TOCCATA CLASSICS

Dmitry SHOSTAKOVICH

COMPLETE MUSIC FOR PIANO DUO AND DUET, VOLUME TWO

PIANO CONCERTO NO. 2 IN F MAJOR, OP. 102
SYMPHONY NO. 15 IN A MAJOR, OP. 141

Min Kyung Kim
Hyung Jin Moon

FIRST RECORDINGS

SHOSTAKOVICH: WORKS FOR PIANO DUO AND DUET, VOLUME TWO

by David Fanning

For Shostakovich, as for most composers of and before his time, arrangements of his orchestral scores for piano, duet or two pianos served strictly utilitarian purposes. The single exception was the unforeseen one of the Fourth Symphony, the two-piano version of which, published in a limited edition in 1946, effectively kept the piece alive during the 25-year period after its aborted premiere in 1936 when it was 'not recommended for performance' (a euphemism for banned). Otherwise, the arrangements were designed variously for concerto soloists to work from prior to rehearsals with an orchestra, for the composer and his friends to play to conductors and give an idea of tempo and character, for workshopping a new piece before friends and colleagues (sometimes even during the process of composition) and, not least, for showcasing to peers in the Composers' Union in order to get the green light for public performance. The piano-duo version of the Fifteenth Symphony, for instance, was auditioned in this way at the beginning of August 1974, not long after completion of the work, by Mieczysław (at the time known as Moisey) Weinberg and Boris Tchaikovsky.

All through his student years, and even after the sensation created by his First Symphony, Shostakovich was torn between a career as pianist or one as composer. It was only after the first International Chopin Competition in 1927, when a bout of appendicitis contributed to his not progressing to the final round, that he took the decision to concentrate his talents on composing. He continued to perform, but from that point he gradually confined his solo public appearances to his own music. The impracticality of maintaining a serious practice regime inevitably took the edge off the steely brilliance for which he had become well-known, and some of the recordings he made in the late 1940s and '50s are marred by excessive nervous tension and

brittleness of tone; but others show a combination of articulacy and structural grasp that is convincing and authoritative.

Piano Concerto No. 2 in F major, Op. 102

Shostakovich's First Concerto – for piano, trumpet and strings – remained a calling-card for his pianistic prowess long after its composition in 1933. The Second appeared 24 years later, and was not destined to enter his performing repertoire in the same way. As with the Concertino for Two Pianos, Op. 94 (1954),[1] it was composed for (and in this case is dedicated to) his son, Maxim, who was completing his pre-Conservatoire studies at the Central Music School in Moscow at the time and who gave the Concerto its premiere on 10 May 1957, the day of his nineteenth birthday. The two-piano score is undated, but it was evidently used for a performance by father and son in April at the USSR Composers' Union. Shostakovich *père* recorded the piece: first live in November 1957, then in the studio in May 1958 during a visit to Paris. Shortly before these recordings a worrying weakness in his right hand presented itself, prompting hospitalisation throughout September 1957. Over the years the problem progressed into general issues with his mobility, but despite repeated investigations in various Soviet clinics it was only definitely diagnosed some fifteen years later – by American doctors – as motor neurone disease. Shostakovich's piano-playing days were numbered, and he increasingly deputed performances to friends, pupils and colleagues.

According to the composer himself, the Second Concerto had 'no redeeming artistic merits'. Unlike some remarks often attributed to him, this one is verifiable, since it comes from a letter to Edison Denisov from mid-February 1957, written barely a week after he had finished work on the piece. As with so many of Shostakovich's pronouncements, it would be dangerous to take it at face value. By this stage in his troubled life he had developed the habit of addressing others in terms that he felt they would most easily relate to, leaving posterity to squabble over what he might 'really' have meant. Writing

[1] Recorded by Vicky Yannoula and Jakob Fichert on Volume One of this series (Toccata Classics TOCC 0034), along with the Suite for Two Pianos, Op. 6; 'The Chase' from *Korzinkina's Adventures*, Op. 59; the Polka from *Ballet Suite* No. 2, Op. 89b; the *Merry March*, Op. 84c, and Tarantella, Op. 84d; the Valse from *Unity*, Op. 95d; and the four-hand version of Symphony No. 9, Op. 70.

to a composer of the young Denisov's adventurous inclinations, Shostakovich may well have been concerned to pre-empt criticism of what was to all appearances one of his more straightforward scores. There may even have been an ironic wink behind the remark that Denisov himself missed. Certainly there is much that could be said to counter-balance Shostakovich's deprecatory self-assessment.

Amid the high jinks of the outer movements, there are a number of in-jokes between father and son, most obviously in the imitations of Hanon studies[2] in the finale. And in general the Concerto fits snugly into a well-established sub-genre of Soviet music: the so-called 'Youth' concerto, targeted specifically at young players in the country's massively subsidised pedagogic system, and popularised above all by Dmitry Kabalevsky. It also fulfils – arguably even over-fulfils – the constantly repeated demands made on Soviet composers for uplifting, 'life-asserting' music, which might further explain Shostakovich's keenness to pass it off as mere hackwork. At any rate the artlessness is clearly by design, not by default.

The *Allegro* first movement 1 gets straight down to business with a perky quick-march tune and a cheerful rejoinder that could easily be a skit on the opening of Rachmaninov's Third Concerto. The soloist cannot resist adding an idea that follows the rhythm of the sea-shanty 'What shall we do with the drunken sailor?'. Whether Shostakovich was aware of this connection is unknown, but he was certainly acquainted with a range of popular songs from around the world, as allusions in his First Piano Concerto and theatre music for *King Lear*, amongst other works, clearly indicate. A more thoughtful idea fades away with melancholy hints of the original march-like rhythms. This idea will make one further appearance in the first movement, originally in the full orchestra over plunging arpeggios from the piano, at the climax to a long passage of accumulating tension. It is this central accumulation, made especially dramatic in Shostakovich's own recorded performances, that sets the high spirits in a more serious context. Afterwards comes a brittle neo-Baroque cadenza and a succinct review of the earlier playful themes.

[2] *Le Pianiste virtuose* was a collection of 60 pedagogical studies published by Charles-Louis Hanon (1819–1900) in 1873. They were taken up with especial enthusiasm in Russia.

The *Andante* slow movement [2] is a touching gift from father to son. A melancholy sarabande, originally for strings, alternates with a heavenly tune that again suggests a gentle parody of Rachmaninov (this time the slow movement of his Second Piano Concerto). Shostakovich's vein of childlike simplicity is almost always accompanied by shades of some other mood – often, as here, some kind of wistful sense of distance or memory. Not for the first time in his career, this seems to be not so much simple music as music about the (lost?) condition of simplicity. The documentary film that once used this movement to accompany autumnal vistas of the capital glimpsed from a boat on the Moscow River surely had its heart in the right place.

Without a break the piano transforms its quiet, tolling repeated notes back into something resembling the jauntiness of the first movement [3]. It is time to close the poetry book and to watch the circus clowns go through their routines. This finale initially features a fast polka, then a cheerfully off-balance seven-beat étude, and finally those imitation Hanon studies – the kind of thing that Shostakovich might well have heard his son hammering away at while he was trying to compose the 'Leningrad' Symphony fifteen years earlier. The music rings the changes on these three ideas, throwing in some wickedly abrupt modulations and, in the orchestral version, cannily holding back the side-drum for extra rhythmic point in the later stages (Shostakovich attempts no rendition of this feature in the two-piano version). By Shostakovich's standards none of this may be rocket-science. But it says something for his gifts that without unduly straining himself he managed to produce the last piano concerto to retain a place in the standard concert repertoire.

Symphony No. 15 in A major, Op. 141

The bare facts about Shostakovich's last symphony are soon told. It was composed between April and July 1971, partly while the composer was undergoing treatment for the debilitating condition of his limbs, and partly during recuperation at a composers' rest home in Repino, twenty miles north-west of Leningrad. It was first performed in Moscow on 8 January 1972 under the baton of the composer's son, now definitively turned conductor. Coming after two symphonies commemorating the 1905 and 1917

Revolutions (Nos. 11 and 12 respectively) and two based on texts (Nos. 13 and 14), the Fifteenth was Shostakovich's first non-programmatic contribution to the genre since the Tenth, composed eighteen years earlier.

Shostakovich was extremely cagey about the origins of the work and how it might be understood. In fact, virtually everything one might say about it, other than the facts above, has to be couched in terms of hypothesis, speculation and rhetorical question. Even its non-programmatic status has a question mark over it, thanks to the prominent quotations – from the *William Tell* Overture in the first movement and from Wagner at the beginning of the finale (the 'Fate' motif and succeeding rhythm of Siegfried's death scene from *Götterdämmerung*).

Not that there is any shortage of plausible explanations for those references. The best-known is based on Shostakovich's own commentary, to the effect that the first movement represents a toyshop, while the whole symphony might be viewed as a birth-to-death piece. Given that toyshops, at least in the world of literature or cinema, can be sites of malevolence and terror, and that mortality and immortality, heroism and anti-heroism and the career of the artist, are all recurrent themes in Shostakovich's later works, perhaps his explanations should be given more credence than they have been.

But there are complications. As so often with this composer there are many other near-quotations and near-self-quotations. The former tend to be from fateful or death-haunted works, such as Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony (the bassoon in the first movement), Mahler's Ninth (the horn, later trumpet, in the scherzo third movement), and the 'yearning' motif from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (violins in the finale). The near-self-quotations involve virtually all of Shostakovich's mature symphonies; if 'the majority of my symphonies are tombstones', as *Testimony* has it,[3] then the Fifteenth is a veritable graveyard.

Then there is the clue of the incomplete setting of a Yevtushenko poem, found in the sketches for the symphony. Like the 'Delvig' poem of the Fourteenth Symphony,

[3] *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitry Shostakovich as related to and edited by Solomon Volkov*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1979, p. 118. The authenticity of *Testimony* has been debated since its first appearance, and it remains unclear which of its statements may be attributed to the composer.

it is a meditation on the fate of the poet. And there is the Glinka song, 'Do not tempt me needlessly with the return of your affections', the main idea of which is so close to the main theme of the finale and which the composer himself recognised as a conscious allusion. Most tantalisingly of all, around the time of the Fifteenth Symphony Shostakovich frequently referred to his fascination with Chekhov's short story *The Black Monk*. Not only did he consider this tale to be related to the concerns of the Fifteenth Symphony, but he even contemplated an opera on it. *The Black Monk* is the melodramatic account of a psychology lecturer whose marriage to a childhood friend is counterpointed with visions of a hooded monk – an *alter ego*, in fact, who exhorts him to believe in his own greatness.

Even so, all these elements offer us are pieces of a puzzle, the larger part of which has been withheld. We listeners may try to connect the pieces as best we can, but we only have fragments to go on, and we may even be looking at some of them upside down. Yet we sense that the whole picture is so profoundly disturbing that fragments may be all that is possible to transmit or perceive of it. Shostakovich was, after all, in failing health. His debilitating condition had been compounded by his first heart attack in 1966, and he would suffer a second one in September 1971, shortly after finishing the Fifteenth Symphony. The composition process itself was hampered by acute eyestrain (he was famously short-sighted). And the effect of all this on what was meant to be a cheerful work (as Shostakovich told his friend and former pupil Boris Tishchenko) is surely as important a factor in the elusive character of this music as any other.

The 'toyshop' first movement, an *Allegretto* 4, could as well be part of a concerto for orchestra as of a symphony. Though this aspect is obviously lost in the piano arrangement, the playful character remains, shading at times into nervousness and at others into bullying. When the *William Tell* quotation appears – in the key of an orthodox academic second subject – it seems just like the kind of prank a musician might play on an unsuspecting conductor in rehearsal. Passages of polymetrical density involving the strings and later the woodwind – resourcefully placed in the tinkly, high-treble register of both pianos – show that even though Shostakovich felt compelled to

denounce avant-garde tendencies in public,[4] he could still put his experience of hearing this kind of music to good creative use.

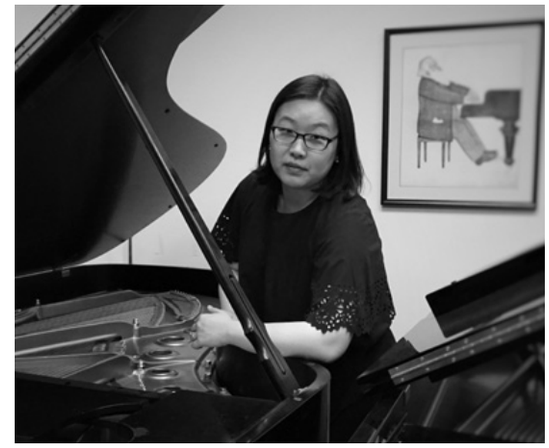
The second movement 5 is set into motion by mournful chorales (originally on the brass), and interspersed with lamenting cello solos that eventually lead to a pair of complex chords, as mysterious and blank-faced as statues on Easter Island. At the heart of this *Adagio* is a long graveside oration for the trombone, one of the few instruments of the orchestra not to have come under the solo spotlight to this point. This episode provokes a passionately protesting full orchestral climax before the movement crawls back into its shell.

The scherzo 6 follows without a break. Here the noble laments of the slow movement are mocked in a kind of *danse macabre* even more thoroughly based on twelve-note themes than the other movements – for Shostakovich's late works in general, twelve-note themes carry associations with death. The thinly scored central section seems to regret the preceding tone of cynicism and tries out something a little more benign, only to be undercut by a kind of dancing-skeletons percussion writing, echoing the central scherzo movement of Shostakovich's Fourth Symphony (though in this case the two-piano version renders it by high-treble tinkling, rather than low-register grumbles).

The finale 7 begins with its medley of inscrutable Wagner quotations and Glinka allusions, placing the listener in a purgatorial world where disembodied fragments meet, as it were, in search of their former incarnations. At the heart of this spectral movement is a passacaglia, led off in the orchestral version by *pizzicato* cellos and basses against sighing violas and ominous timpani and, as so often with Shostakovich, eventually accumulating cataclysmic force. Finally, there is one of the most gripping examples of his mastery of major-mode pathos. The conclusion of the work may be unequivocally in A major; but this is major mode like no other in the history of music, with the possible exception of the original version of Prokofiev's Seventh Symphony. It seems haunted by ghosts of the composer's former selves, which might have had astonishing tales to tell, had they only been allowed to speak freely.

[4] *Cf.*, for example, 'Mirovoy avtoritet sovetskogo iskusstva' ('The Worldwide Authority of Soviet Music'), in *Pravda*, 13 June 1958, p. 3; and 'Istochnik tvorchestva – zhizn' naroda' ('The Life of the People is the Wellspring of Art'), *Pravda*, 14 May 1968, p. 3.

David Fanning is Professor of Music at the University of Manchester and has a varied career as scholar, pianist and critic. Following books on Nielsen and Shostakovich, his most recent publications include a concise monograph on Mieczysław Weinberg. In addition to ongoing research on Weinberg, not least for a much expanded version of the Weinberg book in preparation for Toccata Press, he is currently working on a historical survey of the symphony in the Soviet Union for Yale University Press. He is also active as critic for Gramophone *and* The Daily Telegraph*, and as a BBC broadcaster and public speaker.*

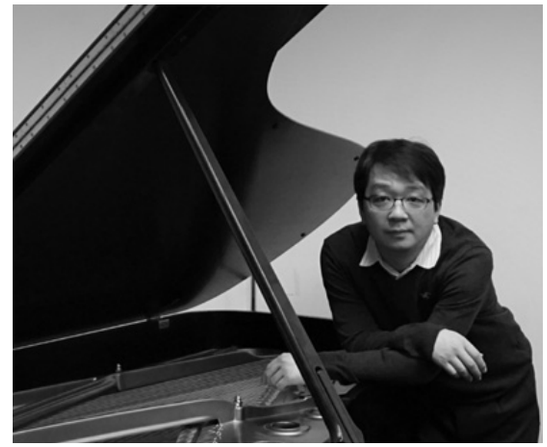


Min Kyung Kim was born in 1983 in Seoul, South Korea. She started to play the piano at the age of six, studying the instrument at Kay Won Arts High School with Kichoung Lee. Min Kyung completed a bachelor's degree in piano performance with Jung Kyu Kim at Myongji University in 2007. In 2008 she moved to the United States to pursue graduate studies at the University of North Texas. She earned a master's degree in piano performance and instrument collaborative work at the University of North Texas in 2011.

Min Kyung's accomplishments include winning several piano competitions, including those held by the Music Education News, the Korea Philharmonic Orchestra and Ye Won University, all in in South Korea. She has appeared in numerous recitals and concerts as a soloist and collaborative pianist in Korea and the United States. She was recognised as an outstanding student in piano performance while at Myongji University and received the Outstanding Student Scholarship in 2005. In 2006 she won of a competition to give a recital, in Korea, on the 250th anniversary of Mozart's birth. Throughout her graduate studies, she has been the recipient of the James T. Rhea Scholarship, College of Music/USC Scholarship, Academic Achievement Scholarships and the Raupe Grant.

As a student researcher at the Texas Center for Performing Arts Health, she presented a poster session at the 2014 Performing Arts Medicine Association in Aspen, Colorado, and lectured at the 2016 Federation of North Texas Area Universities in Denton, Texas.

She is currently a doctoral student in piano performance with Joseph Banowetz and is studying music and medicine as her related field with Dr Kris Chesky at the University of North Texas.



Hyung Jin Moon is an active performer in both solo and collaborative ensembles in South Korea and the United States. He has participated in numerous concert series such as Young Artist Concerts, the Mendelssohn Concert Series, the Piano Society of Korea, and the North Texas Solo and Ensemble Music Festival. The ensembles with which he has performed include the Michigan State University Philharmonic Orchestra, Verde String Quartet and Rokaf Piano Quintet.

As a music educator, he has served as staff pianist at Lansing Music School in Michigan, and currently is an adjunct faculty member at the Korea National University of Transport in Chungju, South Korea.

Hyung Jin Moon received his bachelor of music degree in piano performance studying with Erica Ohm and Hyungbae Kim at Seoul National University in South Korea and earning his master's in piano performance with Deborah Moriarty (with full scholarship) at Michigan State University. He is currently a doctoral candidate in piano performance under the tutelage of Joseph Banowetz at the University of North Texas.

Recorded on 26–28 May 2015 (Symphony No. 15) and 11-12 January 2016 (Piano Concerto No. 2) in the Murchison Performing Arts Center, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas

Piano Tuner: Cyrillus Aerts
Engineer: Blair Liikala
Editor: Peter Brewer
Producer: Brad Beckman

Booklet text: David Fanning
Cover design: David M. Baker (david@notneverknow.com)
Typesetting and lay-out: KerryPress, St Albans

Executive producer: Martin Anderson

Toccata Classics CDs are available in the shops and can also be ordered from our distributors around the world, a list of whom can be found at www.toccataclassics.com. If we have no representation in your country, please contact:
Toccata Classics, 16 Dalkeith Court, Vincent Street, London SW1P 4HH, UK
Tel: +44/0 207 821 5020 E-mail: info@toccataclassics.com

SHOSTAKOVICH Complete Music for Piano Duo and Duet, Volume Two

Piano Concerto No. 2 in F major, Op. 102 (1957)			**19:04**
1	I	*Allegro*	7:31
2	II	*Andante –*	5:34
3	III	*Allegro*	5:59
Symphony No. 15 in A major, Op. 141 (1971)			**41:00**
4	I	*Allegretto*	8:46
5	II	*Adagio – Largo – Adagio – Largo –*	12:31
6	III	*Allegretto*	4:23
7	IV	*Adagio – Allegretto – Adagio – Allegretto*	15:20

TT **60:11**

Min Kyung Kim and Hyung Jin Moon, pianos

FIRST RECORDINGS