

40 YEARS



Dmitry Kouzov  
cello

# SHOSTAKOVICH

CELLO CONCERTOS

Vladimir Lande, conductor

St. Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra

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### Concerto for Cello and Orchestra No. 1, Op. 107 (26:04)

1. Allegretto (5:51)
2. Moderato (10:32)
3. Cadenza (5:08)
4. Allegro con moto (4:33)

### Concerto for Cello and Orchestra No. 2, Op. 126 (31:52)

5. Largo (12:52)
6. Allegretto (4:21)
7. Allegretto (14:39)

**Total time: 58:12**

# Notes on the Program

**Dmitri Shostakovich** (1906-1975) composed both of his cello concertos for Russian cellist and all-around musical icon Mstislav Rostropovich, also the composer's dear friend. The **Cello Concerto No. 1** was completed in 1959, at a time in post-Stalinist Russia when cultural restrictions had eased somewhat - though they were by no means a thing of the past. Rostropovich gave both its Russian and American premieres later that same year. Perhaps *the* most popular twentieth-century cello concerto (and one of the most difficult ever of its kind), it is a deeply personal work, reflecting Shostakovich's ambivalent emotions and insecurities at having to constantly walk an "artistic tightrope" in Soviet Russia's often unpredictable and often hostile cultural environment - in which he might well be a ballyhooed hero one day and a reviled scapegoat the next.

Like a number of his other quasi-autobiographical works (most notably his eighth string quartet), the central thematic feature here is a series of like-sounding variants on Shostakovich's hallmark four-note "DSCH" sequence (D, E-flat, C, and B in German notation) that corresponds to the "D" of his first name followed by the first three Russian letters of his last name. This recurs in several forms - with different starting points, note sequences and intervals - throughout the work, except in the second movement. The piece is fair-

ly lightly scored - with the only brass instrument being a single French horn, which turns out to play a vital role as the concerto progresses.

The first movement's main theme is heard in its first four notes (G, E, B, and B-flat) from the soloist - seeming to pose an unsettling question. From there, the music unfolds in mostly concentrated and supple fashion, maintaining a persistent aura of animated tension throughout its course. The single horn appears to emphatically reinforce the theme as the music grows in anxious intensity. The slow movement begins with a theme that, oddly, is never taken up by the cello; instead, after the horn sets up its entrance, the cello appears with its own theme. The movement proceeds with a sense of uneasy, yet lyrically elegiac reflection - with episodes of typical Russian gloom and intermittent groundswells of bleak and searing desolation.

Ensuing without pause, the unusual third movement is actually an extended solo cadenza that - at first - maintains the preceding movement's melancholic mood in its pensive soliloquy. But then it gradually rises in tempo and intensity, setting up - again without pause - the compact, rondo-like finale in which its main theme (based loosely on a Georgian folksong that Stalin had been fond of) alternates in a lively,

but nervous manner with contrasting material. Then, about halfway through, the first movement's quasi-autobiographical theme returns with a vengeance - confirmed by a mighty horn-call. But the motif is no longer questioning, taking on a more positive quality as the music hurtles to a triumphant finish ... even though Stalin's Georgian tune still lurks beneath the surface in the coda. Still, the movement is emphatically sealed by final "exclamation points" from the timpani.

The **Cello Concerto No. 2** came seven years later, in the spring of 1966; Rostropovich, again its dedicatee, gave its premiere in September of that year, at a concert in honor of the composer's 60th birthday. This is a work that - unlike the first concerto - is not cyclically built around a single pervasive motif, instead giving equal weight to a number of different themes. As such, it is considered (along with the eleventh string quartet and a couple of other works) to be the harbinger of the composer's "late period." It is interesting to note that the above-mentioned post-Stalin cultural "thaw" that had welcomed (or at least tolerated) works like the first concerto had, by 1966, declined again into a somewhat more repressive atmosphere. This may well explain the second concerto's more withdrawn and elusive nature that - like many of his other masterpieces - probably eluded the USSR's cultural goons:

a singular aspect of Shostakovich's tortured genius. The exceptional care he felt forced to expend in its creation may further explain why the work's "birth" was a difficult one, full of stops and starts. In any case, it turned out to be a work of deeply personal introspection and somber beauty that can haunt a sensitive soul for days.

The opening Largo movement begins in depressive darkness, its ominous first theme interrupted by brief, searing outbursts and an early cadenza. After the theme returns, both tempo and mood then pick up somewhat as a xylophone joins the soloist - reinforced by vaguely mocking exchanges among the brasses, winds and percussion. The soloist then leads the orchestra into a forceful climax, with flutes leading the way into shrieking tone shifts over droning low strings and moaning brasses. The movement's dramatic peak comes with abrupt drumbeats, which continue intermittently as the music winds down, coming eventually to a gently mournful close.

The much livelier, scherzo-like second movement is based on the tune of a popular Odessa street-hawker's song, "Buy My Bagels." Repeated intrusions from a single horn lead without pause into the finale's exuberant opening fanfares, now from multiple horns. There follows a strange, but effective

passage for the solo cello with tambourine that develops into an interlude of sweet, yet vaguely hesitant lyric beauty. From there, the music takes us in turn through a march-like episode and what comes across as a dance section. The prevailing mood intensifies until a confrontation of sorts breaks out between the soloist and the snare drum, soon engulfing us in a fierce, whipcrack-punctuated climax in which the opening fanfare's theme is revisited, along with a juiced-up retake on the second movement's street song. The earlier dance section reappears, before fading - amid mutterings from assorted instruments - to a subdued close, with its eerie pizzicato exchanges between the soloist and percussion (mainly woodblocks - perhaps some sort of "knocking" code?). This is thus the only one of Shostakovich's six concertos to end with a whimper rather than a bang.

– Lindsay Koob



Dear Listener,

The recording before you is the product of my lifelong passion for the art of Dmitri Shostakovich, one of the towering figures in Russian music – and, I am proud to say, a fellow native of Saint Petersburg. It has long been my dream to record his cello concertos, and seeing this project come to fruition has been incredibly rewarding. From very early on in my life, I was surrounded by people with direct personal connections to Shostakovich. His life and work were almost sacred to them, and their love was contagious: his music became an inseparable part of my musical being.

About eight years ago, I had the unforgettable privilege of working on the first concerto with Mstislav Rostropovich, to whom the composer dedicated both of the concertos recorded here. Rostropovich, who is indisputably the greatest interpreter of Shostakovich's music, was an idol of my musical

upbringing. His positive reaction to my reading of the piece reinforced my wish to make this project happen.

I must mention another matter that is very important to me. During my college years, I had the great good fortune to study with Victoria Yagling, herself a student of Rostropovich, and an exceptional cellist and composer who deeply influenced my entire musical life. Sadly, Victoria passed away unexpectedly two years ago, and I would like to humbly dedicate this recording to her cherished memory.

I hope you enjoy hearing this CD as much as I enjoyed making it.

Sincerely,

**Dmitry**

# Performer Biographies

A versatile performer, cellist **Dmitry Kouzov** has performed worldwide with orchestras, in solo and duo recitals, and in chamber music performances. He has appeared with such orchestras as the St. Petersburg Symphony (Russia), as well as National Symphony of Ukraine, and the South Bohemian Chamber Philharmonic (Czech Republic), to name a few. He was awarded First Prize at the International Beethoven Competition in the Czech Republic, is a two-time laureate of the International Festival-Competition “Virtuosi of the Year 2000” in Russia, and is winner of the New York Cello Society Rising Star Award. His credits include numerous performances at many prominent concert venues throughout his native Russia, including both St. Petersburg Philharmonic Halls, the conservatoire halls of Moscow and St. Petersburg, respectively, and the Mariinsky Theater. Mr. Kouzov made his New York orchestral debut at Alice Tully Hall in 2005, under the baton of Maestro Raymond Leppard. Since that time, he has also made recital appearances in New York at the 92nd Street Y and with Bargemusic.



Highlights of Mr. Kouzov’s recent seasons include his debuts with the St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra, the St. Petersburg Symphony Orchestra, and the Johannesburg Philharmonic; recordings with the Sinfonia Varsovia and St. Petersburg Symphony Orchestras; solo appearances with the chamber orchestra “Soloists of St. Petersburg Philharmonic Society”; duo recitals in Moscow and St. Petersburg with all Brahms and Beethoven Sonatas with the prominent Russian pianist Peter Laul; and chamber music appearances at the Ravinia and Caramoor Festivals Rising Stars Series. As a recording artist, Mr. Kouzov is also featured on the Naxos, Marquis Classics, Onyx and Albany recording labels.

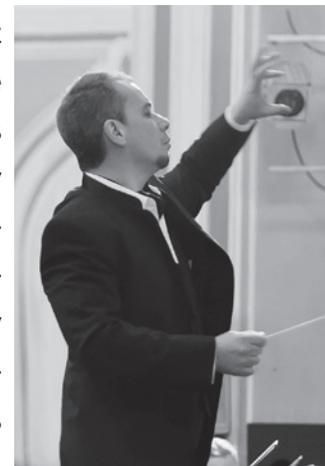
Mr. Kouzov has appeared in command performances before Mikhail Gorbachev and Prince Andrew, Duke of York. In 2005 and 2006, he was a guest artist at the Verbier Festival, International Bach Festival (Switzerland) and Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival (Germany). Additionally, he has performed at the “May of Janacek” International Festival (Czech Republic), and at the “Art-November” International Festival (Russia), and the “Kiev Summer Music Nights” International Festival, among others.

A consummate chamber musician, Mr. Kouzov has collaborated with Joshua Bell, Yuri Bashmet, Krzysztof Penderecki, Evgenii Sudbin, Nicholas Angelich, Ilya Gringolts, and Pacifica

Quartet, among others. Mr. Kouzov is a founding member of the Manhattan Piano Trio, with whom he has toured extensively throughout United States and captured First Prizes at the Plowman and Yellow Springs National Chamber Music Competitions.

In addition to his concert activities, Mr. Kouzov is a devoted teacher. Currently Mr. Kouzov is an Assistant Professor of Cello at the University of Illinois. Prior to this appointment he was on the faculty at the Juilliard School and the Oberlin Conservatory. Mr. Kouzov holds Bachelors & Masters of Music degrees from the Sibelius Academy, Helsinki, and an Artist Diploma from the Juilliard School in New York. His principal teachers have included Professors Mark Reizenshtock, Victoria Yagling, Joel Krosnick, and Darrett Adkins.

**Vladimir Lande** is principal guest conductor of the St. Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra (Russia). He is guest conductor of the National Gallery Orchestra, Washington DC, music director of the Washington Soloists Chamber Orchestra, the COSMIC Symphony Orchestra, and Johns Hopkins University Chamber Orchestra. He appears as conductor with ballet and opera companies in Europe and the United States. In summer 2004, he conducted the opening concert of St. Petersburg's White Nights Festival. Since then, he has led notable orchestras in the United States, conducted the National Gallery Chamber Orchestra on an American tour, and served as conductor of the 64th American Music Festival. Recent tours have taken him to New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, Italy and Russia. In October 2011 he led the St. Petersburg Symphony Orchestra on their tour of the United States, Mexico and South America, and was made associate conductor in 2012. In addition to his busy conducting schedule, Vladimir Lande maintains a successful solo and chamber music career as oboist of the renowned Poulenc Trio. Recordings include those on the Marquis, Arabesque, Kleos, and Naxos labels.



I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Serge Kauzoff for his enormous help during my student years, and to the University of Illinois, whose generous support made this recording possible.

**–Dmitry Kouzov**

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