

RE-EXAMINING THE WARHORSE: SHOSTAKOVICH'S LENINGRAD SYMPHONY

by

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(Under the Direction of David Haas)

ABSTRACT

Shostakovich's Symphony No. 7 ("Leningrad") has a unique history in its topicality and reception. It received rave reviews in the Soviet Union, but once the score reached Western shores, music critics were skeptical from the outset. Their discussions concerned a wide variety of aesthetic, social, and political implications, but comment on the music was negligible. Not only was there a lack of depth to their musical arguments, but also a disregard of movements Two, Three, and Four.

My thesis will provide a survey of the symphony's reception outside of the Soviet Union, with antithetical Russian opinions included intermittently as a point of contrast. A detailed examination of the issues espoused by critics in America as well as the absence of musical considerations in their discourse provides a framework for my own investigation into the music of Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony, wherein a deeper insight into its construction and the processes of opposition and distortion will be provided.

INDEX WORDS: Shostakovich, Seventh Symphony, reception, opposition, distortion

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony received rave reviews when it was premiered throughout the Soviet Union in 1942. Inherent in the work was a program which spoke to the citizens who were suffering deeply from the Nazi invasion during World War II. The Nazi siege of Leningrad—which lasted from September of 1941 to February of 1943—would claim the lives of nearly 1/3 of the population.¹ Even after the blockade ended, the Germans were entrenched only two miles from Kirov.² Famine was rampant, as food rations had been reduced to less than 500 calories a day.³ These grim events were the inspiration of the Seventh (“Leningrad”) Symphony. Shostakovich himself wrote, “I couldn’t not write it. War was all around. I had to be together with the people, I wanted to create the image of our embattled country, to engrave it in music.”⁴

Once the Seventh Symphony reached Western shores, music critics were skeptical from the outset. They questioned not only its musical value, but also its program and excessive publicity—it was not only programmatic music, but propaganda. As polemics continued in major newspapers and journals throughout the United States and Great Britain, debates concerning artistic construction, aesthetic substance, as well as social and political worth became more pronounced. While each commentator had their own unique style and way of discrediting the symphony, most of the reviews had some characteristics in common: lack of depth to their

¹ Boris Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia: 1917-1981*, enl. ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 1983), 177.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Shostakovich, Dmitri, “Kak rozhdayetsya muzika,” *Literaturnaya gazeta* (21 December 1965): 3, quoted in Laurel E. Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 125

musical arguments, a seeming disregard of the final three movements, and a general sense of reproach toward the symphony and its composer.

In the following discussions, I will present issues in the reception of Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony, particularly those surrounding the premieres in 1942 in both the East and West, in addition to more contemporary sources. By providing a nuanced reading and detailed examination of the various opinions espoused by critics, a foundation will be set for an investigation into the music itself—an element which is deficient in most reviews. Specifically, my argument will concern unifying devices and processes which recur throughout the symphony, as well as the combination of traditional and innovative techniques, all of which work together in reconciling the symphony's program with the symphonic conception, and are supported by examples in the score. With this, I hope not only to add to current scholarship concerning Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony, but to also open the door to further examinations of the music, which to this day, remain insufficient.

Due to the extraordinary circumstances surrounding its conception, I will begin by discussing the history of the symphony's composition and performances. It will provide the reader with a background in the exceptional publicity and enthusiasm which surrounded the premieres in Russia and abroad. Furthermore, it will provide a context for the following chapter, which examines the issues in reception.

Composition and Performance History

Shostakovich began composing the Symphony on July 19th, 1941, completing the first movement draft on August 29th during the Nazi blockade of Leningrad and a score copy on September 3rd.⁵ In early August, he invited his friend Isaak Glikman to his home in Leningrad to hear the exposition and “invasion” theme of his new Seventh Symphony. Glikman reported, “We sat,

⁵ Ibid.

plunged in silence, broken at last by Shostakovich with these words (I have them written down): ‘I don’t know what the fate of this piece will be....I suppose that critics with nothing better to do will damn me for copying Ravel’s *Bolero*. Well, let them. That is how I hear war.’”⁶

On September 17th, 1941 Shostakovich announced to listeners of the Leningrad Radio:

An hour ago I finished the score of two movements of a large Symphonic composition. If I succeed in carrying it off, if I manage to complete the third and fourth movements, then perhaps I’ll be able to call it my Seventh Symphony. Why am I telling you this? So that the radio listeners who are listening to me now will know that life in our city is proceeding normally.⁷

The following evening, musicians gathered at his home, where he played the first and second movement of his Seventh Symphony on the piano. Dmitri Sollertinsky recalls the impact the symphony had on listeners: “The impression was overwhelming. When the music ended they all sat in silence for a long while. Words seemed out of place, impotent. Suddenly, an air raid warning sounded. They should have gone to the shelter, but no one moved: they wished to hear the piece again.”⁸ After taking his wife and children to the shelter, Shostakovich returned to perform the piece again. A similar account was given by Bogdanov-Berezovsky who wrote,

Tonight we went to Shostakovich. Twice he played for us two movements of his new symphony [the Seventh]. He told us of the over-all plan. The impression we all had was tremendous. Miraculous is the process of synchronization, of instantaneous creative reaction to the surrounding experiences, clad in a complex and large form with no hint of “belittling of the genre”...while he played there was an air raid. The composer suggested that we continue the music; only his family went to the shelter.⁹

The third movement was completed on September 29th, two days before Shostakovich and his family were ordered to be evacuated to Moscow.¹⁰ The fourth movement, however,

⁶ Dmitri Shostakovich, *Story of a Friendship: The Letters of Dmitry Shostakovich to Isaak Glikman, 1941-1975*, with a commentary by Isaak Glikman, transl. Anthony Phillips (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), xxxiv.

⁷ “Iz vystupleniya po radio. Leningrad. 16 sentyabrya 1941,” *Govorit Dmitriy Shostakovich*, Melodiya 33m 40-41705-12, quoted in Fay, 125. She notes the date given on the album is incorrect.

⁸ Dmitri and Ludmilla Sollertinsky, transl. Graham Hobbs and Charles Midgley, *Pages from the Life of Dmitri Shostakovich* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), 103.

⁹ Schwarz, 177.

¹⁰ Fay, 125.

proved to be difficult for Shostakovich. In a letter to Glikman on November 30th, he admits to not having begun the fourth movement, stating there were many reasons for its delay, the chief one being complete exhaustion from concentrating on the first three movements.¹¹

Shostakovich managed to complete the final movement on December 27th in Kuibyshev.¹² It was quickly nominated for a Stalin Prize. However, the composer reported that, although those who had already heard the Seventh Symphony found the “first three movements very good,” there was debate over the optimism of the finale:

So far I have shown the fourth movement to only a few people. Those few generally like it, but there were some reservations among the chorus of approval. For instance, my friend Soso Begiashvili thinks it (the fourth movement) not optimistic enough. Samuil Samosud thinks it all very fine but not, in his opinion, a proper finale. For it to be so, he thinks I ought to bring in a choir and soloists. There were many more similarly valuable observations on the fourth movement, which I accept for purposes of information rather than for guidance, since I don't believe the movement needs either chorus or soloists and it has quite enough optimism as it is.¹³

He dedicated his new symphony to the city of Leningrad: “Never in my life have I dedicated my compositions to anyone. But this symphony—if I succeed in its realization—I shall dedicate to Leningrad. For all that I wrote into it, all that I expressed in it is tied up with that beloved native city of mine, is connected with the historic days of its defense against fascist oppressors.”¹⁴

As soon as the symphony was completed, a premiere by the Bolshoi Theater Orchestra under Samosud was already being proposed. Ideally, Shostakovich would have preferred the Leningrad Philharmonic under the direction of Yevgeni Mravinsky to premiere the Seventh Symphony: “I worry that there are not enough orchestral forces here [Kuibyshev] to cope, because the symphony does call for a very large orchestra. I should really like to hear Mravinsky

¹¹ Shostakovich, *Story of a Friendship*, 3.

¹² Fay, 127.

¹³ Shostakovich, *Story of a Friendship*, (January 4, 1942), 6-7.

¹⁴ *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, October 9, 1941, quoted in Schwartz, 177-78.

perform this work, but at the moment this is difficult. I don't have great faith in Samosud as a symphonic conductor."¹⁵

There was significant publicity given to the Seventh even before its completion and official public premiere. On March 1, 1942, the Associated Press announced that the private premiere in Kuibyshev—for a selected audience of officials and intellectuals—that day was a huge success and “hailed as a masterpiece.”¹⁶ In a program note before the performance, Shostakovich quoted a proverb which would be cited in many other articles on the Seventh Symphony: “When guns speak, the muses keep silent. Here the muses speak together with the guns.”¹⁷

The official public premiere of the “Leningrad” Symphony took place on March 5th, 1942 in Kuibyshev and broadcasted on radio stations throughout the country. The sculptor Ilya Slonim recalled the composer's nervousness:

The day for the first public performance was a terrible ordeal for him. He was in and out of our apartment (we were next-door neighbors) all day, never staying longer than ten minutes, looking even paler than usual and, almost stammering, imploring us not to go to the concert, hoping all his friends would stay away....

He seemed to suffer agonies during that first performance. The audience insisted on seeing him before it began, and he stood up on the platform, rigid and unsmiling. And when, after it was over, there were enthusiastic clamors for the composer, the grim young man once more climbed up to the platform, looking as if he were going to be hanged.

The Moscow premiere of Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony was given on March 29th in the Columned Hall of the Trade Union House. Samosud once again conducted the performance, this time with the combined orchestras of the Bolshoi Theater and Radio Committee.¹⁸ In the program for the concert, Shostakovich reiterated the symphony's program and the “sinister

¹⁵ Shostakovich, *Story of a Friendship*, (January 4, 1942), 7.

¹⁶ Associated Press, “Shostakovich's Music on Red Army Hailed,” *New York Times*, March 2, 1942.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Fay, 131.

events of 1941” which inspired it.¹⁹ In an espousal of patriotic fervor and reminiscent of the proverb cited at the private premiere in Kuibyshev, he concluded that “as the canons roar, our muses also raise their mighty heads. No one shall ever wrench the pen from our hands.”²⁰ The Moscow audience was no less enthusiastic and continued to listen to the concert despite the air-raid sirens. “The public was told of the alert when the concert was over” Ilya Erenburg recollected, “but people didn’t rush to the shelter. They stood, hailing Shostakovich, they were still in the grip of the sounds.”²¹

It wasn’t until August 9th, 1942, that the Seventh Symphony was performed in the blockaded city of Leningrad. Musicians were brought back to the city from the front lines and granted special rations in the hopes that they may regain enough strength to perform.²² The concert—by the Radio Orchestra—was broadcasted on loudspeakers throughout Leningrad and beyond to the German troops outside the city.²³

The United States and Great Britain were also anticipating the premiere of Shostakovich’s Seventh Symphony. The Western premiere was broadcasted on June 29th, 1942, performed by the London Symphony under the baton of Henry Wood. The score’s journey in a tin can to the U.S. was similarly high profile:

It was photographed on a micro-film, the film transported by plane to Teheran last April 9, thence by motor to Cairo, and from there by plane to this country. As they now transport premiers, generals, soldiers, aviators, mechanics, supplies of bombs, food, and machinery over oceans and hemispheres, so have they transported the precious micro-film to this city.²⁴

¹⁹ Dmitri Shostakovich, Program for Moscow concert on March 29, 1941, in *Dmitry Shostakovich: About Himself and his Times*, ed. L. Grigoryev and Ya. Platek, trans. Angus and Neilian Roxburgh (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), 94.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 95.

²¹ B. Frezinskiy, “Erenburg I Shostakovich,” *Neva* 8 (1989): 205, quoted in Fay, 131-132.

²² Fay, 133.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Olin Downes, “Shostakovich,” *New York Times*, July 12, 1942.

The symphony was highly publicized, and conductors fought for the U.S. premiere. *Time* declared it the most anticipated work since the Manhattan premiere of *Parsifal* in 1903.²⁵ Leopold Stokowski, Artur Rodzinski, and Serge Koussevitzky all fought for the opportunity to conduct the U.S. premiere.²⁶ However, Arturo Toscanini was approached by NBC to conduct the first American performance.²⁷ On July 19, 1942, Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony was performed by the National Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Toscanini. It was broadcasted throughout the United States to millions. The press recorded the audience's enthusiastic response to the symphony, and critic Olin Downes—although a detractor of the symphony, as will be seen in the following chapter—was inclined to note the significance of the occasion:

Following tremendous publicity, and in a spirit reflective of the enthusiasm and the gratitude that the people of this nation feel today toward Russia, defending in oceans of blood humanity's cause, the American premiere of the much-heralded Seventh Symphony of Dmitri Shostakovich...was given yesterday afternoon in Radio City by the NBC Symphony Orchestra, under the leadership of Arturo Toscanini, to shattering applause.²⁸

Conception and General Character

The circumstances surrounding the symphony's conception led Shostakovich to announce programmatic details concerning his Seventh Symphony:

The exposition of the first movement tells of the happy, peaceful life of people sure of themselves and their future. This is the simple, peaceful life lived before the war....

In the development, war bursts into the peaceful life of these people. I am not aiming for the naturalistic depiction of war....I am trying to convey the image of war emotionally.... The reprise is a funeral march, or rather, a requiem for the victims of the war....After the requiem there is an even more tragic episode. I don't know how to

²⁵ "Shostakovich & the Guns," *Time*, July 20, 1942.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ The National Broadcasting Company had begun negotiations for the first Western Hemisphere performance in early January, and had secured the rights by April. On June 16, it was announced that Koussevitzky was granted the rights for the American concert premiere, to be performed in August at Tanglewood. Although Koussevitzky had already been awarded the concert premiere, NBC offered Arturo Toscanini the American premiere. Associated Press, "Koussevitzky Gets Shostakovich 7th," *New York Times*, June 16, 1942. Also see "Shostakovich & the Guns."

²⁸ Olin Downes, "Shostakovich 7th Has U.S. Premiere," *New York Times*, July 20, 1942.

characterize this music. Maybe what is here are a mother's tears or even that feeling when grief is so great that there are no tears left. These two lyrical fragments lead to the conclusion of the first movement, to the apotheosis of life, of the sun. At the very end distant thunder appears again reminding us that the war continues....²⁹

His programs for the second and third movements are less descriptive. However, in his the notes for the Moscow premiere on March 29, 1942, Shostakovich tells of the general mood, and declares his Seventh Symphony a programmatic work:

The second movement is a scherzo, a fairly well-developed lyrical episode, recalling pleasant events and past joys. The atmosphere is of gentle sadness and reverie. Joy of life and the worship of Nature are the dominant moods of the third movement.³⁰

Even before he began composition of the fourth movement, Shostakovich had an idea for its inspiration: "In the finale I want to describe a beautiful future time when the enemy will have been defeated."³¹

Ralph Parker, correspondent for the *New York Times*, described a meeting with the composer and the work's programmatic inclinations on February 9th, 1942. Significant is Shostakovich's expansion of the final three movements in the interview. He explains:

The scherzo and adagio movements are of an intermediate character, in which I am moved by the idea that war doesn't necessarily mean destruction of cultural values. The fourth movement can be described by one word—victory. But my idea of victory isn't something brutal; it's better explained as victory of light over darkness, of humanity over barbarism, of reason over reaction.³²

Concluding the article is an artist's credo, an expression of oneness with his countrymen. "I consider that every artist who isolates himself from the world is doomed," he states. "I think an

²⁹ Shostakovich, "V dni oboronı Leningrada," *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, October 9, 1941, quoted in Fay, 129.

³⁰ "Editor's Note," *D. Shostakovich, Sobraniye sochineniy v soroka dvukh tomakh* 4 (Moscow 1981) quoted in Fay, 129.

³¹ Shostakovich, "V dni oboronı," quoted in Fay, 127.

³² Ralph Parker, "Shostakovich, Composer, Explains His Symphony of Plain Man in War," *New York Times*, February 9, 1942.

artist should serve the greatest number of people. I always try to make myself as widely understood as possible, and if I don't succeed I consider it's my own fault."³³

The American press reported on the symphony's character and conception before the U.S. premiere. Particularly, *Time* noted that it is "no blatant battle piece," but rather, "a musical interpretation of Russia at war....This very musical amorphousness is expressive of the amorphous mass of Russia at war. Its themes are exultations, agonies. Death and suffering haunt it. But amid bombs bursting in Leningrad Shostakovich had also heard the chords of victory."³⁴ Downes, on the other hand, perceived the middle episode of the first movement as a "battle scene" and as the resistance of the Russian people against the invaders.³⁵ However, nearly thirty years following the symphony's premiere, Hugh Ottaway offered a different assessment of the symphony, stating that rather than being a "crudely descriptive work" the "program as a whole is generalized, has more to do with feelings than events."³⁶ More specifically, he objected to the interpretation that the middle of the first movement represents the "approach of the Nazi invaders": "In his treatment of the 'Fascist' theme, which I would call the War theme, Shostakovich seems to be seeking an image of war in both its human and its dehumanizing aspects."

Literature Review

Contemporary writings which specifically concern Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony — particularly in the United States and Britain, and, which are very few—most often deal with the following trends: reception history and thematic processes of a particular theme, or within a

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ "Shostakovich & The Guns."

³⁵ Downes, "Shostakovich 7th has U.S. Premiere."

³⁶ Hugh Ottaway, "Shostakovich's 'Fascist' Theme," *The Musical Times* 111, no. 1525 (March 1970): 274.

particular movement. Both Christopher Gibbs's essay "The Phenomenon of the Seventh"³⁷ and Terry Klefstad's unpublished essay "The Mass Appeal of Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony"³⁸ trace the symphony's reception in America while also illuminating on the symphony's place among the Beethovenian symphonic tradition. Klefstad, however, expands further on this topic by including a brief introduction to Soviet symphonic theory and the influence of Boris Asaf'yev and Ivan Sollertinsky.

Most writings which attempt at an examination of the music seem to neglect the final three movements. Hugh Ottaway's assertion in *BBC Music Guides: Shostakovich Symphonies*³⁹ that "The two middle movements required little comment" is, in my belief, somewhat illogical if one were to pursue an understanding of the symphony as a whole. His discussion of movements two and three is in fact brief, and musical examples are entirely absent (which I suspect are not out of the norm for a book that is a "guide"). In the same vein, but of much larger proportion and breadth is Eric Roseberry's PhD dissertation *Ideology, Style, Content, and Thematic Process in the Symphonies, Cello Concertos, and String Quartets of Shostakovich*.⁴⁰ It is a work of significant import in its coverage and study of many facets which concerned Shostakovich and his style. His discussion of the Seventh Symphony's first movement is enlightening in its combination of motivic links and thematic transformation with interpretation. While this is a good start to unveiling processes within the symphony, its focus is only on the first movement.

Other prolific scholars concerned with the music of Shostakovich, but who have not published a document devoted specifically to the Seventh Symphony, include David Fanning and

³⁷ Christopher Gibbs's, "'The Phenomenon of the Seventh': A Documentary Essay on Shostakovich's 'War' Symphony" in *Shostakovich and His World*, ed. Laural E Fay (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 59-113.

³⁸ Terry Klefstad, "The Mass Appeal of Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony" unpublished.

³⁹ Hugh Ottaway, *BBC Music Guide: Shostakovich Symphonies* (Seattle: University of Washington Press: 1978).

⁴⁰ Eric Roseberry, *Ideology, Style, Content, and Thematic Process in the Symphonies, Cello Concertos, and String Quartets of Shostakovich*, Outstanding Dissertations in Music from British Universities (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1989).

Richard Taruskin. Fanning, in “Shostakovich: ‘The Present-Day Master of the C Major Key,’” relates the C major theme of the first movement and its return in the finale in terms of the human cost of war and an affirmation of “hoped-for triumph.”⁴¹ Furthermore, he points out the similarity between the third theme in the Seventh’s first movement, and the inverted Boris motif in Shostakovich’s opera *Lady Macbeth* in “Leitmotif in *Lady Macbeth*.”⁴² In “Shostakovich and Us,” Taruskin—albeit briefly—discusses the various hermeneutic readings of the Seventh Symphony.⁴³

The following chapter will extend the reception history of Shostakovich’s Seventh Symphony to include programmatic and aesthetic concerns. I will offer a more in-depth look at the specific opinions of commentators and their use of similar characterizations which at times, denote different musical attributes. What will follow in Chapter Three is an investigation into the music. Here I will present an argument contrary to the charges posed by the symphony’s critics while also bringing to light qualities and musical processes they have overlooked and which have yet to be discussed in scholarly discourse on the Seventh Symphony of Shostakovich.

⁴¹ David Fanning, “Shostakovich: ‘Present-Day Master of the C Major Key,’” *Acta Musicologica* 73, no. 2 (2001): 132-134.

⁴² David Fanning, “Leitmotif in *Lady Macbeth*,” in *Shostakovich Studies*, ed. David Fanning (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 149.

⁴³ Richard Taruskin, “Shostakovich and Us,” in *Shostakovich in Context*, ed. Rosamund Bartlett (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) and in *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 484-489

CHAPTER 2

ISSUES IN RECEPTION

Introduction

“Mention the *Leningrad* Symphony to anyone who has heard it but can’t remember when, and you will probably be told, ‘That’s the one with the Fascist theme in the first movement, isn’t it?’ And so it is...”⁴⁴ While this may certainly be the case now, critics of Shostakovich’s Seventh Symphony at the time of its premiere in 1942 had much more to say. The polemics covered a range of aesthetic stances, and questions of artistic, social, and political value were raised. Undoubtedly, these reservations and debates were influential at the time, and many are still lingering as the history of the Seventh Symphony becomes more colorful. As Richard Taruskin points out,

It is time to recognize that the meaning of any symphony, as of any cultural artifact, is the product of its history—a history that only begins with its composition....The history of Shostakovich’s “Leningrad” Symphony is an exceptionally rich and eventful one, touching both inspiringly and dispiritingly on many of the most terrible circumstances of the twentieth century. It subsumes the history of its own reception in varying geographical and political climates and illuminates (or at least illustrates) many of the most pressing aesthetic-cum-social controversies of our time.⁴⁵

Contemporary writings on the Seventh Symphony, and particularly those concerned with its reception, have noted its mixed acceptance by critics in America and Britain. In this survey of the symphony’s reception, I will focus on the reactions outside of Russia, with the diametrically opposed Russian opinions included as an occasional counterpoint. In the Western criticisms of the 1940s, certain themes and keywords frequently recur. For organizational purposes, I have

⁴⁴ Hugh Ottaway, “Shostakovich’s ‘Fascist’ Theme,” *The Musical Times* 111, no. 1525 (March 1970): 274.

⁴⁵ Richard Taruskin, “Review: Symphony No. 7 ‘Leningrad’ op. 60 (1941) by Dmitri Shostakovich [Facsimile]; Manashir Yakubov,” *Notes* 50, no. 2 (December 1993): 760-1.

identified the three most prominent critical issues and given them as subheadings. Among the keywords that encapsulate much of the harsh aesthetic assessments are “simplicity,” “pretentiousness,” and “banality,” as well as numerous synonyms and elaborations of them. Meanwhile, opportunities will appear for me to establish how prominent music critics—while addressing similar issues—link their general aesthetic opinions concerning the relationship between programmatic music in the twentieth century and musical construction, to the Seventh Symphony’s unique amalgamation of social, political and artistic content.

What one may gather from the broad views and detailed examination of a few aesthetic issues is a corresponding lack of discourse pertaining to long-range musical structures other than thematic processes. On a similar note, there is minimal discussion on the symphony’s final three movements, perhaps because these movements do not provide as much music devoted in obvious ways to programmatic ideas. The absence of these considerations will provide a framework for the following chapter, where I hope to contribute new scholarship on Shostakovich’s Seventh Symphony by providing a deeper insight toward its construction. I will take into account the symphony as a whole by which musical values may be interconnected between *all* of the movements, and present other far-reaching musical implications which suggest unity within the symphony.

Before introducing the issues and history of the symphony’s reception, a brief overview of stylistic and aesthetic trends in the twentieth century leading up to the premiere of the “Leningrad” will be presented to give context to the critics’ controversies—especially those concerned with propaganda and the relationship between music and extramusical ideals.

Musical Currents

As Shostakovich scholars know, both the composer's musical language and conception of musical genres is heavily indebted to canonic works of the nineteenth century, both Russian and Western European. Yet he lived at a time when numerous critics and composers focused their attention on new stylistic developments, some of which were put forth as newer, better, and more relevant alternatives to the past styles. The 1920s were especially diverse with respect to musical language and musical style. As composers reacted against nineteenth-century forms and lyricism, they began to search for order and clarity. Neoclassicism, Serialism, and a "New Objectivity" were becoming prominent among composers and philosophers of music in Germany. At the same time, 20th-century analogues to 19th-century nationalistic trends made themselves known in America, Britain, and the Soviet Union with composers such as Aaron Copland, George Gershwin, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst, Sergei Prokofiev, and Shostakovich. In these latter cases, obvious stylistic resonances with the past were commended as sure paths toward accessibility.

However, some critics made a similar case with respect to certain of the new trends. *Neue Sachlichkeit* ["New Objectivity"], for one, boasted a strong social and communal component which encompassed the multiple styles of modern music. As Erich Doflein notes, this "New Objectivity" brought music closer to the human being, "and to human beings among one another in their relationship to music, a human resolution, was yielded by the idea of objectivity."⁴⁶ It is against the styles of the societal music of the nineteenth-century with which the communal idea of objectivity is concerned: "Whether it be the masses, the community, or the parishioners who

⁴⁶ Erich Doflein, "Über Grundlagen der Beurteilung gegenwärtiger Musik," *Melos* 7 (1928): 290, quoted in Edward Lippman, *A History of Western Musical Aesthetics* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 404.

strive for a new tradition, all are various forms of a new togetherness of people that are set in opposition to the societal.”⁴⁷

Although it is essentially a Germanic concept, the “New Objectivity” can be seen as a counterpart to the growing nationalist identities of music in America, Britain, and especially of the Socialist Realist movement in the Soviet Union. The intensification of these trends in the 1930s led to a heightened emphasis and sensitivity to social issues. As David Fanning relates,

A New Simplicity was in the air internationally....reaction against the permissiveness of the Roaring Twenties and a sober re-evaluation of the disorienting musical developments in Vienna and Paris since the beginning of the century, were also pointing towards the need for a new clarity of musical language....the perceived desirability of a socially responsible art [was not] confined to the Soviet Union....The difference in the Soviet Union was the degree to which the New Simplicity and social responsibility were not only expected of composers—as concomitants of Socialist Realism—but increasingly monitored from above.⁴⁸

Consequently, music became increasingly more diatonic, and genres such as the symphony, programmatic music, film music, and music for propaganda became popular for composers since they appealed to a mass audience.

Philosophies and aesthetics of music would also advance in light of the new century and its compositional trends. The result was a cultivation of the nineteenth-century ideas of formalism and idealism into the concepts of objectivity and musical meaning respectively.⁴⁹

The idea of musical meaning is seen in studies concerning hermeneutics, symbolism, and semiotics; many of them connecting musical experiences with currents in society and history. Concepts of objectivity, on the other hand, “examined music in its own right, seeking a rationale for the musical work without looking beyond the music into any attendant circumstances or

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ David Fanning, “Shostakovich: ‘The Present Day Master of the C Major Key,’” *Acta Musicologica* 73, no. 2 (2001): 115.

⁴⁹ Lippman, 393. Formalism was the idea that saw expression, meaning, and content as “incidental manifestations that are secondary to musical form and autonomy,” while its antithesis, idealism, which expressed the notion that feelings are the essential feature of the musical experience, 291-292.

extramusical influences.”⁵⁰ As Edward Lippman notes, this twentieth-century musical aesthetic was concerned primarily with musical forms and principles that could be revealed through analysis.⁵¹ “This emphasis on objectivity and form,” he states,

is accompanied, naturally enough, by a neglect and even rejection of feelings and moods, as of something irrelevant or fortuitous and therefore symptomatic of an inappropriate attitude on the part of the performer or listener. Even in program music, ballet, and vocal music, it has often been contended that the only matter of importance is the form of the music in its own right. Thus, music and musical thought in this century have been determined in important ways by a reaction, notably in the 1920s, against the predominating qualities and values of the nineteenth century.⁵²

Aestheticians, musical theorists, and composers concerned with form and/or autonomy—including Heinrich Schenker, August Halm, Ferruccio Busoni, Erich Doflein, Paul Hindemith and Kurt Weill—had their critics. Adorno, for one, found “New Objectivity” to be a falsification of reality and expressed his irritation in terms of the social order—a way of defining the “truth” of a work. Adorno explains:

It is much more a matter of the consciousness of reality: *serenitas* [serenity] seeks to counterfeit and to persuade its hearers of a condition of objectively settled society, or secure ontological orientation, and of a just social order, which does not exist, and to represent which aesthetically is nothing other than to divert attention from the misery of society....I oppose it as the music of false stabilization.⁵³

Similarly, Ernst Krenek finds fault with the “New Objectivity,” specifically in its emotionally flat ethos:

It has in common with neoclassicism the anti-espressivo tendency and began equally with the intention of expressively neutralizing the material newly formed by Expressionism under the compulsion of its expressive will, or freeing it from its freight of emotion, and of regarding it in itself as given, indifferent. The lack of passion and the absence of emotion in which extraordinary pride was taken was due to a certain demonic possession by the spirit of craft....Here the shock proceeded from the never before so coldly produced display of inhuman aridity of spirit and emptiness of ideas.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Lippman, 393.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 351.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Theodor Adorno, “Kontroverse über die Heiterkeit,” *Anbruch* 12 (1930): 21, quoted in Lippman, 407.

⁵⁴ Ernst Krenek, *Über neue Musik* (Vienna, 1937), 12, quoted in Lippman, 407.

“The growing realization that meaning lay chiefly within the music” and that the music must be understood on its own terms is a motto which composers like Stravinsky and later Stockhausen would develop in the search for musical order.⁵⁵ Stravinsky, in particular, was against the notion that music could express anything extramusical: “Do we not, in truth, ask the impossible of music when we expect it to express feelings, to translate dramatic situations, even to imitate nature?”⁵⁶ Similarly, Schoenberg complains of the connection between musical understanding and the pictorial: “There are relatively few people who are incapable of understanding, purely in musical terms, what music has to say. The assumption that a piece of music must summon up images of one sort or another, and that if these are absent the piece of music has not been understood or is worthless, is as widespread as only the false and banal can be.”⁵⁷

Stravinsky and Schoenberg’s assertion, as will be seen, mirror much of the criticisms in articles published by Olin Downes, Virgil Thomson, Ernest Newman and others. Their skepticism was based not only on the symphony’s conception—that it was composed during war under exceptional conditions—but also on the knowledge of political and cultural conditions in the Soviet Union. The idea of the traditional symphonic form being imbued with political and social harangue was a criticism from which the symphony could not escape.

The Symphony as an Artist’s Reaction to the War

Perhaps it is inevitable that an artwork, molded during a time of significant political and social turmoil, would receive an antipodal reception. For one, Shostakovich’s Seventh Symphony is both traditional in its capsulation of the symphonic form, and atypical in its conception. It is the

⁵⁵ Lippman, 393.

⁵⁶ Igor Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music*, transl. A. Knodel and I. Dahl (Cambridge, 1947), 77, quoted in Lippman, 416.

⁵⁷ Arnold Schoenberg, “The Relationship to the Text,” in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (Berkeley: University of California, 1984), 141.

first symphony, that I am aware of, which is distinguished as being written during wartime hostilities and in wartime conditions which directly affected the composer. It seems then, a precedence had been set, and with that, came skepticism and extreme contrasts in opinions.

The day following the U.S. premiere of Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony, Olin Downes published an article in the *New York Times*. He noted the enthusiasm of its topicality—"in a spirit reflective of the enthusiasm and the gratitude that the people of this nation feel today toward Russia, defending in oceans of blood humanity's cause"—and made a hypothetical connection with the "spirit" of the times and the symphony's artistic value. He concludes that Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony is nowhere close to the greatest symphony of its time:

Now if the statement that this was the greatest symphony of modern age has produced would send the last Hun reeling from the last foot of Russian soil, if the further statement that it was the greatest symphony ever written would result in the offensive so long overdue and so imperatively needed on the western front, we would probably perjure ourselves and declare both these claims to be incontestably true. But we cannot so testify, or even conditionally state that such or anything like it is the case.⁵⁸

Downes would write 3 more articles on the symphony, relating its music, in each case, to the socio-political and aesthetic problems which concerned him. More than any other Western critic, Downes seems to have been the most prolific on all sides of the debate. He does not question the composer's sincerity, but rather contends that the music has suffered because of the urgency in which it was written and the overwhelming political and social values it replaced: "Through no fault of Shostakovich, presumably, conditions of wartime propaganda have caused him, an innocent and gifted musician, to be sucked into the vortex of national publicity and policies that have to do with the immediate problems of existence and must necessarily ignore merely artistic ones."⁵⁹ Three months later, he was more explicit on the attention it received in the media and its effect on the public's perception of the symphony, "The consensus was to the effect that the

⁵⁸ Olin Downes, "Shostakovich 7th has U.S. Premiere," *New York Times*, July 20, 1942.

⁵⁹ Downes, "Second View of a Symphony," *New York Times*, July 26, 1942.

Shostakovich Seventh Symphony was a work puffed and cannonaded into public attention for purposes of political propaganda; that the enormous publicity it received in advance of the hearing gave it a fictitious value for conductors and audiences...that, in short, its pretensions far exceed its manufactured reputation and actual merit.”⁶⁰

To Downes, art is the product of inner reflection and inspiration, which must not be reduced merely to the realistic or pictorial. Similarly, art must not conform to the narrow task of depicting extramusical content such as “international relations and totalitarian concepts” which Downes considers to be the most prevalent in contemporary society. He explains, “This is the doctrine, and the very extensive practice, that the end justifies the means...that affairs of the spirit can be relegated to some future when there is security and time to reconsider them, while the immediate purpose is the single one of tangible results, gained by whatever means are quickest, most expedient and practical.”⁶¹

Within his article, Downes refers to the British critic Ernest Newman, who also discussed its aesthetic value in terms of contemporary events. Like Downes, he was concerned with the symphony’s overwhelming success which he attributed to its use as wartime propaganda: “The final aesthetic value of a work of art has nothing whatever to do with whether it comes to us from an ally or an enemy...to the musician nothing matters in conjunction with the Shostakovich No. 7 but the quality of the music in it; and that, it may as well be said at once with perfect frankness, is mostly very poor...”⁶² He continues, “...let us, for heaven’s sake, keep clear of the crude fallacy that a work written, conceived, and carried out in such conditions thereby acquires an aesthetic virtue of its own. The contrary is the case. Any long work

⁶⁰ Downes, “Essence of a Score,” *New York Times*, October 18, 1942.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ernest Newman, “The New Shostakovich,” *Sunday Times*, June 28, 1942, quoted in Pauline Fairclough, “The ‘Old Shostakovich’: Reception in the British Press,” *Music and Letters* 88, no. 2 (May 2007): 276.

conceived and carried out under such conditions is certain to be a work of the second or third order. Large-scale artistic organizationisms do not develop in that naïve way.”⁶³ Two years later, he voiced his opinion even more vehemently after hearing a radio broadcast of the Seventh Symphony:

The result was to confirm the former impression of most of us that nothing at once so long-winded, so empty, so pretentious has been perpetrated in music within living memory....the amount of real musical thinking that was in it could have been accomplished in seventeen by a composer who understood his job. If you want to locate the work on a musical map, look for it somewhere within the seventieth degree of longitude and the last degree of platitude.⁶⁴

To Newman, the pretention is a combination of the proportions of the symphony and its content (the musical and the programmatic). The symphony’s dependence on the program leads—in his opinion—to the inevitable: a lack of concentration on the part of the composer to the musical material. A similar concern is voiced by Cecil Smith in the *Chicago Tribune*: “Strip the music of its timely connotations, and there is remarkably little left to substantiate the claim that this is one of the great symphonic works of our time, or of any time at all. It is most conspicuously a piece of program music which leans much too heavily on its program, in the hope of concealing appalling shortcomings of technical workmanship.”⁶⁵

Virgil Thomson elaborates on what he terms the “masterpiece tone” and the “masterpiece style” in Shostakovich’s war time symphonies and in particular, their relation to politics and social currents. He is critical of the public’s acceptance of these symphonies, which in his opinion, is largely due to its use as advertisement for the war effort. I will quote his article at length, as it provides deeper insight into Thomson’s aesthetic stance during this time:

This tone [the “masterpiece tone”] is lugubrious, portentous, world-shaking; and length as well as heavy instrumentation, is essential to it. Its reduction to absurdity is manifest

⁶³ Newman, “The New Shostakovich,” quoted in Downes, “Second View of a Symphony.”

⁶⁴ Newman, “The ‘Leningrad’ Again,” *Sunday Times*, January 30, 1944, quoted in Fairclough, 276.

⁶⁵ Cecil Smith, *Chicago Tribune*, October 30, 1942.

today through the later symphonies of Shostakovich. Advertised frankly and cynically as owing their particular character to a political directive imposed on their author by state disciplinary action, they have been broadcast throughout the United Nations as models of patriotic expression....They may have some value as national advertising, though I am not convinced they do; but their passive acceptance by musicians and music-lovers can certainly not be due to their melodic content (inoffensive as this is) or to their workmanship (roughly competent as this is, too).

What imposes about them is their obvious masterpiece-style one-trackness, their implacable concentration on what they are doing....It [the “masterpiece cult”] tends to substitute an impressive manner for specific expression, just as oratory does. That music should stoop to the procedures of contemporary political harangue is deplorable indeed.⁶⁶

What is telling in this statement is Thomson’s recognition of the social and political status of artists and the role art plays in the Soviet state. That critics in the United States were aware of the social and political value placed on music in the Soviet Union, and of the interference of the Soviet government in the arts is evidenced in the articles by Downes following the premiere of the Seventh Symphony:

We can certainly expect much more from Shostakovich. He believes that social ideology must be back of all music....We wish, when it comes to composing, that he were free of any conscious ideologies, and also that his countrymen, especially those with not a tithe of his knowledge of music, would cease instructing him as to whether he is or is not properly expressing in his scores the Soviet ideals.⁶⁷

Three months later, he characterizes it as a veritable negation of “art for art’s sake”—a statement which is both an acknowledgement of the artistic conditions of the Soviet Union and of a Soviet aesthetic: “Nevertheless, back of this symphony of Shostakovich is the reality and stress of these times, and the unsophisticated, dirty supplications and dreams and furies of a people who have neither the time nor need of art for art’s sake.”⁶⁸

Despite the criticisms concerning the symphony’s overtly programmatic conception and musical content, there were articles and publications that praised the symphony unreservedly on

⁶⁶ Virgil Thomson, “Masterpieces,” *New York Herald Tribune*, June 25, 1942, in Virgil Thomson, *The Musical Scene* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), 1945.

⁶⁷ Downes, “Shostakovich 7th Has U.S. Premiere.”

⁶⁸ Downes, “Essence of a Score.”

account of its social and political content, without any disparagement of the musical quality. An article in *The Atlanta Constitution* stresses the message of the symphony:

The Symphony thus concerns the themes of courage and determination, of war, blood, and death, and of the ultimate triumphs of light over darkness....the heart of Leningrad here becomes classically clear and straightforward....Deathless and resolute, living in new glory, the soul of Russia reached a dateless, mighty crescendo in this music, which mirrors those months when shot and blood and death made every civilian a soldier.⁶⁹

Striking, perhaps, is the resemblance to the tone adopted by many Soviet commentators on the Seventh Symphony. Consider Ludmilla Polyakova's description: "The Seventh Symphony, that great composition of our times, marked the beginning of a new period in the work of its author....he has concentrated on the most important, burning problems in the life of the Soviet people and of humanity as a whole; in his symphonies the personal and subjective themes were now linked with themes of universal significance."⁷⁰ She continues: "One interprets this music as a bright result of a hard and harrowing struggle, as a glimpse into the expressive of prophetic faith in the happy tomorrow of liberated humanity."⁷¹ Victor Seroff emphasizes that, while the Germans were "hammering" at the gates, a symphony was being written which told of the "horrors" of war and "of the ruthless foe that was strong—but not strong enough to break the spirit of the people who were willing to fight and to die for their ideals and their country."⁷² Soviet Professor K. Pavlov also recognized the importance of this symphony, noting its social and political significance over the musical. He says, "The Seventh Symphony of Shostakovich is significant beyond the bounds of a merely musical event. It has become a cultural entity of our people, a fact of political and social significance, and an impulse to struggle and victory."⁷³

⁶⁹ "Out of This Darkness," *The Atlanta Constitution*, July 21, 1942.

⁷⁰ Ludmilla Polyakova, *Soviet Music* (Moscow, n.d.), 23.

⁷¹ Polyakova, 25-6.

⁷² Victor Seroff, *Dmitri Shostakovich: The Life and Background of a Soviet Composer*, in collaboration with Nadejda Galli-Shohat (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1943), 240.

⁷³ K. Pavlov, *VOKS Bulletin*, no. 7-8 (Moscow, 1942), 49, quoted in Boris Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia: 1917-1981*, enl. ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 180.

Shostakovich's symphony was an icon in the Soviet Union. They considered it a symbolic testament to the country's struggle, and as a work that was "Russian first and foremost."⁷⁴

Written in a similarly metaphorical style, Ray Brown tells of the symphony's impact on listeners, and their perception of the work as "living music" in which the "message of the composer came through with a thrilling eloquence—a message of the unconquerable spirit of the Russian people....The impact of the music has tremendous strength in its voicing of undying courage and indomitable faith in the brotherhood of man."⁷⁵ Perhaps most intriguing among the original American responses is the poem written to Shostakovich by Carl Sandburg that was published in *The Washington Post*:

The music marches and fights, it struggles and kills, it
stands up and says there are a thousand terrible deaths, it
is better to die than to let the Nazis take over your home-
land and tell you how you must live.

.....
So some of us who listened to what came in the tomato
can from Moscow to Cairo to Manhattan, we salute you
and speak thanks, Mister Dmitri Shostakovich.

Your song tells us of a great singing people beyond defeat
or conquest who across years to come shall pay their share
and contribution to the meanings of human freedom and
discipline."⁷⁶

In less colorful language, Ralph Parker discusses the heroism, spirit, and confidence of the Soviet people that inspired the "Leningrad" Symphony and which resulted in its compelling character.⁷⁷ He concludes that, with the Seventh Symphony, Shostakovich is the "only

⁷⁴ Statement by Ivan Mart'nov. Transcript of the Leningrad plenary session of the Organizational Committee of the Composers' Union (March 28-31, 1944), RGALI, fund 2077, list 1, folder 92, quoted in Marina Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism From Glinka to Stalin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 346.

⁷⁵ Ray C.B. Brown, "Shostakovich's Symphony No. 7 Played With Great Eloquence," *The Washington Post*, November 9, 1942.

⁷⁶ Carl Sandburg, "Take a Letter to Dmitri Shostakovich," *The Washington Post*, July 26, 1942.

⁷⁷ Ralph Parker, "Shostakovich—A Major Voice of the Soviets," *New York Times*, April 5, 1942.

contemporary composer of considerable stature who has made real contact with the masses without being false to his muse.”⁷⁸

Over twenty years later, when Western critics had lost all interest, Soviet critics were still defending the work against the charges that critics in the international press had pitted against it in 1942: “When this symphony began to be performed universally, some musicians did not like it. They said, ‘Admit it! A certain part of the success comes from political propaganda.’ It certainly does. Let us say sixty percent does. But the remaining forty percent possesses enough merit to deserve attention and approval. And, after all, that is the important point.”⁷⁹

The significance of the symphony in the cultural, political, and social spheres in the Soviet Union and abroad is an important facet of its history. It is bound with wartime politics and social currents, all which receive expression based on critic’s own interpretations and system of beliefs while at the same time, reflecting on conditions within their respective countries.

The Seventh Symphony Against the Beethovenian Tradition

Just as critics in both the West and Soviet Russia would adopt one aesthetic stance either for or against the social and political exigencies of the Seventh and another in reference to Shostakovich’s success or failure at inventing and developing his material, so they would name great composers as standards by which to judge him. In this respect, the opinions were quite divided. Some cried against the barbarization of values set by Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, and Mahler, while others claimed Shostakovich as their heir.

The relationship of new symphonic works to the symphonic tradition was a particular concern in the Soviet Union. For that purpose the musicologist and composer Boris Asaf’yev

⁷⁸ Parker, “The Symphonist of Russia’s Travail,” *New York Times*, February 7, 1943.

⁷⁹ Nicolai Malko, *A Certain Art* (New York: W. Marrow, 1966), 227.

developed an influential conceptual framework for criticism of symphonies, past and present. Asaf'yev's idea of *simfonizm* [roughly, "the symphonic quality"] was rooted in his delineation of shared traits found in the symphonies of Beethoven and Tchaikovsky. In his essay "Boris Asaf'yev and Soviet Symphonic Theory," David Haas provides a detailed survey on the development of the idea throughout Asaf'yev's career. Of particular concern here is the way in which the "symphonic" quality is related to dramatic conflict, dynamicism, and the reflection of the composer in his work of art. Specifically, Asaf'yev writes that musical motion is contained, "in a tendency to restore the continuously disrupted equilibrium; and if the living musical fabric is nothing more than a chain of the sequence equilibrium—disruption—restoration...then the essence of symphonism lies in the steady accretion of a qualitative element of differentiation, of novelty, and not in the mere corroboration of equilibrium already experienced."⁸⁰ As Haas notes, symphonism, then, is a "qualitative state" and is conceived as an "unbroken stream of musical consciousness" which the listener perceives as one fixed entity.⁸¹ Similarly, this type of organicism includes the composer's experience as tied to the process of composition. Asaf'yev states, "When an individual asserts the character of his thought via the process of composition, aspects of his inner self are present as well: namely, his specific internal and external life experience of overcoming the difficulties of existence. This struggle [is the source of] drama."⁸² Haas clarifies that "he [Asaf'yev] insists that the act of symphonic composition be integrated

⁸⁰ Igor Glebov [Boris Asaf'yev], "Soblazny i preodoleniia" [Temptations and triumphs], *Melos: Knigi o muzyke* [Melos: Books about music], vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1917), 6, trans. and quoted in David Haas, "Boris Asaf'yev and Soviet Symphonic Theory," *The Musical Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (Autumn 1992): 413.

⁸¹ Haas, 415.

⁸² Boris Asaf'yev, *Instrumental'noe tvorchestvo Chaikovskogo* [The instrumental works of Tchaikovsky], repr. in Asaf'yev, *O muzyke Chaikovskogo* [About Tchaikovsky's music] (Leningrad: "Muzyka," 1972), 241, trans. and quoted in Haas, 419.

with all other concurrent functions of conscious life—and, by implication challenges the listener to intuit in the music a reflection of the fullness of conscious life.”⁸³

Ivan Sollertinsky—a friend of Shostakovich who introduced him to the music of Mahler—also wrote of symphonic drama in connection with Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, and Mahler. In his book on Gustav Mahler, Sollertinsky establishes the composer as a symphonic descendent of Beethoven. He insists that Mahler, alienated from contemporary society, had a social awareness that allowed him to confront reality in his music—he did not separate his art from his life.⁸⁴ The grotesque in Mahler’s music is an acknowledgement of the evils of capitalism, while the expression of democratic and communal principles can be found in his melodic material (not only in his use of popular sources, but also in the linearity and clarity of the instrumental voices). Sollertinsky sees these elements as a step toward a “collective symphony.”⁸⁵

Likewise, Sollertinsky names Beethoven as the culmination of pre-Soviet musical culture. He defines the Beethovenian symphony (or “Shakespearian”) as a dramatic type which gives voice to various human struggles:

[It is] a symphony constructed on objective and generalized reflections about the realities of the process of conflict; as a dramatic symphony, for the drama is a process, a movement, where the consciousness of not one but several human beings is given expression as they struggle against one another....In short, the symphony of the Beethovenian type does not stem from the principle of monologue, but from the principle of dialogue.⁸⁶

As for the symphonies of Mahler and Tchaikovsky, he finds them more complex, in that “both of them moved away from the realm of the subjectively lyrical in to a ‘cruel world’—the real world

⁸³ Haas, 419.

⁸⁴ Ivan Sollertinsky, “Gustav Mahler,” transl. and quoted in Eric Roseberry, *Ideology, Style, Content, and Thematic Process in the Symphonies, Cello Concertos, and String Quartets of Shostakovich*, Outstanding Dissertations in Music from British Universities (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1989), 509-11.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 512-513.

⁸⁶ Ivan Sollertinsky, ‘Historical Types of Symphonic Dramaturgy,’ 1941, transl. in Roseberry, 526.

that surrounded them—and neither made any attempt at covering it up with any kind of aesthetic or stylized make-believe.”⁸⁷ In particular, Sollertinsky credits Shostakovich as Mahler’s successor, especially in the “method of re-modulating the grotesque in a scheme of indirect lyrical expression.”⁸⁸

The influence of Asaf’yev and Sollertinsky’s writings can be seen in several articles attributed to Shostakovich, in which he discusses Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, and Mahler. Like many Soviet contemporaries, Shostakovich characterized Beethoven as a revolutionary who spoke to all of humanity, and most explicitly of the heroism and struggles of mankind:

Beethoven firmly believed that his music should serve the noble cause of justice...and through his work he rallied mankind to the heroic struggle for a happier future, singing—with his characteristic fiery passion—the joyful hymn of liberated humanity. Beethoven addressed himself to the whole of mankind, and therefore was most at home with monumental forms....tragedy is overcome in the process of universal struggle.⁸⁹

Similarly, Shostakovich assessed Tchaikovsky as being a composer who expressed the world in terms of humanity as a whole. However, whereas Beethoven expressed a triumph of tragedy with “universal struggle,” Tchaikovsky is portrayed in a more philosophical, if not spiritual, light: “With the perspicacity of a true philosopher, and the intuition of a great artist, he sensed the contradictory, dialectical path of world development, of the fate of man and mankind....Tchaikovsky believed in the immeasurable strength of human reason and in the power and harmony of the universe. Everything he wrote is permeated by this bright, rational faith.”⁹⁰ Furthermore, Shostakovich names Tchaikovsky as the true heir to Beethovenian symphonism; his lyricism and the concrete expression of human emotions have made the

⁸⁷ Ibid., 531.

⁸⁸ 533.

⁸⁹ Dmitri Shostakovich, *Izvestia*, November 19, 1953, in *Dmitry Shostakovich: About Himself and His Times*, ed. L. Grigoryev and Ya. Platek, trans. Angus and Neilian Roxburgh (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), 149.

⁹⁰ 105.

symphony “that most complex form of musical art—accessible and comprehensible to masses of people.”⁹¹

Like Sollertinsky, Shostakovich highlighted the humanism in Mahler’s music: “Mahler had a profound understanding of the deep ethical significance of music. He penetrated the most hidden and secret realms of human consciousness....Humanism, an indomitable temperament, a burning love for mankind in conjunction with an astonishing talent as a composer helped Mahler to create his symphonies.”⁹²

It is no surprise, then, that the humanism, heroism, and musical virtues of these composers would be summoned up by the symphony’s admirers. Nicolai Malko found that Shostakovich’s Seventh was similar to Mahler’s works in the “peculiarity” of humor and the “tendency toward grandiose forms with stretched-out development.”⁹³ Polyakova invokes Asaf’yev’s term symphonism by relating it to the humanism of Tchaikovsky and Mahler and by placing emphasis on the collective “hero” and his struggle: “It is in the Seventh and Eighth Symphonies that the humanist features of Shostakovich’s symphonism, carrying on in the mid-twentieth century the traditions of Tchaikovsky and Mahler, stand out with particular clarity. His hero is no outstanding personality but an ordinary man, our contemporary, who has to bear all the horrors and hardships of a mechanized war, refined in its cruelty.”⁹⁴ Here, symphonism is related to the drama (or struggle) of the hero as reflected by the composer in the *process* of composition.

In a rather different light, Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony was an example for Kenneth Furie’s comparison to Shostakovich’s “Leningrad” Symphony. Not only does he consider that

⁹¹ Dmitri Shostakovich, “Stating the Case for Slavonic Culture,” *New York Times*, June 21, 1942.

⁹² Shostakovich, foreword to *Gustav Mahler: Pis'ma, vospominaniya*, ed., Inna Barsova (Moscow, 1964), transl. and quoted in Rosberry, 558.

⁹³ Malko, 197.

⁹⁴ Polyakova, 31.

the formal structure of the Seventh follows Beethoven's Ninth, but that it also "achieves something like comparable transcendence in its Adagio. But the destructive processes are inescapable, and are made part of—no central to—the experience..."⁹⁵

The appeal of relating the symphonic tradition of Beethoven, Tchaikovsky and Mahler to Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony was not confined to the Soviet Union, as Western critics also used their works as models. The difference lies not only in the interpretive approach to the music of these composers, but also the role of music in society. And, unlike the Soviet commentators, critics in the West considered them as standards against which the symphonic ideals of the "Leningrad" are opposed. Whereas Shostakovich's symphony was, in their opinion, propaganda music—tied too closely with social and political currents while also lacking inner reflection on the part of the composer—the symphonies of Beethoven and Mahler were quite the contrary. The consultation of "inner feeling" or "internal compulsion" in the process of composition is what distances Shostakovich from the great composers. As critics like Downes, Thomson, and others have expressed in the previous section of this chapter—that there is an absence of contemplation and evidence of struggle by the composer toward his material—their claims bear a likeness to Asaf'yev's symphonism, particularly in the struggle of "internal *and* external life experience" [my emphasis] which become the source of drama.

B.H. Haggin explicitly stressed the disparity between the act of composition as practiced by Mozart and Beethoven, and that of Shostakovich in his Seventh Symphony:

Mozart's G minor Symphony did not bolster the Hapsburg monarchy and Beethoven's last quartets did not undermine it; these works neither upheld nor attacked any political theory; they did not originate in any external events. Mozart and Beethoven wrote from internal compulsions; they expressed their own unique personal emotions and insights in their own unique languages and styles....if Mozart and Beethoven had written in a way

⁹⁵ Kenneth Furie, "An Abnormal Symphony Tailored to Inhuman Times," *New York Times*, January 30, 1994.

that satisfied the Russians they would have produced works like Beethoven's notorious *Battle Symphony*.⁹⁶

The Seventh corresponded with Beethoven's "Wellington's Victory" by its designation as a 'battle' piece, with bouts of realistic sounds of warfare, and its lack of artistry (which many find dubious among Beethoven's accomplishments). One reviewer, however, finds the Seventh as artistically superior to "Wellington's Victory": "It is in a sense an 'occasional piece', which is not, however, anything like as bad artistically as Beethoven's 'Battle' Symphony or the '1812' Overture."⁹⁷

Downes draws more attention to the differences between Shostakovich's "patriotism" and "heroism" and those of Beethoven and others: "If he were let alone to consult purely his inner feeling, in the same way that Beethoven, in the Fifth Symphony and his others, consulted his, and without label or propaganda uttered as no composer before or since the cry for liberty—then we would have better music from Shostakovich."⁹⁸ In a later review, he concludes:

We are just as sure as ever we were that posterity will consign the piece to the wastepaper basket, and that much quicker than posterity has done with better music. If you are talking of real heroism in music, talk of certain finales of great heroic symphonies of Sibelius that have grander, nobler stride and a truer simplicity and power of patriotism and nature back of them in ten pages than Shostakovich has in his whole jumbled score. And the Beethoven Fifth Symphony remains the incomparable cry for liberty and chant of freedom, in terms of imperishable architecture and beauty.⁹⁹

The issue of length and its relation to expressive material was a concern to Virgil Thomson. He cites the works of Beethoven, Mahler, Bruckner and Berlioz as being intentionally long and part of the composer's concept, since "they could not have been made any shorter without

⁹⁶ B.H. Haggin, *Music in the Nation* (New York: William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1949), 111.

⁹⁷ L.A. Sloper, "The Shostakovich Seventh," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 25, 1942.

⁹⁸ Downes, "Shostakovich 7th has U.S. Premiere."

⁹⁹ Downes, "Essence of a Score."

eliminating something the author wanted in it.”¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, the breadth of the Seventh is unnecessary; length is employed simply to “stretch out” material “that is in no way deep or difficult to understand.”¹⁰¹ This stretching out of material will be a point of contention for Western critics, many of whom find the symphony too conventional, repetitive and non-developmental.

Musical Content and the Individuality of Musical Material

According to Downes, music should express “in its own way and according to its own laws, its time and environment.”¹⁰² However, Shostakovich—in placing the music in subordination to the program—composed not a symphony in which musical structures unfold, but rather a “visual panorama,” or “cartoon of battle.” The result, he contends, is the utilization of “inferior thematic material, flung together loosely and flimsily, with little concentration and development which too often consists in mere repetition or superficial contrasts of tonal weight and color—the Shostakovich symphony, nobly intended, could be taken as symbolic of realistic methods in government and international relationships...”¹⁰³

He finds the symphony as a whole theatrical, derivative, superficial with obvious “tricks,” and lacking individuality. What is most wearisome however, are the clichés and derivations from other composers in the “invasion” theme of the first movement: “The third idea, used for what is reasonable to assume, is a kind of battle scene, is a page out of Ravel’s ‘Bolero,’ with some of Richard Strauss’s battle scene in ‘Heldenleben’ and a pinch of the extremely noisy instrumentation of Respighi’s *Pines of Rome* put together for the show.”¹⁰⁴ A

¹⁰⁰ Virgil Thomson, “Shostakovich’s Seventh,” *New York Herald Tribune*, October 18, 1942, in *The Musical Scene* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945),

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Downes, “Second View of a Symphony.”

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Downes, “Shostakovich 7th has U.S. Premiere.”

few months later, he would add Jean Sibelius to the list, connecting the pizzicato figure of his Fifth Symphony to the “big crescendo march in the first movement.”¹⁰⁵ On the whole, Downes considered it not an interpretation of war, but rather, “bad photography” that is all too blatant and obvious.

In a similar espousal of frustration, Gerald Abraham considers the programmatic elements of the Symphony to be naïve and unsuccessful in its execution, especially the “invasion” episode with its incessant repetition and non-development. In a burst of sarcasm and wit, he offers this assessment: “It certainly ‘arouses a feeling of hatred’—if that is not too strong of a word—but not against the Nazis.”¹⁰⁶ Nor do things fare better for the symphony after a performance at the Proms, when a commentator added to the accumulating witticisms: “A comedian once defined a Dachshund as two dogs long and half a dog high. The ‘Leningrad’ is certainly two symphonies long; its height, or quality, is less specific....Except in its length, there is little enough in the ‘Leningrad’ to deserve the same adjective [remarkable].”¹⁰⁷

B. H. Haggin was more direct in his complaints about the work’s diffuseness and pretention, concluding that “...what it says so pretentiously is feeble, inane, banal. Pretentiousness leaps out at one from that long crescendo of repetitions of one theme—the pretentiousness of the conception, the intention, of the inane theme itself, of the unresourceful, crude, blatant variations...”¹⁰⁸ Most commentators on Shostakovich’s Seventh Symphony placed their critical emphasis on the first movement, as it seemed the most overtly programmatic and theatrical of the four. William Leonard is direct on this point when he states, “Perhaps the

¹⁰⁵ Downes, “Shostakovich 7th Wins Ovation Here,” *New York Times*, October, 15, 1942.

¹⁰⁶ Gerald Abraham, *Eight Soviet Composers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), 31.

¹⁰⁷ W. H. Haddon Squire, “Shostakovich at the Proms,” *Christian Science Monitor*, August 1, 1942.

¹⁰⁸ Haggin, 109.

inspiration for the ‘Leningrad Symphony’ is all packed into that overwhelming first movement, with the rest of the work in the nature of addenda...”¹⁰⁹

Downes, however, did not end his discussion on the martial theme. He described the bassoon solo as “unbeautiful,” excessively gloomy, and unable to escape the grips of the program or to be interpreted on its own terms: “He sounds the unbeautiful and lugubrious lamentation of the solo bassoon, as desolate and solitary as a ruined village and the nostalgia for better days and redeemed land. And so on. There is no mistaking it. It is narrative, panorama...”¹¹⁰ He found the coda of the first movement to be beautiful and poetic. The scherzo, although the most “finished and balanced” of the movements, is too light in mood and weight for the “assumptions of the symphony” as a whole; the themes of the third movement have little character, and the finale contains too many recurring items with a development which “sags in the middle.”¹¹¹

“What, one wonders, does this have to do with art!” he asked of the symphony:

Art has been and ever will be dependent upon the selection and the arrangement of its materials. Art may portray any subject it pleases, and employ the commonest language; it can do all these things if the final expression is governed by creative individuality and the taste of the artist. This is a platitude older than the hills, and eternally true. One does not believe now any more than he did two months ago in the musical reality and value of this inflated and clamorous music....Certainly this is not a score for secure and cultivated aestheticians.¹¹²

The “musical reality” discussed by Downes is conceptualized differently by L.A. Sloper. Writing for the *Christian Science Monitor*, he refers to the ‘Leningrad’ Symphony as “representing imaginatively the reactions of the Russian people to the German attack,” but that Shostakovich “thought he could do this best by discarding the symphonic form, although he

¹⁰⁹ William Leonard, *Journal of Commerce*, Oct. 28, 1942, quoted in Christopher H. Gibbs, “The Phenomenon of the Seventh,” in *Shostakovich and His World*, ed. Laurel E. Fay (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 94.

¹¹⁰ Downes, “Essence of a Score.”

¹¹¹ Downes, “Shostakovich 7th has U.S. Premiere.”

¹¹² Downes, “Essence of a Score.”

called the composition a symphony.”¹¹³ By appealing to the emotions of the mass audience, the composer has neglected form: “Its contrasted themes are not developed in the symphonic manner, but are employed dramatically in a series of episodes....There is a great deal of repetition, and a great deal of marking time.”¹¹⁴ In another article three months later, Sloper concludes that the symphony’s construction is the problem, not the composer’s intentions: “It is brilliant and dull, individual and imitative, terse and repetitious—not all at the same time, but in protracted succession....It is discursive, redundant, and all but shapeless. It is noisy and pretentious, yet who shall say that is not sincere?”¹¹⁵

Virgil Thomson, like Downes, questions the symphony’s congruency of emotion with its artistic construction and echoed Newman in his criticism of its length. He begins with the famous lines, “Whether one is able to listen without mind-wandering to the Seventh Symphony of Dmitri Shostakovich probably depends on the rapidity of one’s musical perceptions. It seems to have been written for the slow-witted, the not very musical and the distracted. In this respect it differs from nearly all those other symphonies in which abnormal length is part and parcel of the composer’s concept.”¹¹⁶ Not only is the work’s “abnormal length” divorced from the ideas of the symphony as a whole, but also from the artist’s expression and the music itself: “The piece seems to be the length it is not because the substance of it would brook no briefer expression but because, for some reason not inherent in the material, the composer wished it that way. It is no pent-up pouring out of personal feelings...”¹¹⁷ Thomson continues, “If the music has no mystery and consequently, no real freedom of thought, neither does it contain any obscurity or any evidence of personal frustration. It is as objective as an editorial, as self-assured as the news

¹¹³ L.A. Sloper, “The Shostakovich Seventh,” *Christian Science Monitor*, Jul 25, 1942.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ L.A. Sloper, “Boston Symphony Season Opens,” *Christian Science Monitor*, October 10, 1942.

¹¹⁶ Virgil Thomson, “Shostakovich’s Seventh.”

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 102.

report of a public ceremony.”¹¹⁸ He finds that the music is self-explanatory as far as its connection with the program and lacks any inner reflection or subjectivity from the composer: “The facile competence and the assurance of the whole thing, moreover, eliminate the possibility that any auditor find the struggle between the artist and his material a major subject of interest.”¹¹⁹

Thomson considers the music to be conventional and unimaginative. There is nothing new or experimental to distinguish it from the rest of his works. It is to Thomson—as it is to many a critic—a “series of production numbers,” or a “cinematic narrative”:

The Seventh Symphony has the same formal structure as the rest of its author’s work. It is a series of production numbers, interspersed with neutral matter written chiefly in that same two-part counterpoint. There is a mechanized military march and the usual patriotic ending, neither of them quite as interesting or imaginative as it might be. And the rest of the episodes are even tamer. The pastorale and the Protestant chorale are competent routine stuff, no more; and the continuity counterpoint, though less static than usual, just sort of runs on as if some cinematic narrative were in progress that needed neutral accompaniment.¹²⁰

Thomson closes with this damning conclusion: “That he has so deliberately diluted his matter, adapted it, by both excessive simplification and excessive repetition, to the comprehension of a child of eight, indicates that he is willing to write down to a real or fictitious psychology of mass consumption in a way that may eventually disqualify him for consideration as a serious composer.”¹²¹

That “excessive simplification” and the attempt to communicate with the general public have led to banality in Shostakovich’s symphony is also expressed by M. Camargo Guarnieri. In a message to Mário de Andrade, he said of Shostakovich and the Seventh, “The more I hear this composer, the less I like. There is a banal side in his music, detestable. This desire to reach the

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 103.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid., 104.

public is always dangerous for the composer. From the simple to the banal, the jump is very small.”¹²² In addition to the banal, Haggin attributed the symphony’s “grandiloquent fervors and affirmations” as the “sort to impress an unsophisticated mass audience.”¹²³ He concludes, “His symphony can move listeners in other countries by its associations with events in which their emotions are involved; but what plays on their emotions about the sufferings and heroism of the Russian people is an excessively long piece of bad music.”¹²⁴

That the scathing reviews by many critics were widely read by the public is obvious. The general public was interested in the message that the symphony carried, and its popularity was, for the most part, due to its programmatic content. Interestingly, three months after the NBC premiere, *The Washington Post* published this account of the attendance of the Seventh Symphony at Carnegie Hall in New York:

The most publicized of modern conductors and the most publicized of modern symphonies tonight were unable in combination to fill the New York’s Carnegie Hall. Partly this was because single seats on the lower floor sold for \$11. Partly it was because word had got about that the symphony was too long for its somewhat meager musical content....There was applause at the conclusion. But there was probably more excitement after the “Star Spangled Banner” which ended the concert.¹²⁵

Yet, the Symphony did have its admirers. Hans Kindler, conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra, chided the New York critics in an article published in *The Washington Post*. He says of them:

Oh, these New York critics!...Of course they can say: “This is not our concern. We are but to judge aesthetically.” Granted. But in that ideal world which they so glibly evoke, their critical effusions should then have an aesthetic critical value which their daily

¹²² Flávia Camargo Toni, ed. “A correspondência,” in Flávio Silva, ed., *Camargo Guarnieri—o tempo e a música*, (Rio de Janeiro: Funarte; São Paulo: Imprensa Oficial 2001), 197–317, quoted in Sarah Tyrrell “M. Camargo Guarnieri and the Influence of Mário de Andrade’s Modernism,” *Latin American Music Review* 29, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 54-55.

¹²³ Haggin, 109.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 111.

¹²⁵ John Selby, “Shostakovich’s Seventh Fails to Fill Hall at \$11 a Seat,” *The Washington Post*, October 15, 1942.

dribblings are more often painfully without. The difference between them and young Shostakovich is such that their professed high aesthetic notions nauseate one.¹²⁶

He is particularly fond of its approachability and the “overwhelming” finale which is anticipated in the first movement. The “invasion” theme, he argues, is nothing like Ravel’s “Bolero”: “It is war...inexorably terrifying. Where ‘Bolero’ was irresistibly sensuous, this reiteration is mechanical, cold, clear-cut, steely.”¹²⁷ Another critic—reporting on the symphony’s performance at the “Proms” in 1942—found the symphony “distinctly original” and the occasional similarities between passages in the Seventh Symphony and in the music of Sibelius to be “almost certainly apparent rather than real—a case of two thinkers arriving by different ways at the same conclusion.”¹²⁸ The author concludes that the symphony is a work of sincere emotions and merit, but that “the composer has possibly underrated the importance of design,” although this may “prove to be of little importance when put by the side of the symphony’s solid virtues.”¹²⁹

Nicolas Slonimsky’s description, like those of Soviet music critics of the day, is vivid, spirited, and highlights the simplicity of its musical language. Unlike Downes, Thomson, and others who considered the simplistic characteristics of the Seventh to be a vice, it was an admirable trait to Slonimsky: “It is Shostakovich on a loftier plane,” Slonimsky asserts, “the harmony is purified; major triads are employed with unabashed candor, free of extraneous admixtures.”¹³⁰ Moreover, his ‘analysis’ is mostly thematic, with a focus on programmatic meaning and dramatic dialogue, as in his summary of the “invasion” episode in the first movement, wherein he quotes the words of the 20th-century Russian writer Alexei Tolstoy:

¹²⁶ Hans Kindler, “National Symphony Conductor Comments on Today’s Program,” *The Washington Post*, November 8, 1942.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ F. Bonavia, “Shostakovich in London,” *New York Times*, August 2, 1942.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Nicolas Slonimsky, “Dmitri Dmitrievitch Shostakovitch,” *Musical Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (October 1942): 435.

“Alexei Tolstoy saw in it ‘a sudden outbreak of war, the patter of iron rats dancing to the tune of a rat catcher.’ The theme of the citizen hero struggles through, integrated, from melodic allusions, into a powerful restatement. But the ‘iron rats’ leave a path of destruction in their march.”¹³¹

Allying with Hans Kindler, Serge Koussevitzky—conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra—was also on the defensive against the claims of “banality,” “unevenness,” and simplicity:

Musicians and critics who make such strong criticism today will strongly regret in the nearest future what they have said, for to criticize the work of a man who is without doubt a genius, one must listen not once but many times....No one since Beethoven has had the aesthetic sense, the approach to musical material that Shostakovich has. He is the greatest master of musical wealth; he is the master of what he desires to do; he has melody without end; his language is as rich as the world; his emotion is absolutely universal.¹³²

Unfortunately for Koussevitzky, Western critics held to their inimical opinions while the Soviets held to their favorable ones. Shostakovich’s Seventh Symphony fell off of the musical radar quickly, as most of the symphony’s detractors predicted. Christopher Gibbs in his essay “The Phenomenon of the Seventh,” notes the decline of the symphony in the concert repertoire after 1942.¹³³

The commentary on the Seventh Symphony that appeared years after its disappearance from concert stages and in the secondary literature is clearly influenced by the viewpoints of the original critics. However, in the retrospective interpretations there is little discussion of the historical context and the matter of how time and events conditioned criticism; thus, the

¹³¹ Ibid., 437.

¹³² Associated Press, “Red Composer Ranked With Beethoven,” *The Washington Post*, August 2, 1942. Also see “Shostakovich Upheld,” *New York Times*, August 2, 1942.

¹³³ Christopher H. Gibbs, “The Phenomenon of the Seventh,” in *Shostakovich and His World*, ed. Laurel E. Fay (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 98-9. He observes the postwar performances by The New York Philharmonic (1962, 1990, 1994, 1998, 2000), Philadelphia Orchestra (1977, 2000), Boston Symphony (1948-9, 1984, 1995), Chicago Symphony (1947, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1995), and Cleveland Orchestra (1995, 1999). See Table 2, p. 99.

symphony is divorced, in effect from the context in which it was written. In his 1957 book *A History of Russian Music*, Richard Leonard considered the “Leningrad” Symphony’s history “as sobering as its conception and birth were inspiring.”¹³⁴ In particular, he mentions the “appallingly long first movement” and the symphony’s “swollen proportions.”¹³⁵ In a revival of Virgil Thomson’s critique, David Gow says,

It is essentially representational, and its weaknesses largely derive from the fact that it is often couched in the terms of a propaganda poster....These events are described in musical language which a child could not misunderstand, and it was precisely this fact that ensured the work's immediate success; but it is also, of course, precisely this fact which largely accounted for the rapid falling-off of interest in the symphony after the war—at least outside the Soviet Union. This is a fate which all too often befalls a *piece d'occasion*, however effective it may be at the time; and this is exactly what the Seventh was.¹³⁶

Whereas Gow attributes the decline of the symphony to propaganda and its simplistic musical language, Hugh Ottaway credits its fall from grace to the lack of conflict or tension: “Curiously, apart from the climax of the first movement, there is no fundamental opposition of conflicting forces: was there ever a less dialectical heroic symphony? Here, then, is a possible clue to the work’s declining fortunes in the past thirty years.”¹³⁷

Upon rehearsing the symphony, Wilfrid Mellers contends that “emotion is best recollected in tranquility.”¹³⁸ Unlike Shostakovich’s masterpieces (he names the Fifth and Tenth Symphony), “The Leningrad sprawls and expatiates; the affirmatively noble themes aren't quite good enough, the nasty-Nazi music goes on too long so that it can't make its point in context...it doesn't, however, hold one's musical interest consistently, as do Shostakovich's finest works, so

¹³⁴ Richard Anthony Leonard, *A History of Russian Music*, (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 334.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ David Gow, “Shostakovich’s ‘War’ Symphonies,” *The Musical Times* 105, no. 1453 (March, 1964): 192.

¹³⁷ Hugh Ottaway, *BBC Music Guides: Shostakovich Symphonies* (Seattle: University of Washington Press: 1978), 36-7.

¹³⁸ Wilfrid Mellers, “Review: Symphony No. 7 (Leningrad), Piano Concerto No. 1 by Shostakovich; André Previn; New York Philharmonic; Bernstein, *The Musical Times* 107, no. 1475 (January 1966): 52

that its effectiveness depends on the rhetorical tension of its performance.”¹³⁹ Michel Calvocoressi offers a similar reaction to the Seventh, which he finds unconvincing, “monotonous,” and not “out of the common even from the purely technical point of view.”¹⁴⁰

Just as Western opinion adhered to many of the original criticisms, Soviet appraisal was essentially the same in that it touched most upon the programmatic elements of the symphony and praised its social and political value. In *Pages from the Life of Dmitri Shostakovich*, Dmitri Sollertinsky articulates musical passages by highlighting the dramaturgy as well as the picturesque: “The enemy’s dreadful invasion machinery is already on the move. The noise grows, there are screeches, squeals, and roars everywhere. In the gigantic battle scene [the “invasion” episode]—not a fight for survival but the destruction of two worlds—relief comes at last.”¹⁴¹ Similarly, Martinov uses vivid imagery not only in describing thematic processes, but also in accounting for the composer’s contemplation over the musical material: “Only meditation over the beauty of the world could prompt such a melody [Largo], akin alike to the quiet of a summer evening, to the green gloaming of the woods, to the blue of the seas and the skies.”¹⁴² Even Western commentators found it hard to resist such an urge, although theirs were tinged with sarcasm. One writer offers forgiveness to listeners if they receive an “impression of a desolate Siberian winter landscape set with vast frozen mountains” in the Adagio, instead of “love of life and the beauties of nature”—the composer’s stated program.¹⁴³ Rich in his intonation and matter-of-factness, Richard Taruskin’s estimation is just as cutting:

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Michel D. Calvocoressi, *A Survey of Russian Music* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1974), 113.

¹⁴¹ Dmitri and Ludmilla Sollertinsky, *Pages from the Life of Dmitri Shostakovich*, trans. Graham Hobbs and Charles Midgley (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), 102.

¹⁴² Ivan Martynov, *Dmitri Shostakovich: The Man and his Works*, trans. T. Guralsky (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 120-1.

¹⁴³ Robert Dearling, “The First Twelve Symphonies,” in *Shostakovich: The Man and His Music*, ed. Christopher Norris (Boston: M. Boyars, 1982), 66.

This hulking programmatic symphony, this bombastic anachronism replete with onomatopoetical battle music and cyclic thematic dramaturgy, emerged like some sort of woolly mammoth out of the Stalinist deep freeze. Its rhetoric was shamelessly inflated....and the crass methods by which its message was mongered assaulted fastidious taste just as brutishly as the invaders could be heard assaulting Russia....This debasement of musical values was being carried out in the name of the same holy humanitarian cause that dominated the daily headlines.¹⁴⁴

And so, Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony seems to have kept its iconic status as music for the war effort—or propaganda—which may be seen as a devaluation of the symphony or symphonic genre or a virtue (depending on one's aesthetic or moral perceptions). Yet discussions on the program and the circumstances surrounding its conception continue with little investigation into the music beyond a thematic roadmap. The eminent scholar David Fanning has maintained that Shostakovich studies are in need of a deeper investigation into extended structural processes: "A strong defense of both Sibelius and Shostakovich could be mounted simply by pointing to the complexity of their long-term structural processes, which, as with Beethoven, often worked reciprocally with the simplicity of the musical surface. In fact I believe this kind of investigation to be one of the most urgent priorities for Shostakovich scholarship."¹⁴⁵ In the following chapter, I hope to demonstrate the symphony's multi-dimensional characteristics by providing evidence of long-range musical processes that lend toward a cohesiveness of form as well as how the traditional and innovative musical aspects unfold.

¹⁴⁴ Richard Taruskin, "Shostakovich and Us," in *Shostakovich in Context*, ed. Rosamund Bartlett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 18-9.

¹⁴⁵ David Fanning, "Shostakovich: 'The Present Day Master of the C Major Key,'" *Acta Musicologica*, 73, no. 2 (2001): 139.

CHAPTER 3

RE-EXAMINING THE WARHORSE: THE PROCESS OF OPPOSITION AND DISTORTION

The charges of simplicity, conventionality, and the seeming distortion of symphonic form that were made by the critics of the 1940s have produced a view of the “Leningrad” as a simple piece of program music well-suited for its stressful time but not deserving of deep scholarly inquiry. Their views resulted in surface investigations into the symphony’s musical elements. What was needed, however, was a deeper examination into the more subtle processes and recurring manifestations which account for the Seventh’s dynamicism and formal coherency.

For this chapter, I have chosen to comment on several issues that are useful in bridging the gap between programmatic content and specific musical results. While it will not be possible to make a systematic analysis of the ramifications of these issues in a single chapter, it will be possible to introduce issues and comment on the score data that can be used to support my interpretation. In my study I have found that there are musical and processual elements within the symphony that intentionally disrupt and complicate the course of traditional sonata and symphonic form as well as the progression of musical events. There is, in fact, order and clarity to the chaotic underpinnings of Shostakovich’s Seventh Symphony.

The employment of sonata form and its obscuration in the first movement is an essential feature of the symphony. It is this disruptive and oppositional element which forms the basis of many other processes found in the Seventh Symphony at various levels of analysis. The development or repetitive “invasion” episode is in contrast not only with the previous themes of

the first movement, but also with sonata form itself in that it introduces a new theme and takes an antithetical course against which a development section is typically opposed: repetition. The formal plan of the symphony as a whole seems to take on this characteristic of disruption, specifically of traditional structural units, and in particular, the middle sections. Here, Shostakovich abruptly offers sharp contrast at the beginning and throughout the central episodes, while at the same time integrating previously heard themes or musical ideas and transforming them into their intonational opposite. This return of expository material in a distorted form most often occurs near the close of these contrasting middles, and is antithetical not only to its original character, but also to the episode itself. Similarly, his recapitulations seem to distort the return of tonal or thematic structures, reconstructing what traditionally should be a resolution of tension into non-resolving conflicts.

I believe that critics such as Virgil Thomson—who finds the themes and episodes “routine”—and Olin Downes—who propose that the thematic material is inferior and “flung together loosely and flimsily”—have missed some significant musical events and techniques which are recurring and provide the symphony with a congruence of form, lending to both structural unity and symphonic dramaturgy. Shostakovich’s complication of traditional form is particular to the “destructive processes” described by Furie. It is the means by which listeners are offered an ebb and flow of dynamicism, a series of tension and suspension of activity. Significant is the frequency with which these techniques and processes occur. Locally, they may seem happenstance. However, if one considers more long-range implications, they become at once disruptive, and at the same time, unifying.

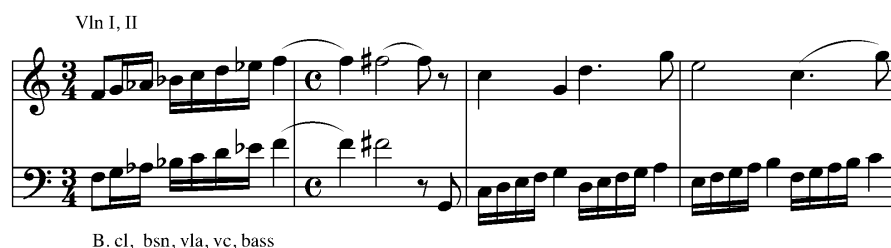
First Movement Anomalies and Their Relationship to the Programmatic Narrative

Until the emergence of the disruptive “invasion” episode at measure 149, the symphony’s first movement suggests that it will unfold as a sonata form in C of the most traditional sort. The transition from C-major to its dominant, G-major, in the second subject area is prepared and obvious, as is the contrasting second subject theme, lyrical and subdued in character. Although the primary and secondary key areas are clearly established, not all of the harmonic language falls neatly into the conventions of common practice style. As an introduction to some of the movement’s stylistic anomalies, it is useful to track the progress of the pitch F-sharp, a foreign pitch to C-major that is used in a salient manner, both when it is foreign to a local key and when it is not. Its presence can be found at multiple levels of analysis within the first movement, as it is a tone which performs a variety of functions at the structural level and also distorts and reinforces certain musical values. Its manifestations acquire melodic, harmonic, tonal, and structural significance, and may, at times, exhibit more than one of these associations simultaneously.

To begin, it is important to note that the exposition in the first movement of Shostakovich’s Seventh Symphony is both traditional in its establishment of a first subject area in the home key (C-major) and a second subject area in the dominant of G-major. Yet, in the third measure of the opening theme, the clearly defined key of C-major is disrupted by the appearance of F-sharp (Ex. 1).

Ex. 1, Shostakovich, Symphony No. 7, first movement, mm. 1-6.

Besides its obvious foreignness to the established key, this modal outlier of C-major creates a moment of tension in many respects: its duration is longer than any other note in the theme, it is metrically accented, its resolution to the fifth scale degree (or dominant) is fleeting—occurring on an offbeat—and it foreshadows the rhythmic figure (timpani and trumpets) that will dominate the percussive march rhythms of the “invasion” episode. Similarly, it reintroduces this theme in the exposition, with a brief passing resolution to the dominant, (Ex. 2).



Ex. 2, Shostakovich, Symphony No. 7, first movement, mm. 34-37.

In the second subject area, the new theme—first stated in G-major—retains the conflicting C and F-sharp dyad of first subject area in their duration, and in particular, of the F-sharp’s passing resolution to G (now the tonic). Whereas F-sharp was previously a tonal outlier, it has now become the leading tone of the new key, retaining its position as a tensional melodic note and tonal degree in need of resolution (Ex. 3a). With the subsequent restatement of the second subject’s theme in B-major, F-sharp has become a prominent tonal note with harmonic considerations. Its value lies in its position as the dominant, yet its replacement from an active melodic note has been transferred to an ostinato in the cello, with deeper harmonic leanings in combination with the violas’ repetitive figure.¹⁴⁶ Interestingly, the F-sharp cello ostinato contains the same neighbor: G (Ex. 3b). In the closing measures of the exposition, the violin solo is

¹⁴⁶ Chords composed of thirds (with an omitted fifth) are common harmonic intervals throughout the movement.

accompanied by a pedal chord held in the strings. Comprised of a perfect fifth (B and F-sharp) and a suspended 4th (E) above, the addition of a G-sharp in measure 143 turns the previous dissonant E into the root of an E-major chord. Thus, the exposition ends with the F-sharp as a dissonant tone and remains unresolved as the “invasion” episode takes way (Ex. 4).

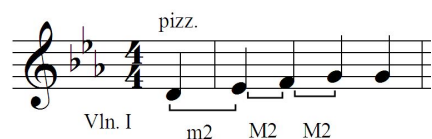
Poco piu mosso ♩ = 126

In lieu of a traditional development, Shostakovich presents a new, 21-bar theme in E-flat. In traditional sonata form, one would expect new treatment of one or more themes of the exposition and modulatory excursions leading to harmonic instability. Here, however, Shostakovich employs excessive repetition. Similarly, the transition to this episode is unique in its use of tonal silence, unresolved tension of the E-major chord, and abrupt shift in key. The element of shock and interruption, while unprepared by traditional formal design, may be reconciled with the symphony's conception of life being interrupted by war or struggle. As this discussion progresses, one will find the element of distortion, interruption, and the juxtaposition of thesis and antithesis in the middle section of the movements as being a recurrent element and an essential part of the symphony's dramaturgy and construction.

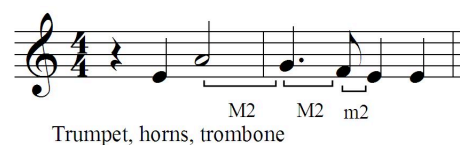
Although the theme in this episode is characterized by incessant repetition, each repetition is differentiated by various instrumental combinations, and increasing intensity of accompaniment. After its twelfth restatement, a fragment of the theme is varied by retrogression, yet uses the rhythm of the first three bars of the theme (Ex. 5). As we have seen, many commentators have considered the theme and its progression as banal and tasteless. Esti Sheinberg, however, has offered a different assessment which takes into account its redundancy and context among more complex and non-repetitive themes as having satirical implications.¹⁴⁷ While the F-sharp's significance seems to defy this episode, it reintroduces the first two measures of the "invasion" theme with its original contour. However, the intervallic pattern is distorted (Ex. 6a), and the F-sharp has briefly claimed its position as the tonal center and pedal tone with its neighbor G (Ex. 6b). It is within these last pages—where the literal repetition of the entire theme has been renounced—that chaotic and increasingly disruptive sounds have taken

¹⁴⁷ Esti Sheinberg, *Irony, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque in The Music of Shostakovich: A Theory of Musical Incongruities*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 91.

over, and the original “banal” invasion episode’s context has been recast. Sheinberg’s account, relating the episode to the theme of war is perceptive without using definitive programmatic labels: “Here, where banality culminates in chaos, the aesthetic axis is transformed into an ethical one, and the stupidity of ‘crass tastelessness’ is correlated with the annihilating stupidity of war.”¹⁴⁸



a. mm. 166-167



b. mm. 429-439

Ex. 5, Shostakovich Symphony No. 7, first movement.



a. mm. 166-167



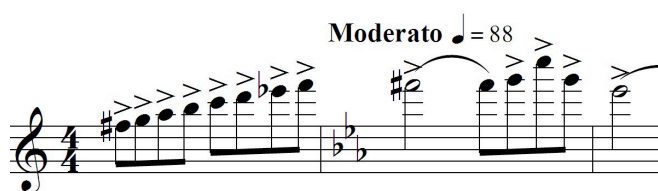
b. mm. 469-472

Ex. 6, Shostakovich Symphony No. 7, first movement.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 93.

The transformation of the theme by means of prolonging time and by the process of intensification may also find correlation with the symphony's affective conception, particularly in the heightening of distress caused by conflict and struggle.

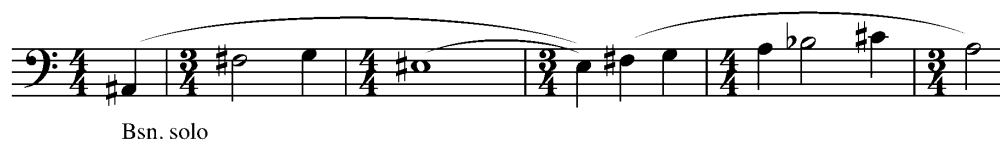
More importantly, F-sharp marks a significant point of arrival: the recapitulation. Theme 1 is reintroduced not in C-major, but in the tonic minor. Here, Shostakovich omits the first two measures of theme 1. Its return—beginning on the F-sharp—is indicative of the formal structural divide, and compelling in that the climax of the former “invasion” episode and the recapitulation are merged (Ex. 7). Not only is the context of theme 1 distorted, but also the division of sonata form structure and balance.



Ex. 7, Shostakovich, Symphony No. 7, first movement, mm. 496-499.

Similarly, the recapitulated second subject area does not bring a resolution to the movement's tonic, but rather, begins with an F-sharp major chord (first in inversion at RN 57, and in root position at RN 58). Several measures later, the bassoon transforms the second theme from its original major key statement in the exposition to F-sharp minor with flattened modal scale degrees, while also obscuring the original meter (Ex. 8). It is another instance where, although Shostakovich disrupts the traditional sonata-form structure, there is an underlying unifying device under the surface. With the restatement of the invasion theme (in C major) and martial drum rhythms, the concluding measures of the first movement affirm C major, yet a sense of unresolved conflict is unavoidable. Below is a table and diagram outlining the functions

of F-sharp throughout the movement (Ex. 9). I have classified its manifestations according to its function—melodic, harmonic, tonal, and structural.



Ex. 8, Shostakovich, Symphony No. 7, first movement, mm. 565-569.

Level	Function	Description
1	Melodic	A <i>foreign</i> note within a theme or melody.
2	Harmonic	Functions as a prominent chord tone within a progression, as a pedal tone or ostinato under which chords fluctuate.
3	Tonal	Relates to important keys and/or the primary scale degrees of 4, 5, and 7; may also disrupt established tonal areas.
4	Structural	Prominent at formal divisions or structural points.

Ex. 9a, Level of Salience

	Measure	Level
Exposition	3	1
	35	2
	54	1, 3
	61-65	2, 3
	88-89	2
	90-93	2
	139-145	2, 4
Recapitulation	469	3
	498	1, 4
	540-550	2, 3, 4
	562	2, 3

Ex. 9b, F-sharp and its functions in the first movement of Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony

While the first movement of Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony makes explicit use of F-sharp in multiple ways to define larger formal structures, to create points of tension, and to complicate melodic units and thematic structures, its appearance in the second movement is less for structural and transformative purposes. It becomes a consonant tone, relating to the keys of B-major and C-sharp minor as common scale degrees. However, it may be noted that although F-sharp no longer lies outside of the prominent tonal area, its position as the dominant and subdominant in the second movement lends to its significance as a tone that has a pronounced function in multiple contexts.

The Anomalous Middles of the Later Movements

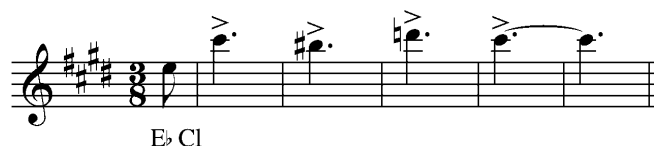
It was noted in the previous chapter that the reception of the Seventh Symphony from the 1940s to the present focused primarily on issues about music and programmatic content that originated in the first movement. Frequently, the middle movements were neglected entirely or dismissed for being conventional, and no serious attempt was made to link the music found therein with that of the outer movements. While Shostakovich indeed chose not to employ cyclic themes or obvious links between harmonic areas, there are other categories of musical material that do suggest relationships between these movements. Movements two, three, and four look back to the first movement with respect to form, abrupt contrasts, and in the transformation or distortion of themes. While the other movements may seem more independent from the first, parallels may be seen, as they present coherent formal structures with opposing elements inherent within them.

As previously mentioned, the "invasion" episode is presented in lieu of a traditional sonata form development. It is in sharp contrast to the first and second subject area not only in its thematic construct, but also in mood, and its insistence on repetition. Here, the sudden shift in key and mood are not prepared. With the conclusion of the second subject area, three measures

of tonal silence and march rhythms of the snare drum precede the contrasting episode. Although there is a rhythmic foreshadowing of the episode in these measures, the absence of harmonic preparation or of any other form of audible transition lends to the feeling of shock and contrast.

Similar instances can be found in the second and third movement. This leads me to believe that these seemingly abrupt contrasts and distortions of themes are intrinsic elements of the symphony's formal procedures. The appearance of the cynical trio in the second movement is similarly unforeseen. The movement's initial theme (theme a) is restated, and the last four measures transposed up a whole step. The final measure does not give clue to what is about to unfold in the trio except for an emphasis on G-sharp, the dominant of the trio (in C-sharp minor). In the first movement, the mechanistic reiteration of the "invasion" theme is transformed from what one may consider naïve or the intentionally banal, to the grotesque and chaotic. However, this contrast of opposing elements in the second movement takes on a different progression. Whereas the "invasion" theme unfolds its transformation and opposition by prolonging the time span of the middle episode, the cynical, humorous, and optimistic motifs collide and interrupt unexpectedly (Ex. 10). Yet mechanistic motives—as in the "invasion" episode—accompany these passages, adding to the dynamicism and forward drive of the contrasting middle sections in the first and second movements.

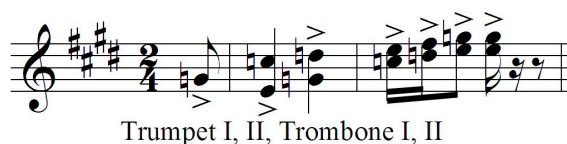
The sudden interruption of "pleasant events" and "past joys" by a stark episode which juxtaposes contrasting moods in an ironic way, relates to the confusion and turmoil brought about by conflict, while also satirizing the act of war. Here, the melodic material and affective connotations of the trio are antagonistic on two levels: to the scherzo and to elements within the trio itself.



a. Cynical, mm. 101-105.



b. Humorous, mm. 123-125.



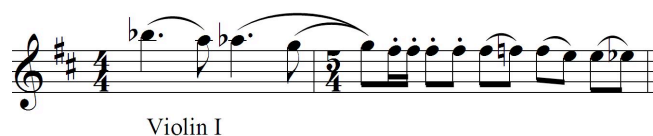
c. Optimistic, mm. 176-177.

Ex. 10, Shostakovich, Symphony No. 7, second movement.

The third movement displays characteristic features of both the first and second movements in the opposition of a central episode to previous musical material, and in the juxtaposition and transformation of melodic units into a new context. The framing sections of the third movement contain a chorale which functions much like a ritornello, and introduces the theme of the violins and the lyrical waltz of the flute. While the lyrical character is inherent in both the chorale and the subsequent string and flute passages, there is a distinction between what I call the collective nature of the chorale, and the individualist or subjective character of the passages for violins and flute. A similar discernment may be found in theme 1 of first movement,

which assumes attributes of mass song and the essence of lyrical intimation in theme 2. However, what is most striking and suggestive of the first movement—while also bearing a resemblance to the Moderato—is the contrasting middle.

The Moderato risoluto is more obviously prepared in terms of tonal, rhythmic, and increasing intensity than the previous movements. The dotted eighth–sixteenth rhythm in the violins introduces a rhythmic motive which becomes prominent, while also emphasizing D-sharp, the dominant of the Moderato. The raised fourth scale degree and its various manifestations in the first movement may be observed in the tonal relationship between the D-major theme of the violins and the G-sharp risoluto section under discussion. Furthermore, a derivation from the second movement is also apparent in this transitional passage: the repetitive semitone figure is a prominent melodic and accompanimental feature (Ex. 11).



a. mm. 16-17



b. m. 22

Ex. 11, Shostakovich, Symphony No. 7, second movement.

The image displays two staves of musical notation from Shostakovich's Symphony No. 7, third movement. The top staff, labeled '120 Largo', is in 3/4 time with a tempo of 92. It features a melodic line with a 'tenuato' (sustained) marking and a 'pp' (pianissimo) dynamic. The bottom staff, labeled '121 Moderato risoluto', is in 3/4 time with a tempo of 120. It features a rhythmic ostinato with a 'cresc.' (crescendo) marking and a 'pp' (pianissimo) dynamic. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

120 Largo $\text{♩} = 92$
tenuato
pp
 Archi
pp
uniso
pp
cresc.
uniso
pp
peresc.
f

121 Moderato risoluto $\text{♩} = 120$
 II
 Fag.
f pesante
 C.fag.
f pesante
senza sord.
 Cor.
f pesante
III senza sord.
f pesante
 Archi
div.
f pesante
f pesante
f pesante
 II

Ex. 11c, Shostakovich, Symphony No. 7, third movement, mm. 219-241: derivations from second movement.

A combination of repetitive ostinati and the dotted eighth–sixteenth rhythms contribute to the incessant drive. Unlike the material which preceded it, the Moderato of the third movement is vigorous and militant. The initial violin theme is reiterated by different instruments and its intervallic pattern is distorted. A menacing rhythmic ostinato joined by the snare drum recalls the martial character of the first movement's “invasion” episode. Fascinating, however, is the juxtaposition of the chorale and violin theme within the contrasting Moderato risoluto. Their

character is transformed from the subdued to the epic. Whereas the winds and strings were the carriers of the chorale and the violin theme respectively, they have now been transferred to the brass, while a majority of the woodwinds and strings provide a forward driving accompaniment which aids in the continuity of the melodic material's new context. This new context seems to harmonize two disparate, and otherwise diametrically opposed, "modes of expression."¹⁴⁹ And, analogous to the climax of the first movement in which the "invasion" episode and the recapitulation coalesce, the climax of the Adagio occurs at the point of juxtaposition (Ex. 12). Yet again, there is evidence of an over-reaching formal coherence which takes the first movement as its model. Similarly, the use of silence and similar scoring in the Moderato of the finale recalls the Adagio, another underlying sense of unification which has precedence in a previous idea within the symphony (Ex. 13).

Ex. 12, Shostakovich Symphony No. 7, third movement, mm. 322-325.

Ex. 13, Shostakovich Symphony No. 7, fourth movement, mm. 368-371.

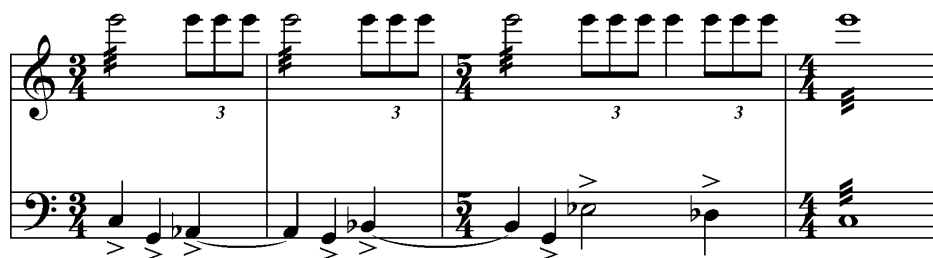
¹⁴⁹ David Haas uses this expression in describing a similar instance in the recapitulation of the first movement of Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony. David Haas, "Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony in C Minor," in *Shostakovich in Context*, ed., Rosamund Bartlett (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 130.

The Finale's Retrospective Elements

All program notes on the Seventh Symphony draw attention to the climactic return of the first movement's opening theme in its original key of C-major shortly before the end of the final movement and the work. It is an obvious case of cyclic thematic recall, with links to such Symphonies as Beethoven's Fifth and Ninth, as well as Tchaikovsky's Fourth and Fifth. So obvious is the recall that that it might indeed be identified even by the type of audience member characterized by Virgil Thomson: one of limited "musical perceptions" and the easily distracted. We will be looking, however, at connections of a less overt nature which have not received as much scrutiny.

Analogous to the "invasion" episode of the first movement, the development of the finale's main theme is prolonged and leisurely. Over many bars, the first notes of the main theme are restated much like the "invasion" theme: through different instrumental combinations and with added accompaniment which thickens the texture as the theme continues to exert itself until the last bars. However, unlike the process of transformation in the central episode of the first movement, the finale's main theme is developed in a more traditional manner: it is transposed at various levels and undergoes rhythmic variation. Its insistence until the final measures of the finale lends to the ambiguity of the theme of victory. Although the move from C-minor to C-major has already been established, the theme—with its flattened scale degrees—seems to distort a firm triumph of C-major until the last three bars (Ex. 14).¹⁵⁰ Such a precedence is set in the first movement, as F-sharp seems to undermine the established key. Furthermore, the reemergence of the first movement's opening theme unexpectedly interrupts the persistent progression of the finale's main theme, affirming the solid return of C-major three bars earlier (Ex. 15).

¹⁵⁰ David Fanning notes the Beethovenian C minor-to-C major paradigm in the concluding bars of the Seventh Symphony, stating "the final pages of the Seventh combined triumph with a sense of its appalling human cost." David Fanning, "Shostakovich: 'The Present-Day Master of the C Major Key,'" *Acta Musicologica* 73:2 (2001): 134.



Ex. 14, Shostakovich, Symphony No. 7, fourth movement, mm. 617-620.



Ex. 15, Shostakovich, Symphony No. 7, fourth movement, mm. 602-604.

There are other events in the finale which suggest an affinity with the first movement. The surface manifestations, as mentioned, are the reemergence of the main theme of the first movement, the move from C-minor back to C-major (a reversal of the C-major main theme and its transformation to C-minor in the recapitulation), and the process of transformation of the main themes during an extended period of time. However, there are less obvious and more complex motivic connections between these two movements. For one, small melodic units of the “invasion” theme manifest in various ways in the fourth movement. The descending scalar passage and a fragment of the main motif are found in the return of the fourth movement’s introductory figure and main theme (Ex. 16). Similarly, the three note motif (RN 171) of the

finale closely resembles the descending motif of the first movement in its rhythm and intervallic pattern (m. 31).¹⁵¹



a. mm. 321-322



b. mm. 326-328

Ex. 16, Shostakovich, Symphony No. 7, fourth movement.¹⁵²

Like the movements which have preceded it, the finale's central Moderato episode is contrasted with the previous musical material by means of tempo, articulation, and rhythmic activity. Despite the contrasting elements within this section, melodic and rhythmic allusions to the first movement imply a gradual, but definitive, return to the central theme of war or struggle before the restatement of the first movement's theme.¹⁵³ In many ways the finale may be seen as a recollection of the violent events which have preceded it. Consequently, it could be considered as the final struggle to be overcome and ultimately achieved at the return of C-major and the quotation from the first bars of the symphony.

¹⁵¹ The three note motif in the first movement also bears semblance to the ascending sixteenth-note triplet figure (RN 204) of the fourth movement.

¹⁵² Compare example 16a with measures 161-162 of the first movement, and 16b with 154-155.

¹⁵³ For instance, the melodic contour of measures 368-371 resemble the first three measures of the second subject area theme in the first movement (mm. 53-55). Similarly, the rhythm of these measures recalls the theme of the 'invasion' episode.

What one should gain from this chapter is a sense of a coherent formal structure which is at once expansive throughout the entire Seventh Symphony and, on a more local level, within the movements themselves. As mentioned, such consistency takes the form of conflicting oppositions of themes, key centers, and the distortions or transformative processes by which certain ideas are subjected. In most instances, these antagonistic trends are most prominent in the central episodes of the movements, where thematic and motivic obscuration takes place, and new ideas are presented which are in confrontation with the musical and affective material inside and outside of the episode. While there are certainly reiterated ideas throughout the symphony, they are by no means as banal, simplistic, or conventional under the surface as they may seem. While this chapter touches on these spots, I believe there is much to be gained in studies concerning Shostakovich's "Leningrad" Symphony, particularly the way in which such juxtapositions and collisions of opposing materials enhance the dramatism and dynamicism of the symphony as a whole. It is, I believe, a start in understanding the forces at work within the symphony, and why, as David Fanning observes, "we hold our breath."

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