NAXOS

SHOSTAKOVICH

Symphony No. 1

Symphony No. 3 ‘The First of May’



Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra

Vasily Petrenko

35 years after his death and the fifteen symphonies of Dmitry Shostakovich have moved to the centre of the repertoire: with those of Mahler, they represent 'modern' music to present-day concertgoers. Yet they differ from any comparable symphonic cycle since Beethoven in the absence of a logical progression as might parallel their career-spanning inclusiveness with an evolution from aspiration to fulfilment.

Of the symphonies, the *First* is a graduation work that accorded the teenage composer international prominence. The *Second* and *Third* represent a reckless accommodation between modernist means and revolutionary ends, while the *Fourth* stakes out the boundary between the individual and society that was to remain a focal point. The *Fifth* clarifies that boundary by paradoxically making it more equivocal; a process the *Sixth* continues by subverting the relationship still further. The *Seventh* is a reaction to civil conflict and social collapse that finds its equivalent in the *Eighth*, which in turn finds its opposite in the *Ninth*. The *Tenth* marks the genre's culmination as the outlet for an abstract programme. The *Eleventh* opens a period in which Russian concerns were foremost, its historical acuity diluted by the impersonality of the *Twelfth* then intensified by the explicitness of the *Thirteenth*. The *Fourteenth* stands outside the genre as regards its form but not its content, while the *Fifteenth* marks a belated re-engagement with abstract symphonism that might or might not have been continued.

The *First Symphony* was preceded by a sizeable amount of music. The composer destroyed almost all his juvenilia in 1927, but a few piano pieces have re-emerged, notably a *Funeral March in Memory of the Victims of the Revolution* (1917) and a fragmentary *Sonata* (1919). The surviving five of *Eight Preludes* for piano (1920) find him grappling with Debussy and Scriabin, while the *Scherzo* for orchestra (1921) adopts a more overly late-Romantic tone. Glazunov is evident in the *Theme and Variations* for orchestra and also pervades the *Three Fantastic Dances* for piano (both 1922) [Naxos 8.555781], whose idiomatic writing is a reminder Shostakovich was a pianist of some distinction. None of these adolescent works, however, whether the Rimskyian *Two Fables of Krïlov*, the Rachmaninov-like *Suite* for two pianos (both 1922), the Brahmsian *First Piano Trio* (1923) [Naxos 8.553297] or the Prokofiev-like *Scherzo* for orchestra (1924), prepares one for the individuality and maturity of what followed.

Shostakovich began his *First Symphony* in October 1924 (initial ideas may date from a year earlier) as a composition exercise while at the Leningrad Conservatoire, completing the first two movements by December. The third movement was finished by mid-January, but the finale proved troublesome. A concert in Moscow featuring several of his works received only a lukewarm reception, but it brought him into contact with the music theorist Boleslav Yavorsky and Civil War hero Mikhaíl Tukhashevsky, who became prominent supporters. Returning to Leningrad, he completed the fourth movement at the end of April. A two-piano transcription was given on 6th May and well received, while the orchestration was finished during the period June 30th-July 1st. Despite the doubts of his teacher Maximilian Steinberg, Shostakovich strove to secure a hearing, gaining the support of the musicologist Boris Asafyev and, most crucially, the conductor Nikolay Malko, who agreed to take on the first performance.

The première took place in Leningrad with the Philharmonic Orchestra on 12th May 1926, a resounding success whose date Shostakovich was to mark for the rest of his life. Bruno Walter gave the West European première in Berlin on 6th February 1928 and Leopold Stokowski the United States première in Philadephia on 2nd November, with Hamilton Harty giving the British première in Manchester three years later. Stokowski made the first recording, with the Philadelphia Orchestra, in November 1933, followed by

Artur Rodzinski with the Cleveland Orchestra in April 1941 and Arturo Toscanini with the NBC Symphony in March 1944. 1951 saw the earliest Soviet recordings, by Constantin Silvestri with the All-Union Radio Symphony, and Kirill Kondrashin with the Bolshoy Orchestra.

The *First Symphony* is scored for woodwind in pairs (but three flutes – with one doubling piccolo), four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (three players), piano and strings. Although its four movements outline the standard classical trajectory (with the scherzo placed second), the opening movement is a highly innovative take on sonata-form, while the expressive divide between the first two movements and the slow movement is such that the finale has to open-out its emotional range still further to ensure a convincing resolution.

The first movement is the most original in conception. It begins with a laconic idea on solo trumpet, commented on by woodwind and passed to clarinet then strings as it reaches a brief climax. A step-wise ascending idea on strings acts as transition to the first theme, a sardonic one for clarinet which is taken up by strings then woodwind in another brief climax. The second theme is a balletic one for flute over pizzicato strings, elaborated in bewitching orchestration. The development initially alights on the ascending idea, heard as an accompanied 'cadenza' for violin, then strings take up the clarinet theme and a violent climax ensues. The flute theme is reprised, again with evocative orchestration, before the clarinet theme provokes another violent climax. The latter fades out, leaving a paraphrase of the introduction to conclude matters.

The second movement is a scherzo of wide contrast. Competing cellos and basses set in motion an angular theme that moves between woodwind and strings, then piano, before a percussive outburst makes way for the trio, a liturgical-sounding chant intoned by flutes then clarinets. The initial idea on lower strings quietly appears (at a slower tempo) then oboes, flutes and clarinets continue pensively with the chant. The angular theme emerges at the same pace, suddenly accelerating in a return to the scherzo music. This time the chant is shouted out by brass over skirling strings, only to be cut off at its apex. Three stark piano chords, and the initial idea returns on lower strings (and at a slower tempo) to see the movement through to its plaintive close on upper woodwind and strings, rounded off by a final percussive gesture.

The third movement opens with an eloquent melody heard initially on oboe, continued by cello then strings as an expansive climax is reached. A six-note 'motto' becomes prominent, paving the way for a central section centred on a sombre theme for lower strings, with a regretful oboe aside. A funereal climax pits anguished strings against baleful brass, then a further inward transition sees the return of the main theme on violin, now with its second half taken up by full strings with the motto again in attendance. A rapt coda initially recalls the oboe's regretful aside on trumpets, now extended downwards so that it runs into an elegiac recall of the main theme's initial phrase on cellos then woodwind, the motto distant on upper strings as the music dies away.

Without pause, a side-drum crescendo leads into the finale. Woodwind then lower strings unfold a brooding introduction before the movement lurches into greater activity with a scurrying theme on clarinet then piano as a powerful climax ensues. Strings declaim a passionate theme that is soon recast as a warmly expressive melody in the violin's lower register, complemented by a soulful theme on horns against airborne trumpets and glittering piano. Plangent strings recall the introduction, then the scurrying theme returns on the way to a massive climax. This is brutally cut short, timpani thrice sounding the six-note motto, then the expressive melody returns resignedly on cello. It builds gradually to an expansive restatement of the introduction, the music all the while gaining pace and ardour, before launching into the decisive final bars.

The two years between the *Second* and *Third Symphonies* saw a number of pieces, from the transcription of two Scarlatti sonatas for wind ensemble and *Tahiti Trot* (both 1927, the latter [Naxos 8.555949]

an orchestration of Vincent Youmans' *Tea for Two*), via incidental music for Vladimir Mayakovsky's *The Bedbug* (1929), to *The Nose* (1928), Shostakovich's first opera and his most radical yet impressive work of this period; also a score for Grigoriy Kozintsev's and Leonid Trauberg's film *New Babylon* (1929), marking the start of a long-term collaboration.

Shostakovich wrote his *Third Symphony 'The First of May'* during the summer of 1929, much of it while on a six-week cruise along the Black Sea coast. Like its predecessor this is a one-movement work with a choral 'finale' (the text belatedly provided by Semyon Kirsanov), both being instalments of an intended symphonic cycle inspired by dates on the revolutionary calendar that was then abandoned. Following the 'struggle' inherent in the earlier symphony, this one focuses on what the composer referred to as "the festive spirit of peaceful construction" and is accordingly less complex in idiom but not in technical demands. Boris Asafyev wrote of its having been fashioned from the fervour of the revolutionary spirit.

The piece was well received at its première in Moscow, Alexander Gauk conducting the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra and the Academic Cappella, on 21st January 1930, the Leningrad première following on 6th November 1931. Leopold Stokowski gave the American première in Philadelphia on 30th December 1932, while Frederick Stock introduced it to Chicago on 19th January 1933 (on both occasions with the choral writing omitted). The work then fell into oblivion and was not revived until 1964. That performance, by the Leningrad Philharmonic with Igor Blazhkov, became the first recording, followed by Morton Gould with the Royal Philharmonic in 1968, Kirill Kondrashin with the Moscow Philharmonic in 1972 and Václav Smetáček with the Czech Radio Symphony in 1974.

The *Third Symphony* is scored for SATB chorus, woodwind in pairs (one piccolo), four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (four players) and strings. Although its single movement plays continuously, a four-movement trajectory is easily discernible. Shostakovich spoke around the time of its completion of his desire to create a symphony where no single theme was repeated – and succeeded to the extent that, despite its abundance of melodic ideas, there is no exact or literal repetition of any theme during the course of the work.

It opens with a ruminative dialogue for clarinets over pizzicato strings, the introduction to a 'first movement' moving rapidly from a stealthy trumpet, via circling woodwind and impetuous strings, to breathless exchanges between instrumental groups that alternate with strident passages for full orchestra. The second of these brings a climactic pause, after which the music continues with unabated energy, slowing latterly for a noble theme on strings borne by striding woodwind. The activity continues with exchanges centred on a repeated-note idea which is taken up by brass and hurtles to an aggressive climax that collides with a march-past for brass and side drum. This alternates with perky woodwind passages as the music loses its impetus, fading away in lower strings to leave sparse chords from timpani and double basses.

Above them, violins in their highest register initiate a 'slow movement' that, following a stark outburst from brass and percussion, unfolds as a speculative dialogue between upper and lower strings, offset at first by ironic brass comments then by folk-like woodwind exchanges, before gaining in expressive warmth and assuming a Mahlerian aura for probably the first time in Shostakovich's output. When he resumed this manner of writing (in his *Fourth Symphony*), it was within a very different musical context and from a much-changed cultural perspective.

Such expressiveness proves unable to take hold, and a running pattern in the strings marks the onset of a 'scherzo' that gains in momentum before climaxing in a syncopated idea which makes its way across the orchestra in all guises of instrumentation. The music grows theatrical in its immediacy, switching ceaselessly between motifs and taking in a full-blooded theme on strings, before the syncopated idea reaches a resplendent apotheosis. This is cancelled-out by a side-drum tattoo, over which unison strings and brass unfurl stern

declamations marked by bass-drum strokes. At length these strokes lead towards silence, the tattoo fading to a dejected response from lower strings and tuba.

What follows is an extended introduction to the 'finale' (and most likely modelled on the Intervention of the Prince music from the 'Introduction' to Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette*). Upwards string glissandi alternate with fanfares on trombones and trumpets, the latter taking precedence as the music gains impetus and climaxes on a unison chord for full brass.

Although the choral peroration has no overt connection with what has gone before, it provides an appropriate ending. Kirsanov's verse, firmly in the lineage of 'revolutionary' poems, is set so that the unison chorus alternates with passages for male then female voices. There is little space for any emotional progression: rather the music surges forward to a climactic statement of intent: after which, trumpets and strings sound a defiant recessional on their way to the final, triumphantly conclusive cadence.

Richard Whitehouse

Simfoniya 3 'Pervoye Maya'

Text by Semyon Kirsanov (1906-1972)

10 V pervoye, pervoye Maya,
Broshen v bïloye blesk,
Iskrï v ogon' razdavaya,
Plamya pokrïlo lesa.

Ukhom ponikshikh yolok
Vslushivalis' lesa
V yunïkh eshchyo mayovok
Shorokhi, golosa.

Nashe Pervoye Maya,
V posviste pul' gorya,
Shtïk i nagan szhimaya,
Bralo dvorets tsarya.

Pavshiy dvorets tsarya—
Eto yeshcho zarya Maya,
Vperoyd idushchego,
Svetom znamoyn gorya.

Pervoye Maya nashe—
V budushcheye parusa—
Vzvilo nad morem pashen'
Gulkiye korpusa.

Symphony No. 3 'The First of May'

English translation by Anastasia Belina

10 On the first day of May
The past was lit up with a flame,
Sparks grew into a fire,
And the fire enveloped the forests.

The forests were listening
Through the ears of pine trees
To the noises and voices
Of young May parades.

Our First of May,
Burning in the hail of bullets,
Grasping the gun and bayonet,
Stormed the Tsar's palace.

Fallen palace of the Tsar—
It is only the dawn of May,
Which marches forward
In the light of its banners.

Our First of May—
The sails of our future—
Unfurled over the fields
Its resonant hulls.

Novïye korpusa—novaya polosa Maya,
Ognyami b'yushchego budushchemu v glaza,
Fabriki i kolonii,
Mayskiy vzmetnoym parad.

Zemlyu sozhmoym kolenkami—
Nasha prishla pora.
Slushayte, proletarii, nashikh zavodov rech',
Vam podzhigaya staroye, novuyu yav' zazhech'.

Solntse znamyon podnimaya,
Marsh, zagremi v ushakh.
Kazhdoye pervoye Maya
K sotsializmu shag.

Pervoye Maya—shag
Szhavshikh vintovku shakht.
V ploshchadi, revolyutsiya,
Vbey milionnïm shag.

New corps—new ranks of May,
Challenging the future with fire.
Fabrics and colonies,
Let us organise a May parade.

We will hold the Earth between our knees—
Our time has come.
Listen, proletariat, to the speeches of our factories,
By burning down the old, you will kindle a new reality.

The sun of the banners is rising,
And a march will ring in our ears.
Every First of May
Will be another step to Socialism.

First of May—a step of the miners,
Tightly holding their rifles.
To the town squares, revolution,
March with steps of millions!

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Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra



The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra is Britain's oldest surviving professional symphony orchestra, dating from 1840. Vasily Petrenko was appointed Principal Conductor of the orchestra in September 2006 and in September 2009 became Chief Conductor until 2015. The orchestra gives over sixty concerts each season in Liverpool Philharmonic Hall and in recent seasons world première performances have included major works by Sir John Tavener, Karl Jenkins, Michael Nyman and Jennifer Higdon, alongside works by Liverpool-born composers John McCabe, Emily Howard, Mark Simpson and Kenneth Hesketh. The orchestra also tours widely throughout the United Kingdom and has given concerts in the United States, the Far East and throughout Europe. In 2009 the orchestra won the Ensemble of the Year award in the 20th Royal Philharmonic Society Music Awards, the most prestigious accolade for live classical music-making in the United Kingdom. Recent additions to the orchestra's extensive discography include Tchaikovsky's *Manfred Symphony* [Naxos 8.570568] (2009 Classic FM/Gramophone Orchestral Recording of the Year), Sir John Tavener's *Requiem*, Volumes 1–4 of the Shostakovich symphony cycle and Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances* and *Piano Concertos Nos. 2 and 3*. For more information, please visit www.liverpoolphil.com

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir

Chorus Master: Ian Tracey

The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir has always been central to the life of the Liverpool Philharmonic. Its members are drawn from all walks of life and travel from all parts of the Liverpool City Region, and beyond, to take part in the choir's activities. The choir's repertoire covers all periods and styles from Bach to newly commissioned works, with full symphony orchestra and unaccompanied, and it also plays a leading rôle in the famous Liverpool Philharmonic Carol Concerts. The choir has performed in many of the major British concert venues, has sung with the St Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra, the National Orchestra of Wales and the BBC Philharmonic, and has undertaken several foreign tours, both independently and with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. Ian Tracey has been Chorus Master since 1985 and has travelled with the choir both in Britain and abroad. Further information about the Choir at www.liverpoolphil.com.

Vasily Petrenko


Photo: Mark McNulty

Born in 1976 in St Petersburg, Vasily Petrenko was appointed Principal Conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra in 2006 and in 2009 became Chief Conductor until 2015. He was appointed Principal Conductor of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain in the same year. He was the Classical BRIT Awards Male Artist of the Year 2010 and the Classic FM/Gramophone Young Artist of the Year 2007. In 2009 he was awarded Honorary Doctorates by the University of Liverpool and Liverpool Hope University. In the 2009/10 season he made his débuts with the Philharmonia, London Philharmonic, Russian National Orchestra, Orchestre National de France, Finnish Radio Symphony, NHK Symphony Tokyo and Accademia di Santa Cecilia, in addition to scheduled appearances with the Philadelphia and Minnesota Orchestras, National Symphony Orchestra Washington, and the Boston Symphony, Sydney Symphony, Oslo Philharmonic and São Paolo Symphony Orchestras. His wide operatic repertoire includes *Macbeth* (Glyndebourne Festival Opera) Le Villi, *I due Foscari* and *Boris Godounov* (Netherlands Reisopera), *Pique Dame* (Hamburg State Opera) and *Eugene Onegin* (Opéra de Paris, Bastille). He has toured with the European Union Youth Orchestra and returned to the BBC Proms for a second time with Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra in 2010. Recordings with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra include Tchaikovsky's *Manfred Symphony* (2009 Classic FM/Gramophone Orchestral Recording of the Year), the first discs of an ongoing Shostakovich cycle, and Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances* and *Piano Concertos Nos. 2 and 3*.

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SHOSTAKOVICH: Symphonies Nos. 1 and 3

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Shostakovich's *First Symphony* propelled the teenage composer to international prominence, its emotional range and innovative orchestration marking him as a daring and precocious talent on the scene. The *Third Symphony*, '*The First of May*', originally intended as part of a symphonic cycle inspired by dates on the revolutionary calendar, has been described as 'a reckless and at times chaotic accommodation between modernist intent and revolutionary fervour'. 'Thrilling, perfect, essential… the modern reference recording'. (*Classicstoday.com* on Naxos 8.572461 / *Symphony No. 10*)

ROYAL LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Dmitry SHOSTAKOVICH

(1906-1975)

Symphony No. 1 in F minor, Op. 10		**33:23**
1	**I. Allegretto – Allegro non troppo**	**8:21**
2	**II. Allegro**	**5:36**
3	**III. Lento – Largo –**	**9:24**
4	**IV. Lento – Allegro molto – Adagio – Largo – Presto**	**10:02**
Symphony No. 3 in E flat major 'The First of May', Op. 20		**31:10**
5	**Allegretto –**	**2:25**
6	**Più mosso –**	**8:52**
7	**Andante –**	**6:05**
8	**Allegro –**	**6:14**
9	**Andante –**	**3:09**
10	**Moderato 'V pervoy, pervoye maya' ***	**4:24**

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir* and Orchestra
Vasily Petrenko

Recorded at the Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool, England, on 28th and 29th July, 2009 (tracks 1-4), and on 22nd and 23rd June, 2010 (tracks 5-10) • Producer: Andrew Walton (K&A Productions Ltd.)
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64:33

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