

4. No Noise

It was in Kiev—where the audience, though critical of the film, was far less hostile than in Moscow—that Vertov offered his most detailed defense of *Enthusiasm*. He began by declaring what he regarded as the film’s “basic idea”:

The basic idea that appears in the film, the most important thing in the film, the thing that the film must convey—or what I, at least, attempted to convey—is those banners, that music in the mines. The music you hear in the mines, the music that mixes with the noise of machines, with the noise of unfurled banners, and the banners themselves—they are all one and the same thing, and it’s impossible to consider any of them apart from one another.¹

In this compact if cryptic statement, Vertov almost cinematically sets four motifs into play: “banners,” “music,” “mines,” and “noise.” If we take the first two terms and the last two as separate dyads, “banners and music” seem to signify something like “(aesthetic) celebration”; “mines and noise,” the very different notion of “(manual-industrial) labor.” The thrust of the opposition is quite obvious, and recalls the classical distinction between intellectual and manual labor; but then, what does his sudden gesture of conflation—“all one and the same thing”—actually mean? I would suggest that, despite Vertov’s insistence that labor and art/celebration *cannot* be “considered apart from one another,” his imaginative fusion of these terms suggests a strong anxiety about their actual separation within social life. The dichotomy is all too familiar to students of later Soviet (and non-Soviet!) culture: the working class goes on laboring and producing, while the hymning and “representation” of its efforts is carried out in a wholly other, “cultural” sphere, within a theatricalized and privileged sensorium that in fact excludes the noise of mines and machines—the realities of life and labor—almost entirely. In our own (justifiably) cynical day, we tend to identify the power of documentary in its potential for exposing and undoing the hegemonic machinery of celebration (whether in the service of the state or of corporate power), in its revelation of workers’ real lives as a way of destroying mythologies about those lives and about the social orders that condition them. Vertov, by contrast, desires at once the celebration *and* the reality, the music *and* the noise—but what is hardest to grasp, is that he wants these things to contaminate one another utterly.

The overcoming of these divisions for Vertov would clearly imply a conception of cinema precisely as an “agent of convergence”—not in the sense of “all-seeing eye,” but rather as a virtual space wherein the normal distinctions between art/work, music/non-music,

¹ RGALI f. 2091, op. 2, d. 417, l. 58ob.

and so on can be apprehended and (potentially) overcome. This “multi-spatial” conception of cinema emerges more strongly in an article on *Enthusiasm* that Vertov published three months later (February 1931), prior to the film’s public release on 1 April:

When, in *Enthusiasm*, the industrial sounds of the All-Union Stokehold arrive at the square, filling the streets with their machine music to accompany the gigantic festive parades;
when on the other hand, the sounds of military bands of parades, the challenge-banners, the red stars, the shouts of greeting, the battle slogans, the orators’ speeches, etc., fuse with the sounds of the machines, the sounds of competing factory shops; [...] we must view this not as a shortcoming, but as a *serious, long-range experiment*.²

The linkage of different spaces through montage is, of course, standard procedure (under the name of the “Kuleshov effect”) in Soviet cinema of the 1920s, and François Zourabichvili’s comments on false continuity remind us of just how much Vertov relies on and radicalizes this device. In *Enthusiasm*, of course, the “linkage” is sonic as well as visual; the categories of onscreen/offscreen space, usually applicable to image alone, suddenly take on relevance for the soundtrack as well, as we come to perceive sound not primarily as “diegetic/non-diegetic” but in terms of its allusions to sources and activities that may or may not be shown onscreen.³ A striking example of this effect can be found in the film’s fourth reel, in a sequence (here called Sequence B) involving an alternation between shots of workers digging and carting above ground against a background of sky and banner (Images 8 and 10), and shots of activities taking place in the depth of a stokehold (Image 9).⁴ These shots are linked by some stirring “non-diegetic” proletarian march music (seemingly recorded in *plein air*), until the point where a stokehold worker appears (Image 9) and the sounds of the ironworks take over. After seven more stokehold shots, the above-ground workers reappear in the same visual configuration—with a female worker now in the foreground (Image 10)—while the sounds of the factory continue to flow through the scene, without the slightest alteration in volume or timbre.

² From *Sovetskoe Iskusstvo* (27 February 1931); here, in the translation “Let’s Discuss Ukrainfilm’s First Sound Film” in *Kino-Eye*: 111-112.

³ On sonic “hors-champ” in *Enthusiasm*, see Jullier, “Travail de l’ouvrier”: 105; and the somewhat differently inflected comments of Fischer, “From Kino-Eye to Radio-Eye”: 33.

⁴ The shots I look at here, though enumerated “1, 2, 3” for purposes of analysis, are not actually contiguous—the crucial thing is the alternation between the two “series.”



Images 8, 9 and 10: from *Enthusiasm* (Sequence B [from reel 4], shot 1, 2, 3).

Far more than a “sound-overlap,” this device makes us sense the two spaces as somehow concretely interpenetrating one another: the *linkage* is achieved by exploiting sound’s relatively “de-localized” quality, while the impression of “*concreteness*” is effected by retaining sound’s “anecdotal” impact, its strong capacity to bear (spatial and concrete, yet non-local) associations.⁵ The overall effect is one of striking heterogeneity, allowing different juxtapositions of sound and image to be configured, perceived and observed.

At the same time, the *qualities* of the sounds in this sequence—marching tune and factory noise—remain entirely distinct; the divide between musical and non-musical sound is in no way compromised. Vertov, it might be charged, simply alternates here between an effective musical soundtrack and bare, meaningless registration of stokehold racket. That he effectively “links” different spaces through sound can be admitted without accepting his “disorganized noises” as either listen-able or genuinely evocative of workers, their sensibilities or their environment.

Vertov’s response to this problem—offered on the spot to the audience in Kiev—is so colorful and of such interest that it really must be quoted at length:

Now, concerning the noises themselves: I declare categorically that there’s not one noise in the film. This notion of “noise” is deployed simply in order to scare workers in sound film away from the sounds that exist in nature. These existent [...] sounds are called “noises” only

⁵ Because of previous parade/march sequences, the “marching music,” too, carries strong “off-screen” (and not simply “non-diegetic”) connotations; the presence of the banner, of course, creates another *onscreen* link to the idea of parade/celebration.

in order to distinguish them from so called music; that is, from those various “do, re, mi, fa”’s and the like, which we can handle very well and can distinguish wonderfully from one another—while at the same time [being] unable to distinguish one natural sound from another (for example the sound of a steam engine, the sound of a threshing-machine, a steamship piston, and so on) in all of its nuances. Yes, for a domestic lapdog, obviously, all sounds are the same—but we’re not domestic lapdogs, we’re not delicate, Western, flowery directors; we do not make, as Eisenstein does, gypsy romances;⁶ and for us, there are no noises. We must acknowledge that we began [in cinema] like literary people, that we’re not sufficiently literate in existing sounds and don’t distinguish among them. If [...] you go to the Donbass, then all you’ll hear [at first] is one uninterrupted roar and noise—that’s the first impression. But this wasn’t my first time in the Donbass;⁷ I studied these sounds and saw that, yes, we really are domestic, and for us these sounds are “noise”—but for the worker in the Donbass every sound has a specific meaning; for him there are no “noises.” And if it seems to you, comrades, who know all the scales perfectly, that I am at this moment emitting pure noise, then I can assure you that I am [producing] no noise whatsoever.⁸

While stressing his own familiarity with the sounds of the Donbass, Vertov is at pains to separate himself from the consciousness and the experiential frameworks of real Donbass workers. His own formation, he insists, is “literary”—that is, convention-bound and limited—but his experiences in the Donbass have enabled an expansion of *sympathy* in the literal sense (*sym-pathy*: with-feeling) that can, Vertov hopes, be replicated in the cinema for a mass audience. For us today, his aspirations for sound cinema echo loudly with Walter Benjamin’s account of the traditional function of *storytelling*—the social relaying of experience, thought of as rooted in the changing realities of everyday working bodies—a function that, according to Benjamin, is vanishing due to “the secular productive forces of history.”⁹ It seems that Vertov would have cinema, so often a purveyor of *information* rather than experience,¹⁰ not only convey the useful and communicable gist of workaday life, but

⁶ No doubt a reference to a very minor Eisenstein film (filmed in France, and probably mostly the work of Grigori Alexandrov) entitled *Romance sentimentale* (1930).

⁷ Vertov’s first Donbass film was *The Eleventh Year* (1928).

⁸ RGALI f. 2091, op. 2, d. 417, l. 59.

⁹ Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller” (1936) in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. and intro. Hannah Arendt (NY: Schocken Books, 1968): 89. Cf. pp. 91-92, 87: “The storytelling that thrives for a long time in the milieu of work—the rural, the maritime, and the urban—is itself an artisan form of communication, as it were. It does not aim to convey the pure essence of the thing, like information or a report. It sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him again. [...] The storyteller takes what he tells from experience—his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale.”

¹⁰ Again, in the Benjaminian sense: “Information [...] lays claim to prompt verifiability. The prime requirement is that it appear ‘understandable in itself’” (“The Storyteller”: 89).

make the full range of those “gists” universally available *within* the new horizon of “secular production.”

Thus Vertov adduces three quite distinct justifications for his belief that “noises” are indeed “meaningful” material. The first is simply his own testimony, his experience of personal “aural development” in the Donbass. The second is his conviction, based largely on observation and the testimony of others, that the sonic environment of the Donbass is fully “cognized” by workers, who have both an intellectual and a practical relationship to those sounds. For this reason, of course, the testimony of “locals” like Olotnin was of great importance for Vertov. Later on at the Moscow preview and responding to a long line of attackers (excepting only fellow documentarian Vladimir Erofeev, who defended the film as a “huge artistic work”),¹¹ Vertov in his brief statement made particular appeal to the understanding of workers:

The sounds in the film are not monotonous at all—they are unusual. The sounds of machines, the identification signals of radio-stations, the noises of electric power stations are endlessly various; but we are still not used to distinguishing among them. Industrial laborers read these sounds easily, like meaningful signs [*smyslovye znaki*]. A delegation of shock-workers from the Dneprstroi [industrial complex] saw the film, accepted it, were somehow taken with it and asked that an analogous work be constructed on the basis of their own Dneprstroi material.¹² [I] refer to a series of positive assessments given [my] film by workers’ audiences.¹³

The differences among specific sonic environments ensured an endless diversity of sounds; that these sounds had (local or class-based) human significance guaranteed (thought Vertov) that they could also enter into a much-expanded *general* human consciousness of the world. Indeed, it was the internationalism of the working class—considered as a pan-national *sensorium*—that offered the largest proof that humanity as a whole might gain full access to these sounds, and Vertov affirmed as much following the Kiev preview:

If we say that we must make films well suited to the working class—suited, in the present instance, to mine workers and metal workers in the Donbass *and the entire world*—then one can confidently say that all these industrial sounds will be comprehensible to all miners and metal workers of the USSR *and the entire world* [my emphasis].¹⁴

¹¹ RGALI f. 2091, op. 2, d. 417, l. 83.

¹² Dneprstroi, one of the largest Ukrainian industrial centers, is closer to Kharkov than to Kiev; it is possible that the delegation Vertov refers to saw the film at the Kharkov preview (2 January 1931).

¹³ RGALI f. 2091, op. 2, d. 417, l. 84.

¹⁴ RGALI f. 2091, op. 2., d. 417, l. 59ob.

The introduction of sound, and particularly of the sounds of national languages, would result in a drastic “re-nationalization” of cinema—or so it was feared in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Here Vertov posits an entirely novel antidote to this problem, one grounded in a conception of workers as comprising a worldwide social-perceptual community. Workers—conceived of as a global mass, a global majority—also turn out to be the class of the most advanced sensibility, the class whose grasp of sound has advanced beyond music. Among other things, this extraordinary proposal reveals the extent to which Vertov’s conception of sound is grounded in one of the deepest aspirations of left political art: a vision of culture wherein the most popular art and the most “progressive” art, far from occupying antipodes of “low” and “high,” are in fact *the same thing*.

For as it turns out, the third prong of Vertov’s defense is nothing less than the existence, as such, of music—indeed, we will see how Vertov’s aesthetic in *Enthusiasm* extends at once his investigations into living sound during the period of the (still poorly understood) “sound-laboratory” in 1916, and his interest in and knowledge of music going all the way back to his early training in the Belostok Conservatory. Like “noise,” music is sound that lacks linguistic meaningfulness; yet music quite clearly has its own highly developed logic, its own deeply and widely understood principles and forms, its own powerful modes of emotional and intellectual appeal. What, then, is to prevent other non-significant sounds—*all* other sounds!—from entering into the charmed circle of conceptuality and (in a changed sense) art? The obverse relation also obtains, and finds a special realization, as we have seen, in *Enthusiasm*’s opening reel (in Sequence A): there, music-making is shown, if only briefly, as a kind of labor, as emerging out of “intervals of production” rather than from some timeless and transcendent “aesthetic” sphere. Thus, if *Enthusiasm* in some sense “aestheticizes” industrial noise, it also (to use Michael Denning’s term) “labors” art. Yet surely this “understanding” of noise cannot occur immediately, through merely exposing the ear to it; how can an audience that has no actual lived connection to “noise” come to understand it, practically? As we will see, Vertov’s solution centrally involves not only cinema as a sensory field of “convergence,” but the use of musical form as a kind of ladder to an understanding of noise, erected by moving music and noise closer to one another. Music is useable in this way because, as Vertov asserts several times, it is universally understood, though understood in a manner different from (linguistic) information.

Before examining how he does this, we should add the qualification that Vertov does have a conception of “real” noise, essentially a matter of technical imperfections that prevent the minimally-mediated registration and reproduction of heard environments: “distortion

caused by speakers, distortion due to excessive volume, distortion for some other reason.”

This is important to avoid, says Vertov, because it is vital that the sounds remain both distinct and freighted with the history of their production:

[T]here needs to be [...] less distortion, in order that each sound comes through as a document [*dokumental'no*], so that every worker can tell which machine produces which noise.¹⁵

Taken together, these apparently unremarkable (even naïve) requirements necessitate another, more important proviso. For Vertov, there can be no full-scale musicalizing of “existent sound,” as advocated by European avant-garde predecessors like Luigi Russolo in *The Art of Noises*.¹⁶ Vertov begins by insisting at once on the potential comprehensibility of all sound (on the analogy with music) *and* on sound’s rootedness in a surrounding active context. For the latter reason, “existent sound” is incommensurable with conventional musical instrumentation, which represents but a hitherto privileged “elite” fraction of the sound-world:

[Sounds not inadvertently distorted technically] are not “noises,” but simply the incredibly large diversity of sounds that fill up the whole existing world; the absolutely unbelievable quantity of sounds still not studied, still not researched, and temporarily replaced for a time—the time during which human beings have existed—by the study of a few musical instruments that occupy but one one-hundred-millionth part of all the sounds that are. For this reason, any translation [of existing sounds] onto those instruments is impossible.¹⁷

Vertov requires not that existing sounds be musicalized—or aestheticized—but rather that they be “understood” on their own (unknown, but knowable) terms. To render those sounds as music would prematurely obstruct that new opening, enabled by technological and political revolution, onto a vast and hitherto repressed sonic history. Much as Vertov’s “narratives” are often best read in terms of *longues durées* of history—the human struggle with Necessity (or Destruction, or Irrationality), in comparison to which specific or local antagonisms are purely contingent—so, too, Vertov considers cinematic sound in relation to

¹⁵ RGALI f. 2091, op. 2., d. 417, l. 59ob.

¹⁶ Russolo, pioneer of noise music and inventor of the legendary *intonarumori*, argued it was “necessary that these noise timbres become abstract material for works of art to be formed from them. As it comes to us from life, in fact, noise immediately reminds us of life itself, making us think of the things that produce the noises that we are hearing. This reminder of life has the character of an impressionistic and fragmentary episode of life itself. And as I conceive it, *The Art of Noises* would certainly not limit itself to an impressionistic and fragmentary reproduction of the noises of life. Thus, the ear must hear these noises mastered, servile, completely controlled, conquered and constrained to become elements of art” (Luigi Russolo, *The Art of Noises*, trans. and intro. Barclay Brown [NY: Pendragon Press, 1986]: 86).

¹⁷ Spoken by Vertov at the Kiev preview: RGALI f. 2091, op. 2, d. 417, l. 59.

the evolution of the senses as such. Though now, of course, this is an evolution that can be shaped, that has become part of a truly *human* history.¹⁸

Considered individually, the devices Vertov uses to “con-verge” music and noise seem rather modest in relation to this grand vision; as a whole, however, they accumulate in *Enthusiasm* into something that allows us to perceive its outline. It is clear, for example, that the effort to approximate music/noise helped to shape the score co-written by Timofeev and Vertov in December 1929. Sometimes this approximation involves the simple inclusion of “mechanical sound” into the score (*à la* Antheil’s “Ballet mécanique” [1924] or Mosolov’s “Iron Foundry” [1928]), as in the lead-up to the score’s “K” section when the ticking sound of a clock, a major motif throughout the piece, is suddenly joined by a motor (Image 11).

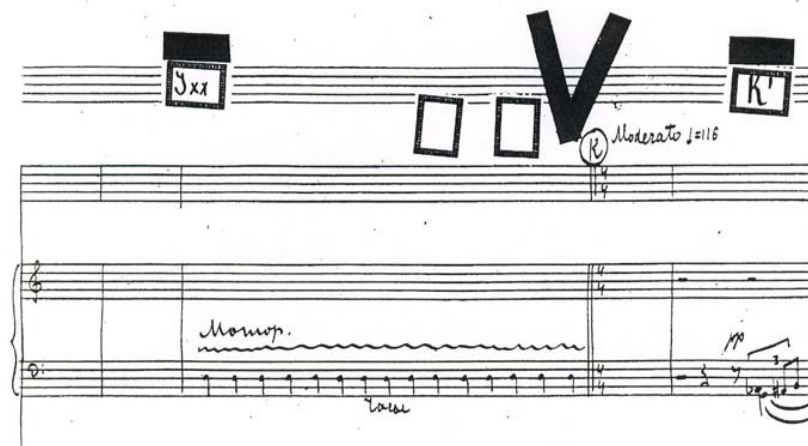


Image 11: End of the “J” section of the Timofeev/Vertov score for *Enthusiasm*, with the ticking of a clock in an indeterminate meter joined with the sound of a motor (the latter indicated by a wavy line). Source: RGALI f. 2091, op. 1, d. 37, l. 22.

Earlier on, the clock’s steady pulse in the “D” section is succeeded in “E” by the tattoo of a “Pioneer drum” in an accelerated pattern that extends and intensifies, as it were, the pace set by the clock (Image 12).

¹⁸ In this, Vertov can be usefully contrasted with his Italian Futurist predecessor Russolo, who had somewhat crudely argued that machine-based modern life induced an evolution of the ear, in turn leading (mechanically) to the obsolescence of traditional music. He wrote that “[the] evolution of music [toward greater dissonance] is comparable to the multiplication of machines, which everywhere collaborate with man. [...] Today, the machine has created such a variety and contention of noises that pure sound in its lightness and monotony no longer provokes emotion,” adding that our ear takes pleasure in modern music “since it is already educated to modern life” (*The Art of Noises*: 24). Vertov by contrast never argues for music’s “obsolescence,” and regards the expansion of the social “sound-field” as a project, not as a deterministic necessity.

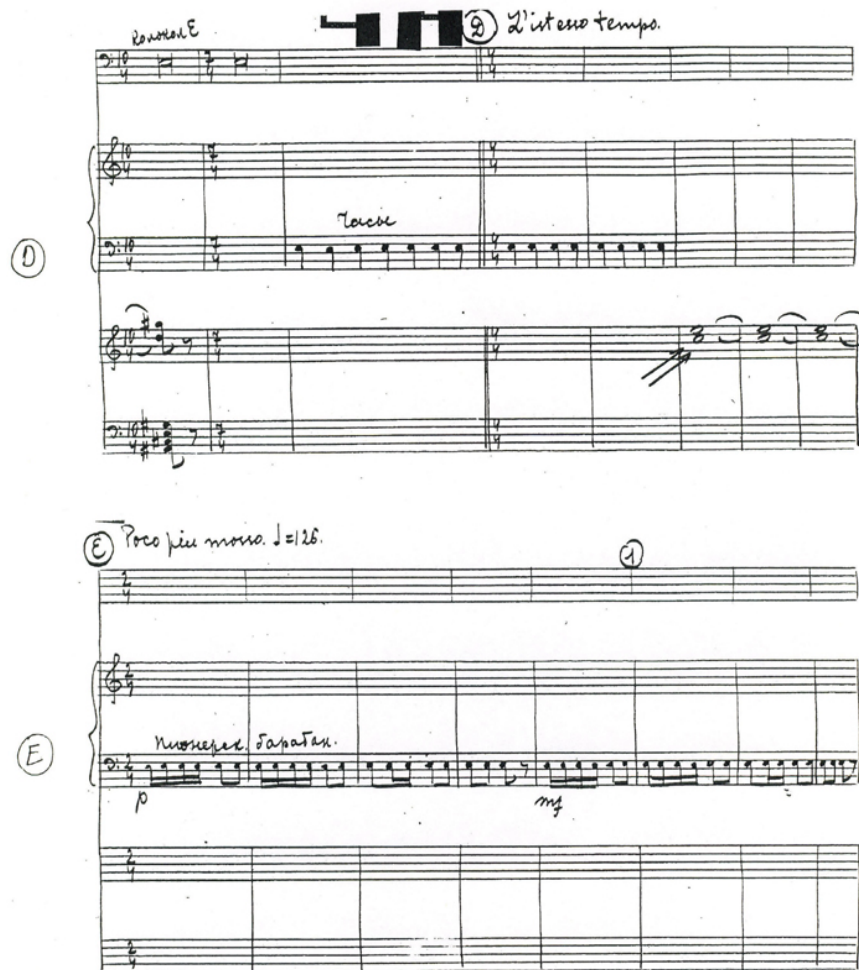


Image 12: The beginnings of the brief “D” and “E” sections of the *Enthusiasm* score, with a ticking clock in “D” (top section), “Pioneer drum” in “E” (bottom section, in 2/4). Source: RGALI f. 2091, op. 1, d. 37, ll. 10-11.

In the film itself, Vertov finds considerably more sophisticated and uncanny ways of blurring musical and non-musical sonic material, as in the extraordinary third reel when the sound of what seems to be a machine, but sounds *almost* like a drum-like instrument of some kind, accompanies the alternation between images of miners in training and miners in action (here Sequence C [Images 13 through 15]). Here the celebratory rat-tat-tat of parades and the noise of the factory indeed contaminate one another, just as (on the image track) the physical and mental preparation for labor is presented as both a distinct form of labor itself and of a piece with “real” production. At the same time, the rational deliberateness and neat, standardized garb of the practicing miners (Images 13 and 15) lend to the shots of “actual” mining (Image 14) a whole layer of intellectuality that would otherwise be absent from our perception of this merely “physical” labor. The (social) categories that articulate perception—of artistic vs. non-artistic sound, of intellectual vs. manual labor—are held in a kind of suspension by these blurrings and juxtapositions.



Image 13 -15: from *Enthusiasm* (Sequence C [from reel 3], shots 1, 2 and 3).

More startling examples of such deliberate slippages occur earlier in the same reel when, commencing in conjunction with a high-angle shot of an audience in a movie theater, we hear patterns etched out by the sound of a factory whistle. Thematically, this opening section of the reel is devoted to the idea of “coal shortage” and its overcoming; thus, the sound has the quality and function of a reveille, although part of what we are “woken” to is most certainly the properties of the sound itself: strident, breathy, saturated with overtone. The patterns with their bold appellations actually reflect the culminating section of the *Enthusiasm* score, a section that never made it into the film as part of the instrumental soundtrack. There, the music was to take up “the rhythm of a radio-telegraph,” growing in volume from a single pianissimo E-flat across several minutes of jagged “telegraph” rhythm (Image 16).

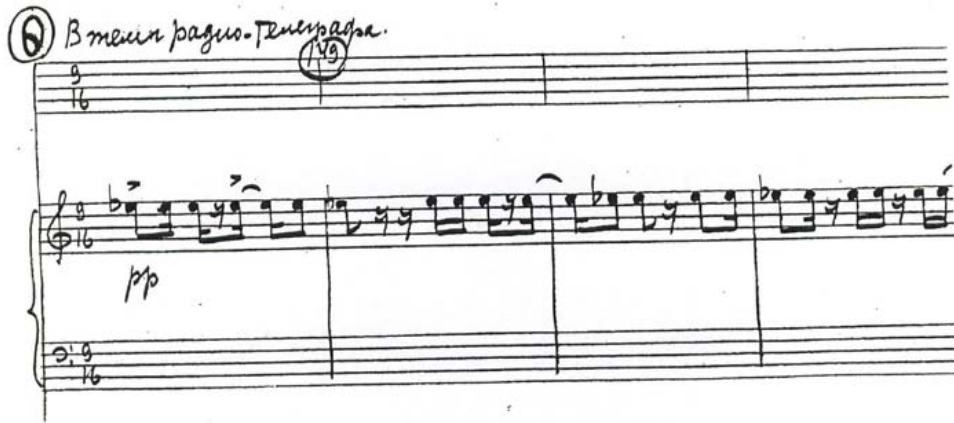


Image 16: From the final section of the *Enthusiasm* score: “in the rhythm of a radio-telegraph.”
Source: RGALI f. 2091, op. 1, d. 37, l. 73.

Audibly enough, this pattern provides the conceit for the bold whistling on the soundtrack, which passes through at least one very clear “transposition” that emphasizes the intervallic properties of the noise. In fact, the factory noises are used to construct an entire dramatic overture to the reel: beginning with a low, loud hum (and accompanying silhouette shots of laborers at dawn, or perhaps at sunset), the noise gradually undulates into distinct and ordered rhythms, cutting across shots of machinery, workers, and the crowd in the movie theater. The first phase of the pattern culminates with a shot of a worker—it is the sixth time he appears within the sequence—who seems to “speak” with radio-telegraphic noise, though pitched higher and more nasal in sonority (Image 17). This speaker is detached from his “voice” in the next shot, when the telegraph pattern (now layered with other industrial sound) persists unchanged within the space of the movie theater, as though the worker along with the entire productive apparatus of the Donbass were addressing the audience from afar. At last the noise ceases (temporarily) as the audience rises and sings (in sync sound, apparently) the “International.”



Image 17: from *Enthusiasm*
(Sequence D [from reel 3], shot 1):
“telegraph-voice.”

What is key in this sequence—one whose richness could be indicated only through a very lengthy analysis—is the extraordinary extent to which Vertov fashions perceptual convergences (though not full *fusions*) on both the sound and image tracks. Communications instrument (telegraph), machine noise (factory whistle), music (the score), and ultimately even visually suggested human voice rhyme and slip across one another in a kind of *virtual* space of comparison and contrast, wherein the preceptor is offered different ways to conceptualize unfamiliar material (industrial noise) in terms of the familiar; though basically industrial, the sound is *shaped* so as to provide a relay point into already existing sonic memories. All the while, the images, suspended in this solution of virtual sound, hover between factory and theater, above and below ground, human and machine, labor and celebration, watching and producing, and ultimately (in the reflective space of the onscreen movie theater) between ourselves and everything that we as audience are seeing and hearing. The noise of industry makes its way into the cultural sphere—the space of the depicted movie theater and the space of *Enthusiasm*'s audience—without ever becoming detached from its conditions of production; the workers whom we see walking in the morning (or evening) can be regarded (by dint of false continuity) as heading *either* to the theater *or* to the factory. The space of work and the space within which work is scrutinized and understood are “converged” in a Möbius-strip-like social-perceptual configuration—a sensory *agora*—in which neither space is given priority.

What happens, however, when the audience rises for the “International”? On the one hand, it might be argued that the stunning “flows” of perceptual material are suddenly stopped up at this point, as the authoritative “sound” of the hymn—whose authority is also underscored by its rendering in *sync* sound, whereby voice and body indeed become “one”—concentrates the surge of stimuli around an ideological vantage point. However, it seems to me that a more important feature of the shot—its obviously mechanically *registered* quality—compromises whatever special “authority” it might purport to bear. The rapid cuts between disparate kinds of seen/heard materials in *Enthusiasm*, their “non-studio” roughness, and their constant supplanting of one another in what François Champarnaud calls a “true battle of sounds,” has the effect of neutralizing—through *mediatization*—the precedence of any one “sample” over any other.¹⁹ This idea helps get to the essence of why *Enthusiasm*, with its “disorganized sounds,” was so intolerable to the emerging cultural hegemony: within the film's field of convergences and divergences, even the most overtly propagandistic

¹⁹ On Vertov's quest for a “neutral” mode of representing the world, see Jullier, “Travail de l'ouvrier”:110.

content (“Hurrah for the Communist Party!”) is perceived less as “ideological reference” than as “sonic material.”²⁰ The use of this documentary “material” as (apparently mindless) *material* precludes the emergence of a central historical protagonist—surely one of the dangers of the Lukácsian anti-documentary imperative to *synthesize*—while the “material” at the same time possesses its own conceptuality and generates new sorts of understanding through visual/aural interactions.

That this “material” has the power, with the help of cinematic and musical mediations, to impart a real understanding of the environments and lives of industrial workers, is surely not a self-evident truth, though Vertov seemed to believe it, as we have seen. We cannot doubt, however, that the later history of sound/image media has indeed brought vast new swathes of the “sound-world” into cultural consciousness and even legitimacy—which is not to say that the subversive force of the *Enthusiasm* soundtrack has been neutered entirely. More importantly, it is clear that Vertov’s program in *Enthusiasm*, naïve though it may seem, represents an attempt to avoid the usurpation of the working class by a spectacular image of the working class, precisely at such a moment when such an image “arose in radical opposition to the working class itself.”²¹ The great irony of *Enthusiasm*, of course, is that the very Plan it promotes would lead to bureaucratic control over the “infinitely diverse” social-perceptual world that the film aspires radically to access. As we know, this new form of domination would impose itself with particular violence upon the peasantry, of whose authentic song traditions *Enthusiasm*’s sixth and final reel offers one of the only extant documents from the period. The living culture that *produced* those sounds, however, did not persist.

²⁰ Champarnaud, *Revolution et contre-revolution culturelles*: 252.

²¹ Guy Debord, in *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (NY: Zone Books, 1995): 69.