



Dmitri Shostakovich

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra

No. 1 in A minor, Op. 77

Dmitri Dmitriyevich Shostakovich (25 September 1906 – 9 August 1975) was a Russian pianist and composer of the Soviet period. He is regarded as one of the major composers of the 20th century. Shostakovich achieved fame in the Soviet Union under the patronage of Soviet chief of staff Mikhail Tukhachevsky, but later had a complex and difficult relationship with the government. Nevertheless, he received accolades and state awards and served in the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR (1947–1962) and the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union (from 1962 until his death). A polystylist, Shostakovich developed a hybrid voice, combining a variety of different musical techniques into his works. His music is characterized by sharp contrasts, elements of the grotesque, and ambivalent tonality; the composer was also heavily influenced by the neo-classical style pioneered by Igor Stravinsky, and (especially in his symphonies) by the post-Romanticism associated with Gustav Mahler. Shostakovich's orchestral works include 15 symphonies and six concerti. His chamber output includes 15 string quartets, a piano quintet, two piano trios, and two pieces for string octet. His solo piano works include two sonatas, an early set of preludes, and a later set of 24 preludes and fugues. Other works include three operas, several song cycles, ballets, and a substantial quantity of film music; especially well known is *The Second Waltz*, *Op. 99*, music to the film *The First Echelon* (1955–1956), as well as the suites of music composed for *The Gadfly*.

The **Concerto for violin and orchestra No. 1 in A minor, Opus 77**, was originally written by Dmitri Shostakovich in 1947–48. He was still working on the piece at the time of the Zhdanov decree, and in the period following the composer's denunciation the work could not be performed. In the time between the work's initial completion and the first performance on 29 October 1955, the composer and its dedicatee, David Oistrakh, worked on a number of revisions. The work was finally premiered by the Leningrad Philharmonic under Yevgeny Mravinsky. It was well received, Oistrakh remarking on the depth of its artistic content and describing the violin part as a pithy Shakespearian' role. Oistrakh characterised the first movement Nocturne as a suppression of feelings, and the second movement Scherzo as demoniac. The Scherzo is also notable for an appearance by the DSCH motif—a motif that reoccurs in many of the composer's works representing Shostakovich himself. Boris Schwarz (*Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia*, 1972), commented on the Passacaglia's lapidary grandeur and the Burlesque's devil-may-care abandonment. The beginning of the Passacaglia is also notable for its juxtaposition of the invasion or Stalin theme from the Seventh Symphony and the fate motif from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.