NAXOS

SHOSTAKOVICH

Symphony No. 10



Royal Liverpool
Philharmonic Orchestra

Vasily Petrenko

Dmitry Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Symphony No. 10 in E minor, Op. 93

A third of a century after his death and the symphonies of Dmitry Shostakovich have moved from the relative to the absolute centre of the repertoire: along with the symphonies of Mahler, they can be said to represent 'modern' music as it appears to the non-specialist concert-goer. Yet they differ from any comparable symphonic cycle since Beethoven in the absence (intended or otherwise) of a logical progression such as might have endowed their career-spanning inclusiveness with a parallel evolution from aspiration to fulfillment.

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, which 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 where Russian concerns were foremost, its historical acuity diluted by the seeming impersonality of the *Twelfth,* then intensified by the explicitness of the *Thirteenth*. The *Fourteenth* stands outside the genre as regards form but not content, while the *Fifteenth* marks a belated re-engagement with abstract symphonism such as might or might not have been continued.

The eight years separating the *Ninth* and *Tenth Symphonies* is the longest hiatus between any two of the composer's works for the genre, though the *Third String Quartet* (1946) [Naxos 8.550974] and the *First Violin Concerto* (1948) [8.550814] are both symphonic in their formal design and expressive scope. The censure meted out to Shostakovich in the 'Zhdanov decree' of February 1948 – not least for the apparent tardiness of his cantata *Poem of the Motherland* (1947) in commemorating the Bolshevik Revolution – effectively divided his output between 'official' works intended for immediate consumption and 'private' works written with no prospect of public performance or publication. To the first category belong several film-scores, along with the oratorio *The Song of the Forests* (1949) and the cantata *The Sun shines over our Motherland* (1952), *Two Lermontov Romances* (1950), *Four Dolmatovsky Songs* (1951), the choral *Ten Poems on Revolutionary Poets* (1951) and four *Ballet Suites* (1949-53) arranged from film and theatre scores by his amanuensis Lev Atovmyan [8.557208]. To the second category belong the song-cycle *From Jewish Folk Poetry* (1948), *24 Preludes and Fugues* for piano (1951 [8.554745-46]), *Four Pushkin Monologues* (1952) and the *Fourth* and *Fifth String Quartets* (1949 [8.550972] and 1952 [8.550974]); the latter work's formal dimensions and emotional weight suggesting an imminent return to symphonic composition.

Shostakovich may have conceived a *Tenth Symphony* around 1946/47, while pianist Tatyana Nikolayeva recalled hearing him play the opening of the first movement in 1951. It was not until June 1953, however, that he worked on the symphony in earnest, completing the first movement on 5th August and the second movement on the 27th. The third movement emerged in September and the fourth movement was finished on 25th October, Shostakovich travelling to Leningrad with his protégé Mieczysław Weinberg to 'try out' the new work in an arrangement for piano duet. Yevgeny Mravinsky conducted the public première in Leningrad, with the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra, on 17th December; the Moscow première, with Mravinsky conducting the USSR State Symphony, followed on 29th December.

Although these performances met with an enthusiastic reception, critical and 'official' reaction was more circumspect, reflecting the difficulty in

assessing so wide-ranging a work only months after the death of Stalin. Not for the first time, the absence of a concrete programme and its overall musical complexity made it hard to place the symphony within a Socialist Realist context and so presented problems for the 'ordinary' listener. A heated debate at the Union of Composers during March and April 1954 largely vindicated the piece, but it was considered too individual to be an acceptable blueprint for future symphonic development and denied a Stalin Prize. Officials were still questioning its worth three year later, though by then the symphony had had premières in the United States and Britain – by Dimitri Mitropoulos with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra in New York on 14th October 1954 and by Adrian Boult with the London Philharmonic in London on 10th April 1955. Mravinsky made the first recording with the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra in April 1954, followed by Franz Konwitschny with the Leipzig Gewandhaus in June and Mitropoulos with the New York Philharmonic in October. Efrem Kurtz then recorded it with the Philharmonia Orchestra in March 1955, as did Karel Ancerl with the Czech Philharmonic in October.

The *Tenth Symphony* is scored for woodwind in threes, four horns, three each of trumpets and trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (three players) and strings. The first movement brings to a peak Shostakovich's personal recasting of sonata-form, while the second is a scherzo that stands in total contrast, and the third is more of an intermezzo than a slow movement, the finale moving between relative stasis and dynamism to end the work with a determinedly 'Classical' energy. Once viewed as the climax of an autobiographical sequence that had commenced with the *Fifth Symphony*, the *Tenth* exhibits much less of Mahler's influence than do its predecessors – Tchaikovsky, in particular, often to the fore such as to link it with the 'Russian period' that included Shostakovich's next three symphonies.

The first movement, *Moderato*, opens with a long-breathed theme on lower strings whose initial three notes are germinal to the whole work: each of the following movements begins with a variant of it. Upper strings respond with impassive gestures before solo clarinet has a ruminative version of this first subject, activity in the strings gradually increasing to a climax where the theme is stated forcefully on strings and brass. This dies down to leave gaunt brass figures, clarinet continuing its rumination against lower strings, a transition, in fact, to the second subject – given initially to flute and pizzicato violins then taking on a waltz-like manner when transferred to the strings. The clarinet briefly takes up the theme, which reaches its brief culmination on strings and woodwind. This evens out rhythmically as it subsides, making way for the opening theme in austere dialogue between woodwind and marking the onset of the development. This takes in horns and strings as it builds to the main climax, trumpets and trombones balefully intoning the theme as it assumes increasing animation in strings and woodwind. Confrontational brass and strings are goaded on by martial percussion, bringing about the start of the reprise at a point of maximum intensity (as at the equivalent points of the *Fifth*, *Seventh* and *Eighth Symphonies*). Descending horns and ascending strings alternate with brass in a vastly expanded version of the first theme, strings carrying the momentum through to its defiant restatement on full orchestra, before tension subsides into a pensive recall of the theme on clarinets. This duly segues into the second subject, haltingly on clarinets before transferring to strings and woodwind. A gaunt transition on lower strings brings back the first theme, and a coda in which the opening is evocatively evoked. This climbs higher in the strings to leave flutes and piccolo plangent above strings and timpani as the movement reaches a subdued close.

The second movement, *Allegro*, is a tensile scherzo whose hectic activity for strings is seized upon by woodwind then brass as an aggressive climax is reached. This hurtles into a seething fugato for upper strings against woodwind and brass over impulsive lower strings, side-drums heralding an implacable climax where the main motifs are hurled across the orchestra. This dies down into quietly pulsating activity

on strings, surging forth again on woodwind and ending with explosive brass chords. Whether or not a 'portrait' of Stalin, it is certainly among the most graphic musical evocations of violence.

The third movement, *Allegretto*, is among the most distinctive in Shostakovich's output. It opens with a capricious theme on upper strings, complemented by an insouciant idea on woodwind. This latter features the four-note motif D-E flat-C-B which, in German nomenclature, becomes D-S-C-H – yielding the composer's initial and first three letters of his surname. This monogram had appeared in several post-war works, but it only here enjoys the prominence it retained in his later music. It dies down on flutes as strings return to the first theme, further build-ups being curtailed by the appearance of a five-note motif E-A-E-D-A on horn. This is a musical translation of the first name of Elmira Nazirova, a pianist from Baku who had studied with Shostakovich in the late 1940s and with whom he had an intense correspondence during the symphony's composition. Her 'motto' is heard twelve times during this movement: in the middle section, it alternates first with a transformed recall of the work's opening then a breathtaking switch from minor to major which is topped off by artless woodwind arabesques. It is then heard against pizzicato strings in a transition to the opening theme on woodwind. Suddenly the music bursts into life as the insouciant idea returns on violins against syncopated trumpets and percussion, building to a climax where the D-S-C-H motif on strings is angrily confronted by brass and percussion; the E-A-E-D-A motif vividly interposes itself on horns, the composer's motif subsiding as tension eases off into a coda where the 'Elmira' motif alternates with the initial theme on violin. A final horn call ends the movement with an unresolved string chord, against which flutes sound D-S-C-H into nothingness.

The fourth movement, *Andante-Allegro*, begins with a slow section that twice alternates sombre lower strings with plaintive soliloquies for oboe and bassoon. Clarinet then flute trade a questioning three-note motif that, after more intensely undulating passages for the strings, is extended into a seven-note motif. This becomes a playful theme for the strings then woodwind as the fast section is finally launched, taking in a robust folk-like idea before arriving at an increasingly forceful interplay on strings and woodwind of ideas heard in the movement so far. A further, more determined build-up sees the opening theme enter the conflict as the music reaches a forceful climax in which the D-S-C-H motif is shouted out by the whole orchestra. Aspects of the slow section now return, mingling with recalls of D-S-C-H before the playful theme is brought back on woodwind. The tempo again increases, as this theme is inter-cut with D-S-C-H in a climax of mounting excitement: despite the major-key close, the final bars are a masterly equivocation between triumph and defeat – the composer's motif defiant on timpani to the last.

Richard Whitehouse

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra


Photo: Jon Barraclough

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. 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), the world première performance of Sir John Tavener's *Requiem*, the first discs of an ongoing Shostakovich cycle and Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances* and *Piano Concertos Nos. 2 and 3*.

www.liverpoolphil.com

Vasily Petrenko


Photo: Mark McNulty

Born and educated in St Petersburg, Vasily Petrenko was Resident Conductor at the St Petersburg State Opera and Ballet Theatre (1994-97) and Chief Conductor of the State Academy Orchestra of St Petersburg (2004-07). He is currently Chief Conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, and Principal Conductor of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain. Engagements include appearances with the London Symphony Orchestra, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Dallas and Baltimore Symphony Orchestras, European Union Youth Orchestra, Philharmonia, London Philharmonic, Russian National Orchestra, Orchestre National de France, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, NHK Symphony Tokyo, Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Sydney Symphony, Toronto Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra and National Symphony Orchestra Washington. In 2010 he made his début at Glyndebourne Festival Opera (*Macbeth*). Recordings with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra include a rare double bill of Fleishman's *Rothschild's Violin* and Shostakovich's *The Gamblers*, Tchaikovsky's *Manfred Symphony* [Naxos 8.570568] (winner of the 2009 Gramophone Award for Best Orchestral Recording), Liszt [Naxos 8.570517] and Rachmaninov *Piano Concertos*, and the first discs in a Shostakovich symphony cycle. In October 2007 Vasily Petrenko was named Young Artist of the Year at the annual Gramophone Awards.

Dmitry

SHOSTAKOVICH

(1906-1975)

Playing Time:
52:11

Shostakovich's monumental *Symphony No. 10* ranks among his finest works. From the bleak introspection of the extended opening movement, through the graphic evocation of violence in the explosive Allegro, and the eerie dance-like Allegretto alternating between dark and light, to the final movement's dramatic climax, this is a work of breathtaking musical contrasts. In 2010 Vasily Petrenko was named Male Artist of the Year at the Classical Brit Awards. His Naxos recording of Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 8* (8.572392), was hailed as 'yet another Petrenko performance to join the greats' *(BBC Music Magazine).*

Symphony No. 10 in E minor, Op. 93 (1953)	**52:11**
1 I. Moderato	22:48
2 II. Allegro	4:09
3 III. Allegretto	12:15
4 IV. Andante – Allegro	12:59

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra
Vasily Petrenko

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