



CHANDOS

NEEME JÄRVI

CONDUCTS SHOSTAKOVICH

ROYAL
SCOTTISH
NATIONAL
ORCHESTRA

Dmitri Shostakovich, 1959



Photograph by Kay Dar (1908 – 1974) / Mary Evans Picture Library, London

Neeme Järvi conducts
Dmitri Shostakovich (1906 – 1975)

COMPACT DISC ONE

Symphony No. 1, Op. 10 (1924 – 25)* **33:40**
in F minor • in f-Moll • en fa mineur

- | | | |
|----------|-----------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | I Allegretto – Allegro non troppo | 8:40 |
| 2 | II Allegro | 4:48 |
| 3 | III Lento – | 9:06 |
| 4 | IV Allegro molto | 10:59 |

Symphony No. 6, Op. 54 (1939)* **30:12**
in B minor • in h-Moll • en si mineur

- | | | |
|----------|------------|-------|
| 5 | I Largo | 17:27 |
| 6 | II Allegro | 5:53 |
| 7 | III Presto | 6:34 |

TT 64:01

COMPACT DISC TWO

Symphony No. 4, Op. 43 (1934 – 36)*
in C minor • in c-Moll • en ut mineur

61:18

- | | | | |
|---|-----|-----------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | I | Allegretto poco moderato – Presto | 27:28 |
| 2 | II | Moderato con moto | 8:56 |
| 3 | III | Largo – Allegro | 24:41 |

TT 61:18

COMPACT DISC THREE

Symphony No. 5, Op. 47 (1937)*
in D minor • in d-Moll • en ré mineur

46:47

- | | | | |
|---|-----|-------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | I | Moderato – Allegro non troppo | 16:21 |
| 2 | II | Allegretto | 5:20 |
| 3 | III | Largo | 14:14 |
| 4 | IV | Allegretto non troppo | 10:42 |

Ballet Suite No. 5, Op. 27a (1931)*

29:17

from *The Bolt* (1930 – 31)

5	I	Overture	5:17
6	II	The Bureaucrat	2:42
7	III	The Dance of the Drayman	1:41
8	IV	Kozelkov's Dance with Friends	5:18
9	V	Intermezzo	4:09
10	VI	Dance of Colonial Woman Slave	3:32
11	VII	The Appeaser	3:20
12	VIII	General Dance and Apotheosis	3:16

TT 76:12

COMPACT DISC FOUR

Symphony No. 7, Op. 60 'Leningrad' (1941)*

69:12

in C major • in C-Dur • en ut majeur

1	I	Allegretto	25:33
2	II	Moderato (poco allegretto)	11:05
3	III	Adagio –	17:05
4	IV	Allegro non troppo	15:21

TT 69:12

COMPACT DISC FIVE

Symphony No. 8, Op. 65 (1943)*

in C minor • in c-Moll • en ut mineur

1	I	Adagio – Allegro non troppo	26:23
2	II	Allegretto	6:36
3	III	Allegro non troppo –	5:54
4	IV	Largo –	9:54
5	V	Allegretto	14:28

TT 63:27

COMPACT DISC SIX

Symphony No. 9, Op. 70 (1945)*

in E flat major • in Es-Dur • en mi bémol majeur

1	I	Allegro	5:05
2	II	Moderato	6:31
3	III	Presto –	2:52
4	IV	Largo –	3:42
5	V	Allegretto	6:56

Symphony No. 10, Op. 93 (1953)[†]
in E minor • in e-Moll • en mi mineur

53:02

6	I	Moderato	23:00
7	II	Allegro	4:05
8	III	Allegretto	13:17
9	IV	Andante	12:29

TT 78:20

COMPACT DISC SEVEN

Ballet Suite No. 1 (1949)^{*}
Arranged by Levon Atovm'yan (1901 – 1973)

13:35

1	I	Lyric Waltz	2:18
2	II	Dance	1:41
3	III	Romance	3:05
4	IV	Polka	1:53
5	V	Waltz-Joke	3:00
6	VI	Galop	1:36

Ballet Suite No. 2 (1951)*			19:38
Arranged by Levon Atovm'yan			
7	I	Waltz	2:15
8	II	Adagio	6:26
Timothy Waldon cello			
9	III	Polka	2:15
10	IV	Sentimental Romance	2:58
John Gracie trumpet			
11	V	Spring Waltz (from <i>Michurin</i>)	2:19
12	VI	Finale	3:21
Ballet Suite No. 3 (1951)*			15:46
Arranged by Levon Atovm'yan			
13	I	Waltz (from <i>The Human Comedy</i>)	2:31
14	II	Gavotte (from <i>The Human Comedy</i>)	2:31
15	III	Dance	2:12
16	IV	Elegy (from <i>The Human Comedy</i>)	3:16
17	V	Waltz	2:08
18	VI	Galop	3:07

	Ballet Suite No. 4 (1953) [†]	12:51
	Arranged by Levon Atovm'yan	
19	I Introduction (Variation)	5:56
20	II Waltz	3:26
21	III Scherzo	3:28
22	Festive Overture, Op. 96 (1954) [*]	5:53
	in A major • in A-Dur • en la majeur	
23	Tahiti Trot, Op. 16 (1927) [*]	3:26
	(Tea for Two)	
	Vincent Youmans (1898 – 1946)	
	Arranged by Shostakovich	TT 71:38
COMPACT DISC EIGHT		
	Concerto No. 1, Op. 77 (99) (1947 – 48) ^{**}	38:23
	in A minor • in a-Moll • en la mineur	
	for Violin and Orchestra	
1	I Nocturne. Moderato	12:23
2	II Scherzo. Allegro	6:24
3	III Passacaglia. Andante	14:44
4	IV Burlesque. Allegro con brio	4:40

Concerto No. 2, Op. 129 (1967)*[‡]
in C sharp minor • in cis-Moll • en ut dièse mineur
for Violin and Orchestra

30:52

5	I	Moderato	12:58
6	II	Adagio	9:36
7	III	Adagio – Allegro	8:13

TT 69:22

Lydia Mordkovitch violin[‡]
Royal Scottish National Orchestra
(formerly Scottish National Orchestra)
Edwin Paling^{*} • **Andrew Martin**[†] leaders
Neeme Järvi



Neeme Järvi

Shostakovich: Symphonies and Ballet Suites

COMPACT DISC ONE

Symphony No. 1 in F minor, Op. 10

The reputation of Dmitri Shostakovich as the leading Soviet composer of his generation chiefly rests on his impressive series of fifteen symphonies (and the same number of string quartets). He was born at St Petersburg on 25 September 1906 and, unlike Prokofiev (his senior by fifteen years), he lived all his life in his native country, where his music did not escape official censure by the Soviet authorities, especially in the Stalin era. The composer nevertheless held fast to a declared belief that music is 'fundamentally the expression of emotion', and he attempted no experiment with musical language outside the idiom of classical tonality.

His major achievement was in creating fresh and compelling ideas within this framework, all the more distinguished by a fluency of invention and strength of character unconfined by the limits of symphonic form. Such qualities were already apparent in his First Symphony, composed when he was aged nineteen and still at the Leningrad Conservatory, a student of

Glazunov and Maximilian Steinberg. He wrote it as the thesis for his graduation examination, and academic requirements have seldom been met in so lively and distinctively personal a way.

The Symphony was an immediate success, not only at home but in all the other countries to which it rapidly travelled after its first performance, at Leningrad, on 12 May 1926. Even after all he later wrote, the work itself remains an astonishing *tour de force* in its youthful yet purposeful exuberance, with many characteristic features of the mature composer already present in embryo, as it were. It clearly conveys the feelings of a young artist expressing his delight and assurance at the fledging of his talent.

A boundless confidence is evident in the start of the first movement, with a short introduction begun by a dialogue between muted trumpet and solo bassoon, later continued by a solo clarinet and cellos played *pizzicato*. This device of a dialogue between solo instruments of contrasting timbre later became a typical feature in the composer's work. With a change of tempo, the clarinet begins the main *Allegro*, establishing the

home key of F minor and expanding the introductory phrases into a lively, somewhat martial theme which provides most of the movement's substance. A fondness for ghostly, quirky waltz-themes is signalled by the second subject, heard on the flute against *pizzicato* accompaniment, but minus the first beat of each bar.

The second movement, in A minor, is a kind of scherzo, with another stylistic fingerprint in the prominent roles given to the piano as well as woodwind, a reminder that Shostakovich was an accomplished pianist and in his youth played the piano in a dance-band. The quieter central section, in three-four time, brings a new woodwind theme which is later transferred to the horns and trumpets. After that it combines in a four-beat metre with the movement's opening ideas when these are recalled to end the movement.

A leisurely and passionately intense slow movement derives almost entirely from the long oboe solo heard at the start, playing a melody in D flat major abounding in Slav melancholy. The movement is extended by a new oboe theme before a solo violin recalls the initial idea, and the music subsides into soft divided strings at the end. A drum-roll links it to the finale, at first continuing the same mood but soon breaking into zestful exuberance. Mood and tempo change

with dramatic abruptness in the course of the music, which twice recalls the slow movement in solo episodes (violin, then horn, in the first; cello in the second), until the prevailing F minor is lifted into a breezy F major for the brisk, assertive coda.

Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 54

By the time Shostakovich reached his Sixth Symphony, at the end of the 1930s and with the Second World War about to engulf Europe, the composer had suffered his first bout of official censure, published in *Pravda*, confirmed in a manifesto by the Union of Soviet Composers and mainly occasioned by Stalin's dislike of the opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (later revised as *Katerina Ismailova*). A silence of eighteen months was broken by the Fifth Symphony (1937), which Shostakovich himself called a 'Creative reply of a Soviet artist to Just Criticism'. Symphony No. 6 followed soon after, and was first performed, at Leningrad, on 5 November 1939.

In its unconventional structure of a slow movement followed by two fast movements, the Symphony has been likened by some Soviet writers to a meditation on past sorrows succeeded by an affirmation of vitality and present happiness. Be that as it may, a nobility of spirit is apparent in the music's opening paragraph, rising from the

lower strings and woodwind to a broad climax dominated by a new phrase on the violins, and followed by a more sombre second theme, also broadly expanded. Each of these ideas is developed throughout a movement which is substantially in B minor.

Again there are expressive solos for woodwind, notably the cor anglais and flute, and by lifting the step of a minor third at the base of the opening theme into a major third during the development, these episodes foreshadow the Symphony's eventual outcome in B major. Much of the instrumental writing, including some military phrases for brass, may be found reminiscent of Mahler, and the counterpoint of different melodic strands in the texture achieves a comparable intensity of expression.

Some of the melodic cells in the opening movement are common to the others also, giving a sense of musical unity in spite of contrasts of character. The second movement is a scherzo which travels from G major at the start to finish in D major. It has the three-four metre of a quick waltz, and an opening theme that flowers in several different directions, including one episode in which it is played upside-down at the same time. Such counterpoint of two melodic ideas combined together is a recurring feature of the movement, in which the xylophone adds

sardonic comments as well as rhythmic punctuation. A forceful climax precedes a quietly nonchalant last flourish.

Unexpected twists of harmony lend a distinctive flavour to the dashing rondo-like finale, leaping forward in the manner of a galop. The main theme is again shown to be capable of turning itself into a variety of other tunes, and a central episode brings a succession of different ideas, suggestive of folksongs and village bands, before the main theme returns on a solo violin. After this, the buoyancy and spirit of the music enable it to lift itself from B minor into B major for an exhilarating finish.

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COMPACT DISC TWO

Symphony No. 4 in C minor, Op. 43

In his twenties, Shostakovich tried to reflect Soviet life and matters of the moment in his music. The revolution, which had his wholehearted support, was the major theme, and his Second Symphony (1927), the *October*, was written for the tenth anniversary of the Revolution, when he was only twenty-one. It was simultaneously premièred in four Russian cities, and was at first enormously popular in the Soviet

Union. The Third Symphony (1929), the *May Day*, is very much the musical equivalent of poster art: garish colours, overstated and relentless, yet effective and utterly sincere. But it was much less successful, for already the first tremors of the approaching storm clouds of 'Socialist Realism' were beginning to form.

The work that confirmed Shostakovich's stature with both Russian and international audiences was the opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, which was produced in January 1934 and quickly notched up 200 performances. Its popularity continued in the USSR but it would eventually be Shostakovich's undoing, and indirectly the undoing of the Fourth Symphony.

Up to the mid-1930s Shostakovich was essentially a composer for the theatre and for the cinema, writing against tight deadlines and in an idiom which contrasted extremes of emotion and often resorted to the bizarre and the grotesque, but nevertheless was capable of simple affecting melody when required. His Second and Third Symphonies were written against this background: they were both fervently dramatic, illustrative pieces of the moment. No one, least of all the composer himself, could have imagined that he would become known as one of the century's major symphonists.

The Fourth Symphony is the turning point in this development, a divide signalled by two totally different factors. The first is the discovery of the composer Mahler and Shostakovich's reaction to this influence. While the Fourth Symphony in many ways grows from what Shostakovich had done in the Second and Third Symphonies, it was also informed by the 'symphonic' character of the opera *Lady Macbeth*. (Indeed, the interludes from that opera, themselves, make a concert work which bears comparison with these early symphonies.)

The second factor which bears on the importance of the Fourth Symphony in Shostakovich's output was an ominous one: Shostakovich was condemned in an editorial in *Pravda* after Stalin had attended a performance of *Lady Macbeth* in January 1936. The dogma of socialist realism was quickly promulgated, and it was a time of real danger for Shostakovich, who was still only thirty and used to being in the forefront of artistic developments. He suppressed the opera and his ballet *Bright Stream*, and much later the Fourth Symphony, which would remain unheard for twenty-five years.

As early as March 1936 the British press could report that 'Shostakovich has, indeed, incurred the displeasure of the rulers of Russia'. In the Shostakovich file in the

BBC written archives there is an exchange of telegrams from the summer of 1937 which very much gives the flavour of the times. The Australian Broadcasting commission asks for exact information about the official standing of Shostakovich in Russia, wondering if his music is banned. The BBC replied, 'believed again persona grata with authorities subject to good musical behaviour'.

In an article published in November 1934 Shostakovich revealed that he had already composed part of the first movement of the Fourth Symphony, but had put it aside for the moment. In spring 1935 he participated in a colloquium on the symphony, organised by the Union of Soviet Composers, and soon afterwards announced that he was again working on his Fourth Symphony which would be his 'composer's credo'. But it was only in the autumn that he actually set to work in earnest and he completed it the following May. Writing in May 1935, he had remarked that 'both formalism and eclecticism are the worst enemies of Soviet musical culture', yet by the time the symphony was completed he had been condemned on both counts. It is probable that the dark and ultimately tragic third movement was composed after his fall from grace.

The Symphony went into rehearsal for its first performance in December. That

performance never took place, Shostakovich withdrew the work, and less than a year later reappeared with his Fifth to mark the twentieth anniversary of the revolution, with its well-known tag, 'A Soviet Arist's Reply to just Criticism'. It had a popular success, and Shostakovich succeeded in regaining his official standing. The Fourth Symphony remained unheard until December 1961 when the first performance took place in Moscow, and it was first heard in the west at the Edinburgh Festival, in 1962, and in London at a Promenade Concert, in July 1963. It is remarkable that so substantial a score by a major composer should have been suppressed for so long.

Shostakovich writes for a huge orchestra, including quadruple wind, with, additionally, two piccolos, E flat and bass clarinets; expanded brass – employing eight horns and two tubas – and extras which include two harps and substantial parts for both xylophone and celesta. Because of its scale, the listener may best approach the first movement as a succession of contrasting musical images, and if Shostakovich had given the work some title such as 'Scenes from the revolution' we should doubtless have little difficulty in accepting his programme. There is, however, no programme other than our deduction that it represents a subjective inner world in turmoil.

The music is placed around three huge climaxes, one each at the beginning, middle, and end. The tormented opening orchestral screams give us an idea of its composer's state of mind, and this presages a typical grimly marching rhythm which accompanies the first theme on the brass. This theme is eventually tamed and becomes a burlesquing idea on piccolo and E flat clarinet. However, the fool is most often played by solo bassoon, in this movement always ambivalent between sorrow and ridicule. The brass theme continues to attempt a return, only to fail. (In the music of Shostakovich, it finally succeeds, in more civilised guise, in the finale of the Fifth Symphony.) The contrasting episodes not only include the extremes of range of various instruments but also, for example, a contrasting romantic string line which later becomes a phantom waltz. In mid-movement the strings suddenly launch into a *Presto* unison on the violins which becomes an amazing fugue entirely in running quavers. A frightening series of eight, progressively louder detached chords on muted brass and timpani has the force of the three great 'blows of fate' in Mahler's Sixth Symphony without actually resurrecting the first theme, which appears to be their objective. The music now sweeps on into the closing section with an extended cor anglais

solo, a solo violin, and two final cries of protest punctuating the uneasy mood.

Compared to the turbulence of the first movement, what follows, with its passages for just strings or woodwind and calling for the heavy brass only at the climaxes, has the character of a genial scherzo. The effect is not too far removed from the *Ländler* movements in Mahler's symphonies. Two basic ideas are presented alternately: the opening music for violas followed by an idea which may be recognised as the germ of the first idea in the subsequent Fifth Symphony. At the end, the muted violins' demi-semiquavers flicker into silence accompanied by a pattering of percussion, harp, and *pizzicato* basses, a clicking effect that he would use again in his last symphony, thirty-five years later.

We do not have dates for the composition of the individual movements of this work, but the solemn tread of a funeral march with which the finale opens surely post-dates the terror that Shostakovich must have felt on being denounced as a formalist. Yet this is actually a fast movement, and soon the main *Allegro* is launched, working up to a climax with his often used technique of constant repetition of a simple figure, yet on the whole creating a positive and optimistic mood. This suddenly gives way to what is in effect

an extended interpolated interlude: a naive series of dance movements, that might have strayed from one of his theatre scores or ballets, and includes many delightful ideas, such as a waltz. Five separate movements can be discerned though they are not marked in the score, and this is all developed over so long a span that the listener may believe it is now the main matter of the music. But all too soon, two timpani disrupt the music, shattering the peaceful atmosphere, and in a remarkable *coup de théâtre* they plunge us back into the funeral march. Finally, in a hushed coda, the muted strings and quiet woodwind sustain a tonic chord of C major over a long time span while odd fragments are heard from timpani, celesta, and muted trumpet: the effect is of inconsolable tragedy. In all life there is death, and never more so than in the Soviet Union of 1936.

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COMPACT DISC THREE

Symphony No. 5 in D minor, Op. 47

The young Dmitri Shostakovich was very much the revolutionary who wanted his music to serve the socialist state. 'I am a Soviet composer, and I see our epoch as something heroic', he wrote, later adding,

'I consider that every artist who isolates himself from the world is doomed'. He came to maturity during that artistically fruitful and highly active period in Russia immediately after the death of Lenin. A career as a concert pianist looked a strong possibility, for his graduation recital, in 1923, was a sensation. But it was his First Symphony, written at the age of nineteen, while he was a pupil of Maximilian Steinberg at the Leningrad Conservatoire, that gave him an international reputation. It was quickly taken up by Bruno Walter, Stokowski, and Toscanini, among others. Two further symphonies followed before the end of the twenties, both at first enormously popular in the USSR. The second, his *October* Symphony, written for the tenth anniversary of the Revolution, when he was only twenty-one, was simultaneously premiered in four Russian cities. Such works exemplify his youthful revolutionary fervour, their technique coloured by his aptitude for writing for the popular media of the stage and the screen, into which he put his considerable energies up to about the age of thirty-five. The latter include his opera *The Nose*, the ballets *The Age of Gold* and *The Bolt*, music for pioneering plays and films, and, at the age of twenty-seven, the opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*.



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Lydia Mordkovitch

However, the opera would be the young composer's undoing, for in January 1936 Stalin attended a performance, and in a climate in which the dogma of 'socialist realism' was being quickly promulgated it was immediately condemned in an editorial in *Pravda*, as was his ballet *Bright Stream*. It was a time of danger for the composer, and he suppressed his Fourth Symphony after rehearsals had started (in December 1936) and responded with his Fifth to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Revolution, with its now well-known tag, 'A Soviet Artist's Reply to Just Criticism'. In fact this phrase appears to have originated with an unknown journalist, but Shostakovich certainly used the phrase 'My Creative Answer' as the title of an article in *Vechernaya Moskva*, in January 1938.

In the early 1930s Prokofiev had predicted that an emphasis on Socialist Realism and the regional music of the Soviet republics would result in a provincial art, and not the least achievement of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony at the time was that it appeared, uniquely, to have proved Prokofiev wrong. First performed, in Leningrad, on 21 November 1937, it was received with tremendous enthusiasm and combined a genuine popular success with apparent adoption of the party line rejecting 'the fetters of

formalism'. Shostakovich's friend, the cellist and conductor Rostropovich, has suggested that it was only the forty-minute ovation which greeted the first performance that saved Shostakovich from the same fate as his mentor, the celebrated producer Meyerhold, who disappeared.

The symphony was repeated in Moscow in January 1938 and then was heard abroad, first from a broadcast in New York in April 1938, next at a concert in Paris in June, and then at concerts in the USA and elsewhere. It was first heard in the UK in November 1939, on a technically rather poor Soviet film, and was first performed in London at Queen's Hall on 13 April 1940, conducted by the composer Alan Bush. By then it had been both published and recorded (by Stokowski, on 20 April 1939).

How should we see Shostakovich's Fifth? Before its first performance in Moscow, the composer was quoted as defining it as a 'lyro-heroic symphony':

Its main idea is man's emotional experiences and all-conquering optimism. I wanted to show how, overcoming a series of tragic conflicts arising in the intense struggle which rages in one's soul, optimism is born as a world-outlook.

He went on to admit that it was, to a certain extent, autobiographical, adding, 'any work of art contains autobiographical traits', and

on another occasion added, 'the theme of my symphony is the making of a man'.

Since his death it has become clear that Shostakovich put into his music sentiments that in any other art would have resulted in direct opposition of the Soviet State. Even about the apparently optimistic Fifth Symphony, Solomon Volkov quotes the composer as saying,

The rejoicing is forced, created under threat.
It's as if someone were beating you with a
stick and saying, 'Your business is rejoicing'.

Shostakovich needs only the strings in octaves for the dramatic opening of the first movement, and, in fact, the first group of themes is presented and developed largely on the strings. The atmosphere changes as throbbing string chords, coloured by harp, introduce the second subject, a soaring idea on the first violins, followed by a subsidiary one first heard on the flute. The throbbing strings return; we have completed the exposition without recourse to the heavy brass or percussion. So the sudden change of mood that signals the start of the development really makes us sit up. The piano at the lowest end of its compass together with the *pizzicato* cellos and basses set up a driving figure (the first three notes of the third statement of the second subject idea) which, with growling low horns, lead

us to a succession of passages in which repeated motifs create a tremendous drive by insistent repetition. A grotesque march (*poco sostenuto*) presages the climax, culminating with the opening dramatic gesture, now on the whole orchestra, as an endlessly renewing texture against which the brass thunder their ascendancy. The movement ends quietly, the second subject returns, and the close comes with the strings now muted, the muted solo violin soaring above.

The second movement acts as a scherzo with trio, in a waltz-like folk rhythm suggesting a *Ländler*. As might be expected from this, the first entry of the woodwind certainly brings Mahler to mind, and the gentle humour comes with darker overtones, particularly in the strange still waltz for violin and harp that comprises the trio.

The third movement (originally headed *Adagio*) particularly pleased its composer: 'I have succeeded in presenting a slow and unswerving motion from beginning to end', he wrote, and in many ways it is the focus of the whole work. The brass are omitted and, unusually, the strings are divided into eight parts (three violins, two violas, two celli and double-basses), giving a glowing spacious effect.

The first movement had been launched in D minor, the scherzo in A minor, the slow

movement in F sharp minor, and now, in the finale, we return to the opening key, ultimately, at the very end, to brighten to the major. The finale's self-important opening over pulsing timpani, a vigorous marching idea, will recur throughout the movement. Later comes a folk-inflected tune reminiscent of Tchaikovsky, and, in the slower section, a fragment from the first movement, which is further developed.

The apparently triumphal closing passage is dominated by its repeated high As on the whole orchestra, no fewer than 252 times, the theme in the brass. 'The end is irreparable tragedy', says Rostropovich of this passage.

Stretched on the rack of the inquisition,
the victim still tries to smile in his
pain – anybody who thinks the finale is
glorification is an idiot.

Quite what Shostakovich may have intended, aged thirty-one, and what he may have remembered thirty-five hard years later, and what, after his death, fifteen years later again, his friends may read into it, needs to be carefully considered. All commentators doubtless have shafts of light to throw on this masterpiece, but it is worth remembering Stephen Johnson's identification of a brief crotchet theme on strings and harp just before the coda that also appears in the *Four Romances on Texts by Pushkin*,

accompanying the words, 'and confusion passes away from my tormented soul as visions appear of a brighter day'.

Ballet Suite No. 5

The Ballet Suites Nos 1 to 5 present a variety of movements from Shostakovich's youthful ballet, theatre, and film scores, and the fifth of these comprises eight movements from the three-act ballet *The Bolt*, written in 1930–31 and first performed, at the Kirov Opera and Ballet Theatre, Leningrad, on 8 April 1931. The setting is a Soviet factory: drunken workers are sacked and in revenge one tries to sabotage a lathe by persuading the operator to drop a bolt into the machine. At the last minute the machinist repents and the saboteur is arrested. The music is extremely vivid in the composer's headlong rhythmic poster pantomime style, satirising the petit-bourgeois. It is perhaps significant that it was preceded in Shostakovich's output by the film score *Alone* and followed by the incidental music for the satirical play *Rule Britannia*.

In 1931 Shostakovich extracted the suite of eight movements here recorded, which was first performed, in Leningrad, in January 1933. The following year he revised the suite for publication, deleting movements 6 and 7 and using less explicit titles. The music consists of a succession of caricatures. The Overture

is heralded portentously by a fanfare on three trumpets, and self-important gesturing by the full orchestra. The Overture then runs away in a contrasting *Allegro*, followed by a cheeky duet for flute and bassoon. After a spoof preparation for the conclusion, the music just peters out with muttering timpani,

The momentum is still maintained (as it is for most of the suite) for the dull Bureaucrat ('Polka' in the revision). We now have humour of the trombone *glissando* kind and, characterised by extremes of register, with the piccolo and bassoon. The music eventually launches into one of its composer's typical galops.

The Drayman's dance (just 'Variations' in the collected edition) gives us more 'rhubarbs' from the trombone and a galumphing dance from the orchestra.

Kozelkov dances with his friends (later 'Tango') in an extremely sectional piece, presumably each section featuring a different friend. The spoof slow opening threatens to lead to a gorgeous waltz, but instead becomes an equally slow tango before the tempo increases to the inevitable invigorating galop.

The gentle lyrical 'Intermezzo' is quite literally an interlude. It is followed by the reflective lyricism and the pleading cor anglais of the Colonial Woman Slave. While this brings a moment of repose in a generally urgent and

brittle score, even here the composer cannot resist interposing frenetic running strings before returning to the elegiac cor anglais tune.

The seventh movement is a brilliant extended xylophone solo, apparently depicting a figure of fun; the Russian title has been variously translated as 'yes-man' or 'the conciliator' – appeaser conveys the sense. Shostakovich rounds off this high-spirited music with a cheerful tune in the extrovert fast finale, ending with another galop over oompa bass, all written in great haste in response to the demands of the theatre.

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COMPACT DISC FOUR

**Shostakovich: Symphony No. 7 in C major,
Op. 60 'Leningrad'**

Shostakovich was a symphonist throughout his career, completing his first at nineteen and his last (No. 15) four years before his death. The *Leningrad* Symphony comes nearly halfway through the canon, but it is still the work of a young man with much passionate feeling to pour out in his music. The circumstances of its composition, in 1941, were dramatic: he was living in his native city of Leningrad at a time when it was besieged by invading German forces. When war broke out earlier in that year

he had volunteered for the army, but when this was ruled out on account of his health and poor eyesight he at once set about using his gifts in the service of his country. He wrote the symphony quickly, as he said later:

That was the least I could do. The war was raging all round. I had to be together with the people, and wanted to picture our country at war, to give it musical expression. On the very first days of the war, I sat down at the piano and began working. I worked at high pressure, for I was eager to compose a work about our times, about my contemporaries who spared no efforts, not even their lives, for the sake of our victory over the foe. When not working, I would go out into the street and watch my beloved city with pain and pride... By the end of 1941 I completed the symphony, written as it were at a single stroke of the pen.

When the authorities insisted that the composer and his family leave Leningrad, in October, three movements were already finished and the finale was then added in his new home, in Kuibyshev. The Symphony was completed in December 1941 and first performed, in Kuibyshev, in March 1942. Its première outside the USSR took place in New York in the following July under Toscanini, to whom a microfilmed score had been flown;

this was immensely successful and the work received more than sixty performances in the USA in the following concert season as well as soon being heard in nearly every western European country.

The symphony is scored for a big orchestra, including thirteen woodwind, two harps, piano, xylophone, and ten extra brass players (trumpets, horns, trombones) besides a standard brass section of eleven instrumentalists. Originally the four movements had programmatic titles, respectively 'War', 'Memories', 'Our Country's Wide Spaces', and 'Victory', and though he later discarded these, Shostakovich did not disown the programme itself. The *Allegretto* first movement is the longest, occupying eighty pages of the symphony's total of 196. As the composer tells us, this at first pictures people living 'a peaceful happy life', but after this fairly brief exposition section the composer replaces a conventional development with something new in the shape of a march-like theme over a side-drum rhythm and later the addition of other percussion. This represents the invasion and is repeated over and over again in an enormous, unforgettable *crescendo* occupying more than forty pages of the score. Towards the end of the passage the melody breaks up violently while retaining the march rhythm; the recapitulation (as the

composer called it), when it finally comes, is a kind of epilogue, 'a funeral march, or rather a requiem for the war's victims; the ordinary people honour the memory of their heroes'. At the very end, the march-like tune with its accompanying side-drum rhythm is briefly recalled.

After this colossal musical statement the symphony's other movements offer some emotional respite. According to the composer, the relatively brief second movement is 'a lyrical intermezzo... there's a little humour – I can't do without it!' – but though it begins and ends innocently and quietly there is a surprisingly violent central section. The third movement is 'a pathetic adagio, the dramatic centre of the whole work', but this too has a savage outburst (at a faster pace, *Moderato risoluto*) at its centre. It leads without a break into a finale that the composer called simply 'victory... I speak of a beautiful life in the future, when the enemy has been routed'. The movement begins with a low held G (timpani roll and strings) and soon gathers immense momentum and vitality in a profusion of themes; a slower chordal section (*Moderato*) then ensues and slowly builds to a final great climax.

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COMPACT DISC FIVE

Symphony No. 8 in C minor, Op. 65

The Eighth Symphony is the second of Shostakovich's so-called 'War Trilogy' of symphonies composed between 1941 and 1945. Written at Ivanovo in the late summer of 1943, it is – unlike its predecessor, the *Leningrad* Symphony – a non-programmatic work the more 'generalised' imagery of which yet seemed to identify with the great suffering and hopes of the Soviet-Russian people at that stage of their 'Great Patriotic War' with Nazi Germany. The *Leningrad* Symphony had been partly written in the city while it was under siege; its successor, however, was written in more peaceful surroundings. Ivanovo, situated north-west of Moscow, was a newly established 'country retreat' set aside by the State for creative work. Shostakovich worked on his new symphony in a small wooden house from which he could go straight out and breathe in the calm of a typically Russian forest landscape. 'When I was there', wrote the eminent Soviet musicologist G. Shneerson,

I could always see Shostakovich at work, hunched over his manuscript. The doors of his 'hen-house' were always open. Outside noise, the hubbub of children playing around the retreat, did not bother him... he

sometimes took rake and pitchfork in hand
and helped to rake the hay into stacks.
In one of the pictures in *Life*, we see him
laughing gaily with a piglet in his arms.

The war with Germany was on the turn.
Leningrad, after unspeakable suffering,
had survived its siege and still held out.
In February the battle of Stalingrad had
convinced the Russians that they could win
the war. The following year would see the big
Soviet offensive which prepared the way for
the 1945 drive towards Berlin and the German
surrender.

At its Moscow première, on 4 November
1943, the Symphony was enthusiastically
received in a thirty-minute ovation for
composer and the conductor, Yevgeni
Mravinsky, to whom the work was dedicated.
After the war, however, it was roundly
condemned at the notorious Zhdanov
Conference of February 1948 for its 'fearful,
almost catastrophic impression' and had
to wait for the demise of Stalinism before
it could be rehabilitated as worthy of a
permanent place in the repertoire.

Having a playing time of over an hour, this
is an epic which compares in symphonic
breadth with such works as the Fourth,
Seventh, and Eleventh Symphonies of
Shostakovich. Its five-movement layout
was taken up again in both the 'little' Ninth

Symphony, composed at the end of the war,
and the Third String Quartet, of 1946. The five
movements may be grouped into a tripartite
dramaturgical scheme. First, the enormous
span of the first movement, notable for its
long-breathed melodies, its cataclysmic
development, its climax of destructive
power, and the dramatically hushed and
curtailed recapitulation, beginning with a
long recitative-*arioso* on the cor anglais. (The
scheme has its origins in the first movements
of the Fourth and Fifth Symphonies.) Next –
and in complete contrast – a mechanistic
march (D flat major) in burlesque style, from
which all human emotion would seem to have
been drained. The last three movements form
a continuous sequence. To begin with, a kind
of *toccata-ostinato* in E minor: its wailing
cry always returns on the same notes but
in strikingly different instrumental guises,
contrasting with a martial trio (trumpet
fanfares and implacable side-drum rhythms).
Building up to a massive climax of self-
destruction, this movement hurls itself into
the unison of a subsiding *passacaglia* theme
which, repeated eleven times in the cellos
and basses, is the basis for a repressed
Largo, cold as ice. This movement slips
unobtrusively from its traumatised G sharp
minor into an unheroic C major for the finale –
a freely developing waltz rondo. Neither

grave nor gay, its voluble main theme (solo bassoon) is one of those speech-song-dance monologues that form a genre of their own in Shostakovich's lyrical expression. A lengthy development builds up to a catastrophic climax that, at its peak, recalls the first movement. But now the music brightens up (bass clarinet, solo violin) as it winds its way back to C major and the return of the rondo theme. The close is calm but empty, the stepwise C – D – C motto of the symphony reverberating in the basses beneath a long-held chord of C major in the violins.

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COMPACT DISC SIX

Symphony No. 9 in E flat major, Op. 70

Dmitri Shostakovich was very much a child of the Russian revolution, who had wanted his music to serve the socialist state. 'I am a Soviet composer, and I see our epoch as something heroic', he wrote as a young man, and later, 'I consider that every artist who isolates himself from the world is doomed'. He came to artistic maturity during that artistically highly fruitful period in Russia immediately after the death of Lenin. Shostakovich's First Symphony, written as a graduation exercise, at the age of nineteen,

while he was a pupil of Maximilian Steinberg at the Leningrad Conservatoire, gave him an international reputation, and was quickly taken up by Bruno Walter, Stokowski, and Toscanini, among others. His youthful revolutionary fervour was channelled into his music, which was similarly innovative. He quickly produced two further symphonies before the end of the 'twenties, both at first enormously popular. The second, his *October* Symphony, written for the tenth anniversary of the Revolution, when he was only twenty-one, was simultaneously premièred in four Russian cities. Such works exemplify his aptitude for the popular media of the stage and the screen into which he put his considerable energies up to about the age of thirty-five. They include his opera *The Nose*, the music for a variety of pioneering films, ballets, and, at the age of twenty-seven, the opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*.

The opera was produced in Leningrad and Moscow in January 1934 and again in Leningrad in May 1934, reaching nearly 200 performances in all. Within a year it was seen in the USA, and in that pioneering season of 1936, the BBC gave a concert performance in English conducted by Albert Coates. In Russia and elsewhere it had been greeted with great enthusiasm, in England less deliriously. However, the opera would be the young

composer's undoing for in January 1936 Stalin attended a performance and in a climate in which the dogma of 'socialist realism' was being quickly promulgated it was immediately condemned in an editorial in *Pravda*, as was his ballet *Bright Stream*; *Lady Macbeth* only reappeared, much revised, as *Katerina Ismailova*, in 1962, long after Stalin's death. It was a time of danger for the composer, and he suppressed his unperformed Fourth Symphony and responded with his Fifth to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Revolution, with its now well-known tag, 'A Soviet Arist's Reply to Just Criticism'.

During the War, however, his Seventh and Eighth Symphonies, particularly the former, caught the mood of the times, and this together with his widely publicised role as a firefighter during the siege of Leningrad restored his standing. Later he came under more general criticism as along with other composers he was one of the objects of the infamous Zhdanov decree, in 1948.

The Ninth Symphony was not what the admirers of Shostakovich were expecting. Here, in 1945, was Russia's leading young composer, who during the War had produced epic nationalistic scores, now reaching his Ninth Symphony with a comparatively lightweight work ('a light and sunny mood', said the composer), in five movements, the

last three playing continuously. The leading Soviet composers were expected to produce great 'Victory' symphonies in bombastic style, but Shostakovich signally failed to do so, and the symphony was criticised as being 'ideologically weak'.

The music was sketched in about six weeks during the spring and summer of 1945 and must have been started about the time of VE day, the full score being prepared during August. The first performance took place, in Leningrad, on 3 November 1945. The first movement is a traditional sonata form complete with exposition repeat, though it is unmistakably by Shostakovich, and might almost be called 'Festive Overture'. Yet it does have strongly classical roots and during the composition of the symphony Shostakovich spent every evening playing Haydn symphonies as piano duets with the composer Dmitri Kabalevsky.

In the second movement, the mood changes to a melancholy lyricism. The long woodwind lines, often completely unaccompanied, create spare clean textures in which the heavy brass is not heard at all. Finally, we arrive at the continuous music that Shostakovich designates as III to V, but which effectively is two *scherzando* movements linked by a short sorrowing intermezzo. The scherzo is typically headlong fast music,

and its joyful character is emphasised by the way in which it is cut off by the portentous low fanfare figure on trombones and tuba, which commences the *Largo*. The effect of the brass and the bassoon's ensuing lament is quite striking. The trombones return, the bassoon continues and ultimately picks up into the playful *Allegretto* of which its solo contributes the first twenty-six bars. Gradually the movement becomes a joyful march, and finally a headlong galop in which its composer actually demonstrates his personal celebration that the war is past, though not quite in the way that had been expected.

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Symphony No. 10 in E minor, Op. 93

Shostakovich was both a prolific and an extraordinarily versatile composer whose output was often matched by remarkable speed (the great Eighth Symphony, for instance, took him only a little over a month, while the Eighth Quartet was written in a mere three days). Owing partly to the vicissitudes of his relations with Soviet dogma, his work fails to reveal any very consistent line of development. Broadly speaking, though, it might be said to fall into two main categories: the public, exemplified

by his fifteen symphonies (1924 – 71), and the private, as evidenced by the fifteen string quartets (1935 – 74). Until 1953, however, when he completed his Eighth Symphony, it was primarily as a symphonist that he would be judged.

His first work in the genre, written as a graduation piece while he was still a student at the Leningrad Conservatoire, caused a tremendous stir in the musical world and attracted the championship of such eminent conductors as Nikolai Malko, Bruno Walter, and Leopold Stokowski. With his Second Symphony, *To October* (commissioned to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Bolsheviks' accession to power), he revealed himself as a true and loyal 'son of the Revolution'. Less than a decade later, however, and without having changed his loyalties, he was in disgrace, denounced in 1936 for writing music which was 'fidgety, screaming, neurotic, coarse, primitive, and vulgar'. Thus it was that the Fifth Symphony came sadly tagged as 'the creative reply of a Soviet artist to justified criticism'. He was accordingly exonerated and by the end of the Second World War, nine symphonies now under his belt, he had become a national hero. But it was not to last.

Following the war, at a time of the tightening of ideological and artistic controls,

Shostakovich fell once more from grace, this time the victim of a savage attack by Stalin's cultural henchman, Andrei Zhdanov. Shostakovich responded by neatly (though hardly serenely) dividing himself in two. The public composer toed the party line with a sting of inoffensive, conventionally jingoistic film scores and choral works ('The sun shines on our Motherland' *etc.*), while the private artist pursued his course through a series of important works (the First Violin Concerto, the Fourth Quartet, and the songs *From Jewish Folk Poetry* among them), which he prudently withheld from publication. The symphonist, however, was in retreat. Eight years passed with no addition to the canon. Then, upon the death of Stalin, in 1953, and the concomitant hopes of a political 'thaw', the floodgates of his symphonic imagination opened, and Shostakovich produced, in his Tenth Symphony, what many still regard as his greatest work. In *Testimony*, the hotly disputed book of 'memoirs' edited by Solomon Volkov, we find the composer in confessional mood:

I couldn't write an apotheosis to Stalin, I simply couldn't. But I did depict Stalin in my [Tenth] symphony. I wrote it right after Stalin's death, and no-one has yet guessed what the symphony is about. It's about Stalin and the Stalin years. The second part, the scherzo, is a musical portrait of

Stalin, roughly speaking. Of course, there are many other things, but that's the basis.

There are indeed 'many other things', among them superb craftsmanship, in which ends and means are impeccably balanced, a brilliantly coloured orchestral canvas, the organic growth of a massive structure from a few simple, germinal ideas (listen, for instance, for the development and recurrences of the little three-note motif with which three of the four movements begin), and an impressive and unquestionably sincere directness of utterance. As Beethoven wrote of his *Missa solemnis*, so might Shostakovich have written here, 'From the heart, may it go to the heart'.

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COMPACT DISC SEVEN

Ballet Suites Nos 1, 2, and 3

The extent of Shostakovich's actual involvement in the preparation of the first three ballet suites, which do not carry official opus numbers, remains unclear. We know from the title page of the 'Six Pieces from the First Ballet Suite', published by the Moscow State Publishing House in 1950, that this set was given the original opus number 84, but no further opus numbers were given to

the publication of the Second (1951) or Third (1953) Suites, and the opus number 84 was in due course reassigned to the first two songs of an incomplete set of Romances to words by Lermontov. The compilation and arrangement of these pieces for small symphony orchestra was made – no doubt in close collaboration with the composer – by the old friend and colleague of Shostakovich, Levon Atovm'yan, who was also responsible for the production of the suites from the numerous film scores of those years and who also, incidentally, had made an arrangement for two pianos of the (as yet unperformed) Fourth Symphony (1934 – 36). These were difficult times for Shostakovich, who had been condemned for so-called 'formalism' (i.e. art without 'content') at the notorious Zhdanov conference, of 1948, and who was now dutifully creating film scores and patriotic cantatas while withholding those of his works which ran the risk of further condemnation from the Party. The four ballet suites, notable for their light, operetta-like characterisations, were no doubt produced as further indication of a more 'accessible' Shostakovich who had heeded the Party's advice.

But there was a hidden irony here. In making these arrangements from the three early Soviet ballets, composed between 1929 and 1935 (*The Age of Gold*, *The Bolt*, and *Bright*

Stream), Atovm'yan was actually drawing on music that had virtually disappeared from the repertoire since Shostakovich's first fall from grace, in 1936. (*Bright Stream* had, in fact, been singled out for criticism under the caption of 'Falsity in Ballet' in the wake of the condemnation in *Pravda* of *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, in January of that year.) Moreover, these ballets, exhibiting frequently satirical handling of popular music idioms, were known to have been greatly admired by an author, M.M. Zoshchenko, who was also in trouble with the authorities for his subversive sense of humour, shown in a novel entitled *The Adventures of a Monkey*. In the circumstances it is understandable that no mention of the sources is made in the published scores, that some of the original dance titles were actually changed, and that, for good measure, four tuneful numbers were thrown in from other, less contentious productions by Shostakovich (the incidental music written in 1933 – 34 to *The Human Comedy* [after Balzac] and the music which accompanied the impeccably patriotic treatment of an eminent Russian horticulturist in a film [1948] based on the life and work of I.V. Michurin [1855 – 1935]). There was even a piano suite made in 1951 with the nursery title of *Dance of the Dolls* that took six of its seven numbers from Suites Nos 1 and 3.

Listening out of their original dramatic context to these attractively scored pieces of light music, which make charming, witty play of conventions that would hardly seem out of place in Rossini, Johann Strauss, Delibes, Offenbach, or Tchaikovsky, we may well wonder how on earth Shostakovich came to acquire the reputation of an *enfant terrible* in those early, forgotten attempts at creating a new Soviet ballet. But, in fact, the relative majority of the selection comes from *Bright Stream* which represents, in its light-hearted lyricism, something of a retreat from the more biting satire to be encountered in the first two ballets – as a comparison with Shostakovich's own Suites from *The Age of Gold*, Op. 22a, and *The Bolt*, Op. 27a, will readily reveal. In any case, the narrowly drawn dividing line between parody and 'straight', the ambivalent mask-play between manner and expressive intent, had already become a characteristic of his idiom by the time that Shostakovich came to write an important set of Twenty-four Preludes for Piano, Op. 34, in 1933 – pieces which show that the various march, waltz, gavotte, polka, and galop stylisations for the ballets were now fully conscripted into the service of his musical imagery outside the theatre.

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Ballet Suite No. 4

After the rather sombre Introduction, the three-movement Ballet Suite No. 4, which dates from 1953, the same year as the Tenth Symphony, gives us a glimpse of another side of the multi-faceted character of Shostakovich. Referring to an earlier but similar work, he confessed,

I hoped simply to write good, entertaining music which would be pleasant or even amusing. It gives me pleasure to see my audience laugh, or even smile.

Particularly in the central 'Waltz', few listeners will fail to oblige.

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Festive Overture, Op. 96

The songful *Festive Overture* dates from 1954 and is socialist realism at its extrovert best. First performed on 6 November that year, it was written for the thirty-seventh anniversary of the October Revolution. Shostakovich said that he wanted to 'convey the feelings of a man who has experienced the hardship of the war years' and 'the enthusiasm of peaceful labour at the construction projects of the new five-year plan.

Tahiti Trot (Tea for Two), Op. 16

The musical *No, No, Nanette* by Vincent

Youmans (1898 – 1946) dates from 1923, and was a hit in London and New York in 1925. Possibly the best-known tune from the show is the foxtrot 'Tea for Two'. The story is told that in 1927, having heard a record of the foxtrot, the conductor Nikolai Malko bet Shostakovich that he could not write his own orchestration of the tune from memory in an hour. Shostakovich won in forty-five minutes!

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COMPACT DISC EIGHT

Lydia Mordkovitch was a favourite pupil of David Oistrakh, with whom she studied from 1968 to 1970 at the Moscow Conservatoire.

Violin Concerto No. 1 in A minor, Op. 77 (99)

Shostakovich completed his First Violin Concerto on 24 March 1948 and dedicated it to the great Russian violinist David Oistrakh, for whom he had written it. The first public performance, however, had to wait more than seven years before it could take place, at Leningrad, on 29 October 1955, with Oistrakh and the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra under Yevgeny Mravinsky. This was on account of the virtual ban on serious instrumental music that had come into force since the notorious Zhdanov Conference and

Party Decree, of 1948, after which nothing but the most explicitly patriotic music (preferably to appropriate texts or film scenarios) was considered acceptable. Stalin's death, in March 1953, made some sort of return to artistic freedom possible, but even then (as the debate on Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony, in 1954, revealed) emotionally complex music such as this concerto could find itself officially ignored. Indeed, Oistrakh himself seems – rather courageously – to have broken the evasive critical silence on this piece after its première by writing an enthusiastic article about it.

This is a truly symphonic concerto on the grand scale and the musico-dramatic plan looks forward to that of the Tenth Symphony. Its progressive four-movement scheme comprises a brooding and mysterious slow first movement in A minor set against a manic Scherzo in the sharply opposed key of B flat minor. Whereas the first movement is a lyrical improvisation the first theme of which (cellos and basses) recurs as a kind of *ritornello* (note also its ghostly reflection on the celeste) the Scherzo is a compact movement in sonata form, which opposes and develops two contrasting themes before achieving a compressed recapitulation and *Presto* coda. It also introduces an epigrammatic motif that is a near relative of DSCH – the notes D,

E flat, C, and B which Shostakovich would use as his musical monogram in the Tenth Symphony and Eighth String Quartet. The third movement (in F minor) is a reflective Passacaglia (one of the composer's favourite forms for the expression of noble feeling) out of which emerges a long solo cadenza the function of which is to lead into the active, positive finale. Returning to the home key of the Concerto, this establishes itself as a vigorous rondo in folk-dance style with more than a hint of the trepak about it. (Shades of the finale of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto!) Towards the end the Passacaglia theme returns on the horn and, taken up by the soloist, dominates an increasingly hectic and brilliant coda.

Violin Concerto No. 2 in C sharp minor, Op. 129

The Second Violin Concerto, completed in May 1967, was also dedicated to David Oistrakh. It was intended as a sixtieth birthday present for the great violinist but, owing to a miscalculation of the birthday date on the composer's part, the work was ready a year too soon. Consequently, it received its first performance with orchestra at Moscow when Oistrakh was only fifty-nine, on 26 October 1967.

The content and form could hardly present a sharper contrast with those of the First Violin Concerto. This is a work

from the beginning of what would prove for the composer his late style period, when his music was becoming even more spare in texture and enigmatic in character. As Shostakovich had suffered a heart attack the previous year, death was never far from his thoughts – in the string quartets, in the *Seven Romances on Poems of Alexander Blok*, to say nothing of the Fourteenth Symphony which lay only two years ahead. This Concerto has not a little in common with the Second Cello Concerto, composed for Rostropovich the previous year. As in that work, there are the same disconcerting shifts involving an almost despairing sadness of lyrical expression, child-like innocence, and a frenetic, grotesque sense of humour. Strangely suppressed motivic repetitions occur with disturbing frequency and (as in the later part of the slow movement) painful outbursts of solo recitative. Both works, too, feature the horn as a prominent solo instrument. This music comes near to speech, yet it gives nothing away. The first movement of the Sonata for Violin and Piano (written for David Oistrakh the following year) is recognisably in the same vein.

Formally speaking, the first movement (in C sharp minor – a somewhat unlikely choice of key for a violin concerto) is a sonata-like scheme in which a dark and slowly expanding

lyricism dissolves into a playful 'second subject' group which suggests quotation marks. The two main characters are developed extensively and reach a protesting climax that is defused by a short transitional cadenza for the solo violin. The main theme now returns peacefully on the solo horn accompanied by the strings and, in a shortened reprise, this nocturnal movement reaches an inconclusive and fragmented close with a resumption of the playful dialogue of the second subject group. The freer, more continuous 3/4 flow of the second movement (in the opposed key of G minor) is richly melodic, but offers little respite from its overcast – even anxious – mood at the end of this movement. The welcome shift of key to a calm D flat major (solo horn and strings) seems to promise relief. But this is withheld as the solo violin (*Adagio*) leads into the sharp, almost spiteful humour of the rondo finale, characterised by a mock-classical main theme, spikey sniggers on muted horn, walloping eruptions on the tomtom, and disrespectful treatment of material from the first movement. As we approach the coda, a long and brilliant cadenza for solo violin prepares the way for the final return of the main theme and its rather hollow assertion of the home key.

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The violinist **Lydia Mordkovitch** (1944 – 2014) took a wealth of musical experience from the former Soviet Union via Israel to Britain, which she made her home for the second half of her life. A strong, charismatic performer, she was a faithful interpreter of a composer's wishes and made more than sixty recordings for Chandos. Her native and adopted countries are strongly represented in a wide repertoire, shown particularly effectively in the four-part Tribute released in 2015.

Lydia Mordkovitch was born in Russia and studied at the Odessa Conservatory, then at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory, in Moscow, where she was master pupil of, and assistant to, David Oistrakh. She emigrated to Israel in 1974 and from 1980 lived in Britain, appearing regularly with the London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, The Hallé, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, and English Chamber Orchestra. She worked with such distinguished conductors as Sir Georg Solti, Riccardo Muti, Vassily Sinaisky, Neeme Järvi, Richard Hickox, Hugh Wolff, Jan Latham-Koenig, Vernon Handley, Gennady Rozhdestvensky, and Stanisław Skrowaczewski. An impressive discography reflects her comprehensive catalogue, and encompasses music from the complete works for solo violin by Bach to the concertos

Royal Scottish National Orchestra, with its current Music Director,
Thomas Søndergård, in Usher Hall

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of Shostakovich, her recording of which for Chandos won a *Gramophone* Award and a Diapason d'Or. In addition to her award nominations, *Gramophone* seven times made a disc of hers a Critics' Choice and her last recordings won major nominations and prizes across Europe.

Lydia Mordkovitch was several times named 'Woman of the Year' by the American Biographical Institute, and also 'Outstanding Woman of the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries'. She was a Professor and Honorary Member of the Royal Academy of Music, in London. As a founding artist for Chandos Records, she will be very much missed.

Formed in 1891, the **Royal Scottish National Orchestra** is one of Europe's leading symphony orchestras. It was awarded royal patronage by Her Late Majesty the Queen in 1977, its special status in the UK's cultural life cemented in 2007 when it was recognised as one of Scotland's five National Performing Companies, supported by the Scottish Government. Under its Music Director, Thomas Søndergård, the Orchestra performs across Scotland, giving concerts in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, Perth, and Inverness, among others, and appears regularly at the Edinburgh International Festival and BBC Proms. It tours internationally, most recently having visited

China and continental Europe. In May 2026, it appointed Giedrė Šlekytė as its Music Director Designate, who will formally assume the role of Music Director at the beginning of the 2027 / 28 season, when Thomas Søndergård will take on the new position of Music Director Emeritus.

The Orchestra has a worldwide reputation for the quality of its recordings, having received a 2020 *Gramophone* Award for its album of Chopin's Piano Concertos, conducted by Elim Chan with Benjamin Grosvenor as soloist, two Diapason d'Or (discs of works by Roussel, conducted by Stéphane Denève, 2007, and Debussy, also conducted by Stéphane Denève, 2012), and eight GRAMMY Award nominations. In recent years, it has cultivated an international reputation for world-class film, television, and videogame soundtrack recordings, having recorded for the BAFTA-winning series *Silo* (Apple TV) and worked with the GRAMMY Award-winning composer Lorne Balfe on *Life on Our Planet* (Netflix), among others. Notable titles also include *Nuremberg* (Sony Pictures), *Now You See Me: Now You Don't* (Lionsgate), *Horizon: An American Saga* (Warner Bros), and *Star Wars Outlaws* (Ubisoft). The Orchestra records at its bespoke in-house facility in Glasgow.

Convinced that music can enrich lives, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra aims

to inspire, educate, and entertain people throughout Scotland and beyond with its performances, recordings, and engagement programmes. Supporting schools, families, young professionals, and wider communities, it delivers high-quality initiatives for all ages and abilities. Its engagement offering includes a singing strand, which encompasses a Buggy Choir and Chorus Academy in both Dundee and Glasgow and a lunchtime Workplace Choir, complementing the well-established and highly respected RSNO Youth Choruses and RSNO Chorus. The community choruses are designed with the benefits of group singing for health and wellbeing at their core and are open to all.

The head of a musical dynasty, **Neeme Järvi** is one of today's most esteemed maestros. He conducts the world's most prominent orchestras and works alongside soloists of the highest calibre. Over his long and highly successful career he has held chief conductor positions across the world with orchestras such as the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra. He is currently Honorary Artistic Director for Life of the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra and Music Director Emeritus of both the Residentie Orchestra The Hague and Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

He also holds the titles of Chief Conductor Emeritus of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra and Conductor Laureate of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. He spent three summers between 2013 and 2016 as Head of Conducting and Artistic Advisor of the Gstaad Conducting Academy. Among recent and future appearances are engagements with European orchestras such as the Berliner Philharmoniker, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Orchestre national de France, and Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, as well as major orchestras in the USA and Asia. In November 2023 he conducted a highly successful tour of China, which was widely acclaimed.

A prolific recording artist, Neeme Järvi has amassed a discography of nearly 500 recordings. He has been a star recording artist with Chandos Records for over thirty years, his most recent releases, with orchestras such as the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Estonian National Symphony Orchestra, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, and Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, including discs of the three full-length ballets of Tchaikovsky and works by Joachim Raff, Kurt Atterberg, Saint-Saëns, and Martinů. Whilst highlights of his extensive discography for international record companies include critically acclaimed complete cycles of works

by many of the great composers, he has also championed less widely known composers such as Wilhelm Stenhammar, Hugo Alfvén, and Niels W. Gade, as well as composers from his native Estonia, including Rudolf Tobias and Arvo Pärt. In September 2018 he received the Lifetime Achievement Award of the magazine *Gramophone*.

Neeme Järvi has been honoured with many international prizes and accolades. Named

as one of the 'Estonians of the Century', he holds various awards from his native country, including an honorary doctorate from the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre in Tallinn, and honorary doctorates from Wayne State University, in Detroit, the universities of Michigan and Aberdeen, and the Royal Swedish Academy of Music. He has also been appointed Commander of the North Star Order by King Karl XVI Gustaf of Sweden.

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Acknowledgements

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Recording producer Brian Couzens

Sound engineer Ralph Couzens

Assistant engineers Bill Todd and Philip Couzens (CD 1), Ben Connellan (CD 2; CD 5), Janet Middlebrook (CD 3; CD 4; CD 6, Symphony No. 10; CD 7, Suites Nos 1 – 4), Philip Couzens (CD 6, Symphony No. 6; CD 7, *Festive Overture, Tahiti Trot*), and Richard Lee (CD 8)

Editors Brian Couzens (CD 1, Symphony No. 1), Ralph Couzens (CD 1, Symphony No. 6; CD 4), Tim Oldham (CD 2; CD 3; CD 6; CD 7), and Richard Lee (CD 5; CD 8)

Mastering Alexander James

A & R administrator Karen Marchlik

Recording venue Grand Hall, City Halls, Glasgow: August 1984 (Symphony No. 1), 22 April 1988 (Symphony No. 5), 22 and 23 April 1988 (Suite No. 1), 5 – 9 February 1989 (Symphony No. 4), 7 February 1989 (Symphony No. 8), & 16 and 17 October 1989 (Violin Concertos Nos 1 and 2); SNO Centre, Glasgow: May 1985 (Symphony No. 6); Henry Wood Hall, Glasgow: 14 – 17 April 1987 (Symphony No. 9, *Festive Overture, Tahiti Trot*), 14 May 1988 (Suite No. 5), and 24 – 26 April 1988 (Suites Nos 2 and 3); Caird Hall, Dundee: 22 and 23 February 1988 (Symphony No. 7) and 12 May 1988 (Symphony No. 10, Suite No. 4)

Front cover Photograph of Neeme Järvi © Tiit Veermäe

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Neeme Järvi, c. 1985

NEEME JÄRVI CONDUCTS SHOSTAKOVICH – Mordkovich / RSNO

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NEEME JÄRVI CONDUCTS DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906 – 1975)

COMPACT DISC ONE

1-4	SYMPHONY NO. 1, OP. 10 (1924 – 25)*	33:40
5-7	SYMPHONY NO. 6, OP. 54 (1939)*	30:12
		TT 64:01

COMPACT DISC TWO

1-3	SYMPHONY NO. 4, OP. 43 (1934 – 36)*	61:18
		TT 61:18

COMPACT DISC THREE

1-4	SYMPHONY NO. 5, OP. 47 (1937)*	46:47
5-12	BALLET SUITE NO. 5, OP. 27A (1931)*	29:17
		TT 76:12

COMPACT DISC FOUR

1-4	SYMPHONY NO. 7, OP. 60 'LENINGRAD' (1941)*	69:12
		TT 69:12

COMPACT DISC FIVE

1-5	SYMPHONY NO. 8, OP. 65 (1943)*	63:27
		TT 63:27

COMPACT DISC SIX

1-5	SYMPHONY NO. 9, OP. 70 (1945)*	25:12
6-9	SYMPHONY NO. 10, OP. 93 (1953)†	53:02
		TT 78:20

COMPACT DISC SEVEN

1-6	BALLET SUITE NO. 1 (1949)*	13:35
7-12	BALLET SUITE NO. 2 (1951)*	19:38
13-18	BALLET SUITE NO. 3 (1951)*	15:46
19-21	BALLET SUITE NO. 4 (1953)†	12:51
22	FESTIVE OVERTURE, OP. 96 (1954)*	5:53
23	TAHITI TROT, OP. 16 (1927)*	3:26
		TT 71:38

COMPACT DISC EIGHT

1-4	VIOLIN CONCERTO NO. 1, OP. 77 (99) (1947 – 48)*†	38:23
5-7	VIOLIN CONCERTO NO. 2, OP. 129 (1967)*‡	30:52
		TT 69:22

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ANDREW MARTIN leader†
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