

THE VERY BEST OF  
SHOSTAKOVICH



2 CDs

# DMITRY SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

## HIS LIFE

Dmitry Shostakovich belongs to the generation of composers trained principally after the Communist Revolution of 1917. He graduated from the St. Petersburg Conservatory as a pianist and composer, his First Symphony winning immediate favour. His subsequent career in Russia varied with the political climate. The initial success of his opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District* (later revised as *Katerina Ismailova*) was followed by official condemnation, emanating apparently from Stalin himself. The composer's Fifth Symphony, in 1937, brought partial rehabilitation, while the war years offered a propaganda coup in the Leningrad Symphony, performed in the city under German siege. In 1948 he fell foul of the official musical establishment with a Ninth Symphony thought to be frivolous, but enjoyed relative freedom following the death of Stalin in 1953. Posthumous information suggests that despite appearing to conform with official policy, Shostakovich remained very critical of Stalinist dictates, particularly with regard to music and the arts. He occupies a significant position in the 20th century as a symphonist and as a composer of chamber music, writing in a style that is sometimes spare in texture but always accessible, couched in an extension of traditional tonal musical language.

## HIS MUSIC

### Stage Works

*Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (*Katerina Izmaylova*) remains the principal of Shostakovich's operas. Other operas such as *The Nose* and his posthumously completed *The Gamblers* have also garnered attention. His ballets *The Golden Age*, *The Bolt*, and *The Limpid Stream* all had their premieres in Leningrad. For plays, he wrote incidental music for Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. He also wrote music for nearly 40 films, including *The Gadfly* and *Five Days-Five Nights*.

### Orchestral Music

The fifteen symphonies of Shostakovich range in scope from the First Symphony of 1925, a graduation composition, to the embittered Thirteenth using Yevtushenko's poems. The Fourteenth, which contains settings of various poems came two years before the Fifteenth and last symphony of 1971. The Fourth, Fifth, and Seventh symphonies are most often heard, while Nos. 2 and 3, with Nos. 11 and 12, have more overtly patriotic suggestions about them. Shostakovich wrote an early concerto for piano, trumpet and strings, and a second piano concerto, a vehicle for his son Maxim, in 1957. He wrote two violin concertos and two cello concertos.

## Choral and Vocal Music

Choral works by Shostakovich include *The Execution of Stepan Razin*, a setting of a text by Yevtushenko. His solo songs are generally less overtly political, evidence of a private rather than public voice.

## Chamber Music

The fifteen String Quartets by Shostakovich form a remarkable body of work, lucid in texture, often moving in musical content. The intensely felt Viola Sonata of 1975 is the third of his duo sonatas, preceded by the 1934 Cello Sonata and the Violin Sonata of 1968. To these may be added the second Piano Trio and a G minor Piano Quintet, written in 1940.

## Piano Music

The piano music of Shostakovich includes, in addition to two piano sonatas, an ingenious set of *24 Preludes and Fugues*, as well as an earlier set of *24 Preludes*.

## MUSIC NOTES

### Festive Overture in A major, Op. 96 (CD 1, track 1)

This was written in 1937 for the 37th anniversary of the October Revolution and is one of Shostakovich's best-known works.

### String Quartet No. 8 in C minor, Op. 110 III. *Allegretto* (CD 1, track 2)

Dedicated to the memory of victims of fascism and war, this string quartet had its premiere in Leningrad in October 1960. Shostakovich wrote it after a visit to the still-ruined city of Dresden.

### Piano Trio No. 2 in E minor, Op. 67 III. *Largo* (CD 1, track 3)

*Piano Trio No. 2* was written in memory of Shostakovich's friend Ivan Sollertinsky; the third movement is a kind of sombre passacaglia.

### Cello Concerto No. 1 in E flat, Op. 107 I. *Allegretto* (CD 1, track 4)

*Cello Concerto No. 1* was given its premiere in 1959 by its dedicatee, the cellist Mstislav Rostropovich. The opening four-note motif, which is of great importance, is announced by the cello, with the woodwinds, and this material is developed throughout the movement.

### 24 Preludes and Fugues, Op. 87 *Prelude and Fugue No. 1 in C major* (CD 1, track 5 and 6)

Shostakovich's *Preludes*, Op. 34 (see track 12), and his *Preludes and Fugues*, Op. 87, give pianists a varying set of stylistic challenges: some have fluency like Bach while others are boisterous and spiky. This opening prelude is a ruminative chorale in sarabande rhythm, followed by a fugue which stays within its key with Bach-like certainty.

**Symphony No. 5 in D minor, Op. 47 II. Allegretto (CD 1, track 7)**

The *Fifth Symphony* is one of Shostakovich's most widely-played works and was described by a journalist as 'A Soviet Artist's Practical Creative Reply to Just Criticism', a commentary that the composer allowed to stand. Cellos and double basses open the second movement, with jaunty rhythms that, at the same time, seem curiously restrained.

**Cello Sonata, Op. 40 IV. Allegro (CD 1, track 8)**

The *Cello Sonata*, although modern in sound, outwardly falls into a traditional four-movement form. The fourth movement opens in an almost Mozartian play between the cello and piano, before continuing in a much more Russian manner.

**The Golden Age, Ballet Suite, Op. 22a III. Polka (CD 1, track 9)**

*The Golden Age* was Shostakovich's first ballet, commissioned as a 'truly Soviet ballet'. However, the obvious depiction of bourgeois decadence and the use of jazz resulted in the work's banning a year later. The third-act Polka was intended as a satire on the League of Nations.

**String Quartet No. 3 in F, Op. 73 IV. Adagio (CD 1, track 10)**

After its premiere in December 1946 in Moscow, Shostakovich withdrew his *String Quartet No. 3* from public performance, following savage attacks by officials on leading composers of the day. The fourth-movement Adagio is the heart of the work, with the strong opening echoed in bitter sadness by the first violin.

**Symphony No. 9 in E flat major, Op. 70 III. Presto (CD 1, track 11)**

Ostensibly written to celebrate Russia's victory in 1945, the *Ninth Symphony* has a certain superficial happiness, but doesn't quite contain a feeling of celebration. In the third movement, a jaunty trumpet takes the stage, echoed by the trombone and woodwinds before it all fades away at the end.

**24 Preludes, Op. 34 Prelude No. 10 in C sharp minor (CD 1, track 12)**

In the *24 Preludes*, composed during the winter of 1932-33, the aim to shock of his earlier piano works has been transmuted into the desire to entertain. This is not to say that these pieces are conventional in essence; rather the surprises come from more subtle contrasts between preludes and across the sequence as a whole. Prelude No. 10 introduces a bittersweet harmonic touch.

**Violin Concerto No. 1 in A minor, Op. 77 IV. Burlesque (CD 1, track 13)**

The *Violin Concerto No. 1* was dedicated to and given its premiere by the Russian violinist David Oistrakh in Leningrad in 1955.

### **The Gadfly Suite, Op. 97a VII. Romance (CD 1, track 14)**

One of Shostakovich's lighter works, *The Gadfly* was written for a 1955 film about a 19th-century Italian nationalist, who dies a hero's death before a firing squad. Before his sad demise, however, there's time for a *Romance*, which seems to be in a closed, dreamy world of its own.

### **Symphony No. 10 in E minor, Op. 93 II. Allegro (CD 1, track 15)**

The *Tenth Symphony*, written in 1953, was intended as the composer's own bitter celebration of his new freedom following Stalin's death, conceived with all the pent-up feelings of resentment held in check during years of oppression.

### **Jazz Suite No. 2 VI. Waltz 2 (CD 2, track 1)**

The themes used in *Jazz Suite No. 2* come from various ballet, film, and theatre works. *Waltz No. 2* features a sinuous saxophone melody.

### **Piano Concerto No. 1 in C minor, Op. 35 II. Lento (CD 2, track 2)**

*Piano Concerto No. 1*, written in 1933, became a continuing part of Shostakovich's repertoire as a pianist. The second movement allows the piano soloist moments of romanticism.

### **Symphony No. 7 in C, Op. 60, "Leningrad" II. Moderato (CD 2, track 3)**

*Symphony No. 7*, begun in Leningrad and completed after his evacuation from the city during the 900-day siege of the city during World War II, was an important propaganda vehicle for the Soviets. The second movement is a rare example in Shostakovich of a symphonic intermezzo, evocative but essentially abstract in nature.

### **3 Fantastic Dances, Op. 5 No. 3. Polka (CD 2, track 4)**

Shostakovich himself gave the première in Moscow on 20 March 1925, and performed the pieces on numerous subsequent occasions. As a lighter work, it is filled with moments of mischief and insouciance before concluding with a lively polka.

### **Symphony No. 13 in B flat minor, Op. 113 "Babi Yar" II. Humour (CD 2, track 5)**

*Symphony No. 13*, written in 1962 was cause for official ire because of the poetry by Yevtushenko on social ills and anti-Semitism in Soviet Russia. Babi Yar is a ravine near Kiev where 150,000 people, mostly Jews, were killed during World War II. The setting of the poem 'Humour' serves as a symphonic scherzo.

### **Piano Quintet Op. 57 III. Scherzo (CD 2, track 6)**

The *Piano Quintet* is one of Shostakovich's most accessible works and for some time was better known and in greater circulation than his symphonies. In 1941, Shostakovich was awarded the Stalin Prize for this piece.

### **Symphony No. 1 in F minor, Op. 10 II. Allegro (CD 2, track 7)**

*Symphony No. 1* was Shostakovich's graduation work from the St. Petersburg Conservatory and brought him to international fame early in his career. The second movement scherzo begins in an ironic mood, followed by a central passage of contrasting mood. The movement ends as the pianist, using the right hand, plays a loud bottom A, the sound of which dies away to the diminishing sound of violin and viola harmonics.

### **Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 102 II. Andante (CD 2, track 8)**

*Piano Concerto No. 2*, written in 1957 for his son Maxim, was given its premiere by Maxim on his nineteenth birthday. The second movement is a slow romance.

### **Symphony No. 15, Op. 141 III. Allegretto (CD 2, track 9)**

*Symphony No. 15* was his last symphony, written in 1971. The Allegretto is clearly sardonic, but tempered with humour.

### **String Quartet No. 7 in F sharp minor, Op. 108 III. Allegro (CD 2, track 10)**

*String Quartet No. 7*, written in 1960, is dedicated to the memory of his first wife Nina.

### **Tahiti Trot, Op. 16 "Tea for Two" (CD 2, track 11)**

The humorous piece *Tahiti Trot* came about as the result of a bet to orchestrate Vincent Youmans' famous number 'Tea for Two.' The piece, alternately witty and nostalgic, was soon played by dance bands and theatre orchestras everywhere.

**For more than a taste of Shostakovich's works, here is a list of the most important complete recordings:**

### **ORCHESTRAL MUSIC**

The Unforgettable Year 1919 .....	8.223897
Festive Overture / The Age of Gold Ballet Suite .....	8.553126
The Gadfly Suite / Five Days-Five Nights Suite .....	8.553299
Hamlet, Op. 116 .....	8.557446
Jazz Suites Nos. 1 and 2 / The Bolt / Tahiti Trot .....	8.555949

### **SYMPHONIES**

Symphonies Nos. 1 and 3 .....	8.550623
Symphonies Nos. 2 and 15 .....	8.550624
Symphony No. 4 .....	8.550625

Symphonies Nos. 5 and 9 .....	8.550632
Symphonies Nos. 6 and 12 .....	8.550626
Symphony No. 7, 'Leningrad' .....	8.557256
Symphony No. 8 .....	8.550628
Symphony No. 10 .....	8.550633
Symphony No. 11 .....	8.550629
Symphony No. 13, 'Babi Yar' .....	8.550630
Symphony No. 14 .....	8.550631

## **CONCERTOS**

Cello Concertos Nos. 1 and 2 .....	8.550813
Violin Concertos Nos. 1 and 2 .....	8.550814
Piano Concertos Nos. 1 and 2 .....	8.553126

## **STRING QUARTETS**

String Quartets Nos. 1, 8 and 9 .....	8.550973
String Quartets Nos. 4, 6 and 7 .....	8.550972
String Quartets Nos. 10, 11 and 13 .....	8.550977
String Quartets Nos. 3 and 5 .....	8.550974
String Quartets Nos. 2 and 12 .....	8.550975
String Quartets Nos. 14 and 15 .....	8.550976

## **CHAMBER MUSIC**

Piano Trios Nos. 1 and 2 .....	8.553297
Piano Quintet .....	8.554830
Viola Sonata .....	8.557231
Cello Sonata/ Violin Sonata (to be released in October 2006) .....	8.557722

## **PIANO WORKS**

24 Preludes and Fugues, Op. 87 .....	8.554745-46
24 Preludes, Op. 34 / 3 Fantastic Dances / Piano Sonata No. 1 .....	8.555781

## **VOCAL AND CHORAL MUSIC**

7 Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok – soprano and piano trio, Op. 127 .....	8.553297
Execution of Stepan Razin (The) / October / 5 Fragments, Op. 42 .....	8.557812

# THE VERY BEST OF SHOSTAKOVICH

## CD1

<b>1</b>	<b>Festive Overture in A, Op. 96</b>	5:59
<b>2</b>	<b>String Quartet No. 8 in C minor, Op. 110 III. Allegretto</b>	4:10
<b>3</b>	<b>Piano Trio No. 2 in E minor, Op. 67 III. Largo</b>	5:35
<b>4</b>	<b>Cello Concerto No. 1 in E flat, Op. 107 I. Allegretto</b>	6:15
<b>5-6</b>	<b>24 Preludes and Fugues – piano, Op. 87 Prelude and Fugue No. 1 in C major</b>	6:50
<b>7</b>	<b>Symphony No. 5 in D minor, Op. 47 II. Allegretto</b>	5:08
<b>8</b>	<b>Cello Sonata, Op. 40 IV. Allegro</b>	4:30
<b>9</b>	<b>The Golden Age: Ballet Suite, Op. 22a Polka</b>	1:52
<b>10</b>	<b>String Quartet No. 3 in F, Op. 73 IV. Adagio</b>	5:27
<b>11</b>	<b>Symphony No. 9 in E flat, Op. 54 III. Presto</b>	2:48
<b>12</b>	<b>24 Preludes – piano, Op. 34 Prelude No. 10 in C sharp minor</b>	2:06
<b>13</b>	<b>Violin Concerto No. 1 in A minor, Op. 77 IV. Burlesque</b>	5:02
<b>14</b>	<b>The Gadfly Suite, Op. 97a Romance</b>	5:52
<b>15</b>	<b>Symphony No. 10 in E minor, Op. 93 II. Allegro</b>	4:18
	<b>Total Timing</b>	<b>66:43</b>

## CD2

<b>1</b>	<b>Jazz Suite No. 2 VI. Waltz 2</b>	3:15
<b>2</b>	<b>Piano Concerto No. 1 in C minor, Op. 35 II. Lento</b>	8:31
<b>3</b>	<b>Symphony No. 7 in C, Op. 60, 'Leningrad' II. Moderato</b>	11:20
<b>4</b>	<b>3 Fantastic Dances, Op. 5 Polka</b>	1:07
<b>5</b>	<b>Symphony No. 13 in B flat minor, Op. 113, 'Babi Yar' II. Humour</b>	7:36
<b>6</b>	<b>Piano Quintet, Op. 57 III. Scherzo</b>	3:25
<b>7</b>	<b>Symphony No. 1 in F minor, Op. 10 II. Allegro</b>	4:54
<b>8</b>	<b>Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 102 II. Andante</b>	6:38
<b>9</b>	<b>Symphony No. 15, Op. 141 IV. Allegretto</b>	4:03
<b>10</b>	<b>String Quartet No. 7 in F sharp minor, Op. 108 III. Allegro</b>	5:35
<b>11</b>	<b>Tahiti Trot, Op. 16, 'Tea for Two'</b>	4:10
	<b>Total Timing</b>	<b>61:06</b>

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# THE VERY BEST OF SHOSTAKOVICH

*"Real music is always revolutionary ..."*

(Shostakovich)

Dmitry Shostakovich, the greatest 20th-century Russian composer, has come to stand for the embattled composer who hones his musical creativity even in the face of great political and social pressures. This 2-CD set shows us more than just his familiar symphonies and string quartets, and includes excerpts from his concertos, film and light music, and other chamber works.

## Compact Disc 1

- 1 Festive Overture** **2 String Quartet No. 8** III. Allegretto **3 Piano Trio No. 2** III. Largo **4 Cello Concerto No. 1** I. Allegretto  
**5-6 24 Preludes and Fugues, Op. 87** – piano Prelude and Fugue No. 1 in C **7 Symphony No. 5** II. Allegretto  
**8 Cello Sonata** IV. Allegro **9 The Golden Age: Ballet Suite** Polka **10 String Quartet No. 3** IV. Adagio  
**11 Symphony No. 9** III. Presto **12 24 Preludes** – piano, Op. 34 Prelude No. 10 in C sharp minor  
**13 Violin Concerto No. 1** IV. Burlesque **14 The Gadfly Suite** Romance **15 Symphony No. 10** II. Allegro

## Compact Disc 2

- 1 Jazz Suite No. 2** VI. Waltz 2 **2 Piano Concerto No. 1** II. Lento  
**3 Symphony No. 7, 'Leningrad'** II. Moderato **4 Three Fantastic Dances, Op. 5** Polka  
**5 Symphony No. 13, 'Babi Yar'** II. Humour **6 Piano Quintet** III. Scherzo  
**7 Symphony No. 1** II. Allegro **8 Piano Concerto No. 2** II. Andante  
**9 Symphony No. 15** IV. Allegretto **10 String Quartet No. 7** III. Allegro  
**11 Tahiti Trot, 'Tea for Two'**



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