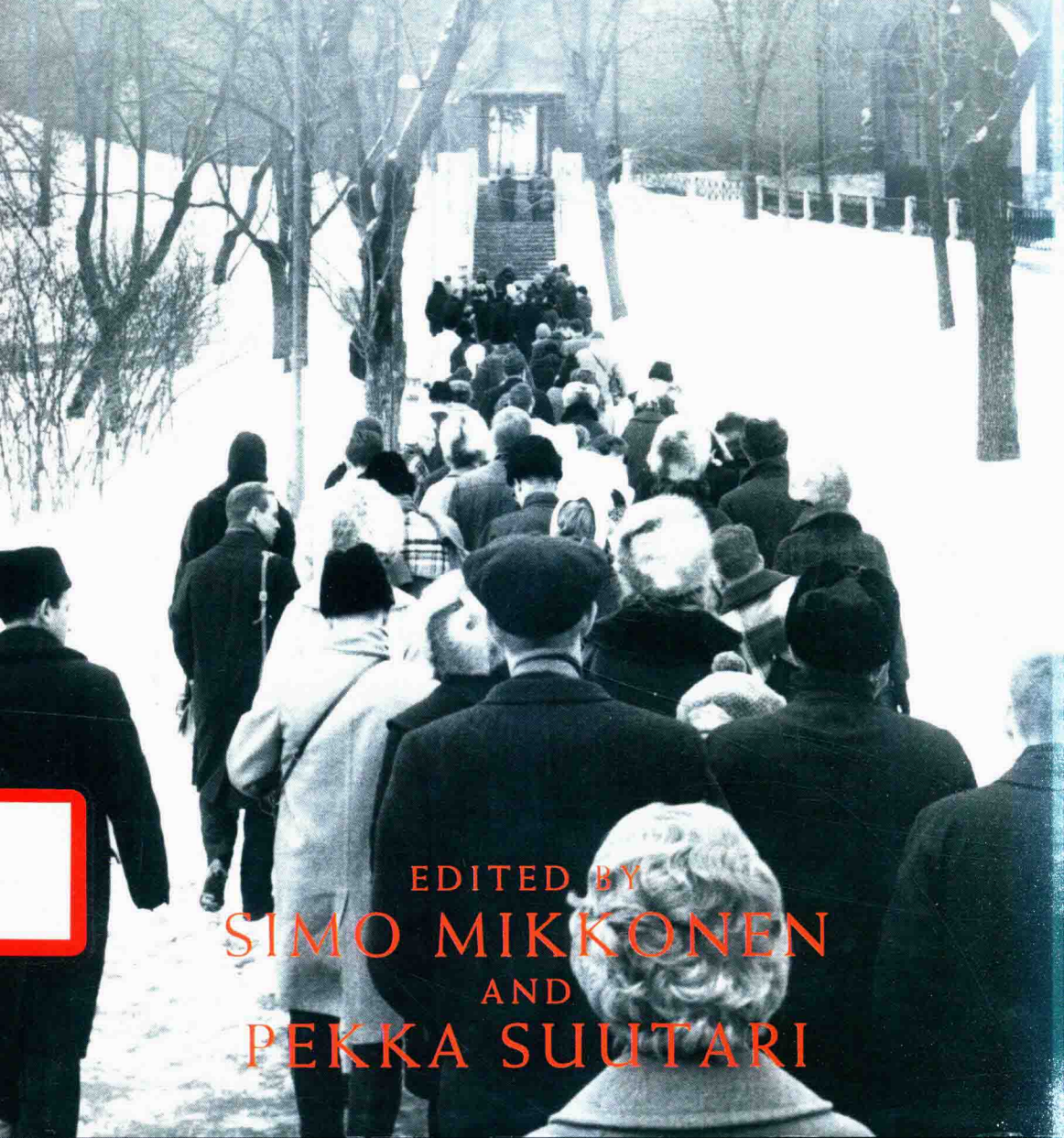


Music, Art and Diplomacy

*East-West Cultural Interactions
and the Cold War*



EDITED BY
SIMO MIKKONEN
AND
PEKKA SUUTARI

Music, Art and Diplomacy: East-West Cultural Interactions and the Cold War

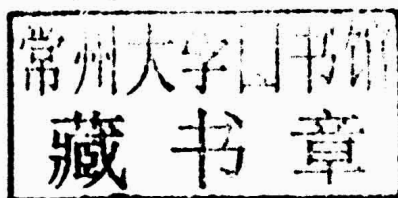
Edited by

SIMO MIKKONEN

University of Jyväskylä, Finland

PEKKA SUUTARI

University of Eastern Finland



ASHGATE

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Published by
Ashgate Publishing Limited
Wey Court East
Union Road
Farnham
Surrey, GU9 7PT
England

Ashgate Publishing Company
110 Cherry Street
Suite 3-1
Burlington, VT 05401-3818
USA

www.ashgate.com

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

The Library of Congress has cataloged the printed edition as follows:

Music, Art and Diplomacy: East-West Cultural Interactions and the Cold War /

edited by Simo Mikkonen and Pekka Suutari.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Music and diplomacy. 2. Music – Political aspects – History – 20th century.

3. Arts and diplomacy. 4. Cold War. I. Mikkonen, Simo. II. Suutari, Pekka.

ML3916.M8736 2015

303.48'24701713–dc23

2015022939

ISBN: 9781472468086 (hbk)

ISBN: 9781472468093 (ebk – PDF)

ISBN: 9781472468109 (ebk – ePUB)



Printed in the United Kingdom by Henry Ling Limited,
at the Dorset Press, Dorchester, DT1 1HD

MUSIC, ART AND DIPLOMACY: EAST-WEST
CULTURAL INTERACTIONS AND THE COLD WAR

Notes on Contributors

Editors

Simo Mikkonen is Research Fellow of the Academy of Finland and an Adjunct Professor of Russian History at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. His primary research interests include the cultural, international and transnational relations of the Soviet Union, especially with the West. He has previously published *State Composers and the Red Courtiers: Music, Ideology and Politics in the Soviet 1930s* (2009), and a number of articles in journals such as *Kritika*, *Journal of Cold War Studies* and *Journal of Scandinavian History*, as well as in several edited volumes.

Pekka Suutari is Professor of Cultural Studies and the director of the Karelian Institute at the University of Eastern Finland (Joensuu). He has studied musicology (ethnomusicology) at the Universities of Helsinki and Gothenburg and has acted as a visiting professor at the Karelian Research Centre (KRC) of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Petrozavodsk, Russia. His main research interests are in the music of the borderland between Finnish and Russian Karelia and the ethnic activities of these areas. He is currently leading a joint research project, 'Flexible Ethnicities', which hosts researchers from the UEF (Joensuu) and the KRC.

Contributors

Susan Costanzo is Associate Professor in History at Western Washington University. She has published numerous articles on post-Stalin culture in the Soviet Union. She is currently completing a book, *Performing Offstage*, on amateur theatres in the post-Stalin era.

Pauline Fairclough is Senior Lecturer in Music at the University of Bristol and a specialist in Soviet musical culture. Her edited books include *Shostakovich Studies 2* (2010) and *Twentieth Century Music and Politics: Essays in Memory of Neil Edmunds* (Ashgate, 2013). She is currently completing her monograph on Soviet repertoire politics in the Lenin and Stalin eras.

Stéphanie Gonçalves has a PhD in Contemporary History from the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB), Belgium, where she has been a teaching assistant in history for six years. She is currently a postdoctorate fellow at the Belgian Historical Institute in Rome, Italy. Her work examines ballet tours and cultural diplomacy in the Cold War.

Meri Elisabet Herrala is a Doctor of Social Sciences from the University of Helsinki. She specialises in the political and cultural history of the Soviet Union and Soviet Cold War cultural relations. She has previously published a monograph, *The Struggle for Control of Soviet Music from 1932 to 1948: Socialist Realism vs. Western Formalism* (2012).

Oliver Johnson is a historian of Soviet and Russian art with an interest in the relationship between the arts and political authority. He is the author of several articles published in highly esteemed journals such as *Slavic Review*, *Kritika* and *Russian Review*. He is currently working on a monograph entitled *Post-War Socialist Realism: Art, Authorities and Audiences in the Period of Late Stalinism*.

Clayton Koppes is Professor of History at Oberlin College, Ohio, USA. He specialises in the political, foreign policy and cultural history of the United States since the 1890s. He is the author of two books: *JPL and the American Space Program* (1982); and (with Gregory D. Black) *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (1987, 1996). Currently, he is writing *Desire under the Code: How Censorship Shaped Classical Hollywood*.

Lars Kristensen is a lecturer at the School of Humanities and Informatics, University of Skövde, Sweden. His research focuses on representation in cinema, transnational and postcolonial filmmaking and bicycle cinema. After receiving his PhD at the University of St Andrews, he held temporary positions at the University of Central Lancashire and the University of Glasgow. He has published mainly on cross-cultural issues related to Russian cinema, and is the editor of *Postcommunist Film: Russia, Eastern Europe and World Culture* (2012).

Ewa Mazierska is Professor of Contemporary Cinema at the University of Lancashire. Her research focuses on various aspects of European cinema, such as representation of work and tourism. She has published numerous books and edited collections, including *Work in Cinema: Labor and the Human Condition* (2013); *European Cinema and Intertextuality: History, Memory and Politics* (2011); *Masculinities in Polish, Czech and Slovak Cinema: Black Peters and Men of Marble* (2009); and, with Laura Rascaroli, *Crossing New Europe: Postmodern Travel and the European Road Movie* (2006). She is principal editor of *Studies in Eastern European Cinema*.

Eva Näripea, PhD, is a senior researcher at the Estonian Academy of Arts and the director of the Estonian Film Archive. Her main research interests include spatial representations in Estonian and Eastern European cinema; Eastern European science fiction cinema; as well as the ramifications of and reflections on neoliberal capitalism in cinemas of the Baltic Sea region. She has co-edited *Via Transversa: Lost Cinema of the Former Eastern Bloc* (2008); a special issue on

Estonian cinema for *Kinokultura* (2010); and *Postcolonial Approaches to Eastern European Cinema: Portraying Neighbours on Screen* (2014). She is a co-editor of *Baltic Screen Media Review*.

Susan E. Reid is Professor of Cultural History in the Department of Politics, History and International Relations at Loughborough University. She has published widely on painting, visual and material culture, gender and consumption in the Soviet Union, especially in the 1950s–1960s. Her publications on Cold War culture include: ‘Cold War Binaries and the Culture of Consumption in the Late Soviet Home’ (forthcoming in *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*); ‘The Soviet Pavilion at Brussels ’58: Convergence, Conversion, Critical Assimilation, or Transculturation?’, *Cold War International History Project Working Paper* (2010); and ‘“Who Will Beat Whom?” Soviet Popular Reception of the American National Exhibition in Moscow, 1959’, *Kritika* (2008).

Tim Scholl is a scholar of Russian and a dance historian who has authored two volumes on the history of Russian dance: *From Petipa to Balanchine: Classical Revival and the Modernization of Ballet* (1994) and *Sleeping Beauty: A Legend in Progress* (2004). Professor of Russian and Comparative Literature at Oberlin College, Scholl is also a docent in the Theatre Research Department of Helsinki University. His articles on dance have appeared in *Playbill*, the *New York Times*, Moscow’s *Kommersant Daily* and Stockholm’s *Danstidnigen*. He is currently at work on a history of ballet in the Stalin era.

Louise Wiggins is a PhD student at the University of Bristol. Her research interests lie in the music and politics of Alan Bush, political composers, and an unofficial cultural diplomat between Britain and the Soviet Union. Her research comprises British communism and culture, and left-wing musical organisations. Louise gained her undergraduate degree from the Royal Academy of Music, and performs professionally as a harpist.

Foreword

Susan E. Reid

Winston Churchill's emotive metaphor of the 'Iron Curtain' directed attention towards divisions, concealment and blocking. Falling across Europe, it seemed to represent the curtain call for cultural flow and interaction. Curtains not only conceal and divide, however; they may also serve to frame, reveal and dramatise, as on the stage or in baroque portraiture, thereby giving new meaning and significance to what they present. Recent accounts have begun to question the imagined materiality of the curtain. Some have proposed, in place of iron, a 'permeable membrane' or net curtain evoking the voyeuristic fascination with the Other. Others have attended to movements through and the parting or raising of that curtain.¹ The present volume, too, based on papers presented at an international conference held in Jyväskylä, Finland, in 2012, focuses on artistic exchanges both across and behind the curtain. Thereby it invites us to consider not only what the Cold War prevented or suppressed but also what it produced. Indeed, the editors propose that the Cold War even exercised beneficial effects on cultural production, which was given new importance by political competition and the demands of cultural diplomacy: 'Cold War era cultural diplomacy enabled novel types of interaction that either had not existed before or were brought to the centre by the Cold War.'²

The reorientation towards connections – to which this volume contributes – is more than a superficial shift in scholarly fashion.³ While a focus on disconnection and prevention undoubtedly produced much worthwhile knowledge, it also

¹ György Péteri, 'Nylon Curtain: Transnational and Transsystemic Tendencies in the Cultural Life of State-Socialist Russia and East-Central Europe', *Slavonica* vol. 10, no. 2 (2004): 113–23; Michael David-Fox, 'The Iron Curtain as Semipermeable Membrane: Origins and Demise of the Stalinist Superiority Complex', in Patryk Babiracki and Kenyon Zimmer, eds, *Cold War Crossings: International Travel and Exchange across the Soviet Bloc, 1940s–1960s* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2014), 14–39; Yale Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003); Walter Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945–1961* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997); David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

² Introduction to this volume, pp. 1–13.

³ Vladislav Zubok, 'Introduction', in Babiracki and Zimmer, *Cold War Crossings*, 1 of 1–13, with reference to Melvyn Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds, *Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vols 1–3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

marginalised or foreclosed important questions concerning, for example, the nature and mechanisms of interaction and exchange, the specific agencies involved, or the effects on receivers. Serving as a framing device reorganising the world, what new centralities and marginalities, cores and peripheries did the Iron Curtain produce? What new cultural forms and identities, connections, crossings, communities and collaborations did the Cold War engender? Other recent studies have begun to explore the symbiotic nature of the identities that emerged and the ways that Cold War culture was coproduced in dialogue across the systemic divide.⁴ The products of the Cold War include the new cultural relations and forms of collaboration and community within the bloc, discussed here by Susan Costanzo and others.⁵ Thus they begin to address the lacuna noted by Austin Jersild: ‘scholars of Central and Eastern Europe routinely emphasise the importance of borderlands, frontiers, migration, and other aspects of the transnational history of this region, but less attention has been devoted to the community that explicitly and perpetually proclaimed itself to be dedicated to “internationalism”’.⁶

This volume contributes to this historiographical reorientation in at least four important respects. First, it treats the Cold War in terms of a transnational history and recognises that the bloc was more than the sum of its constitutive national histories, a geopolitical concept or a military alliance.⁷ Second, the chapters presented here contribute to the ‘cultural’ turn in research on the Cold War. Given the specific character of this confrontation – its ‘coldness’ – resulting from the displacement from the military sphere to cultural and economic ones in the shadow

⁴ György Péteri, (ed.), *Imagining the West in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010); Susan E. Reid, ‘The Soviet Pavilion at Brussels ’58: Convergence, Conversion, Critical Assimilation, or Transculturation?’, *Cold War International History Project Working Paper No. 62* (2010). While another recent volume emphasises division in its title, its contributing authors critically reassess Cold War binaries (Mihelj) and include accounts of cultural diplomacy and coproduction of Cold War culture (Siefert): Peter Romijn, Giles Scott-Smith and Joes Segal, eds, *Divided Dreamworlds: The Cultural Cold War in East and West* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012). See also Annette Vowinckel, Marcus M. Payk and Thomas Lindenberger, eds, *Cold War Cultures: Perspectives in Eastern and Western European Societies* (New York: Berghahn, 2012).

⁵ See also Jérôme Bazin, Pascal Dubourg Glatigny and Piotr Piotrowski, eds, *Art Beyond Borders: Artistic Exchanges in Communist Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2015).

⁶ Austin Jersild, ‘The Soviet State as Imperial Scavenger: “Catch Up and Surpass” in the Transnational Socialist Bloc, 1950–1960’, *Journal of American Historical Review* vol. 116, no. 1 (2011): 109–10 of 109–32.

⁷ Ibid. A recent essay argues that the transnational history of the Second World has been largely overlooked: ‘it also came about through formal and informal interactions, coercive and voluntary transfers and circulations enabled by communist parties and centralised economies’. Elidor Mēhilli, ‘Socialist Encounters’ in Babiracki and Zimmer, *Cold War Crossings*, 109 of 107–33.

of the atom, it is perhaps surprising that culture wars have not been more central to mainstream studies all along.⁸ There were, of course, important early studies such as Frederick Barghoorn's *The Soviet Cultural Offensive* of 1960.⁹ Already in the 1970s, exposures of the ways that Abstract Expressionism had been implicated in the CIA's ideological warfare in Europe East and West, by being operationalised during the 1950s to promote the US ideology of 'freedomism', played an important part in challenging the myth of modernist art's aesthetic disinterestedness.¹⁰ While a number of recent studies have attended to the role of popular culture, the media and consumer culture in the Cold War,¹¹ the chapters in this volume focus on the realm of 'high' culture and cultural encounters, specifically those involving the USSR. As the case of Abstract Expressionism illustrates, the prestige of high culture and its apparent transcendence of partisan politics gave it a special place in Western cultural diplomacy. Classical music, theatre, ballet, fine art (although not abstraction) – the media addressed here – also held a central place in the Soviet Union's enlightenment project at home, as well as in its self-projection abroad as the saviour of European civilisation.¹²

Barghoorn's account of the 'Soviet cultural offensive' is of interest because he was both a participant witness and – as US advisor on the Soviet Union – an agent of Cold War cultural diplomacy. Indeed, many of the Western scholars whose work has shaped our understanding of Soviet history were themselves shaped by the formative experience of participating in West–East cultural diplomacy: through student exchanges, involvement as guides at the American National

⁸ David Crowley and Jane Pavitt, eds, *Cold War Modern: Design 1945–1970* (London: V&A, 2008).

⁹ Frederick Barghoorn, *The Soviet Cultural Offensive: The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960).

¹⁰ Eva Cockcroft, 'Abstract Expressionism: Weapon of the Cold War'; Max Kozloff, 'American Painting during the Cold War' and other essays anthologised in Francis Francina, (ed.), *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2000; first published 1985). See also Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta, 2000); Marilyn S. Kushner, 'Exhibiting Art at the American National Exhibition in Moscow, 1959: Domestic Politics and Cultural Diplomacy', *Journal of Cold War Studies* vol. 4, no. 1 (2002): 6–26.

¹¹ E.g. on fashion, Eha Komissarov and Berit Teeäär, eds, *Fashion and the Cold War (Mood ja Kuulm Soda)* (Tallinn: KUMU, 2012); on tourism, Anne Gorsuch, *All This is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad after Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹² On the continued commitment to high culture and enlightenment in the age of mass media see Kristin Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time: How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire that Lost the Cultural Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011). On architecture and fine art see Catherine Cooke, 'Modernity and Realism', and Susan E. Reid, 'Toward a New (Socialist) Realism', in Rosalind P. Blakesley and Susan E. Reid, eds, *Russian Art and the West: A Century of Dialogue in Painting, Architecture, and the Decorative Arts* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006), 172–94; 217–39.

Exhibition in Moscow in 1959 or through exchanges of scholars and participation in international conferences.¹³ Further research is needed on the part that such encounters played both in their personal and intellectual biographies and in the historiography of the Cold War.

While state bureaucracies and quasi-autonomous cultural organisations took an important role in initiating, funding and facilitating Cold War exchanges, the third main way in which the chapters here participate in recent historiographical shifts is that the volume zooms in on the micro-agency and experience of the individuals who participated in the cultural initiatives, whether as professionals or as amateurs – or, we might add, as audiences. Both ‘camps’ in the Cold War recognised the importance of getting intellectuals, artists, cultural practitioners and other specialists on board. As Frances Stonor Saunders showed in her book *Who Paid the Piper?*, United States Information Agency (USIA) front organisations cultivated individuals who enjoyed respect for their personal cultural achievements.¹⁴ The Soviet-sponsored Congresses of Intellectuals for Peace – of which the first was held in Wrocław at the start of the Cold War in 1948 – brought together prominent left-leaning cultural figures from the West, such as Pablo Picasso, with their counterparts from the East.¹⁵ Notable among the latter was Soviet writer Ilya Ehrenburg, an important peace champion and informal cultural diplomat for the Soviet Union who had lived in Paris as a young man in the 1910s and established strong contacts with the avant-garde while there, including Picasso.¹⁶ Ehrenburg continued to act as a cultural ambassador during the Stalin period. Under Khrushchev he not only authored the novel that gave the period its name, *The Thaw* (1954), but also took an active role in promoting acceptance of modern Western art in the Soviet Union, publicly expressing the hope that ‘the spirit of genuine cultural co-operation and honest competition’ would countervail the climate of Cold War.¹⁷ Ehrenburg played a key role in the organisation of a major Picasso retrospective, which opened in autumn 1956, first

¹³ Richmond, *Cultural Exchange*, 47–64; on the US guides at ANEM see Susan E. Reid, ‘Who Will Beat Whom? Soviet Popular Reception of the American National Exhibition in Moscow, 1959’, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* vol. 9, no. 4 (2008): 855–904. Architectural historian Catherine Cooke recalls the impact of the Soviet pavilion on her when she visited the Brussels World Fair in 1958: Cooke, ‘Modernity and Realism’.

¹⁴ Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?*

¹⁵ Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, ‘Modernism between Peace and Freedom: Picasso and Others at the Congress of Intellectuals in Wrocław, 1948’, in Crowley and Pavitt, *Cold War Modern*, 33–42.

¹⁶ Joshua Rubenstein, ‘Ilya Ehrenburg: Between East and West’, *Journal of Cold War Studies* vol. 4, no. 1 (2002): 44–65; Ilya Ehrenburg, *People and Life: Memoirs of 1891–1917*, translated by Anna Bostock and Yvonne Kapp (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1961) 205–7.

¹⁷ Ilya Ehrenburg, ‘Mysli pod novyi god’, *Ogonek*, no. 1 (1 January 1959): 9–10.

in Moscow and then in Leningrad.¹⁸ Although the Soviet bureaucracy in charge of cultural exchange, the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (VOKS), handled organisational matters, the exhibition would not have happened without Ehrenburg's commitment. Picasso also participated actively in determining how his oeuvre would be seen in the USSR, selecting works from his personal collection to be included in the retrospective.¹⁹

As in the case of the American Abstract Expressionist artists above, the ways in which individuals saw their role in cultural exchange and encounters – and the benefits they expected to derive – did not necessarily coincide with what state-sponsoring agencies envisaged.²⁰ A major contribution of this volume is that it explores the complexities of the relationships between the individual culture-bearers and the state whose policies they wittingly or unwittingly executed. For artists and other professionals, cultural exchange represented an opportunity for professional advancement: both to gain international recognition and to access the information they needed to be at the top of their profession. For Soviet fashion designers, for example, the chance to travel, to meet their Western counterparts at home, or to study Western collections and practices, provided vital opportunities to learn and to match themselves against international standards.²¹ Similarly, for architects and the professionals in the newly emerging field of Soviet industrial design, international exchanges and congresses of organisations such as the International Union of Architects (IUA), the International Association of Art Critics (AICA) or the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (ICSID) not only enabled individual professional advancement, but also promoted the development of the profession.²²

Further research would be illuminating, for example, on the personal links formed under the auspices of these international, trans-curtain bodies, and on

¹⁸ Igor Golomshtok and Andrei Siniavskii, *Picasso* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1960); Reid, 'Toward a New (Socialist) Realism', 221–4; Eleonory Gilburd, 'Picasso in Thaw Culture', *Cahiers du Monde russe* vol. 47, no. 1–2 (2006): 61–108.

¹⁹ Gilburd, 'Picasso', 73–4.

²⁰ Picasso may have engaged with the exhibition as an opportunity to receive the blessing of the 'mother of communist parties'. Gertje R. Utey, *Picasso: The Communist Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 150–52.

²¹ Larissa Zakharova, 'Dior in Moscow: A Taste for Luxury in Soviet Fashion under Khrushchev', in David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, eds, *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010), 95–120.

²² On Soviet architects and the IUA see Cooke, 'Modernity and Realism'; Alexandra Köhring, 'The Congress of the International Architects' Union in Moscow (1958)', in Bazin et al., *Art Beyond Borders in Communist Europe*. On Soviet design and the ICSID see Dmitry Azrikan, 'VNIITE, Dinosaur of Totalitarianism or Plato's Academy of Design?' *Design Issues* vol. 15, no. 3 (1999), 63–5 of 45–77. The USSR joined the ICSID in 1965. Yuri Soloviev, *Moia zhizn' v dizaine* (Moscow: Soyuz dizainerov Rossii, 2004), 137; Tom Cubbin, personal communication, 27 February 2012.

the role of individual patrons and art collectors, among whom Norton Dodge is perhaps the best known.²³ The attention to the role and experience of individuals has implications for research sources, requiring the use not only of official planning documents and reports filed in state archives, and of published press reviews, but also of biography, autobiography, memoirs, letters and diaries in personal collections, and memories elicited through oral history.

In addition to considering individual agents of cultural exchange, an understanding of Cold War transnational cultural interactions within and between the blocs requires consideration of the effects on reception and audiences, both as individuals and as collective 'publics'. The focus of this volume on 'high' culture is premised on the recognition that cultural diplomacy courted different target audiences, addressing them in differentiated ways. In this period, the growing middle classes took on new importance as the audience the Soviet Union sought to persuade. As the editors note, the Soviet Union no longer sought primarily to influence foreign communists with the aim of spreading communism, but to use achievements in culture to enhance the Soviet Union's image among the Western chattering classes.²⁴ Teachers, academics, critics, journalists and other professional opinion makers were wooed not least because they occupied influential positions in society and could be used to 'cascade' the message further.²⁵

How the foreign public was imagined had effects on the way the Cold War adversaries presented themselves. And this, in turn, exercised effects not only on the receivers but also on the senders of the message. For example, at Expo '58 in Brussels, Soviet planners came to understand that the task of representing the Soviet Union to the West European viewer, in direct competition with the USA, required them to engage with Western modes of mass entertainment and tourism. Such experiences recast the exhibition designers' conception of their own practice and Soviet self-presentation abroad.²⁶ Self-representations, shaped by the internalised image of the Other, could also exercise effects on domestic cultural practices. The international success of the Czechoslovak pavilion at the same Brussels World Fair in 1958, celebrated back home in Czechoslovakia, engendered an enthusiastic embrace of an organic modernist style of design that came to be

²³ Norton T. Dodge, 'Notes on Collection', in *Nonconformist Art: The Soviet Experience, 1956-86* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1995), 12; John McFee, *The Ransom of Russian Art* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1994).

²⁴ Conclusion to this volume, p.155.

²⁵ The Soviet organisers at Brussels '58, for example, deliberated over *which* viewers they should prioritise – middle-class professionals and specialists or ordinary lay viewers and the working class. Reid, 'The Soviet Pavilion at Brussels'; State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF), f. 9470, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 34–45 [l. 39]; GARF, f. 9470, op. 1, d. 21, l. 128, ll. 166–8, 207–8.

²⁶ Reid, 'The Soviet Pavilion at Brussels'.

known as the Brussels Style. Referencing an ideal urbane modern lifestyle, it had extended impacts on everyday life, visual culture and design.²⁷

This should remind us that it was not only people who crossed borders but also artefacts, technologies and practices. Along with the remembered experiences of performances and exhibitions that formed part of Cold War cultural diplomacy, and the new friendships and communities that resulted from human encounters, these had lasting consequences for cultural production on both sides of the 'Iron Curtain' and beyond.

²⁷ Daniela Kramcova, *The Brussels Dream: The Czechoslovak Presence at Expo 58 in Brussels and the Lifestyle of the Early 1960s* (Prague: Arbor Vitae societas, 2008).

Preface and Acknowledgements

The Soviet Union was a cultural superpower. The arts were valued in the Soviet Union and plenty of attention was directed towards arts in general. Art production was taught not only to future professionals, but also to the general public, creating a vast arsenal of art lovers keeping art production alive. It is, of course, debatable what role the Soviet state and the Communist Party played in this process. Official approaches to the arts had several negative features, manifesting in severe limitations of artistic freedom and preference for conservative art taste. Few can deny, however, that for almost 75 years the Soviet art world enthralled and fascinated people around the world. The Soviet Union used different forms of art extensively as part of its foreign policy. Exhibitions on Soviet fine arts and photography were circulated around the world; the best music and dance groups as well as individual artists were sent on extensive tours abroad. Even during the reign of Stalin, when travelling was limited, several artists were sent on foreign tours. The Second World War in particular saw extensive use of Soviet artistic force in areas occupied by the Soviet army. Later, after Stalin's death in 1953, the use of arts in Soviet foreign policy notably extended, becoming global in scale.

Personally, I have been interested in the relationship of art and power in the Soviet Union for a long time. I started to work on materials related to Soviet cultural diplomacy while I was a visiting scholar at Stanford in 2008. I am indebted to Amir Weiner, who welcomed me to Stanford's intellectual community, introduced me to collections at the Hoover Institution Archives, and invited me to give papers both at the 'kruzhok' of the history department and at Hoover Institution events. This initial spark later led me to do extensive archival work in Moscow and other places in order to understand the cultural diplomacy of the Soviet Union.

The initial idea for this book was first born in 2011, when I started arrangements for an international conference – 'East–West Cultural Exchanges and the Cold War' – organized at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, during four exceptionally beautiful days in June 2012. Despite the somewhat remote location of the conference, we received a great turnout of topical papers from 26 countries. In all, together with conference co-organisers Pia Koivunen (University of Tampere) and Pekka Suutari (University of Eastern Finland), we selected 84 participants through a rigorous review process. With possible future volumes in mind, the conference had pre-circulated research papers. Special thanks in regard to arranging and helping with organising the conference belongs to Riikka-Mari Muhonen, who led a team of graduate students of history. After a successful conference, we were encouraged by the turnout of very promising papers and started to go through possible combinations of papers. Eventually, we ended up producing two separate volumes, one discussing connections between Western and Eastern Europe outside

the superpower setting. The other one is the volume at hand. Furthermore, Stanciu Cezar had edited a special volume for the *Valahian Journal of Historical Studies* from the research papers from the conference in 2013.

The process leading to this volume has not been without problems, as certainly no edited volume has even been. Yet I am grateful to all the contributors for submitting everything on time, paying attention to comments and conforming to all the requirements set by the editors. It has been pleasure to work with such a selection of innovative and arduous researchers, willing to share their expertise and ideas with others. Instead of editing a collection of loosely compatible individual chapters, I have felt that we have shared a vision and a purpose. Our aim has been to better understand the objectives, outcomes and impact of Soviet artistic interaction with the West. Whether the perspective of an individual chapter has been on individuals or structures, they have played together, aiming at the bigger picture of Soviet cultural diplomacy and the role of different organisations and individuals in it.

In the process of editing and compiling this volume, I received important contributions from several people who deserve my deepest gratitude. My co-editor Pekka Suutari has naturally had a key role throughout the process. Kirsi-Maria Hytönen from the University of Jyväskylä had a very important role in helping to process the manuscript into its final stages. Without her tireless effort and committed contribution, the process would have been much slower than it eventually was. Lea Kervinen, from the University of Eastern Finland, also played an important role by going through the final stages of editing and processing the manuscript.

On behalf of our several contributors, I also wish to extend my gratitude to those numerous archivists and librarians whose tireless work makes our work possible in the first place. Without libraries and archives, we would have little to do our research with. It is not possible to name all the archives and libraries that have been used for compiling this volume, but they range from Russia to the United States and to several European archives and libraries.

SIMO MIKKONEN

Berkeley, California

On a warm and sunny day in March 2015

Contents

<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	vii
<i>Foreword</i> <i>Susan E. Reid</i>	xi
<i>Preface and Acknowledgements</i>	xix
1 Introduction to the Logic of East–West Artistic Interactions <i>Simo Mikkonen and Pekka Suutari</i>	1
PART I INDIRECT CONTACTS, IMAGES AND IMAGINATION	
2 Mutually Assured Distinction: VOKS and Artistic Exchange in the Early Cold War <i>Oliver Johnson</i>	17
3 Friendship of the Musicians: Anglo-Soviet Musical Exchanges 1938–1948 <i>Pauline Fairclough and Louise Wiggins</i>	29
4 Gazing at the Baltic: Tourist Discourse in the Cinema of the Baltic Sea Countries <i>Eva Närripea, Ewa Mazierska and Lars Kristensen</i>	49
PART II HIGHLY PUBLICISED AND SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLES OF EXCHANGE OF MUSIC AND MUSICIANS	
5 The Real Ambassadors? The Cleveland Orchestra Tours the Soviet Union, 1965 <i>Clayton Koppes</i>	69
6 Pianist Sviatoslav Richter: The Soviet Union Launches a ‘Cultural Sputnik’ to the United States in 1960 <i>Meri Elisabet Herrala</i>	87