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The role of classical music as an instrument of national identity actualization in the Russian Federation; the case of concert programming in the Saint Petersburg State Philharmonic

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The article focuses on discovering how the state-supported classical music organization, Saint Petersburg State Philharmonics, season programming is used as an instrument of national identity actualization in Russia. The research is a qualitative, single case study, based on social constructivist approach. It comprises documented data, including Russian cultural policy reports (2014–2023) and Saint Petersburg State Philharmonics season programs (2013–2023). The collected data is subjected to thematic analysis, through which themes, in connection to national identity formation are generated. The findings of the analysis on the cultural policy reports present five themes; Proud History and Patriotism, Russian Language and Literature, Upbringing, Enlightenment, and Religion and Spirituality. These themes are actualized in the Philharmonic's season programming, thus functioning as evidence of the state's expanding control over the organization. The findings indicate that national identity agenda and classical music's role in it is strong. Consequently, the article proves that classical music is a functioning tool of national identity actualization in Russia.

KEYWORDS

cultural policy, SPb philharmonic, season programming, national identity, Russia

Introduction

When Russian president Vladimir Putin held his speech at Valdai Club in 2013, with the strong rhetoric about the nations being “who are we?,” It started a fundamental, conservative shift in the country’s cultural policy-making (Jonson, 2019). Throughout Putin’s third presidential term (2012–2024) the concept of national identity went through rearrangements as the Kremlin institutionalized its discourse into the government’s use. These changes extend to the cultural field, where the cultural policy system is reformed rapidly with new ideology compliant reports (2014–). Their core idea is of a single national

identity (Romashko, 2019; Jonson, 2019), and cultural procedures for building true and compliant Russian citizens.

The formation of a unifying national identity has been studied by many researchers (Markova, 2020; Miller, 2016; Linan, 2010; Guibernau, 2004; Smith, 2002; Smith, 1991) and is considered to be a complex entity. Markova (2020) underlines Russian regime's power in shaping national identity to reflect their political needs. This agenda is accentuated in cultural policy reports and its cultural actualization is fascinating. In my opinion, the role of music in this process should be studied. The past studies (i.e., Thomas, 2021; Hillen, 2020; Zabalueva, 2017) have focused on the connection of national identity formation with other cultural fields, i.e., theater, pop rock music and museums. These studies have provided insights into the realities in those fields, and how they can be instrumentalized to spread state-led national identity agenda. However research connecting national identity building and governmental classical music organization's programming has been overlooked. Nevertheless, a few researchers (Dvuzhilnaya, 2022; Ader and Belousov, 2021; Viljanen, 2016; Barabanov 2014) have illuminated the situation of Russian classical music festivals, and Viljanen (2020); Viljanen (2021) about the relationship between Soviet era cultural policy and classical music.

I argue that the theme is worth studying as Kremlin equips cultural field through cultural policy to mirror their national identity ideology to the citizens. Since there's limited research on the relationship between national identity formation and state-funded classical music institutions, it serves as motivation for writing this article.

Aim of study

The article aims to discover how governmental classical music organization Saint Petersburg State Philharmonic's season programming is used as an instrument of national identity actualization in Russia. Given the current socio-political climate, I argue that understanding the factors, shaping ordinary citizens' perceptions of themselves and their nation is essential to comprehending the events occurring within Russia. This article is significant domestically and internationally, since it offers a fresh perspective on the topic of instrumentalization of classical music organizations.

In the article, I answer the following questions;

- I. What are the main themes connected to formation of national identity in the Cultural policy reports during 2013–2023?
- II. How are these found themes actualized in Saint Petersburg State Philharmonic season programming?
- III. Does Saint Petersburg State Philharmonic, truly function as a tool of national identity actualization in the Russian Federation? (Koskinen, 2024, p. 6).

Structure of article

The article consists of four parts. The first part comprises the thematic framework of the article, where I define the concepts of cultural policy and national identity, and position the latter in Russian context. The second part presents the research methodology. The third part contains the empirical findings on Russian cultural policy reports and SPBP season programs, as well as the discussion of these findings in connection to the research questions. The fourth part presents the conclusions, answers to the research questions and gives recommendations for future research.

Thematic framework

Cultural policy

One of the earliest formal definitions of cultural policy was given during the 1967 UNESCO round table (Vostryakov and Turgayev, 2018; Vostryakov, 2011). The definition of the term in the paper "Cultural Policy-a Preliminary Study" was "*a body of operational principles, administrative and budgetary practices and procedures which provide a basis for cultural action by the State*" (UNESCO, 1967, p. 7). This description of a little-discussed subject served as the foundation for cultural policy studies, which are still thriving today and drawing interest from scholars worldwide. According to Dragicevic-Sesic and Stojkovic (2000) politics is an intentional, conscious human endeavor. Consequently, she defines cultural policy as a collection of suitable policies, procedures, and activities that society uses to try to attain a particular cultural development path (Dragicevic-Sesic and Stojkovic, 2000, p. 26).

While Dragicevic-Sesic emphasizes the Western ideals of cultural policy, with society and its inhabitants as main forces of its actualization and development, the Eastern ideals highlight the role of the state. Adams and Goldbard (1995), Adams and Goldbard (1986) have produced state-driven forms of actions for conscious cultural policy. The three types of actions are:

I) Determination of cultural values, goals and priorities; II) programs of initiatives and expenditures, i.e., cultural policy, consistent with these goals; III) policy monitoring as a process that allows assessing the cultural impact of each social action in the light of established standards in cultural policy (ibid).

These procedures align with the current Russian model of cultural policy making. As continuation, they list six key areas that should be the focus of cultural policy. They are education, preservation of heritage, distribution of cultural products, creativity, research and personnel training (ibid).

"Governmentality," which represents the idea of the state regulating its people (Foucault 1991, p. 87–90) is directly linked to the realization of Adams and Goldbard (1995), Adams and Goldbard (1986) model of cultural policy production. In the context of Russian cultural policy, governmentality and

“hegemony” are equivalent, where dominant culture harnesses education, religion and art to normalize its position to all groups inside a society (Miller and Yudice, 2002, p. 9).

Accordingly, Russian cultural policy is described in *Basics of the State cultural Policy* (2014) as Russian governments and public institution’s actions to support, preserve and develop culture, as well as the formation of personality, which honors Russian society’s value systems. The theoretical and practical aspects of implementing cultural policy in Russia, along with problems of developing and improving its national model are presented in numerous works by domestic researchers. Astafiyeva, 2008; Astafiyeva, 2010; Astafiyeva, 2014; Astafiyeva, 2021, Vostryakov (2018), Vostryakov (2011) and Flier (2018), Flier (2000) are in the forefront of the group, with their state-approved interpretations of the phenomena.

It appears that the definition and interpretation of cultural policy are ambiguous and influenced by the cultural background of the researcher. This concept is expanded by Simjanovska (2011), p. 4, who states that cultural policy is ever-evolving. The parameters are never fixed, which suggests that it is currently and will continue to reproduce the problem on its own terms.

National identity

To accurately understand national identity, the term “ethnies” needs to be defined since it forms the common basis of all nation-related study. Pioneer in nationalism studies, Smith (1986), p. 32 has defined it as a ‘*named human populations with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory, and a sense of solidarity*’. His notion on “ethnies” is fundamental to his ethnosymbolist theory, which explores the cultural features of nations and nationalism (Guibernau, 2004, p. 126). Smith characterized nation as “*a named community possessing an historic territory, shared myths and memories, a common public culture and common laws and customs*” (Smith, 2002, p. 15). The flexible idea of national identity shares many characteristics with the definition of nation. Smith emphasizes that national identity “*involves some sense of political community, history, territory, patria, citizenship, common values and traditions*” (Smith, 1991, p.9). Keillor et al. (1999) add that each culture is unique with a set of meanings owned by it. Smith further underlines the multi-dimensional nature of national identity by naming its five fundamental attributes of historic territory; common myths and historical memories; common, mass public culture; common legal rights and duties for all members, and common economy with territorial mobility for members (Smith, 1991, p. 14).

Today, there are two types of national identities; civic-and ethnic national identity (ibid.). The Western perspective is presented by civic national identity, which emphasizes territory and a sense of political community that people connect with and feel a part of (Markova, 2020, p.1). The

ethnic national identity underlines a non-Western perception and shared roots of its citizens (Smith, 1991, p. 9-10). Therefore, the primary distinction between the two identities is that citizenship is either actively acquired (civic) or inherited from birth (ethnic) (Greenfeld, 1992, p.11). National authorities have influence on how national identity formed, for instance, by utilizing or perhaps modifying common history narratives (Miller, 2016, p. 448; Linan, 2010, p. 167). This leads us back to the study of ethnosymbolism, which focuses on myths, symbols, traditions, heroes, and sacred sites. According to Guibernau (2004), p. 127, nationalists can use these elements to support their political legitimacy in their nation. In contemporary Russia, where national authorities play a major role in forming the Russian national identity, this logic is evident (Markova, 2020, p. 2).

The concept of national identity in today’s Russia

The formulation of an ends-meeting nationalist narrative for Russian national identity has, according to Girvin (2022), p. 40 taken Putin nearly two decades. These results were presented in a programmatic article (2012), which visions Russia as a single multi-ethnic nation and the country as a national state (Blackburn, 2020, p. 4; Yakhshyan, 2020, p. 2). Putin claims that the “dominant culture,” comprising Russian language, high culture, historical memory, and statehood, is the foundation of the modern state (ibid). By erasing the distinction between the civic and ethnic Russian identities, the Kremlin began implementing his goal of a unitarian national identity once he was re-elected in 2012 (Blakkisrud, 2016, p. 267). Putin’s commitment to national assimilation is based on his reasoning about the Czarist empire and how its people were assimilated into the dominant Russian culture (Girvin, 2022, p. 40). A civic definition of national identity, founded on shared values, patriotism, unity, and religion, was part of his 2013 Valdai Club speech. This idea suggests that there isn’t space for diverging ideologies. According to Romashko (2018), p. 3-4, official documents (2013-) create “legitimation of sociocultural marginalization and censorship,” only recognizing Russian cultural values, which disregards non-Russian cultural practices. The state-civilization identity, thus aims to unify the peoples of Eurasia under Russian statehood, which is based on the preservation of the Russian cultural dominant, and conservative discourses on values, patriotism and Orthodox morality (Yakhshyan, 2020 p. 2, 4; Romashko, 2019, p. 12).

Methods

The research is a qualitative, single case study, based on social constructivist approach. The data is based on Russian cultural

policy reports (2014–2023) and target organization Saint Petersburg State Philharmonics season programs (2013–2023). According to [Leavy \(2014\)](#) qualitative research is ideal for textual material, and for finding linkages between two entities, as combining ideologies of the governmental reports and the Philharmonics programming. Additionally, the decision to concentrate on non-numerical data—which, according to [Denzin and Lincoln \(2005\)](#), cannot be quantified—and determine their underlying meanings provides justification for the qualitative approach.

The social constructivist approach ([Berger and Luckmann, 1966](#)) underlines that the understanding and knowledge of citizens, in this case Russians, are based on their social surroundings. In Putin's Russia (2012-) these surroundings are continually modified by him, through cultural imaginaries, which are actualized by cultural policy. Here one of the core ideas is the "social creation of identity" ([Leavy, 2014](#), p. 85). According to [Hopf \(1998\)](#) the national identity formation is connected to the citizens' identities, surroundings and their definitions of local happenings. This, together with the past and present counter-position with the West, as well as constant changes in Russia, form the basis for a modern national identity ([Hopf, 2010](#)). Acknowledging social constructivism as a crucial paradigm in uncovering the features of identity formation gives validity to the article's reasoning and the choice of analysis method.

[Braun and Clarke \(2014\)](#) state that thematic analysis is compatible with the social constructivist approach. Through thematic analysis, primary themes in connection to national identity formation are discovered from the Russian cultural policy documents (2013–2023). The identification of the themes is conducted inductively, rather than basing on the researchers prior knowledge, thus making the analysis data-driven ([Hsieh and Shannon, 2005](#)). The process also follows [Braun and Clarke's \(2006\)](#) six analysis phases, where themes contributing to answering the research questions are selected as main themes. Succeeding the identification of the main themes in connection to national identity, deductive thematic analysis is conducted on Saint Petersburg State Philharmonic's season programming, based on previously identified themes ([Braun and Clarke, 2014](#)). Here the identification of the concert themes is done in two ways. Firstly concerts, belonging to a subscription cycle or otherwise possessing a title, are put under a specific theme (thematized concert), if they fit the thematic division of the thematic analysis. For example, Subscription cycle no. 8 "Dialogues about Russian Art" (2022-23) belongs to theme "Enlightenment" and in its 5th concert Dmitri Shostakovich "Leningrad" Symphony was performed by the Academic Symphony Orchestra, as well as "Unknown Friend" spectacle by Ivan Bunin (2016-17 to 2021-22) and narrated by Kseniya Rappoport is connected to theme "Russian Language and Literature."

Secondly, individual concerts without titles, but containing a majority of Russian works, are put under a specific theme. For

example, the Andreyev State Russian Orchestra's concert on 3rd of October 2013, when the ensemble performed works by Andreyev, Gurilyov, Glinka, Rimski-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky, Rahmaninov, Abaza, Fomin, Baines and Joyce, belongs to theme "Proud History and Patriotism."

Both the inductive and deductive analysis phases intend to address the three research questions and determine whether the Philharmonic is being used as a means for the actualization of national identity.

Results

Connection of russian cultural policy with the charter of saint petersburg state philharmonic

The key areas of the organization's activities and societal responsibilities are defined in the [Saint Petersburg State Philharmonic \(2026\)](#). According to the first article ([Charter of the Federal State Cultural Institution, 2011](#), p. 2) the Philharmonic is a non-profit organization that engages in professional musical activities. The organization is subject to the Constitution of Russian Federation, federal laws, and the Charter. The 15th Article describes the Philharmonic's state-related tasks. The first section emphasizes that the organization executes the state task designated in the Charter and created and authorized by the Cultural Ministry (*ibid*). Therefore, the Philharmonic's activities are determined by the state-affiliated Cultural Ministry. The next part concerns finances. Financial support is allocated in subsidies by the Cultural Ministry for implementing the state task (*ibid*). Consequently, it honors the current laws and Cultural Ministry's cultural policy directions. The third part alludes to the Philharmonic's "compulsory social insurance," which states that performance activities are governed by the state and ought to reflect the state assignment (*ibid*). Article 15s final part highlights the state's authority and the importance of the state task, which the Philharmonic has no right to refuse.

The third and most crucial section of the Charter deals with the Philharmonic's obligations and rights. Article 26 a) states that the Philharmonic has a right to decide independently which artistic and creative choices they'll pursue with their activities, repertoire, performances, and the release of promotional materials within the parameters set by Russian Federation law ([Charter of the Federal State Cultural Institution, 2011](#)). This article is oxymoronic; it begins liberally, offering "free will" in artistic decisions, but later invalidates it and shows how prevalent the current legislation is. Article 26 k) relates to the Cultural Ministry's supervision power in the creation of branches, establish representative offices, and deciding on their dissolution and reorganization. Additionally, the Ministry has the ultimate control over who may utilize the Philharmonic's real

estate, which filters visiting performers who want to perform there (Article 26 f)). Finally the fourth section, the Management of the Philharmonic activities, details the responsibilities of the artistic director. According to Article 29, the Cultural Ministry decides on the appointment and demotion of the artistic director, who oversees the overall administration of the Philharmonic's activities. Article 31 clarifies that while the artistic director has unity of command, he is also personally accountable for performing his duties. This article explains the Cultural Ministry's unrestricted authority in organizational affairs. Consequently, the artistic director, if they have a positive relationship with the regime, has autocratic power in their role. In Termirkanov's case, the beneficial relations resulted in access to monetary benefits and lengthy reign until his death.

The [Saint Petersburg State Philharmonic \(2026\)](#) seems outdated, with only one revision (2023) following the release of the new cultural policy documents. Examining the contents and the authors' conclusions will clarify this. Since the Cultural Ministry and those close to the regime already had authority over cultural activities, the Charter's selected provisions didn't need to be revised to reflect the new cultural policy's dominant directions. The singular amended factor, thus, was the division artistic director's role into director and chief conductor. Nevertheless, it remains at the time being unclear how the passing of the former artistic director and the division of decision power to two people, will affect the Philharmonic's future.

Themes of national identity in the Russian cultural policy reports and Saint Petersburg State Philharmonic's season programs (during seasons 2013–2014 to 2022–2023)

In this section, I introduce the findings of the analysis processes. The following themes were discovered during thematic analysis: Proud History and Patriotism, Russian Language and Literature, Upbringing, Enlightenment, and Religion and Spirituality. These themes are presented, according to the findings from the State cultural policy reports and the Philharmonics season programs.

Theme I) proud history and patriotism

To create a unified national identity, the Russian government employed state cultural policy to guarantee "priority cultural development." According to "[Basics of the State cultural Policy \(2014\)](#)" Russian historical path serves as the cornerstone for building national identity and the basis for national mentality and values of the society. The multinational Russian people are believed to be united by a common "historical consciousness." According to the Basics, culture instills a sense of patriotism among Russians, which, via its subliminal impact, ensures civil

unity and regime compliance in the nation. However, in the document, a possible threat is mentioned that cultural policy is ready to battle. This is the "*deformation of historical memory*" (ibid, p. 2), which refers to criticism towards the Great Patriotic War (WWII) and its premises, and other important historical periods, crucial to the common unifying story of Russians. The Kremlin fears individualism, which could cause opposition to the regime. Hence, the report underlines culture's preservation power, which includes "*historical and cultural heritage...transmission from generation to generation of values and norms, traditions...traditional for the Russian civilization*," and personality formation, honoring the Russian values (ibid, p. 4, 7). Consequently, historical awareness and patriotism form the core of State-led national identity imaginary, spread and implemented through culture.

[Strategy of the State cultural Policy \(2016\)](#) implements the goals and objectives of [Basics of the State cultural Policy \(2014\)](#). It presents state and federal target programs in culture, which aim to strengthen "*the unity of the Russian nation*" and develop "*patriotic education of youth*" ([Strategy of the State cultural Policy, 2016](#), p. 4–5). Here domestic classical music has a special standing, as it is considered "*the national glory and pride of the Russian Federation*" (ibid, p. 5). This has historical overtones, as the state funds concert programs (i.e., works by Shostakovich), connected to historical events. By highlighting the risks of Russian history falsification, as questioning the outcomes of World War II, the strategy aligns with the Basics (ibid, p. 10). This can be fought, according to the Strategy (p. 9), by using culture as a soft power. The State controls cultural life to preserve the "*harmoniously developed personality*," historical and cultural heritage-, the state-instrumented vision of Russian history, and to ensure domestic unity. This is accomplished through memorial and anniversary concerts, celebrating notable Russian cultural figures (ibid, p. 29). Patriotism, in turn, is harnessed by military and patriotic education, increasing prestige to service in domestic Armed Forces, as well as perpetuating memory for casualties of the Great Patriotic War (ibid, p. 31–32). This includes popularizing domestic military history through culture (ibid, p. 32), i.e., Victory Day concerts.

[Ministry of Culture in the Russian Federation \(2023\)](#) added "*all-Russian civic identity*" to the aims of the policy, thus combining all Russian peoples under a single nominator, eliminating possibilities of discord. The latest term is thought to be centuries old and corresponds with the historical evolution of Russian statehood. Thus, the human element of historical preservation is considered in the new document. The State seeks to make everything divergent a threat to domestic unity and national security by establishing historical consciousness and all-Russian identity as cultural guiding principles. Historical falsification was identified as a major threat to Russia's future in the Basics, and the document's ideology maintains a high value on preserving Russian "*historical memory and protecting historical truth*" (Amended Basics, p. 7). Consequently,

TABLE 1 Proud history and patriotism.

Seasons	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23
Concerts	192	203	225	200	229	197	152	187	232	264
% of all concerts	39	44	46	42	43	45	44	45	51	51
% of thematized concerts	57	62	63	60	60	62	60	66	69	68

(Koskinen, 2024, p. 65).

cultural institutions are given more authority in citizens historical and cultural education (ibid, p. 8).

The theme “Proud History and Patriotism” is strongly connected to national identity formation as a key factor in the conservative-authoritarian system. During 2013-2023, the Kremlin has increasingly incorporated the notion of common history and patriotism into the cultural policy reports. The State has reinterpreted historical events, including the Great Patriotic War, to unite the multiethnic Russian nation together under a single, all-Russian civic identity. Here, domestic military forces and cultural events that glorify Czarist and Soviet history play a significant role as soft power that influences the populace. Citizens, most influenced, are those who have no contact to the outside world and start believing the State’s message. Consequently, they internalize these factors and the state goal of “creating” patriotic, historically unified and obedient citizens are accomplished.

I) Proud history and patriotism (SPBP season programs)

The theme “Proud History and Patriotism,” which numeral data is presented in Table 1 shows that it is the largest thematic category during seasons 2013-14 - 2022-23.

The category commits to the state goal of sustaining cultural visitors’ historical memory and harnessing their sense of patriotism, through concert programming. The programs can be divided into two subcategories, the patriot-historical- and the anniversary, and divided into four parameters.

The first parameter “*Subscription cycles*” consists of 23 cycles. In the Grand Hall, the first cycle group is dedicated to the two resident orchestras and their artistic directors. These include no. 1 “Yuri Temirkanov and His Orchestra,” no. 3 “1st Symphony Orchestra in Russia” and no. 4 “Alexander Dmitriev and His Orchestra,” later renamed “Academic Symphony Orchestra of the Philharmonic”. The second group consists of anniversary cycles, honoring the Philharmonic’s history, and Russian patriotic-historical events. These are no. 2 “Music of Revolution. Two Colors of Time” (2017–2018), which is dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the October revolution and succeeded by “Memories of the Grand Hall” (2018-2019 to 2019–2020), which celebrates the 180th anniversary of the Dvoryansky Hall. Furthermore, cycle honoring the “75th Anniversary of Complete Liberation of Leningrad from Fascist

Siege” (2018–2019), and cycles celebrating the organization: “Philharmonic-100. History in the Mirror of Decades” (2020–2021 to 2021–2022), “Russian and Foreign Ensembles, to the 100th Anniversary of the Philharmonic” (2020–2021 to 2021–2022) and “Philharmonic from Creation of the World” (2021–2022), belong to the anniversary subcategory. The third group contains anniversary cycles, honoring great Russian and foreign composers. These are no. 2 “Tchaikovsky. Six Meetings” (2014–2015 to 2015–2016), “Dvorak and...” (2016–2017), “Rahmaninov. Pages of Diary” (2022–2023), no. 13 “Beethoven +” (2019–2020 to 2020–2021) and cycle “Skryabin, Prometheus of Russian Music” (2021–2022). In the Small Hall, cycle no. 12 is dedicated to Philharmonic’s artists; “Artists of the Philharmonic in Ensemble and as Soloists” (2016–2017 to 2022–2023). The other cycles are devoted to the anniversaries of Russian and international musical figures. Two cycles are dedicated to Temirkanov; no. 1 “Happy Birthday, Maestro (2013–2014) and “Offering to Maestro” (2018–2019). The cycle, honoring international composers was first called “Anniversaries,” later becoming no. 2 “In the Circle of Great Names” (2013–2014 to 2022–2023). Finally, during season 2022–2023 Russian jazz was celebrated with cycle no. 6 “100th Anniversary of Russian Jazz” and the 30th anniversary of Divertimento with cycle no. 7 “Better and Newer. Chamber Orchestra Divertimento.”

The second parameter “*Other Thematic Concerts*” refers to events that are connected to the theme “Proud History and Patriotism” and subtheme “Anniversaries” but don’t belong to the subscription cycles. The annual patriotic concerts include nine events. The celebratory- and memorial concerts feature works by Soviet, war year composers and consists of four themes. The celebration of Victory in the Great Patriotic War and honoring its veterans, dedication concerts for the honorary Saint-Petersburgians, the anniversary of Liberation of Leningrad from the Fascist Siege, and “Yellow Stars” memorial-concerts of Holocaust victims. The Anniversary events, taking place outside of the subscription cycles, include memorial concerts of famous Russian cultural figures, such as, composers Tchaikovsky and Slonimsky, as well as important Russian literary figures, namely, Pushkin and Ahmatova.

The fourth parameter “*International and All-Russian Competitions*” includes a wide array of classical music competitions. They incorporate performance competitions

from the International Tchaikovsky -to the Chopin Competition, in addition to composition competitions, for example, the Andrei Petrov Competition and the All-Russian Shostakovich Competition.

The fifth parameter “*International Festivals*” features concerts of domestic and international ensembles and stars, presenting programs from Russian and Western symphonic-, opera- and military repertoire to new music and jazz. The festivals include the International Winter Festival “Art Square,” International Festival “Admiralty Music” and International Festival “From Avantgarde to Our Days”¹.

According to the findings on **Table 1** theme “Proud History and Patriotism” witnessed a significant growth during seasons 2013-2014 – 2022-2023. The concert amounts increased by 72 concerts and 12% in comparison with other concerts. This provides solid evidence that this category is essential to the development of Russian national identity. In the **Basics of the State cultural Policy (2014)** the importance of *historical consciousness* and fostering patriotism in citizens was acknowledged. Consequently, the **Strategy of the State cultural Policy (2016)** introduced special state and federal programs, to unify the multiethnic nation through utilizing appropriate history to foster patriotism. They are portrayed in the Philharmonic’s season programming through multiple subscription cycles and themed concerts. Thus, data analysis demonstrates how the organization and conservative-hegemonic ideology are interconnected.

Theme II) Russian language and literature

The relationship between language and national identity has been considered by the government, which has made it a significant tool of cultural policy. The **Basics of the State cultural Policy (2014)** places Russian language on a pedestal, stating that in the historical consciousness unifies Russian peoples and culture (**Basics of the State cultural Policy, 2014**, p. 2). By guaranteeing the use of the standard Russian literary language in public and media, and by enhancing the level of language proficiency among citizens, the government has taken measures to promote and protect Russian language. Consequently, Russian literature is given a significant role in the country’s social processes and progress. Here, the document refers to culture’s power in transferring “*moral, ethical and aesthetic values that form the core of national identity*” (ibid, p. 3). The regime, thus, aims to influence the citizens into unified, state-supporting consciousness, through state supported literature. The state has begun expanding citizens’ access to classical and contemporary domestic literature to accomplish this goal.

The **Strategy of the State cultural Policy (2016)** administers state and federal targeted programs, supporting Russian language, and committing to the **Basics of the State cultural Policy (2014)** goals and objectives. According to the report, efforts should be taken to maintain and enhance Russian’s status as state language and language of interethnic communication to maintain unity (**Strategy of the State cultural Policy 2016**, p. 9–10). Russian language skills are important for active participation in the society, despite promises of using the peoples languages, remains the only language of public life. The state vision for a harmoniously developed Russian personality also includes language proficiency, which is why the cultural policy aims to guarantee general education programs in Russian and establish incentives and conditions for enhancing proficiency in Russian literary language (ibid, p. 31). This is realized in concert organizations’ programming, including works by state-approved authors like Ahmatova, and vocal music in Russian.

The **Ministry of Culture in the Russian Federation (2023)** has made additions regarding Russian language and literature. To combat sociocultural challenges and extremism, a state order has been established to produce literature that preserves the all-Russian civic identity (**Ministry of Culture in the Russian Federation 2023**, p. 8). This passage suggests that the state monitors the results of creative processes, and literary production is used to depict conservative-hegemonic images of the world. Russian language also becomes protected and supported as state language and the state supervises and ensures complying the norms of modern Russian literary language (i.e., prevention of obscene language) and diminishing the use of foreign vocabulary (ibid, p. 9). This suggests that the state determines what constitutes “appropriate” language and literature. The regime, thus, restricts citizens’ freedom of speech and expression by enforcing this censorship. Russian literature is presented as an enlightening tool and utilized to educate citizens spiritually and morally through domestic classical music (ibid, p. 10). Domestic concert organizations primarily feature appropriate works with pro-Russian texts, compatible with the development of all-Russian civic identity.

The theme “Russian Language and Literature” is integral to citizens national identity building. In the cultural policy reports (2013–2023) Russian language’s status shifts from humanist, common nominator’s role to a tool of state propaganda. The state has decided to downplay the importance of Russian people’s languages and literature while promoting Russian literature and language as the pillars of all-Russian civic identity. Since the audience is exposed to Russian programming, which distances them from Western influence, the state ideology supporting literature predominates Russian cultural life. By imposing Russian language unilaterally, the state guarantees that the language’s significance as a common nominator for the formation of national identity cannot be challenged.

1 <http://philharmonia.spb.ru/>

TABLE 2 Russian language and literature.

Seasons	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23
Concerts	62	38	38	50	62	35	33	53	49	52
% of all concerts	13	8	8	10	12	8	9	13	11	10
% of thematized concerts	18	11	11	15	16	11	13	19	14	14

(Koskinen, 2024, p. 68).

The theme “Russian Language and Literature,” which numeral data is presented in Table 2, shows that it is the second largest thematic category during seasons 2013-2014 - 2022-2023.

The category promotes the idea that national identity- and language are interconnected. This is recognized by the government, which plans to preserve and advance Russian literature and language. The Philharmonic’s theme-related programs are divided into four parameters.

The first parameter “*Subscription cycles*” takes place in the Small Hall and consists of two cycles, featuring Russian and foreign artists performances of vocal- and opera music. Cycle no. 2 “Evenings of Vocal Music” is dedicated to Russian romance, songs -and folk songs, and opera arias, while cycle no. 6 “Destinies and Roles,” later renamed “Music. Invisible Connector of Time” (2013-14 to 2021-22) focuses on opera music. The mostly performed Russian composers during the cycles are Tchaikovsky and Rahmaninov.

The second parameter “*Other Thematic Concerts*” incorporates two Russian historical poetry and literature spectacles, in addition to vocal music, outside of the subscription system. The first spectacle, “Unknown Friend” by Bunin (2016-17 to 2021-22) is narrated by Russian actress Kseniya Rappoport. The performances portray 20th century poetry and literary excerpts mainly by Ahmatova, Gumilyov, Bulgakov and Brodsky. The second spectacle “1926” features performances, based on the correspondence between Tsvetayeva, Pasternak and Rilke. In addition, the International Music Academy of vocal pedagogue Yelena Obraztsova presents vocal music evening, where the academy’s students perform.

The third parameter “*Evenings of Creativity and Poetry*” presents events in Russian and aims to increase citizens’ accessibility to domestic literary language- and works. *Evenings of Creativity* consist of programs by domestic cultural intelligentsia, presented in mono-spectacle medium. The featured guests include historian Edvard Radzinsky and journalist Vladimir Pozner. *Evenings of Poetry* presents Russian poetry- and literature-themed events, which are dedicated to portray the Kremlin-led values, necessary for national identity building. These include works, written during the Leningrad Siege, by Ahmatova and Mandelstam, and Russian classics by Pushkin and Tolstoy.

The fourth parameter “*International and All-Russian Competitions*” promotes Russian vocal music works through four classical singing competitions. They incorporate the International Shtokolov Vocal Competition and International Festival-Competition “Three Centuries of Classical Romance”¹.

According to the findings, presented in Table 2 of the theme “Russian Language and Literature” has remained relatively steady, changing between 8 and 13% of all concerts, during seasons 2013-2014 - 2022-2023. The changes were caused by inconsistent number of creative- and poetry evenings, and vocal competitions, which weren’t organized each season. During the last season (2022-23) the percentage reached the medium, 10% in comparison with other seasons, still making the thematic category the second largest. The strong standing among other thematic categories functions as affirmation that Russian vocal music- and state ideology-abiding literature are worthy of attention in connection to national identity formation. According to The *Basics of the State cultural Policy (2014)*, Russian language has the ability to unite the multiethnic Russian people, and the *Strategy of the State cultural Policy (2016)* uses this potential to strengthen it through state-targeted programs. The third parameter “*Evenings of Creativity and Poetry*” can here be interpreted as part of the targeted programming. Consequently, cultural policy’s influence combined with the biased representation of languages in programming creates the impression that a hegemonic language unites the nation.

Theme III) Upbringing

A major factor in inspiring and awakening patriotism in younger generations is education. Russian government considered this, when creating its own educational system. According to the *Basics of the State cultural Policy (2014)*, educational and artistic unity is essential to comprehending the social mission of culture as a means of transmitting future generations a set of moral, ethical, and aesthetic values that constitute the foundation of national identity (*Basics of the State cultural Policy 2014*, p. 2-3). The state has created educational programs and targeted children’s and youth movements to guarantee that young people develop a sense of patriotism and national identity. These initiatives

TABLE 3 Upbringing.

Seasons	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23
Concerts	40	55	56	56	58	60	44	24	26	38
% of all concerts	8	12	12	12	11	14	12	6	6	7
% of thematized concerts	12	16	16	16	15	19	18	8	8	8

(Koskinen, 2024, p. 70).

aim to cultivate and popularize Russian cultural values while also conserving the country's historical and cultural legacy (ibid, p. 5). The state has expanded its role in educating children and youngsters about history and culture through cultural organizations like Philharmonics (ibid, p. 10). In addition to elevating family's social standing by reaffirming traditional family values in the public consciousness, programming philosophy places emphasis on families and the revival of family education traditions (ibid., p. 13).

The *Strategy of the State cultural Policy (2016)* presents state and federal target programs, and in connection to national identity building the most prominent ones include "*Patriotic education of citizens of the Russian Federation for 2016 - 2020*" (*Strategy of the State cultural Policy, 2016*, p. 2). The goal of state ideology-compliant educational programs is to counteract humanitarian crisis manifestations, particularly the weakening of family bonds and the rise of individualism (ibid, p. 6). Since "broken families" and refusing to raise a family violate transferring intergenerational values and norms, the regime has placed its hopes in value-oriented education, which is based on "best domestic traditions". Cultural institutions are included in the main educational goal of enabling the construction of "*harmoniously developed personality*." Creating concert programs, promoting the "ideal" traditional family values i.e., popularizing Russian family dynasties and cultural heritage is a method for accomplishing this (ibid, p. 30–31).

The *Ministry of Culture in the Russian Federation (2023)* follows the established view, concerning the state regulated obligations regarding upbringing. The main principle of basing education on "*traditional Russian spiritual and moral values*" has received continuation with the phrase "*protecting the interests of children*" (*President of the Russian Federation, 2023*). This alludes to the state-imposed prohibition on spreading "propaganda" about corrupting family values in schools, including details about the LGBTQ community. Philharmonics and other cultural organizations are given more prominence in the citizens' historical and cultural education and upbringing (ibid, p. 8). This refers to the implementation of Russian cultural heritage, including music and literature, to educate residents morally and spiritually while introducing families to suitable classics (ibid., p. 10–11). These astute states actions to shape and control the perspectives of the

younger generation have long-term effects. The goal of "saving the Russian people," or influencing their subconscious into support the regime, is a tactic to create submissive citizens who'll unquestioningly defend their country.

The theme "Upbringing," which focuses on creating a homogenous and patriotic Russian younger generation, has become a significant part of national identity building. Teaching children and youth Russian values and way of life established by their ancestors is at the heart of the cultural policy reports (2013–2023). The understanding of upbringing has become increasingly conservative, with censoring "harmful" Western ideologies from education. This ideology is also spread to the cultural organization's children- and youth education programs. If Putin's 2013 prediction that a new generation of authentic Russian citizens comes true, only time will tell. Nonetheless, the consequences of comprehensive upbringing programs are evident as more children and youth adopt the Z-ideology and join the Yunarmiya.

The theme "Upbringing," which numeral data is presented in **Table 3**, shows that it is the third largest thematic category during seasons 2013-2014 - 2022-2023.

The category is dedicated to the cultural education and national identity building of Russian children and youth. By implementing targeted educational programs, the state ideology aims to familiarize the younger generation with Russian cultural history and values. Through its season programming, the Philharmonic, a state-funded organization, contributes to the dissemination of governmental agendas. This category incorporates *Subscription Cycles* and *Other Thematic Concerts* parameters.

The first parameter "*Subscription cycles*" consists of six concert cycles, and hosted by Russian musicologists and presenters. The cycles are divided into five subcategories; I) *Story-based Programs*, II) *Introduction to Musical Instruments and Performance Tradition*, III) *Introduction to Musical Eras -, Countries -, Genres -and Forms*, IV) *Introduction to World Composers*, and V) *Introduction to Russian Composers and Their Works*. The subcategories also include subscription cycles, which are divided by hall and target audience.

The first subcategory of *Story-based programs* consists of three subscription cycles. The category is based on programmatic music, such as world and Russian fairy tales, and thematic music,

appropriate for younger listeners. In the Grand Hall, cycle no. 12 "Childrens Scenes" is targeted for family audiences. In the Small Hall, two cycles are targeted to younger children. These are no. 13 "Great Music for Younger Children" (2013-2014, 2022-2023) and no. 12 "Visiting a Fairytale" (2015-2016, 2019-2020).

The second subcategory *Introduction to Musical Instruments and Performance Tradition* comprises two subscription cycles, which take place in the Small Hall and target younger children. The first cycle, no. 12 "Who is Playing on What?" (2014-2015, 2018-2019, 2020-2022), familiarizes younger audiences with instruments, from orchestral instruments to voice. The second cycle no. 14 "We are Musicians" (2017-2018 to 2018-2019) focuses also on performance tradition with concerts, presenting different sized ensembles.

The third subcategory *Introduction to Musical Eras-, Countries-, Genres- and Forms* includes four subscription cycles. In the Grand Hall, two cycles are organized for youth and family audiences, which present different genres, from symphonies to film music. Cycle no. 10 "Concerts in Tailcoats and Jeans" is customized for the youth- and cycle, no. 11 "Concerts for the Whole Family," for family-audiences. Additionally, the Small Hall presents two subscription cycles, meant for children. Cycle no. 13 "Magical Hours of Music" (2013-2014 to 2017-2018) concentrates on musical genres and forms, and cycle no. 15 "Musical Cruise across Europe" (2015-2016, 2019-2020 to 2020-2021) musical eras-and countries.

The fourth subcategory *Introduction to World Composers* portrays Russian- and world composer's music, from Baroque era to the 21st century Russian works. The category consists of two subscription cycles, organized in the Small Hall. Cycle no. 14 "Six Naughty Boys, who became Great Composers" is targeted for children and cycle no. 16 "Popular Melodies and Their Creators" for the whole family. The fifth subcategory *Introduction to Russian Composers and Their Works* is part of state patriotic educational programs. The category focuses on Russian composers' works and comprises one cycle, meant for the whole family. This is cycle no. 16 "Through the Pages of Russian Classic Masterpieces," which is later renamed no. 15 "Great Names of Saint-Petersburg. From Golden Age to Our Days," and focuses on local compositions. The programs include works by Glinka and Dunayevsky.

The second parameter "Other Thematic Concerts" involves interactive, fairytale-themed new year's concerts, which are intended for younger audiences. The concerts take place in the Small Hall during seasons 2014-2015 to 2019-2020. The spectacles include Western and Russian storylines, from Shaisky's "Nils Holgersson" to Gladkov's "New Years Adventures with Masha and Vita¹.

According to the findings, presented in Table 3. Theme "Upbringing" experienced growth before the corona restrictions (2020). The number of concerts rose during

seasons 2013-2014 and 2018-2019 by 20 concerts and 6% in comparison with all concerts, and would have likely continued to rise, without the lockdown. The *Basics of the State cultural Policy (2014)* and *Strategy of the State cultural Policy (2016)* educational agendas were implemented in the Philharmonics programming, which led to the category's expansion. After the COVID-19 restrictions were lifted during 2022-2023, the concert amounts returned to almost the same level as in the first season (2013-2014), with 38 concerts. This season planning progression can be explained by the cultural policy reports. In the *Basics of the State cultural Policy (2014)*, classical music organizations were given a strengthened role in the younger generation's historical, cultural and patriotic education, which is deemed to positively impact their national identity formation. Special state and federal target programs, defined in the *Strategy of the State cultural Policy (2016)*, serve as executional tools. The Philharmonic implements these programs through subscription cycles. Through classical music, these cycles depict Russian cultural history, which is visioned advantageous for citizens' moral education (Ministry of Culture in the Russian Federation, 2023, p. 10 -11). The Philharmonic, thus, molds the younger generation into patriotic and putinist, lacking Western inclinations by supporting the Kremlin's national identity agenda.

Theme IV) enlightenment

Adult education is utilized by Russian cultural policy as means of producing patriotic and enlightened citizens. According to The *Basics of the State cultural Policy (2014)*, education and self-education play a significant role in battling the crisis, threatening Russia's future. Devaluation of accepted values, distortion of value orientations, and a decline in society's intellectual and cultural level are some of the biggest threats (*Basics of the State cultural Policy (2014)*, p. 3). These refer to the "harmful" influence of "Western" lifestyle and individualism in Russia. The state has created cultural enlightenment programs to counteract this, with the goal of raising Russian society's intellectual potential (ibid, p. 17). Thus, cultural organizations, i.e., philharmonics, have been given a stronger role in historical and cultural enlightenment of Russian citizens (ibid, p. 10).

In the *Strategy of the State cultural Policy (2016)* Russian government has outlined federal and state programs to promote enlightenment education and self-education (*Strategy of the State cultural Policy, 2016*, p. 4). Cultural organizations are instrumental in this, by "providing citizens with access to knowledge, information and cultural values" (Ibid, p. 26). It demonstrates that citizens are acquainted with domestic cultural products and use culture to further state's nationalist objectives. Therefore, the cultural organization's programming incorporates the proven methods of patriotic education to strengthen citizens' nationalistic tendencies (Ibid, p. 31).

TABLE 4 Enlightenment.

Seasons	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23
Concerts	18	27	25	25	29	20	20	17	22	24
% of all concerts	4	6	5	5	5	5	6	4	5	5
% of thematized concerts	5	8	7	7	8	6	8	6	7	7

(Koskinen, 2024, p. 73).

The Ministry of Culture in the Russian Federation (2023) deepens the state's nationalist-based view of enlightenment activities. These activities fight the core threat of Russian people's intellectual and cultural decline (Ministry of Culture in the Russian Federation, 2023, p. 3–4). The role of cultural organizations, i.e., Philharmonic's, in citizen's historical and cultural education is reinforced. Thus, the foundation of the enlightenment programs is on Russian cultural heritage, including literature and music, in moral and spiritual education of people (ibid, p. 10). These programs are carefully planned and adhere to state doctrine. To enforce compliance, the state provides funding to organizations which organize cultural and educational activities uniform with government's ideology (ibid, p. 8).

The theme "Enlightenment" aims to preserve and replicate Russian national value orientation among domestic adult population. The three cultural policy reports recognize the increasing necessity of reintegrating "westernized" people into the conservative value system, imposed by the state. Thus, enlightenment programs conducted by cultural organizations are founded on domestic, ideologically driven cultural products, seeking to affect the public and restore national unity. Consequently, depictions of Russian culture and history foster pride and solidarity that supports the individual's national identity building.

The theme "Enlightenment," which numeral data is presented in Table 4, shows that it is the fourth and second smallest thematic category during seasons 2013–2014–2022–2023.

The category focuses on Russian adult population's national identity formation. The state-led enlightenment programs aim to reduce adult citizens' individualistic inclinations by redirecting them to Russian conservative-hegemonic values. Through its concert activities, the Philharmonic plays a significant role in achieving this goal. The Philharmonics programs are divided into two parameters, *Subscription Cycles* and *Other Thematic Concerts*.

The first parameter "*Subscription Cycles*" comprises three cycles annually. In the Grand Hall, four subscription cycles were organized during seasons 2013–2024 –2022–2023. Two of the subscription cycles, no. 7 "Philharmonic Fridays" (2013–14 to 2014–15) and no. 9 "Guide to Classics" (2013–14 to 2019–20, 2022–23) are introduction platforms to symphonic music,

through different eras, genres and styles. The cycles are led by the resident orchestras, which interpret Western and domestic works from Mozart's Requiem to Rimski-Korsakov Scheherazade. Creating a connection between the audience, musicians, and performed works is also a part of audience outreach. Cycle no. 8 "Musical Meetings" (2015–16 to 2016–17) is created to harness this relationship with thematic concerts, interpreting masterpieces of Russian opera-, music by Bach family- and symphonic images by Lyadov and Rimski-Korsakov. The cycle 8 "Dialogues about Art" in the Grand Hall, is a collaboration project between the Hermitage, later Russian Museum, and the Philharmonic. The thematic concerts are connected to exhibition pieces, presenting domestic and foreign music with them as a montage. During the final season, the cycle receives a patriotic undertone and is renamed "Dialogues about Russian Art." The programs partner Russian art- and symphonic masterpieces by i.e., Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev. In the Small Hall two subscription cycles were organized during 2013–14 – 2022–23. The first cycle no. 5 "Music for the Soul" (2017–18, 2019–20 to 2021–22) offers versatile and easily approachable music from different musical eras, including Russian folk- and ballet-, jazz- and cinema music. The second cycle no. 10 "I love Orchestra" (2013–14 to 2022–23) introduces a parade of Russian orchestras. These include ensembles playing domestic music with patriotic connotations, traditional music, and both Russian and foreign academic music.

The second parameter "*Other Thematic Concerts*" consists of two enlightenment projects, held in the Grand Hall: the "Night of the Museums"- and "Readings with Meaning". The "Night of the Museums" (2013–14 to 2022–23) is a concert marathon and part of the Petersburg White Nights festivities. It is an accessible way of familiarizing newer audiences with a variety of music, from classical repertoire to jazz. The "Readings with Meaning" project (2020–21 to 2022–23) connects famous writers, artists, theater and film directors with audiences, starting their journey in art. The project connects prose with music and functions as a thought awakening journey. The events are based on Irada Berg's philosophic and patriotic prose, where state-led ideology is mirrored with symphonic music from Baroque to Soviet eras¹.

According to the findings, presented in Table 4 theme "Enlightenment" has remained almost at the same level during seasons 2013–2014 – 2022–2023. Compared to all

concerts, the number of concerts has increased by 1%, and the cultural policy reports can be used to explain the steady increase. The [Basics of the State cultural Policy \(2014\)](#) sees music as a tool for fostering patriotism in the populace. Consequently, cultural organizations, like the Philharmonic, have an important part in the national identity formation of all age groups. Due to the special state target programs, emphasizing citizens' self-education and enlightenment, there has been growth in the seasons, following the publication of each [Basics of the State cultural Policy \(2014\)](#) and [Strategy of the State cultural Policy \(2016\)](#). These programs are executed in the Philharmonic through subscription cycles and enlightenment projects, which harness Russian cultural heritage to spread Kremlin-approved ideals and influence the audience's value-orientation.

Theme V) Religion and Spirituality

National identity building in Russia has a strong connection to religion. Orthodoxy, therefore, forms the sacred essence of identity, influencing the human mind. Since orthodoxy has historically shaped Russia's value system and assisted the Russian peoples build their national and cultural identities, the religious and spiritual realm of identity is mentioned in the ([Basics of the State cultural Policy, 2014](#)) ([Basics of the State cultural Policy, 2014](#), p. 2). Consequently, the state views culture and cultural activities as strategic tools for preserving, transmitting and popularizing ideology-compliant *spiritual values*. The spiritual realm, thus, functions as a system of beliefs about human society, the world, and a hierarchy of values (Ibid, p. 5). Supporting the notion of a hierarchical structure, where the Church and the government collaborate at the highest level, shapes moral and spiritual values of the populace to reflect their superiors'.

The [Strategy of the State cultural Policy \(2016\)](#) outlines the procedures for addressing threats to Russian spiritual and moral values. Religious intolerance and the decline of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values are the biggest cultural omens ([Strategy of the State cultural Policy, 2016](#), p. 6–7). These challenges are met by all-Russian groups and movements that engage in socially relevant cultural projects founded on traditional spiritual values (ibid, p. 41). In classical music organizations these projects include concerts, featuring Orthodox Church music, spiritual music, and celebration music on traditional Russian holidays, i.e., Easter.

The [Ministry of Culture in the Russian Federation \(2023\)](#) further emphasizes traditional Russian spirituality in building all-Russian civic identity. Here, Russian moral and spiritual values are portrayed as a system, fostering unity among the multinational population ([Ministry of Culture in the Russian Federation, 2023](#), p. 2). Common

value basis connects citizens of different cultural backgrounds, thus ensuring civic unity and protection of national interests. The development of moral, socially conscious, independently thinking citizens who share traditional Russian spiritual and moral values is one of the aims of cultural policy (ibid, p.2). The report pictures a crisis that threatens Russian value basis, equipping the state to strengthen *all-Russian civic identity* and ensure "*interethnic and interreligious peace and harmony*" (ibid, p. 6). Therefore, cultural events and activities, preserving and popularizing "*traditional Russian spiritual, moral, and family values*" receive governmental support (ibid, p. 11). All cultural events are subjected to state-led quality control, which censors ideology-divergent programs, giving room for *harmoniously developed personality, the all-Russian civic identity*, to truly develop.

The theme "Religion and Spirituality" emphasizes Russian people's longstanding affiliation with the Church and their orthodox spiritual value-basis. Cultural policy reports refer to Orthodoxy as the basis of collective national identity, but to be more inclusive to all Russian peoples, adopt the term interreligious harmony. This is state's acknowledgement for the need of interethnic cohesion, which cannot exclude large Russian demographics, due to religious differences. Consequently, all-Russian moral and spiritual norms are selected as common nominator; they can change to fit the state's needs. Despite the reports' attempts to appear inclusive, the Orthodox Church retains dominant position, with Putin-affiliated Father Kirill serving as the country's spiritual leader. This is also reflected in domestic cultural life, where orthodox music and theatics are portrayed in the programs, making the church visible and influencing the citizen's spirito-moral orientations.

The theme "Religion and Spirituality," which numeral data is presented in [Table 5](#). Is the fifth and smallest thematic group during seasons 2013-2014 - 2022-2023.

The category focuses on the religio-spiritual component of national identity formation process. The government grants Orthodoxy a unique position in forming the value system of the populace and embracing the state-subject hierarchies. The Philharmonic participates in these proceedings by hosting performances, featuring orthodox and spiritual music. The organization's programs include four parameters.

The first parameter "*Subscription Cycles*" takes place in the Small Hall and consists of two cycles during seasons 2013-2014 – 2022-2023. The first, cycle no. 11 "*Evening of Spiritual music*" (2013–2014) is dedicated to sacred vocal music and partakes in reviving Russian spiritual traditions. The programs portray domestic spiritual choral music, from traditional chants to spiritual cantatas by i.e., Taneyev and Sviridov. The second, cycle no. 6 "*Unbanned Songs*" (2015–2016) is ideologically

TABLE 5 Religion and spirituality.

Seasons	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23
Concerts	28	9	11	7	5	6	3	4	7	10
% of all concerts	6	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	2
% of thematized concerts	8	3	3	2	1	2	1	1	2	3

(Koskinen, 2024, p. 76).

linked to the previous cycle. The programs consist of spiritual choral works, including works by Tchaikovsky, Schnittke and Desyatnikov.

The second parameter “*Other Thematic Concerts*” is divided into four sub-categories, *Anniversaries*, *Charity Concerts*, *Holiday Concerts* and *Other Sacred Concerts*. The *Anniversaries subcategory* celebrates the jubilees of important Orthodox worship places, historical figures and composers. These include the 300th anniversary of the Holy Trinity Monastery, jubilee of Saint Alexander Nevsky, and composers of Pleshak and Sviridov. The *Charity Concerts* subcategory (2013–2014 to 2014–2015) raises funds for sick children. The concerts honor Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker, the paragon for Santa Claus. The *Holiday Concerts* subcategory consists of Easter and Christmas celebrations. Easter festivities feature spiritual works, such as the All-night Vigil by Rahmaninov, and Easter chants by Bortnyansky and Sviridov. Christmas in turn is met with both Western and Russian spiritual music. The *Other Sacred Concerts* subcategory consists of spiritual instrumental- and choir music. These include performances by Konevets-quartet and choral works by Rahmaninov, Shostakovich and Shchedrin.

The two events of the fourth parameter “*International Competitions*” are organized during Easter and consist of the 2nd International Composition Competition of Spiritual Choir Music “Roman the Sweet Songwriter” and the Festival Competition “Slavic Spring”.

The fifth parameter “*International and All-Russian Festivals*” comprises three festivals. The International Festival “Academy of Orthodox Music” and “Easter Festival,” which take place during Easter, and the All-Russian Festival of Orthodox Singing Tradition “Sources”. All three festivals portray Russian spiritual Orthodox music by, for example, Petrov, Chesnokov and Glazunov¹.

According to the findings, presented in Table 5 concerts in connection to theme “Religion and Spirituality” have varied between 28 and 3 concerts during the seasons 2013–2014 – 2022–2023. The subscription cycles were only planned during the seasons 2013–2014 and 2015–2016, which accounts for the large changes and the concert numbers’ peaks. During regular seasons, Christmas and Easter are when most concerts were held. The percentages of all concerts varied between 1% and 2%, and fluctuations

during regular seasons have stayed modest. The *Basics of the State cultural Policy (2014)* ideological message underlines the role of Orthodox faith and values in national identity building. The *Strategy of the State cultural Policy (2016)* has provided cultural organizations with projects, based on traditional spiritual values, to spread the message. These target programs have been executed moderately in the Philharmonic, with events happening on church holidays. However, a developing curve of the category has resulted from the *Ministry of Culture in the Russian Federation (2023)* placing greater emphasis on popularization of Russian spiritual, moral, and family values. This can be seen as a tightening of state control over the Philharmonic’s programming and as efficient implementation of conservative-hegemonic cultural policy.

Conclusions and discussion

The article is dedicated to discovering how a governmental classical music organization, Saint Petersburg State Philharmonic, partakes in Russian national identity formation process.

The author’s interest in Russian culture and desire to understand the Kremlin’s influence on the classical music sphere led to the study topic choice. This brought me to Russia’s national identity phenomenon and its manifestations. Thus, I was inspired to undertake this research after noticing the knowledge gap connected to the topic and classical music organizations.

The main contents of the article focus on the thematic analysis results on Russian cultural policy reports and Saint Petersburg State Philharmonics season programs (2013–2014 to 2022–2023). The selected data comes from Putin’s third presidential term (2012–2024), when cultural policy began to employ culture as a soft tool for national identity actualization and presenting conservative-hegemonic characteristics. The data’s thematic components of Russian national identity are clarified by the analysis.

Three research questions form the basis of the article’s problem formation, with the first two providing theoretical and empirical support for the third, main research question.

The first question focuses on identifying the main themes in connection to national identity formation in the cultural policy reports (2014–2023). The thematic analysis provided the following themes; Proud History and Patriotism, Russian Language and Literature, Upbringing, Enlightenment, and Religion and Spirituality. In relation to the thematic analysis findings of the cultural policy reports, the second question concentrated on discovering how Saint Petersburg State Philharmonic executed the season programming (2013–2014 to 2022–2023). All the institute's concerts (2013–2023) were subjected to deductive thematic analysis and the results prove that all the analysis-generated themes in connection to national identity formation are found in the Philharmonics season programs. Next, I uncovered that the first theme "*Proud History and Patriotism*" (57%–68% of thematized concerts) was the largest thematic category, the other categories gradually smaller, making the fifth theme "*Religion and Spirituality*" (8%–3% of thematized concerts) the smallest group. The actualization of the themes was administered through special federal and state target programs, which I have clarified by dividing the concerts into five parameters. The most transparent is no. 1 "*Subscription Cycles*," and parameters no. 4–5 "*International and All-Russian Competitions*" and "*International Festivals*". During 2013–2023, these ideology-driven parameters have strengthened their position in the season programming, emphasizing the growing stronghold of the Kremlin-led Cultural Ministry on the organization's programs.

The third research question addresses the article's main question: does classical music serve as a covert means of citizens' national identity formation. The question has received positive indications from the empirical data. The findings show that the number of thematized concerts in comparison with the other, non-thematized, concerts has risen by 6%, during the ten seasons. During the first season (2013–14), 69% of the concerts were thematic, which was already a significant number, whilst 31% of the concerts were non-thematic. Concerts are often thematized to support dominant state ideology in autocratic countries like Russia and similar tendency is visible in the Philharmonic's pre-2013–2024 season programming. As the final focus season (2022–23) approached, the percentage the thematic category rose to 75%, while the percentage of the non-thematic category fell to 25%. The shift is explained by the first thematic category's "*Proud History and Patriotism*," increase by 12% during the ten-year period. This change became possible, because the state increased its control over the organization, thus expanding state-targeted programs.

The analyzed data shows a visible shift towards conservative-hegemonic state ideology. The number of

ideology-based concerts comprised 4/5 of all concerts during the final season (2022–23), indicating that concert production is predominantly under government control. Consequently, I have determined that classical music can be a powerful tool of national identity formation. Given the growing number of nationalist movements globally, I believe that this study offers valuable insights into the connection between classical music and national identity. Since this is a pioneering study, I think more research on the phenomenon should be conducted to acquire greater insight. Additionally, I hope that my work sparks interest regarding the topic and encourages others to carry further the established research.

Recommendations for future research

Research on how Russian cultural policy affects classical music organizations should be continued, to gain a deeper understanding of the complex entity. Regarding Saint Petersburg State Philharmonic, I suggest extending the time period to season 2028–2029, to determine whether the progression continues as predicted. Additionally, studies on the topic could include Medvedyev's presidential terms (2008–2012), when cultural policy concept was regarded as more liberal. Extending the timeframe would provide understanding of the pre-Putin period, providing a clearer view of the conservative-hegemonic process and its progression.

Examining the connection between music and national identity formation in our time is essential to comprehending Russian mentality. This includes discerning their reasoning in connection to their country and the outside world, the feelings of patriotism versus distrust towards the West. These subconscious feelings don't grow overnight and need different mediums. Since music is such a potent medium, more research should be done on its effects, particularly among culturally engaged. Furthermore, I propose researching other Russian governmental classical music institutions and their programming. Examining that could validate this article's findings and illuminate the current situation and the effects of cultural policy agenda in other regions.

Data availability statement

The datasets presented in this study can be found in online repositories. The names of the repository/repositories and accession number(s) can be found in the article/supplementary material.

Author contributions

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