

Shostakovich's Sonata for Cello and Piano in D minor, Op. 40, was one of his early works, composed in 1934 just prior to his censure by Soviet authorities of his music, notably the opera Lady Macbeth of Mtensk, that was deemed too bourgeois and decadent for the Soviet people. It was also a period of emotional turmoil in his life, as he had fallen in love with a young student at a Leningrad festival featuring his Lady Macbeth. Their affair resulted in a brief divorce from his wife Nina, and it was in August, during their period of separation, that he wrote the cello sonata, completing it within a few weeks and giving its premiere in Moscow on 25 December with his close friend the cellist Viktor Kubatsky its dedicatee. By the next Autumn Shostakovich and Nina had remarried, with her being pregnant with their daughter, who was born in 1936.



# Shostakovich

**Sonata in D minor op. 40 for Cello and Piano**

**Daniel Shafran, cello**

**Lydia Pecherskaya, piano**



Daniel Shafran Born: January 23, 1923 Died: February 07, 1997

One of the greatest cellists of the twentieth century, a performer who combined technical brilliance with soulful expressiveness, Danil Shafran was born in 1923, in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg). Shafran's first teacher was his father, who was the principal cellist of the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra. At the age of eight, Shafran started studying with Alexander Shtrimer, at the Special Music School for Children. Two years later, he was among a group of students selected to advance directly to the Leningrad Conservatory. When he was eleven, Shafran made his debut with the Leningrad Philharmonic, continuing his studies with Shtrimer, who taught the young cellist to appreciate music in the wider context of humanistic culture and of art in general. In 1937, Shafran won the All-Union competition for cellists and violinists. The prize was a magnificent 1630 Amati cello, which Shafran played until the end of his life. This instrument had a delicate, but gorgeous, tone, and Shafran was sometimes criticized for playing an instrument that was perceived as more appropriate for chamber music. In 1950, the year he graduated from the Leningrad Conservatory, Shafran won the Prague International Cello Competition. Although Shafran toured Europe, the U.S., and Japan, he shunned the glamour of international fame, preferring to perform and record in the U.S.S.R. His recordings, for the Melodiya label, include much of the standard cello repertoire, with particular emphasis on Romantic and -century Russian music. For example, he recorded Kabalevsky's Cello Concerto No. 1 in 1954, creating, two years later, a legendary recording of the Cello Sonata by Shostakovich, with the composer at the piano. One of the high points of Shafran's career was his 1967 performance of Kabalevsky's

Cello Concerto No. 2, one of the most demanding works of the cello repertoire. Written as a musical monument to the victims of World War II, and dedicated to Shafran, Kabalevsky's extraordinarily difficult work provided the cellist with an opportunity to display his prodigious technique and profound musicality. Throughout his career, Shafran sought to enrich the cello repertoire by playing transcriptions of works for other instruments. Many of these transcriptions, which include the Franck Violin Sonata and the Shostakovich Viola Sonata, are miniatures by composers such as Schumann, Chopin, and Brahms, which he often offered as recital encores. Shafran's performances of these familiar encore miniatures, such as Schumann's "Träumerei," from the Kinderszenen for piano, were truly magical, for his playing could transform a familiar piano piece into cello music of unearthly beauty. Shafran was particularly known for his rich, expressive tone; his vibrato was unique, and when he played without vibrato, Shafran used his prodigious bowing technique to enrich his tone. A hallmark of Shafran's highly personal style, in addition to his finely nuanced and profoundly expressive tone, was his inimitable vibrato. All in all, Shafran was a stupendous virtuoso whose breath-taking technical skill was totally subservient to a profound, overwhelmingly powerful musicality. Always in total control of the formal aspects of the music he played, Shafran constantly sought, as he revisited a particular piece, to probe deeper into its inner being, methodically striving to reveal the sometimes incomprehensible complexity of the music that he played. He died in 1998.

# Shostakovich

## Cello Sonata in D minor op.40

Daniel Shafran, cello • Lydia Pecherskaya, piano

I - Allegro non troppo 8:35

II - Allegro 3:07

III - Largo 7:57

IV - Allegro 4:04

Shostokovich Recorded by RCA 1961

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