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NAXOS

SHOSTAKOVICH

**Chamber Symphony,
Op. 73a**

**Symphony for Strings,
Op. 118a**

Kiev Virtuosi

Dmitry Yablonsky



Dmitry Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Chamber Symphony, Op. 73a • Symphony for Strings, Op. 118a (arr. Rudolf Barshai)

Although it has now come into its own among those seminal cycles of the twentieth century, Shostakovich's sequence of fifteen string quartets is unusual in that almost all of its constituents have been transcribed for larger forces that range from string ensemble to full orchestra. The catalyst for this was undoubtedly Rudolf Barshai (1924-2010), who enjoyed a professional association with the composer which lasted through to the latter's death. Barshai established himself as a violist – first as a member of the Borodin Quartet during 1945-53, then in a trio with Leonid Kogan and Mstislav Rostropovich; latterly as director of the Moscow Chamber Orchestra, which he founded in 1955 and conducted until his emigration to the West in 1977. Along with commissions, transcription was an integral part of his activity with the orchestra.

The present recording completes the series of transcriptions that Barshai made of the Shostakovich quartets [those of the *First*, *Fourth* and *Eighth Quartets* can be heard on Naxos 8.573466], in which guise they have enjoyed regular revival in the concert hall as well as in the recital room.

Shostakovich wrote his *Third String Quartet* between January and August 1946 – its première being given in Moscow by the Beethoven Quartet on 16th December of that year, with the first performance in Leningrad by the Glazunov Quartet the following April. Well received at this time, the piece fell foul of the 'Zhdanov decree' in February 1948 and further performances were banned for several years (though it was heard in private on several occasions). Barshai made the present arrangement in 1990, the resultant *Symphony for Strings* receiving its première in Rotterdam on 10th January 1991 by the New Amsterdam Sinfonietta and Lev Markiz. The work parallels the *Ninth Symphony* in having five movements, though the emotional range is appreciably wider and the final resolution one of numbed acceptance.

The first movement sets off with a deceptively jaunty theme on strings, whose successor on flute and oboe

sounds a more plaintive tone prior to an ambivalent close. This mood is duly intensified in a development which discusses the first theme to a strenuous degree, before the latter regains a measure of poise in the reprise. Here again the second theme sounds a note of caution, before the coda brings about a conclusion of brusque decisiveness. This tenseness is pursued in the second movement, an *intermezzo* whose initial idea sees an acerbic interplay that is complemented by the ensuing theme with its repeated-note accompaniment. At length the earlier idea returns in a brief climax, cut short by musing woodwind as the latter theme is resumed in a mood of anxiety which persists through to the sombre close. There follows one of Shostakovich's demonic *scherzi*, its angular theme emphasised by those stabbing chords which underpin it. A central section strides forward purposefully, taking in a brief interlude for woodwind before this aggression resumes on the way to an unequivocally violent close.

The fourth movement is a *passacaglia*, on a theme whose stern opening gesture from unison strings derives contrast from its plangent rejoinder on oboe and clarinet. The variations that follow take in sombre interplay on woodwind, imploring violins over fateful lower strings, and an impassioned climax across the strings rounded off by pensive bassoon over dirge-like cellos and basses. From here lower strings assume greater animation as the finale begins – its lilting main theme soon taken up by upper woodwind in a mood of quiet foreboding. This is complemented by a wistful theme with solo viola to the fore against darting *pizzicato* strings – then, following the recall of the main theme, by a drily humorous idea. This is drawn back into the main theme, which now builds gradually though remorselessly to a piercing climax with the *passacaglia* theme balefully to the fore. It subsides to leave cello musing uncertainly, then the humorous idea returns in a whimsical dialogue between strings and woodwind. This dies down to a motionless chord on lower strings, over which violins bid an ethereal farewell.

At one time the most often heard of Shostakovich's quartets after the *Eighth*, the *Tenth String Quartet* was written from 9th to 20th July 1964 and is dedicated to the composer Mieczysław Weinberg. The Beethoven Quartet gave its world première in Moscow on 20th November of that year, with a first hearing in Leningrad the next day. The Western première came about through a recording by the Weller Quartet at Vienna's Sofiensaal in June 1965, with no public hearing until 3rd April 1966 from the Alberni Quartet in London. Barshai made his arrangement soon after the première, the *Symphony for Strings* becoming a staple of concerts with his Moscow Chamber Orchestra. Its format is similar to that of the *Third Quartet*, save for the omission of an *intermezzo*, and the expressive trajectory is one of innocence lost then tentatively regained.

The first movement is among the most disarming that Shostakovich wrote, its main theme by turns quizzical and consoling as it circles around those pithy motifs heard at the outset (given this work's dedication, there may be a private conversation underway between Shostakovich and Weinberg; something of which both composers made a feature in their later quartets, and which helps explain the increasingly withdrawn and often rarefied nature of these pieces). No less circumspect is a central episode that unfolds haltingly towards a return of the main theme, given added piquancy by some spectral gestures played on the bow of the strings, before the coda brings the tardiest of resolutions. Its poise is shattered by a second

movement that, less headlong than that from the *Third Quartet*, is arguably the more disconcerting for its strutting aggression. All of its material is derived from the grating gestures at the outset, and these are shared (or rather hurled) between upper and lower strings in a mood of unrelieved violence that holds good through to the return of the opening bars and a conclusion of brutal decisiveness.

The third movement is the last (in a string quartet) among Shostakovich's *passacaglias* – its heartfelt theme leading to variations which take in searching violins, undulating exchanges between upper and lower strings, a more fatalistic interplay, a sombre return of the theme in lower strings, then a more consoling manner which is regretfully denied by the keening final variation. Out of which the finale emerges with a loping theme that soon takes hold, leading to a ruminative passage where lower strings continue musingly against muted dissonance on violins. These twin elements then alternate with fugitive unease over the course of a lengthy crescendo that eventually climaxes in the strenuous return of the *passacaglia* theme on lower strings. After a gradual winding down the main theme returns, now interspersed with motifs from the first movement to bring the music full circle and so effect a conclusion of winsome repose: a quality unmistakable in both the quartet original and string orchestra transcription.

Richard Whitehouse

National Chamber Ensemble 'Kiev Virtuosi'

Violin I

Taras Iaropud
(concertmaster)
Oleksandra Savchenko
Tatyana Khomenko
Halyna Korinets
Hanna Tsurkan
Igor Andriievskiy
Olga Chornokondratenko

Violin II

Anastasia Chop*
Ekaterina Boychuk
Pavlo Mohylevskiy
Sukhovyi Yevhenii
Roman Kholmatov
Viktor Ivanov

Viola

Kuleba Kostiantyn*
Valentyna Bugrak
Nataliia Onishchuk
Volodymyr Ponomarev

Cello

Yuri Pogoretskyi*
Natalia Yaropud
Olga Zhukova
Mariia Yasinska

Double bass

Anton Zhukov
Volodymyr Grechukh

Flute

Bogdana Stelmashenko
Igor Tyutyunnikov

Oboe

Dmytro Gudyma

Cor anglais

Yuri Mandryk

Clarinet

Oleg Moroz

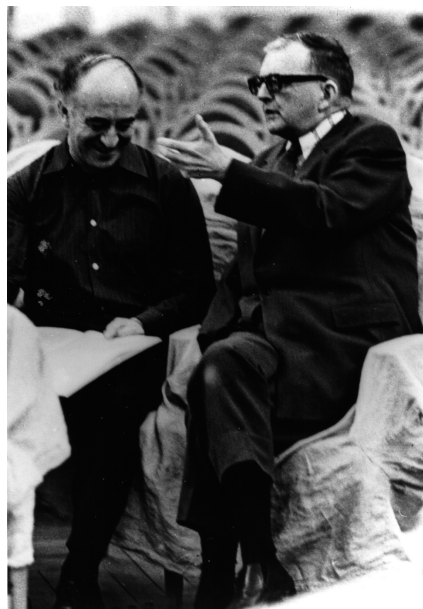
Bassoon

Oleksandr Saenko

Harp

Yaroslava Nieklyaeva

* Section leader



Dmitry Shostakovich and Rudolf Barshai at a rehearsal for the orchestrated version of *Six Romances on Verses by English Poets* in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, 29th November, 1973

Photo: V. Akhlov / DSCH Archive, Moscow

Kiev Virtuosi

Artistic Director and Chief Conductor: Dmitry Yablonsky



The Kiev Virtuosi is an orchestra based in the capital of Ukraine. It has earned national and international recognition as one of its country's leading orchestral ensembles, uniting talented young musicians from all over Ukraine. Most of the players are competition winners, with an average age of about 30. The ensemble gained its reputation in popularising the music of Western composers in Ukraine. It has also enjoyed a very close collaborations with such outstanding contemporary composers as Krzysztof Penderecki, Valentin Silvestrov and Myroslav Skoryk. The orchestra's unique sound and virtuosity have attracted many internationally acclaimed soloists and conductors to appear with them in public performances over the years. It has toured Switzerland, France, Spain and Azerbaijan, among other countries.

Dmitry Yablonsky



Dmitry Yablonsky, a GRAMMY®-nominated cellist and conductor, was born in Moscow into a musical family. He began playing the cello when he was five years old and was accepted into the Central Music School for gifted children. At the age of nine he made his orchestral debut playing Haydn's *Cello Concerto*. Since then his career has taken him to some of the most celebrated stages in the world, such as Carnegie Hall, La Scala, Moscow Great Hall, St Petersburg Philharmonic Hall, Taiwan National Hall, Teatre Mogador, Cité de la Musique and the Louvre, amongst others. His career as a conductor began at the age of 26 in Camerino, Italy, and since then he has collaborated with many major orchestras, including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra (Principal Guest Conductor 2000-2004), Novoya Rossiya (Principal Guest Conductor since 2012), National Chamber Ensemble "Kiev Virtuosi" (Principal Conductor since 2014), Israel Symphony Orchestra, Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, Belgian National Orchestra, Antwerpen Orchestra, North Netherlands Orchestra, Maastricht Orchestra, Russian State Orchestra, Orchestre National d'Ile de France, Taiwan National Orchestra, Catania Opera Orchestra, Holland Symphonia, Bologna Chamber Orchestra, and the Orquesta Filarmónica de la UNAM (OFUNAM), Mexico. In 2010 Dmitry Yablonsky received the Diploma of Honorary Academician at the Independent Academy of Liberal Arts at the Russian Academy of Sciences. He has transcribed and edited works for cello, which have been published by the International Music Company and Dover Publications. In 2008 Naxos released his recording of all forty Popper *Etudes* for solo cello (8.557718-19), to critical acclaim. He has been teaching since 2016 at the Buchmann-Mehta

School of Music at Tel Aviv University, Israel. He has an enthusiastic and charismatic character that leads him to initiate many projects and organise many festivals, including the Qabala Festival in Azerbaijan and the Wandering Stars Festival, which takes place in a variety of countries such as Israel, Italy, Russia and the United States. He plays two cellos, a Joseph Filius Andrea Guarneri and a Matteo Goffriller.

An eminent violist and conductor, Rudolf Barshai was responsible for five transcriptions of Shostakovich's *String Quartets* and this recording completes the sequence with the *Third* and *Tenth* (Volume 1 is on 8.573466). Barshai recast *String Quartet No. 3* as a chamber symphony for strings and woodwind, the latter adding a sense of foreboding to the texture and engaging in whimsical dialogues during a work full of terseness and piercing power. Fashioning a *Symphony for Strings* from the *Tenth Quartet* soon after its première, Barshai graphically charts its movement from innocence lost and then tentatively regained.

Dmitry
SHOSTAKOVICH
(1906-1975)



Chamber Symphony in F major, Op. 73a (1946/90) 32:13
(String Quartet No. 3, arr. Rudolf Barshai)

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------|-------|
| 1 | I. Allegretto | 6:11 |
| 2 | II. Moderato con moto | 5:43 |
| 3 | III. Allegro non troppo | 4:06 |
| 4 | IV. Adagio | 5:53 |
| 5 | V. Moderato | 10:20 |

Symphony for Strings in A flat major, Op. 118a (1964/65) 27:44
(String Quartet No. 10, arr. Rudolf Barshai)

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|-------|
| 6 | I. Andante | 5:08 |
| 7 | II. Allegretto furioso | 5:17 |
| 8 | III. Adagio | 5:49 |
| 9 | IV. Allegretto – Andante | 11:30 |

Kiev Virtuosi • Dmitry Yablonsky

Recorded at the Concert Hall of the National Radio of Ukraine, Kiev, on 13th and 14th June, 2016
(tracks 1-5), and on 17th and 19th June, 2016 (tracks 6-9)

Engineers and editors: Andrij Mokrytsky (tracks 1-5); Oleksii Grytsyshyn (tracks 6-9)

Booklet notes: Richard Whitehouse • Publisher: Sikorski Musikverlage, Hamburg

Cover: *Dmitry Shostakovich in Moscow, 1949*

Photograph by V. Dombrovsky / DSCH Archive, Moscow