

SHOSTAKOVICH

Three Chamber Symphonies

Kiev Soloists • Dmitry Yablonsky



Dmitry Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Three Chamber Symphonies (arr. Rudolf Barshai)

Although it has now come into its own among the seminal cycles of the twentieth century, Shostakovich's sequence of 15 string quartets is unusual in that almost all of these pieces have been transcribed for larger forces ranging from string ensemble to full orchestra. The catalyst for this was undoubtedly Rudolf Barshai (1924-2010), who enjoyed a professional association with the composer that lasted through to the latter's death. Barshai established himself as a violist – first as a member of the Borodin Quartet during 1945-53 and 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 transcription of Shostakovich's *First String Quartet* was actually the last of the five such arrangements undertaken by Barshai. Originally subtitled 'Spring-time', the piece was written during May to July 1938 and premièred in Leningrad that October by the Glazunov Quartet. Barshai's transcription for strings was made in 1995 for the Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi, and duly premièred by them the following year. In this version, the music's essential naivety and understatement are discreetly underlined by the larger string ensemble.

The first movement opens with a wistful melody heard across strings in affecting harmonies, at length heading into a second theme with its plaintive exchanges over a running motion on lower strings. The opening melody then returns in bittersweet guise, followed by a curtailed reprise of the latter theme that duly leads into a coda with aspects of both themes poignantly combined. The second movement is a series of variations on the brooding, folk-like melody heard at the outset. The first of these opens out its harmonic potential accordingly, while the second reaches a brief climax before its successor renders it in notably exquisite terms. This builds to a surprisingly

anguished culmination, before the theme is recalled almost literally over pizzicato accompaniment prior to the regretful close. The third movement is a rustling scherzo with deft exchanges for upper strings over a running bass, making way for the trio whose wistful elegance is enhanced by its underlying barcarolle motion. Brief recollections of both themes make for a pert conclusion. The finale opens with a lively theme that bursts forth in energetic terms on its way to the good-natured second theme and more anxious recall of its predecessor prior to the intensive development. Both themes are briefly reprised before the first theme comes to the fore, so rounding off the movement in suitably decisive terms.

The transcription of the *Eighth String Quartet* was the first of Barshai's arrangements. The piece was written over just three days in July 1960 while Shostakovich was working on a film score in Dresden; the circumstances of its composition, coupled with the composer's personal upheavals, doubtless influencing its predominantly sombre tone and highly autobiographical nature – witness quotations from several of his earlier works. It was premièred in Leningrad that October by the Beethoven Quartet and Barshai's transcription followed soon afterwards.

The opening movement begins with the composer's 'DSCH' motto given in brooding terms, after which the viola unfolds a ruminative melodic line before violins continue with a soulful cantilena. The music briefly takes on a more consoling manner, but the return of the motto brings with it that of the initial mood. Suddenly the second movement erupts with a pulsating theme hurled between upper and lower strings, its fervent progress abetted by the ceaseless underlying motion, and which culminates in a sudden crescendo before being cut off at its height. From here the third movement sets off as a quizzical intermezzo with the motto now transformed into a tripping idea deftly offset by trills in the middle register. The intervening episodes provide more substantial contrast,

before the initial idea is resumed against subtly held dissonant chords; subsidiary ideas flitting past as the music winds down to an uncertain pause. The fourth movement now commences with glowering chords which expand into a searing unison threnody, then tension subsides heading into a heartfelt dialogue across the strings, followed by a touching melody for viola prior to the return of the initial chords. The motto gently reasserts itself at the outset of a finale that is otherwise free of quotations or allusions, unfolding in restrained terms towards a conclusion poised between despair and resignation.

The transcription of the *Fourth String Quartet* is the most interventionist among Barshai's transcriptions. Shostakovich wrote the piece during April to December 1949, when much of his output was banned from public performance, and though it had several private hearings, the official première did not take place until December 1953 in Moscow by the Beethoven Quartet. Barshai's transcription was first performed in July 1990, when he directed the BBC Welsh Symphony Orchestra in a radio broadcast from Cardiff. Unlike the above two works, the string ensemble is supplemented here by single woodwind (with cor anglais) two horns, trumpet, percussion and timpani. The result is to emphasize the sheer expressive immediacy of the composer's writing, notably the Jewish inflections to the fore in the piece (as in several other Shostakovich works from the later 1940s), and additionally to bring out the symphonic dimension of what might otherwise seem a less imposing quartet than its two predecessors.

The first movement opens with an expansive and wide-ranging melody given tonal grounding by an unchanging pedal on lower strings. This quickly rises to an effulgent statement of the theme, after which woodwind assume the foreground with their pensive dialogue then strings and muted brass usher in a brief recollection of the

initial music prior to the uncertain close. The second movement, one of Shostakovich's most affecting (and duly recognized as such by Dmitry Tsyganov, leader of the Beethoven Quartet, when he transcribed it for violin and piano in the early 1960s – a version recently recorded by Sasha Rozhdestvensky and Jeremy Menuhin on First Hand Records FHR37), centres on an eloquent melody here given to oboe over a halting accompaniment on lower strings. This gains gradually in expressive intensity on the way to a climax with keening woodwind to the fore, subsiding as horn then clarinet pick up on that initial eloquence with a continuation where the melody is heard right across the texture; the music retains its earlier poise before it arrives at a calmly expectant pause.

The third movement is one of its composer's fugitive scherzos, its understated activity shared between strings in the middle and lower registers prior to a wistful rendering on flutes against lower woodwind and muted brass. The focus shifts back to the strings, then trumpets have an almost Mahlerian take on the theme in the company of insistent percussion. The music then returns to its initial reticence, with aspects of previous variants sounding speculatively before the bassoon gently outlines the main theme of the finale. The movement as a whole is brusquely launched by wind and percussion, strings taking up this theme in the company of mordant comments from woodwind and brass (with a discreet yet telling contribution from celesta.) Gradually tension mounts going into a rousing transformation of the theme with the whole orchestra brought into play. At length the brass sounds a halt to this activity, aspects of the theme then being shared between brass and woodwind until the music alights on a gentle discord from the latter. The dance motion fades out musingly on violins and percussion.

Richard Whitehouse

National Chamber Ensemble 'Kiev Soloists'

Artistic Director: Oles Yasko

Chief Conductor: Dmitry Yablonsky

Violin I

Taras Yropud
(concertmaster)
Olga Sheleshkova
Oleksandra Savchenko
Nataliia Zolotoper
Mykhailo Bilych
Tetiana Homenko
Tetiana Mashkova
Galyna Korinez

Violin II

Anastasiia Chop*
Kateryna Boychuk
Igor Zavgorodnii
Maksym Golovko
Ylia Cheremis
Yevhenii Sukhovyi
Yurii Saluha

Viola

Oleksandr Lagosha*
Oksana Darbin
Konstantyn Kuleba
Anatolii Vasylykivskiy
Andrii Makii

Cello

Yurii Pogoretskyi*
Natalia Yaropud
Igor Pazovskyi
Sergiy Kazakov
Iryna Kozlova

Double bass

Dmytro Tretiak*
Iurii Zbrozhek

Flute

Aryna Shapochkina

Oboe

Yurii Litun

Cor anglais

Yurii Mandryk

Clarinet/Bass clarinet

Oleg Moroz

Bassoon

Olexandr Saenko

French horn

Dmytro Taran
Anton Tkachenko

Trombone

Sergei Demianchuk

Percussion

Yevhenii Ylianov

Celeste

Yurii Saluha

* 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 Soloists



The Kiev Soloists 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. Recent tours have taken the ensemble to Luxembourg Palace, UNESCO in Paris, Radio Kulturhaus in Vienna, Komische Oper in Berlin, the National Philharmonic Hall in Warsaw, and to Tokyo and Singapore. The Kiev Soloists have been frequent participants at the David Oistrakh Festival in Parnu, Estonia, the Modern Music Festival in Warsaw, Poland, and the Classical Music Festival in Ruhr, Germany.

Dmitry Yablonsky



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 Gofriller.

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 début 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 Soloists' (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 an enthusiastic and charismatic character that leads

Rudolf Barshai's professional association with Shostakovich lasted until the composer's death. The success of his five transcriptions and arrangements of Shostakovich's string quartets was a catalyst for re-workings of nearly the entire cycle from string ensemble to full orchestra. The essential naivety and understatement of the *First Quartet* is here discreetly underlined by the larger string ensemble. This contrasts with the broodingly autobiographical *Eighth Quartet*, the searing emotions of which have made it the best known of Shostakovich's quartets. Barshai's transcription of the *Fourth Quartet* is his most ambitious and interventionist, the addition of winds and percussion emphasising the work's symphonic dimension.

Dmitry SHOSTAKOVICH

(1906-1975)



Chamber Symphony for Strings in C major, Op. 49a 'Eine kleine Symphonie' (1938/1995) (String Quartet No. 1, arr. Rudolf Barshai)

15:06

- 1 Moderato
- 2 Moderato
- 3 Allegro molto
- 4 Allegro

4:39
4:48
2:26
3:13

Chamber Symphony for Strings in C minor, Op. 110a (1960) (String Quartet No. 8, arr. Rudolf Barshai)

19:54

- 5 Largo
- 6 Allegro molto
- 7 Allegretto
- 8 Largo
- 9 Largo

4:28
2:48
4:21
5:01
3:16

Chamber Symphony in D major, Op. 83a (1949/1990) (String Quartet No. 4, arr. Rudolf Barshai)

24:12

- 10 Allegretto
- 11 Andantino
- 12 Allegretto –
- 13 Allegretto

4:37
5:33
5:15
8:47

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