

Like so many Russian musicians, Mravinsky seemed first headed toward a career in the sciences. He studied biology at St. Petersburg University, but had to quit in 1920 after his father's death. To support himself, he signed on with the Imperial Ballet as a rehearsal pianist. In 1923, he finally enrolled in the Leningrad Conservatory, where he studied composition with Vladimir Shcherbachov and conducting with Alexander Gauk and Nikolai Malko. He graduated in 1931, and left his Imperial Ballet job to become a musical assistant and ballet conductor at the Bolshoi Opera from 1931 to 1937, with a stint at the Kirov from 1934. Mravinsky gave up these posts in 1938, after winning first prize in the All-Union Conductors' Competition in Moscow, to become principal conductor of the Leningrad Philharmonic. He remained there until his death, long ignoring many guest-conducting offers from abroad. Under Mravinsky's direction the Leningrad Philharmonic came to be regarded as one of the finest orchestras in the world, although the world had comparatively few opportunities to hear it aside from the rare tour (about 30 performances in 25 years, starting in 1956), some dim Soviet recordings, and a very few highly acclaimed records for such Western European companies as Deutsche Grammophon and, in the end, Erato. Mravinsky was made People's Artist of the U.S.S.R. in 1954, and in 1973, he received the order of Hero of Socialist Labor. But his more lasting international acclaim came for his performances of Mozart, Beethoven, Bruckner, Wagner, Sibelius, Bartók, Stravinsky, and anything Russian or Soviet. His reputation only rose upon his retirement from the Leningrad Philharmonic.



Mravinsky's rehearsal manner was said to be autocratic and brutal, and the resulting performances were tightly clenched. Yet they were also technically precise, finely detailed, subtly colored, and highly dramatic -- and this not always because he was in the habit of whipping fast finales into a frenzy. His readings had an intensity, concentration, and -- despite the arduous rehearsal -- spontaneity comparable to those of Wilhelm Furtwängler. In the West, Mravinsky was particularly noted as an interpreter of Shostakovich, whose Fifth, Sixth, Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth symphonies he premiered, and of Tchaikovsky. His recordings of the Tchaikovsky's last three symphonies, made in 1960 for Deutsche Grammophon while the orchestra was on tour in London, are touchstones of the Russian repertory.



SHOSTAKOVICH SYMPHONY NO. 10



Yevgeny Mravinsky Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra
Recorded Live

The Symphony No. 10 in E minor (Op. 93) by Dmitri Shostakovich was premiered by the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra under Yevgeny Mravinsky on 17 December 1953, following the death of Joseph Stalin in March of that year. It is not clear when it was written: according to the composer's letters composition was between July and October 1953, but Tatiana Nikolayeva stated that it was completed in 1951. Sketches for some of the material date from 1946.

The symphony is scored for two flutes and piccolo (second flute doubling second piccolo), three oboes (third doubling cor anglais), three clarinets (third doubling E-flat clarinet), three bassoons (third doubling contrabassoon), four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, snare drum, triangle, cymbals, tambourine, tam-tam, xylophone, and strings.

The first and longest movement is a slow movement in rough sonata form. As in his Fifth Symphony, Shostakovich quotes from one of his settings of Pushkin: in the first movement, from the second of his Four Pushkin Monologues, entitled "What is in My Name?". This theme of personal identity is picked up again in the third and fourth movements.

The second movement is a short and violent scherzo with syncopated rhythms and endlessly furious semiquaver (sixteenth note) passages. The book *Testimony* states: I did depict Stalin in my next symphony, the Tenth. I wrote it right after Stalin's death and no one has yet guessed what the symphony is about. It's about Stalin and the Stalin years. The second part, the scherzo, is a musical portrait of Stalin, roughly speaking. Of course, there are many other things in it, but that's the basis.

However, Shostakovich biographer Laurel Fay wrote, "I have found no corroboration that such a specific program was either intended or perceived at the time of composition and first performance." Musicologist Richard Taruskin called the proposition a "dubious revelation, which no one had previously suspected either in Russia or in the West". Elizabeth Wilson adds: "The Tenth Symphony is often read as the composer's commentary on the recent Stalinist era. But as so often in Shostakovich's art, the exposition of external events is counter-opposed to the private world of his innermost feelings."

The third movement nocturne is built around two musical codes: the DSCH theme representing Shostakovich, and the Elmira theme:

At concert pitch one fifth lower, the notes spell out "E La Mi Re A" in a combination of French

and German notation. This motif, called out twelve times on the horn, represents Elmira Nazirova, a student of the composer with whom he fell in love. The motif is of ambiguous tonality, giving it an air of uncertainty or hollowness.

In a letter to Nazirova, Shostakovich himself noted the similarity of the motif to the ape call in the first movement of *Das Lied von der Erde*, a work which he had been listening to around that time.

The same notes are used in both motifs, and both are repeatedly played by the horn. In the Chinese poem set by Mahler, the ape is a representation of death, while the Elmira motif itself occurs together with the "funeral knell" of a tam tam. There is also more than a passing resemblance of this motif to the slow fanfare theme in the finale of Sibelius' Fifth Symphony; similar instrumentation (horns, woodwinds) is used for the Elmira motif here as in the Sibelius work. Over the course of the movement, the DSCH and Elmira themes alternate and gradually draw closer.

The third movement is a moderate dance-like suite of Mahlerian *Nachtmusik* - or *Nocturne*, which is what Shostakovich called it.

In the fourth and final movement, a naively happy tune at a slow *andante* pace (again heavily influenced by Mahler) that suddenly changes into a fast finale that has the pace of a doom-laden *Gopak*,^[citation needed] which recalls the second movement theme. The fast theme is in turn defeated by the triumphant DSCH theme, which is repeated with increasing agitation through the frantic conclusion. The coda effects a transition to E Major, and at the very end, several instruments have a glissando from an E to the next E.

The 10th symphony is automatically linked to many of Shostakovich's other works such as the Cello Concerto No. 1 (1959) and notably the String Quartet No. 8 (1960) because of the use of the DSCH-motif. The DSCH-motif is anticipated throughout the first movement of the 10th symphony: In the 7th bar of the start of the symphony the violins doubled by the violas play a D for 5 bars which is then directly followed by an E; 9 bars before r.m. 29 the violins play the motif in an inverted order D-C-H-S (or D-C-B-E). The first time the motif is heard in its correct order in the whole symphony is in the 3rd movement, right after a short canon on the beginning melody starting from the 3rd beat of the 5th bar after r.m.104 (Fig.11) where it is played in unison by the piccolo, the 1st flute and the 1st oboe (compassing a range of three octaves).

SHOSTAKOVICH SYMPHONY NO. 10

Yevgeny Mravinsky Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra
Recorded Live

1. Moderato 22:01
2. Allegro 4:00
3. Allegretto 10:55
4. Andante. Allegro 11:14

Recorded by Meloydia Live at the Grand Hall of Leningrad Philharmonic March 1976



For more info e-mail us:
admin@highdeftapetransfers.com
or visit our website:
www.highdeftapetransfers.com