

The Naxos logo, featuring the word "NAXOS" in white capital letters on a blue rectangular background.

NAXOS

SHOSTAKOVICH

Piano Concertos Nos. 1 and 2

String Quartet No. 8
(arranged for piano
by Boris Giltburg)

Boris Giltburg, Piano

Rhys Owens, Trumpet

**Royal Liverpool
Philharmonic Orchestra**

Vasily Petrenko

Dmitry
SHOSTAKOVICH
(1906-1975)

	Piano Concerto No. 1 in C minor, Op. 35	23:23
1	I. Allegro moderato	6:12
2	II. Lento	8:14
3	III. Moderato –	1:56
4	IV. Allegro con brio	7:01
5	String Quartet No. 2 in A major, Op. 68: III. Waltz: Allegro (arr. B. Giltburg for piano)*	5:56
	Piano Concerto No. 2 in F major, Op. 102	19:59
6	I. Allegro	7:30
7	II. Andante	6:59
8	III. Allegro	5:30
	String Quartet No. 8 in C minor, Op. 110 (arr. B. Giltburg for piano)*	20:28
9	I. Largo –	4:39
10	II. Allegro molto –	3:07
11	III. Allegretto –	4:08
12	IV. Largo –	4:46
13	V. Largo	3:48

Recorded at Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool, UK, on 21st, 22nd and 25th January, 2016
(tracks 1-4, 6-8), and in the Concert Hall, Wyastone Leys, Monmouth, UK,
on 16th June, 2016 (tracks 5, 9-13)

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Dmitry Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Piano Concertos Nos. 1 and 2 • String Quartet No. 8

In late June 1960 Dmitry Shostakovich travelled from Moscow to Leningrad, where he met with his close friend and confidant, Isaak Glikman. The composer seemed to be on the edge of a nervous breakdown – he was hysterical and was weeping loudly; Glikman recalled never to have seen Shostakovich in a similar state before. After calming down, Shostakovich told Glikman of the cause: he had agreed, in a moment of weakness and under some pressure, to join the Communist Party.

Shostakovich apparently perceived it as a devastating personal and moral defeat – this was the same party which had mounted the vicious attacks on him in 1936 and 1948. Such attacks could have led (and in numerous other cases did lead) to arrest, exile or even death. Shostakovich 'only' lost his job and had most of his works blacklisted; as was customary, he became subject to widespread persecution by peers and media, to say nothing of the ever-present threat of worse repercussions against him and his close ones. This was the party under which millions were made to disappear, which in Shostakovich's eyes was an embodiment of violence, and which Shostakovich had previously sworn never to join.

His 'escape' to Leningrad was an attempt to foil the planned pompous ceremony at the Union of Composers – but it proved just a temporary reprieve: the meeting was rescheduled, and Shostakovich announced his decision in a prepared speech, "like a parrot". Shortly afterwards he travelled to Dresden, sent there to compose a score for a propaganda film in collaboration with East Germany. In a letter to Glikman he wryly wrote that the beautiful surroundings did nothing to help fulfil the commission, and instead Shostakovich had composed an "ideologically faulty quartet, needed by no-one". This was his *String Quartet No. 8*, a tragic autobiographical work, very likely triggered by Shostakovich's recent ordeal.

It is a compact and taut five-movement work of exceptional emotional and psychological power, even by Shostakovich's standards. Unapologetically dark and intense, it's almost monochromatic in mood – though

within that darkness the music ranges from pathos and real pain to sarcasm, fright, and crushing aggression. A slow first movement acts as an introduction, leading directly into two *scherzo* movements: one relentless and percussive, a musical embodiment of a destructive force, full of blind hate; the other a caustic, biting waltz enclosing an eerie, plaintive middle section. The fourth movement features repeated groups of three harsh chords – resembling heavy knocks on the door, a much dreaded sound. A single quiet note is sustained between the chords; to me it seems like a lone soul holding out bravely against the calamities, only to falter and stop at the end [4:09]. The closing movement is a prolonged *fugato* on the main motif, and the quartet ends with a repeat of the opening section, pale and subdued, finally fading into nothing.

"It occurred to me that if I ever die, it is unlikely that someone would write a composition dedicated to my memory," Shostakovich wrote to Glikman. "Therefore I decided to compose one myself. One could write just that on the cover: 'Dedicated to the memory of the author of this quartet.'" Even without his letter, the autobiographical nature of the quartet is apparent in the music. The four-note motif which opens the quartet and which later recurs over a hundred (!) times is Shostakovich's musical signature: his initials in German notation – D.S.C.H (D–E flat–C–B). In addition, he quotes extensively from his own compositions: the *Totentanz* melody from the last movement of his *Piano Trio No. 2* (appearing in the wild *Danse macabre* section in the middle and at the end of the second movement), the opening of the *First Cello Concerto*, the *First and Fifth Symphonies*, as well as a prolonged quotation from his last opera, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, the very work which brought on the first attack by the regime, in 1936.

He chose to quote the purest and most lyrical moment of the entire opera: the protagonist's joy at seeing her lover after a hard day of marching to exile in Siberia, unaware yet that his feelings towards her had cooled down and that he was already courting another. In

the quartet, as in the opera, this section appears as a soft ray of light [3:19] – unexpected, beyond hope, and all too brief, making the returning darkness seem even more oppressive. It follows yet another quotation, this time from a Russian revolutionary song *Tormented by heavy captivity* [1:58], all too easily applicable to Shostakovich himself...

The *Second Piano Concerto*, written in 1957 as a birthday present for Shostakovich's son, Maxim, is worlds apart. A good-natured, slightly humorous introduction played by the woodwinds ushers in a similarly light-spirited melody in the piano. A march-like connecting section follows [0:38]; Shostakovich liked this bugle-call motif, and used it often in various guises and moods – not least in the *First Piano Concerto*. The second theme is more lyrical, though one still feels the energy in the orchestral accompaniment – quiet but very active [1:21].

Things seem to quieten down towards the end of this section, when – BOOM! – the orchestra barges in with a sharp loud chord, and we are thrust into the thick of action, with some enemy marching upon us [2:29]. The opening melody is now played by shrieking woodwinds, while the piano hammers out a double-octave passage. A series of variations follows, gradually building up towards a huge climax, which is a return of the second, lyrical theme, this time played with full force by the entire orchestra [4:47] – a radiant sonority, in which the piano must content itself with a secondary rôle at best; it is simply swallowed by the massive body of orchestral sound. A short cadenza, written mostly as a two-voice invention, leads to a repeat of the main theme [6:09], this time with rôles reversed, the woodwinds carrying the tune and the piano accompanying. And finally a coda, based on the orchestral introduction to the movement: happy and energetic, it is as positive an ending as would come out of Shostakovich's pen.

The second movement to me is a rare instance of Shostakovich without a mask. There is genuine sadness in the long opening, which is lightened somewhat by the gentle tenderness of the piano's melody [1:30]. Both sections are repeated, though the second appearance of the piano's melody is in a minor key instead of a major [4:42] – a heartbreaking moment, as if the small ray of

hope we were given earlier could not hold out. The movement entrenches itself deeper and deeper in the minor key [5:45], and at the very end the piano line slowly climbs up over a sustained C minor chord in the orchestra, reaching a high C and repeating it multiple times, with the sound receding away.

The third movement dispels the mood almost at once, as, rather than stop fully, those repeated C notes come back to life, gain speed, and segue into a light, utterly carefree tune, accompanied first by bouncy woodwinds, later by the strings. A second theme in quirky 7/8 metre follows, boisterous and just as bouncy [0:59], and then a third – a deadpan parody of the endless Hanon exercises Maxim had to play as a child [1:45] (a place more tricky than its description sounds; large stamina reserves are called upon!). A little shadow is cast over the proceedings in the development, when the theme is transposed to the lower reaches of the piano, and the horns answer darkly [2:09] – but as opposed to the first movement, here it only remains a distant threat, never materialising. The reprise uses the unexpected device of augmentation: the full melody of the opening is played twice as slowly [3:35], leading to some unexpected pomposity later on [3:49]. Both the 7/8 theme and the Hanon exercises are repeated, the latter climbing to the edge of the keyboard, and thus leading the concerto – one of the most fun to perform of the entire piano repertoire – to a genuinely joyful close.

Shostakovich was demonstrably attracted to the waltz; on this recording alone there are three examples of the dance – the third movement of the *Eighth String Quartet* (dry, fast and sarcastic), the second movement of the *First Piano Concerto* (slow, frozen, very severe), and a standalone waltz, which forms the third movement of his *String Quartet No. 2*, written in the summer of 1944. A deep-flat key, a hushed tone, a fast tempo – this waltz would almost seem a faded memory, if not for the nervous agitation underneath the surface.

There's an eerie elegance pervading the music, and the first pages maintain a noble disposition, full of subdued passion, which makes the middle section even more of a shock. Seemingly out of nowhere, the elegance becomes

bitingly grotesque, the measured swirls of the triple metre turn into frantic activity, the passion into hysteria [2:21]. This mood continues for a long while, winding itself up more and more, until a climax [3:37] brings back the opening theme, now heavy and lumbering.

The hushed sound reinstates itself fairly quickly and the reprise repeats all the sections of the beginning, with the second theme appearing in a major key [4:17] – a short-lived respite. A beautiful moment of hope appears before the coda [5:08], again, only to peter out and dissolve into a last appearance of the main theme, with repeated E flats high above, like ghostly chimes. Almost as an afterthought, a new, sinuous line appears below, supported by short chords [5:28], and the two, like a fade-out effect, dance the waltz to its conclusion.

Nearly thirty years separate the first and last works on this recording. The *First Piano Concerto* was completed in 1933, shortly before the sustained national and international success of Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* brought him widespread recognition and admiration from audience and critics alike. In his letters from that period there is no premonition of the dark days that were to follow due to the regime's (or, quite likely, Stalin's own) displeasure with his music. We find him jaunty, cocky, even slightly arrogant.

The concerto, stemming from the same mood, is a masterful example of eclecticism – with the self-assuredness of success and youth (though also of experience), Shostakovich effortlessly draws from numerous sources of inspiration, yet manages to combine them into a fully coherent whole which is still distinctively his own in style.

When asked what the music was about, Shostakovich flatly refused to answer, saying "I cannot describe the content of my concerto with any means other than those with which the concerto is written." Possibly this was a stance he assumed for an interview, but there is a truth to this – simply enumerating the many elements that make up each movement would fail to convey the feeling of that movement as a whole. As he would later do with the *Eighth Quartet*, he quotes extensively from other works, both his own and of others, including Beethoven's *Appassionata* and *Rage over a lost penny*, a Haydn

sonata, and at least three folk tunes (the trumpet solo in the fourth movement begins to the notes of *Poor Jenny is a-weeping*, which the piano rudely interrupts with a loud bang [3:13]).

The trumpet's rôle is fascinating. Shostakovich originally wanted to compose a trumpet concerto, later changed it into a double concerto (trumpet and piano) and finally brought it to its present balance of power. In the outer movements, where the mood, and indeed the musical content, changes every few bars, the trumpet is irreverent, intervening, interrupting, happily snatching the line out of the pianist's hands – a general mischief-maker. In the second movement, the slow, frozen waltz mentioned above, it plays a long, mournful solo, its muted sound haunting [4:47]. As with the multiplicity of sources, Shostakovich handles his unusual instrumental forces with utter conviction – in his hands it seems to be the most natural combination imaginable.

Writing before the première to his closest friend, the polymath Ivan Sollertinsky, Shostakovich expressed the hope that the conductor, Fritz Stiedry, should like the concerto and accompany Shostakovich "if not with pleasure, then at least without disgust". Even tongue-in-cheek as this was written, he needn't have worried – the première was a great success, and the concerto has been a favourite of audiences and performers ever since. With its inscrutable coexistence of humour and deadly seriousness, with its brilliant virtuoso writing, with its inspired richness of material all bundled in a compact form, with its overwhelming immediacy of effect, I'd wager it will stay a favourite for as long as piano concerti continue to be played.

To finish, a short note on the two arrangements: Shostakovich is a composer I couldn't live without. I am addicted to the raw, visceral power of his music, to his intuitive ability to distil into music the most basic, even primitive human emotions – fear, anger, lust, hate, but also love and hope for happiness – and hurl them at the listener with such force that one's being reverberates in shock.

As pianists we are left with a body of very powerful chamber music from Shostakovich, as well as two marvellous concerti; however, he hasn't left us a large-

scale solo work that could approach the depth and emotional impact of his string quartets or symphonies. It was a strong need to gain access to *that* kind of Shostakovich which led me to attempt these arrangements. I was tremendously grateful to receive the permission of

the Shostakovich family – to be able to experience firsthand some of the most powerful Shostakovich there is, is a true privilege.

Boris Giltburg

Vasily Petrenko

Photo: Mark McNulty



Vasily Petrenko was appointed Principal Conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra in 2006 and in 2009 became Chief Conductor. He is also Chief Conductor of the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, Chief Conductor of the European Union Youth Orchestra, and Principal Guest Conductor of the State Academic Symphony Orchestra (Evgeny Svetlanov) in Moscow. He was the Classical BRIT Awards Male Artist of the Year 2010 and 2012 and the Classic FM/Gramophone Young Artist of the Year 2007. He is only the second person to have been awarded Honorary Doctorates by both the University of Liverpool and Liverpool Hope University (in 2009), and an Honorary Fellowship of the Liverpool John Moores University (in 2012). These

awards recognise the immense impact he has had on the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and the city's cultural scene. He now works regularly with many of the world's finest orchestras. His wide operatic repertoire includes *Macbeth* (Glyndebourne Festival Opera), *Parsifal* and *Tosca* (Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra), *Le Villi*, *I due Foscari* and *Boris Godunov* (Netherlands Reisopera), *Der fliegende Holländer*, *La Bohème* and *Carmen* (Mikhailovsky Theatre), *Pique Dame* (Hamburg State Opera) and *Eugene Onegin* (Opéra de Paris, Bastille). Recordings with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra include Tchaikovsky's *Manfred Symphony* [Naxos 8.570568] (2009 Classic FM/Gramophone Orchestral Recording of the Year) and Tchaikovsky's *Symphonies 1, 2 and 5*, a complete Shostakovich cycle [Naxos 8.501111], and Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances*, complete *Symphonies* and complete *Piano Concertos*. With the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, he has recorded Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*, Shostakovich's *Cello Concertos* and an ongoing Scriabin *Symphony* cycle.

Rhys Owens

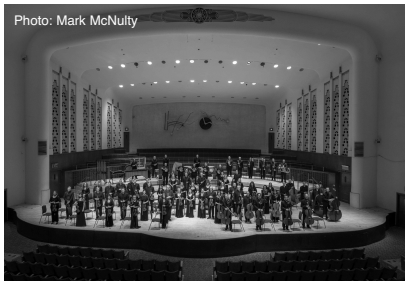
Photo: Mark McNulty



Rhys Owens was born near Caerphilly, South Wales, in 1967. He began playing the cornet in the local brass band at the age of eight. At seventeen he was Principal Cornet of the National Brass Band of Wales and Principal Trumpet of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales. In 1984 he entered Chetham's School of Music in Manchester, moving on to the Royal College of Music, London, in 1986, where he studied with David Mason. During his time at the Royal College of Music he was a brass finalist in the BBC Young Musician of the Year and also finalist in the Shell LSO Concerto Competition. He graduated with honours in performance. Before joining the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra he played with many British orchestras including the London Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and BBC National Orchestra of Wales, as well as working in Europe. He joined the Liverpool Philharmonic in August 1991 as Fourth Trumpet, and was promoted to Section Principal in 1998. In addition to his busy orchestral activities, he teaches at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester.

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra

Photo: Mark McNulty



The award-winning Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra is the oldest continuing professional symphony orchestra in Britain, dating from 1840. Vasily Petrenko was appointed Principal Conductor of the orchestra in September 2006 and in September 2009 became Chief Conductor. The orchestra gives over sixty concerts each season in Liverpool Philharmonic Hall and tours widely throughout the United Kingdom and internationally, touring to China, Japan, Switzerland, France, Spain, Germany, Romania and the Czech Republic. World première performances have included major works by Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Sir John Tavener, Sir James MacMillan, Karl Jenkins, Stewart Copeland, Michael Nyman, Michael Torke, Nico Muhly and James Horner, alongside works by Liverpool-born and North West-based composers. Recent additions with Vasily

Petrenko to the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra's extensive and critically acclaimed recording catalogue include Tchaikovsky's *Manfred Symphony* [Naxos 8.570568] (2009 Gramophone Awards Orchestral Recording of the Year), the world première performance of Sir John Tavener's *Requiem*, a complete Shostakovich symphony cycle (the recording of *Symphony No. 10* [Naxos 8.572461] was the 2011 Gramophone Awards Orchestral Recording of the Year), Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances*, *Symphonies Nos. 2 and 3* and *Piano Concertos Nos. 1-4 and Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* (with Simon Trpčeski), Tchaikovsky's *Piano Concertos Nos. 1 and 2* (also with Trpčeski), Elgar's *Symphony No. 1* and *Cockaigne Overture*; and Tchaikovsky's *Symphonies Nos. 1, 2 and 5*. www.liverpoolphil.com

Boris Giltburg



Born in 1984 in Moscow, Boris Giltburg moved to Tel Aviv at an early age, studying with his mother and then with Arie Vardi. In 2013 he won first prize at the Queen Elisabeth Competition, catapulting his career to a new level. In 2015 he began a long-term recording plan with Naxos. Having taken the second (and audience) prize at the Rubinstein Competition in 2011, Giltburg has appeared with many leading orchestras such as the Philharmonia Orchestra, the Israel Philharmonic, DSO Berlin, the Frankfurt Radio Symphony, the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Swedish Radio Symphony, the Danish

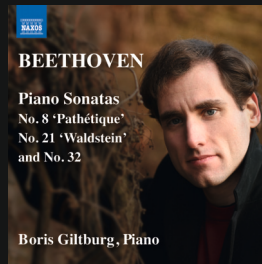
Radio Symphony, the St Petersburg Philharmonic and the Baltimore Symphony. He made his BBC Proms début in 2010 and has toured regularly in South America and China, and has also toured Germany with the Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse. He has played recitals in leading venues such as the Leipzig Gewandhaus, the Toppan Hall, Tokyo, Bozar, Brussels, the Southbank Centre, London, the Louvre, Paris, and the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam. Last season's highlights included several appearances at Rotterdam De Doelen (beginning with a return to the Rotterdam Philharmonic under Jukka-Pekka Saraste), a début with the Monte-Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra under Emmanuel Krivine, and chamber music with the Takács Quartet and the Pavel Haas Quartet. He was re-invited to the Seattle Symphony (Dausgaard), the Brussels Philharmonic (Denève), the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra (Petrenko), and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (Prieto) – with whom he played seven concerts as part of their Rachmaninov series. Having initially appeared on the EMI Debut label some years ago, in 2012 Giltburg released an acclaimed recording of Prokofiev's *War Sonatas* on Orchid Classics, earning him a place on the shortlist for the critics' award at the Classical Brits. His *Romantic Sonatas* disc (Rachmaninov, Liszt, Grieg) followed in 2013. His first solo releases on Naxos (Schumann and Beethoven) prompted enthusiastic reviews, and his latest Rachmaninov recording was named *Gramophone's* Disc of the Month. Boris Giltburg is an avid amateur photographer and blogger, writing about classical music for a non-specialist audience. He is represented by Intermusica.

www.borisgiltburg.com

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Shostakovich's two *Piano Concertos* span a period of almost thirty years. The youthful *First Piano Concerto* is a masterful example of eclecticism, its inscrutable humour and seriousness allied to virtuoso writing enhanced by the rôle for solo trumpet. Written as a birthday present for his son Maxim, the *Second Piano Concerto* is light-spirited with a hauntingly beautiful slow movement. With the permission of the composer's family, Boris Giltburg has arranged the exceptionally dark, deeply personal and powerful *String Quartet No. 8*, thereby establishing a major Shostakovich solo piano composition.

Dmitry
SHOSTAKOVICH
(1906-1975)

- | | |
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| 1-4 Piano Concerto No. 1 in C minor, Op. 35 (1933) | 23:23 |
| 5 String Quartet No. 2 in A major, Op. 68: III. Waltz:
Allegro (arr. B. Giltburg for piano) (1944/2016)* | 5:56 |
| 6-8 Piano Concerto No. 2 in F major, Op. 102 (1957) | 19:59 |
| 9-13 String Quartet No. 8 in C minor, Op. 110
(arr. B. Giltburg for piano) (1960/2015)* | 20:28 |

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Boris Giltburg, Piano

Rhys Owens, Trumpet 1-4

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra 1-4 6-8

Vasily Petrenko 1-4 6-8



A detailed track list and full recording and publishers' details can be found inside the booklet.

Piano: Fazioli (serial number 2782773), kindly provided by Jaques Samuel Pianos, London.

Booklet notes: Boris Giltburg • Cover photograph: Sasha Gusov



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DDD

Playing Time
69:47



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