



DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

Percussion Music and Overture from The Nose Op.15 (1930)

Concerto for Piano and Trumpet in C minor Op. 35 (1933)

Allegro moderato – Lento – Moderato - Allegro con brio

Two Orchestral Fragments from Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk Op. 29 (1934)

In the Home of the Ismailovs – Danger: High Voltage!

Suite from The Clear Stream Op. 39a (1935)

Waltz - Galop - Pizzicato - Dance of the Tribesmen from Kuban

INTERVAL

Symphony No. 5 in D minor Op. 47 (1937)

Narrators:
Roly Botha (Shostakovich)

Alex Macqueen (Stalin/Pravda)

Piano Soloist:

Aleksandar Madžar

Trumpet Soloist
Sam Balchin

Odyssey Festival Orchestra

Leader: Scott Storey

Conductor: Peter Ash



Shostakovich and Gogol

Dmitri Shostakovich was born in St. Petersburg in 1906. His father, also called Dmitri, was an engineer and a political revolutionary. Young Dmitri was a brilliant pianist and knew from an early age that music was his calling. His First Symphony, written as a graduation piece from college, quickly became an international sensation.

Within two years of its Russian premiere, it had been performed by the Berlin Philharmonic under Bruno Walter and received its US premiere under the baton of Leopold Stokowski. Soon, the young Shostakovich was hailed, at least for a while, as the poster boy for soviet music. His Second Symphony (1927) celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Revolution of October 1917.

Shostakovich was often drawn to irony and the absurd played a significant role in many of his pieces. He followed in the footsteps of the 19th century satirist Nikolai Gogol, who mocked Russian society in novels like *Dead Souls* and plays such as *The Government Inspector*. Shostakovich based his first opera The Nose on a Gogol story about a nose that takes on a life of its own. It was to have been staged by the radical theatre director Vsevolod Meyerhold, who encouraged the young composer to be daring and to take risks. Meyerhold however withdrew from directing the premiere.

Shostakovich's experimentalism and his sarcastic, subversive humour was at first celebrated, then merely tolerated by the soviet authorities, many of whom found his music difficult to understand. Joseph Stalin, who had trained as a musician, took a particular interest. But, until the mid 1930s, the young composer had a pretty free hand to do as he wished.

Gogol on The Power of Humour (from Dead Souls)

"I saw that I'd get nowhere on the straight path and that to go crookedly was to go straighter."

"The longer and more carefully we look at a funny story, the sadder it becomes..."

"However stupid a fool's words may be, they are sometimes enough to confound an intelligent man..."

Culture in Russia in the 1920s and 1930s

After the revolution of October 1917, Lenin and his Bolsheviks overthrew the Russian monarchy, murdering the royal family and replacing them with a government of communist soviets: local regional councils, who reported to a supreme soviet in Moscow.

The revolutionaries believed in the importance of the arts in Russian life. And, in its early years, the artistic scene there was a ferment of experimentalism. The films of Eisenstein broke new boundaries, while Meyerhold and Stanislavsky continued to rewrite the rules of the theatre. In the visual arts, a group of radicals called the Suprematists flourished. Their philosophy was based not on realism, but on the supremacy of 'pure artistic feeling'. Kasimir Malevich was their spokesman. His most famous painting was a black square..

Shostakovich was involved in many aspects of the new soviet culture. He played piano and wrote music for silent films and he composed theatre scores for a proletarian theatre group called TRAM. Humour played a big role in many of his early pieces. He wrote ballet scores about footballers (*The Golden Age*) and about lazy workers in a soviet factory (*Bolt*).

After Lenin's death in 1924, the government (now under the Georgian-born Joseph Stalin) increasingly started to view this sort of experimentalism as a form of Western decadence. In consequence, it began to impose a more rigid set of traditional values on the arts, called *Socialist Realism*, which celebrated folk music: "plain brown bread", as one official described it, by contrast to fancy bourgeois pastries.

By the 1930s, the government started arresting, imprisoning and murdering artists whose work was deemed suspect. To survive, creators and performers had to find ways of compromising. Malevich, for example, returned to painting more traditional subjects, but defiantly signed his work with a black square. Shostakovich, on the other hand, who had always enjoyed musical quotations, started to embed them even more deeply and significantly into his music. What had once been playful humour, became a kind of code, a secret means of defying the increasingly authoritarian regime.



Boris Grigoriev (1886-1939): Vsevelod Meyerhold as archer and dandy



The 22 year-old Shostakovich with Meyerhold, 1927

RUSSIAN HISTORICAL TIMELINE

1906 Shostakovich born 1924
Lenin Dies.
Joseph Stalin replaces
him as leader

1933 Concerto for Piano and Trumpet 1935 The Clear Stream 1937 Symphony No.5

















October Revolution
Soviet Union established under Lenin

1930 The Nose

Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk 1936 The Great Purge begins



Dmitri Shostakovich playing solo piano in Concerto for Piano, Trumpet and Strings





Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk

Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk was based on a story by a 19th century Russian novelist, short story writer, playwright and journalist, Nikolai Leskov (1831-1895). Leskov's novella tells the story of a brutalised woman, Katerina Ismailova, in a loveless marriage, who is violently assaulted by Sergei, a labourer at a flour mill. Katerina then takes Sergei as a lover, murdering both husband and father-in-law, before being condemned to a remote penal colony. Shostakovich's opera version very much takes Katerina's side in this terrible story.

The opera was first performed in January 1934 in Leningrad (as St Petersburg was renamed between 1924 and 1991) and its wild, passionate score, filled with new musical effects, was a critical and popular success for the young composer. Then, two years after its premiere, Joseph Stalin came to a performance in Moscow. He walked out. It was rumoured that the noise of the huge percussion section annoyed him, or that he found the discordant can-can that accompanies Katerina's assault too much to take. A New York critic had described it as "pornophony". In any event, the next day the state newspaper *Pravda* (Truth) denounced the work as *Muddle instead of Music* and warned its creator to beware of the consequences of writing music such as this. A committee was established under a bureaucrat called Platon Kerzhentsev to supervise the arts. The opera was taken off the stage and not presented again in the Soviet Union until 1961.

 Photos from Act IV of original Leningrad production of Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk





Long Live Stalin, the Field Marshall of Communism! Poster by B Lebeshev, 1939

Dmitri Shostakovich at his country house, mid 1930s

Extracts from Muddle Instead of Music from Pravda (Truth) -**28 January 1936**

The Soviet Union demands good music. The people expect it. Good songs, but also good instrumental pieces and good opera. Such as we know Dmitri Shostakovich can compose. Certain theatres however are now presenting his opera Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk to the Soviet public. Unthinking music critics are praising it to the skies, celebrating its innovation and trumpeting its supposed glories. Our young composer, instead of hearing proper serious criticism, now hears only praise. It is time for him to face the truth.

From its opening the listener is shocked by deliberate dissonance and a confused stream of sound. Snatches of melody, the beginnings of phrases that might have led somewhere, are swiftly drowned, only to emerge again in a cacophony of grinding and wailing. It goes on like this for the entire opera. Singing is replaced by shrieking. If the composer ever does stumble upon a simple melody, you can be certain he will soon throw himself back into a wilderness of sonic chaos. This is not because he lacks the talent or ability to depict strong and simple emotions in music. Instead, it is deliberate perversity. His intention is to turn music inside out, so that it has no connection at all with anything popular... All this is primitive and vulgar. The music simply quacks, grunts and growls.

The power of good music to inspire the masses has been sacrificed to a bourgeois desire to be original, through cheap clowning. It is a game of clever ingenuity that may end very badly for this composer.







The Bright Stream

The Bright Stream was Shostakovich's third ballet score, commissioned for a Leningrad ballet troupe. It premiered in June 1935. Its story about rural life on a collective farm was delightfully bland and Shostakovich wrote music that was filled with traditional tunes and dances. Critics disparaged its lack of intellectual adventure, but the ballet enjoyed great public success until it was subjected to a vicious attack in Pravda on February 6, 1936. Following so soon after Muddle Instead of Music, this attack on a ballet that seemed so true to the ideas of Socialist Realism, reinforced how far out of favour Shostakovich and his collaborators had fallen with Stalin and the authorities. One of them would pay the ultimate price. Adrian Piotrovsky, who had devised the ballet's scenario, was later arrested by the secret police. In November 1937, he was sentenced to death and shot.

Shostakovich escaped this fate in part because he was clever, lucky and perhaps because Stalin, who had trained as a chorister, thought he knew about music and could see how Shostakovich's talent could be used to support his own regime. But Stalin was suspicious and unpredictable. From 1936 onwards, Shostakovich had to tread a complex and delicate line between pleasing the state and following the integrity of his own artistic path.

◆ Characters from the premiere of The Bright Stream (1936)

The Great Terror

Stalin's purges of his political enemies began in earnest in the summer of 1936. Threatened by his fellow revolutionary, Leon Trotsky, Stalin decided to use the secret police to eliminate all those within the Communist Party who supported his rival. The purges began in the political class, but soon spread to the army, the peasantry and then to the intelligentsia. There were show trials, where officials, under the influence of torture, confessed to being counter-revolutionaries and 'enemies of the people'.

Hundreds of thousands of victims were accused of political crimes. Many were summarily executed. Others were sent to the gulag – a series of remote and terrible labour camps scattered across the Soviet Union - where conditions were harsh and from which few returned alive. It is estimated that around 700,000 Russians were killed during these purges.

Shostakovich married his first wife, Nina Varzar, in 1932. They divorced in 1935, but the couple remarried when Nina became pregnant with their first child, Galina, who was born in 1936. Her brother Maxim was born two years later. Shostakovich now had their fate to consider as well when he defied authority.



Alexander Pushkin: Rebirth (set as a song by Shostakovich in 1936)

With his crude brush, a barbarian Daubs paint over an exquisite old painting Covering it with his own rough splashings. But, as time passes, the vulgar colours Flake off like old scales, And the lost painting Appears again in all its former beauty. So, delusions disappear From my anguished soul, And in their place, visions Visions of purity and

innocence.

- ▲ Propaganda poster designed by Gustav Klutsis showing Stalin as teacher and leader of the nations of the world (1935)
- ▼ Shostakovich and his daughter Galina in their country datcha (1930s)



Symphony No. 5 in D Minor Op. 47

Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5 is scored for a very large orchestra. It has a traditional four movement structure, with a long slow movement preceding the apparently triumphant finale. Its meaning, if there is one, has been hotly debated.

The symphony was premiered by the Leningrad Philharmonic under the baton of Yevgeny Mravinsky in 1937. It was received with rapture by the audience, with Mravinsky waving the score over his head during the half hour ovation that followed. Party officials generally accepted it as evidence that Shostakovich had turned his back on bourgeois "formalism." Mikhail Chulaki, general director of the orchestra, certainly thought so. "Mixed with genuine appreciation of this outstanding composition was a feeling of enormous relief that Shostakovich's new work possessed all the qualities essential to his being rehabilitated as a composer at this difficult time," he wrote. "It was in simple language, with many extended melodies and - what was particularly important - it finished with victorious fanfares whose outspoken nature could not be called into doubt."

It was not quite so simple. Unbeknown to the audience, the final movement quotes from an unpublished song that Shostakovich had written to a poem of Pushkin's called *Rebirth*. It has been seen as a clue to understanding the meaning of the finale - in particular its references to 'vulgarity', and 'rough splashings'. Shostakovich's friend Solomon Volkov later wrote that the composer had told him that the triumph if played at the right tempo is in reality a forced celebration. 'It's as if someone were beating you with a stick and saying, "Your business is rejoicing, your business is rejoicing, and you rise, shaky, and go marching off, muttering, "Our business is rejoicing, our business is rejoicing."

Despite the ovation that followed the premiere, not all the party bureaucrats were convinced. They demanded a special performance - just for party officials – to ensure that nothing anti-Bolshevik had slipped through the net. The symphony was presented in the first half with an ensemble of folk dancers in the second. Unaware of the bitter irony in Shostakovich's reference to the Pushkin poem, they reluctantly gave it their approval. It would go on to become the most widely-performed of all his fifteen symphonies.



inspiring young people on their musical journey

Artistic Director, Peter Ash

Violin 1

Scott Storey James Lynch Rosina Acosta Christine Amirashayeri Grace Byrne George Richardson-Jones Martha Neugarten Ammal Bhatia Molin Han Amy Lovejoy Jason Bae

Violin 2

Lavinia Kadar Jack Robinson Esther Rumney Joanna Phillips Sam Chadwick Joshua Gordon Ralph Rusconi **Emily Vanian** Willoughby Baars Amy Price

Viola

Mina Hobson Mazur Bekha Choi Emily O'Dell Saya Barbaglia

Cello

Alexander Scott-Brown Lucy Neil Anna Leary Clara Neather Jaeho Bae **Dwayne Stewart** Lucas Robson Joseph Folkes Anna Gunstone Robbie Sher

Basses

Lydienne Horsford Manon Bristow Beth Higgs Sam Nolan Ginny Small Anton Avis

Flutes

Daisy Noton Agnese Lipska Eloise Hartings

Oboes

Billy Liu Katherine Jones Lidia Moscoso Bernal

Clarinets

Tomimo Kubota Emma Gerrett **Nelson Sinclair-Strong**

Bassoons

Sacha Neugarten Poppy Ellis Logan Zoe Meredith

Horns

Sarah Pennington Oscar Horan David Wheeler Freya Campbell Henry Ward

Trumpets

Sam Balchin Sasha Canter Eloise Yates

Trombones

Ben Loska Nathan Joseph Jonny Lovatt

Tuba

Morro Barry

Timpani & Percussion

Bogdan Skrypka Joe Lewis Julie Scheuren Claudia Costa Goncalves Toril Azzalini-Machecler Sophie Stevenson Josh Gearing

Harps

Emily Sullivan Aisha Palmer

Celeste/Piano

Bogdan Skrypka

Odyssey Festival Orchestra is an ensemble for gifted musicians, whether amateur or professional, aged largely between 18 and 30. It has evolved out of Peter Ash's forty years of work with young musicians, twenty of which were spent as Artistic Director of the London Schools Symphony Orchestra, which Sir Simon Rattle hailed as "an incomparable ambassador for the dynamism and excellence of British youth." There, he and Donald Sturrock developed projects that broke the conventions of the concert-going experience, using readings, dancers and lighting to give both players and audience a sense of context around the music being performed.

Odyssey aims to take that concept to a new stage. Our intention is to achieve the highest standards, presenting music in a bold and creative atmosphere through which we hope to build a new, younger, more philosophically engaged audience for our musical adventures. Odyssey is diverse, inclusive and free at the point of entry. This is only possible thanks to the generosity of its supporters, whose vital support is hugely appreciated.

Odyssey warmly welcomes collaborations with schools and local community groups and would love to hear from schools who would like to collaborate with us. Tonight we welcome students from Harris Academy, Peckham and Haberdashers' Borough Academy.



Odyssey Festival Orchestra Debut Concert at Cadogan Hall, September 2022



Peter Ash (he/him) is a conductor and composer whose career has been characterised by ambitious new projects: from first performances at the Salzburg Festival with members of the Berlin Philharmonic and Haydn operas at Garsington, to the premiere of Tobias Picker's Fantastic Mr. Fox for the Los Angeles

Opera. Recent projects have included the world premiere of Jamaican-born Eleanor Alberga's Trumpet Concerto at the Barbican Hall and an immersive production of Richard Strauss's opera Salome in the USA. Born in Iowa, Ash has been resident in London for over forty years, where he is passionately committed to broadening audiences for classical music. As a composer, he has written two family operas: Keepers of the Night and The Golden Ticket, based on Roald Dahl's Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. He is hugely excited to be continuing this mission with Odyssey Festival Orchestra.



Roly Botha (they/them) are an actor, composer and sound designer. They're proud to be an associate artist of the awardwinning physical theatre and devising ensemble The PappyShow.

Their theatre work includes: Bootycandy (Gate); Snowflake (Lowry); Cascando

(Barbican); Ghost Stories (Lyric Hammersmith); Making Fatiha (Camden People's Theatre); Skylight (Chipping Norton); CARE (Vaults); Strangers In Between (Trafalgar Studios). Radio includes: Doctor Who - Susan's War (Big Finish); A Funeral Of Plumes And Lights (BBC). Television includes: Secret Life Of Boys (CBBC); Doctors, Eastenders, Casualty (BBC)



Aleksandar Madžar (he/him) is one of the most sought after pianists of his generation, celebrated around the world for his imagination and the intelligence and subtlety of his performances. Since his debut in 1990 with the Berlin Philharmonic, he has collaborated with many great European orchestras and under the baton of conductors such as André

Previn, Rudolf Barschai, Marcello Viotti and Dimitri Kitaenko. He is much in demand as a recitalist and a chamber musician, performing regularly with Louise Hopkins, Andreas Staier, the Takács Quartet, the Belcea Quartet and Muriel Cantoreggi. Born in Serbia, Madzar is professor at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Bern and at the Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel and delighted to be back playing in London with his old friend Peter Ash for the first time since the Covid pandemic.



Alex Macqueen (he/him) is a BAFTA nominated actor, best known for his roles as Julius Nicholson in the BBC's Thick Of It and Neil's Dad in the Channel 4 comedy The Inbetweeners. Most recently, he's starred opposite Hugh Bonneville in the Downton Abbey Movie 2, Will Ferrell in Jesse Armstrong's Downhill and Michael

Caine in Paolo Sorrentino's Youth. He has a long association working with Sir Kenneth Branagh, which began when he was directed by him in Disney's Cinderella, before going on to star opposite him in the West End version of The Painkiller, and the Sony Classic movie, All Is True. He was nominated for a BAFTA for the HBO comedy, Sally For Ever and an Evening Standard Award for the Film 4 thriller, The Hide. He will soon be seen in the Apple TV series Hijack with Idris Elba. He is delighted to be working with Odyssey Festival Orchestra.



Sam Balchin (he/him) grew up surrounded by music, in particular within orchestras, wind bands and brass bands. He started playing the cornet at the age of 6, making his concerto debut playing the Haydn Trumpet Concerto on tour in Germany. Sam studied trumpet at the Royal College of Music Junior Department (RCMJD) under Torbjörn

Hultmark and was principal trumpet for the National Youth Orchestra (NYO), most notably performing at the BBC Proms 2022. Sam is now at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He is thrilled to be a part of Odyssey Orchestra and is very grateful to be playing under the baton of Peter Ash!



Scott Storey (he/him) is one of the most talented young violinists of his generation. He performed for many years with the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, leading it at the 2022 BBC Proms and performing solos in a commissioned work by Danny Elfman "Wunderkammer" and Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue". Since joining the Royal

College of Music as a Petronella Dittmer scholar on both violin and viola, Scott has performed in masterclasses with Timothy Ridout and Maxim Rysanov, and has played in many orchestral and chamber projects. On the viola, Scott performed Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante in Wells Cathedral with the Bromley Youth Music Trust's Chamber Orchestra.

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Further Reading

Hope against Hope by Nadezhda Mandelstam (1970)
Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich as told to Solomon Volkov (1979)
Shostakovich: A Life Remembered by Elizabeth Wilson (1994)
Story of a Friendship: The Letters of Dmitri Shostakovich to Isaak Glikman (2001)
The Noise of Time, a novel by Julian Barnes (2016)
Stalin Vol II – Waiting for Hitler, 1929-41 by Stephen Kotkin (2017)

NEXT CONCERT

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Odyssey Festival Orchestra's first season has been blessed by a crew of supporters, who have enabled this opening season of concerts in many different ways. In particular we would like to thank:

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If you would like to support the orchestra financially then you can donate via The Grasshopper Music Trust, a UK registered charity (No. 1196165). All donations made to the trust will go to fund Odyssey Festival Orchestra projects. If you are a UK Taxpayer, you can increase the value of your donation by 25% at no extra cost to yourself, by completing a Gift Aid form. Gift Aid forms are available in the foyer and are enclosed with each programme.

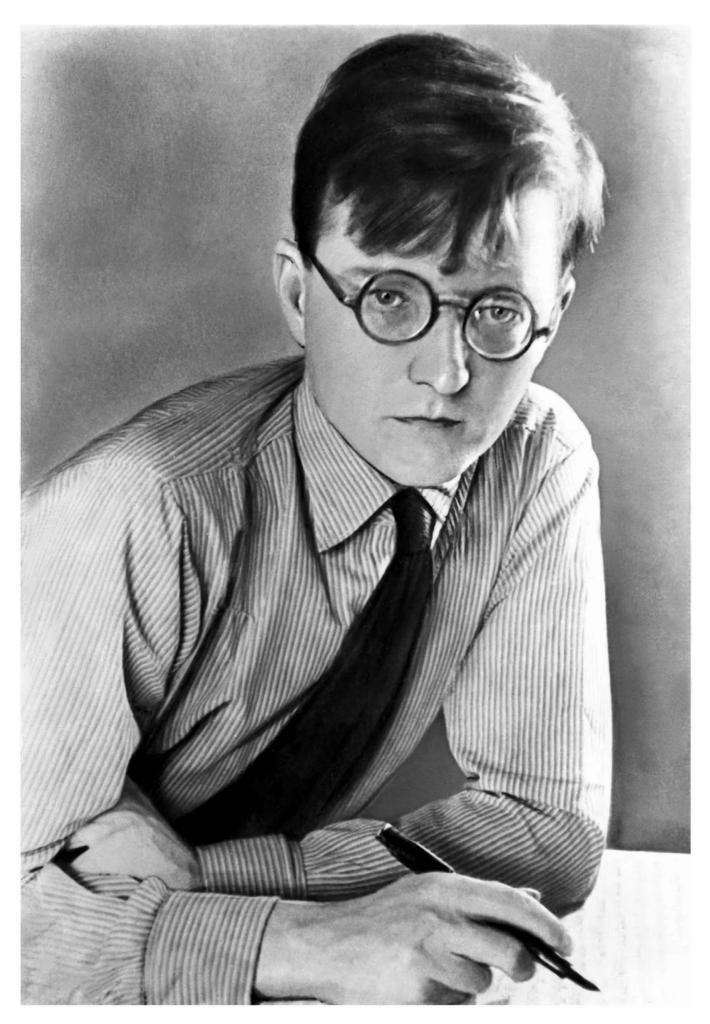
Reactions to Odyssey's recent concert The Last Waltz at Queen Elizabeth Hall in January, 2023

A player's reaction

"The enthusiasm and energy you've cultivated at Odyssey is really unique from my perspective and WE (speaking on behalf of myself but also other young musicians) need these ecosystems to grow. It feels in stark contrast to what is going on in the arts in the UK at the moment. Thank you for this breath of fresh air and energy- it's a wonderful respite from the surrounding negativity."

Selection of audience reactions

- "Fabulous...riveting...exceptional...unbelievable.... intelligent... wonderful..."
- "I haven't enjoyed a concert so much for ages..."
- "The concept is brilliant...Look forward to many more..."
- "The quality of music making was quite exceptional and the narration complemented the music perfectly..."
- "Odyssey's programming skills are simply phenomenal."



Dmitri Shostakovich (1933)

