CHANDOS

SHOSTAKOVICH

SYMPHONY NO. 2 'TO OCTOBER' · SYMPHONY NO. 5

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra

CBSO CHORUS

JOHN STORGÅRDS

Boosey and Hawkes / ArenaPAL

Dmitri Shostakovich, late 1930s

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906 – 1975)

Symphony No. 2, Op. 14 'To October' (1927)* **18:21**
in B major • in H-Dur • en si majeur
(Originally: 'Symphonic Dedication to October')
with Choral Finale

1	Largo ♩ = 46 – ♩ = 152 –	6:13
2	Poco meno mosso ♩ = 138 – Allegro molto ♩ = 192 – ♩ = 152 – ♩ = 168 –	3:48
3	Meno mosso ♩ = 100 – Moderato ♩ = 76 –	1:58
4	Мы шли, мы просили работы и хлеба (We marched, we asked for work and bread)	6:21

Symphony No. 5, Op. 47 (1937) — 48:54

in D minor • in d-Moll • en ré mineur

5	I	Moderato ♪ = 76 – ♩ = 84 – ♩ = 92 – ♩ = 104 – Allegro non troppo ♩ = 126 – ♩ = 132 – Poco sostenuto ♩ = 126 – ♩ = 138 – Largamente ♩ = 66 – Più mosso ♩ = 84 – Moderato ♩ = 42	17:17
6	II	Allegretto ♩ = 138	5:35
7	III	Largo ♩ = 50 – Largamente – Poco più mosso ♩ = 72 – ♩ = 50 – ♩ = 72 – ♩ = 50	14:33
8	IV	Allegro non troppo ♩ = 88 – ♩ = 104 – ♩ = 108 – ♩ = 120 – ♩ = 126 – Allegro ♩ = 132 – Più mosso 𝅗𝅥 = 72 – 𝅗𝅥 = 92 – 𝅗𝅥 = 80 – Poco animato – ♩ = 100 – 108 – ♩ = 116 – ♪ = 184	11:19
			TT 67:20

CBSO Chorus*

Simon Halsey CBE director

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra

Yuri Torchinsky leader

John Storgårds

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John Storgårds

Shostakovich:
Symphonies Nos 2 and 5

Symphony No. 2 in B major, Op. 14
'Dedication to October'

On 16 June 1926, a month after the première of his First Symphony, the nineteen-year-old Dmitri Shostakovich (1906 – 1975) compiled his first *curriculum vitae*. Apart from his stated determination not to return to 'hack-work' as accompanist in the silent cinema, this was a drily factual document, giving no hint of the crisis of confidence that had led him to burn a number of manuscripts, including a juvenile piano sonata, a ballet, and an opera. For a while his creative direction seemed uncertain, and plans for a piano concerto and a second symphony were shelved.

The crisis soon passed, and over the next two years Shostakovich launched energetically and gleefully into his most overtly modernistic phase, much influenced by the 'linear counterpoint' of Ernst Krenek and Paul Hindemith, with which friends and mentors had acquainted him. Meanwhile, composition was not his only priority. He was also determined to test out his proficiency as a pianist, and in January 1927 he took part in the first Chopin Piano Competition, in Warsaw, where he was one of eight finalists but not a prize-winner. He put this disappointment down to pain from appendicitis (he eventually had his appendix removed, in April that year) and to the chauvinism of an all-Polish jury. After this experience he still gave concerts but from 1930 confined solo appearances to his own works, deciding to make his way first and foremost as a composer.

1927 would prove a particularly eventful year. Shostakovich used his honorarium from Warsaw to finance a return trip via Berlin, and shortly after his arrival home he met Prokofiev, who was making the first of many visits to Russia before his definitive resettlement there nine years later. The Leningrad première of Berg's *Wozzeck*, in June, gave further impetus to Shostakovich's *avant-garde* inclinations. Although he tried to play down the notion, the influence of this opera's tragic-satirical tone and expressionist-constructivist style was decisive. It can certainly be found in his *Symphonic Dedication to October* (later retitled Symphony No. 2) on which he had just embarked, to a commission from the

Propaganda Department of the State Music Publishing House to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution. In this work he also amused himself with the idea of introducing factory hooters into the score (they are optionally performable by unison brass) and he even visited factories to inspect the real thing. The later stages of composition proved an uphill struggle, as he wrestled with the final chorus, to a propagandistic text by Alexander Bezïmensky that he found contemptible (to what degree his contempt applied to its literary or ideological content, or both, is not easy to say).

The single twenty-minute movement follows no obvious symphonic precedents. If anything, its loose structure of inter-linked tableaux, culminating in a choral apotheosis, follows the line of the various hybrid 'Ode-Symphonies' and 'Symphonic Odes', now mostly forgotten, that had been composed in France and Germany in the aftermath of Beethoven's Ninth. More pertinently, it parallels Soviet outdoor theatrical representations of the early revolutionary days, which were as often as not supervised by Futurist artists and dramatists using sophisticated means to enhance simplistic messages. The parallel consists of vivid musical equivalents to the succession of 'floats' that were wheeled into public spaces to present vivid and contrasting illustrations of the story of the Revolution, like updated versions of mediaeval mystery plays. In the case of the Second Symphony, the 'story' is outlined in Bezïmensky's text, which tells of workers redeemed from oppression and hunger by Lenin's exhortations to struggle, and of the culmination of this struggle in the 'October' Revolution: in effect, from chaos to order.

There are four main sections, or musical 'floats'. The first presents a miasmic rising from the depths, in which the strings are divided into seven parts; each of these sticking to its own rhythmic unit (a clear antecedent is the drowning scene in *Wozzeck*, in which Berg illustrates the waves closing over Wozzeck's head in overlapping rising chords). This texture gradually gives place to wandering melodies on trumpet and flutes / piccolo. Meanwhile, the double-basses imperceptibly stabilise the foundations into an *ostinato* pattern, confirming their initial note E as a point of orientation.

The second section is a march-scherzo, very much in the manner of Shostakovich's First Symphony. Youthful high spirits take over but are as yet comparatively lacking in direction. The independent lines gradually coalesce onto

a wedge-shaped theme and pedal-points, again on E, eventually called to order by a massive G flat major chord. The shuddering aftermath fails to reignite the 'march-scherzo' and collapses back to an E pedal.

The third section is a *tour de force* of anarchic counterpoint, a kind of anti-fugue in thirteen parts, perhaps illustrating the futility of bourgeois individualism, or perhaps simply a quasi-theatrical modernist experiment in the simultaneous declamation of unrelated texts. Here the proximate model is Hindemith's 1925 Concerto for Orchestra. Once again, pedal-points on E offer a toehold of tonal security within the surrounding anarchy. After a screaming climax, declamatory brass supported by diatonic harmonies seem to herald a new dawn. But this dawn is still some way off, and the music instead collapses into an adumbration of the dolefulness of the first lines of the text. Melancholy scalic ascents in violas, oboe, and bassoon, and finally solo violin pre-figure the 'Factory chimneys tower[ing] up towards the sky / Like hands, powerless to clench a fist'. Finally, the factory hooter, optionally re-scored as a unison F sharp in horns, trombones, and tuba, brings the chorus to its feet. John Storgårds and the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra use a hand-wound claxon at this point, adding horns on F sharp to clarify and stabilise the pitch.

The concluding choral ode itself falls into five sub-sections, loosely based on the structure and imagery of the text. The first two move with increasing rapidity from reflection to resolution. The third is an instrumental double fugue, led off by brass and woodwind, and the fourth celebrates the power of the new collective society. Between the ecstatic invocations of 'October', a brief recall of the miasmic opening and the factory hooter compresses the symphony's ideological trajectory into a short space. Thereafter, climax piles onto climax, the chorus switches to unpitched declamation for the final half-stanza, and the orchestral coda presents a microcosm of the move from chaos to order.

Symphony No. 5 in D minor, Op. 47

On 21 November 1937, in Leningrad's Philharmonic Hall, Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony received one of the most sensational premières in the history of music. In the slow movement, members of the audience were seen to be openly weeping, and at the end a thunderous ovation, reportedly lasting half an hour, saw Shostakovich repeatedly recalled to the platform and the Leningrad Philharmonic's rising star conductor, Yevgeny Mravinsky, holding the score high above his head.

In anyone's terms, this is an inspiring piece of musical composition. But there were other reasons why the reception of that first performance was so tumultuous. Everyone present knew that Shostakovich had been in disgrace since the appearance of the notorious *Pravda* editorial 'A Muddle instead of Music', in January the previous year. That unsigned article, presumed by anyone who read it to reflect Stalin's own views, laid into the composer's lurid opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, warning Shostakovich in no uncertain terms to mend his ways or face the consequences. A further editorial soon followed, denouncing his ballet *The Limpid Stream*. Later in 1936, he was forced to withdraw his Fourth Symphony in the middle of rehearsals, and the Fifth, composed the following spring and summer, made its appearance in the even more murderous climate of Stalin's Great Terror. It would mark either the definitive rehabilitation of the composer or, conceivably, his permanent eclipse. Ultimately it proved to be a rehabilitation, but not one that was guaranteed in advance.

Having weathered the immediate aftermath of the *Pravda* denunciations, Shostakovich had to find a means of surviving creatively. He needed a formula for reconciling his artistic conscience with official requirements for music that should be both populist and contemporary, uplifting yet not banal, and above all not tainted by supposed bourgeois western decadence, those being the terms and conditions recently enshrined as Socialist Realism. The responsibility was awesome. The underlying cause of Shostakovich's disgrace in 1936, not fully realised at the time and not fully understood even today, was the Communist Party's search for a 'model' composer, along the lines of the model poet-playwright Vladimir Mayakovsky (who had committed suicide in 1930) or model author-critic Maxim Gorky (who died in dubious circumstances shortly after coming to Shostakovich's defence over the *Lady Macbeth* affair). In this sense, along with the fate of the Fifth Symphony hung that not just of Shostakovich but of Soviet art music as a whole.

Shostakovich arrived at a solution which was certainly a compromise, but one fashioned on his own terms. In effect, it was a virtuoso stylistic juggling act, in which he successfully renewed the range and emotional balance of the romantic symphony as a genre, updating it to the era of neoclassical linear counterpoint and the rhetoric of film music. The results evidently spoke to the first audience not only as an individual artistic renewal against the odds

but also as a broader affirmation of humane values in an environment of extreme State oppression. By comparison with his Second, Third, and Fourth Symphonies, Shostakovich moderated his style in the direction of 'acceptable' lyrical and heroic intonations. At the same time, he devised an interplay of levels of meaning that could modify, render ambiguous, or even flat-out contradict the surface impression. In this way he managed to speak from his conscience to the hearts of his fellow countrymen and to symbolise in art the enforced compromises and pretences of their personal and intellectual lives.

To buttress the symphony against possible attacks, Shostakovich referred to it in a published interview after the first performances as 'A Soviet artist's practical creative reply to just criticism'. More precisely, he approved an anonymous reviewer's use of this expression. But that review has never been discovered and most likely never existed. So Shostakovich may have coined the expression after all, attributing it to A.N. Other in order to double-proof his rehabilitation, without being saddled with responsibility should the slogan backfire.

Whatever the original Leningrad audience made of individual passages, or of the ostensible overall message of the symphony, they must have been struck by its powerful embodiment of struggle, lament, and resistance. In an atmosphere in which no one dared breathe a word about either fears or losses, yet in which, in accordance with Stalin's 1935 pronouncement, 'Life has got better; life has become more cheerful', jollity was the watchword for all the arts. Yet it was striking that this symphony went unblinkingly into realms of grief and tragedy. Survival, never mind triumph or jollity, had to be hard-earned. In allowing audiences to project onto it something of their own personal experiences of loss and fear, the Fifth Symphony acted as a gigantic safety valve for pent-up feelings.

The qualities that enabled it to do so are to be found both on the surface of the music and deep underneath. After the peremptory neo-baroque opening gestures, Shostakovich's first movement spins out melodic lines over great distances, rarely touching base with the home key of D minor. If the prevailing tone is sorrow, the music nevertheless asserts its right to reflect and grieve in its own time and in its own way. Through the wide-intervalled singing of the second subject and the accelerating brutality of the central section, the first movement works towards a crisis point and eventually into stoical acceptance. This process is

underpinned in a purely classical, even Beethovenian, manner, as for the first time in his career Shostakovich deploys key centres in a single arch-like rise and fall, as a vital and active ingredient in the music's large-scale psycho-dramatic architecture.

Behind its academically correct guard, the scherzo second movement packs a defiant punch, fusing the apparently contradictory elements of waltz and march. In the trio section, by contrast, solo violin and flute evoke the *faux-naïf* world of the Ballerina's Waltz from *Pétrouchka*, one of Shostakovich's favourite Stravinsky scores.

Imagery of oppression and grief returns in the long-drawn slow movement, a fact that did not go unnoticed by Soviet critics at the time, whether they were sympathetic to it or not. Here Shostakovich allows the lament to follow its own seamless course, at times sinking into hibernation, at others rising up in self-assertive defiance. Profoundly moving in itself, this psychological process is an essential preparation for the finale, in other words for the 'Growth of a Personality', to invoke the Soviet novelist and short-story writer Aleksey Tolstoy's description of the work, approved by the composer.

The finale resumes the headlong momentum of the central phases of the first movement, driving recklessly towards an affirmation that feels premature, is almost immediately challenged, and quickly falls apart. The horn then initiates an extended phase of soul-searching, taking in a highly suggestive self-quotation of a recent song-setting of Pushkin's lines

> Thus do delusions disappear
> From my anguished soul,
> And in their place, visions arise within it,
> Visions of pure and primal days.

A beacon of hope? Wish-fulfilment?

When the opening ideas of the movement eventually resume, they do so at almost half speed and with a menacing scowl. Instead of the previous onrush, Shostakovich now sets his sights on a higher goal – whether realistic, delusional, or deliberately ironic is for the listener to decide. After such a prolonged winding-up, the D major coda certainly looks on the page like the consummation of a neo-Beethovenian dark-to-light progression (as in the finale of the Choral Symphony), in full conformity with the Socialist Realist requirement for a Happy End. Yet in context, nothing could more effectively subvert that requirement, for this passage hammers away so mercilessly at its epic-triumphalist gestures that it becomes difficult to believe in them. Hypothetical political interpretations aside, this conclusion undoubtedly serves to highlight the inability of the 'happy ending' to ring true in the

decade of dictatorships. In so doing, it holds up a mirror to its composer's times. And not only in Shostakovich's own country.

Trained for forty years by Simon Halsey CBE and supported by a team of professional staff, the **CBSO Chorus** is one of the world's great choirs. It is made up of 180 people from all walks of life, who have come together to sing symphonic choral music: a hard-working group of singers who give up their own time to perform the most challenging works in the choral repertoire to the highest international standard. Founded in 1973, and thus having celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2023, the Chorus performs it main role in appearances with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, singing everything from Bach to Boulanger, as well as operas, Mahler symphonies, and the Orchestra's famous annual carol concerts. But it has also toured to Europe, Asia, Australia, and North America, and sung with some of the greatest orchestras in the world, including the Wiener Philharmoniker and Berliner Philharmoniker. Having more than fifty recordings to its credit, the Chorus has won four *Gramophone* Awards. All this is achieved by singers from Birmingham and the Midlands, as young as eighteen years of age, whose day jobs range from student to nurse, teacher to pilot.

One of the most celebrated broadcast ensembles in the world, the **BBC Philharmonic Orchestra** possesses a distinctive energy, lightning speed, and unique musical character which have moved and inspired audiences for over 100 years. Founded in 1922 as the 2ZY Orchestra, it has played an essential part in shaping the Greater Manchester region into an unmissable cultural destination and a hub for world-class talent in orchestral music. Outside the Philharmonic Studio, its broadcast home at MediaCityUK, the Orchestra presents a flagship series at Manchester's Bridgewater Hall as well as live concerts recorded in venues across the country, at the BBC Proms, and on tour. Whether encountered in the concert hall, heard on the air, seen on television, or streamed on BBC Sounds and iPlayer, its work is enjoyed by millions of listeners every year. Its Chief Conductor is John Storgårds, an inspiring musical leader who has built a close relationship with the Orchestra over many years, and Anja Bihlmaier is the Principal Guest Conductor. The trailblazing musical storyteller Julia Wolfe is Composer in Residence for the 2025 / 26 season.

Artistic innovation and the development of a new audience for classical music have been a keen focus for many years. In June 2024, the Orchestra gave the world première of Huang Ruo's *City of Floating Sounds*, an immersive symphonic experience, at the cutting-edge Aviva Studios, in Manchester. In March 2025, it followed up with its latest collaboration with these Studios, *Philharmonic Sessions: The Augmented Orchestra*, featuring the UK première of Anna Clyne's *PALETTE*. During the current season it will give UK and world premières of works by Laura Bowler, Edmund Finnis, Gabriella Smith, Julia Wolfe, and Du Yun, her Pulitzer Prize-winning opera *Angel's Bone*, produced in collaboration with English National Opera and Factory International. Work engaging with children and young people continues to be a vital part of the work of the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra. At the end of 2023, CBeebies broadcast *Musical Storyland*, a ten-part television series produced by the Orchestra and featuring a number of its musicians. Using the power of music, the series brings to life famous stories from around the world. This was the first time an orchestra has been commissioned to make a series of films for UK network television. To date, *Musical Storyland* has been requested more than thirteen million times on BBC iPlayer.
www.bbc.co.uk / philharmonic

Chief Conductor of the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and Turku Philharmonic Orchestra, and Principal Guest Conductor of the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa, Canada, **John Storgårds** enjoys a dual career as a conductor and violin virtuoso; he is widely recognised for his creative flair for programming and his rousing yet refined performances. As Artistic Director of the Lapland Chamber Orchestra, a title he has held for more than twenty-five years, he has earned global critical acclaim for the ensemble's adventurous performances and award-winning recordings. He appears with such orchestras as the Berliner Philharmoniker, WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Orchestre philharmonique de Radio France, Orchestre national de France, Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI, BBC Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, and all major Nordic orchestras, including the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra of which he served as Chief Conductor from 2008 to 2015. Further afield, he appears with leading orchestras in Australia, Japan, and the United States. He collaborates with soloists such as Yefim Bronfman, Seong-Jin Cho, Sol Gabetta, Kirill Gerstein, Håkan Hardenberger, Kari Kriikku, Gil Shaham, Baiba Skride, Christian Tetzlaff, Jean-Yves Thibaudet, and Frank Peter

Zimmermann, as well as Soile Isokoski and Anne Sofie von Otter.

His vast repertoire includes all the symphonies by Sibelius, Nielsen, Bruckner, Brahms, Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert, and Schumann. He regularly performs world premières, many works, such as Per Nørgård's Symphony No. 8 and Kaija Saariaho's Nocturne for solo violin, having been dedicated to him. During the 2024 / 25 season he returned to the BBC Proms with the BBC Philharmonic, and also to the Bamberger Symphoniker, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, St Louis Symphony Orchestra, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, and Orchestre symphonique de Montréal.

Having studied violin with Chaim Taub, John Storgårds became concert master of the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra under Esa-Pekka Salonen, then studied conducting with Jorma Panula and Eri Klas. He received the Finnish State Prize for Music in 2002 and the Pro Finlandia Prize in 2012.

CBSO Chorus

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and John Storgårds performing Holst's 'The Planets', 21 September 2024

4 До октября

Мы шли, мы просили работы и
хлеба,
Сердца были сжаты тисками тоски.
Заводские трубы тянулися к небу,
Как руки, бессильные сжать кулаки.
Страшно было имя наших тенет:
Молчанье, страданье, гнет.

Но громче орудий ворвались в
молчанье
Слова нашей скорби, слова наших
мук.
О Ленин! Ты выковал волю
страданья,
Ты выковал волю мозолистых рук.
Мы поняли, Ленин, что наша судьба
Носит имя: борьба.

Борьба! Ты вела нас к последнему
бою.
Борьба! Ты дала нам победу Труда.
И этой победы над гнетом и тьмою
Никто не отнимет у нас никогда.
Пусть каждый в борьбе будет молод
и храбр:
Ведь имя победы – Октябрь!

To October

We marched, we asked for work and bread.
Our hearts were gripped in a vice of
anguish.
Factory chimneys towered up towards
the sky
Like hands, powerless to clench a fist.
Terrible were the names of our shackles:
Silence, suffering, oppression.

But louder than gunfire there burst into
the silence
Words of our torment, words of our
suffering.
Oh, Lenin! You forged freedom through
suffering,
You forged freedom from our
toil-hardened hands.
We knew, Lenin, that our fate
Bears a name: Struggle.

Struggle! You led us to the final battle.
Struggle! You gave us the victory of
Labour.
And this victory over oppression and
darkness
None can ever take away from us!
Let all in the struggle be young and bold:
The name of this victory is October!

Октябрь! – это солнца желанного
вестник.
Октябрь! – это воля восставших
веков.
Октябрь! – это труд, это радость и
песня.
Октябрь! – это счастье полей и
станков.
Вот знамя, вот имя живых
поколений:
Октябрь, Коммуна и Ленин.

Алекса́ндр Ильи́ч Безыме́нский (1898 – 1973)
From: Saint Petersburg, Russia: Mariinsky.
MAR0507

October! The messenger of the awaited
dawn.
October! The freedom of rebellious ages.
October! Labour, joy, and song.
October! Happiness in the fields and at
the work benches.
This is the slogan and this is the name of
living generations:
October, the Commune, and Lenin.

Aleksander Il'yich Bezïmensky (1898 – 1973)
From: Saint Petersburg, Russia: Mariinsky.
MAR0507

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and John Storgårds

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DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906 – 1975)

1-4 **SYMPHONY NO. 2, OP. 14 'TO OCTOBER'** (1927)* 18:21
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WITH CHORAL FINALE

5-8 **SYMPHONY NO. 5, OP. 47** (1937) 48:54
IN D MINOR • IN D-MOLL • EN RÉ MINEUR

TT 67:20

CBSO CHORUS*
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SHOSTAKOVICH: SYMPHONIES NOS 2 AND 5
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