SHOSTAKOVICH

BRILLIANT CLASSICS

SYMPHONIES
JAZZ, BALLET &
FILM MUSIC
CONCERTOS
CHAMBER MUSIC
STRING QUARTETS
PRELUDES & FUGUES

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH 1906-1975 COLLECTION

TRACK LISTS

SYMPHONIES

CD1 **74’50**

SYMPHONY No.1 in F minor Op.10

1. Allegretto 8’09
2. Allegro 4’45
3. Lento 7’43
4. Allegro molto 8’36

5. **SYMPHONY No.2 in B Op.14 for Chorus & Orchestra, “To October”** 18’45

6. **SYMPHONY No.3 in E flat Op.20 for Chorus & Orchestra, “First of May”** 26’29

Rundfunkchor

WDR Sinfonieorchester
Rudolf Barshai *conductor*

Recording: **Nos. 1 & 3** 30 September - 3 October 1994,
No.2 23 January 1995, Philharmonie Köln, Germany
Producer: Christoph Held
Sound engineer: Siegfried Spittler

CD2 **61’50**

SYMPHONY No.4 in C minor Op.43

1. Allegretto poco moderato 27’11
2. Moderato con moto 8’45
3. Largo-allegro 26’02

WDR Sinfonieorchester
Rudolf Barshai *conductor*

Recording: 16-24 April & 24 October 1996, Philharmonie, Köln, Germany
Producer: Christoph Held
Sound engineer: Siegfried Spittler

CD3 **77’25**

SYMPHONY No.5 in D minor Op.47

1. Moderato 15’30
2. Allegretto 5’31
3. Largo 13’17
4. Allegro non troppo 11’14

SYMPHONY No.6 in B minor Op.54

5. Largo	18’49
6. Allegro	5’47
7. Presto	6’58

WDR Sinfonieorchester
Rudolf Barshai *conductor*

Recording: **No.5** 3-8 July 1995 & 26 April 1996, **No.6** 17-20 October 1995, Philharmonie, Köln, Germany
Producer: Christoph Held
Sound engineer: Siegfried Spittler

CD4 **71’32**

SYMPHONY No.7 in C Op.60 “Leningrad”

1. War, allegretto	26’17
2. Memories, Moderato (poco allegretto)	10’29
3. My native Field, adagio	18’14
4. Victory, allegro non troppo	16’31

WDR Sinfonieorchester
Rudolf Barshai *conductor*

Recording: September 1992, Philharmonie, Köln, Germany
Producer: Heiner Müller-Adolphi, Christoph Held
Sound engineer: Siegfried Spittler

CD5 **64’27**

SYMPHONY No.8 in C minor Op.65

1. Adagio	27’21
2. Allegretto	6’42
3. Allegro non troppo	6’42
4. Largo	10’05
5. Allegretto	13’34

WDR Sinfonieorchester
Rudolf Barshai *conductor*

Recording: 14 March 1994 & 16 October 1995, Philharmonie, Köln, Germany
Producer: Reiner Müller-Adolphi, Christoph Held
Sound engineer: Siegfried Spittler

CD6 **76’15**

SYMPHONY No.9 in E flat Op.70

1. Allegro	5’16
2. Moderato	5’42
3. Presto	2’54
4. Largo	3’00
5. Allegretto	7’07

SYMPHONY No.10 in E minor Op.93

6. Moderato	23’14
7. Allegro	4’31
8. Allegretto	12’08
9. Andante	12’17

WDR Sinfonieorchester
Rudolf Barshai *conductor*

Recording: **No.9** 12-14 July, 14 September 1995 & 26 April 1996;
No.10 15-24 October 1996, Philharmonie, Köln, Germany
Producer: Christoph Held
Sound engineer: Siegfried Spittler

CD7 **59’54**

SYMPHONY No.11 in G minor Op.103 “The Year 1905”

1. Palace Square: Adagio	15’27
2. January 9-th: Allegro-adagio-allegro-adagio	18’48
3. Eternal Memory: Adagio	11’24
4. The Toscin: Allegro non troppo-allegromoderato-adagio-allegro	14’12

WDR Sinfonieorchester
Rudolf Barshai *conductor*

Recording: 3-7 May 1999, Philharmonie Köln, Germany
Producer: Christoph Held
Sound engineer: Siegfried Spittler

CD8 **37’04**

SYMPHONY No.12 in D minor Op.112 “The Year 1917”
“To the Memory of Lenin”

1. Revolutionary Petrograd: Moderato-allegro	12’53
2. Razliv: Adagio	9’57
3. Aurora: Allegro	4’14
4. The Dawn of Humanity: L’istesso tempo	9’58

WDR Sinfonieorchester
Rudolf Barshai *conductor*

Recording: 11-15 September 1995, Philharmonie Köln, Germany
Producer: Christoph Held
Sound engineer: Siegfried Spittler

CD9 **62’41**

SYMPHONY No.13 in B fl at minor for Bass, Chorus & Orchestra Op.113, “Babi Yar”

1. Babi Yar: Adagio	17’09
2. Humour: Allegretto	8’28
3. In the Store: Adagio	12’44
4. Fears: Adagio	11’55
5. A Career: Allegretto	12’29

Sergei Aleksashkin *bass*

The Choral Academy Moscow

WDR Sinfonieorchester
Rudolf Barshai *conductor*

Recording: 11-14 September 2000, Philharmonie Köln, Germany
Producer: Hans-Martin Höpner
Sound engineer: Siegfried Spittler

CD10 **45’34**

SYMPHONY No.14, for Soprano, Bass, Strings & Percussion Op.135

1. De profundis (bass; Garcia Lorca) 4’23
2. Malagueña (soprano; Garcia Lorca) 2’50
3. Lorelei (soprano & bass; Apollinaire) 8’00
4. The Suicide (soprano; Apollinaire) 6’13
5. On Watch (soprano; Apollinaire) 2’59
6. Madam, look! (soprano & bass; Apollinaire) 1’32
7. In Prison, at the Sante Jail (bass, Apollinaire) 8’20
8. The Zaporozhian Cossack’s answer to the Sultan of Constantinople (bass; Apollinaire) 2’07
9. O Delvig, Delvig (bass; küchelbecker) 3’44
10. The Death of the Poet (soprano; Rilke) 4’23
11. Conclusion (soprano & bass; Rilke) 1’04

Alla Simoni *soprano*
Vladimir Vaneev *bass*

WDR Sinfonieorchester
Rudolf Barshai *conductor*

Recording: 1999/2000, Philharmonie, Köln, Germany
Producer: Hans-Martin Höpner
Sound engineer: Siegfried Spittler

CD11 **37’54**

SYMPHONY No.15 in A Op.141

1. Allegretto 8’19
2. Adagio-largo-adagio-allegretto 11’43
3. Allegretto 3’53
4. Adagio-allegretto-adagio-allegretto 13’56

WDR Sinfonieorchester
Rudolf Barshai *conductor*

Recording: 15-20 June 1998, Philharmonie, Köln
Producer: Hans-Martin Höpner
Sound engineer: Siegfried Spittler

CHAMBER SYMPHONIES

CD12 **61’16**

CHAMBER SYMPHONY Op.73a
(Arrangement of String Quartet No.3)

1. Allegretto 8’19
2. Moderato con moto 5’30
3. Allegro non troppo 4’41
4. Adagio 5’09
5. Moderato 10’52

CHAMBER SYMPHONY Op. 83a
(Arrangement of String Quartet Op.4)

6. Allegro	4’12
7. Andantino	7’04
8. Allegretto	5’09
9. Allegretto	9’56

Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi
Rudolf Barshai *conductor*

Recording: Live. 2005, Auditorium Verdi, Milano, Italy
Producer: Mareo Mazzolini
Sound engineer: Roberto Brenna
Digital editing: Roberto Brenna, Mareo Mazzolini
Mastering: Mareo Mazzolini, Roberto Brenna, Hanspeter Mäglin (CH)

CD13 **63’40**

CHAMBER SYMPHONY Op.49a „Eine kleine Symphonie“
(Arrangement of String Quartet No.1)

1. Moderato	4’23
2. Moderato	4’52
3. Allegro molto	2’45
4. Allegro	3’33

CHAMBER SYMPHONY Op.110a
(Arrangement of String Quartet No.8)

5. Largo	4’42
6. Allegro molto	3’40
7. Allegretto	4’29
8. Largo	4’29
9. Largo	3’49

CHAMBER SYMPHONY Op.118a
(Arrangement of String Quartet No.10)

10. Andante	5’08
11. Allegretto furioso	4’15
12. Adagio	7’01
13. Allegretto	10’02

Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi
Rudolf Barshai *conductor*

Recording: Live. 2005, Auditorium Verdi, Milano, Italy
Producer: Mareo Mazzolini
Sound engineer: Roberto Brenna
Digital editing: Roberto Brenna, Mareo Mazzolini
Mastering: Mareo Mazzolini, Roberto Brenna, Hanspeter Mäglin (CH)

JAZZ SUITES

CD14 **50’43**

SUITE FOR VARIETY ORCHESTRA No.1 (JAZZ SUITE No.2)

1. March	3’04
2. Dance No. 1	2’56
3. Dance No. 2	3’39
4. Little Polka	2’33
5. Lyric Waltz	2’38
6. Waltz No. 1	3’21
7. Waltz No. 2	3’34
8. Finale	2’13
9. **OVERTURE ON RUSSIAN AND KIRGHIZ THEMES Op.115**	9’19

JAZZ SUITE No.1

10. Waltz	2’19
11. Polka	1’38
12. Foxtrot	3’47
13. **NOVOROSSIJSK CHIMES**	2’32
14. **FESTIVE OVERTURE Op.96**	5’46

National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine
Theodore Kuchar *conductor*

Recording: 1-8 June 2005, Grand Studio of the National Radio Symphony Company of Ukraine in Kiev
Producer: Alexander Hornostai
Engineer: Andrei Mokrytsky

BALLET SUITES

CD15 **55’46**

THE BOLT Ballet Suite Op.27a

1. Overture	6’34
2. Polka	2’36
3. Variation	1’49
4. Tango	5’07
5. Intermezzo	3’50
6. Finale	3’23

THE LIMPID STREAM Ballet Suite Op.39a

7. Waltz	2’23
8. Russian Lubok	2’30
9. Galop	1’57
10. Adagio	7’19
11. Pizzicato	1’12

THE GOLDEN AGE Ballet Suite Op.22a

12. Overture	3’54
13. Adagio	8’40
14. Polka	2’08
15. Dance	2’10

National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine
Theodore Kuchar *conductor*

Recording: 1-8 June 2005, Grand Studio of the National Radio Symphony Company of Ukraine in Kiev
Producer: Alexander Hornostai
Engineer: Andrei Mokrytsky
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FILM MUSIC

CD16	**72’09**
HAMLET Suite	
1. Prelude	2’18
2. The Ball at the Palace	3’41
3. The Ghost	1’20
4. In the Garden	3’03
5. Hamlet & Ophelia	3’51
6. Arrival of the Actors	2’11
7. Poisoning Scene	7’26
8. Duel and Death of Hamlet	3’57
GADFLY Suite Op.97a	
9. Overture	2’58
10. Contradance	2’27
11. Folk Feast	2’38
12. Interlude	2’49
13. Waltz “Barrel Organ”	1’54
14. Galop	1’57
15. Introduction	6’04
16. Romance	6’23
17. Intermezzo	5’32
18. Nocturne	3’52
19. Scene	3’21
20. Finale	3’07

National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine
Theodore Kuchar *conductor*

Recording: 1-8 June 2005, Grand Studio of the National Radio Symphony Company of Ukraine in Kiev
Producer: Alexander Hornostai
Engineer: Andrei Mokrytsky

PIANO CONCERTOS

CD17	**61’12**
PIANO CONCERTO No.1 in C minor Op.35	
1. I. Allegro moderato	6’13
2. II. Lento	8’26
3. III. Moderato	1’37
4. IV. Allegro con brio	6’51
PIANO CONCERTO No.2 in F Op.102	
5. I. Allegro	7’36
6. II. Andante	7’35
7. III. Allegro	5’25
3 FANTASTIC DANCES Op.5	
8. I. March - Allegretto	1’16
9. II. Waltz - Andantino	1’29
10. III. Polka - Allegretto	1’04
PRELUDE AND FUGUE No.24 Op.87	
11. Preludio - Andante	4’50
12. Fugue - Moderato	8’43

Giuseppe Andaloro *piano*

Orchestra Sinfonica Abruzzese
Filippo Arlia *conductor*

Recording: 22-24 September 2023, Auditorum Renzo Piano L’Aquila, Italy
Sound engineer: Raffaele Cacciola
Technical assistant: Francesco Valastro
Editing and mastering BartokStudio

VIOLIN CONCERTOS

CD18 **70’54**

VIOLIN CONCERTO No.1 in A minor Op.99

1. I. Nocturne. Moderato	11’37
2. II. Scherzo. Allegro	6’39
3. III. Passacaglia. Andante	13’56
4. IV. Burlesque. Allegro con brio	5’02

VIOLIN CONCERTO No.2 in C-sharp minor Op.129

5. I. Moderato	13’15
6. II. Adagio	10’48
7. III. Adagio - Allegro	9’29

Ivan Pochekin *violin*

Russian National Orchestra
Valentin Uryupin *conductor*

Recording: 2019, Grand Hall of the Moscow Conservatory
Director of recording: Mikhail Spassky

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CELLO CONCERTOS

CD19 **64’53**

CELLO CONCERTO No.1 Op.107

1. I. Allegretto	6’15
2. II. Moderato	11’33
3. III. Cadenza	5’52
4. IV. Allegro con moto	4’39

CELLO CONCERTO No.2 Op.126

5. I. Largo	15’44
6. II. Allegretto	4’20
7. III. Allegretto	16’18

Alexander Ivashkin *cello*

Moscow Symphony Orchestra
Valeri Polyansky *conductor*

Recording: 7–9 October 1997, Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory
Licensed from Ode Records, New Zealand

CHAMBER MUSIC

CD20 **72’01**

PIANO QUINTET in G minor Op.57

1. I. Prelude. Lento – Poco più mosso – Lento 5’00
2. II. Fugue. Adagio 9’45
3. III. Scherzo. Allegretto 3’19
4. IV. Intermezzo. Lento 6’55
5. V. Finale. Allegretto 7’23

Quartetto Noûs
Tiziano Baviera · Alberto Franchin *violins*
Sara Dambruoso *viola* · Tommaso Tesini *cello*

6. **PIANO TRIO No.1 in C minor Op.8** 13’09

PIANO TRIO No.2 in E minor Op.67

7. I. Andante - moderato 7’24
8. II. Allegro con brio 3’04
9. III. Largo 4’53
10. IV. Allegretto 10’47

Trio Kanon
Lena Yokoyama *violin*
Alessandro Copia *cello*
Diego Maccagnola *piano*

Recording: **Piano Quintet** March 2023, **Trios** September 2024, BartokStudio, Bernareggio (MB), Italy
Sound engineer: Raffaele Cacciola
Editing: Alberto Franchin (Piano Quintet)
Mastering: BartokStudio

CD21 **82’59**

SONATA FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO Op.134

1. I. Andante 9’24
2. II. Allegretto 6’10
3. III. Largo 12’34

Isabelle van Keulen *violin*
Ronald Brautigam *piano*

SONATA FOR VIOLA AND PIANO Op.147

4. I. Moderato 9’28
5. II. Allegretto 7’07
6. III. Adagio 12’19

Duo Phoné
Leonardo Taio *viola* · Sofi a Adinolfi *piano*

CELLO SONATA in D minor Op.40

7. I. Allegro non troppo 11’20
8. II. Allegro 3’19
9. III. Largo 7’02
10. IV. Allegro 3’49

Timora Rosler *cello*
Klára Würtz *piano*

Recording: **Op.134** 23/24 March 1992, Maria Minor Church Utrecht, The Netherlands; **Op.40** September 1997, Church Kortenhoef, The Netherlands; **Op.147** 29-30 October & 20-22 November 2023, Auditorium “Negri” - Cavalli Musica Castrezzato, Brescia, Italy
Recording engineer: Adriaan Verstijnen (Op.134)
Sound engineer, editing and mastering: Marco Taio (Op.147)
Artistic director: Donatella Colombo (Op.147)
Recording producer: Tini Mathot (Op.134), Marnix Bongers (Op.40)

STRING QUARTETS

CD22 **77’06**

STRING QUARTET No.2 in A Op.68 (1944)

1. Overture: Moderato con moto	8’03
2. Recitative & Romance: Adagio	10’53
3. Waltz: Allegro	5’59
4. Theme & variations: Adagio	10’47

STRING QUARTET No.8 in C minor Op.110 (1960)

5. I. Largo	4’40
6. II. Allegro molto	2’45
7. III. Allegretto	4’15
8. IV. Largo	4’33
9. V. Largo	4’04

STRING QUARTET No.13 in B-flat minor Op.138 (1970)

10. Adagio	20’44

Rubio Quartet
Dirk van de Velde *violin I* · Dirk van den Hauwe *violin II*
Marc Sonnaert *viola* · Peter Devos *cello*

CD23 **71’39**

STRING QUARTET No.3 in F Op.73 (1946)

1. I. Allegretto	6’40
2. II. Moderato con moto	4’54
3. III. Allegro non troppo	4’01
4. IV. Adagio	5’41
5. V. Moderato	10’40

STRING QUARTET No.7 in F-sharp minor Op.108 (1960)

6. I. Allegretto	3’33
7. II. Lento	3’36
8. III. Allegro	6’03

STRING QUARTET No.9 in E-flat Op.117 (1964)

9. I. Moderato con moto	4’20
10. II. Adagio	4’34
11. III. Allegretto	3’47
12. IV. Adagio	3’32
13. V. Allegro	9’54

Rubio Quartet
Dirk van de Velde *violin I* · Dirk van den Hauwe *violin II*
Marc Sonnaert *viola* · Peter Devos *cello*

CD24 **76’16**

STRING QUARTET No.5 in B-flat Op.92 (1952)

1. I. Allegro non troppo	10’44
2. II. Andante	10’41
3. III. Moderato	10’25

STRING QUARTET No.11 in F minor Op.122 (1966)

4. Introduction: Andantino	2’15
5. Scherzo: Allegretto	2’57
6. Recitativo: Adagio	1’18
7. Etude: Allegro	1’19
8. Humoresque: Allegro	1’08
9. Elegy: Adagio	4’15
10. Conclusion: Moderato	3’41

STRING QUARTET No.12 in D-flat Op.133 (1968)

11. I. Moderato	6’41
12. II. Allegretto	20’29

Rubio Quartet
Dirk van de Velde *violin I* · Dirk van den Hauwe *violin II*
Marc Sonnaert *viola* · Peter Devos *cello*

CD25 **75’18**

STRING QUARTET No.4 in D Op.83 (1949)

1. I. Allegretto	4’27
2. II. Andantino	6’35
3. III. Allegretto	4’07
4. IV. Allegretto	10’28

STRING QUARTET No.6 in G Op.101 (1956)

5. I. Allegretto	6’42
6. II. Moderato con moto	4’56
7. III. Lento	5’57
8. IV. Lento-Allegretto	7’44

STRING QUARTET No.10 in A-flat Op.118 (1964)

9. I. Andante	4’23
10. II. Allegretto furioso	4’15
11. III. Adagio	6’13
12. IV. Allegretto	9’08

Rubio Quartet
Dirk van de Velde *violin I* · Dirk van den Hauwe *violin II*
Marc Sonnaert *viola* · Peter Devos *cello*

CD26 **75’18**

STRING QUARTET No.1 in C Op.49 (1935)

1. I. Moderato	3’57
2. II. Moderato	4’43
3. III. Allegro molto	2’12
4. IV. Allegro	3’03

STRING QUARTET No.14 in F-sharp Op.142 (1973)

5. I. Allegretto	8’22
6. II. Adagio	10’57
7. III. Allegretto	8’44

STRING QUARTET No.15 in E-flat minor Op.144 (1974)

8. Elegy: Adagio	12’23
9. Serenade: Adagio	5’14
10. Intermezzo: Adagio	1’49
11. Nocturne: Adagio	4’54
12. Funeral March: Adagio molto	4’38
13. Epilogue: Adagio	6’40

Rubio Quartet
Dirk van de Velde *violin I* · Dirk van den Hauwe *violin II*
Marc Sonnaert *viola* · Peter Devos *cello*

Recording: April-September 2002, Church in Mullum, Belgium
Producer & Engineer: Johan Kinnivé, Signum Sound Productions

PRELUDES & FUGUES

CD27 **70’13**

PRELUDE ET FUGUE No.1 in C

1. Prélude	2’25
2. Fugue a 4 voices	2’53

PRÉLUDE ET FUGUE No.2 in A minor

3. Prélude	0’52
4. Fugue a 3 voices	1’26

PRÉLUDE ET FUGUE No.3 in G

5. Prélude	1’48
6. Fugue a 3 voices	2’08

PRÉLUDE ET FUGUE No.4 in E minor

7. Prélude	2’34
8. Fugue a 4 voices	5’06

PRÉLUDE ET FUGUE No.5 in D

9. Prélude	1’48
10. Fugue a 3 voices	1’50

PRELUDE ET FUGUE No.6 in B minor

11. Prélude	1’31
12. Fugue a 4 voices	4’12

PRÉLUDE ET FUGUE No.7 in A

13. Prélude	1’24
14. Fugue a 3 voices	2’28

PRÉLUDE ET FUGUE No.8 in F-sharp minor

15. Prélude	1’09
16. Fugue a 3 voices	5’42

PRÉLUDE ET FUGUE No.9 in E

17. Prélude	2’48
18. Fugue a 2 voices	1’39

PRÉLUDE ET FUGUE No.10 in C-sharp minor

19. Prélude	2’03
20. Fugue a 4 voices	5’06

PRELUDE ET FUGUE No.11 in B

21. Prélude	1’15
22. Fugue a 3 voices	2’21

PRÉLUDE ET FUGUE No.12 in G-sharp minor

23. Prélude	4’18
24. Fugue a 4 voices	4’08

PRÉLUDE ET FUGUE No.13 in F-sharp

25. Prélude	1’59
26. Fugue a 5 voices	4’26

Mūza Rubackytė *piano*

CD28 **75’28**

PRELUDE ET FUGUE No.14 in E-flat minor

1. Prélude	4’40
2. Fugue a 3 voices	3’11

PRÉLUDE ET FUGUE No.15 in D-flat

3. Prélude	2’45
4. Fugue a 4 voices	1’59

PRÉLUDE ET FUGUE No.16 in B-flat minor

5. Prélude	3’30
6. Fugue a 3 voices	7’31

PRÉLUDE ET FUGUE No.17 in A-flat

7. Prélude	1’47
8. Fugue a 4 voices	3’33

PRELUDE ET FUGUE No.18 in F minor

9. Prélude	2’15
10. Fugue a 4 voices	3’36

PRÉLUDE ET FUGUE No.19 in E-flat

11. Prélude	2’02
12. Fugue a 3 voices	2’42

PRÉLUDE ET FUGUE No.20 in C minor

13. Prélude	3’38
14. Fugue a 4 voices	4’19

PRÉLUDE ET FUGUE No.21 in B-flat

15. Prélude	1’26
16. Fugue a 3 voices	2’51

PRELUDE ET FUGUE No.22 in G minor

17. Prélude	2’29
18. Fugue a 4 voices	3’54

PRELUDE ET FUGUE No.23 in F

19. Prélude	2’33
20. Fugue a 3 voices	3’44

PRÉLUDE ET FUGUE No.24 in D minor

21. Prélude	3’47
22. Fugue a 4 voices	6’30

Mūza Rubackytė *piano*

Recording: August 2006, Hall of Luthuanian National Philharmonic, Vilnius, Luthuania
Engineering-Montage: Corsin Vogel

LINER NOTES

Who is Dmitri Shostakovich, half a century since his death at a hospital in Moscow? At different points during his lifetime, he was both celebrated and vilified within the Soviet Union, as a decadent or dissident artist, or a heroic successor to Russian composers in the tradition of Glinka, Mussorgsky and Tchaikovsky. The publication in 1979 of *Testimony*, purporting to present his memoirs, stirred up controversy even while apparently revealing the nervous man behind the fragile mask.

A decade later, the fall of Soviet communism and the brief era of *glasnost* stimulated performances and intensified a public interest in Shostakovich which has only increased over the following decades. Even as the scope of those performances has broadened, beyond landmark works such as the Fifth, Tenth and Fifteenth symphonies and the Eighth String Quartet, to allow for a more rounded assessment, his music has often been weighed and appreciated more in terms of its historical significance than its musical and expressive values.

What is this music really *about*, we are encouraged to consider. 'Aboutness', circumstance and anecdote have been woven into the fabric of the music: appealing to many new listeners, but exerting a magnetic pull away from Shostakovich's own calling as an artist. It should be possible, in retrospect, to hold these competing forces in a kind of balance; to understand how his music could not have sounded any other way had it been written at another time or by another musician.

It would be hard to overstate the precocious nature of Shostakovich's musical mind. He was born in St Petersburg on 25 September 1906 to Dmitrij Boleslavovich Shostakovich (1875-1922), a government inspector of weights and measures, and his wife Sofja Vasilevna (1878-1955). He began to learn the piano under his mother's instruction, and by 1914 he was already writing piano pieces. Now lost, they featured a theme which Shostakovich quoted 60 years later in one of his very last pieces, the *Suite on Verses by Michelangelo*.

This theme appears within a setting he titled 'Immortality'. When we weave tapestries and tell stories about Shostakovich, based on our understanding of his music and his time, they are never more complex than the ones he wove himself. He was thinking musically from infancy, it seems, and with rapid maturity as a composer came pride in craftsmanship which never deserted him. Admitted in 1919 to the conservatoire in what was then Petrograd (now St Petersburg), Shostakovich wrote his 'Opus 1' at the age of 13, a Scherzo for orchestra preceded by a small catalogue of works for piano.

The First Symphony bears the Opus number of 19, but Shostakovich viewed it as another Opus 1 of sorts: the work in which he first became fully himself. He wrote it as a graduation exercise from the conservatoire, under the tutelage of his professor of composition, Maximilian Steinberg, The opening, offhand duet of trumpet and bassoon announces an oblique approach to this summit of compositional form, in the tradition of Beethoven and the 'wrong'-key gesture opening his First Symphony.

The artistic manifesto is underlined by the following saucy clarinet solo. Yes, I can write a four-movement symphony in classic style, says the 19-year-old composer, I can write immaculate counterpoint and sparkling orchestration – the balletic trio of the Scherzo, straight out of *The Nutcracker* – but on my own terms. In fact Steinberg deprecated the abrupt switches of mood in the middle movements, and it is impossible to imagine the symphony taking shape without the composer's experience already acquired as a pianist improvising to accompany silent films.

Steinberg and Shostakovich soon parted ways. 'On leaving the Conservatoire,' recalled Steinberg, 'Shostakovich came under the influence of people who professed the musical principles of the "extremist" West. This was in 1925 … One of Shostakovich's first compositions was his sonata, written in contemporary idiom and called by him October Symphony. Already in this there was an unhealthy tendency to "adapt" formalistic language for the expression of revolutionary ideas. The most

extreme statement of Shostakovich's "new" tendency was the *Aphorisms*. When he brought them to me, I told him that I understood nothing in them, that they were quite foreign – after which he ceased coming to me.'

The following two symphonies are the product of a halcyon era in the late 1920s when revolutionary ideals in both art and politics achieved brief consonance. The murky string dissonances, slow pile-up of textures and angular trumpet solo opening the Second surely emerge from Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*, as much as the episodic single-movement form blurs and elides traditional principles of symphonic form and unity. The Third strikes a partial reconciliation with those principles, presenting four movements in one at a lower level of harmonic dissonance, still declining to develop its ideas so much as juxtapose them in jump-cut sequences of brightly lit and sharply edited scenes.

The stage is set, symphonically speaking, for the hammering ostinato to open the Fourth Symphony – but before that came Shostakovich's second opera, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, which had opened to wildly enthusiastic notices and full houses in January 1934. Only once Joseph Stalin saw the new opera for himself, at a revival in January 1936, did the composer's stock fall – literally overnight, once the front page of *Pravda* the following morning carried its infamous editorial, 'Muddle instead of Music', very possibly written by Stalin himself.

'From the first moment, the listener is shocked by a deliberately dissonant, confused stream of sound. Fragments of melody, embryonic phrases appear - only to disappear again in the din, the grinding, and the screaming… Here we have "leftist" confusion instead of natural, human music… The danger of this trend to Soviet music is clear. Leftist distortion in painting, poetry, teaching, and science. Petty-bourgeois innovations lead to a break with real art, real science, and real literature… All this is coarse, primitive, and vulgar. The music quacks, grunts and growls, and suffocates itself… in the most vulgar manner.'

In the aftermath of the editorial, Shostakovich carried on teaching, and completing the finale of the Fourth, which went into rehearsal in December 1936. Noting unease on the part of the musicians, Shostakovich called a short break and consulted the conductor, Fritz Stiedry. 'If this music is played at this time," asked Shostakovich, 'do you think there will be a public scandal?' Stiedry, whose attitude toward musical scandals was typically Western, tried at first to laugh away the composer's fears; but Shostakovich persisted. ''Should I withdraw the Symphony?' he asked. Stiedry replied that this was a decision which only the composer could make. Shostakovich went to the office of the Leningrad Philharmonic management, called off the remainder of the rehearsal, and cancelled the premiere. Later on he went so far as to repudiate the Symphony as 'unrepresentative of his present ideals in music'.

It was the polymathic academic Ivan Sollertinsky who had introduced Shostakovich to *Wozzeck*, and to the music of Gustav Mahler, whose imprint on the Fourth could finally be heard once Shostakovich felt confident enough of his life and career to permit its belated premiere to be given in December 1961. The rustic counterpoint of the Fourth's central scherzo, the circus-like sequence of dances and marches in the long finale are certainly 'Mahlerian', but then the unusual form of the whole work echoes Bruckner's Ninth in its incomplete state, while the furious fugato at the centre of the first movement takes its cue from a similar passage in Nielsen's Fifth (premiered in 1922).

In the months that followed, *Pravda*'s blast against Shostakovich and modernist music in general was taken up by other Soviet publications. Usually it was Sollertinsky who took the brunt of the attacks. He was portrayed as a blend of Mephisto and Svengali, who had lured his composer friend into a morass of Western formalism. Not that the composer himself was spared from censure. Veniamin Basner, one of Shostakovich's composition students, recalls that in 1937, the composer was interrogated by the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (later renamed the KGB) concerning an alleged plot to assassinate Stalin; only the timely imprisonment of his interrogator saved Shostakovich from possible arrest.

In 1970, the composer recalled to Flora Iasinovskaia Litvinova, 'Yes, those were desperate times… You ask if I would have been different

without “Party guidance”? Yes, almost certainly … the line that I was pursuing when I wrote the Fourth Symphony would have been stronger and sharper … I would have displayed more brilliance, used more sarcasm, I could have revealed my ideas openly instead of having to resort to camouflage; I would have written more pure music.’

Perhaps so; but the Fourth bears comparison with Richard Strauss’s *Elektra* as an ultima Thule, an outer zone of density and complexity from which the only plausible direction was backwards or sideways. With the Fifth Symphony of 1937, Shostakovich achieved this knight’s move and rehabilitated himself. The famous subtitle – ‘A Soviet Artist’s Reply to Just Criticism’ – says one thing. The finale says another, with its quotation from one of the composer’s recent settings of poems by Pushkin, on the theme of rebirth.

Only now, in his early 30s, did Shostakovich feel equipped to address the genre of string quartet which generations of composers had regarded as the ultimate test of technique. As in the First Symphony, close observance of Classical-era models (especially Haydn) served him well in the First Quartet of 1938, but it is the Second Quartet of six years later, where he begins to find his quartet voice, and meanwhile he had written another three symphonies.

Written on the eve of the Great Patriotic War, as the Russians call it, the Sixth remains one of the composer’s most singular and cryptic pieces: a huge slow movement, descending at points to stasis, succeeded by a biting Scherzo and a circus-galop finale. The individual elements unmistakably emerge from forms developed in the Fourth and Fifth, and go on to serve as a torso for the composer’s adoption of a five-movement form in later masterpieces, while defying coherence on their own terms except as an obstinate refusal to toe the line.

Past the broad canvas and patriotic call to arms of the Seventh, the Eighth Symphony is the first work to adopt this compelling five-movement plan – a discursive opening, a pair of contrasting scherzos, a ruminative elegy and a finale to answer the opening – which Shostakovich would then adapt to compelling effect for the Ninth and Thirteenth symphonies, and the Third, Eighth and Ninth quartets.

Alongside his Tenth Symphony, Shostakovich took special pride in the Third Quartet, in a way that most artists do, who have to think their latest piece is their best. More telling is the testimony of Fyodor Druzhinin, violist of the Beethoven Quartet at a much later period in the composer’s life: ‘Only once did I see Shostakovich visibly moved by his own music. We were rehearsing the Third Quartet… When we finished playing he sat quite still in silence like a wounded bird, tears streaming down his face. This was the only time that I saw Shostakovich so open and defenceless.’

Having composed it at his summer dacha in 1946, Shostakovich dedicated the Third to the Beethoven Quartet, who went on to premiere all but the Fifteenth (and last) Quartet. Cast in five movements, enclosing two scherzos and a kind of grave passacaglia, the quartet shares several features with both the Eighth (1944) and Ninth (1945) symphonies, less laboured than the former, less bizarre than the latter. The opening Allegro is almost too perfect as an exemplar of 20th-century sonata form, and the two-chord payoff looking back to Haydn and Beethoven. The jagged opening of the second scherzo directly anticipates the more famous Scherzo of the Tenth Symphony supposedly conceived as a portrait of Stalin.

It no longer seems like a historical accident that Shostakovich turned more and more towards the Quartet and away from the Symphony as genres during the course of his career. He began writing quartets in earnest as part of the sudden swerve of aesthetic direction forced upon him by official condemnation of the modernist language and amoral outlook of *Lady Macbeth*. But the supposedly ‘abstract’ mode of expression and harmonious architecture of a Classical-era quartet offered a powerful outlet to a composer never short of ideas.

Shostakovich also shared with Mozart a natural fluency in transferring those ideas to the page, and a bittersweet, major-minor, happy-sad vein that comes to the fore in the finale of the Third Quartet, which begins in offbeat fashion with a long, furtive and ruminating cello solo – again, not

unlike the slow introductions to the finales of several symphonies, but more ambivalent. There is a wheedling second theme that enters like a servant in Chekhov, then a foot-tapping, vodka-soaked tune, before the emotional balance is tilted by the climactic return of the passacaglia theme. Even the coda's fragmentary quotation of the movement's opening theme resists trite or straightforward interpretation. It means what you want it to mean.

It was around this central stage of his career, through the late 1940s and 50s, that Shostakovich's melodies took on a more stepwise shape – advancing and receding or rising and falling by tone or semitone, as if making a cautious foray over dangerous ground – and a more vocal cast. Formative in this regard are his reorchestration of Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, and his incidental music for Kozintsev's film version of *King Lear*, both completed in 1940.

No less consequential for the future direction of his music and thought was his first meeting in 1943 with the Polish composer Mieczyslaw Weinberg, who became one of his closest friends and colleagues. Weinberg had fled the Warsaw ghetto, nearly all of his relatives having been murdered by the Nazis, and the scourge of anti-semitism burned itself into Shostakovich's consciousness, and artistic conscience. The full expression of that conscience soon emerged in the settings *From Jewish Folk Poetry* of 1948, and the adoption of klezmer idioms in the Second Piano Trio (1944), the First Violin Concerto (1947) and Eighth String Quartet (1960).

At the same time – in solidarity, perhaps, also no doubt as an act of defiance and compositional ingenuity – Shostakovich developed his autobiographical cryptogram, D-S-C-H (D, E flat, C, B natural, in German music-notation). This cryptogram becomes the defining motif of the Tenth Symphony premiered in 1953, Shostakovich having left off writing symphonies for eight years (or, at least, completing them for performance). The death of Stalin in March 1953 no doubt marked a turning point for him it did for all Russian people, but the underlying narrative of the Tenth also juxtaposes his cryptogram (in the slow movement) with that of a former pupil and infatuation, Elmira Nazirova.

Meanwhile, throughout the 1950s, Shostakovich was finding ever more distinctively personal and ingenious ways to fuse inscrutable humour with Classical phrase shapes and a Russian-accented spirit of elegy, in the string quartets Nos. 4-7. At the beginning of the decade he had written a set of 24 preludes and fugues for piano, overtly emulating the exemplar of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, which served perhaps even more than the quartets as a distillation of his musical thought and ideas, ranging from fluent Baroque polyphony to quasi-serial procedures. All these themes and preoccupations come together at the end of the decade in the Eighth Quartet, which Shostakovich composed in a burning, Schumann-like frenzy of inspiration in the summer of 1960. He regarded the quartet as his finest work to date, and dedicated it as an instrumental requiem 'to the victims of fascism and the war'.

Increasingly ill, increasingly celebrated abroad but also increasingly left behind by a younger avant-garde generation of Soviet composers such as Sofia Gubaidulina, Alfred Schnittke and Galina Ustvolskaya, Shostakovich turned increasingly inward around this time towards the development of a 'late style'. However, there is a precedent for the Eighth Quartet as an instrumental requiem in the Eleventh Symphony of 1957, ostensibly bearing a cinematic narrative to honour the fallen of Russia's first, failed revolution of 1905 but covertly paying tribute to the victims of the failed Hungarian revolution of 1956, when Russian tanks crushed protestors on the streets of Budapest.

The festive-heroic tone of the Twelfth Symphony, dedicated to the memory of Lenin and depicting the events of the 1917 Russian revolution, has proved harder to parse as a piece of crypto-dissidence, though the first movement quotes a revolutionary song with the words 'Shame on you tyrants' and the Polish song *The Warsaw March*, both of which appear in the finale of the Eleventh. No such difficulties arise in the case of the Thirteenth Symphony, which Shostakovich was inspired to write after reading the poetic account of Yevgeny Yevtushenko, standing at the edge of the ravine in Kyiv where thousands upon thousands of Jews were murdered

by the Nazis, in an atrocity subsequently erased from history by the Communists.

At 55, Shostakovich was the Soviet Union's most celebrated composer. Yevtushenko, 26 years his junior, already had a small catalogue of published work but also a reputation at stake, whereas the composer chose and set his texts with the attitude of a man who had nothing to lose. All the same, it was an astonishingly bold move on the composer's part – to ally himself with a young dissident poet; to lay his own dissidence on the line; and to make explicit what listeners to the Eighth Quartet had had to read between the lines.

Initially he envisaged his setting of *Babi Yar* to stand alone, before he felt the stirrings of another symphony. Three more poems from Yevtushenko's latest collection presented themselves as fit for the purpose, and he asked the poet for another – which became the symphony's fourth and in some ways most openly dissident movement of them all, 'Fears'. Stalin, after all, was only eight years in his grave when Shostakovich commissioned the poet to recall 'the secret fear of an anonymous denunciation/The secret fear of a knock at the door.'

In the years of Nikita Khruschev's leadership – the so-called 'Thaw' – Shostakovich walked a fraying tightrope between inward expression and outward conformity. The exhumation of the Fourth Symphony in 1961 seems pivotal in the content and the expression of his later music. Directly preceding the Eighth Quartet is another, less-known but pivotal work in the formation of a late style, the song-cycle of Satires which seemed initially unperformable until the soprano Galina Vishnevskaya suggested an expedient subtitle, 'Pictures of the Past'.

Words and poetry increasingly became the means through which the composer renewed his creative voice. Immediately after the Thirteenth Symphony, Shostakovich made another Mussorgsky orchestration, of the *Songs and Dances of Death*. Also around this time, he produced a revision of *Lady Macbeth*, retitled as *Katerina Izmailova*, and the mood of fretful reconciliation with the past is captured by the Ninth Quartet. The central movement's quotation of the *William Tell* Overture revives an *idée fixe* which bears full and final fruition in the Fifteenth Symphony.

Before that, though, comes the mini-cycle of quartets, Nos. 11-14, which the composer dedicated to each of the four members of the Beethoven Quartet. These works make increasingly radical experiments with form and gesture, exemplified by the slow scream to close No.13, as though the composer would not be outdone by his younger contemporaries – and indeed the striking sequence of slow movements in the Quartet No.15 has a precedent in the Fourth Quartet of Boris Tishchenko. Meanwhile the composer's fusion of song-cycle and symphony in the Thirteenth found a private resting place in the Fourteenth, setting poems on death by Apollinaire, Lorca, Küchelbecker and Rilke. 'Death awaits all of us', said Shostakovich at a public rehearsal of the 14th Symphony prior to its premiere in September 1969. 'I don't see anything good about such an end to our lives, and this is what I am trying to convey in this work.'

The thin string line (not quite a 12-note row, though it does include all the notes of the chromatic scale) that opens the Symphony is one of those typical Shostakovich melodies that, orchestrated for fortissimo brass, could plausibly find its way into the triumphal finale of the patriotic 12th. Here, the melody is pitched closer in tone to the string quartets that were coming to dominate Shostakovich's creative work; really, the Symphony is scored for expanded quartet, percussion and two singers – perhaps the three kinds of musical voice that meant most to him through his career.

If there is such a thing as the secret Shostakovich, here it is, finally revealed at a time when he had nothing to lose. 'Perhaps, in part,' he said, 'I am following in the footsteps of the great Russian composer Mussorgsky. His cycle *Songs and Dances of Death* – maybe not all of it, but at least "The Field Marshal" – is a great protest against death and a reminder to live one's life honestly, nobly, decently, never committing base acts.'

Elsewhere, however, the composer was more specific. 'I don't protest against death in [the 14th]. I protest against those butchers who execute people. You can and must protest against violent death.' This is, then, a

kind of violent anti-Requiem for the Terror and for its perpetrator, Joseph Stalin. At the heart of the symphony is a quartet of Apollinaire poems, which find the poet in prison and contemplating suicide. In the last two songs, when the two soloists join as one for the first time, to sing of all-powerful death keeping watch even in the hour of happiness, the peremptory rap of a woodblock suggests that the grim reaper is already knocking at the door.

There is no escape from mortality in Shostakovich's late music, nor is there the consolation of an afterlife. When asked if he believed in God, the composer replied, 'no, and I am very sorry about it.' If he believed in anything, perhaps, it was music, and the indomitable will to survive through artistic expression. Percussion returns to close out the Fifteenth Symphony, directly recalling the clickety-clack at the end of the Scherzo of the Fourth Symphony, as the most vivid symbol of a musician's voice that could not and would not be silenced.

EXTENSIVE LINER NOTES

SYMPHONIES

Rudolf Barshai
A Profile

Of the great conductors of our time, Rudolf Barshai is surely the one most closely associated with the contemporary composers whose music he conducts. He studied composition with Shostakovich, discussed orchestration with Prokofiev, and established himself as a forceful advocate of the music of Alexander Lokshin. But there were a great many more composers who wrote works for the orchestra Barshai founded in 1955 and frequently took on tour - the orchestra with which he gained world renown: The Moscow Chamber Orchestra. It was he who first acquainted Russian audiences with Baroque music and chamber orchestra literature. Not only did he commission works from composers, he arranged their pieces as well. His probably best-known orchestration is the Chamber Symphony after Dmitri Shostakovich's Eighth String Quartet.

As Barshai worked with all of these composers, his interpretation of 20th century Russian music possesses unparalleled authenticity. He partnered many of them, often performing Shostakovich's music with the composer at the piano: not only as a conductor but as a violist, for Barshai was an incomparable master of the viola. He regularly played chamber music with David Oistrakh and Sviatoslav Richter, Emil Gilels and Leonid Kogan, Mstislav Rostropovich and Yehudi Menuhin.

After Shostakovich's death, Rudolf Barshai emigrated to the West, where he built up a new career. Now he began conducting the great orchestras of the world in classical repertoire ranging from Bach and Mozart, Schubert and Brahms, to Mahler and Shostakovich. He directed the Vienna Symphony and the London Symphony, the BBC Symphony and the Philharmonia, the Orchestre National de France and the Orchestre de Paris, the Deutsches Symphonieorchester Berlin and the Bavarian Radio Symphony, plus a great many other orchestras in Europe, Asia and the

United States. He was awarded an honorary doctorate of music by the University of Southampton.

Although Rudolf Barshai has made countless recordings - the most important of his current projects is a complete cycle of the fifteen Shostakovich symphonies with the Cologne Radio Orchestra - he always kept aloof from the media circus. Eminently serious, he shuns any form of glitz and glamour, and is not one of the jet-setting conductors that constantly dash round the world performing under-rehearsed programmes. Barshai's name stands for the masterful realisation of the composer's will; a principled advocate of their ideas, he dedicates his legendary ability to rapidly mould an orchestra's sound to his conceptions to one sole purpose: achieving clarity and focus. But then with astonishing results. Few interpreters today can so powerfully bring out the meaning of a composition purely on the basis of the score. Barshai needs no additional ingredients to make a piece "interesting"; he shows what the music itself has to say. His readings of the Beethoven symphonies are unique for their clarity of form and forceful architecture. On hearing Barshai's interpretation of Beethoven's Eroica, Shostakovich remarked: " We haven't heard Beethoven like that since Klemperer." And indeed, Barshai's music-making could most easily be compared to Klemperer's. An unerring stylistic instinct allows Barshai to go to the very heart of a Mahler symphony and to answer all the questions Mahler readings so often leave open when conductors pursue only the superficial effects that are so easy to realise.

One of the reasons for this is surely the training Barshai received in Moscow in the 1940s and '50s - the training that produced all the famous Russian musicians that have helped shape the second half of our century. Barshai began his violin studies at the Moscow Conservatory with the legendary Lev Zeitlin. Zeitlin had been the star pupil of Leopold Auer, "father" of the Russian school of violin-playing. An Austrian, Auer had brought the authentic spirit of the Viennese classical period to Russia.

While still a student, Barshai developed such enthusiasm for string-quartet playing that he moved from the violin to the viola, for he wanted to found a first-rate quartet. He subsequently became a founding member of both the Borodin Quartet and the Tschaikovsky Quartet. This was also the period when his friendship with Shostakovich began. And it was Barshai who stood up to massive bureaucratic resistance and, in close creative collaboration with the composer, gave the first performance of Shostakovich's Fourteenth symphony with his orchestra in 1969.

For decades Sviatoslav Richter, perpetually dissatisfied with half-hearted" orchestral accompaniment", would work with only two conductors: Benjamin Britten and Rudolf Barshai.
Barshai continually seeks opportunities to engage in creative work of his own as well, composing, orchestrating and arranging, always on a quest for new sounds. He has recently arranges further string quartets by Shostakovich for small orchestra. In the year 2000 he intends to conclude a project that has occupied him for many years: the completion and orchestration of Gustav Mahler's Tenth Symphony, which has thus far existed only in creditable performing editions. The premiere of the Barshai version will undoubtedly constitute a new and meaningful addition to the symphonic repertoire.
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Symphony No.1 in F minor Op.10
Born in St Petersburg in 1906, Shostakovich was, without doubt, the greatest Symphonist of the Soviet Era. Unlike his contemporary, Prokofiev who grew up in Tsarist Russia and then emigrated to Paris in 1914 only returning to Soviet Russia permanently in 1933, Shostakovich spent his whole life in Russia. This loyalty to his homeland was to land him in trouble with the Soviet authorities on several occasions: once after official disapproval of his opera "Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk", again after the War when criticised by Zhdanov and yet again after his Thirteenth Symphony had criticised Soviet Anti-Semitism. Dogged by ill-health in his later years, he nevertheless is the prime example of a composer writing under political

pressure, sometimes creating highly effective musico-political propaganda and at others retreating into an intensely private world.

Shostakovich's first teacher was his mother but after his entrance to the Petrograd Conservatory in 1919, he was taken under the wing of Glazunov (himself a composer of eight complete Symphonies and an unfinished Ninth) and he graduated in 1926 with his First Symphony as Diploma work.

Although showing influences of his teacher as well as Prokofiev and Stravinsky, the First Symphony holds the germs of much of Shostakovich's later style and is an amazing achievement for a nineteen year old student which even now remains firmly in the symphonic repertoire as one of his most approachable and best-loved works.

The opening of the First Symphony places it firmly in the world of the" grotesquerie" of Stravinsky's "Petrushka", a mood that would permeate many of the later works. The mood continues in the following Scherzo with its homage to Prokofiev in the introduction of the skeltering piano part. The Adagio introduces another of Shostakovich's enduring influences the shade of Mahler whilst the Finale introduces a note of tragedy until a crescendo and accelerando leads to a final Presto, again a hallmark of some of the Symphonies to come.

Symphony No.2 in B Major Op.14 - To October

Only a year after the undoubted success of his First Symphony, an admittedly conventional work for orchestra written as a graduation piece whilst at the Leningrad Conservatory, Shostakovich turned his hand to a new genre of political statement. This was a time before the rigours of Stalinist artistic policy, when young Soviets were creating a new and volatile artistic world led by "futurists" such as the theatre director Meyerhold and the poet Mayakovsky and influenced both by the new trends from the West as well as the idea of Art as propaganda. Shostakovich flung himself into the midst of these new trends with his Second symphony, a celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Russian October Revolution of 1917 and a commission from the State. As well as a large orchestra it uses a mixed chorus for a final setting of a poem in praise of Lenin by the Soviet propaganda poet Alexandr Bezymensky. The music is both forward looking and blatantly political although, unlike his later attempts at portraying Revolutionary fervour in the Eleventh and Twelfth Symphonies, there is no real programme here.

The single movement of the Symphony which lasts a bare twenty minutes or less, begins with a mysterious Largo introduction growing in density from the original rumble on a bass drum and adding ever higher and faster strands from the string sections. The brass section now enters and builds to a first climax as the whole orchestra reaches the triad of G flat. A new section begins, marked Allegro molto, where each instrument seems to battling on its own. After a vigorous theme from the horns, another climax is reached and the bass drum rumble announces another slower section. This apparent peace is then shattered by the sound of a factory siren (keyed in F sharp) which leads to the entry of the chorus and the setting of Bezymensky's poem. Although friends suggested that Shostakovich never took the words of the poem too seriously, he adds a gradually increasing sense of fervour to the setting, beginning with the basses and then adding the whole chorus to cries of: "Lenin" and "Struggle". After an orchestral interlude, the chorus reaches a climax on the word "October", until finally, identified with the proletariat and the struggle, the whole chorus shout out the final words of "October, the Commune, Lenin" after which the orchestra rushes back to close the work.

Symphony No.3 in E flat Op.20 - May Day

Following two years after his Second Symphony, Shostakovich's "May Day" Symphony again is a one movement propaganda work, this time more concerned with celebration rather than struggle.

Like its predecessor, it remains little performed today and again there is little attempt at true symphonic form, the whole canvas perhaps resembling more of a Revolutionary statement than a formal symphonic composition. First performed in January 1930 in Leningrad, it includes

another concluding choral setting - this time of a poem by Kirsanov which veers more towards the ideas of a hymn rather than a call to arms. Unlike its predecessor, this is a basically positive, even joyful work with little originality other than a repeated use of a motto rhythm, an idea which would resurface in a more impressive way in the wartime Seventh Symphony's opening movement.

Although the Third Symphony positively teams with ideas, too many for a span of less than thirty minutes, it is ultimately less satisfying than its predecessor. The work opens with the marking of Allegretto and seems to suggest a contemplation of nature with clarinet above pizzicato bass line but this soon gives way to a faster tempo, which after a dissonant chord continues ever more furiously. Despite a turn towards calm, this agitated section returns before a slower section appears which gives way to a Scherzo section. After an interlude of a melodic hymn, a series of recitatives appear over a drum roll. A series of strange glissandi effects follows which then lead to the final choral section.

The final section, barely five minutes in length, with its nods towards Beethoven's own Choral Symphony, is sung at full volume throughout with a slow moving melodic line which reaches a climax with the words of "Hoisting flags in the Sun" and "A step towards Socialism". The trumpet takes up a triumphant attitude and leads to a Coda which, as in the Beethoven model. ends the work on a note of positive, almost Agitprop fervour which is soon to be found missing in the immediately succeeding Symphonies.

Symphony No.4 in C minor Op.43

On January 28th 1936, an unsigned article appeared in the Soviet daily newspaper "Pravda" attacking so-called "Pluralism" in Soviet music and making special reference to Shostakovich's opera "Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk" which had received its first performance at the Maly Theatre in Leningrad on January 22nd 1934 and then repeated in Moscow at the Bolshoi in 1936. The author of the article referred to what is now considered one of the composer's masterpieces as an example of "the most negative qualities of the Meyerhold type, into Opera and Music". Complaints of "Muddle instead of Music" (the title of the article) led to the withdrawal of the opera and the introduction of a clear new policy, based on Stalin's own dislike of the music, which led to the shelving of Shostakovich's plan of a series of four operas based on Russian and Soviet Women and the end of hope of any further serious operas from the composer. The free atmosphere that had produced the great artistic experiments of "Futurism" was over and with the formation of a "USSR Composers' Union" all musical activity in the foreseeable future was to come under the rigid control of the state.

In addition, a meeting of the Union in Leningrad proceeded to condemn many of Shostakovich's other works such as "The Nose" and "The Limpid Stream" and the composer was now seen as an "enemy of the people". A vendetta was soon put in place against artists and prominent figures, some of whom were executed like Marshal Tukashevsky, Osip Mandelshtam and Isaac Babel, others who were imprisoned such as Popov and Mosolov. Finally the purge was to reach Meyerhold himself who was arrested and murdered in 1940.

These were dangerous times for Shostakovich who had been working on his Fourth Symphony during the period of September 1935 and May 1936. Although the Symphony began rehearsals in May 1936, Shostakovich decided to play safe and withdraw the work before its first performance and the work was not to be heard until after Stalin's death when it was given by the Moscow Philharmonic under Kiril Kondrashin in December 1961. The Symphony was not published until 1962, a revised critical edition appearing in 1976. The first performance in the West took place to great acclaim at the 1962 Edinburgh Festival.

The Fourth Symphony is Shostakovich at his most Mahlerian and is scored for an enormous orchestra consisting of six flutes (two doubling piccolos), three bassoons, one double bassoon, six clarinets, four oboes, four trumpets, three trombones, two tubas, eight horns, a large percussion section including six timpani, triangle, castanets, wood block, side drum,

cymbals, bass drum, gong, tubular bells, xylophone, glockenspiel and celesta as well as two harps, twenty first violins, eighteen second violins, sixteen violas, sixteen cellos and fourteen double basses. The work is cast in three movements of which the first and third last nearly half an hour each and can be divided into several sub-sections whilst the central Moderato weighs in at less than ten minutes, acting something like an interlude between the two outer movements.

The opening Allegretto consists of 476 bars and is in a free form where ideas come and go in even greater abundance than the Third Symphony, many once introduced never to be heard again. It begins with a violent onslaught from the brass section in March like tempo before leading into a series of contrasting episodes including a Scherzo, a slower section introduced by bassoon, a toccata for woodwinds and an amazing virtuoso fugal section for the strings played full out presto.
The movement is full of disparate climaxes and although it cannot be related to traditional Sonata form, it is an amazing tour de force ranging from the triumphs of the new industrialisation of the Soviet Union to the sadness of the Russian soul. The influence of Mahler becomes clear in the more conventional Second Movement - a mixture of Mahlerian Laendler and Shostakovich Scherzo.

There is a massed brass development of the second subject before the opening motive returns for a Coda which prefigures the exotic percussion effects of the composer's final, Fifteenth Symphony.

The final movement, although ostensibly a Largo, is, in fact, subdivided into five separate sections. The Largo opening is almost pure Mahler but leads to a climax which gives way to an Allegro driven by a two note ostinato. A third section takes us back to Mahler with echoes of a Viennese Waltz before the bassoon leads into a whirling Scherzo with a rather vulgar trombone solo. Finally, a lengthy ostinato for two timpanis introduces the concluding section which is surmounted by a brass chorale leading to a quiet Coda with solo trumpet and an ascending arpeggio on the celesta. Again there are pointers to the final Symphony, just as there are to the ever present spirit of Mahler.

Symphony No.5 in D minor Op.47

A Soviet Artist's Reply to Just Criticism" is how Shostakovich described his Fifth Symphony and no matter how posterity may judge his symphonic canon, the D minor Symphony is a much more classical and conventional attempt at a true Symphony than the preceding three works in the genre had been. Gone are the patriotic gestures and futuristic experiments of the two choral symphonies, numbers two and three and gone too is the sprawling undisciplined mass of ideas that marked the Fourth. Instead, there is a genuine attempt at writing a work that fits in with the historical genre that is marked by the achievements of Beethoven, Brahms and Tchaikovsky. The Fifth Symphony was written at white heat to counteract the claims of the Establishment that Shostakovich had become an artistic "Enemy of the People" and the work was completed - composed and orchestrated - in a period of just three months before its premiere in Leningrad on November 21st 1937. Shostakovich saw his new work in a style "conceived lyrically from start to finish" and the new piece saw him again in the forefront of Soviet composers ready for the celebration of twenty years of the Revolution.

Whether Shostakovich had merely bowed to pressure or had genuinely found his own new style is of little matter compared to the lasting popularity that the work ensured and continues to guarantee its composer. Laid out in conventional style, the work is in four movements, beginning quietly in the depths of the conscious and exploiting the rigours of true Sonata form. There is a feeling both of tranquillity and also somehow of suffering which leads to the more conventional material of the Allegro. The Scherzo which follows is one of the composer's most amiable creations although it still shows some allegiance to the Scherzo mood of the Finale of the Fourth Symphony with its Mahlerian overtones. The Largo is perhaps Shostakovich's most sublime single movement to date and although ostensibly one of the simplest of his creations, it expresses a range of emotions from serenity and peace through to grief and resignation. Commentators have differed on the nature of the symphony's somewhat bombastic Finale with its evident optimism, in tune with Party

requirements, a mood which the composer himself was to question in later years, preferring to see the empty triumph more as personal defiance. Whatever the politics, the Fifth Symphony marked a significant change in the composer's idiom and although Mahler's influence is still to be felt, the outcome was the creation of a true, successful Soviet Symphony.

Symphony No.6 in 8 minor Op.54

Persuaded, or perhaps forced from the paths that had led to his Fourth Symphony of 1936 and fresh from the justifiable success of the Fifth in November 1937, Shostakovich embarked on plans for a new major symphonic work in honour of Lenin. The composer foresaw a major choral piece in the manner of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and he even went into print in a Soviet journal in 1938, stating he had set himself "a task of tremendous responsibility to express in sound the immortal images of Lenin", making considerable use in the composition of folk sources and based on verses by the poet Mayakovsky. Whatever may have changed his mind, the Sixth Symphony as we now know it, was to emerge as a purely orchestral work. No "Lenin" Symphony of the sort described was ever to appear. The Sixth was premiered during a Festival of Soviet Music in November 1939, together with Prokofiev's "Alexander Nevsky" Cantata and Shaporin's now forgotten patriotic "On the Field of Kulikovo". The triumphs of the Fifth Symphony were not, however, to be repeated and the audience was obviously disappointed that the great Lenin memorial had not materialised. So perplexed were the contemporary commentators that they even assigned their own programme to the work, trying to find in this strange three movement piece, any clues to references to Lenin that they could.

The opening Largo is, in fact, more akin to a second slow movement than a first and may somehow explain the initial strangeness of the three movement structure of the symphony. Although ostensibly in B minor, the Largo opens in E minor and its course takes up more than half the work's total length. The music is tragic, solemn and lyrical by terms, something of an extension of the slow movement of the Fifth symphony and claimed by early critics to be a portrait of Lenin. After such a grandiose opening, the following two movements seem quite out of place, both are Scherzi which owe more to the style of Prokofiev than any attempt of a glorification of the Hero. The Allegro is both vivacious and jocular as well as bitingly satirical depending on the listener's (or conductor's) viewpoint, whilst the final Presto reminds the audience distinctly of the success Prokofiev had enjoyed some years previously with his" Classical" Symphony. As the movement draws to its close, there is more and more of the atmosphere of the vaudeville, a style Shostakovich had not fully forgotten from those earlier days of works like his "Lady Macbeth" - perhaps his change of heart was never a true repentance after all.

Symphony No.7 in C major Op.60 - Leningrad

When Hitler decided to invade Russia in 1941, Shostakovich was in Leningrad and on the fateful day of June 22nd, he and his friends were supposedly preparing to go to a football match. Instead of the football stadium, Shostakovich went straight to the recruiting office and volunteered for service in the army.

Short sighted and weak in physique, the composer never got to wear the Soviet uniform, but he did spend time as a voluntary fire-fighter in Leningrad during the Nazi siege of the city and, according to the official Soviet sources, this was when he was inspired to start work on his Seventh Symphony in honour of the siege of Leningrad. The official story of the time also adds that Shostakovich was so dedicated to the project that he refused to leave his work desk during the air raids or to escape to the comparative security of Moscow although the authorities insisted on his move to the capital by the end of September, taking with him the score of the first three movements of the new Symphony, the final movement being completed by December of that year.

The Symphony was hailed as a triumph of resistance and became popular with orchestras and audiences alike in the Soviet Union and in the

West where it was smuggled on microfilm. If the original intentions of the Symphony are acknowledged, then this is Shostakovich's major piece of programme music for propaganda purposes. Initially, it was even given titles for the four movements suggesting War, Reminiscences, the size of Russia and finally, unsurprisingly, Victory.

The first performance of the work was given by the Bolshoi Orchestra in Kuybyshev, followed by a performance in Moscow and eventually in Leningrad in August 1942.

Shostakovich later withdrew the rather simplistic titles and after his death, claims were made for a very different interpretation of the work. The end of the War and another attack on Shostakovich by the State in 1948, meant that the Seventh Symphony faded almost entirely from public view for a while until after the death of Stalin in 1953.

Later critics, particularly following Solomon Volkov's editing of Shostakovich's memoirs have now agreed that the Symphony was possibly begun before the outbreak of war and was intended as a Requiem to those who had suffered under the injustices of State totalitarianism in Russia. Shostakovich was supposedly, at the time, also deeply moved by the Psalms of David and these were seen as an initial inspiration for the work. It is also known that the Seventh Symphony was initially programmed for a premiere in the Leningrad Philharmonic's autumn 1941 season and that Shostakovich supposedly interrupted composition of his new Symphony in order to work on a new orchestration of Mussorgsky's "Boris Godunov" for the Kirov Theatre. Writing as he was, however, in a besieged Leningrad, the Symphony was soon taken to represent the courage of a city and its people in the fight against the Nazi threat. Taking the traditional pre-Volkov, view of the Symphony, the opening Allegretto is a portrait of Shostakovich's love of his people and their homeland on the verge of invasion from a common foe.

The work is scored for large orchestra including two harps, five timpani, a xylophone and a range of other percussion instruments as well as a large woodwind and string section. Although it begins with a peaceful theme in strings and bassoons, its major component is a repeated March theme which bears much in common with the repetitions of Ravel's" Bolero" – a satirical comment on Man's inhumanity to Man or the portrayal of the Nazi forces of invasion, the protracted and repetitive ostinato is both banal and also an expression of the inevitable.

The following Moderato is one of Shostakovich's fine and moving movements leading perhaps to those Remembrances suggested by the original title but adding a little humour to the grim threats of the previous movement and serving as what the composer saw as a "lyrical Intermezzo".

The following Adagio reflects those earlier slow movements in the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies. This is undoubtedly one of Shostakovich's most profound moments, pathetic and tragic with a more dramatic central episode. Finally the Triumph of the concluding Allegro played without a break from its predecessor, emerges from the darkness towards its thunderous and triumphant Coda - Victory of some kind has surely been achieved.

Symphony No.8 in C minor Op.65

After the final triumphant pages of the Leningrad Symphony with its memories of better days and a future still to come, Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony paints a picture of utter despair. This time there is no hope on the horizon and the music presents a universality of suffering and despair mixed only with that sense of the grotesque that had been a hallmark of the composer's style from the early Futurist inspired days, sometimes evoking the Vaudeville or Circus, sometimes the bitter critique of the times or the dance of death that is found towards the end of this Symphony.

The Eighth Symphony stands as the central part of a triptych of Wartime Symphonies which had begun in 1941 with the "Leningrad" Symphony and which would be concluded with the rather problematic Ninth. Soviet critics, after their initial disappointment with the Ninth Symphony, tended to see the three Symphonies as representative of a people determined to unite in defence of their homeland, a portrait of the total tragedy and bitterness of War and the joyful affirmation of new life after Vitory

respectively, despite this rather simplistic programme, later critics searched for something else in the Symphonies and Solomon Volkov and his followers saw a reference to pre-Wartime events in the Symphonies and the sufferings of the Russian people under the terrors of Stalin as much as the Nazi invasion.

Just as the Seventh Symphony had been recognised as a tribute to the city and the siege of Leningrad, the Eighth which followed only a year after was seen at the time, as a tribute to the city and siege of Stalingrad. There is no direct reference to a programme concerning these events in either Symphony and the subtitle of "Stalingrad" most probably came about because of the city's fate at the time of composition, the association being eventually dropped. It was not until November 1943 that the Eighth received its premiere in Moscow under the baton of the legendary Soviet conductor, Yevgenni Mravinsky to whom it was dedicated, travelling then to the USA under Artur Rodzinski and after which it tended towards neglect before it was taken up again and revived by conductors such as Mravinsky, Kondrashin and Rudolf Kempe.

The eighth Symphony is cast in five movements, as indeed is its successor, although it is possible to see it as a more conventional four movement plan if the two Scherzi are seen as a two part movement in the same mood. In addition, the final three movements are played without a break. As with the Sixth Symphony, the opening movement is a lengthy and very intense Adagio, reflecting the structures and indeed the mood of the two final Symphonies of Mahler. The Adagio begins in the home key of C minor and combines the functions of a slow movement with Sonata form, reaching only a turn to Allegro around half way through its considerable length. The mood of the Fifth Symphony has now been supercharged with emotion and despair combined with brutality in its central section. Despite efforts by some Soviet critics to see some life-affirming spirit, this is music that offers very little if anything in the way of hope.

The following two movements are both Scherzi although there is nothing of the usual playful element of the title here. The D flat major Allegretto is a grotesque processional with much use of percussion, particularly the side drum. The music portrays perhaps the pomp of the marching armies as it may have been seen in the newsreels of the time and is punctuated by solo sections for the woodwind. The following movement turns to the minor key of E and makes use of an automatic, again almost Futurist, use of a Toccata rhythm. This begins with the violas in a perpetuum mobile ostinato which is then punctuated by dull thuds, brief screeches and a trumpet fanfare. The mood is nightmarish and unreal, a portrayal of the unceasing horrors of war and mass carnage, which leads unstoppingly to an enormous climax from the full orchestra.

This chilling vision leads without a break into the C sharp minor Largo, a Passacaglia based on the second subject of the first movement and repeated twelve times in the double basses. The mood is that of a Requiem for the fallen and the repetitions are punctuated by solo passages for horn, piccolo and clarinet. Again, without any pause, the final Allegretto follows with a misleadingly pastoral mood, still containing echoes of the violence that has proceeded. Tension increases and a climax recalling the opening Largo is reached after which an eerie return to the pastoral mood returns, perhaps here even a dance of death itself, before the harmonies reach the highest range of the violins and the work ends peacefully but against a mysterious three note motive in the double basses.

Symphony No.9 in E flat major Op.70

The Ninth of Shostakovich's Symphonies posed problems for its composer on two fronts. Firstly it was to be the concluding part of a trilogy of War Symphonies which had begun with the vast patriotic canvas of the" Leningrad" Symphony, then continued with the dark and tragic Eighth and should now, according to Soviet ideas of public requirement, conclude presumably with a large scale celebration of Victory.

In addition, Shostakovich was aware, as had been composers before him, of the challenge to even complete a Ninth Symphony after the example of Beethoven. Schubert had created his longest and most grandiose Symphony in reply, Bruckner had failed to complete his Ninth

and Mahler had shied away from the task by following his Eighth with the Symphonic Song Cycle of “Das Lied von der Erde”.

Shostakovich’s solution was to write one of his shortest and, at least on the face of it, least serious works. The Symphony was completed in just six weeks by August 1945 and was successfully premiered in November that year by the Leningrad Philharmonic under Mravinsky. It may be significant that during the period of composition, Shostakovich and his friend Kabalevsky had been immersing themselves in the early Symphonies of Beethoven as well as those by Mozart and Haydn. Despite that initial success and the surface gaiety of the piece, the Symphony was to be subsequently criticised by the Communist Party and was to be outlawed after the Zhdanov decree of 1948.

Like the Eighth, the Symphony is in five movements, the last three played without a break. The opening Allegro is in Sonata form and displays humour and irony. This is followed by a Moderato, initially a tender and tranquil movement which is only disturbed by echoes of the earlier Wartime pieces towards its close. The final three linked movements indulge in a certain amount of self-parody although the Largo at times strikes a note of more serious mood before the final Allegretto sweeps all before it in a final March and Gallop, telling us that the composer really is celebrating the end of the past years of War.

Symphony No.10 in E minor Op.93

Just as the so called “Lady Macbeth” affair had persuaded Shostakovich in 1936 to withdraw his Fourth Symphony in the face of Party criticism and to produce the more conventional Fifth Symphony, so too did the criticism following the Ninth Symphony lead to a rejection of that work, and indeed the Eighth too. The result this time was a period when Shostakovich wrote no further Symphonies for a further eight years, concentrating only on film scores and patriotic cantatas such as the “Song of the Forests”. The reason for this new “silence” was the result of an article in the periodical “Culture and Life” denouncing the Ninth Symphony as being unable to “reflect the true Spirit of the Russian People” and the subsequent denunciation of Shostakovich and others by Zhdanov in 1948 who accused his enemies of “formalistic distortions and anti-democratic tendencies alien to the Soviet People”.

This was not to be Shostakovich’s last run-in with the authorities but it was to lead to his longest period of self-imposed non-productivity. He withdrew his recently composed Violin Concerto and even went so far as to make a public statement agreeing that his musical language was “incomprehensible to the People” and admitting that the Party and Zhdanov as its spokesman were right in these criticisms. This time, unlike the lessons learnt in the wake of the Opera’s withdrawal, there was no conventional apology in the form of a fine new Symphony rather than wait until after the death of his main critic, Stalin himself, before the Tenth Symphony was composed.

Stalin died on 5th March 1953 - by a stroke of cruel coincidence the same day as Prokofiev and the Party was able to admit that certain aspects of the personality cult surrounding the ex-Leader had led to certain “errors” in the Arts policy of the country. The new freedom was not all embracing but it was enough of a catalyst for Shostakovich to release the pent-up creative impulses which allowed him to produce a rush of masterpieces including two Quartets, a Violin Concerto and the highly personal and intense Tenth Symphony.

One of the most significant changes now in his music was to be its intensely personal nature, often signified by the use of the musical motto based on his own name – DSCH (the letters signifying the German spellings of the notes D, E flat, C and B. This personal motto has, amongst other signs and the reminiscences given to Solomon Volkov at the end of Shostakovich’s life, led to a suggestion that the Tenth Symphony is a programmatic attack on the Stalin Years. Thus, the first movement represents repression and frustration, the second is a portrait of Stalin as the evil tyrant, the third shows the uncaring State whilst the fourth rather obviously represents hope growing from the dark days.

The first performance of the Symphony took place in Leningrad on 17th December 1953 and was conducted by Evgenni Mravinsky, after which it was considered by many critics to be Shostakovich's finest work to date, claiming that the silence of the past years had helped him to mature a new and more accomplished style. Scored for a more conventionally sized orchestra than some of the previous works, it is in the classical standard four movements.

Opening with the longest of the four movements, Shostakovich had tried again to write a "real symphonic Allegro" but this was again not to be. The music grows organically from a quiet and slow beginning, introducing the three main themes of this dark and uncompromising Moderato.

The third theme is prominent in the development section but it is only after the return of the second theme that a climax is reached which in its massive intensity reminds us again of Shostakovich's debt to Mahler. The tumult finally dies away and a lighter version of the exposition returns to close the movement.

The Stalin portrait follows as a short but violently energetic Scherzo with slashing chords recalling the Eighth Symphony. The third movement is hardly the usually expected slow or lyrical section and introduces the DSCH motto and a theme from the Violin Concerto. After a solo horn call and the reversion to the opening from the cor anglais, a mighty climax arrives before the DSCH motto on winds closes the movement. The Finale begins with an Andante section which misleads us into thinking a true slow movement may be beginning but the mood soon turns to whimsy and the Allegro begins its unstoppable progress despite the odd vicious reminder of the "Stalin" Scherzo. Not surprisingly, it is the composer's own Motto which achieves the victory on timpani in the final bars.

Symphony No.11 in G minor Op.103 - The Year 1905

The Second Symphony had marked the twentieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution and the Eleventh was seen to be a celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the great historical event of the Soviet era. With such a commission in mind, it would have been difficult if not impossible for Shostakovich to write a work as personal as its predecessor and indeed the Eleventh Symphony reverts to the kind of propaganda and programme work that had been the hallmark of the Seventh (Leningrad) Symphony. Like that work too, Shostakovich chose titles for each of the four movements, titles that have remained with the Symphony and that give an even clearer picture of what the Symphony is about. Or do they? Solomon Volkov and his supporters have suggested otherwise and insist that the Symphony has little or nothing to do with the events of the unsuccessful January 1905 Revolution it supposedly portrays; instead Volkov claims that the Symphony is really about events in Hungary in 1956 - the year of the abortive uprising in that country. Even Shostakovich's son, Maxim - usually not one to agree with Volkov's revisionist ideas of his father's music - asked the composer during the work's dress rehearsal: "Father, what if they hang you for this?"

That, at least, is one view of this overtly programmatic work. It is surprising that Shostakovich may have meant such a reference when the work contains no less than nine Revolutionary songs and follows the programme of that Bloody Sunday in St Petersburg with something like cinematic detail. If Volkov was correct, why are there no Hungarian songs or even Hungarian rhythms in the music to locate the tale to Budapest rather than the banks of the Neva?

Whatever the final decision on the true programme of the Symphony, it is undoubtedly a step backwards for Shostakovich after its predecessor, a return to the Wartime style and content of the Seventh and Eighth Symphonies and a reliance on borrowed melodic content. This programmatic element was to continue in the next Symphony and it would seem that Shostakovich had now decided to channel his more personal thoughts into the series of String Quartets that would reach a peak with the Eighth a short time later.

The score of the Eleventh Symphony was completed on 4th August 1957 at Shostakovich's country Dacha on the Gulf of Finland and a two piano reduction was performed by the composer and his arranger Mikhail

Meyerovich a few weeks later at the Moscow House of Composers. The official orchestral premiere was given at the Moscow Conservatory under Nathan Rakhlin as part of the celebrations for the Revolution's fortieth anniversary, Evgenni Mravinsky directing the Leningrad premiere four days later. Within months recordings of the new work followed under conductors as diverse as Rakhlin, Stokowski and Cluytens.

Shostakovich had already experimented with running movements together to form continuous groups in the Eighth and Ninth Symphony but now he composed a work which is intended to be played throughout without breaks although each movement has a clear beginning and end. This not only gives the work a symphonic cohesion but adds to its cinematic tendencies, supported by the references to the Revolutionary songs mentioned above which act also as mottos through the work.

The opening "Palace Square" is typical Shostakovich, beginning slowly and quietly evoking the chill and eerie aspects of deserted St Petersburg and making use of the two songs "Listen, Listen" and "The Prisoner". The tension mounts through muted trumpet calls before bursting full thrust into the second movement, one of those vicious Scherzi similar to the Eighth Symphony but without any of the irony of the earlier work. This is surely a picture of the events of that Sunday when innocent people were gunned down by the Tsarist guards and is entitled "The Ninth of January". After the clamour dies down, a slow "Requiem" follows, insistently developing a folk theme, "You fell as Victims", used itself at Lenin's funeral and which turns out to be one of the composer's most moving and immediately accessible melodic inventions. The final "Tocsin" movement is typical of those positive Finales the composer closed such propaganda works with, repeated bells calling for the continued struggle, whatever that may be seen to be.

Symphony No.12 in D minor Op.112 – The Year 1917

Following some four years after its predecessor, Shostakovich's Twelfth Symphony covers much the same ground. This time, the event to be celebrated is the October Revolution of 1917 and the work is dedicated, appropriately enough, to Lenin. This is, however, hardly the work originally envisaged at the time of the Sixth Symphony, but a purely orchestral piece that, although ostensibly in four movements, is played as a continuous whole. There is no sign here of the personal struggles that marked out the Tenth Symphony as something unique and it seems that Shostakovich had decided to confine personal thoughts to his chamber music and works such as the self-quoting and troubled Eighth Quartet. Music here indeed seems to be subservient to a propagandist programme aimed at education and being" understandable to the masses". The Symphony was premiered by Mravinsky in Leningrad in October 1961 and each of the movements is, as in the Eleventh Symphony, given a programmatic title.

The first movement, "Revolutionary Petrograd" is something of a rarity for Shostakovich – an Allegro in Sonata form. It opens with a fine, brooding theme in the mood of a folk song but original to the composer, before the onslaught of the Allegro proper. The movement plays on the contrast of two contrasting themes which will appear in all four movements, at once unifying the composition but also hinting already at something of a dearth of thematic ideas in the work. This is followed by a ruminative and expressive Adagio portraying Lenin's revolutionary headquarters at Razliv in the countryside outside Leningrad. There is a paring down of the orchestral forces here which looks forward to Shostakovich's later style but the thematic material is thin and again based on the themes already heard in the preceding movement.

Aurora was the name of the battleship that fired the first shots in the Revolution. Amazingly brief for such an important event, there is little here other than a film score type of depiction of events which then leads to the final "Dawn of Mankind" Allegro. This is one of Shostakovich's most disappointing Finales, the opening theme simply not strong enough for its purpose and the final moments being a constant repetition of a banal motto theme suggesting that the composer had lost his way and was unable to put his heart, or his technique into a triumphant conclusion of any substance.

Symphony No.13 in B flat minor Op.113 – Babi Yar

After the low point of the Twelfth Symphony, Shostakovich needed to depart from routine Soviet style propaganda works and to capture the public imagination with something more immediate and more personal. The Thirteenth Symphony could hardly be more of a contrast – a series of five Choral movements with bass soloist that was to land the composer, once again, with problems with the authorities.

The ill-fated and long withdrawn Fourth Symphony finally received its premiere in 1961 and proved to be a great success at home and abroad. At last, it seemed as if the political climate in the Soviet Union had relaxed enough to allow composers to write what they wanted and to present it for public consumption. At the same time, a new and internationally acclaimed young poet, Evgenni Yevtushenko had begun to publish poetry which was openly critical of points of Soviet Society.

Fatefully, Shostakovich, impressed by the young poet's openness, decided to include one of his most critical poems as the first part of the new Symphony. "Babi Yar" is an outspoken critique of Soviet anti-Semitism, a political and racist stance which officially could not exist in a country which had fought and defeated Hitler's ideas in the second World War. Khruschev, then Premier, suggested that Shostakovich and Yevtushenko should cancel the premiere of the Symphony but the performance went ahead and the Symphony saw the light of day on December 18th 1962. After that, it was immediately withdrawn "due to the illness of the soloist" but in effect, the Symphony had been banned until Yevtushenko made alterations to the verses, adding extra lines to the first movement to show the Soviet solidarity against the Nazis and noting that not only Jews were killed at the massacre.

After the revisions, the Symphony was performed in its new version on February 10th 1963, after which it disappeared until a performance in Moscow in November 1965 under Kiril Kondrashin. The Thirteenth Symphony is the first of a trilogy which represents a summing up and a new vision to Shostakovich's symphonic output. It begins a break away from the State sponsored cinematic music of the Eleventh and Twelfth Symphonies and re-introduces a more personal as well as universal aspect to the composer's work. Although the influences of Mahler will always remain, this is a work that refers to the great nineteenth century Russian composer Mussorgsky whose operas Shostakovich had edited and whose " Songs and Dances of Death" he orchestrated. It is to Mussorgsky indeed that the bass solo part refers and honours and it is the bass solo who carries most of the musical and philosophical ideas.

The Symphony gains its subtitle from the poem setting of the first movement, Babi Yar, a site of a German massacre of the Jews in the Second World war. The movement opens with a tolling bell which is to recur in this movement and later in the piece. Gone are the platitudes of the 1905 and 1917 histories and the grotesque images of some of the earlier Symphonies are allowed to return.
In all, the movement is one of Shostakovich's most memorable and stands together with the slightly later "Execution of Stepan Razin" as a vindication of Shostakovich's mastery of the choral style.

This is followed by a sardonic Scherzo setting of a poem on the subject of Humour which shows the composer's belief in the power of that emotion no matter how dark the situation may be. Again, the setting owes much to Mussorgsky and although there is little in the way of outright joy, that bizarre element of the composer's own sardonic wit makes itself felt in the vocal and orchestral contributions.

The final three movements are, as so often with later Shostakovich Symphonies, played without a break. Like the two Scherzi of the Eighth Symphony, the third and fourth movements are both parallel but this time slow movements. Initially, a melancholy march portrays the queuing of Soviet women at a store, short of consumer goods, enduring the cold and boredom of their lot whereas the eerie music of "Fears" that follows both allows for the disappearance of the fatal knock on the door of Stalinist times but admits that fears may be "dying but are not dead". The movement opens with a particularly haunting tuba solo.

Finally, "A Career" takes up the reference from the last movement of the Twelfth Symphony and its verses are interspersed by two telling orchestral

interludes before the Symphony ends with one of those quiet, percussion based codas that look forward to the enigmatic end of the Fifteenth Symphony and the work ends, as it began, with the toll of the bell.

Symphony No.14 Op.135

Shostakovich first met Benjamin Britten in 1960 in what was to be a close association between the two composers and several Anglo-Soviet performers who would feature in the works of the two composers. The occasion of Shostakovich's visit to London was the first performance of his first Cello Concerto and the cellist Rostropovich and his wife the soprano Galina Vishnevskaya were to join the Britten/Shostakovich circle influencing Britten's compositions such as the cello Sonata and indeed the War Requiem. That Soviet influence on Britten also flowed in the opposite direction and Shostakovich's Fourteenth Symphony is both dedicated to Britten and owes much to the Englishman's musical style as well as its obvious debts to Mussorgsky's "Songs and Dances of Death" which Shostakovich had recently orchestrated.

The other great influence on the Symphony is rather more personal, it is the presence of Death and Mortality. The work was written in a short space of time in 1969 when Shostakovich was suffering extremely poor health and it is perhaps the grimmest of all his works, obsessed by the differing appearances of Death within the texts of its eleven poems. On this occasion, it is indeed the close relationship of the texts which give a symphonic structure of a kind to what is otherwise a song cycle in the nature of Mahler's "Song of the Earth". The Symphony is scored for soprano and bass soloists and with an orchestra echoing Britten's use of chamber forces, consisting of only strings and prominent percussion section. The original version of the Symphony sets all eleven texts in Russian but Shostakovich later authorised performances in their original languages as well as aversion in German translation. The poems set by Shostakovich are by Apollinaire, Garcia Lorca, Rilke and Kuechelbecker. Premiered in Leningrad under Rudolf Barshai on September 29th 1969, the original soloists were Galina Vishnevskaya and Mark Reshetin.

The two opening poems of the Symphony are settings of Federico Garcia Lorca, the Spanish poet who was shot during the Civil War. "De Profundis" opens with an eerie wandering theme in the strings after which the Bass enters mourning a hundred dead lovers and the hundred crosses erected in their memory. This is followed by "Malaguena" for the Soprano, a macabre dance rhythm on high violins and percussion including castanets. The third poem, more of a dramatic Scena, is a setting of Apollinaire, one of the longest of the songs and the tale of the legendary temptress who lures men to death from her rock. This time it is the Lorelei herself who must die, the music becoming now more chromatic whilst she plunges into the water below.

Apollinaire settings also make up the texts of the following five songs, beginning with "The Suicide": introduced by cello solo, this poem tells of the grave of the young girl where there is no cross but only three lilies growing in remembrance. "On Watch" is introduced by an insistent motto on the xylophone prefacing the death of the Soprano's "little brother", the soldier about to be killed in war, after which she too must find death. Soprano and Bass join in duet now and the Bass reminds the woman of her loss whilst she bitterly replies that such was nothing, only the loss of her heart.

"In the Prison" is again a setting of Apollinaire, for Bass solo and begins with ascending and descending scales in the lower strings. In sometimes biblical language, the Prisoner is alone in his cell awaiting his death. The final Apollinaire setting is a bitter scene from earlier Russian history, allowing the composer full rein of his talent for the grotesque. Such virulence is followed by the only setting originally in Russian, relevant in its text to Shostakovich's own position as an artist at odds with Society and one of the most deeply contemplative sections of the Symphony. A solo muted violin at its highest register begins Rilke's "Death of a Poet", a sad lament for Soprano broken by the sounds of wood block and castanet.

Finally, the two soloists join in the short and bitter conclusion of Rilke's "Schluss-Stueck". The homage to Death has been anguished and final.

Symphony No.15 in A major Op.141

Two years after the Song Cycle Symphony No.14, Shostakovich produced the last of his fifteen symphonies and returned to the conventional four movement form; conventional at first glance that is, as this is yet again one of Shostakovich's diversions from the general rule. Initially seeming to bear a lightness of mood far removed from the Death filled atmosphere of its predecessor, the new Symphony uses quotes and near quotes not only from the composer himself but also from a range of other works principally by Rossini and Wagner. As so often with these symphonies, the Fifteenth is enigmatic and provides only clues to whatever subtext may be intended. That it was seen as a summation of the composer's own work is obvious but it seems clear too that despite the light-hearted inclusion of the "William Tell" overture in the opening Allegretto, the references to Siegfried's Death in the final Adagio must represent a return to that preoccupation with death and indeed the composer's own death that so informs the Fourteenth Symphony.

The Symphony is scored for a normal sized orchestra with double woodwind and a large percussion section; it was first performed in Moscow under the baton of the composer's son Maxim. Shostakovich gave the puzzling comment that the opening Allegretto should be played as if "in a toyshop" but whatever that may mean, the movement opens good naturedly with an opening theme which soon leads to a quotation from Rossini's "William Tell", eventually repeated five times. Although initially a bizarre interruption, the quotation is clearly related to the final notes of Shostakovich's own theme. The lengthy Adagio which follows is in much more sombre mood and features brass chorales echoing the world of Gabrielli rather than Rossini. There is a prominent section for solo cello before the music builds to a climax which refers at one point back to the composer's own Eleventh Symphony. The bassoons then link the movement to the following Scherzo, the shortest of the four movements. This is a light and skittish movement, which nevertheless finds time to introduce Shostakovich's own motto of DSCH before leading into the final Adagio. There can be no doubt that the opening of the final movement, with its reference to Siegfried's death from Wagner's "Ring" is meant to have a special point of reference but Shostakovich himself claimed the theme was also related to a Glinka song. A reference to Wagner's "Tristan" seems to follow but soon meanders back to Shostakovich. Wagner never quite goes away and the movement comes to a huge climax, echoing the discordant chords of Mahler's Tenth Symphony before sinking back to a quiet conclusion coloured by the lighter percussion instruments, perhaps portraying the failing heartbeat of a man, perhaps recalling the dying pages of the composer's Fourth Symphony from earlier and other difficult times.

JAZZ SUITES, BALLET SUITES & FILM MUSIC

Artistic experiment was the norm in Soviet Russia at that time and Shostakovich's music shows the influence of his contemporaries in Western Europe as well as a smattering of the Dadaist element found across the arts at the time. Despite the great success of the first of his symphonies, the following two found him in musical difficulties and have never gained popularity or success. Real success seemed to be coming to Shostakovich in the form of his stage works and particularly the highly acclaimed opera "Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District" premiered in 1934. But within two years, Stalin and his henchmen were to produce an article in the state newspaper, "Pravda", under the title of "Muddle in Music" which saw the opera withdrawn from the stage. The "Lady Macbeth" affair was also to give rise to a series of articles attacking so-called formalism in films, architecture, painting, theatre and ballet. Whenever music was mentioned, Shostakovich's reputation fell under the

hammer and not only was his opera withdrawn, but also his ballet “The Limpid Stream” (1935), currently enjoying a successful run in Moscow. The ballet had been choreographed by Fedor Lopukhov and seemed to fulfil all of Stalin’s current artistic demands for such a work. It is set on a collective farm in the Kuban region and rather than being a strong narrative ballet, it is really just an excuse for a series of dazzling dances within the spirit of “life has never been better”. Stalin however felt that whereas Shostakovich’s opera had been crude and over complex as well as morally questionable, the ballet was considered characterless and without substance. The ballet was withdrawn and lost from the repertoire - excerpts appeared in the so-called “Ballet Suites” arranged by Atovmian in the 1950’s and a single suite of this rather bland series of six dances including an obligatory “Russian Dance” and “Waltz” - the music is undemanding and the listener will find it difficult to imagine this is a “banned score”.

Shostakovich’s most successful ballet in musical terms was his first - “The Golden Age” (1930). Overlong in any complete performance and with a somewhat surrealist plot involving a Soviet football team visiting and resisting the temptations and evils of the West, it contains some attractive and highly individual “modernist” music. Shostakovich made a four movement suite from the ballet which includes an Introduction, sleazy Adagio dance and two circus style dances showing how close the spirit of Stravinsky’s “Petrushka” could be. Shostakovich’s second ballet followed a year after and is a story of industrial sabotage by drunks and saboteurs against the brave Soviet workers. Again, there is little of narrative interest here but the vaudeville nature of much of the music comes across well in the Suite assembled from the full score, beginning with an obvious reference to Tchaikovsky and ending in uproar.

The debacles with the withdrawal of Shostakovich’s opera and ballet meant that the composer found himself in financial difficulties as well as political ones and resulted in two major decisions; he would not produce another stage work (apart from the light-hearted operetta “Cheryomushki” of 1959 and an incompleted and unstaged version of Gogol‘s “Gamblers”) as such pieces were too liable to misinterpretation and he would have to seek for remunerative film somewhere else. That somewhere else turned out to be in the film studios.

Both Lenin and Stalin had seen the propaganda values of film both at home and abroad from the outset. Lenin had made a statement in 1922 claiming cinema to be the most important of all the arts and Stalin was particularly keen to produce a series of films under his own strict guidance which would not be based on any profit motive but would be an ideological lesson easily assimilated by the masses. Despite his displeasure with Shostakovich, he was wise enough to realise that the composer was capable of producing the right sort of soundtracks for Stalin’s approval and would be more suitably controlled and controllable in the studios writing more “popular” music scores. Shostakovich was, in fact, to write a large number of film scores throughout his life from as early as 1928 onwards when he composed the score for the expressionist masterpiece “New Babylon”. In the following years the most popular films with Stalin and with the mass audiences were to come from the Leningrad film studios and the composer of most of those soundtracks was to be Shostakovich - a job, that although not necessarily popular with the composer, was to prove his safe conduct as an artist in such troubled times.

Music for films was meant to have the purpose of following and accenting the subject and mood of the screenplay rather than making any individual statements contrary to what was seen on the screen itself and that applied to patriotic epics as well as to lighter fare. The 1955 film of “The Gadfly” is no Soviet epic but rather a romantic history based on the novel by Ethel Voynich and set in fin de siecle Austria. The story concerns the “gadfly” of the title, an Italian independence fighter called Artur who is assumed to have committed suicide for previous misdemeanours but returns to the fray under a new name after which he is captured and killed by firing squad. There is plenty of patriotism, romance and tragedy here which prompted Shostakovich to write one of his most tuneful and romantic scores and although the film is unlikely to make any sort of spectacular come-back in the West, some of the music has become extremely popular in recent times - particularly the “Romance”. A suite from the film was

prepared by Levon Atovmian who had already salvaged some of the earlier ballet music in his four “Ballet Suites”.

One of the Soviet films which did find a wide international currency was the moody and impressive 1964 version of Shakespeare’s “Hamlet” directed by Grigori Kozintsev . Kozintsev and Shostakovich had already worked together on a version of “Hamlet” in 1954 and Shostakovich had earlier written music for a rather bizarre production of the play by Nikolai Akimov which had been shown in Moscow in 1932. That early version assumed that most of the cast were alcoholics, including Ophelia who drowned herself after an excessive drinking bout; the production was considered to be too unconventional although some of the score is preserved in Shostakovich’s own suite of numbers, eventually published in 1960.

The suite from the later film was again put together by Atovmian and consists of eight quite substantial movements beginning with an overture and ending with Hamlet’s funeral music - mostly sombre and with the inclusion of a harpsichord to portray Ophelia, the music has echoes of the recently completed thirteenth symphony and shows Shostakovich’s mastery at joining mood and music to action.

In March 1953 both Stalin and Prokofiev died on the same day and the threat to Shostakovich and other Soviet artists from the Dictator came suddenly to an end. The death of Prokofiev meant that Shostakovich was now, without doubt, Soviet Russia’s major composer whilst the death of Stalin left a void in the country expressed in the uncertainty of its artistic future. The new leader was to be Khruschev and there followed a thaw in cultural matters which it would be easy to see expressed in a light hearted positive work such as the Festival Overture with its celebratory fanfares and light hearted tunefulness. Despite that, Shostakovich’s troubles would not be over. There was still trouble on the horizon with the composer’s distinctly political Thirteenth Symphony - an indictment of Stalin’s policies after his death and a questioning of the country’s attitudes to the anti-Semitic nature of the government even after the death of Stalin. Shostakovich’s physical health also became more and more troublesome and became a morbid preoccupation in his later symphonies and quartets. Despite that, a new freedom was gradually being won and more attention could be paid to the less patriotic side of the composers music. Strangely enough this resulted in some decidedly political works such as the programmatic eleventh and twelfth symphonies as well as allowing a rehabilitation of “Lady Macbeth” albeit in a revised version under the title of “Katerina Izmailova” and the appearance of some more occasional works written both then and earlier.

Shostakovich’s ballets had already explored some of the jazz trends of the 20’s and 30’s but it was not until 1934 that he decided to write a specifically titles work for Jazz Orchestra - the First Jazz Suite. This was the result of a Leningrad competition for a specific work in the Jazz idiom and the resulting suite took the form of three movements based on dance forms - the Waltz, Polka and Foxtrot. There is nothing particularly raucous about the music here but more an attempt to integrate the idea of Jazz into a more serious format.

A second Jazz Suite followed in 1938, written specifically for the State Jazz Orchestra of Viktor Knusnevitsky but the score was lost somehow during the ensuing War, The Suite has been reconstructed from a piano score by Gerald McBurney who arranged three movements for a London Promenade Concert in 2000, drawing material from earlier theatre and film scores (including “The Gadfly”). The suite was later enlarged to eight numbers and has enjoyed a certain popularity from then on; the scoring places attention on the accordion and saxophone giving an essence of jazz or theatre orchestra rather than being specifically jazz music – hence its designation as a suite for promenade orchestra.

As well as the alternative jazz music, Shostakovich showed a keen interest in music from or for ethnic groups other than the strictly Russian element of the Union. Perhaps best known of these influences was his interest in Jewish folk music and the position of the Jewish minority in the country - works such as “Babi Yar” from the Thirteenth Symphony and the masterful “>From Jewish Folk Poetry”. As well as these influences, he concerned himself with the music of the southern area of Kirghizia - a

region bordering on part of neighbouring China. In 1963 he composed on "Overture on Russian and Kirghiz Folk Themes" ostensibly celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the region's incorporation into Russia. The piece, hardly a masterwork, contrasts the folk music of the region with that of its Russian neighbours. Another nod to the southern areas of the country comes in the "Novorossisk Chimes" - a setting of the melody "Fire of Eternal Glory", a patriotic sounding if exceedingly brief hymn to the port of Novorossisk on the Black Sea written by the composer in 1960.

PIANO CONCERTOS

This recording covers a wide span of Dmitry Shostakovich's compositional life. Much has been written about the palpable coincidence between the events of his life and those of his country, the Soviet Union; he is practically the first Russian composer of the 20th century to have been educated in the post-Tzarist era and to have lived his entire life in the Soviet Union: the year of his birth, 1906, almost coincides with the first uprisings of the Soviets. This is not the place to enter into the debate: beyond any possible discussion, what matters to us is to emphasise his figure as an artist, an extremely prolific composer of unparalleled virtuosity, capable of mastering any style and technique, from the great Russian compositional tradition to Jazz, to film music, to the domination of the symphonic orchestral mass.

The *Piano Concerto No.1 in C minor Op.35* makes use of a curious ensemble: string orchestra, piano and trumpet as soloists; the original title reads "Concerto for piano with string orchestra accompaniment and a trumpet". The concerto was composed between 6 March and 30 April 1933, and performed that same year at the Leningrad Philharmonic Hall, conducted by Fritz Stedry, Shostakovich himself at the piano.

After an initial period that could be described as "futurist", in those years Shostakovich had moved towards an objective and "constructivist" attitude, with a view to providing the young Soviet state with an instrumental repertoire that would raise the cultural level of the masses, in the spirit of so-called "socialist realism". The concert, in four movements, is a spectacular collage of quotations (from Beethoven, Haydn, folk songs and Shostakovich himself), full of vitality, at times sarcastic and biting. In the first movement, there is an obvious quotation from Beethoven's Sonata Op.57. No.23 'Appassionata' at the beginning, then taken up by the strings, followed by a vitalistic alternation of various thematic cues. The trumpet, after the initial "cry", later enters the dense thematic web with 'the irruption of faux 'simple' motifs, now playful, now 'circus-like' to build a rhapsodic plot, which leads in the finale to the repetition of the Appassionata's thematic cue in piano, with which the movement concludes.

The second movement, lyrical, is led in the first part by strings and piano; about halfway through the piece, from a moment of ecstatic stasis, the sound of the trumpet is inserted with a mute almost out of nowhere, with an effect of alienating sonority, perhaps recalling the timbre of a folk wind instrument. The very brief third movement serves to "launch" the unbridled fourth movement, a new collage of themes, including the trumpet's self-quotation of Shostakovich's theme of Columbus; everything converges in a wild galop, leading to the sparkling finale in C major.

Twenty-four years passed between the composition of the First Piano Concerto and the *Second Piano Concerto Op.102* (1957). In the meantime, many things had changed in the Soviet Union: the death of Stalin (1953) contributed a great deal to lightening the cloak of darkness created during the pre-war years of Terror; the tragedies of the Great Patriotic War, as the Russians call the Second World War, were over, we were entering a lighter climate, the so-called thaw. Shostakovich's art was also affected by this: dedicated as a gift to his pianist son Maxim, the Second Concerto seems to forget the war epic; in the opening Allegro, there is a breezy dialogue between soloist and orchestra, and the "military" interventions entrusted to the snare drum actually sound more ironic than warlike.

The second movement, *Andante*, marks a return to a Romantic lyricism imbued with "Russian" suggestions: the character of the melody, the use of harmonies reminiscent of ancient modes, the use in the orchestral ensemble of only strings and a horn, all contribute to a serene, gently melancholic atmosphere. The Allegro that closes the concerto is a continuous unfolding of prancing vitality; by Shostakovich's own admission, there is extensive use of formulas closely reminiscent of Hanon exercises: a way of forcing Maxim to practise them. A thunderous climax concludes the concert, forcing the audience to applause.

The three very short *Danze Fantastiche Op.5* (Три фантсических танця) are compositions from the 1920s-23s, a compositional period characterised by "modernist" research not far from the "French" harmonic settings of the same period; there are also a few winks of a jazzy nature. The characteristic feature is an exuberant vitality, in which traditional tonal systems are seen as a deforming mirror. See, for example, *Dance No.2*: a Waltz with a key armature in G major, which is only "declared" after an "elliptical" course of semitone shifts between chords belonging to distant tonal centres (e.g. A-flat major); in A-B-A form, it involves a central part with a tonal centre in C major (the subdominant of the plant tone) and then returns with chromatic movements towards the alienating initial incipit. The key of G major is definitively declared with a traditional perfect cadence only in the last two measures.

Completely different is the atmosphere that permeates the *24 Preludes and Fugues Op.87*, composed in 1950-52. The reference to Bach's art of the Well-Tempered Clavier is evident; this is an extremely serious and reflective Shostakovich, particularly in the Prelude and Fugue featured in the recording, No.24. The deeply meditative Prelude, marked out in a Moderato progression on a metric reminiscent of the ancient Sarabande, is followed by a colossal four-voice Fugue with two subjects and counter-subject.

The first subject, tonal in nature, is elaborated in a series of entrances from the initial pianissimo to the stretto (bars 83 et seq.), without ever exceeding the mf dynamic, until bar 108, where only one voice remains to prepare the entrance of the second subject, in quavers, perhaps reminiscent of a similar second subject in the Fugue XIII in F sharp major from the first volume of the Well-Tempered Clavier. This second soggetto leads to an acceleration and crescendo that culminates in the Più mosso of bar 135; from here on the second soggetto is continuously developed until the interweaving of bar 218 with the first soggetto that leads to the grandiose Finale in fff.

VIOLIN CONCERTOS

The extensive compositional oeuvre of the Russian composer Dmitry Shostakovich (1906-1975) includes 6 solo concertos, two of which are for violin and orchestra.

Shostakovich was privileged to have at his disposal two of the leading Russian instrumentalists of his time. Having dedicated his two cello concertos to his friend and pupil Mstislav Rostropovich (1927-2007), he wrote his two violin concertos for David Oistrakh (1908-1974), himself a friend of the composer.

The gestation of the *First Violin Concerto in A minor, Op.77** reflects the mood in the Soviet Union of those days, the years of the "Cold War" that followed the Second World War. Shostakovich spent just under eight months composing the concerto, from July 1947 to March 1948, after which he withheld the work for seven years, till 1955. An early premiere was out of the question for two reasons. At the start of 1948, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union passed resolutions calling contemporary music into question and labelling compositions by Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Khachaturian, Popov and Myaskovsky as "formalist" and "anti-democratic", out of keeping with the artistic taste of the Soviet people and unworthy of performance. Accordingly, these composers were more or less banned. Shostakovich fared even worse,

losing his teaching posts at the conservatories in Moscow and Leningrad (Saint Petersburg) as well. The second reason is equally sinister, marking the onset of the anti-Zionist movement: the composer's interest in Jewish folk music, audible in his song cycle "From Jewish folk poetry", Op.79, was deeply suspect.

After Stalin's death in 1953, things gradually changed. In consultation with David Oistrakh, the composer made a few small alterations to his First Violin Concerto, and the work received its premiere on October 29, 1955, with Yevgeny Mravinsky conducting the Leningrad Philharmonic and dedicatee Oistrakh as the soloist.

Shostakovich's *Second Violin Concerto in C sharp minor Op.129* (1967) is his last concertante work. On the day of the premiere, September 26, 1967, the composer was in hospital following a heart attack.
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The link between the past and the present

1. Q: What is the history of your relationship with Shostakovich's music? Why did you decide to record these particular works?
A: Shostakovich's music very accurately conveys what was happening in the lives of people in my country until very recently. I feel it deeply and want to convey it to the audience, as if tracing the link between past and present, preserving authenticity. Together with Valentin Uryupin, we as individuals were formed in the very musical system where Dmitri Shostakovich worked several decades before. My father attended several premieres of Shostakovich's works, including the Violin Concerto No.2. There is a recorded telephone conversation between David Oistrakh and Dmitri Shostakovich in the public domain, where the composer points out the most important details of the interpretation and even hums the Concerto No.2 finale. For me, this is still live history.

2. Q: The Violin Concerto No. 1 was written in 1948, Concerto No. 2 in 1967. They belong to two completely different periods in the life and work of the composer. Please tell us about each of the concertos.
A: Concerto No.1 is focused on emotions; here the protagonist is full of energy and hope and there is inner expansion. As for Concerto No.2, it has a different philosophy, its emotions seem to have been crystallized. Wisdom and the composer's outside perspective prevail.

3. Q: You have recorded this CD together with the Russian National Orchestra (RNO).Tell us about your cooperation with this group and why you chose to work with them?
A: RNO is one of the worldwide trendsetters for interpreting Russian music. Mikhail Pletnev has established the stylistic traditions that are deeply rooted in the mentality of every musician of this group. We have performed with the Maestro on multiple occasions, including playing Dmitry Shostakovich's concertos. Therefore, one can say that the moment has come.

4. Q: What is the most important thing for you when recording a CD? Tell us how did this recording go?
A: Every detail matters, the format of studio audio recording is very specific. Expressive means interacting with each other in a different way as opposed to a live concert performance. The same goal is achieved by different means. The Grand Hall of the Moscow Conservatory energizes you with its history, acoustics and majestic beauty. The composer himself listened to these pieces here and this only strengthens the link between past and present.
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CELLO CONDERTOS

Shostakovich and his Cello Concertos

Creator of symphonies, quartets, operas, ballets, concertos and a host of other works, Dmitri Shostakovich was, without doubt, one of the greatest composers of the Soviet era, and unlike his contemporary Prokofiev – who grew up in Tsarist Russia and then emigrated to Paris in 1914, only returning to Soviet Russia permanently in 1933 – Shostakovich spent his whole life in Russia. This loyalty to his homeland was to land him in trouble with the Soviet authorities on several occasions: once in 1936, after official disapproval of his opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* and ballet *The Limpid Stream*, then again after the Second World War when criticised by Zhdanov, and yet again after his Thirteenth Symphony which condemned Soviet anti-Semitism. Plagued by ill health in his later years, he is the prime example of a composer writing under political pressure, sometimes creating highly effective musico-political propaganda, and at other times retreating into an intensely private world.

Shostakovich's first teacher was his mother, but after his entrance to the Petrograd Conservatory in 1919 he was taken under the wing of Glazunov, graduating in 1926 with his First Symphony as his Diploma work. Artistic experiment was the norm in Soviet Russia at that time, and Shostakovich's music shows the influence of his contemporaries in Western Europe as well as a smattering of the Dadaist element (then in vogue). Despite the great success of the First, the following two symphonies proved musically troublesome for Shostakovich and did not meet with the same approval by the public. Real success was found instead with his stage works – particularly the highly acclaimed opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, which premiered in 1934. Within two years, however, Stalin and his henchmen issued an article in the state newspaper, *Pravda*, under the title of 'Muddle in Music', and the work was subsequently withdrawn from the stage.

The 'Lady Macbeth' affair also gave rise to a series of articles attacking so-called formalism in films, architecture, painting, theatre and ballet. Whenever music was mentioned, Shostakovich's reputation fell under the hammer, and not only was his opera withdrawn but also his ballet *The Limpid Stream* (1935), which had been enjoying a successful run in Moscow. Stalin felt that whereas Shostakovich's opera was crude and overly complex as well as morally questionable, the ballet was characterless and without substance, and the result was that the composer found himself in both financial and political difficulties. Indeed, Stalin's decision was to have a significant impact on the composer, who did not produce another stage work (apart from the light-hearted operetta *Cheryomushki* of 1959 and an uncompleted and unstaged version of Gogol's *Gamblers*) and was obliged to change his musical style in order fit with the requirements of the dictator's personal taste.

In March 1953 both Stalin and Prokofiev died on the same day, and the threat that Shostakovich and other Soviet artists has endured for so long came suddenly to an end. Shostakovich was now, without doubt, Soviet Russia's foremost composer, but the death of Stalin had left a void in the country, now uncertain of its artistic future. With Khruschev named as the new leader, there followed a thaw in cultural matters – as seen in light-hearted, positive works such as the Festival Overture, which is dominated by celebratory fanfares and general tunefulness. Shostakovich's problems were far from over, however, and there was still trouble on the horizon with the composer's distinctly political Thirteenth Symphony – an indictment of Stalin's policies that simultaneously questioned the country's attitudes to the anti-Semitic nature of the government, even after the death of Stalin. The composer's physical health was also gradually declining, as expressed in his later symphonies and quartets.

Just as Shostakovich's pair of concertos for violin is associated with the great Soviet violinist David Oistrakh, so too are the cello concertos intimately linked with Mstislav Rostropovich, their greatest interpreter. The First dates from 1959, shortly after the often underrated Eleventh Symphony, with its reliance on rich scoring and popular melody, and was described by the conductor Kirill Kondrashin as a work 'filled with deep thought and an exhilarating brilliance of form'. The piece caused a

sensation when Rostropovich introduced it to American audiences in Philadelphia. Initially inspired by Khachaturian's Concerto Rhapsody for cello and orchestra, the work is mainly based on a single theme; the opening movement shows Shostakovich at his wittiest and is based on a four-note motif which soon gives way to a reordered version of the composer's own DSCH motto. The second movement is based on a folk-like melody that builds to an intense climax, after which a lengthy cadenza for the solo instrument intensifies towards the dance-like finale, an exhilarating close to a most appealing work.

In addition to his six original concertos, Shostakovich also produced a re-orchestration of Schumann's problematic Cello Concerto, to which he gave the opus number of 125 and completed in 1963. This project gave him a chance to revisit the challenge of concerto form and the idiom of writing for cello. Three years later, in 1966, he produced his own Second Cello Concerto – premiered in time for his 60th birthday.

This concerto revealed a new and sparse style, a change in idiom that may have been due to the onset of Shostakovich's ill health following a heart attack in the spring of that year. The subdued and ruminative opening Largo concentrates on small groupings and solo instruments in addition to complex unfoldings of ideas with a modal or oriental tinge. The second movement introduces an eerie dance theme with much use of glissandi, after which the final Allegretto takes up an idea of combat between side drum and horns before the cello enters, in a musico-dramatic kinship with the Fourth Symphony (belatedly premiered in 1961) and the Fifteenth (1971). This movement introduces a tapping motif in which some have heard the clocks and ticks of the medical equipment used to treat the composer's heart condition during his lengthy stays in hospital.

Time has moved on, and so the Soviet era is past the musical ideologies associated with it; the greatness of Shostakovich's vision is becoming clearer. Whatever the final judgement on Soviet music may turn out to be, Shostakovich's place among the greatest composers of the 20th century seems assured.

CHAMBER MUSIC

Piano Quintet in G minor Op.57

Shostakovich, like Bartók and Ravel, was an excellent pianist, although not on the same level as the great Soviet interpreters of his time such as Lev Oborin or Samuil Feinberg. He claimed jokingly, but probably not, to have added a piano part to his "Second Quartet" (having written the first in 1938) to able to travel the world.

The resounding success of the *Quintet in G minor* provided him with many opportunities to perform concerts, but the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 abruptly halted his activities. Shostakovich had begun collaborating with a young ensemble which had formed whilst studying at the Moscow Conservatory. Known as the Beethoven Quartet, they would go on to become, over the ensuing thirty years, the trusted interpreter of his Quartets. Except for the first and the last, all fifteen of Shostakovich's Quartets were written for this legendary ensemble. It was indeed the Beethoven Quartet that suggested to Shostakovich the idea of writing a Piano Quintet, so that they could perform together. The idea took shape in the summer of 1940, with a work of great impact and expressive depth. Shostakovich was at that moment recovering from the disappointment of the unenthusiastic reception for his Sixth Symphony and needed to regain some fresh momentum from the shadow cast by this setback, given the ebb and flow of his controversial relationship with the Soviet authorities. The problem was to find a simple and accessible language, acceptable to the regime's strictures, without sacrificing artistic integrity.

Shostakovich's fears, which were reflected in the series of exhausting rehearsals that lead up to the official premiere at the Moscow Conservatory, were immediately dispelled by the rapturous reception that the work received. So much so, that the audience demanded the repetition of two of the movements. However, the character of the work was not as optimistic as the regime's aesthetic demanded. The Quintet rather more manifested Shostakovich's sarcastic traits over the superficial cheerfulness of the so-called popular music approved by the Ministry.

Despite Prokofiev's harsh judgment in finding the work to be over calculated, the Quintet actually highlights a wide range of feelings that manage to coexist in a harmonious way. The sense of unity of form is achieved in part through impeccable compositional technique and in part to ingenious construction. The first two movements, connect seamlessly, being both in the key of G minor. Composed in a neo-Baroque style, they follow in Bach's model of prelude and fugue. The high rhetorical style of the first half of the piece, accentuated by the intense character of the slow development of the *Fugue* (2nd mvt), is counterbalanced by the ironic and biting central *Scherzo* (3rd mvt), infused with raw sonorities in the dissonant key of B major. The grotesque caricature of official optimism thus becomes the expressive heart of the work, which symmetrically presents another pair of movements to complete the form. In the second half, Shostakovich resorts to two other classical forms. Namely 'aria' in the *Intermezzo* (4th mvt) and 'sonata form' in the Finale. Here, finally, the music seems to find a lightness and a childlike innocence, but it is difficult to believe that Shostakovich's smile here, is entirely sincere and does not conceal other, unconfessed secrets.

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Translation: Alberto Franchin

Piano Trio No.1 in C minor Op.8

Shostakovich composed his *Piano Trio No.1 Op.8* in 1923, when he was only sixteen years old. This early work, written in C minor, already shows the characteristics of his later style, although it is still strongly influenced by the Romantic tradition. The trio is a single-movement composition that explores a wide range of emotions and moods, from lyrical melodies to dramatic outbursts. The youthful energy and inventiveness of the young composer are clearly audible in this work, which foreshadows his later masterpieces.

Piano Trio No.2 in E minor Op.67

The *Piano Trio No.2 Op.67*, composed in 1944, is one of Shostakovich's most poignant and emotionally charged works. Written during World War II, the trio reflects the horrors and sorrow of that time. The work is dedicated to the memory of his friend Ivan Sollertinsky, a prominent musicologist and critic who died in 1944. The trio opens with a haunting, ethereal melody played by the cello in harmonics, followed by a series of variations that are both lyrical and intense. The second movement is a lively and sarcastic scherzo, while the third movement is a lament that expresses the deep sadness of the composer. The final movement combines elements of Jewish folk music with a powerful and dramatic climax, giving the work a sense of catharsis and hope.

Sonata for Violin & Piano Op.134

The *Sonata for Violin and Piano Op.134* was composed in 1968 and is one of Shostakovich's later works. The piece was written for the violinist David Oistrakh and the pianist Sviatoslav Richter, two of the greatest musicians of their time. The sonata consists of three movements and demonstrates Shostakovich's mastery in combining complex structures with deep emotional expression. The first movement, Andante, is a somber and introspective piece that evokes a sense of melancholy and reflection. The second movement, Allegretto, is a lively and playful scherzo that contrasts with the seriousness of the first movement. The final movement, Largo, is a deeply moving and meditative conclusion that leaves the listener with a sense of peace and contemplation.

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Sonata for Viola and Piano Op.147

Dmitri Shostakovich had a troubled relationship with the Soviet government because of his compositions, which were periodically censored. His complete rehabilitation only came after Stalin's death.

In his early 60s, he began his final style, dark and penetrating, which he maintained until his death. The Sonata for viola and piano is his last

composition and also the only piece he never heard, as it was first performed publicly on 1 October 1975.

His style is characterised by numerous quotations, such as the musical cryptogram DSCH (D, E flat, C, B natural) used by Shostakovich to represent himself. The *Sonata Op.147*, dedicated to Fedor Druzhinin, violist of the Beethoven Quartet in Moscow, is one of the most played and unique sonatas for viola and piano. Indeed, this composition is a connective bridge of viola music between the early and late 20th century. Being the last work written by Shostakovich, it poses an interesting question to the performer as to how to approach it. Written in three movements, there is no tonal centre or tonality.

Although it has a first movement, *Moderato*, in sonata form, it does not strictly follow its traditional characteristics, there are no defined keys or tonality but melodies and harmonies that are based on different intervals rather than tonal systems, where the main theme, serene and full of deep thought, is in stark contrast to the furious character of the second theme.

The *Allegretto* draws much thematic material from the unfinished scherzo-like work *The Players* (Igroki), the writing is dense and the viola part virtuosic.

The *Adagio* carries a significant emotional charge, permeated by the themes of the passage of time and death. With elements such as the piano arpeggios, the movement recalls, in a citation style common in Shostakovich's late production, the rhythmic motifs of the "Moonlight Sonata", superimposed on the thematic material already heard in the preceding movements; indeed, the composer indicated this movement "in memory of the great Beethoven". Common to the structure of all movements is the presence of a cadenza. In the first movement it has a role similar to the cadenzas of the concertos, in fact it is used to guide the movement from the reprise to the coda; in the second movement the cadenza has the important task of introducing the first theme of the last movement; in the *Finale* it is used as a development of the main theme.

In all movements the viola ends on a long note with the indication "Morendo" (dying), signifying Shostakovich's own awareness of an imminent end.

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Translation: BC

Cello Sonata in D minor Op.40

Shostakovich *Cello Sonata in D minor Op.40* (1934) premiered by Viktor Kubatski, the dedicatee, with the composer, Small Hall of the Leningrad Conservatory, 25 December 1934. Censured by Stalin, fêted by Khruschev, a child of Tsarist Petersburg schooled by the first Leninists, Shostakovich was a man, Solomon Volkov asserts at the end of Testimony (1979), who said that, looking back over his life, he saw nothing but ruins and 'mountains of corpses'. 'There were no particularly happy moments [...], no great joys. It was grey and dull and it makes me sad to think about it. It saddens me to admit it, but it's the truth, the unhappy truth.' Like Tolstoy, he believed that music was a 'stenography of feelings,' a force 'capable of expressing overwhelming, sombre drama and euphoria, sorrow and ecstasy, burning wrath and chilling fury, melancholy and rousing merriment – and not only all these emotions but also their subtlest nuances and the transitions in between – which words, painting or sculpture cannot express [... Music] creates a spiritual image of man, teaches him to feel, and expands and liberates his soul.' In the doom-laden key of the Fifth Symphony, fathoming quintessential largo waters, testing structural and imaginative ideas that would need larger canvases to reach their fullest expression, the Cello Sonata was the composer's first major chamber work. 'The lightning speed at which I compose unsettles me. This is surely bad. One shouldn't write as quickly as I do. This is, after all, a serious process, and therefore one shouldn't "gallop" (as a well-known ballerina used to say). I compose terribly fast and can't put on the brakes [...] As soon as I have finished a work, I'm no longer so sure that the time was well spent.

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STRING QUARTETS

Dmitri Shostakovich: a life in fifteen String Quartets

In the twentieth-century history of music, the life and works of Dmitri Shostakovich are remarkable and unique in several ways. This young, promising and successful composer developed in a period when neither Western nor Eastern Europe shunned the experimental. In 1936, when Shostakovich had become an up-and-coming star, Stalin began to feel menaced by his success and used a performance of Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District in 1936 as a pretext to declare Shostakovich a persona non grata. From then onwards, Shostakovich felt artistically straitjacketed by Socialist Realism, a stranglehold he managed to escape from through large doses of delicately balanced musical ambiguity. He became so well-versed in achieving this ambiguity, that it turned into an idiomatic style.

After Stalin's death in 1953, the system gradually loosened its reins, but Shostakovich did not give up his idiom. He hardly sought alliance with developments taking place in Western Europe and America while Stalin was still alive. Although he had kept himself abreast of the latest tendencies (serialism, aleatory, inderterminacy, minimal and repetitive music), he integrated hardly any of it into his style, with the exception of the twelve-tone-system. From 1968 on, that technique, introduced by Schönberg in 1923, did appear now and again in Shostakovich's later works.

Politically, however, he made a few mistakes he would pay dearly for with regard to public opinion. Due to the fact that, by his own account, he had been forced to join the communist party in 1960, and later, to denounce the dissident Sacharov, Shostakovich was considered to belong to the old regime.

It is not easy for an outsider to imagine what it must have meant to be a composer under Stalin's dictatorship.

It is generally agreed that Shostakovich behaved like a yurodivy, someone who is able to see and hear what others cannot, and communicates about it in coded language, almost like a mediaeval fool speaking the truth in jest and thus communicating more than could be understood at first sight.

Whenever he could, Shostakovich adopted an anarchist and individualist attitude; restricted though he was in many ways, he tried to breach conventions.

Still, some of his deeds remain problematic, and several testimonies, though not always equally reliable, do not help to clarify the picture. Moreover, his own Testimony (1979) was not written by the composer himself, but taken down by Solomon Volkov and it contains some obvious manipulations of the truth; Maxim, Shostakovich's son, emphatically denies some of the statements in Testimony. And then, there are conductors, such as Kurt Sanderling, who worked with Shostakovich and who claim that their views of Shostakovich's works are based on what the composer told them, which, of course, is hard to verify. For most people, the most reliable source of information to date is Krzysztof Meyer's biography on Shostakovich (1996).

Preceding the String Quartets

In the first part of Shostakovich's musical production his main interest is in bigger genres such as symphonies and the opera. Not until 1938 did Shostakovich turn to the string quartet, a genre he would cultivate until his death.

Shostakovich was a child of his time. In 1917, at the age of eleven, he encountered Lenin during a demonstration and he composed his Praise of Freedom, a Funeral March for the Victims of the Revolution and a Little Revolution Symphony.

The October Revolution left its mark on Shostakovich: in many ensuing compositions he would revert to this theme, with or without a sense of ambiguity.

In the twenties a proletarian culture had come to the fore, urging composers to write operas and oratorios based on mass culture. This tendency came into conflict with those composers who wanted to apply themselves to the experimental, Shostakovich being one of them.

Consequently, both sides organised themselves into associations and factions, which, in the early thirties, finally resulted in the Composers' Society, allowing composers to criticise each other's works. The final judgement, however, was not made by the composers, but by bureaucrats.

Shostakovich had a hard time during his studies at the Conservatory (1919-1925). After he had completed the piano course, financial worries forced him to accompany silent movies, a time-consuming and burdensome occupation, as Shostakovich was near-sighted. The *Symphony No.1* (1925), which he composed to conclude his composition course with Stheynberg and Glazunov, was an immediate success, not only in the Soviet-Union but also in Europe and the United States.

It was followed shortly afterwards by the *Piano Sonata No.1* (1926) and the *Aphorisms* (1927), two experimental compositions which were quite beyond the grasp of the audience.

The *Symphony No.2* (1927), subtitled October, had been commissioned by the government to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Revolution. It contained an
ambiguity that suited Shostakovich very well, for the composition was a clean break away from symphonic tradition. This was interpreted by the government as a reflection of the revolutionary spirit (apart from the revolutionary texts, it has a factory whistle in it); Shostakovich himself however, was much more concerned with aesthetic innovation through experiments, but, as yet, this eluded the government.

With the partly absurd opera *The Nose* (1928) Shostakovich transferred his urge to experiment to large-scale genres. His next opera, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1932, revised as Katerina Ismailova in 1958), earned Shostakovich national and international fame between 1934 and 1936, though some critics blamed the work for its then pornographic content.

While composing Lady Macbeth, Shostakovich seriously misjudged the situation. On the one hand, he took the liberty of questioning the priority and quality of mass song during meetings of the Composers' Society. This was not a very sensible thing to do, as it ran counter to the doctrine of Socialist Realism, which had by then been introduced by Maxim Gorki and in which mass song and optimism were described as qualities.

On the other hand, Shostakovich thought Lady Macbeth would tally entirely with the principles of the government: he depleted Katerina as a person meriting sympathy, because her adulterous behaviour did away with pre-revolutionary middle-class morality. He gives her the most melodious passages, even though she is a murderess, while the other characters (including her impotent husband, her perverted father-in-law, the police) are caricatured.

It eluded his attention that explaining away murder, the lack of optimism, and a thoroughly dissolute morality could be interpreted by Stalin in a nihilistic way. After all, it was only the programme leaflet that said that Katerina's adventures were to be blamed on capitalism.

With the article "Chaos instead of Music", published anonymously in the Pravda and stigmatising Lady Macbeth as formalistic (one of the most abusive terms within the system), Stalin set in motion a descending spiral, which would eventually lead to Shostakovich's downfall. As a matter of fact, from 1936 on Stalin organised large scale witch hunts, during which even Gorki was killed. In that period Shostakovich went to sleep fully dressed, for fear of being arrested at night. He became badly depressed, took to drinking and seriously considered suicide. With the favourable reception of the remarkably ambiguous *Symphony No.5* (1937), he succeeded in saving his skin. Nevertheless, its triumphant music, with sweet and heroic elements can also be interpreted as a hollow triumph and a parody.
Shostakovich himself called the work "a Soviet artist's creative reply to justified criticism".

String Quartet No.1 in C Op.49 (1938)
After the success of the Symphony No.5 and his subsequent rehabilitation. Shostakovich wrote music mainly for propaganda films. In only six weeks' time, during the summer of 1938, he wrote his *String Quartet No.1*, an unpretentious 'finger exercise' which gave him a lot of pleasure. At the

premiere in Leningrad on 10 October 1938 by the Glazunov Quartet he himself described the composition as cheerful and spring-like. Some sources say the birth of his son Maxim (10th May 1938) contributed to the light-hearted character of the string quartet. Maxim himself, however, maintains that the simplicity and serenity of the work are connected to the opposite. Looking at it from that angle, one could say that Shostakovich used ambiguity from his very first string quartet.

Shostakovich interchanged the first and fourth movements, both of which have a positive radiation. The scherzando-like character of the nervous, waltz-like third movement can be interpreted ironically. In the second movement, a set of melancholic variations on a folk tune is started by the viola. It should be noticed that this is not an authentic Russian folksong, but a creation by the composer, modelled on exactly that folksong tradition. The Moscow premiere (16 November 1938) by the Beethoven Quartet meant the beginning of a lifelong friendship with these musicians.

String Quartet No.2 in A Op.68 (1944)
In 1940 Shostakovich scored highly with his audience and the authorities with the impressive *Piano Quintet*, for which he received the Stalin Prize. But real popularity only came through his *Symphony No.7* (1941-1942), written during the siege of Leningrad by the Germans. According to Shostakovich, this siege had been the immediate reason for writing the 'invasion march' in the first movement of the symphony. Besides, the movements originally bore the subtitles War, Remembrance, The Splendour of our Country and Victory.

The creation on 5 March 1942 was generally considered to be a historical event. On 22 March, the same performers played the composition in Moscow. During this premiere, there was an air raid warning. but the orchestra simply went on playing and nobody left the theatre. The symphony moreover became a symbol for the Allied Forces: the score was smuggled out on microfilm to be played in the United States. Later, it was also performed in London and in Sweden. It goes without saying that Shostakovich was awarded the Stalin Prize for this work also.

It was understood that both *Symphony No.7* and *No.8* were about suffering. Shostakovich would remark ironically that the war period was a happy time: at last the composer was allowed to write works with a negative content. But while the authorities took his music to be a mere ventilation of the tragedy of war, Shostakovich and many others heard in the notes the tragedy of the regime they were obliged to live under.

Shostakovich wrote the *Piano Trio No.2* (1944) in consequence of the unexpected demise of his best friend, Ivan Sollertinsky (1902-1944). Not only had the work been written in commemoration of Sollertinsky, but it was also conceived as a huge indictment of war, and so bringing together collective and individual suffering. Shostakovich took quite a long time to write it (half a year). It earned him his third Stalin Prize. It was created on 14 November 1944 in the hall of the Leningrad Philharmonic (where Sollertinsky had been artistic director), together with the *String Quartet No.2*, written immediately after the *Piano Trio No.2* and in a very short period of time ("eerily short", he would have told Shebalin).

This work, which also contains war symbolism, is dedicated to the composer Vissarion Shebalin, one of Shostakovich's dear friends, and one of the few people who had defended him when he had fallen into disgrace in 1936.

Unlike the *String Quartet No.1*, the movements are not conceived in a traditional way. The *Overture* uses a solemn opening theme, which returns at the end, alternating with a multitude of melodic lines.

In the *Recitative* the violin sounds as if it were looking for comfortable musical surroundings, finally finding them in the Romance, in the harmonious carpet of sound unrolled by the other members of the quartet for its long monologue.

In the fluctuating motions within the *Waltz*, some perceive the restlessness and anxiety of people who have fallen victim to absolute arbitrariness.

After an introduction, the *theme with Variations* is started by the viola. The musical development leads to a violent climax, with piercingly high notes, to be closed by a large but calm section, as if the composer were suggesting that peace is possible after all.

String Quartet No.3 in F Op.13 (1946)
After the war it was rumoured that Shostakovich intended to write a grand symphony to pay tribute to the glorious victory. This was even announced by the press agency Tass. At first Shostakovich himself was very communicative, but afterwards became very secretive about it. At its creation it appeared that the *Symphony No.9* (1 945) was not a majestic work, but a short, ironical and even sarcastic symphony, more frivolous than triumphant. The reviews were scathing, at home and abroad.

The same irony is also present in *String Quartet No.3*, where contrasting musical ideas incessantly question one another. Shostakovich wrote it between January and August 1946. As in the *Symphony No.8*, he chose in favour of five movements, and just as he had done in *Symphony No.7*, omitted the programmatic subtitles in the final version.

The *Allegretto* (calm and unaware of approaching disasters) breathes frivolity and unsophisticated cheerfulness.

The beginning of the second movement (rumbling uneasiness and expectation) is characterised by obstinate broken triads. It is a lively waltz, with at times shrill sounds, apparently forecasting the approaching conflict. The scherzo-like third movement (unleashed force of arms) is in marked contrast with the preceding one, by means of rugged accents and a nervously melodious style of writing. According to some, the central march parodies the Prussian goosestep and it must be interpreted as a metaphor for a display of power. The *Adagio* (homage to the dead) is a sevenfold presentation of a sweet mourning song on the violin, accompanied by a solid unisono-substructure of cello, viola and violin. It evokes the atmosphere of a funeral march disappearing in the distance. The viola carries out the transition to the last movement (the eternal questions: Why? and for what purpose?), with some of the earlier themes entering into dialogue with each other, and ultimately falling silent.

At its creation (16 December 1946, by the Beethoven Quartet) the audience once again did not hear a triumphant hymn, but a more universally oriented work.

It was to be expected that reactions to these acts of insubordination were to come, which would by no means be the case only for Shostakovich.

String Quartet No.4 in D Op.83 (1949)
The Composers' Society was instructed by Stalin and his pawn Zhdanov to expose the formalists and cosmopolites among the composers. It was also the start of the very questionable star career of Tichon Khrennikov, who later on would prove himself to be an opportunist.

During the historical meeting, Prokofiev fell asleep, was called to order and left the room. The other composers started to incriminate each other in public, but were finally all discredited: Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Khachaturian, Dmitri Kabalevsky, Gavriil Popov, Vissarion Shebalin,... On 10 February 1948 the resolution was made public and at the school of music, the 10-year-old Maxim Shostakovich was forced to condemn his father. During the following meetings nobody dared to sit beside Shostakovich. Like the other composers present, he also had to read out a piece of self-criticism, the text of which was handed to him when he mounted the platform. With the exception of his *Symphonies No.5* and *No.7*. all his music was considered to be unworthy of the Russian people. He was also removed from some of his teaching posts.

Paradoxical as it may sound, but entirely in accordance with Stalin's perverted power politics, Shostakovich was obliged to attend a congress in the United States as a Russian observer. After his refusal to go, Stalin in person called him on the telephone. According to reports, Shostakovich asked how a composer whose works were not played and who had been accused of formalism, could represent the Soviet-Union in the United States; Stalin replied that no composer in the Soviet-Union had been

forbidden. Shostakovich went to the United States and was forced to deliver propagandist speeches.

A partial rehabilitation followed because of his mainly Stalinist (but also deliberately trivial) *Song of the Forests* (1949) and the countless film scores he composed in that period. Far more interesting compositionally are the *24 Preludes and Fugues* (1952) written in consequence of his forced visit to Leipzig in the D.D.R. in 1950.

In the period following his condemnation, Shostakovich would write quite a lot of compositions, only to loci, them away, waiting for better circumstances. Among them are the *Violin Concerto No.1* (1947), the *Festive Overture* (1947), *the song cycle From Jewish folk poetry* (1948) and the *String Quartet No.4* (1949).

This quartet was not created until 3 December 1953, by the Beethoven Quartet. after Stalin's death (5 March 1953).

The delay was caused by the use of material from Jewish folksongs. Stalin had spoken out against cosmopolitanism in 1948 and thus also against the Jews. To Shostakovich the Jews had become a symbol: "All of man's defencelessness was concentrated in them".

In the first movement he does not use the folk music literally, but he does adopt the idiom. The melody starts on top of some held tones. Quite fast it moves on to a climax and is then followed by resignation. In the second movement, the first violin comes to the fore with a quasi-improvised melody. It is said by some, to contain a reference to private suffering. The third movement is not a scherzo: it evokes a menacing feeling, caused by its specific timbre (almost entirely con sordino), its unisono-passages and its inciting galloping motif. In the last movement, it is not only the instruments that engage in dialogue, but also the Western and Jewish-Eastern worlds: everything is focused on collective suffering. To that effect Shostakovich uses both dances and literal quotes from colourful Jewish melodies. It is significant that this folk music is not treated severely but freely. Only at the end of the movement does the Western music come back to the fore, as if it were to be dissolved in nothingness.

String Quartet No.5 in B flat Op.92 (1952)
The most remarkable thing about the beginning of this string quartet (which was created only as late as 13 November 1953, for the thirtieth anniversary of the Beethoven Quartet) are the five notes played over and over by the viola, and referring to the name 'Shostakovich': C, D, Es (E flat, read: 'S') and H (followed by C sharp) are part of the initials D-S-C-H. But this motif will not be fully and systematically elaborated until *Symphony No.10* and the *String Quartet No.8*.

These energetic, driving five-note passages alternate with more lyrical moments. Striking is the tenuous tone that concludes this movement and marks the transition to the next one.
The second movement stands out because of a highly refined sonority: viola and violin playing the same line together, at a large interval and extremely subdued, evoking eternity.

As imperceptible as it was in the first movement, a new transition is made to the next section: there, gently but irresistibly, serenity is exchanged for a busy texture of voices, reminiscent of the previous two movements, including the striking five-note motif, and ending in the same timelessness as the second movement.

The composer (and also pupil of Shostakovich) Galina Ustvolskaya claims that Shostakovich incorporated a theme from her Trio (for violin, clarinet and piano) in this string quartet and also in his Michelangelo-suite, as a sign of appreciation.

String Quartet No.6 in G Op.101 (1956)
The first large composition Shostakovich finished after Stalin's death was *Symphony No.10* (1953). According to Solomon Volkov and Kurt Sanderling, the Scherzo is a portrayal of Stalin. Most probably, this symphony is full of cryptic symbolism, but Shostakovich hardly ever discussed this, and never in the same way.

The period between 1953 and 1956 was favourable to Shostakovich's reputation and he received several distinctions. Meanwhile a real struggle

for power took place behind the scenes. resulting in the actual abolition of the 1948 decree in the spring of 1958.

This period was not really Shostakovich's heyday as a composer. The *String Quartet No.6* is by far the most remarkable work he wrote in this period. The Beethoven Quartet created it in Leningrad on 7 October 1956. Shostakovich wrote it as a relaxation while composing his *Symphony No.11*.

The first movement starts with a childlike melody, written for the film "The Fall of Berlin" (Padenie Berlina).

The atmosphere is reminiscent of the pastoral. The optimistic line continues into the second movement, where the first violin floats serenely high above the other instruments. Astonishingly poetical is the introvert, melancholic mood of the passacaglia in the third movement, according to some, a symbol for grief and remembrance. In the fourth movement the passacaglia theme recurs amidst the expressions of joy which characterised the first two movements.

What is most remarkable about this string quartet is the way in which each movement is concluded: Shostakovich chooses in favour of a formula that returns almost literally each time, thus forming a unifying element throughout the string quartet.

String Quartet No.7 in F sharp minor Op.108 (1960)
In the programmatic Symphony No.11 from 1957 Shostakovich sympathises with the 1905 revolutionaries who vainly struggled for a humane world. Compositionally, Shostakovich had by then united all his typical styles of writing into a coherent language.

In his private life he had to deal with the loss of his wife Nina Vaslyevna: she had died in consequence of radiation during her laboratory work. Shostakovich married again in 1956, with Margarita Andrejavna Kajnova, who he had proposed to the first time he saw her. They divorced in 1961. The following year, Shostakovich married Irina Antonovna Soepinskaya.

He wrote the short, fairly simple *String Quartet No.7* in 1960, in commemoration of Nina, who would have been 50 that same year.

At the beginning of the first movement a striking rhythmic motif (short-short-long) is introduced and repeated five times: it will be the basis for the rest of the movement. Cello and first violin alternate at first but then bring the melody to life together. The joyful character is exchanged in the second movement for a melancholy melody, which is started high by the violin and steadily descends to lower spheres.

At the beginning of the third movement, Shostakovich uses a brutal contrast: soft, descending lines are alternated without warning with whirling, nervous dialogues, developing like a fugato, and still ending in serenity. At its creation in Leningrad on 15 May 1960, the members of the Beethoven Quartet called the final movement a cosmic fugue, indicating not only the technical difficulties in it, but also referring to the attempt at finding comfort in the absolute.

String Quartet No.8 in C minor Op.110 (1960)
In 1959 Shostakovich began to be severely troubled by an inflammation of the spinal cord, an incurable disease (poliomyelitis). In May of the following year he was forced to go to Gohrisch near Dresden for treatment. Officially, however, he stayed in Dresden, then still completely in ruins, for the film score of "Five Days Five Nights".

In three days' time, impressed by the misery of war, he wrote the *String Quartet No.8*, the five movements of which blend into each other. He dedicated it to the victims of fascism and war, and, according to his daughter Galina, Shostakovich considered himself to be one of them, a very justifiable point of view, especially considering the numerous quotations from key Shostakovich compositions that were woven around the central motif D-Es-C-H. The notes D-Es-C-H refer to his initials, and at the same time symbolise each (suffering) individual.

The first movement contains references to *Symphony No.1* and *Symphony No.5*. In the second movement, not by chance, a Jewish theme from the *Piano Trio No.2* glimmers through. The *Cello Concerto No.1* (1 959) is present in the waltz-like third movement. In the fourth movement, with its remarkably aggressive accents, a Russian hymn from 1870 is

quoted: "Languishing in prison, martyred by slavery", a hymn which Lenin liked very much. Further, the cello refers to the aria "Seryozha, my love" from the third act of Lady Macbeth, where Katerina sings about woman's great sense of sacrifice.

It is difficult to say whether the D-Es-C-H-motif is related intentionally to the opening fugue of Beethoven's String Quartet op.131. The purported integration of the Dies Irae is nothing but 'Hineininterpretierung'.

String Quartet No.9 in E flat Op.117 (1964)
Precisely in 1961, the official start of destalinisatlon, Shostakovich wrote one of his most controversial compositions, *Symphony No.12*, subtitled the “Year 1917”. Compositionally it provoked negative reactions, and with respect to content, the choice of subject was rather unfortunate. Some people maintain, however, that the work is misunderstood.

On the music scene there were no clear signs of destalinisation. Krushchev abused Shostakovich because of a jazz concert organised by the composer (after which, in 1961, jazz was officially forbidden). Nevertheless, the visits by Leonard Bernstein (1959), Glenn Gould and Igor Stravinsky (1962) had a salutary effect. The fact that it was Khrennikov of all persons who organised that last visit, heralded the turning tide. Equally symbolic was the successful creation of *Symphony No.4* on 30 December 1961. This work had been completed during the controversy about Lady Macbeth and had since then been locked away since then with lots of other compositions. It was also to influence *Symphony No.13* (Babi Jar), a composition boycotted by the government because of its Jewish theme.

Just like *String Quartet No.8* the five movements of *String Quartet No.9* are played without a break. The work is dedicated to his third wife lrina.

The first four movements work towards the final movement. In the first movement a central idea is born, which afterwards will be frequently combined with other motifs. In the second movement the writing is much more chord-like and serene. At the end the first violin suggests a theme in a quiet tempo, but then with a remarkable rush, it runs into the third movement. The gallop motif is clearly reminiscent of Rossini. In the fourth movement, on top of a chord-like structure, a soloist plays a hesitating melody time and time again, which at times continues telling the story in a monologue.

In the final movement all the ideas of the preceding movements return in a colourful, orchestral texture, in the shape of a waltz, march, chorale, fugato, recitative and monologue. The composition leads to an impressive climax, which is concluded by a striking unisono.

Together with *String Quartet No.10*, this work was created by the Beethoven Quartet on 20 November 1964.

String Quartet No.10 in A flat Op.118 (1964)
This string quartet was written in 11 days' time and it is dedicated to the Jewish composer Moissei Samuilovich Vainberg, the pianist with whom Shostakovich played the arrangements of his symphonies for two pianos to the members of the censoring committee.

In this work Shostakovich returns to one of his favourite styles of writing: that is starting with only one instrument, after which the other parts gradually join in. However, the intense way in which the instruments then enter into dialogue, is rarely seen in his works. A lasting impression is left by the remarkable use of the sul ponticello-articulation by the viola towards the end. Its serene ending contrasts sharply with the furious second movement, which also contains a quotation from *String Quartet No.7*. Here dialogue has disappeared and impulsive accents and strident glissandi dominate in a soundscape approaching symphonic colours, and finishing with a surprising unisono.

The third movement is the pith of the composition. It consists of a 9-measure passacaglia theme, played mainly by the cello, and towards the end situated in a higher register. Out of the passacaglia a fourth movement arises, gradually becoming busier and referring to the previous movements. In a sound that is very typical of Shostakovich, cello, viola and second violin play a slow melodic line unisono, at a long distance from each other, while the first violin is moving in between, pizzicato. The end refers to the serenity in the first movement.

String Quartet No.11 in F minor Op.122 (1966)
In 1965 Vasily Shirinsky died. He was the second violinist of the Beethoven Quartet and Shostakovich dedicated *String Quartet No.11* to him. The seven short movements are played without interruption and are characterised by a dark undertone. The central theme is played in the Introduction by the cello. It returns in ever-faster note values at the beginning of the second movement, which sounds pianissimo almost continuously. As happens quite often in the work of Shostakovich, the contrast between movements is exploited, in this case, by an extremely loud onset of the third movement with expressive eruptions and striking motifs followed by quiet chorale sections.

The restlessness is driven to extremity in the Etude, when the busy gestures of the first violin move to the other parts, surrounded by a wall of sound from the other instruments. The obsessive repetition in the fifth movement adds an effect of great relief to the gloomy tranquillity of the funeral march in the sixth movement. In the last movement the opening motif keeps returning in the first violin, clearly but modestly, ending in near silence, to the sound of a thin high note. The creation of this string quartet took place in May 1966.

String Quartet No.12 in D flat Op.133 (1968)
This string quartet comes after the *Seven Songs* (1967), with texts by Alexander Blok) and the *Violin Concerto No.2* (1967). It is dedicated to Dmitri Tsyganov, the first violinist of the Beethoven Quartet, who created the work in Moscow, September 14th 1965.

It is significant for music history that Shostakovich now moves to panchromatism. He uses all twelve tones equally, thus joining in with dodecaphony as it had been developed by Schönberg in 1923. The main difference though, is situated in the tonality and consonance into which Shostakovich integrates these twelve tones.

This string quartet is also said to be programmatic. At the beginning of the first movement (the world of higher ideals) the twelve tones are presented seven times, sometimes fragmented and in ever-changing contexts. The part of the second violin is silent at the beginning, as homage to the deceased Shirinsky. The second movement itself consists of four movements, the first of which is a Scherzo (Allegretto: the destructive powers). Besides trills, this Scherzo uses an energetic rhythmic motif (four short notes and a long one), the motifs conflicting with each other.

The second movement (despair) is an adagio chorale, played con sordino, referring to the musical language of the Russian Orthodox Church. At the end the first violin plays ever more penetrating pizzicati, announcing the Moderato (expression of pure intention and higher aspiration). Elements from the previous movements are resumed. The final movement (Moderato/Allegretto: victory of good over evil) is characterised by an obsessive recapitulation of the rhythmic motif in the Scherzo.

12 is not only a relevant number compositionally, it can also be seen from the viewpoint of Christian mysticism: together with the numbers 3 and 7, 12 is the depiction of a multitude which can be restored to unity.

String Quartet No.13 in B flat minor Op.138 (1910)
In this work Shostakovich continues his unbounded pessimism (probably caused by his bad physical condition), already present in his *Symphony No.14* (1969). It is dedicated to Vadim Borisovsky, the violist of the Beethoven Quartet, who created this string quartet in Leningrad on December 13th, 1970. In 1937 Borisovksy had published a work of reference on the viola. Therefore it is not surprising that Shostakovich focuses on this instrument in his string quartet. The composition opens with a viola solo, playing a melancholy, evocative twelve-tone melody, after which the other instruments serenely join the discourse, in utmost sobriety. As in *String Quartet No.12*, some melodic elements were inspired by the Russian Orthodox Church. Then, the sound becomes busier, more present, adding attention for non-conventional, percussive sonorities, such as tapping the body of the instrument with the wooden part of the bow. In this respect, Shostakovich comes close to the Western European avant-garde, with its increasing attention to 'sound in

itself'. Although for some time it looks as if this string quartet will also end in silence, Shostakovich breaks through these expectations by softly building up the last tone to a painfully hard and sharp final sound.

String Quartet No.14 in F sharp Op.142 (1913)
Shostakovich wrote this string quartet after the ambiguous *Symphony No.15* (1971). The work is dedicated to cellist Sergei Shirinksy and the cello plays a prominent role in it. In the first movement the cello enters into dialogue with the first violinist, Tsyganov, the only other remaining member of the Beethoven Quartet (for violist Vadim Borisovksy had passed away in the meantime, as had quite a few other friends of Shostakovich's). Although this string quartet has a carefree ring, there is lament behind it.

The introvert is at the heart of the passacaglia in the second movement. The *Passacaglia*, and in a broader sense also *Theme with Variations*, appears to have been a cherished style of writing throughout Shostakovich's string quartets, especially in slow movements: the second movement in *String Quartet No.1*, the fourth in *No.2*, the third in *No.6*, the third in *No.10* and in this movement.

In the last movement "Seryozha, my love" from Lady Macbeth, returns, the same quotation Shostakovich had already used in *String Quartet No.8*. Whereas then it referred to a forbidden composition, it has now become a joyful witticism and an allusion to the dedicatee's first name.

The evolution in this composition, from light-heartedness slowly deepening to reconciliation and idyll at the end, adds a moving touch of poetry to the global discourse.

String Quartet No.15 in E flat minor Op.144 (1914)
Shostakovich refused another dedication, because death seemed to be lying in wait all the time. Cellist Sergei Shirinsky died in 1974, during rehearsals for this string quartet. It was created by the Tanejev Quartet on 14th November, 1974, in the presence of Shostakovich, who was himself fatally ill by then. He could not even mount the stage to take a bow.

This string quartet is most typical of the later, introverted Shostakovich, a kind of music which hardly makes allowance for the concert situation. Shostakovich said: "It must be played in a way which makes flies drop dead from the ceiling and makes the audience leave the concert hall out of pure tediousness".

It is a masterpiece of melancholy, sadness and embitterment. It has six slow movements, flowing into one another.
The first movement is a fugato, but its theme is so static and spun out that all sense of time appears to be gone.

In the second movement Shostakovich uses a twelve-tone row, each note a scream, rising from soft to loud, and ending abruptly. These alienating sounds are compensated by a modest, almost uncertain waltz. This movement also contains a reference to Beethoven's String Quartet in A minor Op.132.

In the third movement the violin plays a dramatic recitative, with echoes of the Serenade, while the other instruments play signal-like chords, and the cello, almost unobserved, holds a note. Some elements of Bach's Chaconne are integrated in this movement.

In the *Nocturne* the warm sonority of the viola plays a cantilena con sordino, accompanied by the other members con sordino as well. Some soft pizzicati in the cello announce the *Funeral March*. Its starts with a viola monologue and is continued by the cello. Sometimes the music is chord-like, but the monologue remains at the centre. In the final movement the central ideas from the previous movements are resumed and brought to a synthesis. The viola expresses the last musical thought.

Shostakovich realises that he will never accomplish his project of writing 24 string quartets in all keys. Three days after having finished the *Viola Sonata* (1975), on 9 August, he dies from a heart attack. At his funeral his *String Quartet No.8* is played.

PRÉLUDES & FUGUES

On October 10th, 1950, following his visit as the principal Soviet delegate honoring the 200th anniversary of Bach's death and as jury member of the Leipzig Bicentennial Bach Competition, Shostakovich set out to compose a collection of twenty-four preludes and fugues for solo piano inspired by Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier. (A draft of the sixteenth prelude however, appears to have been written before this opus). The work was completed on February 25th, 1951. It proceeds around the circle of ascending fifths.

Prelude and Fugue No.1 in C
The prelude (moderato), composed in homage of the classic Sarabande, gives the impression of a choral work. The same theme is repeated throughout.
The four-voice fugue (Moderato), somber and clumsy, boasts a modal structure. The lack of any accidentals is surprising for a 20th century work.

Prelude and Fugue No.2 in A minor
Bach's influence is clearly evident in this prelude (Allegro) reminiscent of the Toccata.
The lively and witty three-voice fugue (Allegretto) is characterized by a subject, which could easily be imagined in one of Shostakovich's Polkas.

Prelude and Fugue No.3 in G
In this prelude (Moderato non troppo), one theme, distinguished for its slow and majestic octave, encounters another, more rapid and brilliant theme.
The fugue in three voices (Allegro molto) is ironic and mischievous in character.

Prelude and Fugue No.4 in E minor
The prelude (Andante) is heavy and introverted in character.
The double fugue in four voices (Adagio) is made up of two themes, one almost common, the other eager that they should meet the end.

Prelude and Fugue No.5 in D
The prelude (Allegretto) uses close arpeggios suggestive of the Balalaika to depict popular scenes.
The three-voice fugue (Allegretto) is built on a theme, almost infantile in nature, adorned with moments of silence.

Prelude and Fugue No.6 in B minor
The prelude (Allegretto) is dramatic in character.
The fugue in four voices (Moderato) is structures around two themes: One is grave and sombre, while the other is more animated.

Prelude and Fugue No.7 in A
The prelude (Allegro poco moderato) is enlivened by a 12/8 rhythm.
The three-voice fugue (Allegretto) is fine and delicate.

Prelude and Fugue No.8 in F-sharp minor
The prelude is distinguished for its staccatos. Its theme heralds the fugue.
The three-voice fugue (Andante) reflects sentiments of anguish and deviousness.

Prelude and Fugue No.9 in E
The prelude (Moderato ma non troppo) is inspired from Russian folksongs.
The two-voice fugue (Allegro) which follows the prelude is swift and virtuosic.

Prelude and Fugue No.10 in C-sharp minor
The prelude centers on brisk movements interrupted by choral sections.
The peaceful four-voice fugue (Moderato) gives way to melodies inspired by folk music.

Prelude and Fugue No.11 in B
The prelude (Allegro) is brisk, delicate and child-like. Certain themes re-emerge in the fugues that follows.
The fugue in three voices (Allegro) is quick and elated in character.

Prelude and Fugue No.12 in G-sharp minor
The prelude (Andante) is a passacaglia boasting a long theme, which is repeated ten times. The final theme re-emerges in the fugue which follows.
The four-voice fugue (Allegro) bears orchestral writing of an introverted nature, suggestive of emotional suffering.

Prelude and Fugue No.13 in F-sharp minor
From within the prelude (Moderato con moto) appears a melodious theme.
The academic, austere five-voice fugue (Adagio) is built around a short and simple theme.

Prelude and Fugue No.14 in E-flat minor
The prelude (Adagio) depicts a Mussorgskyan atmosphere, a scene reminiscent of an Orthodox service where the octaves, performed as tremelos, and the low notes reminds one of a choir chanting in prayer.
The three-voice fugue (Allegro non troppo) is based on a theme from the prelude which precedes it; it reflects complex sentiments of suffering and complaint.

Prelude and Fugue No.15 in D-flat
The prelude (Allegretto) is written as a Waltz; its jovial nature depicts a feast.
The four-voice fugue (Allegro molto) is a monolithic work marked by staccato notes.

Prelude and Fugue No.16 in B-flat minor
The prelude (Andante) is reminiscent of a choir singing a Russian song.
The three voice fugue (Adagio) is melancholic, almost suffering in nature; it boasts a great wealth of rhythm.

Prelude and Fugue No.17 in A-flat
The prelude (Allegretto) is happy and almost child-like in nature.
The fugue (Allegretto), in four voices, continues in the spirit of the prelude, which precedes it.

Prelude and Fugue No.18 in F
The prelude (Moderato), intimate and lyrical, is written in the form of a Nocturne.
Similarly, the four-voice fugue (Moderato con moto) is also lyrical.

Prelude and Fugue No.19 in E-flat
The prelude (Allegretto) is made up of two themes. In the first theme, majestic chords stand like columns, adorned by dotted passages.
The four-voice fugue (Moderato con moto), austere in character, is written in five time.

Prelude and Fugue No.20 in C minor
The prelude (Adagio) mirrors a dialogue between a chorus of men and a soloist.
The three voice fugue (Moderato) opens with the same theme from the prelude which precedes it.

Prelude and Fugue No.21 in B-flat
The prelude (Allegro) is written as an Etude. It is light, airy, and delicately conceived.
The three-voice fugue (Allegro non troppo) is built around a brief theme; it is jovial in character, with dance-like qualities bearing staccato notes.

Prelude and Fugue No.22 in G minor
With notes repeated in pairs, the prelude (Moderato non troppo) reminds one of an Etude.
The four-voice fugue (Moderato con moto) is composed around a soft these reminiscent of a folk song.

Prelude and Fugue No.23 in F
The prelude (Adagio), serene and profound, is reminiscent of a Chopin Nocturne with its subtlety and colors.
The three-voice fugue (Moderato con moto) centers four themes.

Prelude and Fugue No.24 in D minor
The prelude (Andante) is chacterized by religious majesty, reminiscent of a prayer. The second theme re-emerges in the fugue, which follows.
The four-voice double fugue (Moderato) begins with a serene, intimate theme, which progressively mounts in tension. The second theme (Accelerando poco à poco), conceived as a symphony, eventually culminates with a complex, grandiose sound evocative of a cathedral rising of the heavens.

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