

Article

Speech Melody Research as the Interdisciplinary Foundation of the Petrograd Institute of the Living Word

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Abstract: The assumption of similarity between artistic speech melody and music was deeply rooted in Russian Symbolism and based on the culturally established analogy between poetry/lyrical prosody and music. This connection was the basis for a wide range of performative practices focused on performed word such as the experiments of director Vsevolod Meyerhold and composer Mikhail Gnesin in Petrograd theater studios in 1900–1910s, and the collective declamation of Vasilii Serezhnikov and Vsevolod Vsevolodskii-Gerngross. However, after the October revolution, this analogy not only inspired new artistic paths, but also new approaches in humanities. This article explores the correlation between a practice-based strategy and advanced theory that characterized the structure and curricula of the Petrograd *Institute of the Living Word* (Institut zhivogo slova; 1918–1924). Its specific institutional features affected the development of disciplines in the fields of linguistics, poetics, and literary studies. The earlier period of its work (1918–1921) was defined by the search for common ground, which could unite representatives of different disciplines. The study of the melody of speech, which this article is focused on, became one of the key joint research projects of the Institute’s team. It is the perspective of the *Institute of the Living Word’s* research projects and performance-related art practices that is used for analysis of the Russian Formalist approaches in the 1910s–20s, specifically articles and books of philologist Boris Eikhenbaum on the melody and composition of verse intonation.

Keywords: poetics; Russian Formalism; Institute of the Living Word; Vsevolod Vsevolodskii-Gerngross; Boris Eikhenbaum; Sergei Bernshtein; sounding artistic speech; early Soviet institutions; poetry performance



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1. Introduction

The opposition between the theoretical attitudes of Russian Symbolists and Formalists is often referred to in major works on the history of Formalism. This applies both to the assertions of the Formalists themselves and more recent studies of the history and theory of Russian Formalism (Erlich 1980, pp. 71–86, Hansen-Löve 1978, pp. 47–54). One of the key issues around which the debate revolved was the concept of the synthesis of the arts, particularly the way in which music and poetry interact (Hansen-Löve 1978, p. 60). It was put forward by Andrei Bely, Vyacheslav Ivanov, and other key representatives of Russian Symbolism in the 1900s–1910s. Later, in the 1910s–20s, their assumptions became a key criticism of the Formalists (I will elaborate on some of Boris Eikhenbaum’s statements later in this article). Yet, the emerging terms and definitions of new poetics in this crucial period of Formalism’s development cannot be explained as a rejection of the concept of syncretism. In this article, I address this polemic, taking the example of Boris Eikhenbaum’s works written in the 1910s–20s and devoted to poetics and specifically to verse intonation. Eikhenbaum’s book *The Melodics of Russian Lyric Verse* (Melodika russkogo liricheskogo stikha), focused on the characterization of melodic-syntactic figures in lyric verse of the “songlike”, [napevnogo tipa] remains to this day one of the most striking testimonies to the use of musical terminology in the study of poetry. Moreover,

the hypotheses and concepts that asserted the closeness of the verbal arts and music remained in the texts of the Formalists themselves. In the 1920s, linguist and philologist Sergei Bernshtein turned to music theorist Ernst Kurth's concept of music as motion, while analyzing poetic declamation and developing the general theory of composition in declamatory and poetic works (Schmidt 2020, pp. 85–86, 240–41; Bernshtein 2018, pp. 59–61, 349–50). The legacy of the Formalists has traditionally been considered in the context of the history of literary studies and semiotics, as well as individual biographies of the researchers. Exploring Eikhenbaum's verse theory in the context of other studies of Formalists, Aage A. Hansen-Löve asserted that it mediates methodologically between the approaches of Osip Brik/Boris Tomashevskii and Tynianov's verse semantics (Hansen-Löve 1978, p. 310). Carol Any's in-depth study of Boris Eikhenbaum's legacy, on the other hand, discusses Eikhenbaum's works of this period in the context of the evolution of his own methods (Any 1994, pp. 47–79). Timothy D. Sergay (Sergay 2015) provides an in-depth critique of the concept of melodic verse in Eikhenbaum's works, as well as his version of poetry and music syncretism, from the perspectives of both musicology and linguistics. I follow this path, focusing on the interrelations of the verbal arts and music that interested Eikhenbaum. Yet, this article offers a different perspective—an institutional look, first and foremost—at Eikhenbaum and his colleagues' research work in the 1910s–20s and beyond. The article explores the functioning of collective research projects at the Petrograd Institute of the Living Word (Institut zhivogo slova, hereafter IZhS). On the one hand, it allows one to see how much Formalist theory is conditioned by the institutional context. Boris Eikhenbaum, Sergei Bernshtein, as well as Lev Iakubinskii, Boris Tomashevskii, and Yuri Tynianov were all members of the Institute's staff at different periods. The IZhS became a platform where a dialog about the musical nature of verse between Formalists and followers of Symbolist ideas unfolded.

On the other hand, turning to this polemic on the interaction of music and poetry in the IZhS allows us to see the Formalists' research projects of that period in the context of performance-related art practices and to discuss the influence that it had on them. This aspect rarely draws the attention of researchers, but it seems to me to be particularly important for understanding the Formalist's legacy that is discussed in this article. The IZhS was responsible not only for the research, but for the art practices as well, and the academics were not only concerned with the verse, but also with poetry performance. To show the role that the experimental nature of the IZhS as an institution played in the process of establishing emerging literary and performance research, I am looking at the artistic practices of that time.

In *A Sentimental Journey*, Viktor Shklovsky described the conditions under which the literary work was carried out in the newly founded Soviet institutions after the Bolshevik Revolution:

When famine stood at the intersections in place of policemen, the intelligentsia declared a general peace.

Futurists and academicians, Kadets and Mensheviks, the talented and the untalented sat together in studios at World Literature and stood in line at the House of Writers.

What a fall was this! (Shklovsky 1970, p. 196)

Among the names of organizations mentioned by Shklovsky, it would make sense to add another one: the Institute of the Living Word. Although academics clearly outnumbered futurists, the IZhS was initially characterized by the extraordinary diversity of disciplines and methodologies. This institute opened in Petrograd in 1918 and ceased its work in 1924. The famine and harsh living conditions in general, mentioned in Shklovsky's memoir, were a major reason for the Formalists' attachment to the newly founded organization. However, their research contributed to the dynamically developing collective projects of the IZhS. Moreover, it was the collaborative nature of their efforts that allowed

not only the Formalists but also other institute members to make a great contribution to the knowledge on intonation and performed word.

Psycho-physiological discourse at the foundation of literary analyses, developed by Russian Formalists in the IZhS and other institutions where they worked together, became the focus of the first two chapters of Ana Hedberg Olenina's *Psychomotor Aesthetics: Movement and Affect in Modern Literature and Film* (Hedberg Olenina 2020). In this comprehensive study, she draws attention to the influence of methods that came from physiological psychology and biomedical sciences. She also often considers extra-linguistic aspects of oral performance, corporeal aspects of poetry, and the physical aspects of how it was received. I am relying on this approach in my article because it allows me to consider the overlaps of the artistic and research spheres, tracing the influences that make up the theories of Formalists. Moreover, studying the influence of performance-related art practices on the theories of the Formalists allows one to recontextualize their legacy and to explore the interrelations of humanities and performance-related practices of the avant-garde. In the individual as well as choral recitation, authorial poetry reading, and theater, scholars sought answers to questions posed by innovative literary studies. Studies of poetry performance, in turn, posed new problems when overlapping with poetics.

2. The IZhS and Artistic Speech Aesthetics of the Early 20th Century

Below I will briefly discuss the history of the IZhS together with other institutions that emerged in post-revolutionary Russia to deal with artistic and public speech. The Laboratory for the Study of Artistic Speech (Kabinet izucheniiia khudozhestvennoi rechi; 1923–1930) under the auspices of the *State Institute of Art History* (Gosudarstvennyi Institut istorii iskusstv) was one of them. It was led by Sergei Bernshtein and originated directly from the IZhS. The State Courses of Speech Techniques (1924–1930) with Lev Iakubinskii as a director also took over the IZhS, specifically its oratory section (Brandist 2007, pp. 65–68; 2015, p. 94). Both laboratory and courses worked in Leningrad. In turn, the *State Institute of Recitation*, headed by actor and teacher Vasilii Serezhnikov, opened in Moscow in 1919. A year later, it was renamed the *State Institute of Speech*.¹ In contrast to it, The Commission of the Living Word (under philologist Aleksei Shneider) at the Literary Section of the State Academy of Artistic Sciences (Gosudarstvennaia akademiia khudozhestvennykh nauk) mainly carried out research work. Against the backdrop of these organizations, the IZhS stands out for at least one distinctive feature: it was founded as an *interdisciplinary experiment* that sought to combine artistic and scientific approaches both in education and research. The idea of combining literary studies and theater pedagogy with modern psychophysiology, experimental phonetics, sociolinguistics, etc., was developed by the former actor, teacher, and theater historian Vsevolod Vsevolodskii-Gerngross, who was the Institute's chairman from when it opened in 1919 until 1923, with the support of the Bolshevik People's Commissar of Enlightenment Anatoly Lunacharsky. The experiment was to lead to a transformation of early Soviet humanities and art education. In the early period of the IZhS, its staff saw the integration of different disciplines supported by the absence of distinct faculties as a guarantee that the Institute would boost different fields of science and art,² from linguistics and poetics to recitation, theater, and even dance (Sirotkina and Smith 2017, pp. 74–80). In reality, things turned out differently to how Lunacharsky, Vsevolodskii-Gerngross, and others planned. Almost from the very beginning, the Institute was in a mode of permanent crisis which it was never able to overcome. The difficulties were caused, on the one hand, by the rigidity of the early Soviet system of management of culture and science, and by the peculiarities of the Institute's organization, on the other. Yet, the challenge of interdisciplinarity, and the framework of an interdisciplinary institution in general, strongly influenced the work of the Formalists, especially Boris Eikhenbaum and Sergei Bernshtein. The turn to the concept of the syncretism of music and poetry, which I discuss below, was one of the responses to this challenge.

The Institute had virtually no precedent in Russia.³ However, similar principles, such as interdisciplinarity and combining scientific knowledge with artistic and pedagogical

practices, were at the heart of the short-lived journal *Voice and Speech*. In the mid-1910s, it signaled the desire of a wide range of artists and specialists to unite their efforts and exchange their artistic and pedagogical knowledge. This journal “for orators, lawyers, preachers, teachers, singers, lecturers, artists, and devotees of eloquence”, as its editor, an actor Anatoly Dolinov proclaimed on the cover, was published from 1912 to 1914 in St. Petersburg (Ivanova 2003, pp. 111–12; Hedberg Olenina 2020, p. 52). Vasilii Serezhnikov, director of the *State Institute of Speech*, noted that *Voice and Speech* served as “a vivid illustration of the rapprochement between representatives of science and art: the journal’s staff included physiologists, psychologists, linguists, doctors, teachers of reciting and singing, actors, court officials, etc.” (Serezhnikov 1924, p. 9). This list quite accurately mirrors the fields of knowledge that several years later would be represented by IZhS members. Among the authors were the specialist on classical antiquity and translator Faddei Zelinskii, the renowned lawyer and writer Anatolii Koni, the dialectologist Vasilii Chernyshev, Vsevolodskii-Gerngross, who contributed to this journal with articles on the melody of speech and the history of declamation, and other future employees of the IZhS. In turn, the combination of science and artistic experience, noted by Vasilii Serezhnikov, later would become one of the main features of the Institute.

To understand the basics of its research projects, it is necessary to briefly characterize two main phases of the IZhS’s history. Chronologically, the first phase covered the period between the opening of the Institute (November of 1918) and winter of 1921. This first phase was characterized by (1) the involvement of specialists of various disciplines, such as physiology, psychology, phonetics, pedagogy, philology, etc.; (2) the search for common grounds for interdisciplinary projects; (3) an attempt to combine scientific approaches with the knowledge accumulated by contemporary theater, or, more precisely, with the work of teachers of theater schools and private studios, which included Vsevolodskii-Gerngross himself. It was during this period of time that the Institute would turn out to be the place where different approaches to speech, such as physiological, political, social, and artistic, would come together. In this article, I mainly deal with the first period. The second phase covered the period from the spring of 1921, when the institute began a reform initiated by the staff themselves, to the spring of 1923, when Vsevolodskii-Gerngross left his leadership position.⁴ The work of The Committee on Declamation Theory [Komissiiia po teorii deklamatsii] under the guidance of Boris Eikhenbaum (established in 1921, but started to work later, in 1922) was especially significant for the development of a new performance-centered discipline of sounding artistic speech.

The volume of the *Notes of the Institute of the Living Word* (*Zapiski Instituta Zhivogo Slova* 1919), which was published in 1919, demonstrates the role that different branches of psychology and medicine (including psychophysiology, anatomy, treatment of the organs of hearing and speech) played in the early period of the IZhS. It was supposed to be part of not only research but also educational work; for example, the Institute’s professors were expected to perform breathing exercises with the students.⁵ Among them were otolaryngologist and defectologist Mikhail Bogdanov-Berezovskii, speech therapist David Feldberg, and psychologist Polina Efrussi. However, from the very beginning, the rich combination of different disciplines and activities in the Institute made it problematic to subordinate to the Theater Department of the People’s Commissariat of Education. In 1918–1919, an ambitious plan to open under David Feldberg’s guidance an otophonetic laboratory and clinic as part of the IZhS was discussed by the Institute’s board, but later called into question. The reason for that was the refusal of the theater department of the People’s Commissariat of Education to support initiatives outside its professional sphere.⁶ In addition, in December 1919, Mikhail Bogdanov-Berezovsky, who had been involved in the administration of the Institute as a member of its presidium, died. In 1919, David Feldberg became the head of the Otophonetic Institute (Chown and Brandist 2007, p. 97), which was opened in Petrograd not as part of the IZhS, but of the Petrograd Psychoneurological Institute.

Despite the ambitiousness of Lunacharsky and Vsevolodskii-Gerngross's plan, the principles, framework, and methods of joint work in the new institute were not clearly defined in advance. In the spring of 1918, Vsevolodskii-Gerngross proposed a project of courses dedicated to the science and art of "living language". Plans to open the courses continued to be discussed in the fall of 1918, and the decision to rename it as an institute was made just before its opening, when it became obvious that the title "Courses of the Artistic Word" did not correspond to the scale of the new institution (Vassena 2007, pp. 79–80). The phrase "living word" in the name of the Institute was undoubtedly a stroke of luck. It referred to both Symbolism (the phrase was used by Andrei Bely, for example, in his collection "Symbolism" (Bely 2010, p. 316)), with which some of the Institute's employees such as Konstantin Siunnerberg (pen name: Erberg) and Vladimir Piast had been closely associated, and to the "resurrection of the word" principle put forward by Viktor Shklovsky. By 1918, the "living word" was already accepted by many and recognized as a common term in a vocabulary of a wide variety of practices and disciplines. Yet, the Institute was opened in a hurry, caused at once by the Bolshevik government's desire to set up cultural police and the need to improve the living conditions of the Petrograd scholars. Having had time to discuss the structure of educational programs before the Institute opened its doors, the staff had to determine the framework of their joint research in the months following the opening.

An article, "The Regularity of Speech Melody", written by Vsevolodskii-Gerngross in the mid-1910s, finishes with a statement about the need for a "scientific basis for the art of theater" as the ultimate goal of his research on speech melody: "[François] Delsarte has made his contribution in the field of plasticity. We should follow his example with the speech prosody studies [v oblasti toniki]" (Vsevolodskii-Gerngross 1914–1915, p. 72). In *Notes of the Institute of the Living Word*, the first purpose of the scientific department of the IZhS was proclaimed as "the creation of a science of the art of speech" (Zapiski Instituta Zhivogo Slova 1919, p. 97). This echoed the goal outlined by Vsevolodskii-Gerngross in his early article. But the ambition of providing scientific foundations for the speech of the actor on stage (a topic that drew attention from Vsevolodskii-Gerngross in the mid-1910s) was far more specific than the proclaimed creation of a "science of the art of speech". Talks often took place among the Institute's staff at the meetings of the Presidium, as well as the meetings of the Institute's scientific, pedagogical, and other councils. Thus, when discussing the principles of the Institute's structure in December 1918, Vsevolodskii-Gerngross argued that the work of all departments should "pass through the 'word' filter [prokhodit' cherez fil'tr "slovo"]"⁷, caring little that this filter was not fulfilling its function well. In turn, the discussion of issues concerning the present and future of the IZhS was by no means careless. In 1927, Vsevolodskii-Gerngross recalled:

We came together for the first time, for the first time under one roof: [Anatolii] K[oni], Eikhbaum, [Yuri] Yur'ev.⁸ This gathering of ill-matched elements did a great deal, but on the other hand, they also undermined, made fragile the foundation on which this institute was created. [...] The struggle between the representatives of these disciplines, on the one hand, artistic, and on the other hand, scientific, was the most heated, up to incredibly stormy meetings.⁹

The position of the scientific secretary of the Institute proved to be especially important. Lev Iakubinskii held the post until February 1919. He gravitated towards sociolinguistics, which was an appropriate conceptual framework for the work of theater teachers, linguists, doctors, psychologists, lawyers, etc. However, when he left this position, his place was taken by Lev Shcherba, a phoneticist and professor at the Petrograd University (Vassena 2007, p. 81). Soon after, several topics, chosen to contribute to the achievement of the goal proclaimed by the Institute, were outlined. These topics included the study of Russian pronunciation norms, as well as the study of the influence of the war and revolution on the Russian language. One more topic was the study of the melody of speech (Zapiski Instituta Zhivogo Slova 1919, pp. 98–101). Of these three topics, it was the last one that would effectively bring the scholars of the IZhS to work together for a time.

Vsevolodskii-Gerngross proposed studying the melody of speech on 14 November 1918, coinciding with the Institute's opening.¹⁰ Vsevolodskii-Gerngross himself, the philologist Sergei Bondi, and the poet Nikolai Gumilev were to carry out work on this topic in the Committee on the Melody of Speech [Komissiiia po melodii rechi].¹¹ According to Eikhenbaum's testimony, this work was initiated by Lev Shcherba,¹² who later became involved in the work on this topic as well. Vsevolodskii-Gerngross had strong reasons for supporting this proposal.¹³ It was not only his own research into the melody of speech but also the work of the artists of the previous decade to whom he felt attached. The theatrical work of Iurii Ozarovskii, a senior colleague and teacher of Vsevolodskii-Gerngross, is an example of how the speech melody gradually became one of the main interests of the performance practitioners of those years. Author of the *Apollo* magazine, collector, and historian, immersed in the material environment of bygone eras, Ozarovskii was a characteristic figure of Russian modernism (see: (Kharlamova 2006)). As a director, he became known for his productions of ancient Greek tragedies at the Alexandrinsky Theatre, notably Euripides' *Hippolytus* (1902) and Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* (1904).¹⁴ Ozarovskii's antique plays did not only represent an attempt to restore ancient Greek theater, but also embodied his program of musicalization of the dramatic theater. Ozarovskii introduced the chorus in the Greek tragedies he staged in Saint Petersburg, and actors had to emphasize the melody of speech. He was the author of the book *Music of the Living Word: Foundations of Russian Artistic Reading* (Ozarovskii 1914), where he discussed the concept of "declamation music". For a short time, he was editor of the journal *Voice and Speech*. His approach influenced Vsevolodskii-Gerngross's studies of intonation. It has a lot in common with the ideas of musicologists like Leonid Sabaneev (who would later use the term "music of speech" (Sabaneev 1923)) and Boris Asafiev (Sergay 2015, p. 199), as well as with composer Mikhail Gnesin's experiments in musical reading (Krivosheeva 2000; Bondi 1961). In the first decades of the twentieth century, thanks to the performances of the actor Nikolai Khodotov (together with the composer and pianist Evgenii Vil'bushevich), Vera Komissarzhevskaja, and others, the art of melodeclimation, that is, the performance of poems with musical accompaniment, would be renewed. In an article, "On Chamber Declamation" (1923, first published in (Eikhenbaum 1927, pp. 226–249)), Eikhenbaum argued with Ozarovskii, who by that time had emigrated and died in Paris in 1924. But having joined the IZhS in 1919, Eikhenbaum became part of a research project that in many ways continued, developed, and refined Ozarovskii's ideas, which were in turn influenced by the concept of syncretism.

The above-mentioned scholars, artists, and teachers shared the confidence of the proximity of music and performed word (be it authorial readings or theater, or even poetry or prose itself due to the premise that intonation is a constituent of literary text that I will later discuss). This conviction was common to speech aesthetics of the early twentieth century, and it was also decisive for many aspects of the IZhS's work. Vsevolodskii-Gerngross taught at the Institute course on "Music of Speech". His frequent collaborator composer Anatolii Kankarovich taught the course on "Music as the Element of Living Word" (*Zapiski Instituta Zhivogo Slova* 1919, pp. 73–74). Modernist poetry occupied a central place in the repertoire of the Institute's studio, which was established in 1919 under Vsevolodskii-Gerngross' guidance. He explained this by the presence of "speech music":

First of all, we abandoned all the old traditional declamation skills and techniques, all that declamation peddled by professional actors. All of that was found to be untenable. [...] Then, to start building something new, we took a completely new material for declamation: instead of the favorite Pushkin and [Aleksii Konstantinovich] Tolstoy texts, we took the poems of [Konstantin] Balmont, of poets from the Symbolists to the proletarian, including the Imaginists. Then we refused to accept poems based on their semantic and emotional figurative side only; we became interested in their musical side. This emphasis on speech music was the main characteristic of the newly formed declamation school.¹⁵

In addition to solo recitation, Vsevolodskii-Gerngross also developed collective recitation in his studio, which he regarded as a musical creation. His approach was displayed in

his published scores of collective recitation, accompanied by sheet music (Vsevolodskii-Gerngross 1925, pp. 133–89).¹⁶ In practical teaching, he used folklore material and turned to the traditions of oral storytelling and epic poetry that was originally sung. The study of folklore, including the bylinas of the Russian North, was also an important component of the research work of the Institute of the Living Word. Folklore-related papers were regularly presented in the Institute by Vsevolodskii-Gerngross himself, collector of Russian fairy tales Maria Serova, geologist and ethnographer Mikhail Edemskii, philologist Maria Liverovskaia, and others. Thus, a common approach to such different phenomena as folklore, performance of modern poetry, and actors' speech was outlined. The next step was to extend it to literature. It was made after two young specialists—literary scholar Boris Eikhenbaum and linguist Sergei Bernshtein—joined the IZhS.

Work on the topic of speech melody began at the Institute in the late winter and early spring of 1919. A few months earlier, at a meeting on December 9, 1918, Lev Shcherba and Sergei Bondi suggested Eikhenbaum and Bernshtein be members of the research team.¹⁷ Both Eikhenbaum and Bernshtein were also members of the OPOIaZ (the Society for the Study of Poetic Language) and had worked on the subject of verse melodics before being invited to join the Institute.

The study of speech melody in the Institute was limited to the research on intonations of predominantly artistic speech. Moreover, the relations within the triangle of music, speech, and literature soon came to the forefront for the Institute's staff. Research work at that time included presentations on the topic of speech melody, together with compiling a bibliography (this was entrusted to Bernshtein and Eikhenbaum)¹⁸ The plans also included sound recordings of speech and specifically "the speech melody of actors performing fragments of drama" (*Zapiski Instituta Zhivogo Slova* 1919, p. 98) to be made in the Laboratory of Experimental Phonetics at the First Petrograd University and later in the otophonetic (soon became phonetic) laboratory created at the IZhS. It had been assigned to Sergei Bernshtein, who in February 1920, began to record on a phonograph the reading of poems by the poets (Nikolai Gumilev, his colleague from IZhS, Anna Akhmatova, Aleksandr Blok, Osip Mandel'shtam, Vladimir Mayakovsky, among others), as well as singer of bylinas Ivan Trofimov (recorded in February and March 1921), and poetry and prose declamation by Vsevolodskii-Gerngross himself (April 1920) and his Studio (December 1920). These sound recordings marked the beginning of the collection, which in 1923 was transferred from the Institute of the Living Word to The Laboratory for the Study of Artistic Speech (Bernshtein 1926, pp. 49–50), and by 1930 had become the largest collection of sound recordings of the author's reading in Soviet Russia.

3. The Performative Dimension of Boris Eikhenbaum's Conception

In what follows, I will briefly review Eikhenbaum's research on the melody of verse before and after he joined the Institute to show its place within the IZhS context. It began in 1917, when, in his own words, he "became engaged in the theory of verse and prose, and especially in questions raised by "philology of the ear" (Ohrenphilologie)".¹⁹ The concept was proposed by the German philologist Eduard Sievers as an alternative to "visual philology" ("Augenphilologie"). According to Sievers, while creating a poem, its author experiences the influence of one of the suggestive melodic ideas, which regulates the choice of vocabulary and measure, together with the rhythm and melody of the poem. Thus, the poet provides the sound form constituent of the text. The experiments with amateur reciters led Sievers to the conclusion that there is a melodic interpretation, inherent in the text by its author himself. He divided reciters into two types—*Selbstleser* and *Autorenleser*—and believed that the latter are able to identify and reproduce the rhythmic and melodic qualities of the text, under the influence of which she or he falls when reading literary text (Sievers 1912; Zhirmunskii 1928, pp. 104–7). In Eikhenbaum's lecture on the verse melody in 19th-century lyrics, delivered in 1918 at the Faculty of History and Philology of the Petrograd University, then at a meeting of the Neophilological Society and later, he often referred to Sievers's research so the ideas of the German philologist were gradually

introduced not only into Russian verse studies (Zolotukhin and Schmidt 2014, p. 237). The hypothesis that the analysis of the poetry performance could contribute to the study of literary texts inspired some scholars at the IZhS as well. The notion of the inseparability of melody (or the tunefulness) from oral poetry has also been voiced by Vsevolodskii-Gerngross and was extended by him to epic poetry in general.²⁰ In the 1940s, he recalled a conversation about oral epic poetry with Ekaterina Iordanskaia, a specialist in the field of pedagogical storytelling:

In a conversation with her, I said, though without confidence, that bylinas should be performed in the way they exist among the masses. In general, I added, the chanted performance of ballads, poems, and bylinas, i.e., of the whole epic poetry [stikhotvornogo eposa], is the only correct one, because it is organically inseparable from the verbal material. (Vsevolodskii-Gerngross 1948, p. 36)

It is worth mentioning here that the questioning of this hypothesis by Sergei Bernshtein will bring a significant advance in the study of sounding artistic speech in the following years.

The topic of the syncretism of music and poetry was central for Boris Eikhenbaum during his years at the IZhS (from 1919 to 1923).²¹ In his articles of that period, he attempted to link his vision of syncretism to the hypothesis of tonal structures embedded in verse itself. Eikhenbaum's major works of these years, concerned with the analysis of poetry, were *The Melody of Russian Lyric Verse* (1921, published in 1922), *Anna Akhmatova: An Attempt at Analysis* (1922, published in 1923), *Lermontov: A Study in Literary-historical Evaluation* (1924), together with the already mentioned article "On Chamber Declamation" (1923, published in 1927), devoted to the performance of poetry. However, to show the close connection between the problems that interested Eikhenbaum and those that occupied the Committee on the Melody of Speech of the IZhS, I will briefly discuss Eikhenbaum's lesser-known newspaper and journal publications of these years: "On the Reading of Verse" (Eikhenbaum 1919), "On Sounds in Verse" (Eikhenbaum 1920), and "The Melodics of Verse" (Eikhenbaum 1921). These three articles can be seen as preliminary versions of the major publications.²² I intentionally leave out Eikhenbaum's analysis of the *skaz*, which also resonates with the artistic practices, including new approaches to reading prose on stage, such as those of the actor and reciter Aleksandr Zakushniak. The above-mentioned articles of Eikhenbaum are of particular interest to me because they mirror debates in the IZhS together with the problems its members discussed, premises they shared, and polemics they had. These articles are linked together not only by the interest in melody and intonation but also by the discussion on poetry as performance ("declamation" in Eikhenbaum's words), which was virtually absent from his major works (apart "On Chamber Declamation"). The polemic on syncretism of music and verse is another subject that links these three publications.

In the first one, "On the Reading of Verse", Eikhenbaum developed the notion, popular in the 1910s–20s, that an author's recitation has essential qualities that differentiate it from one of non-authorial performers, especially actors. This opposition was not just a matter of aesthetic preferences but a dualist methodological attitude shared by Eikhenbaum's colleagues at the Institute such as Siunnerberg, Bernshtein, partly Vsevolodskii-Gerngross, and Vladimir Piast, a poet and reciter who was actively involved in both the scientific and educational work of the IZhS. However, the final section of Eikhenbaum's article is particularly interesting in terms of the interrelation of poetry and music. Eikhenbaum criticized Vladimir Piast's views, calling the idea of the synthesis of the arts "a dull and barren metaphor":

Piast speaks of the traditions of symbolism—we don't need them. There is no painting or sculpture, no architecture (!), no music, and no pantomime in literary arts, but there are laws common to *all* art, as such, and there are its own laws, special ones, distinguishing verbal arts from the other. (Eikhenbaum 1919, p. 1)

In the article "On Sounds in Verse", published a few months later in the *Life of Art* newspaper, he focused on the issue the previous article had just briefly mentioned, that is,

the criticism of the Russian Symbolist's art theory. The argument that introduced polemics with Andrei Bely's ideas about phonetic orchestration of the verse was again related to the proximity between music and verse:

One talks about the 'musicality' of verse—but this is a metaphor, which only seems to be an explanation. There is no analogy between music and verse in this case because the matter concerns the sphere of speech, related to articulation, which is completely absent in music. (Eikhenbaum 1920, p. 2)

Eikhenbaum contrasted the notion of "harmony of form and content" with the Formalists' canonical concept of the struggle between the different elements of an artistic work and its subordination to the dominant factor (Tynianov et al. 2019, pp. 77–78, 276, 339). According to Eikhenbaum, the form of verse is subordinate to abstraction, or, as he calls it elsewhere, to abstract-speech intent. But to explain this thought, he turns to an analogy with program music: "Sound-imitation in music must be, above all, a *musical* theme, operating independently of any connection with an extra-musical phenomenon" (Eikhenbaum 1920, p. 3). This "musical" analogy was suggested as an alternative to the fruitless, as Eikhenbaum believed, metaphorical claims of "musicality of verse".

This discussion on music and poetry was central in the third article "The Melodics of Verse", published in December 1921. However, its "consistent musicological tilt" (Sergay 2015, p. 197) distinctly contradicted the polemics with Piast two years earlier. Eikhenbaum wrote:

Now it seems to be a moment when the theory of verse (in particular of lyric composition) must, in order to solve a number of its problems, turn to comparisons drawn from the theory of musical form. (Eikhenbaum 1921, p. 2)

Repeating the methodological guidelines of *The Melodics of Russian Lyric Verse*, Eikhenbaum in this article presented his vision of syncretism. "The syncretization of poetry with music, resulting in the birth of the lyric' songlikeness [pesennyi lad liriki], exposes itself in the dominance of the intonation factor", he wrote (Eikhenbaum 1921, p. 2). Again, he contrasted his understanding of syncretism with the understanding of phonetic orchestration as the "musicality of verse" typical of the Symbolists. Thus, returning to the notion of syncretism of the music and verse shows it was the explanation of synthesis, given by Symbolists, that was rejected by Eikhenbaum, but not the concept itself. The key theses of the article "The Melodics of Verse" is repeated in the book on melodics with one noteworthy exception. In the article, Eikhenbaum attempted to connect two issues that interested the staff of the IZhS—the syncretism of poetry and music, on the one hand, and the value of studying authorial reading, on the other. This is how Eikhenbaum ended his journal article:

Up to now, the "musicality" of verse has been taken to mean phonetic orchestration. It is necessary to contrast this with the intonational aspect, whose connection with music is completely organic. At the same time, the issues of the pronunciation of lyrics, which have been so vague up to now, should be clarified. After all, the main difference between the actor's and the poet's declamation is in the ways of intonation. The actor, following his stage habit, keeps speech intonations intact, and if he changes them, then only in the direction of strength, "expressiveness". The poet's intonations are based on the rhythmic-syntactic structure—the melodization is obtained, and a special lyrical tune [liricheskii napev] appears. So far, this has been considered a subjective and therefore secondary fact. In connection with the general question of the melody of verse, the attitude to this fact must change. (Eikhenbaum 1921, p. 3)

This statement echoed the words of Vsevolodskii-Gerngross on oral poetry quoted above. In "The Melodics of Verse", the performative dimension is presented at least as clearly as in Eikhenbaum's article "On Reading Poems", which refers to Alexander Blok's reading of his poems. While addressing the subject of melody, Eikhenbaum was attempting to outline ways of connecting the studies of declamation and poetics. It was

almost absent, however, from *The Melodics of Russian Lyric Verse*,²³ where, in order to achieve the impression of objectivity in his scholarly description, Eikhenbaum, as Carol Any rightly put it, “managed to describe intonational patterns in such a way that they appeared disconnected from any speaker” (Any 1994, p. 134). The same could be said of the approach to the intonations embedded in verse demonstrated in *Anna Akhmatova. An Experience of Analysis*. In this work as well, describing the reader’s, including his own, experience of articulating the verse, Eikhenbaum hardly touched on the question of authorial or non-authorial poetry recitation. But that did not mean he lost interest in the lyrical tune in the poet’s declamation, which he talked about in “The Melodics of Verse”, or that he saw it as irrelevant to his research. Below I will briefly review one of the discussions at the meeting of a new Committee on Declamation Theory [Komissiiia po teorii deklamatsii] in order to show the methodological difficulties Eikhenbaum faced in trying to connect his observations on declamation with his innovative poetics studies.

The establishment of this Committee in 1921 was a signal of the new phase of the Institute’s work. The beginning of the next stage of the IZhS was determined by the changes in the system of state management of higher education and culture in Soviet Russia. In the second half of 1921, the Institute was transferred from the subordination of the Chief Committee for Vocational-Technical Training (Glavnoe upravlenie professional’nogo obrazovaniia, or Glavprofobr) to another department—General Directorate of Scientific, Scientific and Artistic, and Museum Institutions (Glavnoe upravlenie nauchnymi, nauchno-khudozhestvennymi i muzeinymi uchrezhdeniiami, or Glavnauka). “We moved to Glavnauka and put research rather than educational activities at the center of our work”, explained Vsevolodsky-Gerngross in 1927.²⁴ By 1921, when this transition was to take place, the most advanced research projects at the Institute were those of the staff of the faculty of philology (slovesnoe otdelenie). Since May 1919, when the IZhS abandoned an idea of non-faculty structure, the faculty of philology was established and headed by Boris Eikhenbaum as a dean. It was this department that proposed the reform in 1921–1922 that was to change the direction of the institute. The plan was sketched out by Sergei Bernshtein and Boris Eikhenbaum.²⁵ Summarizing, its main purpose was to close down the theater faculty and poetry studios, on the one hand, and to create a more advanced model for the coexistence of research and practical work, on the other. The institute was to be transformed to proceed specifically with the research and practice of artistic and public speech with the focus on recitation of poetic texts, narration [skazitel’stvo], choral recitation, performance of works of oral folklore, etc. The emancipation of word-centered artistic practices from theater was an appropriate strategy for the IZhS. However, this vision was at odds with those of Vsevolodskii-Gerngross. In the autumn of 1921, he came up with the idea of organizing the Experimental Theatre at the IZhS (based on IZhS theater studio), which was opened the following year. The end of this period was marked by the crisis of 1923, provoked, according to multiple IZhS students’ accounts,²⁶ by the Experimental Theater, which began to interfere with the work of the Institute and drew its material resources.

The period between 1921 and 1923 was productive for the new research project that was no longer focused specifically on the melody of speech. The above-mentioned Committee on Declamation Theory [Komissiiia po teorii deklamatsii] (1922–1923) was chaired by Eikhenbaum and included Bernshtein, Vsevolodskii-Gerngross, Boris Tomashevsky, Yuri Tynianov,²⁷ Vladimir Piast, and others. They were joined by Sofia Vysheslavtseva, student of Bernshtein, who would later recite poetry on stage and also join The Laboratory for the Study of Artistic Speech. The transcripts of the meetings of this Committee, that worked till 1923, show the advances and difficulties Eikhenbaum encountered in trying to reconcile his analysis of the syntax of the poems with an analysis of the “melodies” that appeared in the poets’ actual declamation. The discussion on Anna Akhmatova’s intonations, that took place on 8 May 1922, is of particular interest. It has been stenographed as follows:

Y. N. Tynyanov [...] points out that A. Akhmatova’s songful recitation, given the spoken character of her poetry, presents the same contradiction between poetic and declamatory style as he noted between the narrative style of Blok’s poetry and

the songfulness of his recitation. The speaker [Sergei Bernshtein] questions the correctness of defining Akhmatova's poetic style as conversational. He notes that Akhmatova's declamation, chanted in the way of melodizing, lacks intonational dominant [lishena intonatsionnoi dominantny]. The chairman [Boris Eikhenbaum] [...] together with Y. N. Tynyanov, states, that between Blok and, especially, Akhmatova's nature of poetic creativity, on the one hand, and the declamatory manner, on the other, there is a certain contradiction: the considerable variety of poetic styles she [Akhmatova] uses corresponds to a monotonous declamation, automated and not subjected to any variations. This moment of automatization must be taken into account especially seriously when one is going to consider the poet's declamatory manner as a commentary on his artistic conception.²⁸

Defamiliarization, according to the Formalists' beliefs, was meant to overcome automatism. Therefore, being a result of automatism, as Eikhenbaum suggested, this monotonous speech melody of Akhmatova's and Blok's reading does not belong to the sphere of artistic techniques at all. Yet, in his article "On Chamber Declamation", he returned to his early impressions of Alexander Blok's reading of his poem on the occasion of actress Vera Komissarzhevskaya's death in her memory in 1910. This time he related them to his understanding of poetry as a movement:

Blok's reading was muffled and monotonous, he read somehow in separate words, evenly, pausing only after the ends of the lines. But thanks to this I perceived the text of the poem and experienced it the way I wanted to. I felt that the poem was being *presented* to me [stikhotvorenie mne podaetsia], not *played out* [ne razygryvaetsia]. The reciter helped me, not hindered me like an actor with his "feelings"—I heard the words of the poem and its movements. (Eikhenbaum 1969, p. 514)

The remark about the poem's movements conveys Eikhenbaum's highly individualized reception of poetic performance. Although Sergei Bernshtein would later criticize Eikhenbaum's ideas about the melodic contours embedded in verse, the notion of verse as movement would become an important premise of his work and that of his students, including Sofia Vysheslavtseva (Hedberg Olenina 2018; Hedberg Olenina 2020, pp. 90–102). The performative effect of Blok's poetic declamation was in agreement, or even served as an impetus for Eikhenbaum's innovative conceptualization of poetry. Back in the mid-1910s, when considering the relationship between speech and music, Vsevolodskii-Gerngross wrote: "Melody, according to the definition given by Aristotle, is movement" (Vsevolodskii-Gerngross 1914–1915, p. 41). He extended this definition of melody to the melody of speech. In drawing attention to another overlap between Eikhenbaum's text and that of Vsevolodskii-Gerngross, I do not mean to imply a direct influence of terminology, but to highlight how the idea of the proximity of music and speech, which was central in Vsevolodskii-Gerngross research, was echoed once again in the discourse on poetry. So, did the poetry performance, according to Eikhenbaum, allow one to perceive poetry in a new way? Or was it, on the contrary, a result of automatization? Eikhenbaum's own articles, books, and comments did not provide a resolution to the contradiction between two views on declamation. While Eikhenbaum confidently introduced the concept of intonation and melody into the realm of theoretical poetics, in the gap between intonation as a concept of poetics and constituent component of declamation, this confidence disappeared.

4. Conclusions

Returning to the question of the role the IZhS played in the process of establishing emerging literary and performance research, one can regard it as a platform where Formalists meet the researchers and artists with close ties to Symbolism. The study of speech melody served as a foundation for their joined work, yet the Formalist's approach to syncretism conflicted with the premises their colleagues shared. It is common to consider Eikhenbaum's advances in theoretical poetics from that period unrelated to his interest in

questions of performance-related art practices, such as poetry recitation, that flourished in the IZhS. The outline of this interrelation aims to expand our understanding of Formalism and the nature of the interdisciplinary approaches of early Soviet art and research institutions in general.

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Notes

- 1 Since 1922 it lost state funding and operated privately under the name of the *Institute of the Word* until 1925.
- 2 This was the topic of Lev Shcherba's report to the Institute's Pedagogical Council on 19 November 1919 (TsGALI (the Central State Archive of Literature and Arts). F. 82. Op. 1. D. 22. Polozheniia i zhurnaly zasedanii prezidiuma, organizatsionnogo i uchenogo sovetov instituta "Zhivogo slova", spiski slushatelei. 18.10.1918–30.06.1919. pp. 69–91). Despite Shcherba's convincing arguments that the institute should abandon the division into faculties, it soon happened.
- 3 Ekaterina Chown and Craig Brandist point out that the Courses for the Training of Teachers of Expressive Reading in Schools (opened in 1910) was the predecessor of the IZhS. There was a plan to turn the courses into an institute, where an interdisciplinary model was presumably supposed to be implemented, but it never happened due to various reasons (Chown and Brandist 2007, p. 96).
- 4 TsGALI. F. 82 Op. 3 D. 32. Protokoly zasedanii Fol'klornoi sektiis Otdela literaturovedeniia; stenogrammy zasedanii Otdela teatrovedeniia Doklady po voprosam sovremennogo fol'klora i teoreticheskim problemam fol'kloristiki. . . 1.1.1927–30.3.1930. pp. 126–126ob.
- 5 TsGALI. F. 82. Op. 1. D. 22. P. 125ob.
- 6 Ibid., Pp. 70–72; 90. In 1921, the department was closed (Zolotnitskii 1976, p. 85).
- 7 TsGALI. F.82. Op.1. D.22. P. 40.
- 8 Yuri Yur'ev was an actor of the Alexandrinsky Theater. In the 1910s and 1930s he played in Vsevolod Meyerhold's productions, including Lermontov's *Masquerade*. Together with a group of actors from the Alexandrinsky Theater, some of whom were Yur'ev's students, he was invited by Vsevolodskii-Gerngross in 1918 to teach at the IZhS.
- 9 TsGALI. F. 82 Op. 3 D. 32. P.122.
- 10 TsGALI. F. 82. Op.1. D. 22. P. 17ob.
- 11 Ibid., P.37.
- 12 "There is an institution here called the 'Institute of the Living Word.' There, on the initiative of Shcherba, a company for the study of the melody of speech has been formed, to which I have been invited. There I have been assigned to compile the bibliography" (Zhirmunskaiia and Eikhenbaum 1988, p. 312). Lev Shcherba's interest in this topic was also mentioned by Vsevolodskii-Gerngross himself at the meeting in IZhS on 2 December 1918: "V. Vsevolodsky proposes to develop the topic "about the melody of speech". According to him, L. V. Shcherba pays much attention to this topic". (TsGALI. F.82. Op.1. D.22. P. 36.).
- 13 TsGALI. F. 82. Op.1. D. 22. P. 40ob.
- 14 The third ancient tragedy, Sophocles' *Antigone*, was staged by Ozarovskii not at the Alexandrinsky Theater, but at the New Theater in 1904 (Somina 2006, p. 455–56).
- 15 TsGALI. F. 82 Op. 3 D. 32. P. 124ob.
- 16 Musical notation was done by composer and musicologist Georgii Rimskii-Korsakov.
- 17 TsGALI. F. 82. Op.1. D. 22. P.40ob. In his "Work report for 1919" (from 1 December 1918 to 20 November 1919) Bernshtein wrote: "In addition to the described work on speech melody, in winter and spring [of 1919] I took part in the phonetic practice of Prof. L.V. Shcherba, devoted to the study of French phrasal intonation (gramophone records were used). At the same time, I did similar exercises myself on German material. As a member of the commission formed at the Institute of the Living Word to study the melody of speech, I took part in a public meeting of the Academic Council of the institute held on 28 February [1919] and disputed with V.N. Vsevolodskii-Gerngross, who presented his paper on the melody of Russian speech. On behalf of the same commission I undertook, together with B.M. Eikhenbaum, the compilation of a bibliography on this question" (OR

RGB (Manuscript Department of the Russian State Library). F. 948. Kar. 1. Ed. khr. 8. Bernshtein, Sergei. Otchety o nauchnykh zaniatiakh pri kafedre russkogo iazyka Peterburgskogo universiteta. 1916–1919. Pp. 28ob–29).

18 It was printed in: (Vsevolodskii-Gerngross 1922, pp. 107–10).

19 RGALI (the Russian State Archive of Literature and Arts). F. 941. Op. 4. Ed. khr. 2. Materialy Instituta zhivogo slova Narkomprosa RSFSR (plany, otchety o deiatel'nosti za 1918–1921 gg., svedeniia o nauchnoi rabote sotrudnikov instituta, protokoly zasedanii Pravleniia i perepiska i dr.). 23 ianv.–24 apr. 1922 g. P. 32ob.

20 "... Every poem has its typical ideal tonal form, which is, so to speak, born along with it. The tonal form contained within the poem; its graphic signs (letters and punctuation marks), metrical and rhythmic combinations, alliteration and rhyme, images, ideas, content (as a logical-emotional succession of images) determine the tonal form". (Vsevolodskii-Gerngross 1919, p. 1)

21 TsGALI. F. 82. Op.1. D. 22. P. 134.

22 For example, the outline of Robert Boehringer's article "Über Hersagen von Gedichten", first provided in a short form in "On the Reading of Verse", in 1922 would be presented as a paper at the IZhS (see OR RGB. F. 948. K. 2. Ed. khr. 3. Institut Zhivogo Slova. Komissiia po teorii deklamatsii. Povestki S. I. Bernshteinu o zasedaniakh Komissii po teorii deklamatsii. 1922–1923), and then its extended version would be a part of "On Chamber Declamation".

23 In *The Melodics of Russian Lyric Verse*, Eichenbaum briefly touches on the subject of the author's reading, mentioning characteristic monotony (Eikhenbaum 1969, pp. 341–42).

24 TsGALI. F. 82 Op. 3 D. 32. P. 125ob.

25 OR RGB. F. 948. K. 1. Ed. khr. 11. Zapiski o reforme Instituta Zhivogo Slova. [1919–1923]; OR RGB. F. 948. K. 1. Ed. khr. 18. Sluzhebnaia zapiska k B. M. Eikhenbaumu s vneseniem popravok k pervonachal'nomu tekstu o reformirovanii Instituta Zhivogo Slova. 1921 dek.2.

26 See the memoirs of former IZhS student Nina Galanina (RO IRLI (Manuscript Department of the Institute of Russian Literature (Pushkin House). F. 474. D. 659. Galanina Nina. A.F. Koni. Vospominaniia byvshei studentki Instituta Zhivogo slova. 1974) and the play "Higher School" by Rustem Valaev (pen name: Galiat), published soon after IZhS was closed (Galiat 1928; Gorიაeva 2011).

27 Ljubljana

28 OR RGB. F. 948. K. 2. Ed. khr. 1. Protokoly i stenogrammy zasedanii Komissii po teorii deklamatsii Instituta zhivogo slova. 1922. pp. 41–42ob.

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