conjugation of two principles: classical (old) synergetics and hesychasm.

Classical (old) synergetics emerged in the 70s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as an interdisciplinary field in science, within which the peculiarities of the self-organization of systems in the world were studied. It was found that systems evolve in the direction of: from less organized (orderly, stable, etc.) to more organized.

Hesychasm is the core of Orthodox teaching. Hesychasm asserts that as a result of a person's uttering prayer, the union of man and God occurs – the union of human energies and God's energies, expressed by the increase of human energies in the sequence: bodily – soulful – spiritual<sup>6</sup>.

Attention is drawn to the fact that the reading of prayer by a Christian hesychast person not only led to his unity with God, but also predetermined the transfer of the experience of this unity. What does this mean?

The fact is that in the process of prayer, the hesychast Christian communicated with all people, humanity [1, pp. 3-9]. Such communication of a Christian hesychast with people during prayer contributed to the emergence in every lay person *of the desire for unity with God in the world*. This aspiration was expressed in the bodily, soulful and spiritual activation of a person in the world and conditioned the development of the world, according to the principle of self-organization of systems. The very self-organization of systems, according to the author, is represented by the sequence: *nature – society – culture – art – music*. That is, *music is the embodiment of man's unity with God in the world*.

## Practice

Practical work is based on the realization that music is the most powerful means of human unity with God. According to the Author, *music therapy* is the process of bringing a person to God through music.

The Author has developed a technology of music therapy designed to ensure the ascent of a person to a Higher Beginning. How is this achieved?

The Author believes that there is a structural similarity between man and music:

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<sup>6</sup> It is significant that in both classical (old) synergetics and hesychasm, the key concept is *synergy*.



both man and music consist of three interrelated levels: the first level of man correlates with the first level of music, the second level of man – with the second level of music, the third level of man – with the third level of music.

Human levels: bodily, soulful, spiritual.

The levels of music, its bodily, soulful and spiritual levels, are called by the Author, respectively, *physico-acoustic* (the elements of which are rhythm, meter, tempo, timbre, dynamics), *communicative-intonation* (the element of which is intonation), *spiritual-value* (the elements of which are mode (tonality), melody and harmony).

The principle of operation: in the first sessions, music is used, in which the first level of music prevails (rhythm, meter, tempo, timbre, dynamics). Such music is designed to activate the body-plastic component of a person (while, of course, the use of other types of sound is not excluded, but the main material is still based on rhythm, meter, etc.).

In subsequent sessions, the emphasis is first on the second level of music (based on intonation), and then on the third (based on mode (tonality), melody and harmony), which activate, respectively, the soulful and spiritual hypostases of a person. Thus, the conducted music therapy sessions stimulate the body-soul-spiritual growth of a person, opening up to him a Higher dimension of being, and at the same time, according to the Author, ensure Perfect Harmony of being in the world [5]<sup>7</sup>.

It seems that the ideas of Russian philosophers about music as a prerequisite for human health outlined in the article are extremely in demand today.

## ADDITIONAL

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### Author's contribution:

The author confirms his authorship according to the ICMJE criteria.

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<sup>7</sup> According to the Author, the model proposed by him is the final expression of the ideas of Russian thinkers about music as a way of influencing a person in dynamics: human harmony – human health.

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