

David Oistrakh is considered the premiere violinist of mid-20th century Soviet Union. His recorded legacy includes nearly the entire standard violin repertory up to and including Prokofiev and Bartók. Oistrakh's violin studies began in 1913 with famed teacher Pyotr Stolyarsky. Later he officially joined Stolyarsky's class at the Odessa Conservatory, graduating in 1926 by playing Prokofiev's First Violin Concerto. Performances of the Glazunov concerto in Odessa and Kiev in 1927, and a 1928 debut in Leningrad (Tchaikovsky concerto), gave Oistrakh the confidence to move to Moscow. He made his premiere there in early 1929, but the event went largely unnoticed. In 1934, however, after several years of patiently refining his craft, Oistrakh was invited to join the Moscow Conservatory, eventually rising to the rank of full professor in 1939.

Meanwhile, Oistrakh was gaining success on the competition circuit, winning the 1930 All-Ukrainian contest, and the All-Soviet competition three years later. In 1935 he took second prize at the Wieniawski competition. In 1937 the Soviet government sent the now veteran violinist to Brussels to compete in the International Ysaye Competition, where he took home first prize.

With his victory in Brussels, Soviet composers began to take notice of their young compatriot, enabling Oistrakh to work closely with Myaskovsky and Khachaturian on their concertos in 1939 and 1940, respectively. In addition, his close friendship with Shostakovich led the composer to write two concertos for the instrument (the first of which Oistrakh played at his, and its, triumphant American premiere in 1955). During the 1940s Oistrakh's active performing schedule took him across the Soviet Union but his international career had to wait until the 1950s, when the political climate had cooled enough for Soviet artists to be welcomed in the capitals of the West. The remaining decades of Oistrakh's life were devoted to maintaining the highest possible standards of excellence throughout an exhausting touring schedule (he returned to the U.S. six times in the 1960s), and he began a small but successful sideline career as an orchestral conductor. His death came suddenly in Amsterdam in 1974, during a cycle of Brahms concerts in which he both played and conducted. Oistrakh's unexpected death left a void in the Soviet musical world which was never really filled.

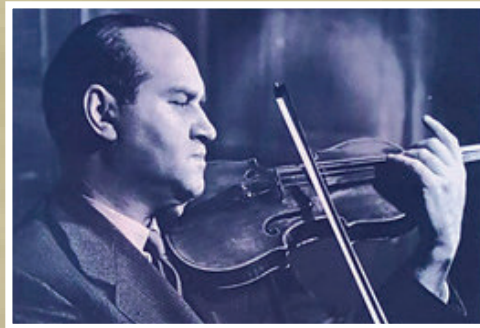
Throughout his career David Oistrakh was known for his honest, warm personality; he developed close friendships with many of the leading musicians of the day. His violin technique was virtually flawless, though he never allowed purely physical matters to dominate his musical performances. He always demanded of himself (and his students) that musical proficiency, intelligence, and emotion be in balance, regardless of the particular style. Oistrakh felt that a violinist's essence was communicated through clever and subtle use of the bow, and not through overly expressive use of vibrato. To this end he developed a remarkably relaxed, flexible right arm technique, capable of producing the most delicate expressive nuances, but equally capable of generating great volume and projection.

As a teacher, David Oistrakh maintained that a teacher should do no more than necessary to help guide the student toward his or her own solutions to technical and interpretive difficulties. He rarely played during lessons, fearing that he might distract the student from developing a more individual approach, and even encouraged his students to challenge his interpretations. Perhaps the best evidence of the Oistrakh's gift for teaching is that he felt that he gained as much from the teaching experience as his students did.

david oistrakh

Sergei Prokofiev Violin Concerto No. 2

Philharmonia Orchestra - Alceo Galliera



Beethoven Sonata In D Major, Opus 12 No. 1 Piano – Lev Oborin

The multicolored strands of influence -- personal and creative -- that converged on composer Sergei Prokofiev lent to his musical career a strange richness and duality. Prokofiev's musical development evolved in the constant shadow of multiple and often paradoxical circumstances. Raised and trained in the culture of waning imperial Russia, he would nonetheless emerge as one of the brightest stars in the Soviet Union's world of stringent artistic doctrines. Though hailed early on as a "bad boy" modernist, simplicity, urged by Soviet strictures, became Prokofiev's ultimate goal. Still, he steadfastly continued to employ those aspects -- novel and unexpected harmonic turns, melodic athleticism, and a prodigious handling of rhythm -- which from the outset marked the uniqueness of his style.

The aspects of change and multiplicity in Prokofiev's music, both within individual works and in the larger scope of his evolving style, are in no place more in evidence than in the Violin Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Op. 63 (1935). Indeed, the work took shape over the course of wide-ranging travels the composer undertook as part of his performing career. "Reflecting my nomadic concertizing existence," he wrote, "the Concerto was written in the most diverse countries: the main subject of the first movement was written in Paris, the first theme of the second movement -- in Voronezh, the instrumentation was completed in Baku, and the premiere took place in December of 1935 in Madrid." Undertaken (probably

unbeknownst to the composer) as his final commission from a non-Soviet source, the Concerto already exhibits a particular attention to a less complicated -- though no less masterful -- handling of musical materials.

The first movement, *Allegro moderato*, opens with a plaintive, five-beat motive in the solo violin which, even at this early stage, creates a sense of metric imbalance from having been placed into a 4/4 meter. It is spun into a full-fledged melody in G minor which pushes onward, eventually punctuated by episodes of abrupt changes in tonality, rhythmic impulse, and mood. The built-up energy and perfunctory close of the first movement is rapidly dissipated by the arrival of the second, *Andante assai*, which is characterized by a wistful and perhaps nostalgic, unpretentious and songlike theme in E flat major. The orchestra provides a gentle, harmonically unobtrusive accompaniment as the violin's theme is varied and developed -- and later, gear-shiftingly interrupted -- in the course of the movement. The roles are reversed in the final bars as a thematic fragment and its pizzicato accompaniment, now provided by the solo violin, recapture the initial mood as they fade into quiet. The final movement, *Allegro ben marcato*, emerges in triple-metered dance-like gestures, at times with the genteel reserve of a waltz, at others with a more rustic, uninhibited character. Episodes of grotesquerie and dark comedy spring forth and propel the movement forward toward its steely *con brio*, tumultuous close.

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Beethoven

Sonata In D Major, Opus 12 No. 1

Piano – Lev Oborin

Violin Concerto No.2 In G Minor Op.63

1 Allegro Moderato 10:55

2 Andante Assai 10:21

3 Allegro, Ben Marcato 6:18

Sonata In D Major, Opus 12 No. 1

4 Allegro Con Brio 6:14

5 Andante Con Moto 7:23

6 Rondo: Allegro 4:55

Prokofiev: Recorded by EMI records at No.1 Studio, Abbey Road, London 1959

Engineer - Robert Gooch

Beethoven: Released by Philips Records 1962



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admin@highdeftapetransfers.com
or visit our website:
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