

# Mixed Motives: Soviet Symphonies and Propagandistic Duplicity in *The Iron Curtain* (1948)

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## Abstract

For Darryl Zanuck's anti-communist film *The Iron Curtain* (1948), music director Alfred Newman compiled a score from the symphonic works of Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Khachaturian, and Myaskovsky. The Soviet selections remained even after legal efforts on behalf of the composers sought to remove them. Scholarship on *The Iron Curtain* has acknowledged the courtroom wrangling but not the capacity for outside music to sustain and complicate a propagandistic narrative. This article considers Newman's setting of music within the film, which shifts from the spare, predominantly diegetic musical accompaniments used in Zanuck's other "semidocumentaries" to a style patterned after pro-Soviet Hollywood films made during World War II in which Russian musical selections encouraged sympathetic audience responses. Drawing upon contemporary press coverage and production materials, this study shows how *The Iron Curtain*'s unusual compilation soundtrack both affirms and subverts ideologies imposed upon it.

In May of 1948, 20th Century-Fox's *The Iron Curtain* opened amid a carefully planned uproar.<sup>1</sup> As Hollywood's first explicitly anti-Soviet film of the postwar period, *The Iron Curtain* had been designed to provoke as much as inform. Based on the published accounts of Igor Gouzenko, a Russian cipher clerk who had worked in the Soviet embassy in Ottawa, Canada, during and following World War II, the film depicted Soviet efforts to steal information on the atomic bomb, a ploy that is revealed when Gouzenko defects, bringing with him documents detailing the spy ring's activities.<sup>2</sup> Not surprisingly, the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* preemptively denounced the "American gangsters" who had made the film and berated the Canadian government for not stopping it.<sup>3</sup> After the film's release, *New York Times* critic Bosley Crowther excoriated the filmmakers in multiple articles, predicting that the film would "aggravate anger and anxiety, suspicion,

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<sup>1</sup> Kiril Tomoff, one of the only scholars to write about the music of *The Iron Curtain*, offers an engrossing account of the film's release in New York City. See Tomoff, *Virtuosi Abroad: Soviet Music and Imperial Competition during the Early Cold War, 1945–1958* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), 20–21, <https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501701825>.

<sup>2</sup> Igor Gouzenko's memoirs were first serialized for *Cosmopolitan* as "I Was Inside Stalin's Spy Ring," published in the February, March, April, and May issues in 1947. Gouzenko also published a separate, book-length account, *The Iron Curtain* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1948).

<sup>3</sup> D. Zaslavsky, "Canadian 'Moviestars' of Hollywood," *Pravda*, February 25, 1948, 3. "They expect praise, which [the film] will not receive," promised Zaslavsky. "They will receive disgrace, which they did not expect." Translation by the author.

hate and fear, not through any sober clarification but through the old-fashioned villain stereotypes.”<sup>4</sup> Praise for the film was also adamant, with *The Hollywood Reporter* (edited by avowed anti-communist W. J. Wilkerson) admitting that “a more gripping, tense and suspenseful narrative could hardly have been put on the screen . . . plus the incontrovertible provocativeness of the theme itself marks *The Iron Curtain* as a certain and speedy money grabber.”<sup>5</sup> Supporters of the film clashed with detractors in the press and on the streets.<sup>6</sup> While the film’s depiction of communist espionage was the rallying point around which most commentators gathered, the film’s music was another sticking point. Passages taken directly from the works of Dmitri Shostakovich, Sergei Prokofiev, Aram Khachaturian, and Nikolai Myaskovsky comprised nearly the entire film score, which had been compiled and conducted by 20th Century-Fox music director Alfred Newman.

Aram Khachaturian	Lullaby from <i>Gayane</i>
Nikolai Myaskovsky	Symphony no. 21 (single movement work)
Sergei Prokofiev	Symphony no. 5, movement III
Dmitri Shostakovich	Symphony no. 1, movement III
	Symphony no. 5, movements III and IV
	Symphony no. 6, movement I

**Table 1:** Compositions by Soviet composers included in *The Iron Curtain*<sup>7</sup>

The Soviet composers’ music remained on the film’s soundtrack even after legal action, pressed on their behalf, sought to remove it. In court, the composers’ attorney argued “the use of the plaintiffs’ music in such a picture . . . indicates their ‘approval,’ ‘endorsement’ and ‘participation’ therein . . . casting upon them ‘the false imputation of being disloyal to their country.’”<sup>8</sup> The New York judge’s rejection of the plaintiff’s argument was shared widely in news outlets, making the front page of *The Los Angeles Times*.<sup>9</sup> Indulging in irreverent analogy, *The New York Times*’s enticed readers with the subheading “Four Held After Brawl,” a reference to four men charged with disorderly conduct at an *Iron Curtain* demonstration and the four Soviet composers “held” to the film despite ongoing legal fights.<sup>10</sup> 20th Century-Fox’s vigilant

<sup>4</sup> Bosley Crowther, “‘The Iron Curtain’: New Roxy Film Poses a Question: Is It Being Raised or Lowered?,” *New York Times*, May 16, 1948, X1. Several days earlier, Crowther had written that “Hollywood fired its first shot in the ‘cold war’ against Russia yesterday. . . . There is no question about it: it is a highly inflammatory film.” Bosley Crowther, “‘The Iron Curtain,’ Anti-Communist Film, Has Premiere Here at the Roxy,” *New York Times*, May 13, 1948, 31. *The Iron Curtain*’s producer, Darryl Zanuck, took the extraordinary step of publicly defending his decisions in a pointed rejoinder that cites both of Crowther’s articles: “the picture is calculated to, and does, arouse the public to vigilance against a menace. As proof I need only cite the fact that the majority of the conspirators were convicted and sentenced to prison.” Darryl Zanuck, “Zanuck Defends ‘*The Iron Curtain*,’” *New York Times*, May 30, 1948, X5.

<sup>5</sup> “*Iron Curtain* Explosive Documentary Revelation,” *Hollywood Reporter*, May 7, 1948, 4.

<sup>6</sup> For example, see Irving Hoffmann’s collection of combative remarks, culled from various papers in “‘Iron Curtain’ Applauded, Lambasted by N.Y. Critics,” *Hollywood Reporter*, May 17, 1948, 22.

<sup>7</sup> The excerpts from Soviet works heard in *The Iron Curtain* were excerpted directly from the original orchestral scores without reordering or reorchestrating material. The selections used by Newman are preserved in full and short score formats in the Alfred Newman Collection, Cinema-Television Library, Edward L. Doheny Jr. Memorial Library, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California. The author is extremely grateful to Edward Comstock for providing access to these archival materials.

<sup>8</sup> “Special Term, Part III, Opinion by Hon. Justice Edward R. Koch,” New York Supreme Court, County of New York, June 7, 1948, Charles Schlaifer Collection, Margaret Herrick Library, Beverly Hills, CA.

<sup>9</sup> “*Iron Curtain* Action Lost by Composers,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 8, 1948, 1.

<sup>10</sup> “Police on Guard at Film Picketing. . . . Four Held After Brawl,” *New York Times*, May 13, 1948, 21. At the time of the article’s publication, New York Supreme Court Justice Edward Koch had not yet ruled on the case. Nevertheless, by “reserv[ing] decision for a motion for temporary injunction brought by four Russian composers,” the judge ensured the music’s placement in the film.

publicists tracked the case's coverage on radio, noting that one radio columnist had observed that "the studio couldn't have bought the kind of publicity the Reds handed out on a silver platter."<sup>11</sup>

Title and topic ensured that *The Iron Curtain* became the most heavily reported film of 1948.<sup>12</sup> As the actual espionage case on which the film was based had helped concretize the threat of a cold war turning hot, the film's mere presence in theaters—regardless of its quality—further amplified a media-driven feedback loop of fear and hysteria. One pamphlet bearing the image of a ticket stamped "admit one to *The Iron Curtain*" warned readers not to "buy this ticket to WAR!" and instead "call, write or see the Manager and tell him you come to this theatre for entertainment—not to be propagandized back into uniform."<sup>13</sup>

Hollywood itself was under suspicion for allegedly allowing communists to infiltrate its ranks and taint its films with pro-communist messages. *The Iron Curtain* served baldly as a pledge of loyalty to fervent anti-communists monitoring the industry, including the nationally syndicated gossip columnist Hedda Hopper, who applauded the film;<sup>14</sup> *Hollywood Reporter* editor Wilkerson, whose newspaper reviewed the film enthusiastically; and, most vitally, the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), whose interrogations of Hollywood studio personnel proceeded during the film's production and release.<sup>15</sup> Since its release, historians of Cold War cinema have examined the film's impact, including its stormy international reception, executive producer Darryl Zanuck's motivation for pursuing the project, and filmmakers' deft recycling of espionage plots for *The Iron Curtain* that had previously featured Nazis and Japanese.<sup>16</sup>

Scholarly interest in the film's political notoriety, however, has rarely extended to the film's unusual musical commentary: a compilation of Soviet concert works enlisted to accompany and characterize *The Iron Curtain's* story, character, and propagandistic message.<sup>17</sup> Although music in *The Iron Curtain* emphasizes the film's ideological hinges, music director Alfred Newman's work exhibits a degree of ambivalence that is easily missed within a film that largely eschewed subtlety and attracted storms of polemic indignation. As Herb Tank wrote in an obligatorily negative review for the communist *Daily Worker*, "Newman carefully recorded . . . the soundtrack of a film calculated to incite war against the very nation whose social order made such music possible."<sup>18</sup> Tank's essentialist assertion that communism enabled "such music" demonstrates how Newman's Soviet selections simultaneously fed the reductionist outcry and suffered from it. But Tank was not wrong in registering something "careful" about Newman's work. This

<sup>11</sup> Untitled, undated document detailing all radio blurbs acknowledging the film from May 11 to May 13, "Iron Curtain—Campaign" folder, Charles Schlaifer Collection.

<sup>12</sup> J. Hoberman, *An Army of Phantoms: American Movies and the Making of the Cold War* (New York: The New Press, 2011), 74.

<sup>13</sup> "Don't Buy This Ticket to WAR!," pamphlet, published by the Chicago Committee Against War Propaganda, Charles Schlaifer Collection. According to documents in the Schlaifer collection, copies of the pamphlet were also distributed by organizations in New York and Milwaukee.

<sup>14</sup> "The picture is exciting, authentic, and frightening. Darryl Zanuck deserves much credit for making it. Many producers here said they would do an anti-Commie picture; Zanuck did it." Hedda Hopper, "Looking at Hollywood," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 8, 1948, 13.

<sup>15</sup> For more on Hopper, Wilkerson, and HUAC's interrogation of Hollywood filmmakers, see Thomas Doherty, *Show Trial: Hollywood, HUAC, and the Birth of the Blacklist* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), especially pp. 42–46, <https://doi.org/10.7312/dohe18778>. Paul Swann also discusses the intersection of the film's production with ongoing HUAC hearings (Paul Swann, "International Conspiracy in and around *The Iron Curtain*," *Velvet Light Trap* 35 [1995], 53).

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Daniel J. Leab, "'The Iron Curtain' (1948): Hollywood's First Cold War Movie," *Historical Journal of Radio, Film, and Television* 8, no. 2 (1988), 153–88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439688800260191>; John Rossi, "'The Iron Curtain': A Premature Anti-Communist Film," *Film & History* 24, no. 3/4 (1994): 100–12; Swann, "International Conspiracy," 52–60. Drawing the connection between anti-Nazi spy thrillers and the *Iron Curtain* was readily apparent. The screenwriter, Milton Krims, had also written *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* [1939], a point that critic Bosley Crowther repeatedly called out. See Leab, "'The Iron Curtain' (1948)," 176.

<sup>17</sup> An important exception is Kiril Tomoff, who has written extensively about the legal fights over the film's music in *Virtuosi Abroad*, 20–45.

<sup>18</sup> Herb Tank, "'Iron Curtain' Drops on Roxy," *Daily Worker*, May 13, 1948.

article attends to that care, inquiring into Newman’s treatment of Soviet symphonic works, which Newman—a highly prolific film composer—elected to draw upon rather than compose an original score.

This article is not an apologia for the unapproved repurposing of Soviet composers’ works as anti-Soviet propaganda. However, the political and musical turmoil in which *The Iron Curtain* remains enmeshed presents a special opportunity to confront the tangled lines wound around cinematic genre, musical accompaniment, and multifront political combat. Study of music selection and placement in *The Iron Curtain* reveals a shift across musico-cinematic conventions associated with two categories of 1940s Hollywood films. *The Iron Curtain* was produced and advertised as a “semidocumentary,” a sub-genre developed at 20th Century-Fox that emphasized realism and reduced musical accompaniment, but the film’s music also adapts techniques from wartime pro-Soviet films in which Russian folk and classical selections encouraged sympathetic responses from American audiences. By adjusting the placement and function of music across the film’s duration, Newman uses Soviet concert music both to support and complicate *The Iron Curtain*’s Cold War mission.

The musical material Newman had selected was conducive to the task before him. Like Newman, whose career as a Hollywood composer and music director spanned from 1930 to 1969,<sup>19</sup> Shostakovich, Prokofiev, and Khachaturian had composed music for films since the 1930s. (Shostakovich’s film career had begun even earlier; in 1924 he started accompanying silent films on piano and composed a score for the 1929 silent feature *New Babylon*.<sup>20</sup>) Even when writing for the concert hall, these composers’ works supported what Pauline Fairclough characterizes as a “Soviet middlebrow” strategy to “deliberately write music for a wide audience, in full knowledge that this aim was considered unfashionable in some quarters in the West and, [Fairclough contends], in full acceptance that this was their duty as Soviet citizens.”<sup>21</sup> Although Fairclough emphasizes that the ideological frame of the Soviet middlebrow was distinct from middlebrow discourse in the United States—in large part because it did not depend as heavily upon commercial success and emphasized equality of opportunity<sup>22</sup>—the “deliberate” and “unfashionable in some quarters” labor of fashioning symphonic music for general audiences certainly resembled the objective of Newman and his Hollywood colleagues.

Furthermore, Newman drew from a body of symphonies that were well-suited to accompanying narrative film. Shostakovich himself adapted and repurposed material from his symphonies in multiple film

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<sup>19</sup> Surveys of Alfred Newman’s film career may be found in Mervyn Cooke, *A History of Film Music* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 103–8; and Christopher Palmer, *The Composer in Hollywood* (London: Marion Boyars, 1990), 68–93. In 1981, the film composer Fred Steiner completed a dissertation scrutinizing Newman’s early life and film work of the 1930s: Frederick Steiner, “The Making of an American Film Composer: A Study of Alfred Newman’s Music in the First Decade of the Sound Era” (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1981).

<sup>20</sup> For more on Shostakovich’s work in films, see John Riley, *Dmitri Shostakovich: His Life in Film* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2005); and Joan Titus, *The Early Film Music of Dmitry Shostakovich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199315147.001.0001>.

<sup>21</sup> Pauline Fairclough, “Was Soviet Music Middlebrow? Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony, Socialist Realism, and the Mass Listener in the 1930s,” *Journal of Musicology* 35, no. 3 (2018): 350, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jm.2018.35.3.336>.

<sup>22</sup> Fairclough, “Was Soviet Music Middlebrow?,” 366.

scores,<sup>23</sup> and Newman recognized passages from the symphonies that would intersect meaningfully with the films' characters and narrative. In the manner of Nicholas Cook's theory of "affordances," musical attributes conceived for the concert hall (or even for a different narrative context, such as Khachaturian's ballet, *Gayane*) are heard anew in the context of *The Iron Curtain* as shading and nuancing emotional qualities present in the onscreen drama.<sup>24</sup>

### *The Iron Curtain* and the Semidocumentary

The *Iron Curtain* opens with Igor Gouzenko's (Dana Andrews) arrival in Ottawa from Moscow. His days are spent in concealed rooms of the Soviet embassy coding and decoding classified correspondences. Soviet espionage, Igor soon discovers, strains his devotion to ideals and country: a woman from the embassy attempts to seduce him as a test of his resolve; others snap and sneer mistrustfully. Major Kulin (Eduard Franz), Igor's only friend, is jaded and depressed by his responsibilities, a premonition of what Igor may become over time. As Igor adapts to his new surroundings, a parallel narrative details the backroom dealings of Canada's communists. Their leader, John Grubb (Berry Kroeger), collaborates with Moscow and the Soviet embassy to extract scientific secrets about the atomic bomb. Igor learns of these initiatives through work. Then his wife, Anna (Gene Tierney), arrives. She is pregnant and likes Canada—a lot. The neighbors are nice, their apartment is comfortable, and business owners hang Russian-relief signs above shops. Petitioning her husband, Anna argues that Canada is a better place to raise their child. After initial resistance, Igor changes his mind, prompted in part by the threatening tactics of his superiors and Kulin's aggrieved warnings. Bearing evidence of his embassy's illegal dealings, the Gouzenkos seek and receive asylum from the Canadian government. Igor's secret investigation of his colleagues' work exposes the spy ring, a narrative twist worth emphasizing. Unlike other espionage films of the World War II and Cold War eras, the spies' inner circle is not brought down by intrepid FBI agents. Instead, audiences are shown that even among Soviets, a house divided cannot stand. "Good" Russians—i.e., those sympathetic to Western democracy—are key to communism's downfall. It is this theme, in particular, that Newman's score would reinforce.

20th Century-Fox billed *The Iron Curtain* as a "semidocumentary," a subgenre developed by producer Darryl Zanuck that confronted contemporary socio-political issues. Outstanding examples include *The House on 92nd Street* (1945), which tackled Nazi espionage in New York City; *Boomerang!* (1947), which treated the sway of corrupt politicians over the justice system, and *Call Northside 777* (1948), which examined the life sentencing of an innocent man. (Alfred Newman served as music director on *Boomerang!* and composer for *Call Northside 777*.) Semidocumentaries conveyed the intention of heightened realism

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<sup>23</sup> John Riley identifies several such instances, such as passages from *The Great Citizen* (1938) and *Simple People* (in production 1944–46, released in 1956) that recall Symphony no. 5 and the reuse of passages from Symphony no. 7 in *The Fall of Berlin* (1950) and Symphony no. 8 in *The Song of the Rivers* (1954). See "Screen Dramas: Shostakovich's Cinema Career," in *The Cambridge Companion to Shostakovich*, ed. Pauline Fairclough and David Fanning (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 213–28, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521842204.011>. The process worked in reverse too, with Prokofiev adapting material from his film scores for concert performance. See Kevin Bartig, *Composing for the Red Screen: Prokofiev and Soviet Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199967599.001.0001>; and Bartig, *Sergei Prokofiev's Alexander Nevsky* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>24</sup> Nicholas Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 96–97. Cook acknowledges that his use of the term "affordances" is from James J. Gibson, who expounds on the concept in "The Theory of Affordances" in his book, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), 127–37.

through assorted techniques that could be deployed or dropped at will, resulting in films that blended documentary qualities with traits now associated with *film noir* (crime-driven plots set in urban locales featuring “gritty” cinematography and morally ambivalent or compromised characters).<sup>25</sup> As cinema historian Thomas Schatz notes, documentary techniques in these films included on-location shooting and sound, interspersed documentary footage, newsreel-like voice-over narration, “based on real events” narratives, nonactors in secondary roles, diegetic music, and “little or no underscoring.”<sup>26</sup> *The House on 92nd Street*, the espionage film that Zanuck cited repeatedly as his model for *The Iron Curtain*, features only a recurrent march theme for several action sequences, accompaniment for voice-over narration, and a few instances of plausibly positioned diegetic music.<sup>27</sup>

To an extent, *The Iron Curtain* mimics this pattern. Indeed, Newman and Zanuck’s insistence that the score feature work by Soviet composers was intended to serve as a sonic corollary to the on-location shots, based-on-a-true-story narrative, cooperation of Canadian law enforcement, and sober voice-over narration, all announced in the film’s credits over a frantic performance<sup>28</sup> of the finale from Shostakovich’s Symphony no. 5 (Example 1).<sup>29</sup> In particular, viewers were notified through the credits that “Music [is] From the Selected Works of the Soviet Composers,” with a list naming Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Khachaturian, and Myaskovsky (in that order). But adherence to semidocumentary expectations is complicated by music almost immediately. The first music heard after the opening credits sequence follows the example of other semidocumentaries by diegetically anchoring music within the onscreen world. But the selection—an excerpt from the first movement of Shostakovich’s Symphony no. 6—and its use in the scene are jarringly unrealistic. They mark an early alert that *The Iron Curtain* will acknowledge musical methods of the semidocumentary genre but not reliably follow them.

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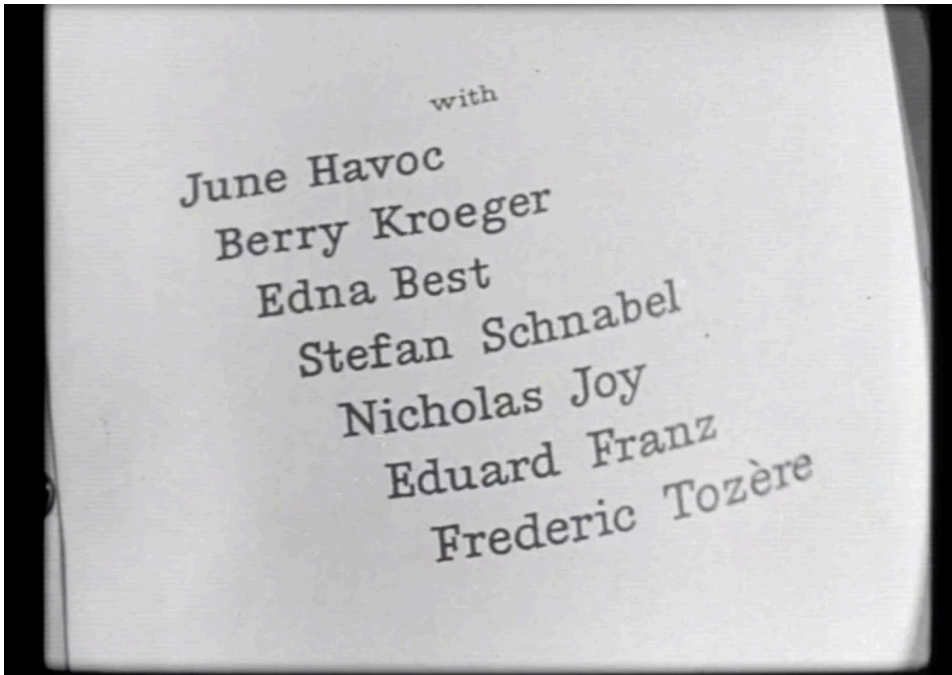
<sup>25</sup> The degree to which semidocumentaries resemble or diverge from *film noir* depends on the film in question. For more on this intricate relationship, see Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust: American Cinema in the 1940s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 379–80.

<sup>26</sup> Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 379. *Call Northside 777*, for example, has no underscoring beyond the opening and closing titles; only diegetic music is used briefly. David Buttolph’s brief score for *Boomerang* accompanies only transitional newspaper montages and voice-over narration.

<sup>27</sup> See memo from Darryl Zanuck to producer Sol Siegel and writer Martin Berkeley, April 9, 1947, reprinted in *Memo from Darryl Zanuck*, ed. Rudy Behlmer (New York: Grove Press, 1993), 128.

<sup>28</sup> Shostakovich’s tempo marking for the movement is quarter note=88. Newman’s performance is considerably brisker, about quarter note=136 before accelerating to around quarter note=145 at Rehearsal no. 98 (where Shostakovich’s suggested tempo is 104). Newman’s tempi, however, are not terribly different from some conductors of American orchestras in the 1940s and 1950s. As observed by Peter Kupfer in a forthcoming study, a 1948 recording of Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra and a 1952 recording of Dimitri Mitropoulos and the New York Philharmonic show both taking the finale much more briskly than Evgeny Mravinsky in his 1938 recording with the Leningrad Philharmonic (“Of Majesty, Mockery, and Misprints: The Coda of Shostakovich’s Fifth on Record,” *Journal of Musicological Research* 41, no. 2 [forthcoming]). The author thanks Peter for sharing this research before its publication.

<sup>29</sup> Although Leab has asserted that the idea to feature Soviet composers came from executive producer Darryl Zanuck, contemporary news sources frame the decision as Newman’s. See especially Edwin Schallert, “Music Score Challenge,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 22, 1948, 15; Thomas F. Brady, “Sour Music, Russians Say,” *New York Times*, March 28, 1948, X5. Newman also refers to “my decision” in his article, “The Iron Curtain,” *Film Music Notes* 7, no. 5 (1948): 19–23. Leab, “‘The Iron Curtain’ (1948),” 173.



**Example 1:** Main titles emphasize the film's reliance upon official records, original locations, and music by Soviet composers.

**Video link:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.3109>.

In this early scene (5:50<sup>30</sup>), Gouzenko has just arrived at the Soviet embassy in Ottawa, and an employee leads him to his work space. As the employee presses a hidden door buzzer, a soft, sustained chord from tremolo strings enters (three measures before Rehearsal no. 11). With no visible source or obvious rationale, the music appears to be nondiegetic and infuses this new secret with suspense and foreboding. A curtain hanging along a wall is drawn back, revealing a door with a small round window. A man on the other side glares through the glass before opening it. Individual strings lines peel apart dissonantly as the music crescendos dramatically. As the first employee leaves, having introduced Igor to the dour cipher lieutenant Vinikov, his parting words clarify the musical accompaniment's unusual volume. "I hope you like music," he says before walking away, some thirty seconds after the music has entered the soundtrack. As Igor steps into the chambers, the music's volume increases further, a reflection of both higher mixing on the soundtrack and the steady movement of the string section into a higher tessitura. After the door closes and the curtain is drawn across it, Igor's entombment within the Soviet embassy's inner sanctum is punctuated by a sustained, accented trill in the violins. As Igor is given a tour of the rooms, additional synch points between Shostakovich's symphony and onscreen action belie the music's diegetic status. While the source of the music remains unknown, a lone, upwardly straining trumpet pitted against descending tremolos in the strings seems tailored to the hero's plight as he is escorted deeper into the intelligence departments' chambers. In the manner of nondiegetic underscoring, a solemn timpani solo is aligned with a close-up shot of a safe bearing a "top secret" seal. While these multiple correspondences stretch the limits of musical coincidence and undermine the music's purportedly diegetic role, Vinikov's final lines to Igor reaffirm the music's diegetic presence: "And don't

<sup>30</sup> Time stamps reference the location of specific scenes within the film, as referenced in *The Iron Curtain*, directed by William Wellman (1948; Beverly Hills, CA: 20th Century-Fox Cinema Archives, 2016), DVD.

ask to have the music turned off. It's a rule. The *music* must always play so no one can hear what's being said in the other offices. I hate music." (Example 2).



**Example 2:** Vinikov explains why music is the rule.

**Video link:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.3109>.

Although the music here upholds the expectations of its genre—namely, that semidocumentaries favor diegetic music—it betrays the spirit of cinematic realism. According to Gouzenko's memoirs, the embassy played "jazz, monotonous soap operas, and sundry commercials."<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Shostakovich's symphony and the visual editing are carefully coordinated to function in a manner largely indistinguishable from nondiegetic scoring. Rather than blaring along obliviously, the Shostakovich excerpt seems a sympathetic accompaniment for Gouzenko, as he is introduced to a clandestine operation that he will later resent and resist. The music's alliance with Igor is also reinforced negatively through dialogue. The lines spoken by Igor's coworkers—"I hope *you* like music" and "I hate music"—reflect opposition to, if not necessarily immunity from, music's affect. The impression of the music on Igor, meanwhile, is deliberately left open: his blank face betrays neither interest, apprehension, nor pleasure. This peculiar musical sequence anticipates future developments: as the film progresses, the musical accompaniment diverges even further from the musical patterns established by earlier semidocumentaries. This shift unfolds gradually, however, effecting an important change in the music's role within the narrative.

Although early press blurbs promised *The Iron Curtain* as the "climax" of 20th Century-Fox's realistic rendering of semidocumentaries, critics quickly noted discrepancies.<sup>32</sup> As Richard Coe observed in *The Washington Post*, the visuals violated the semidocumentary contract: "The faces [of the Soviet spies] are sinister, drenched in artful shadows, which were conspicuously lacking in the same company's other approaches to the semidocumentary style." The use of Soviet music was particularly problematic.

<sup>31</sup> Igor Gouzenko, *The Iron Curtain* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1948), 190.

<sup>32</sup> Edwin Schallert, "Iron Curtain to Reach Peak as Documentary," *Los Angeles Times*, May 2, 1948, C1: "Darryl F. Zanuck declares that *The Iron Curtain* is the ultimate in documentary films. 'Factual film impressions cannot go farther than this,' he declared." The pseudonymous Mae Tinee of *The Chicago Tribune* was more equivocal on this matter: "The villains are very villainous, just their appearances would seem to make them highly suspect, but on the whole the film has a ring of authenticity and plausibility." "Iron Curtain Screen Version Packs a Wallop," *Chicago Tribune*, May 17, 1948, A3.



Although some critics did concede that it contributed aural “realism,”<sup>33</sup> Coe found it did the exact opposite, with adverse consequences for both the film and the music:

The pitch on this needless poster-like quality is also given in the music, background throbbings from the works of Shostakovich, Prokofieff, Miaskovsky, and Khachaturian [sic]. For years our country has been laughing at the Soviet government for telling its composers that its music should express an ideology. We, in our free way, have been quite willing to accept those composers’ works for the pure music that it is and we’ve so boasted. Yet, “The Iron Curtain” employs that same music as suggestive of the Soviet ideology, unsubtly suggesting sinister strains in the music to express sinister beliefs.<sup>34</sup>

Coe locates an important irony, and his words remind us that works of Soviet composers carried different associations for American audiences in the 1940s than they do now, decades after the publication of *Testimony* (misleadingly claimed by the book’s editor, Solomon Volkov, to be Shostakovich’s defiant memoir<sup>35</sup>) and the fall of the Soviet Union. As Pauline Fairclough, Terry Klefstad, and Christopher H. Gibbs observe in case studies of Shostakovich reception in the UK and US, Western audiences of the 1940s were not in the habit of seeking out subversion or dissidence in Shostakovich’s music. Such theories would gradually enter mainstream discourse after the death of Stalin.<sup>36</sup> Newman’s use of Soviet music in *The Iron Curtain* anticipates later developments, when the idea of Soviet composers’ obliquely expressing objections to “sinister” circumstances (namely, the violently repressive tactics of Stalin’s Soviet Union) through music became an appealing counternarrative for Western critics.

There were other ironies as well. Newman had begun building his Soviet soundtrack in January of 1948,<sup>37</sup> at the same time the Soviet Central Committee Secretary Andrey Zhdanov was at work on a resolution on the state of Soviet music. Published on February 10, 1948, the resolution named the same four composers featured in *The Iron Curtain* as guilty of formalist, bourgeois tendencies.<sup>38</sup> The composers found themselves in an unlikely situation: disgraced and silenced at the hands of their own government, they were now elevated to star status in Hollywood’s first postwar, anti-Soviet film, a circumstance that the American press observed in items like “Soviet-Condemned Music to be Used in *Curtain*.”<sup>39</sup> The Soviet

<sup>33</sup> At least one critic concurred that deploying music by Soviet composers within the film helped “lend a further note of realistic background to the picture.” “*Iron Curtain* Explosive Documentary Revelation,” *Hollywood Reporter*, May 7, 1948, 4.

<sup>34</sup> Richard Coe, “‘Iron Curtain’ Drops Too Low,” *Washington Post*, May 13, 1948.

<sup>35</sup> The problems of *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich* “as related to and edited by Solomon Volkov” are explored in detail in *A Shostakovich Casebook*, ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004). Laurel E. Fay notes in an essay from that collection that “at best, *Testimony* is a simulated monologue, a montage stripped of its original interrogatory and temporal context, by an unproven ghostwriter who has repeatedly professed ignorance of the basic published materials by and about the composer, and who has admitted to having resorted to guesswork. At worst, *Testimony* is a fraud” (Laurel E. Fay, “Volkov’s *Testimony* Reconsidered (2002)” in *A Shostakovich Casebook*, 57, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11hptp2.7>).

<sup>36</sup> See Pauline Fairclough, “The ‘Old Shostakovich’: Reception in the British Press,” *Music and Letters* 88, no. 2 (2007), 266–96, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ml/gcm002>; Terry Klefstad, “The Reception in America of Dmitri Shostakovich, 1928–1946” (PhD diss., University of Texas, 2003); Christopher H. Gibbs, “‘The Phenomenon of the Seventh’: A Documentary Essay on Shostakovich’s ‘War’ Symphony,” in *Shostakovich and His World*, ed. Laurel E. Fay (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 59–113, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691232195-007>. As Gibbs notes, “No American critic of whom I am aware questioned that this murderous figure [represented through the first movement theme] was Adolf Hitler or that Shostakovich was not less than completely sincere in writing a work that stood up to the German attack on the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941. More recent writings have suggested otherwise” (103).

<sup>37</sup> Journalist Thomas F. Brady recorded that Newman started work on the score in January 1948 (“Sour Music, Russians Say,” *New York Times*, March 28, 1948, X5).

<sup>38</sup> Formalistic trends, read the resolution, led to “complex forms of instrumental textless symphonic music.” Quoted in Boris Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia, Enlarged Edition, 1917–1981* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 220.

<sup>39</sup> “Soviet-Condemned Music to be Used in *Curtain*,” *Boxoffice*, April 3, 1948, 47.

newspaper *Izvestia* published an open letter of protest allegedly signed by the composers; it was broadcast over Radio Moscow and translated in American presses:

With a feeling of deep indignation we learned from a report in *The New York Times* that extracts from our musical works are being used in [*The Iron Curtain*]. Needless to say, none of us gave or could have given our consent for any utilization of our music. . . . This confirms once again the prevalent order of things in the U.S.A. in which personal rights, the right of freedom of creation and democratic principles are recognized words but unceremoniously trampled upon deeds. . . . We resolutely insist on withdrawal of our music from the film, *The Iron Curtain*.<sup>40</sup>

Legislators fought on the composers' behalf in New York, but with no copyright agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States, the judge affirmed the music's public domain status in the United States and denied the motion of restraint.<sup>41</sup> In defense of his actions, Alfred Newman informed readers that he had planned to use the composers' works six weeks before Zhdanov's decree.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, the studio had paid \$10,000 in licensing fees to Leeds Music Co., despite the music's public domain status in the United States.<sup>43</sup> Whether any of the funds would reach the composers, however, Newman could not say.<sup>44</sup>

As Kiril Tomoff notes in a detailed account of the legal battles over the film's music, "there is almost no evidence that any of the four composers named in the [New York] lawsuit . . . even knew about it, much less participated."<sup>45</sup> Although the lawsuit ultimately failed to suppress the film's music, the studio could hardly claim the moral high ground. As Charles Recht, the American lawyer representing the composers, observed, including the names of the composers in the credits gave the misleading impression that they had agreed to and been compensated for the use of their music.<sup>46</sup> This placed Alfred Newman, who had selected and conducted the music for the film, in a complicated position. His few published statements on the matter are defensive, as Zhdanov's resolution had cast a strange light on what was already an unusual case of musical (mis)appropriation. Newman had selected the composers because they were among the most well-known Soviet composers; now their government had officially declared their music insufficiently ideological. In response, Newman adopted a position of solidarity with the composers that acknowledged their political value while still claiming for himself the archetypal role of apolitical Western classical musician. Claiming on the one hand that he was "still convinced that the embattled composers epitomize the Soviet spirit in music,"<sup>47</sup> Newman noted that he had set the work of his Soviet colleagues works with "reverence,"<sup>48</sup> "humility and conviction"<sup>49</sup>—a counterintuitive assurance, given the anti-Soviet message of the film.

This argument reflected contradictory assumptions: that while Soviet composers' efforts were perceived on some level to be representative of the communist state (hence their cachet for *The Iron Curtain*), Newman's creative labor as a Hollywood music director served only the dramatic needs of cinematic narrative. As Newman framed it, his main responsibility was to balance musical presence with

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<sup>40</sup> "Moscow Broadcasts Protest," *New York Times*, April 12, 1948, 2. The original letter is published in D[mitri] Shostakovich, S[ergei] Prokofiev, A[ram] Khachaturian, N[ikolai] Myaskovsky, "Letter to the Editor of the Newspaper *Izvestia*," *Izvestia*, April 11, 1948, 4.

<sup>41</sup> "Russian Composers Lose," *New York Times*, June 8, 1948, 28.

<sup>42</sup> "No Basis for Soviet Piracy Claim, Says 20th Music Head," *Hollywood Reporter*, April 13, 1948, 3.

<sup>43</sup> "No Basis for Soviet Piracy Claim."

<sup>44</sup> Thomas F. Brady, "Sour Music, Russians Say," *New York Times*, March 28, 1948, X5.

<sup>45</sup> Tomoff, *Virtuosi Abroad*, 37.

<sup>46</sup> Tomoff, *Virtuosi Abroad*, 28.

<sup>47</sup> Alfred Newman paraphrased by Thomas Brady in "Sour Music, Russians Say," *New York Times*, March 28, 1948, X5.

<sup>48</sup> Alfred Newman quoted in Thomas Brady, "Hollywood Tidbits," *New York Times*, April 18, 1948, X5.

<sup>49</sup> Newman, "The Iron Curtain," 20.

cinematic realism: “providing music for *The Iron Curtain* posed a serious problem, which became a challenge . . . . If one wishes to retain the realism of scenes where fanatical ideologies and heresies are conceived and practiced, would not the use of music rob the subject of its realism?”<sup>50</sup> Newman’s remarks adhere to the belief that dispassionate presentation (or, rather, the impression of dispassion) was a key factor in the semidocumentary’s potential to inform and warn audiences. In such a framework, the full threat of “fanatical ideologies and heresies” might be diminished rather than enhanced through more conventional Hollywood underscoring. But as reception from critics made clear, *The Iron Curtain*’s style and topic were not perceived as typical of the semidocumentary.

Newman’s challenge, then, was more difficult than his brief comments allow. Wondering if the music might “rob” the film of its realism meant ignoring the ways in which the film’s thriller-paced story beats, shadowy cinematography, and clichéd villains already stretched the “realistic” qualities exhibited in documentaries. Setting music to such scenes had the effect of casting the accompanying preexistent music as complicitly melodramatic, even if such qualities were not necessarily inherent to the music in concert settings. Thus, although music would be singled out by critic Richard Coe as part of the film’s crass vilification of communists (“sinister strains . . . to express sinister beliefs”), Coe’s observation misses the ways in which Newman’s musical strategies accommodated different and sometimes contradictory ends, with music at times serving the film’s ham-fisted political ends while also lending greater sympathy and nuance to the story and its characters. As will be evident, Newman’s achieved this range by shifting music’s role across the film and cannily adapting musical practices deployed in wartime pro-Soviet films.

<b>Musical selection Symphony/Movement</b>	<b>Initial time stamp</b>	<b>Length of musical excerpt</b>	<b>Placement</b>
Shostakovich 5/4, opening	0:00	1:50	Accompanies opening titles, fades out at end of title sequence
Shostakovich 6/1, 3 measures before Rehearsal no. 11	5:50	2:14	Diegetic, music plays in secret rooms of embassy
“You’ll Never Know” (Gordon and Warren)	8:28	:22	Diegetic, dance music at nightclub
Shostakovich 6/1, Rehearsal no. 1	13:30	:28	Diegetic (?), accompanies voice-over narration in secret embassy rooms
Shostakovich 6/1, Rehearsal no. 2	16:05	1:05	Extra-diegetic, accompanies voice-over narration and travel montage, cuts off for onset of character dialogue
Shostakovich 5/4, Rehearsal no. 110	20:20	2:28	Extra-diegetic, initially accompanies voice-over narration, then plays under character dialogue

**Table 2:** Music used in *The Iron Curtain*’s first twenty minutes

<sup>50</sup> Newman, “The Iron Curtain,” 19.

## Musical Plotting

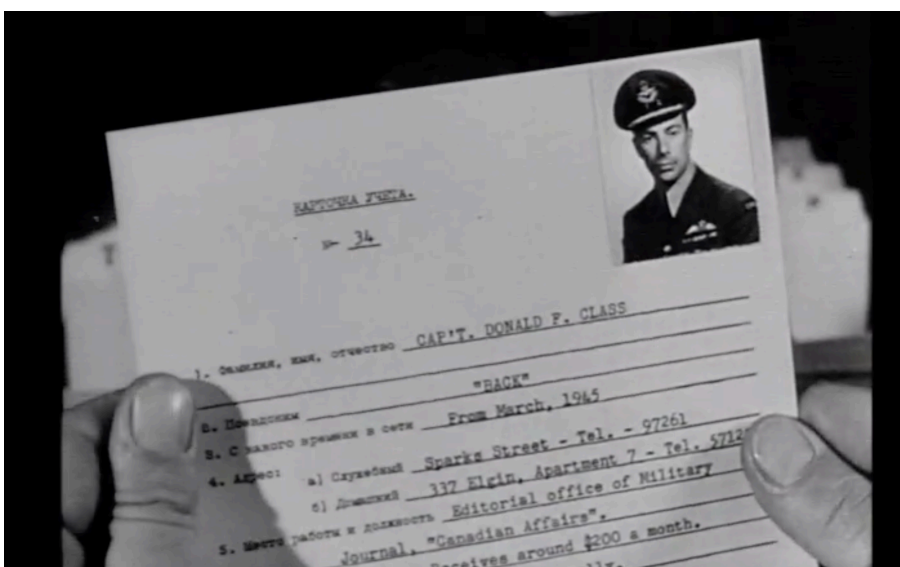
Table 2 summarizes the use of music in the film's first twenty minutes. After a credit sequence accompanied by the opening measures of the finale from Shostakovich's Symphony no. 5, Newman turned next to three excerpts from the first movement of Shostakovich's Symphony no. 6. The first instance, discussed previously, is when Gouzenko enters the embassy's secret chamber. Through dialogue, the music's source is established as diegetic. In the second instance (13:30), the music's source is again initially unclear. The sequence is set in the same secret chamber and shows Gouzenko at work. Initially, then, it is plausible that this is diegetic music. Perhaps the spies simply prefer working to Shostakovich's Symphony no. 6. But the music also accompanies a stern male voice-over narration. "Within a few days Gouzenko settled down to the job for which he had been so well trained," the narrator begins, detailing Gouzenko's instructions to connect Soviet agents with John Grubb, a Canadian citizen eager to commit dark deeds. Dropping nondiegetic music behind voice-over narration was a common tactic in Hollywood studio films, with music curtaining off the narrator's commentary from the (often silent) visuals being commented upon. Fifteen seconds into the scene, this nondiegetic status is confirmed with a visual crossfade from Gouzenko working at his desk to him accessing a file cabinet. Although the crossfade marks an unspecified leap forward in time (since we are not shown Gouzenko leaving his desk to move to the file cabinet), the Shostakovich symphony continues uninterrupted. This signals that the music, like the narration, is not anchored within the onscreen space and time shown in this brief montage. But like the first scene, the music's placement in relation to the narrative is initially ambiguous. Newman's musical plotting subtly unsettles the soundtrack, making it less clear whether music is serving as an aural prop within the scene or an external commentary upon it. (The fact that the music was not written specifically for the sequence further heightens the ambiguity of its commentative role.)

In the third instance of Shostakovich's Symphony no. 6, which commences two minutes later in the film, Newman finally makes the music's placement clear. After the unseemly Grubb orders a taxi driver to take him to the members' entrance of the House of Commons (an instruction that reveals Grubb's governmental access), a nondiegetic excerpt from the symphony accompanies a travel montage that ends with a shot of the member welcoming Grubb to his office. As the door to the member's chambers closes, shutting the audience out from a secret conference, the voice-over narration reenters over the symphony, explaining how public organizations like the Associated Friends of Soviet Russia served to recruit and groom agents. The excerpt ends as the next scene—set at a gathering of the Associated Friends, presided over by Grubb—commences. These three uses of excerpts from Shostakovich's Symphony no. 6 share a melodic motif, heard prominently on solo trumpet when Gouzenko first enters the secret chamber, and chart music's shifting placement, moving from ambiguously diegetic to ambiguously nondiegetic to pointedly nondiegetic.

These features aurally iterate the act of espionage in terms that are appropriately double-faced. On the one hand, this musical strategy mirrors Soviet machination itself. Each repetition of Shostakovich's melody underscores a strengthening association between Shostakovich's music and the hidden efforts of the Soviet state. Just as ideas hatched in the embassy's secret chambers become furtive actions within the halls of the Canadian government, so too does music anchored to a hidden chamber transcend its source, infiltrating the nondiegetic score, where it acts upon audiences while remaining inaudible to characters onscreen. However, if this music seems to mark the progress of Soviet intelligence, its presence also signals the limits of such efforts. *The Iron Curtain* does not, after all, present a triumph of Soviet spycraft. Rather, it is a story

of how such work may crumble from within once its own agents recognize the Soviet state's inferiority to Western democracy. Shostakovich's Symphony no. 6 serves then to emphasize this point as well. As noted earlier, there is a telling alignment of the diegetic music in the embassy and Gouzenko's station: both serve the Soviet Union in spite of undisguised antipathy and distrust from others ("I hate music"). Once the music becomes nondiegetic, it accompanies a narrator whose omniscient grasp of the situation exceeds even Gouzenko's growing understanding. The narrator's vocal presence, supported by the Shostakovich excerpts, serves as warning and reassurance. By depicting secret, malevolent actions on film and marking them as such through voice-over and musical commentary, *The Iron Curtain* begins showing the means by which its own narrative mechanisms—including music—will identify and hold bad actors to account.

Twenty minutes into the film, an excerpt from the fourth movement of Shostakovich's Symphony no. 5 plays behind another montage with voice-over narration. But instead of fading out the music at the end of the narration, as in the previous two occurrences, the music continues into the next scene, a more intimate scene that shows Major Kulin, Gouzenko's depressed and alcoholic coworker, awaking from bed to serve himself a drink (Example 3).



**Example 3:** A transitional passage from Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5 accompanies a shift in onscreen action from a montage with voice-over narration to a quiet, reflective scene.

**Video link:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.3109>.

Here again, music's relationship to the narrative appears to shift, its new role emergent. At the beginning of the cue, the lyrical secondary theme is scored for orchestral tutti as Gouzenko flips through card after card of new intelligence recruits. The return of the movement's opening theme during the montage (a theme Newman himself described as manifesting "Russian aggressiveness") gives way in the new scene to another iteration of the secondary theme, this time voiced gently by solo horn playing against chamber-like accompaniment.<sup>51</sup> The swift winnowing of orchestral forces mirrors the narrative shift from Soviet spy machine to Russian individual: Kulin, a man whose disillusionment with communism has driven him to seek release through alcohol. As Gouzenko enters the room to tell Kulin that he's learned from their superior, Ranov, that both of their wives will be joining them in Canada, Kulin mocks Gouzenko's

<sup>51</sup> Newman, "The Iron Curtain," 20.

enthusiasm. Expressing distaste for both Ranov and his own wife, a former captain in the Red Army, Kulin tells Gouzenko that they will be lucky if the train is late, “very late.” Gouzenko’s expression betrays confusion and disappointment. As their dialogue unfolds, a fragmented rendition of the theme wafts in the upper register of the violins against meandering chromatic lines in the cellos, which eventually give way to solo woodwinds engaged in harmonically uncertain dialogue. Here, Newman uses Shostakovich’s disintegration of orchestral homophony into rivulets of unstable polyphony to contrast the ruthless efficiency of the Soviet machine with the attitudes of reluctant participants like Kulin, whose disillusionment serves as a warning to Gouzenko.

This is a pivotal moment in the film. Soviet music is no longer tied primarily to conspiring governmental forces and Gouzenko’s workroom. Instead, Shostakovich’s music underscores Kulin’s reckoning with a system from which he feels estranged. Newman emphasizes this narrative revelation by having the music overflow its semidocumentary bounds, playing long past the voice-over narration to lend Kulin’s cynical remarks greater poignancy and emotional depth. Newman’s placement of the piece encourages audience identification, even alliance, with Kulin through Shostakovich’s seemingly sympathetic commentary.

### Songs of Russia: Hollywood’s Pro-Soviet Films

While this drives the musical accompaniment even further away from the semidocumentary, it brings *The Iron Curtain* closer to a different cinematic category: that of the pro-Soviet films made in Hollywood during World War II. Hollywood’s pro-Soviet films served the cause of the Office of War Information by rationalizing for American audiences the wartime alliance with a communist power that had maintained, until Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, a non-aggression pact with the Third Reich. Films such as *The North Star* (1943), *Mission to Moscow* (1943), *Battle of Russia* (1943), *Days of Glory* (1944), and *Counter-Attack* (1945) ranged from war documentary to melodrama, but all emphasized the astonishing perseverance of “ordinary,” reasonable Russians against brutal Nazis. Through onscreen performances or background underscore, Hollywood music directors used Russian concert and folk music as a means of emphasizing cultural affinity over political differences. Since “we” (American audiences) enjoy Russian music, the argument went, we may celebrate our wartime alliance on cultural, if not political, grounds. This practice stands in strong distinction from that evinced in Hollywood’s contemporaneous anti-Japanese films, which, as Anthony Sheppard has argued, “marshaled preexistent European music, stereotypical Orientalist signs, and traditional Japanese music against the exotic enemy.”<sup>52</sup> In contrast, pro-Soviet films’ used predominantly pre-Soviet compositions to generate American sympathy for the new ally. As Peter Kupfer has shown, Aaron Copland’s score for *The North Star* quotes Soviet melodies (“Internationale,” “Song of the Motherland,” “Moscow in May”) and features “new” folk melodies adapted from actual Russian songs that are performed diegetically within the film.<sup>53</sup> Not incidentally, *The North Star*’s male lead is played by Dana Andrews, who plays Gouzenko in *The Iron Curtain*.

<sup>52</sup> W. Anthony Sheppard, “An Exotic Enemy: Anti-Japanese Musical Propaganda in World War II Hollywood,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 54, no. 2 (2001): 357, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jams.2001.54.2.303>. Alfred Newman contributes as a composer and music director to some of the films that Sheppard discusses, including *Prelude to War* (1943) and *The Purple Heart* (1944).

<sup>53</sup> Peter Kupfer, “Musical ‘Diplomacy’ in American and Soviet World War II Films of the 1940s,” in *Music in World War II: Coping with Wartime in Europe and the United States*, ed. Pamela M. Potter, Christina L. Baade, and Roberta Montemorra Marvin (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2020), 84, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv16h2nhw.8>.

Hollywood's romance with Russian music and, by implication, Russia herself, is most explicit in *Song of Russia* (1944), an MGM film directed by Russian émigré Gregory Ratoff. While touring the Soviet Union, an American conductor (Robert Taylor) falls in love with a Russian pianist (Susan Peters) from the charming but fictional village of Tchaikovskoye, a place where agrarian comrades sing peasant choruses from Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* while returning from the fields. Conductor and pianist marry; after the Nazi invasion, their performances of Tchaikovsky's music sustain morale in Russia and generate pro-Soviet support in America. Towards the film's conclusion, the conductor addresses a Russian radio audience, declaring: "Before I came to Russia, I knew your country only through its music. Now thanks to this tour, I've been able to meet you, to talk with you, to get to know you, in fact, to marry you." Such emphatic expressions of American commitment to Russian culture and people recur throughout the film. In another scene, the conductor presents an engagement ring to the pianist after their wedding. As *sotto voce* oboe and violins perform the opening lyrical theme of the second movement of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto no. 1, the conductor assures his confused bride that now that they are married, they can be assured that their *engagement* won't ever be broken. The political metaphor looming behind this exchange is thinly veiled at best.<sup>54</sup>

In a later scene, conductor and pianist perform Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto no. 1. Their performance is broadcast over radio across the Soviet Union. A montage shows their music wafting—figuratively and literally—through living rooms and broad natural landscapes, bridging not only disparate Soviet listeners within the film but also American spectators watching the film in theaters across their own country. The message is unsubtle but effective: Music by a Russian composer and performed through American–Soviet cooperation will lend sustenance and solidarity to those who hear it (Example 4).<sup>55</sup>



**Example 4:** Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 wafts over an entire country in *Song of Russia* (1944).

**Video link:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.3109>.

<sup>54</sup> This reading is informed by Anna Nisnevich's paper, "Classical Music, Cultural Diplomacy, and Recirculated Affect in MGM's *Song of Russia* (1944)," presented at the Annual Conference of the American Musicological Society, Rochester, New York, November 2017.

<sup>55</sup> The performance, however, is jarringly interrupted: as an orchestral tutti in the concerto nears a melodic crest, a non-diegetic arrangement of the Nazi "Horst Wessel Lied" intrudes as the scene shifts to Nazi troops preparing to cross into the Soviet Union while peaceful citizens listen raptly to this Soviet-American performance.

*The Song of Russia* is broadly implausible, but critics welcomed its music and praised its story, including *New York Times* critic Bosley Crowther, who later became fiercely opposed to *The Iron Curtain*.<sup>56</sup> Philip Scheuer of the *Los Angeles Times* declared Tchaikovsky the star of the film, admitting that the film “works out a shade too patly for belief throughout, but thanks to the music and some superb performances . . . I caught myself behaving exactly as if it were on the level.”<sup>57</sup> One especially noteworthy endorsement came from Aram Khachaturian, whose music would be incorporated into *The Iron Curtain*. In a detailed review of the film, Khachaturian heralded *Song of Russia* as “a tribute to the cultural collaboration of the American and Russian people,” although he did consider some of the musical arrangements in poor taste.<sup>58</sup>

### Soviet Symphonies for Sympathetic Ends

Whether audiences noted the musical connection between *The Iron Curtain* and its pro-Soviet predecessors, *The Iron Curtain*'s musical accompaniment takes a similar path, using Soviet compositions in later sequences to underscore Russian characters who are portrayed as more sympathetic. Notably, Newman expands the score to include composers beyond Shostakovich, emphasizing the shift in narrative tone through a corresponding change in compositional voice. The lullaby from Khachaturian's ballet *Gayane* accompanies Gouzenko and his wife, Anna, as he introduces her to their Canadian apartment and she, stunned by the beauty of their new home, tells him that she is pregnant (24:15). As one of the film's few tender scenes, considerable space is given to the music. As the camera slowly pans the apartment, a dusky flute solo, accompanied by softly pulsing clarinets, unfolds over twenty seconds, uninterrupted by dialogue until the flute reaches the end of the phrase. When Anna explains at the end of the scene that they will have a baby, the rocking motion of the lullaby's accompaniment takes on more literal significance, anticipating the gentle care that will unfold within their new home.<sup>59</sup>

In the next scene, strains from Myaskovsky's Symphony no. 21 enter as the Gouzenkos walk about Ottawa. Before the excerpt begins, a shot of Igor and Anna walking down the street is accompanied with narration: “Whenever he had time away from the embassy they would go for long walks, exploring what to them was a strange, sometimes disturbing, sometimes puzzling world.” Beneath the narration, a church organ is heard performing a prelude: diegetic music emanating from the church that the Gouzenkos are walking past. As the narration ends, an offscreen boys choir joins the organ to sing a polyphonic psalm setting. The Gouzenkos pause outside the church to exchange mystified expressions at this rare instance of

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<sup>56</sup> “It is really a honey of a topical musical film, full of rare good humor, rich vitality and a proper respect for the Russians' fight in this war. Indeed, it comes very close to being the best film on Russia yet made in the popular Hollywood idiom.” Bosley Crowther, “*Song of Russia*, Rich Musical Picture,” *New York Times*, February 11, 1944, 17.

<sup>57</sup> “If I were selling the picture I would emblazon “Glorious Tchaikowsky Music” above everything else. . . . And even swing fans, thanks to Freddy Martin and others, have a soft spot in their hearts for old Peter Ilyich.” Philip K. Scheuer, “Tchaikowsky Music Real Star of *Song of Russia*,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 18, 1944, A11.

<sup>58</sup> “In certain places, the rhythm and character of the music is distorted, evidently for the benefit of the action. I don't really think there was any necessity for doing this, nor do I think it was good taste to perform alongside Tchaikovsky the [Dmitri] Pokrass song in the restaurant.” Khachaturian made special effort to defend preemptively the film's depiction of young Russians with prodigious musical talent. After listing off several names, he continues: “I could cite many other examples illustrating the effective assistance rendered by the Government in encouraging the development of musical talent. . . . I'm bringing in all this in order to demonstrate that situations, despite their unusualness, are quite plausible.” Aram Khachaturian, “First Soviet Review of U.S. Film Sent to Daily,” *Motion Picture Daily*, November 17, 1944, 5.

<sup>59</sup> The author thanks Peter Kupfer for noting this connection.



sacred (and non-Soviet) music in the film. A visual dissolve to the Gouzenkos walking on a different street is matched by a shift from the diegetic church music to the nondiegetic Myaskovsky symphony (three measures before Rehearsal no. 5). As the Gouzenkos regard a Russian war relief poster hung above a store, Myaskovsky's music plays without any narration or dialogue over it (25:30–25:54). Although it is only a brief, somber passage for sustained strings, its prominence at this juncture in the soundtrack reinforces the Western-and-Russian goodwill represented in the poster. Newman's selection of this particular work for this particular scene may have arisen from the work's recent compositional history. Myaskovsky's single-movement symphony had been commissioned by Frederick Stock and the Chicago Symphony to celebrate the orchestra's fiftieth anniversary.<sup>60</sup> Premiering on August 23, 1942, Myaskovsky's offering presented a wartime symphony that garnered respectable reviews just months before Shostakovich's Symphony no. 7, "Leningrad," stormed American concert halls as the Soviet Union's defiant musical response to Nazi invasion. The radio premiere of Myaskovsky's much smaller single-movement symphony was conducted by Bernard Herrmann, who, by 1948, had become Newman's colleague at 20th Century-Fox.<sup>61</sup> Although presumably lost on most moviegoers, this foregrounded setting of Myaskovsky's symphony pointed to acts of musical solidarity enacted between a Soviet composer and American musicians, a gesture of mutual respect that, like the pro-Russian war relief sign, felt precarious if not impossible amid Cold War unease.<sup>62</sup>

Newman returns to Myaskovsky's symphony twice more in the film. Minutes later, he sets an extended version of the same passage from before as Gouzenko, called to the embassy in the middle of the night, takes dictation from his superior about new information on the Canadians' research on the atomic bomb. Although the passage from the symphony is now relegated to supporting verbal dictation, the selection serves ironically: establishing through musical repetition a contrast between the pro-Soviet sentiments strung from sunny Ottawa streets and Soviet espionage against Canadians, unfolding under the cover of darkness. The third and final excerpt draws from the symphony's quiet beginning for solo clarinet. It enters conspicuously during the stunned silence that follows an impassioned outburst from Anna, angry at her husband's unceasing suspicion of all Canadians, including the neighbor who has kindly watched their baby. Myaskovsky's symphony again receives a foregrounded position within the sonic mix, as Anna and Igor watch their sleeping baby. Anna speaks in hushed tones as lyrical clarinet gives way to sustained, gentle string textures: "Poor little fellow. It would be a pity to have him grow up thinking the world is his enemy. . . . These people are not our enemies; they are our friends. It is we who are acting like enemies." It is worth pausing to emphasize the curious rhetorical flourish of this sequence. Anna's monologue pairs a reasonable call for greater trust with self-indictment. These words are spoken to the strains of a Soviet symphony originally composed to celebrate the anniversary of an American orchestra, commandeered here

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<sup>60</sup> Myaskovsky was not the only composer tapped for the occasion. Others included Alfredo Casella, Reinhold Gliere, Zoltan Kodaly, Darius Milhaud, and William Walton. Rather than commissioning American composers for the anniversary, the symphony administration determined that holding a competition instead would be less divisive. "Chicago Symphony Commissions New Works for 50th Anniversary Season," *New York Times*, January 28, 1940, X7.

<sup>61</sup> Herrmann's performance with the Columbia Broadcasting Symphony took place the day after the Chicago premiere. C.W.D., "Nicolas [sic] Miaskovsky, Prolific Symphonist," *Boston Daily Globe*, October 25, 1942, B51.

<sup>62</sup> Myaskovsky's symphony also received a formal recognition from the Soviet government with a "First Class" Stalin Prize in 1940. Remarkably, an anonymous informant had attempted to scuttle the honor by alerting the award committee of the symphony's commission from an American orchestra. This did not prevent Myaskovsky from receiving the award, but it did create considerable tension when the negative letter was attributed to Khachaturian. In an engrossing account of this symphonic intrigue, Marina Frolova-Walker notes that although Myaskovsky and Khachaturian managed to mend their relationship in the wake of this internal scandal, Khachaturian's remarks on the matter do not explicitly deny that he may have been the letter's author. See Frolova-Walker, *Stalin's Music Prize: Soviet Culture and Politics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 138–42, <https://doi.org/10.12987/yale/9780300208849.001.0001>.

to serve the cause of an anti-Soviet film. Whether Newman intended his selections to illuminate such depths of irony, Anna's accusation that "it is we who are acting like enemies," resonates differently once the contradiction is noticed.

If Myaskovsky's symphony underscores the countering of Soviet distrust with Western goodwill, the adagio from Prokofiev's Symphony no. 5 accompanies scenes in which Gouzenko feels increasingly compelled to resist his own government. In the first scene with the Prokofiev symphony, Gouzenko is shown leaving the secret room at the embassy (31:00). As he is inspected by the guard, he wryly jokes about trying to get out with a telephone book under his shirt, foreshadowing the more dangerous smuggling of documents he will attempt later. For the film's most politically charged sequence, the adagio plays for nearly five minutes, the longest continuous musical excerpt heard in the entire film. (The excerpt begins at Rehearsal no. 58.) The scene is set at a meeting in the embassy, shortly after the Allied victory in World War II. Colonel Trigorin instructs his officers to expand their efforts to gain information on the atomic bomb from their agents. The officers depart, leaving only Gouzenko, Kulin, and Trigorin. An emotional dialogue ensues (46:40). Trigorin, attempting to dictate a memo to Gouzenko, is distracted by thoughts of the bomb's destruction in Hiroshima: "What a weapon. I wish I knew more about it." Kulin, already drinking, responds despondently, "One little bomb that makes a desert on which nothing can live. What more need you know?" Irritated by this response, Trigorin mocks Kulin, prompting Kulin to address Gouzenko: "Do you think I am a great fool? . . . Consider me carefully. I have blood on both hands and I sleep with dead faces on my eyeballs." Gouzenko stays silent, staring ahead. Trigorin orders Kulin to cease. Kulin continues, recounting past atrocities, including his killing of ten Russian soldiers who refused to volunteer for dangerous wartime missions. "As a man, I'm called a sadist, but what of governments that pile dead on dead and justify murder as means to an end? What name do you call them?" When Trigorin warns Kulin that he may need to return to Russia, Kulin smiles darkly: "The threat of threats: to be sent back to Russia. Why should it have such an ominous sound?" Trigorin places Kulin under arrest and orders Gouzenko not to utter a word of the exchange elsewhere. Prokofiev's adagio plods dutifully through this drama. Accompanying such dialogue, the piece shoulders new associations, evoking the reluctant trudge of unwilling Soviet warriors like Kulin and his doomed charges. The sequence also introduces a level of culpability overlooked in reviews of the film: Kulin's shame over brutalities committed by his country is set in relief to the United States' design and use of a devastating weapon. Why aspire to comparable atrocity? A strained, ethereal melody in the violins, when joined with Kulin's tormented argument, seems to signal a desperate desire for release, its lyrical dissonances conveying the poignance of such efforts (Example 5).



**Example 5:** To the strains of Prokofiev's Symphony No. 5, Kulin speaks against government-endorsed atrocity.

**Video link:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.3109>.

This scene marks the tipping point: Gouzenko visits Kulin to express his own growing self-doubt and desire to do what is best for his baby son. Following the meeting, Gouzenko is shown walking down the street (53:40). Reminiscences of words spoken by Kulin, Anna, and Trigorin swell and swirl on the soundtrack, an aural representation of Gouzenko's anxious mind and growing conviction that he must resist. Amidst this interior dialogue is the dynamic climax of Prokofiev's adagio, where the steady march of the movement approaches a terminal reckoning. The music sits remarkably high in the mix, nearly drowning out the other voices as the full brass section blasts forth regimented dotted rhythms, followed by anguished, dissonant chords (Example 6).



**Example 6:** Igor reflects on voices he has heard.

**Video link:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.3109>.

Like the Myaskovsky, Prokofiev's Symphony no. 5 was another wartime work. It premiered in the United States after the Allies' victories in Europe and Japan. Prokofiev's explanation that the symphony depicted the "spirit of man," while generic, was picked up in American presses.<sup>63</sup> As Simon Morrison has noted, the "evocative score [was] interpretable as a parable about the war—before, during, and after—and about civilization thwarting annihilation."<sup>64</sup> Such themes mapped well onto the new context into which Newman placed the piece, where discerning Russians, like their American counterparts, were impelled to resist authoritarianism on humanitarian grounds.

With Shostakovich Symphony no. 6 linked to the creeping threat of communist espionage and the music of Prokofiev, Myaskovsky, and Khachaturian marshaled in support of oppressed Russians and their encounters with Western goodwill, Shostakovich's Symphony no. 5, with which the movie opens, noticeably defies either categorization—even when imposed by characters in the film. In one scene (34:53), Soviet agent and archvillain John Grubb visits a nuclear scientist's home to coerce him into sharing research. As he takes in the scientist's quarters, Grubb pauses to peruse the record collection. After identifying a recording of Shostakovich, he cues the record to an interior passage from the third movement (Rehearsal no. 83). After low strings gravely intone a chant-like melody, a lone oboe sounds plaintively over violin tremolos as Grubb murmurs "beautiful, the first flowering of a true proletarian culture," then threateningly interrogates the reluctant agent: "Have you gone over to the capitalist enemy?"<sup>65</sup> Here Shostakovich's strains offer pained witness to ideologically motivated violence—an interpretation of Shostakovich's music that would prove compelling among Western audiences and scholars in the following decades (Example 7). In contrast to the scene from *Song of Russia* in which Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto no. 1 binds together people and nations, the placement of Shostakovich's Symphony no. 5 in this scene acoustically accentuates division. Whether Grubb truly "hears" proletarian culture in Shostakovich's music, his need to politically orient the passage asserts morally objectionable qualities within the film's framework. Not only is he a scheming villain, but he also reduces music to a political cudgel, thereby denying the democratic ideal that artists must be free to create beyond the confines of political ideology.<sup>66</sup> Yet Richard Coe of the *Washington Post* believed the film to be no better than Grubb: it too, argued Coe, politicized music when Americans were accustomed to "laughing at the Soviet government for telling its composers that its music should express an ideology." Although Coe does not elaborate upon this point, his complaint suggests the film as a whole commits the same sin as Grubb, reducing and weaponizing music of Soviet composers to political ends.

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<sup>63</sup> Olin Downes, "Music and Politics," *New York Times*, March 9, 1947.

<sup>64</sup> Simon Morrison, *The People's Artist: Prokofiev's Soviet Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 249.

<sup>65</sup> In her biography of Shostakovich, Laurel Fay notes that one attendee of the symphony's premiere in 1937 observed audience members weeping openly during the third movement, a response rather different from Grubb's. See Laurel E. Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 100. In his analysis of Shostakovich's Symphony no. 5 Largo, Richard Taruskin proposes that this particular passage uses musical allusions to invoke "publicly inexpressible sentiments." The oboist's melody might reference two melancholy melodies from Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*. "Der Einsame im Herbst" (The Lonely One in Autumn) and "Der Abschied" (The Farewell). These, in turn, are set within a broader allusion to the concluding hymn of the funeral *panikhida*. Whether Newman registered any of these intertextual references, they only add further irony to Grubb's seemingly tone-deaf conviction that this passage in particular represents an optimistic flowering of proletarian culture. See Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 530, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691219370>.

<sup>66</sup> Lydia Goehr, "Political Music and the Politics of Music," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52, no. 1 (1994): 99–112, [https://doi.org/10.1111/1540\\_6245.jaac52.1.0099](https://doi.org/10.1111/1540_6245.jaac52.1.0099). Appropriate to this study, Goehr's article begins with an account of film composer Hanns Eisler's cross examination by HUAC in September 1947.



**Example 7:** Grubb savors Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5.

**Video link:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.3109>.

However, if *The Iron Curtain's* political argument seems as crassly overdetermined as Grubb's explanation of Shostakovich's music, Newman's repetition of a passage from the finale of Shostakovich's Symphony no. 5 allows more space for ambivalence. Namely, music that had accompanied the montage of Soviet infiltration (described above) is reused as Gouzenko, in preparation for defection, plunders his own embassy's classified files and slips past the guard, his shirt stuffed with secrets. The reuse of the same passage from the symphony invites comparison across the scenes, and the continuity of context played against a slippage in affiliation from Soviet infiltration to Gouzenko's defiant counterespionage leverages music's polyvalent capacity. Has Shostakovich's Symphony no. 5, like Gouzenko, "switched sides" to that of resistance against the Soviet Union's plotting? Regardless, Newman's selection muddies the moral waters, suggesting some level of equivalency among spies, whether they be for democratic or communist gain. Critics in *The Washington Post* and *New Yorker* complained that Zanuck's film seemed oblivious to its own double standard on espionage (that spying was apparently only evil when committed by communists), but Newman's placement of Shostakovich's music provides an important exception to that general impression, discreetly expressed through the careful selection and placement of musical passages.<sup>67</sup> It is from this example that we can begin to better understand the ways in which music in service of a propagandistic film is not as easily reducible as the narrative to which it is appended.

## Conclusion

In October 1947, as screenwriter Milton Krims labored to complete *The Iron Curtain's* script, Hollywood studio executives answered to HUAC for their production of films like *The North Star* and *Song of Russia*. Russian-born author Ayn Rand served as expert witness, denouncing the dangers of *Song*

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<sup>67</sup> "It certainly can't be news to anyone that all countries have agents and informants and showing these as such hissers and shouters will only result in like films from Moscow studios and so on and so on." Richard Coe, "Curtain Falls with a Dull Thud," *Washington Post*, May 16, 1948, L1. See also John McCarten, "Onward with Darryl," *New Yorker*, May 22, 1948, 103.

of *Russia*, which showed Soviet citizens enjoying material goods and children smiling.<sup>68</sup> Only several years earlier, such films had been celebrated as a vital part of Hollywood's wartime service. Now they appeared suspicious, quite possibly the work of communists among Hollywood's ranks. Given this context, it is tempting to dismiss *The Iron Curtain* as a "protection payment" signaling Hollywood's readiness to appease HUAC.<sup>69</sup> Instead of American allies, Soviets are now the new Nazis in Hollywood films. But the particulars of Gouzenko's story, which depend upon him, a Soviet citizen, breaking the ring (as opposed to the FBI or Canadian authorities) and Newman's use of Soviet composers' music to accompany the story in a manner reminiscent of the pro-Soviet wartime films complicates the picture in valuable ways.

On the one hand, Newman's decision to feature Soviet concert compositions played to semidocumentary strategies: To support a story of actual Soviet espionage, *The Iron Curtain* incorporated excerpts of music from actual Soviet composers. (That Gouzenko's particular story did not directly intersect with Soviet concert composers' music was fixed by having the Soviet embassy play Shostakovich's symphonies as a security measure, a detail inspired by but not exactly congruent with Gouzenko's published account.) On the other hand, Newman's compiled score is not confined—like music in other 20th Century-Fox semidocumentaries—to serving as a diegetic prop or accompaniment to voice-over narration. Instead, it gradually takes on the qualities of typical Hollywood underscore, with the music of Soviet composers implemented to elicit emotional identification with the film's sympathetic characters. This use of foreign-yet-familiar music to emphasize shared qualities resembled musical practices from pro-Soviet wartime features. As Peter Kupfer notes, "in *Song of Russia* [Tchaikovsky's] music functions less as an emblem of Russia and more as a catalyst for emotional transference," with Tchaikovsky's music serving as "the great unifier" among American and Russian characters.<sup>70</sup> In *The Iron Curtain*, Newman sets Soviet composers' music to signal shared values among "good" Soviets and American audiences while marking "bad" Soviets as incapable of enjoying or appreciating Soviet music beyond its supposed adherence to ideological slogans.

Music in *The Iron Curtain* is ultimately founded on contradictions. While critics reasonably faulted the filmmakers for using the composers' Soviet status to politically essentialize and commandeer their works for anti-Soviet propaganda, Newman's positioning of the music within the film and his public remarks express respect for and solidarity with his Soviet colleagues. Shostakovich, Prokofiev, and Khachaturian were, after all, accustomed to composing for politically edged films that, while not necessarily representing

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<sup>68</sup> When asked by Representative John McDowell to clarify whether children truly did not smile in the Soviet Union, Rand doubled down: "If they do, it is privately and accidentally. Certainly it is not social. They don't smile in approval of their system" (Doherty, 121). Robert Mayhew's monograph on *Song of Russia* and Ayn Rand's testimony offers considerable production history on the film and a very sympathetic portrayal of the objections Rand brought forth in the hearings. See *Ayn Rand and Song of Russia: Communism and Anti-Communism in 1940s Hollywood* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2005).

<sup>69</sup> Thomas Doherty refers to *The Iron Curtain*, *The Red Menace* (1949), and *The Red Danube* (1949), as "protection payments in 35 mm" "made to placate HUAC" (Doherty, 351). While Doherty's larger point about studios' eagerness to signal anti-communist fervor and appease HUAC is accurate, Daniel J. Leab argues compellingly that "Darryl Zanuck . . . seems to have been motivated by other than fearful considerations in racing to release the first anti-communist movie" (Leab, 158). Zanuck's interest in the project preceded HUAC's preliminary hearings in May 1947 and reflected an apparently genuine and profit-directed effort to inform American audiences of tangible dangers, as he had in the account of a Nazi spy ring in *The House on 92nd Street* (1945).

<sup>70</sup> Kupfer, "Musical 'Diplomacy,'" 82.

the composer's personal convictions, nonetheless brought them political and financial reward.<sup>71</sup> And whereas the Soviet government had denounced these composers for ostensibly composing expressively inaccessible music, Newman's setting of their work in a Hollywood film demonstrated these composers' currency in popular (and capitalist) media. Like the film's depiction of Gouzenko, music inextricably associated with the Soviet regime could be used by others to endorse or undermine it.<sup>72</sup>

Consequently, Newman's compiled score both perpetuates and challenges simplistic correlations between music and propaganda by allowing space for multiple ironies. The overt irony of the film's music—that Soviet composers were being deployed to fight for an anti-Soviet cause—is joined by others. These include Newman's unexpected position of defending composers disgraced by the Soviet government as American critics decried his (or the studio's) misappropriation of the composers' music for *The Iron Curtain*, a complaint built upon an incomplete characterization of music's role in the film. These compounding ironies produce a pronounced and, under the circumstances, appropriate “doubleness,” a phenomenon noted by Richard Taruskin in which Shostakovich's music manages to accommodate conflicting subtexts.<sup>73</sup> In *The Iron Curtain*, music's doubleness not only encourages one to consider ruptures between official Soviet policy and its people—the overt propagandistic message of the film—but also between its music and those who “speak” on its behalf, whether from Moscow, Hollywood, or the critic's desk. Music renders this particular *Iron Curtain* more permeable than its onscreen narrative might otherwise acknowledge, inviting us to scrutinize anew the slippery threads meant to bind music, film, politics, and reception.

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<sup>71</sup> Peter Kupfer discusses how some of these films rely on original music to vilify American characters in postwar Soviet productions, like *The Secret Mission* (1950, music by Khachaturian) and *Meeting at the Elbe* (1949, music by Shostakovich). Peter Kupfer, “Musical ‘Diplomacy.’” Mikhail Romm's *The Russian Question* (1947, music by Khachaturian) offers an interesting comparison to *The Iron Curtain*. Released shortly before *The Iron Curtain*, it too uses the trope of the “good” citizen forced to reckon with the achievements of an enemy society and the failings of his own. In this case, the citizen is an American journalist who is pressured by his editor to write negatively about the Soviet Union despite his own positive encounters there. The film opens with a startling montage in which severe shots of the Statue of Liberty introduce a series of images depicting grotesque economic inequality and racism in the United States. Khachaturian's grim march and dissonant fanfare figures herald a society deaf to its own defects. The film is viewable on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ePawW0W-do&t=1s>.

<sup>72</sup> In one item from *The Washington Post*, an anonymous author notes that whether “the composers have a legal case [to remove their music from *The Iron Curtain*] we cannot say, but they have a big job on their hands if they are out to stop the playing of their works by every capitalist orchestra or record fancier.” “*The Iron Curtain*,” May 15, 1948, 6.

<sup>73</sup> Richard Taruskin, “When Serious Music Mattered: On Shostakovich and Three Recent Books,” in *Shostakovich: A Casebook*, ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 360–70, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11hptp2.30>.

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