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SHOSTAKOVICH

Symphony No.7
'Leningrad'

Yuri Temirkanov

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Symphony No.7, Op.60, 'Leningrad'

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

①	Allegretto	28.40
②	Moderato (poco allegretto)	10.19
③	Adagio	13.52
④	Allegro non troppo	18.51
	Total timings	71.44

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SHOSTAKOVICH

Symphony No.7, Op.60, 'Leningrad'

As a 27-year-old, in 1934, Shostakovich had a runaway, worldwide success with his opera, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, which was regarded as a high-water mark in Soviet opera and praised by the authorities as 'the result of the general success of socialist construction'. In 1936, with the arts now under the centralized control of the All-Union Committee on Artistic Affairs, the tide was turning against any composers whose works did not appeal directly to the masses. Stalin attended a performance of *Lady Macbeth* in January of that year and was offended by the forthrightness of the subject matter and confused by Shostakovich's advanced musical language. Two days later, the now notorious Pravda editorial appeared describing *Lady Macbeth* under

the headline 'Muddle instead of Music' as a 'discordant, confused stream of sounds...the music cracks, grunts and growls'. A few days on, his ballet, *The Limpid Stream* fared no better under the banner, 'Balletic Falsehood'. Although now seen as preposterous and philistine, at the time these were unprecedented articles. Pravda, the official organ of Soviet Communism, disapproved in language verging upon the violent; the 'cheap clowning' of *Lady Macbeth* being chillingly described as 'a game of clever ingenuity that may end very badly'. The party had spoken – this music was not to be imitated and the works in question disappeared from the repertory forthwith. Nobody in the Soviet Union was immune to Stalin's Great Purge in the years

immediately preceding the Second World War. Neither the poorest citizen-comrade nor the highest ranking party official could escape Stalin's clunking fist as he sought to consolidate power by 'cleansing' the Communist Party, and the country at large, of so-called dissidents, undesirable anti-revolutionaries and other 'enemies of the people'.

By the time the Second World War came to Shostakovich's doorstep, he had regained some respect amongst the Soviet authorities and could even command a position teaching at the Conservatory. But he still had to watch his step. With the Nazi invasion of Russia in June 1941, the composer tried to enlist in the Red Army, but was rejected seemingly due to his rather poor eyesight. That he was also one of the most famous composers in the land may have swayed the judgement of the Communist Party elite. On 8 September 1941 the Axis powers had arrived to

capture Leningrad on their march toward Moscow. The Siege of Leningrad, which was to last until 1944, with little respite, is remembered as 900 days of hell; one of the most horrifyingly protracted, savage and bloody campaigns in modern history. For the first 18 months of the siege, Leningrad was blockaded completely in an effort to starve the city and its people into submission. Although ultimately unsuccessful, the siege was as much of a loss to the victors as to the vanquished. The true number of casualties may never be known, and the figures are forever being revised (mostly upwards), but it is estimated that somewhere between a third and a half of the city lost their lives to heavy air raids, fire-bombing and the silent killer – starvation.

Unable to defend his city in the service of the military, Shostakovich instead volunteered as a fireman, devoting his free time to writing and arranging patriotic

songs. Much of the **Symphony No.7 in C Major, Op.60**, dedicated to the city of his birth was also written during the invasion of Russia and the Siege of Leningrad:

Never in my life have I dedicated my compositions to anyone. But this symphony – if I succeed in its realisation – I shall dedicate to Leningrad. For all that I wrote in 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 defence against fascist oppressors.

Shostakovich had, in fact, dedicated a number of previous compositions to individuals, including his Cello Sonata in D minor, Op.40 (to the cellist, Viktor Kubatsky) and the controversial opera, *Lady Macbeth* (to his first wife, Nina Vardaz). But such a caveat is hardly one that can enter into the realms of the usual arguments that bedevil Shostakovich's

life and music – namely to what extent was he either a silent but willing servant of the Soviet Union or a musically vociferous critic of the regime's horrors. It's clear that Leningrad was dear to him and he was certainly amongst the last artists to leave the city when life became unbearable. It is less apparent just when the famous opening movement was actually conceived. Some push its genesis as far back as 1939, around the same time as the completion of the Sixth Symphony, while others posit the middle of July 1941 as the date he began work. Much of the argument here lies in the massive movement's famous 'invasion theme' – a short march repeated a dozen times with increasing tension. This 'war machine' crescendo replaces the traditional development section and baldly states the theme over and over with the only actual development being in the orchestration which drives the march into frenzy by accumulation, not

only through instrumentation, but by an increase in dynamics and accentuation. The popular idea has it portraying the Nazi invaders marching on Russia and Leningrad. It has also been thought of as depicting the horrors of Stalinist rule, or indeed the terror visited upon the masses by any fascist or totalitarian regime. Evidence that both Hitler and Stalin may be targets rests on musical quotation within the march theme. The second half of the march is most likely a parody on an aria from one of Hitler's favourite operettas, *Die lustige Witwe* (The Merry Widow), the opening of the march resembling moments in the libretto of *Lady Macbeth* considered to be connected with tyrannical behaviour. Shostakovich described the section succeeding the 'invasion' music as the central focus of the movement as a 'requiem for the heroes who died for us' in his notes on the occasion of the symphony's first performance.

What does seem fairly certain is that the first two movements were completed about a week after the Leningrad Blockade began. On 17 September 1941 Shostakovich broadcast the following via Leningrad Radio:

An hour ago, I finished the score of two parts of a large symphonic composition. If I succeed in writing this composition well, if I succeed in completing the third and fourth parts, then it will be possible to call this composition the Seventh Symphony. Why do I announce this? So that the radio listeners who are listening to me now will know that the life of our city goes on as normal. We are all now doing our military duty. Soviet musicians, my dear and numerous brothers-in-arms, my friends Remember, that our art is now in great danger. Let us defend our music, let us work honestly and selflessly.

Whether this was merely broadcast by Shostakovich, rather than written by him, may never be known, but the composition of the rest of the symphony appears a little less clouded by the mists of time or politics. The third movement seems to have been completed prior to the evacuation of Shostakovich and his family to Moscow on 30 September 1941, and the final movement finished in Kuybishev by 27 December, in living conditions which were far from favourable to the composer. The world premiere of the symphony took place in the same location by similarly displaced members of the Bolshoi Theatre Orchestra under the direction of Samuil Samosud on 5 March 1942. A few weeks later Samosud introduced the work to Moscow and by radio to Russia and the world. The work quickly became known and mythologised as a great symphony for the times, an anti-war conception which extolled the indomitable spirit of man and Leningrad

and, as the American poet Carl Sandburg opined, was music 'written with the heart's blood'. The race for the Western world's first performance of this heroic work was made the more urgent and exotic and by the microfilm copies of the work taking a circuitously exciting, James Bond route out of Russia to the West, via locations such as Tehran, Cairo, Casablanca and (oddly) Brazil. Major conductors in the U.S. vied for the honour of performing it, including Koussevitsky, Rodzinski and Stokowski – Toscanini eventually winning out with a broadcast on 19 July 1942. But, not before Henry Wood trumped the lot by performing the symphony with the London Philharmonic Orchestra a month earlier.

However, the most affecting performance was always going to be when the symphony returned to Leningrad. It did so on 9 August 1942 with the much depleted Leningrad Radio Orchestra being

bolstered by musician soldiers summoned back from battle and conducted by Shostakovich's fellow student at the Petrograd Conservatoire, Karl Eliasberg. The mighty General Govorov marshalled attacks on enemy gun positions, executing the specially planned Operation Squall, so that the symphony might not be interrupted. Loudspeakers relayed the performance not only throughout Leningrad, but were also targeted directly at the blockading foe in an interesting move into psychological warfare. Whether music is mightier than fire-bombing is debatable, but the impact of the symphony, the mere idea of it allied with its subsequent plethora of performances no doubt stirred the blood, and strengthened the sinews of the war effort.

The symphony remained popular throughout the war years, becoming a valuable propaganda tool not only in Russia, but among many of the Allied

nations. In the United States alone, it was played over sixty times in the year following its premiere. The flurry of performances dried up pretty much as soon as the war was over – almost as if the piece had somehow outlived its usefulness. Shostakovich began to receive criticism at home and abroad and before long it had all but disappeared from concert programmes, most especially in the West. Criticized for being naïve, crude and bombastic, the once loved symphony was derided by composers such as Virgil Thomson while Bartók famously lampooned the 'invasion' theme in his Concerto for Orchestra. However, since the late 1970s the Seventh Symphony has come back into the canon and is once again a regular on the concert scene: critics, composers and public alike now recognising it as a monumental condemnation of totalitarianism in all of its guises.

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St Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra

The St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra, Russia's oldest symphonic ensemble, was founded in 1882. In that year, by Order of Alexander III, the Court Musical Choir was established – the prototype of today's Honoured Collective of the Russian Federation. Thus, in 2007, the orchestra celebrated its 125th anniversary. The Musicians' Choir was founded to perform in the 'imperial presence' – at receptions and official ceremonies and at the balls, plays and concerts at the Imperial Court. The pinnacle of this type of activity was the participation of the choir in 1896 in the coronation ceremony of Nicholas II. In 1897 the Court Choir became the Court Orchestra, its musicians having been transferred from the military and given the same rights as other actors of royal theatres. In the early 20th century the orchestra was permitted to perform

at commercial concerts for the general public. The series of concerts 'Orchestral Collections of New Music' saw the first Russian performances of Richard Strauss' symphonic poems *Ein Heldenleben* and *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Mahler's First Symphony, Bruckner's Ninth Symphony and Scriabin's *Poem of Ecstasy*. There was a 'historical series', concerts featuring the works of a single composer and a series of subscription concerts, some of which were accompanied by a lecture or an introductory address. Among the conductors were world-renowned musicians such as Richard Strauss, Arthur Nikisch, Alexander Glazunov and Serge Koussevitsky. In 1917 the Orchestra became the State Orchestra and following the Decree of 1921 it was incorporated into the newly founded Petrograd Philharmonic, the first of its kind in the country. Shortly

afterwards an unprecedented number of great Western conductors began to come to conduct the orchestra. Their names enjoy unquestioned authority in today's musical world: Otto Klemperer (who also conducted the subscription concerts), Bruno Walter, Felix Weingartner and many more. Soloists Vladimir Horowitz and Sergey Prokofiev (the latter performing his piano concertos) appeared with the orchestra. On the initiative of foreign conductors, the orchestra began to play modern repertoire – Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Berg, Hindemith, Honegger, Poulenc and continued to premiere the music of contemporary Russian composers. Back in 1918, directed by the composer, the orchestra had premiered the Classical Symphony of Prokofiev, and in 1926 Shostakovich made his debut when Nikolay Malko conducted Shostakovich's First Symphony in the Great Hall of the Philharmonia. In 1934 the orchestra was the first in the country to receive the title of the Honoured

Orchestra of the Republic. Four years later Evgeny Mravinsky, the First Prize winner of the National Conductors Competition, joined the orchestra and for the next 50 years he gradually transformed it into one of the best orchestras in the world.

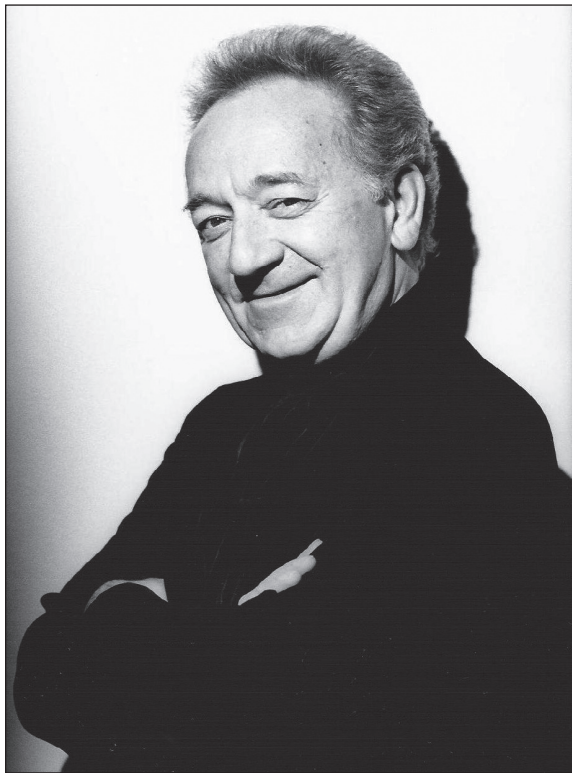
For the performance of Tchaikovsky and Shostakovich symphonies, the orchestra rapidly became 'the model'. The orchestra's virtuosity put it on a par with the orchestras of von Karajan and Walter and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra as the best interpreters of Mozart during the Viennese festival dedicated to Mozart's 200th anniversary. Unique in the musical world was also the creative alliance of Mravinsky and Shostakovich. Many of the symphonies were premiered by Mravinsky and they became the centerpieces of the repertoire, both at home and abroad on tour. We may imagine how deeply Shostakovich appreciated this collaboration when he dedicated the Eighth Symphony

to Mravinsky. The orchestra also performed in this period and beyond with other famous conductors including Leopold Stokowski, Igor Markevich, Kurt Sanderling, Arvid Jansons, Mariss Jansons, Gennady Rozhdestvensky and Evgeny Svetlanov.

In 1988 on the initiative of the orchestra, Yuri Temirkanov became the principal conductor of the most famous national orchestra. So began the 'Temirkanov era', the period of collaboration with one of the most sought-after conductors of our times. In the last few years the orchestra has given many world premieres and opened the 2005/2006 season at Carnegie Hall, the culmination of its performances in all the most prestigious concert halls of the world. In 2006/7, after a long gap, the orchestra went for the first time on a large-scale concert tour around Russia. It performed in Siberia in Irkutsk, Surgut, Khanty-Mansiysk and took part in the

2nd International Music Festival 'Stars at Baikal'. The tour finished with great success in Moscow where in June 2007 the orchestra closed the 2nd Festival of the World Symphony Orchestras. 2007/8 saw the orchestra celebrating its 125th anniversary and in December 2008 Yuri Temirkanov's 70th birthday. In the newly refurbished Philharmonic Hall the orchestra gave with Krzysztof Penderecki the first St. Petersburg performance of his *Polish Requiem*, took part in a concert with Rodion Shchedrin in which the composer played his First Piano Concerto, performed at the Marathon-Concert for the International Music Day and celebrated the 125th anniversary of Igor Stravinsky. The orchestra also visited the USA with a major concert tour, including several performances in Carnegie Hall. In March 2009 the orchestra inaugurated the recording studio of the St Petersburg Philharmonia with a performance in the Great Hall of Verdi's *Requiem*.

YURI TEMIRKANOV



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YURI TEMIRKANOV became the artistic director and chief conductor of the St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra in 1988. Looking back to Temirkanov's early career, a key event was his victory at the 2nd National Conductors' Competition in 1966. From that moment onwards, Temirkanov, a graduate student of the Leningrad Conservatory (from the class of Professor Ilia Musin) overnight entered the ranks of the most sought-after conductors of his generation. Together with Kirill Kondrashin and David Oistrakh he toured internationally and performed with orchestras from the US, France and Germany. In early 1967 Temirkanov conducted a concert in the Philharmonic Hall and after this performance Evgeny Mravinsky offered him the position of assistant conductor. From 1968 the maestro was head of the Academic Symphony Orchestra of the Philharmonia. He widened the orchestra's repertoire and took them on tour to Europe, Japan and the US. In

1976 Temirkanov became the artistic director and chief conductor of the Kirov (Mariinsky) Theatre. Here he created classic productions of *Eugene Onegin* and *Queen of Spades* by Tchaikovsky as well *War and Peace* by Prokofiev and more recently *Peter I* by Petrov and *Dead Souls* by Shchedrin. At this time Kirov also started actively performing abroad. The theatre toured the US, Japan and many countries of Europe, including England, for the first time in history. Temirkanov initiated symphony concerts by the theatre orchestra both in Russia and abroad.

In the same period Temirkanov began his collaboration with many world famous orchestras. In 1978 Temirkanov worked for the first time with Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and in 1992 became its chief conductor. From 1992 until 1997 he was also principal guest conductor of the Dresden Philharmonic. In 1998 he moved from the RPO to Danish Radio

Symphony Orchestra where he remains principal guest conductor. For six seasons (2000-2006) Temirkanov was the chief conductor of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and from 2007-2008 he has been principal guest conductor of the Bolshoi Theatre and Music Director of the Teatro Reggion in Parma.

The main focus, however, of his career for almost 20 years has been the St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra. He regularly performs in St. Petersburg to conduct the traditional opening and closing concerts of the season. He also tours extensively with the orchestra and took them to Carnegie Hall in 2005 in as part of the official ceremony of the UN General Assembly in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of Victory day. Under the direction of Temirkanov, St. Petersburg Philharmonic became the first Russian orchestra to perform at the opening concert of the season in this famous New York concert hall.

Temirkanov's activities have been recognized by numerous awards and titles. Yuri Temirkanov holds the title of the People's Artist of the USSR, he has received several State Awards and Orders (including the Order of Merit of the 2nd grade). The year of his 65th birthday brought to Temirkanov the President of Russia award and the Abbiati award, The Best Conductor of the Year. Last season the maestro was elected Honorary Academic of Academy of Santa Cecilia and was awarded the St. Petersburg Government Award. Despite the intensity of his concert schedule, Temirkanov has made the preservation and nurturing of St. Petersburg's spiritual and cultural inheritance a personal priority. He founded the Temirkanov International Foundation for Cultural Initiatives and in 1998 created the Temirkanov award for talented young musicians, granted on a yearly basis to outstanding students of Musical School of St. Petersburg Conservatory.

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Yuri Temirkanov *conductor*

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