



Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH

Symphony No. 14

Dmitri Dmitriyevich Shostakovich (25 September 1906 – 9 August 1975) was a Russian composer and pianist. His father worked as an engineer under Dmitri Mendeleev, who published the original Periodic Table of Elements. Meanwhile, Shostakovich's mother introduced him to music and began teaching him piano at the age of 9. Clearly displaying musical talent, Shostakovich began composing around that time and enrolled in the Saint Petersburg Conservatory only a few years later. Shostakovich graduated from the conservatory at 19, and his graduation piece - the *First Symphony* (1926) - made him an instant success. On January 26th, 1936, Joseph Stalin and his entourage attended a performance of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1934), which Stalin severely disliked. After this, Shostakovich was attacked in the magazine, *Pravda*, and his music was subsequently campaigned against. 1936 also marked the beginning of the Great Terror, in which political repression led to the deaths and imprisonment of many of Shostakovich's colleagues. The fear of being captured led Shostakovich to withdraw the premiere of his 4th Symphony, but his much more conservative 5th Symphony (1937) made him a critical and political success once again. During World War II, Shostakovich wrote his 7th Symphony (1941), which was famously performed in Leningrad during its siege by the Nazis by an assembly of starving amateur and professional musicians. It even involving a Russian military offensive to keep the concert hall safe and quiet during the performance, which reportedly received an hour-long ovation. Shostakovich again fell out of favour when his 8th and 9th symphonies were denounced for not accurately reflecting the current spirit of the Soviet Union. In 1948, under the Zhdanov decree, Shostakovich's music was essentially banned for "formalism" until Stalin's death in 1953. Shostakovich finally gave in and joined the Communist Party in 1960 (by force, many speculated) and saw his health deteriorate and purportedly became suicidal. He would continue to compose, completing a total of 15 symphonies, before he passed away from lung cancer in 1975.

Symphony No. 14, Op. 135 (1969) is a work for soprano, bass and a small string orchestra with percussion. To add to the originality of the instrumentation, the traditional orchestral percussion instruments (timpani, bass drum, cymbals, and triangle) are swapped out for the likes of castanets, whips, soprano, alto and tenor tom-toms, xylophone, Tubular bells, vibraphone, and celesta. The structure of the piece is also unusual, consisting of eleven linked "movements": settings of poems by four authors. Most of the poems deal with the theme of death, and Shostakovich particularly tried to counter the positive presentation of death often found in music. Shostakovich felt heavily about this piece, stating, "Everything that I have written until now over these long years has been a preparation for this work."

Musically, the symphony begins with the violins playing a theme based on the *Dies irae* (a famous sequence in the Requiem). Fragments of the theme recur throughout the symphony, and it occurs in its entirety in the climactic tenth movement. Additionally, in all but two of the movements, Shostakovich employs tone rows, as well as tone clusters (one instance occurs in fourth movement's fortissimo chord illustrating the lily growing from the protagonist's mouth).

The first movement (*Adagio*) sets Federico García Lorca's 1921 poem, "De profundis", with an English translation as follows: The hundred lovers/sleep for ever/beneath the dry earth./Andalusia has /long red roads./Córdoba, green olive trees/where to place a hundred crosses,/in their memory./The hundred lovers/sleep for ever.

The second movement (*Allegretto*) sets Lorca's 1921 poem, "Malagueña", translated as follows: Death/enters and leaves/the tavern./Black horses/and sinister people pass through/the deep pathways/of the guitar./And there is a smell of salt/and of female blood/in the fevered tuberoses/of the seaside./Death /enters and leaves,/and leaves and enters/the death/of the tavern.

The third movement (*Allegro molto*) sets Guillaume Apollinaire's 1913 poem, "Loreley", translated as follows: In Bacharach there was a blond witch/who let all men around die of love for her. /The bishop had her summoned to his court/but absolved her right away thanks to her beauty. /O pretty Lorelei with your eyes full of jewels,/which wizard

bestowed his sorcery on you? /I am tired of living and my eyes are cursed,/bishop. All those who looked at me met their demise. /My eyes are not jewels, but flames. Why don't you/cast all that witchcraft into the fire? /I am burning amid those flames, O pretty Lorelei./Let another condemn you, you bewitched me. /You must be joking, bishop. You'd better pray the Virgin,/put me to death and may God protect you. /My lover left for a land faraway, why don't you/put me to death, since I feel no more love? /My heart aches so that I am bound to die,/a mere glance at myself would force me to die. /My heart aches so since he left,/My heart ached so the day he left. /The bishop summoned three knights armed with lances:"bring to a coven this demented woman" /Begone, crazed Lorelei, away with your trembling eyes./You'll be a nun, clad in black and white. /And so they set forth, the four of them,/The Lorelei begged them, her eyes shining like stars. /Knights, allow me to climb this rock so high/to see my fair castle one last time, /to watch one last of my reflections in the river,/and then I shall join the coven of maidens and widows. /Up there the wind twisted her unfurled hair/and the knights yelled "Lorelei, Lorelei..." /Yonder on the Rhine a skiff is sailing by,/on which stands my lover. He saw me, he beckons. /My heart mellows so, my lover is coming./She then leans over and falls into the Rhine /for having seen in the water the pretty Lorelei,/her Rhine coloured eyes and her hair of sunlight.

The fourth movement (*Adagio*) sets Apollinaire's poem, "Le Suicidé" (year unknown), translated as follows:
Three large lilies, three large lilies on my grave without a cross,/three large lilies dusted with gold, daunted by the wind./Watered only when a murky sky pours upon them,/majestic and beautiful like kings' scepters. /One emerges from my wound and, when a ray of sunlight brushes it,/moves up bleeding. It is the lily of terror./Three large lilies, three large lilies on my grave without a cross,/three large lilies dusted with gold, daunted by the wind. /Another emerges from my heart, which lies suffering on this resting place, /gnawed by worms. The third emerges from my mouth./All three stand on my lonely grave/All alone, all alone and condemned as I deem myself. /Three large lilies, three large lilies on my grave without a cross.

The fifth movement (*Allegretto*) sets Apollinaire's 1915 poem, "Les Attentives I" (On guard), translated as follows:
The one that must die this evening in the trenches/is a young soldier who, all day long, stares idly/at the concrete battlements/where the night's glories were hung. /The one that must die this evening in the trenches/is a young soldier, my brother and my lover. /And since he must die I want to make myself beautiful;/I want my naked breasts to light the torches,/I want my big eyes to melt the pond that freezes./And my hips, I want them to be the tombs/for, since he must die, I want to make myself beautiful/in both incest and death, these two magnificent deeds. /The cows at sunset low all their roses,/the bluebird's wing fans me softly./It is the hour of Love, of ardent neuroses./It is the hour of Death and of the final promise./The one that must perish, just as the roses die,/is a young soldier, my brother and my lover.

The sixth movement (*Adagio*) sets Apollinaire's 1915 poem, "Les Attentives II" (Madam, look!), translated as follows:
Madame, look!/You have lost something./It's my heart -- not much of a thing!/So pick it up./I have given it, and I have taken it back./It was down there in the trenches./Now it's here and I laugh at them, I laugh at them,/at the beautiful loves scythed down by death.

The seventh movement (*Adagio*) sets Apollinaire's 1911 poem, "À la Santé", translated as follows:
Before entering my cell/I had to strip naked./And what a sinister voice howls/Guillaume, what has become of you? /Farewell, farewell, singing round,/oh my bygone years, oh my young girls!/Lazarus entering the tomb/instead of getting out of it, as he did.

The eighth movement (*Allegro*) sets Apollinaire's poem, "Réponse des Cosaques Zaporogues au Sultan de Constantinople" (year unknown), translated as follows:
More villain than Barabbas,/horned like the angels of evil,/what Beelzebub are you down there,/nourished with filth and mire?/We shall not attend your Sabbaths./Rotten fish of Salonika,/long necklace of horrible dreams,/of eyes pulled out by dint of a pike./Your mother farted wet,/and you were born of her colic./Executioner of Podolia, lover/of wounds, of ulcers, of scabs./Pig's snout, mare's arse./Keep all your riches/to pay for your medicines.

The ninth movement (*Andante*) sets Wilhelm Küchelbecker's poem, "O, Del'vig, Del'vig!" (year unknown), translated as follows:
Oh Delvig, Delvig! Where is the reward/for good deeds and for the poetry?/What place is there for talent/amongst rascals and fools? /In Juvenal's rigorous hand/the frightful scourge menaces the villains/and robs the colour of their cheeks./The

power of tyrants trembled. /Oh Delvig, Delvig! What is the pay for persecution?/Immortality is yet the reward/for valiant and courageous deeds/or for delightful poetic singing. /Thus, our alliance will never be lost,/proud, joyful and free!/And, for better or for worse, will remain unshaken/the alliance of friends of the immortal muse!

The tenth movement (*Largo*) sets Rainer Maria Rilke's 1892 poem, "Der Tod des Dichters", translated as follows:
There he lay. His face resting/on the inclined pillow was pale and defiant/since the world and this, of it, know-it-all,/devoid of his senses/redounded upon the indifferent year. /Those who saw him living, did not know/how much he was one with all this,/for, these valleys, these meadows,/and this water were his face. /Oh, his face was this entire vastness/that, even now, wants to move towards him, to court him,/and his mask, that now anxiously expires,/is tender and open like the inner core/of a fruit that rots in the air.

The eleventh movement (*Moderato*) sets Rilke's 1920 poem, "Schlußstück", translated as follows:
Death is great./We belong to her/with laughing mouths./When we believe ourselves to be in the midst of our lives,/she dares to cry/inside us.