

EIR Feature

Glasnost and the magicians of Venice

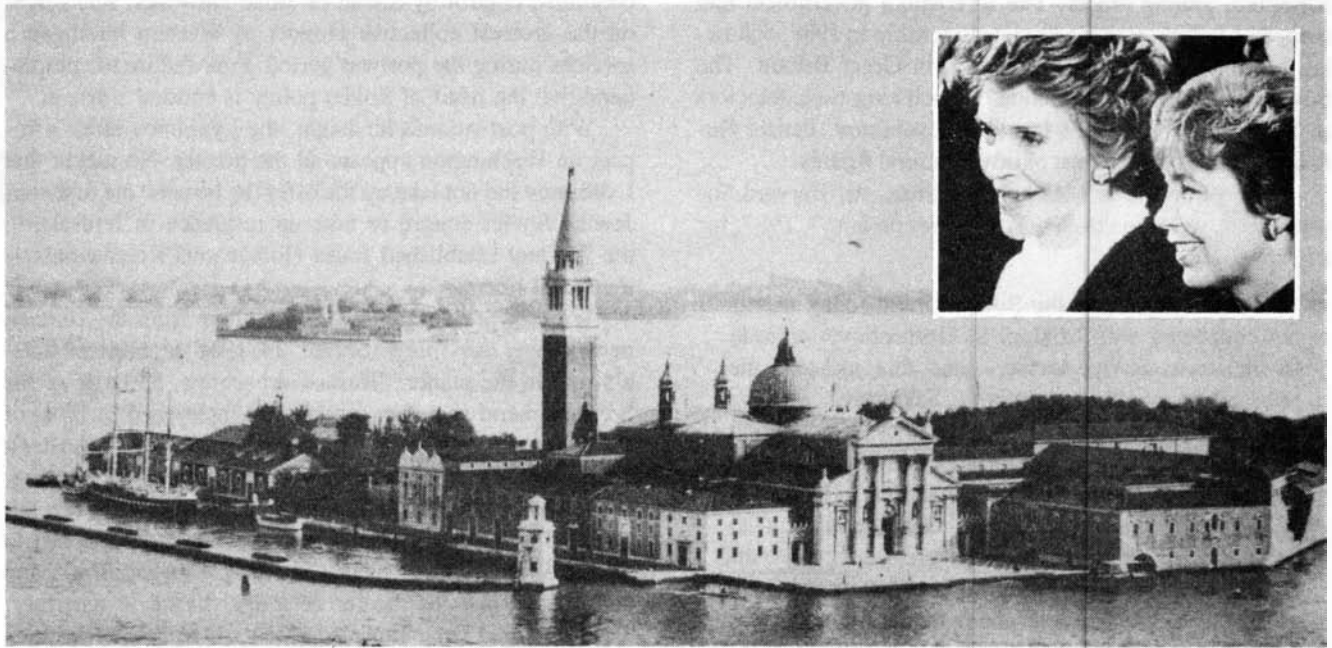
by David P. Goldman

In November 1987, shortly before Soviet General Secretary Gorbachov's arrival in Washington, Nancy Reagan scheduled an extraordinary visit to New York City, to attend the Carnegie Hall debut of an emigré Russian pianist, Vladimir Feltsman, who had earlier played his first American concert at the White House, at Mrs. Reagan's invitation. Earlier in the year, the First Lady's close friend, U.S. Information Agency director Charles Wick had arranged for Feltsman, a Jewish dissident, to record the Chopin *Preludes* at an improvised recording studio in the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, an unheard-of favor to a musician suppressed by the Soviet cultural authorities. The recording was released with great fanfare by CBS last fall.

Mrs. Reagan's trip to New York fell victim to a sudden snowstorm, but she and President Reagan attended the Feltsman premiere at Washington's Kennedy center two weeks later.

Feltsman himself is a pianist of second rank even among the prominent Russians of his generation, destined to fade into the obscurity which has overtaken dozens of other emigrés. The First Lady's passing obsession with him seems barely worthy of a footnote in the broader story of President Reagan's apparent personality change prior to his agreement with Gorbachov. But the incident marks a high point in White House fascination for what passes for "Russian culture," artfully guided by Wick and his sponsor, Soviet go-between Armand Hammer. That is not to accuse Mrs. Reagan of susceptibility to cultural influences as such; this, after all, is the same woman whose personal intercession permitted the Beach Boys to perform before the Washington Monument. What captured her was, rather, the high opinion of "Russian spirituality" among the Armand Hammer social set, with respect to which she stood "like a little girl with her nose pressed against the store-window," in Michael Deaver's description.

Mrs. Reagan's personal enthusiasm for Russian romanticism is nonetheless something special. It appeared when Russian emigré Vladimir Horowitz returned to Moscow in a triumphant tour stage-managed by Charles Wick, and returned to a hero's welcome and a White House concert; and it took on the passion of the



The island of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice, site of a Benedictine Abbey which serves as the think tank for the old Venetian families conspiring with the Russian oligarchy to corrupt the underlying content of Western culture. Inset: Nancy Reagan, "fan" of Russian modernism, in a television appearance with Raisa Gorbachova, the Russian cultural tsarina.

newly converted with the Feltsman incident. That sort of radical, impassioned shift in matters of apparent personal taste can transform the personality of political leaders at a level more fundamental than nominal structures of political belief.

The problem of cultural counterintelligence

Nancy Reagan's teeny-bopperish fancy for the Russians identifies the special sort of event in counterintelligence, in which the recruitment of an agent-of-influence implies the existence of a broader sort of capability to effect such a transformation. That capability is to be found in oligarchically controlled official cultural institutions of Western Europe, of which we call attention to the two nastiest: the Venice Biennale festival, and the Goethe Institute of West Germany. Funded and nominally directed by the the Italian and West German governments, both were founded and continue to serve as vehicles for the old European families who have embraced the Soviet Empire.

The selling of glasnost, in its present form, has been in preparation since the Venetian "Biennale" cultural festival of 1977 on the theme of Soviet dissent. The promotion of what passes for Russian culture has been the subject of an intensive effort on the part of the Venetian noble families and their collaborators abroad for much longer. This effort, in turn, draws upon a more bizarre and far-reaching project, namely, the synthesis of a Nietzschean ideology to replace Augustinian culture in the West.

This report will treat subjects which appear arcane, above all the autistically arcane subculture of modernist musical

composition. The Frankenstein monsters of the musical avant-garde on both sides of the Iron Curtain, command little public attention. Here we are concerned not with their music as such, but with the laboratories that synthesize the cultural poison, whose purpose is to kill the surviving roots of Western civilization. In return for his patience, we promise to show the reader the inside of the Venetian witches' kitchen, which brews the ingredients for a transformation of Western culture on the grand scale.

The difficulty of those among the American political elite who watched with horror as Gorbachov seduced the White House, is most poignantly illustrated by former Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger. Steadfastly anti-Soviet, Weinberger, in his private capacity as chairman of the Washington Opera, nonetheless presided over the first wave of Russian cultural assault on the capital, in the Russian-centered 1985-86 Washington Opera season, including a new production of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Le Coq d'Or*. Emigré musician Mstislav Rostropovich's appointment as director of the moribund Washington National Symphony had already established Russian dominance of the Washington musical scene.

But glasnost's real triumph in Washington came in January 1987, with emigré director Yuri Lyubimov's staging of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* at the National Theater's Arena Stage, hailed as the year's cultural happening. On Christmas Eve 1986, three weeks before the Dostoevsky premiere, Lyubimov hinted that he might return to the Soviet Union on invitation from the Soviet authorities; in fact, he had received telephone calls communicating the personal invitation of Raisa Gorbachova, from the composer Alfred

Schnittke, among others. The Chernenko government had stripped Lyubimov of his Soviet citizenship in 1984, following his highly publicized defection in Great Britain. The Soviets also extended invitations to such long-time defectors as Rostropovich, a close friend of Lyubimov, dancer Rudolph Nureyev, and a host of other cultural figures.

Glasnost promoter Marshall Goldman, the Harvard Sovietologist, wrote in the *New York Times* on Jan. 7, 1987, for example:

Little happens in the Soviet Union today that is not connected with Mikhail S. Gorbachov's crusade to transform Soviet society—and that includes the release last month of Andrei D. Sakharov. . . . The problem, Moscow discovered, is that it is hard to stimulate creativity in the laboratory and factory while suppressing creativity elsewhere in society. That seems in large part to account for Mr. Gorbachov's call to Dr. Sakharov. It is also why the great director, Yuri Lyubimov, has been promised that he would have artistic freedom if he returned from the United States to resume direction of the Taganka Theater in Moscow. And it helps explain why after years of refusing readmission for those who have emigrated, Moscow decided to welcome some 50 prodigal sons and daughters back into the country last week.

EIR's April 1987 *Special Report*, "Project Democracy: the 'parallel government' behind the Iran-Contra affair," provided extensive documentation showing that Lyubimov's defection and reinvasion followed a pattern of Soviet "homing pigeons," i.e., false defectors, whose conscious or unconscious mission was to re-shape Western intelligence services' view of the Soviet *nomenklatura*. Apart from Lyubimov, the case histories presented included Oleg Bitov, who disappeared during the 1983 Venice "Biennale" film festival, reappeared in a British asylum, and later returned to his job at the Soviet journal *Literaturnaya Gazeta*; and the film director Andreas Tarkovsky, who died in Paris exile in 1986, only to be eulogized by the Soviet press as a martyr to the Soviet bureaucracy; Vitaly Yurchenko, whose aborted October 1985 defection and re-defection colored Secretary of State Shultz's Moscow negotiations prior to the Reykjavik summit, among others.

In that report, we identified the role of former U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, a member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, in providing credibility to cultural defectors channeled to the West through the Venetian cultural scene, in particular the "Biennale" film and music festival. We concluded, "The importance of the Lyubimov case . . . is that the Russian director remained under Soviet intelligence control [through Soviet-allied Western cultural networks] before, during, and after his supposed defection to the West. . . . Since the Lyubimov case became, in the eyes of Western analysts, something of a thermometer for Moscow's anticipated 'cultural thaw,' his

continued control by Soviet or allied networks, sheds light on the greatest collective blunder of Western intelligence services during the postwar period: their failure to comprehend that the heart of Soviet policy is cultural warfare."

With post-summit hindsight, the Lyubimov affair's impact on Washington appears all the greater. No matter that Lyubimov did not take up the offer (he became the first non-Jewish Soviet emigré to take up residence in Jerusalem); the incident established Raisa Gorbachova's credentials as a cultural liberal.

Western press reports, e.g., this one from the German newsweekly *Der Spiegel* of Dec. 29, 1986, highlighted Raisa's role in the matter: "Raisa Gorbachova, 53, wife of the Soviet general secretary, apparently intervened in favor of the avant-garde stage director Yuri Lyubimov. . . . After a visit to the Taganka Theater, Lyubimov's former workplace, Raisa Gorbachova asked, after a discussion between her husband and the actors' collective, what had happened to the anti-Stalin theater piece, *The House on the River*, and complained that the theater no longer had it in repertory. The show had been canceled when the stage director was sent out of the Soviet Union, and is now being rehearsed again."

It should be noted that Lyubimov, a Dostoevsky fanatic, horrifies Western audiences whenever his cage door is left open. His Arena Stage production compelled the audience to file by two simulated corpses (Raskolnikov's victims in *Crime and Punishment*), and stand a search by theater ushers for traces of blood on their clothing, among other niceties.

Introducing the magicians

Our Project Democracy report identified the Soviet connections of the Western channels which absorbed and passed on such Russian "dissidents" as Lyubimov and Tarkovsky, through the old Venetian families and the Venice-centered Communist music mafia in Italy and elsewhere. For example, Lyubimov's Western collaborator since the early 1970s was the Venetian modernist Luigi Nono, son-in-law of the atonal high priest Arnold Schoenberg; Nono, who wrote numerous works in praise of bloody red revolution, was in turn the principal Venetian contact of the KGB's leading cultural traveler and talent-scout, the "poet" Yevgeni Yevtushenko. Nono's librettist, Massimo Cacciari, began his political career as the alter ego of fugitive terrorist Toni Negri, then became a Communist Party deputy in the Italian parliament, and finally broke with the Communists to promote a communist-fascist alliance against the Catholic center.

In early 1987, when the report appeared, it could still be hoped that elements of Western intelligence might repudiate the Soviet disinformation campaign directed at establishing the credibility of glasnost. The behavior of U.S. intelligence suggests that it has played this game intentionally, and obtained the results it wanted.

It is not sufficient to trace the birth certificate and adoption papers of this particular Rosemary's Baby; the more impor-

tant question is, "What sort of capability undertook the behavior modification of the Washington elite?" These events stem from a long-term enterprise to corrupt the underlying content of Western culture, by agreement between the Russian oligarchy, and such elements of the Western elite as the old Venetian families and their centuries-old think tank at the Benedictine Abbey on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore; such British cultural-pessimists as the late Arnold Toynbee and Hugh Trevor-Roper; and the official West German cultural mafia headed by Klaus von Bismarck, president of the Goethe Institute, and Bismarck's patron, Herwarth von Bitenfeld.

Strictly speaking, the modern form of this operation was fully formed at the 1815 Congress of Vienna, which crushed the pro-American republican upsurge throughout Europe. Its first incarnation was the Romantic movement of Novalis and the Schlegel brothers in Germany, Wordsworth and Coleridge in England, Madame de Staël in Geneva, Rousseau in France. It ripened later in the century, under Nietzsche's watchword, "God is dead, everything is permitted," and flourished in Russia under the influence of Nietzsche's philosophical twin, the pan-Slavic messianist Fyodor Dostoevsky.

The name of the operation today, is "Neo-Romanticism," with a special emphasis upon Russian Romanticism, because the Venice-centered cultural mafia argues that what passes for Russian culture best expresses the Nietzschean-Dostoevskian collective soul, as opposed to the divinity of the individual which underlies Western culture.

In 1982, a group of Western politicians met under the auspices of the just-founded Aspen Institute of Venice, in the same library of the San Giorgio Maggiore Benedictine Abbey where the heads of state of the seven leading Western nations held their June 1987 deliberations. The Aspen Venice meetings offered the first public hint in Western circles of a Soviet cultural thaw, three Soviet leaders before the ascension of Mikhail Gorbachov.

However, the Venice Biennale, then under the management of Count Ripa di Meana, a CIA-linked Venetian patrician who heads the foreign section of Italy's (now governing) Socialist Party, had begun preparations for the supposed thaw in 1977, with a much-publicized special session entitled, "Freedom and Socialism: the Historic Moments of Dissent." The 1977 Biennale festival, which drew extensive coverage from English-language media, opened with an emotional message of thanks taped by (former) dissident physicist Andrei Sakharov, now back making bombs for the Gorbachov regime which rehabilitated him. Every available dissident was rounded up for the jamboree, which met with thunderous denunciations in the Soviet media.

The Biennale itself was the creation of Count Volpi di Misurata, the Venetian adventurer who served as foreign and economic minister under Mussolini. Volpi, as *EIR* has reported in numerous locations, sponsored Alexander Parvus, Lenin's funding source and contact with the German foreign

ministry which paid for his 1917 return to St. Petersburg. He set up the original "Trust" agreement with the Bolshevik government in the 1920s. The 1977 affair has its roots, therefore, in the origins of the Bolshevik party itself.

The 1977 event had a double purpose. Ripa di Meana, now a commissioner of the European Community, bashed the Soviet government for the benefit of his friends in U.S. intelligence (he went on to direct the Italian side of the Free Afghanistan Committee, among other similar projects). However, the Venetian elite which controls the Biennale, e.g., Count Antonio Foscari, who then sat on the Biennale's governing board, conducted a subtler profile of Russian censorship, with a two-edged purpose. The first involved the grand strategic deception of the West which ultimately sold glasnost to Washington. The second, longer-range Venetian objective, foresaw the resurgence of Russian-nationalist "culture" as the channel through which Venice could, as throughout previous centuries, manipulate the stupid Russian giant which Venice expected to dominate world affairs for the next several centuries.

The view from San Giorgio Maggiore

In a February 1987 interview, one of the chief cultural planners for the Venetian elite, the Benedictine father Pellegrino Ernetti of San Giorgio Maggiore, argued that resurgent Russian culture would dominate the West. Ernetti, who also heads Italy's Church music association, is the Benedictine Order's principal writer on music and liturgy.

"I am very much inside Russian musical problems," Ernetti said, "and for many reasons. We can distinguish between two parts of Russian music, i.e., liturgical and non-liturgical. The liturgical side of Russia is perfect. The tendency, including the modern tendency, and the tradition of this beautiful Oriental polyphony, fascinates me greatly. Even the modern liturgical composers. On the other hand, in non-sacred music, all the present-day Russian tendencies fascinate me. Russian music has a fascination, even the modernists. There is something there of great importance, which you will not find in Italy, for example. There is a constant line of inspiration, which continues overtime; this line of inspiration will branch into one, two, three, four, or five different composers which descend from it. Listening to any of them, one hears immediately that they are Russian, without knowing in advance the nationality of the composer. It seems to me that even the Russian modernists have a common character, above and beyond the individual personality of the musician."

One Russian composer, Edison Denisov, had made the connection between Yuri Lyubimov and the Venetian modernist Luigi Nono, which brought Lyubimov to the West for the first time in 1972 to stage a Nono opera. Asked his opinion of Denisov, Ernetti replied,

"I like him very much. But I like all of them. They all have real life to them, but that is above all a communal life. That is, when we listen to them, we say immediately, 'That is Russian,' or 'This is Russian,' even if they all have their

own character. On the contrary, this can't be said of the last half-century of Western composers. For example, if we take some of the modernists, e.g., [Gian Francesco] Malipiero [the Mussolini fascist who ruled Venetian music for half a century—ed.], Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Bartok, Stockhausen, etc., etc. and throw in some of our own Italian modernists, say Luigi Nono—even if any two of them belong to the same school, say the [Schoenberg] dodecaphonic school—there is no common logic to any of them!”

Missing from the Western musical modernists' output, which the musical public despises, is the inherent “naturalness” of Russian music, Ernetti argues. In fact, the witches' brew of Slavic sentimentality and folkloric populism which characterizes Russian composers has nothing more to do with nature, than the New Orleans whorehouse rags re-worked by Debussy and Stravinsky, and sold back to George Gershwin as “native American jazz.” Nor is there anything new in Ernetti's report. Debussy's generation of jaded “post-Romantics,” bloated after the chromatic orgies of Liszt and Wagner, adopted the Dostoevskian primitivist Mussorgsky, as a novel musical cheap thrill. The Russians Scriabin and Stravinsky inaugurated musical modernism. Arnold Schoenberg's labored imitation of Scriabin was retreaded as “German expressionism,” while Stravinsky regressed to barbaric primitivism.

What emerged as two contending schools of musical decomposition during the 20th century, i.e., the Viennese formalist vs. Russian primitivist schools, had a single, evil underlying conception. Schoenberg's formalism, which employs arithmetical procedures to choose notes, was (in Schoenberg's explicit admission) a form of number-magic, an hermetic cabalism. Stravinsky's primitivism (followed by George Gershwin, Aaron Copland, et al. in the United States) is based upon symbolic magic, in which the listener supposedly responds to musical references to symbols supposedly buried in his unconscious mind.

After a half-century in which Schoenberg's so-called twelve-tone method dominated what passed for musical composition, the Venice-centered cultural mafia decided to “swing the pendulum” back to sentimental barbarism. That is the content of the “neo-Romantic revival.”

A joke told by the Czechs puts the content of Russian culture in an appropriate light. Not long ago, the story runs, Prague decided to set up a Czech Navy. A few generals were fitted for admiral's uniforms, some army buildings were turned into navy buildings, and a press release was prepared. But at the last moment, a party official suggested, “Why don't we ask Comrade Gorbachov about this first?” So a delegation of newly designated admirals took the next plane to Moscow, and went straight to Gorbachov's office in the Kremlin. “Comrade Party Secretary, we have the pleasure to inform you that we shall announce tomorrow the formation of the Czech navy!” they said. Gorbachov was suspicious. “You are landlocked country with no oceans,” he growled. “What for are you needing navy?” A Czech admiral was nonplussed.

“Well, Comrade Gorbachov, you have a ministry of culture!”

Case histories: Alfred Schnittke

Raisa Gorbachova opened contact with Yuri Lyubimov through the composer Alfred Schnittke, as noted. Lyubimov's first official word that he would be reinvited home came from Schnittke, who called him from London shortly before Christmas 1986. Schnittke “was in London and told him Gorbachov had attended a Taganka Theater production not too long ago and had spoken warmly of Lyubimov and his work,” Lyubimov told the *Washington Post* Dec. 25, 1986. “Schnittke further said that the troupe, emboldened by the visit, subsequently reinstated one of his most successful productions, *The House on the River*, to the repertory and that the opening night crowd had cheered his name.” As noted, the incident involved Raisa's personal intervention.

Schnittke, like Lyubimov, poet Yevgeni Yevtushenko, and a chosen handful of other Soviet cultural figures, works at the borderline of censorship, and travels freely between East and West as a semi-dissident. He is also the standard-bearer of the supposed new Soviet synthesis of Romanticism and modernism, and the most-performed Soviet composer in the West. Through the support of another Soviet emigré, violinist Gidon Kremer, for whom Schnittke has composed four violin concertos, the Russian's work has gained wide currency with European and American orchestras.

Yuri Lyubimov set Schnittke up as a purported cultural freedom fighter, with a 1983 commission for an oratorio on the Faust legend, using a 1587 German text. It was first performed in Vienna, June 1983, after the Andropov regime banned its performance on the grounds that it reflected “mysticism.” The composer told reporters at the time, “It is a negative passion, since it deals with a Christian who, if not anarchist, could be called evil. The folk tale says, however, that he died as an ‘evil and good Christian.’ ” So much for Schnittke's Christianity.

The Schnittke scandal of 1983 became Yuri Andropov's prelude to glasnost. Konstantin Chernenko, soon to replace the dying Andropov as interim party chief, told a central committee meeting a week before the Vienna debut of the Schnittke pastiche, that the role of the arts should be to present “positive Communist heroes.” The Soviet authorities then virtually kicked Schnittke across the border to Vienna, to get him out of Moscow before Western journalists could raise a fuss, according to Schnittke's Viennese sponsors. Once identified as an heroic dissident, Schnittke's later rehabilitation could be presented as evidence of Soviet good faith.

Schnittke's oratorio included the participation of Moscow's leading pop singer, Alla Pugachova, whose role was described as follows by a reviewer of the Vienna premiere: “A low, sensual woman's voice entered the hall as if from the ceiling. A seductive blonde in black stiletto heels and a slinky sequined nightgown prowled through from the back, microphone in hand, sending out a lusty vibrato. Taking over



Venetian "entertainments" of the 16th century: Foreigners were amused—and fleeced—by performers of all descriptions, at all hours, in the notoriously depraved City of the Lagoon.

the narration of the piece, she parodied the sobriety of the chorus in archaic German set to rock, the shrill eddying of her highest notes bordering on laughter."

Wolfgang Rihm and the Goethe Institute

Schnittke's ragbag of modernist noise-making, Rachmaninoff-style romanticism, and popular music, set an unpleasant standard for the sort of music the European cultural mafia set out to promote. The neo-Romantic retooling of Western music began, officially speaking, with a series of radio broadcasts sponsored by West German Radio (Westdeutscher Rundfunk, or WDR), in 1977, just as the Venice Biennale planned its marathon on East European cultural dissent. WDR announced (in the person of *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* music critic Karl Dalhaus) that a "new simplicity" ("Neue Einfachkeit") would be the common basis of musical composition henceforward.

The composers are still trying to work out what they are supposed to do. The supposed standard-bearer of the school, the 35-year-old Wolfgang Rihm, said in a recent interview, "You ought to know, when you use the conception 'New Simplicity,' that this was an idea introduced by concert promoters and publishers for the most incompatible things. They brought under the same hat minimalist music, neo-expressionist music, post-serial music; everything was packed into this idea, and nobody knew exactly what was meant by it. There was a weekend program on WDR, and one of the editors invented the title for it. And I wasn't even there, and they didn't even play any of my works. And in the next few weeks, it was out everywhere, that I was the principal exponent of New Simplicity!"

Wolfgang Rihm's activity duplicates the pattern of East-West collaboration we saw earlier in the cases of Nono,

Lyubimov, Schnittke, et al., in the smaller pond of East-West German relations. His principal literary collaborator is the East Berlin surrealist Heiner Müller, who provided the text for a number of Rihm works, most notoriously the 1986 piece of "music theater" entitled, *The Hamlet Machine*. (Although it won a national prize for "best new opera of the year," it "aroused interest only from the critics," a reviewer noted, since "the third performance played to a virtually empty house.")

Müller enjoys the reputation of a dissident, and his *Hamlet Machine* text includes references to the Hungarian uprising of 1956, among other jabs at the Soviets. A reviewer called the Müller-Rihm collaboration "history as the junkyard of history; history is rolled in like some kind of family album, in which the writer and composer flip back and forth, led not by logic but by free association." Müller's potpourri introduces an actor playing Hamlet, who then becomes Hamlet, and gravediggers, who again become Hamlet, swimming in cultural references, while Rihm obligingly quotes everything from Handel to Richard Strauss. Press accounts have Müller in trouble with his East Berlin masters, who supposedly dislike the style and content of his dissent. Not so at all, Rihm told an interviewer. "Heiner Müller is very privileged in East Germany. He can go back and forth from East to West Berlin any time he wants."

Rihm is also one of a very few Western modernists recognized by the Soviet cultural authorities, who dedicated an article to him in the February 1985 issue of the official Soviet music journal.

He made the big time early. The Venice Biennale featured his works in 1981. His new opera *Oedipus Rex* (with texts by Hölderlin and Nietzsche) became in October 1987 the first modern opera debut to be broadcast live on West German television, and numerous major orchestras, including the Chicago Symphony, have offered first performances of Rihm works during the past several years, again courtesy of WDR. The New York premiere of his "neo-expressionist" opera *Jacob Lenz* last December at the Juilliard School represented the year's cultural high point for the official West German community in the United States, which formed half the opening night audience. Rihm attended the event, the guest of the Goethe Institute, West Germany's official organization for foreign cultural activities.

A pleasant but troubled man, Rihm met Luigi Nono in 1980, and developed a sort of adolescent crush on the Venetian composer. "When we met in 1980," Rihm enthused in a recent interview, "he naturally knew nothing of mine, while I knew much of his work, but he had a hunger to get to know things, and that inspired me, this openness, this unaffected, simple ability to get access to the other person. He wanted to get to know things ever so much, and I played things for him on tape, and he wanted to hear more, and more, and more, and for me that was—I had never experienced anything like that, that a great composer of my father's generation wanted to know so much. And since then we have been in contact,

and meet often. I try to be just as open as he is, and that is what I can learn from him.”

Nono, a torch-bearer of the Schoenberg tradition (he married and only recently separated from Schoenberg’s daughter Nuria), quietly abandoned the twelve-tone formalist cause in the early 1980s, when the shift to “neo-Romanticism” became mandatory in Venice. Nono confided to friends that his favorite new composer was Wolfgang Rihm.

That is the goldfish bowl which Rihm circles. Examining Rihm’s career, we learn who owns the bowl. As a 17-year-old lad, he came into the good graces of the British composer Humphrey Searle, a wartime official of British intelligence and close collaborator of Sir Hugh Trevor-Roper. Searle, who had been a student of Vienna School guru Anton Webern, made his life’s work the attempt to integrate Schoenbergian modernism with Franz Liszt’s romanticism (Searle founded the international Liszt Society in 1950). More to the point, Searle ran the British Broadcasting Corporation’s musical programming for several years after 1938. Along with Trevor-Roper (for whose book *The Last Days of Hitler* he performed the on-the-scene research in postwar Germany), he was one of the architects of postwar German cultural policy, and above all, the myth of German collective guilt—the rubric under which the Anglo-American pre-war friends of the Nazis reinstated their friends in positions of power under the occupation, reasoning that since all Germans were equally guilty, it did not matter who came back.

Rihm then served an apprenticeship under Karlheinz Stockhausen, the former Hamburg whorehouse pianist who became modernism’s leading apostle of a “New Age.” At the age of 24, Rihm found himself, to his own surprise, carrying the standard of “New Simplicity,” courtesy of Klaus von Bismarck’s Westdeutscher Rundfunk, as noted. At the time of Rihm’s “discovery,” von Bismarck had just moved from his 15-year tenure at German radio to the presidency of the Goethe Institute, which in December 1987 sponsored Rihm’s American debut.

Von Bismarck’s political career is the invention of the British occupation, i.e., of Sir Hugh Trevor-Roper and Humphrey Searle. He was groomed for a leading postwar cultural role starting in 1945 at British prisoner-of-war camps. His activity parallels Humphrey Searle’s in a number of respects. Searle directed musical programming at British Broadcasting Corporation from 1938 to 1940, and for years after the war. Searle founded the Liszt Society in 1950 as a vehicle for a new Romanticism; von Bismarck, in 1954, conjured the ghost of Madame de Staël, the salon-keeper of the first Romantic movement, as the guiding light for postwar German cultural policy. De Staël’s corrupted presentation of Germany as the nest of the Romantic movement, should be a “pride and joy” to modern Germany, von Bismarck argued, and “kept alive abroad” through official policy.

In 1961, Bismarck joined the handful of Protestant clergy and laymen who responded to the erection of the Berlin Wall with the infamous “Tübinger Declaration,” which, for the

first time in postwar German history, proposed to abandon the goal of a reunified, free Germany, and accept Soviet occupation as an inalterable fact. Bismarck was then elected to serve on the central committee of the World Council of Churches. He has since become one of West Germany’s most prominent sponsors of neutralist reunification under de facto Soviet domination.

Von Bismarck’s sponsor at the Goethe Institute was Herwarth von Bittenfeld, then concluding a long diplomatic career which had begun with a 1931-39 assignment to the German embassy in Moscow. A participant in the Hitler-Stalin pact, von Bittenfeld, as an undersecretary at Willy Brandt’s foreign ministry in the 1960’s, was the principal behind-the-scenes architect of Willy Brandt’s *Ostpolitik*, i.e., appeasement. In 1969, he undertook the German foreign ministry’s reorganization of the Goethe Institute as an engine of cultural pessimism.

Since his retirement from the foreign ministry, von Bittenfeld occupied himself foremost with the German wing of the International Save Venice Committee, the official link between the Venetian oligarchy and its collaborators abroad.

The Goethe Institute’s sponsorship of a jejeune Nietzschean like Wolfgang Rihm is far from the worst thing it has done under von Bittenfeld and von Bismarck. With a \$150 million annual budget from the German foreign ministry, the Institute expanded its “cultural programs” under Khomeini’s Iran, while President von Bismarck hailed the “spiritual vitality of Islam” as represented by the mullahs. It sponsors foreign showings of “new wave” German films, including the repertoire of the deceased drug-addict homosexual director Rainer Fassbänder. Von Bismarck’s literary preferences run to the modernist writers Gunther Grass and Heinrich Böll, the principal cultural apologists for the terrorist left.

Bittenfeld and Bismarck, no doubt, would share the Venetian Father Ernetti’s complaint that none of the musical modernists of the West are gifted with the “natural rhythm” of the Soviet primitives. The best they can come up with are musicians who profess ideological compatibility with their goals, and Wolfgang Rihm is the best they have found. “Mr. Rihm still thinks of himself as a German Romantic, but the Romanticism permeates his being, rather than defining the surface characteristics of his style,” a *New York Times* account Dec. 12 offered. “The Romanticism that interests me,” Rihm said, “is a literary Romanticism—Poe, Baudelaire, Hoffman. . . . Romanticism is such a misunderstood word. People think of it as a 19th-century musical style, but Romanticism can be found in much 20th-century music, too, as with composers like Luigi Nono.”

Rihm’s Romanticism, more specifically, is Nietzsche’s Romanticism. Music, he believes, should draw forth primal archetypes from the unconscious of the listener, uncovering man’s barbaric, pre-Christian nature.

But the political function for which von Bismarck et al. selected him involves the moral softening-up of the German population to accept von Bismarck’s program. The theme

remains the old “collective war guilt” of the Anglo-American Occupation psychological warfare experts. Asked whether his emphasis on “taking guilt upon one’s self” stemmed from the notion of German collective war guilt, Rihm said with great emotion, “I grew up in a time when this concept was always going around. And I can do nothing without having to think about it, as in the case of this present theatrical subject [Oedipus]: How does it relate to a history, which I must either regret, or deny? And now there is an attempt to construct a healthy world [in Germany], where you can have it good. But one still should know what was. And to simply temporize about what was, to say, ‘It’s history,’ I can’t go along with that. And during a discussion about *Oedipus* I simply put the idea on the table, that this is what is going, when people like Oedipus and Jocasta kill themselves, in Jocasta’s case, or blind themselves, in Oedipus,’ because of guilt, in which they have no subjective, conscious part, but, rather, were suddenly confronted with. And then it leapt into my mind, when history professors in Germany suddenly say, ‘Yes, now we can talk about things as if they were history.’ But they are the present, say I!”

Glasnost West

Some of Rihm’s listeners might argue that his eruptive, atonal style includes the punishment along with the guilt. His most important sponsors, e.g., von Bittenfeld of the “Save Venice” committee, would look sadly upon Rihm as an abortive experiment. Nono, Rihm, and the Western modernists generally have no future, Father Ernetti warns. “All that happens is that their works receive one performance at public expense. It isn’t music at all. This so-called music has no sense at all, because it does not respond to the demands of nature.” By this, Ernetti means the folksy “naturalness” of the Russian composers whom the Venetians favor.

Glasnost has meanwhile overtaken the modernist vanguard in the West. The *New York Times Magazine* March 1, 1987, offered a group portrait of the modernist mafia, centering on pianist Maurizio Pollini, a close friend of Luigi Nono. British journalist Keith Botsford portrayed the softening of the old quasi-terrorist gang, writing, “With Pollini, the talk is not all of music, but also of people, ideas, politics. For there was a time when, like most Italian intellectuals of his age, Pollini was deeply committed politically. He and [his friend, the composer Giacomo] Manzoni, the composer Luigi Nono and others would perform in factories and in poor districts. He still holds to the Socialist ideal, in which he sees no need for authoritarian government. As Pollini and Manzoni say, in essence, their hopes of the early 1970s were disappointed. Manzoni calls it ‘a lovely and wonderful time.’ Pollini would perhaps like to see ‘what would happen if a Prague Spring were allowed to go ahead, to see what socialism could do in a developed country.’ ”

In Venice, even the red menace Luigi Nono has become passé. Meanwhile, the Benedictines of San Giorgio Maggiore stare out at the lagoon, and wait for the Russians.

Interview: Wolfgang Rihm

A preference for Nietzsche and Venice

Wolfgang Rihm was interviewed on Dec. 12, 1987, following the New York premiere of his opera, Jacob Lenz. Excerpts from the discussion follow.

Q: I asked a mutual friend, “Why is Rihm so interested in [the surrealist Antonin] Artaud, Nietzsche. . . .

Rihm: . . . Hölderlin, Lenz . . .

Q: “. . . Büchner, and so on, that is, people who deal with mental illness. Why this preference for mental illness?” But he assured me that you are quite normal.

Rihm: Naturally! Please, one has to be able to separate occupation with something, and the question of identity.

Q: But why are you so interested in mental illness as a subject?

Rihm: Because, I believe, when I look for a literary subject for music, then there’s no point in setting in music a classical piece which is closed in itself; rather, I look for things, that are broken, that explode, that are wounded. And music has much more to do, I believe, with the confusion of the soul, than with the calming of the soul. Music has confused me more than calmed me, since the first time I heard it as a child. And I love music because it gets me going, because it doesn’t leave me where I am, but drives me forward. And therefore I look for subjects which are not complete in themselves, but have energy—subjects that are hurt.

Q: In the classical ideal of music—“All true art is moral progress,” as Beethoven put it, or music for the glory of God, in Bach’s conception—the idea was somewhat different. Would the classical composers have agreed with you?

Rihm: Some of them, certainly. Beethoven in many respects, and, surprisingly, I believe Mozart as well. . . .

Q: Plato would have excluded you from his *Republic*.

Rihm: Plato excluded music from his *Republic* in any event.

Q: There is a chapter in Schindler’s biography of Beetho-