

REVISIONISM IN THE MUSIC
HISTORY OF DMITRY
SHOSTAKOVICH:
THE SHOSTAKOVICH WARS

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Abstract

The revisionist view of the Soviet Union's most eminent composer, Dmitri Shostakovich has been dominant in the American and British press ever since the publication of ex-Soviet journalist Solomon Volkov's *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich as related and edited by Solomon Volkov* in 1979. This pre-glasnost book proved to be the opportunity for music journalists to polish up their image of Shostakovich as a closet dissident who had been secretly laughing up his sleeve at the Soviet regime since 1932.

This thesis suggests that Solomon Volkov faked the writing of *Testimony* and claiming that the book was the 'memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich' is one of the most fraudulent acts in the history of Western music.

A favourite theme of revisionist writers is the perceived relationship between Shostakovich and Stalin. This thesis reveals that there was little interaction between the two despite the conjecture of revisionist writers and film makers. The infamous anonymous 1936 *Pravda* editorial 'Muddle Instead of Music' has been the subject of speculation ever since it was written. In the appendix of this thesis is a translation of 'Mysteries of Lady Macbeth' a chapter of Leonid Maksimenkov's *Muddle Instead of Music: Stalin's Cultural Revolution 1936-1938*. Archival evidence in this chapter reveals that the *Pravda* editorial was a product of internal Communist Party rivalry between the Cultural Education Board and the newly-formed Arts Committee. Stalin played no part in the writing of the editorial at all. This explodes many myths that have circulated since 1936 about 'Muddle Instead of Music'. It seems that Shostakovich was a convenient target selected at random by the ambitious head of the Arts Committee – Platon Kerzhentsev.

Glossary of Names

Ashkenazy, Vladimir (1943-). Russian-Jewish pianist born in Gorky (now Nizhny-Novgorod). In 1962 won the prestigious Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow. In 1963 defected to the United Kingdom. Has been a staunch advocate for Solomon Volkov.

Babbitt, Milton Byron (1916-). American composer and mathematician. On staff at Princeton University since 1938. His compositions developed from the 12-note system of Schoenberg and Webern, later employing electronic devices such as synthesizers and tape. Writer of notorious article ‘Who Cares if You Listen?’ in 1958.

Basner, Veniamin Emmanuilovich (1925-1996). Leningrad composer. Studied at Leningrad Conservatory in late 1940s. Did not study under Shostakovich but became close friend and disciple of the composer.

Boulez, Pierre (1925–) French conductor and composer. Influenced by Olivier Messiaen and Anton von Webern, he aimed to extend serialism into all aspects of a composition, including rhythm and dynamics.

Denisov, Edison (1929-1996). Composer, teacher. Trained as mathematician. Persuaded by Shostakovich to study composition with Shebalin at Moscow Conservatory 1951–6. Taught at Moscow Conservatory from 1960. A leader of the Soviet musical avant-garde.

Glière, Reinhold Moritsovich [Reingold Glier] (1875-1956). Ukrainian born composer and conductor. Director, and professor of composition Kiev Conservatory 1913–20, then taught at Moscow Conservatory. His *The Red Poppy* (1927) was the first Soviet ballet to have lasting success.

Gorodinsky, Victor Markevich (1902-1959). Critic and bureaucrat. Studied piano at Leningrad Conservatory 1923-1929. Assistant director at the Culture and Education division of Central Committee under Shcherbakov from 1935-1937. Survived *Pravda* crisis in 1936 unlike Shcherbakov who was demoted.

Gubaidulina, Sofia (1931-). Russian/Tatar composer. In 1975, with Artyomov and Suslin, founded Astreya, a group which improvised on rare Russ., Caucasian, and Central Asian folk instruments. Her *Stufen* for orch. won first prize at Rome international competition 1975. Regarded with Schnittke and Denisov as one of leaders of Soviet music since death of Shostakovich.

Kerzhentsev, Platon Mikhailovich (1881-1940) Theatre expert and cultural official, chairman of the Committee of Artistic Affairs 1936-1938. Author of book *The Creative Theatre*. Probable writer of the *Pravda* editorials ‘Muddle instead of Music’ and ‘False Sounds of Ballet’ in 1936.

Khrennikov, Tikhon Nikolayevich (1913-2007). Composer and pianist, administrator. As secretary-general of Union of Soviet Composers, denounced Prokofiev and Shostakovich for formalism in 1948, and a generation later Schnittke and Gubaidulina. Leader of Soviet Composers' Union, for over 25 years. Teacher of composition at Moscow Conservatory from 1963.

Kondrashin, Kiril Petrovich (1914-1981). Conductor, founder of Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra. Conducted first performances of Shostakovich Fourth and Thirteenth Symphonies. Defected in 1978.

Lebedinsky, Lev Nikolayovich (1904-1992) Musicologist. Chief ideologue of RAPM, an organisation hostile to Shostakovich, until it was dissolved by Stalin. Later became friendly with Shostakovich in the 1950s but they fell out when Shostakovich married Irina Supinskaya. Provided much material to Volkov about Shostakovich.

Litvinova, Flora Pavlovna (1920-) Biologist. Daughter-in-law of Maxim Litvinov who served as foreign minister until 1938. Befriended Dmitry and Nina Shostakovich during exile to Kuibyshev. Source of biographical material about Shostakovich some controversial.

Meyerhold, Vsevolod Emilyevich (1874-1940) Actor, theatre director. Was the target of vehement official criticism, his theatre was closed in 1938; he was arrested in 1939 and executed in 1940.

Mravinsky, Evgeny Alexandrovich (1906-1988). Nephew of Bolshevik revolutionary Alexandra Kollontai. Legendary principal conductor of Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra from 1938 to his death. Conducted first performances of Shostakovich's Fifth, Sixth, Eighth Ninth and Tenth Symphonies. In secret was a profoundly religious man.

Nazirova, Elmira Mirza Riza (1928-) Azerbaijani composer and pianist. Briefly studied with Shostakovich in Moscow then returned to Baku. Corresponded with Shostakovich when he was writing the Tenth Symphony and provided inspiration for the third movement.

Rostropovich, Mstislav Leopoldovich (1927- 2007). Baku born cellist, conductor and pianist. Studied under Shostakovich in Moscow. Inspired the composer to write two cello concerti. After sheltering Solzhenitsyn in his outhouse was blacklisted by the Party and eventually left Soviet Union in 1974.

Sanderling, Kurt (1912-). German conductor. Left Germany 1936, becoming conductor of Moscow Radio SO 1936–1941. Conductor of Leningrad Philharmonic 1941–1960 (jointly with Mravinsky). Notable interpreter of Mahler and Shostakovich.

Sakharov, Andrei Dmitriyevich (1921–1989), Russian nuclear physicist and civil rights campaigner. Having helped to develop the Soviet hydrogen bomb, he campaigned against nuclear proliferation. He fought for reform and human rights in the USSR, for which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1975 but was also sentenced to internal exile 1980-1986 in Gorky until freed by Gorbachev.

Shcherbakov, Alexander Sergeievich (1901-1945). Founding member of Soviet Writers' Union. Appointed first secretary of Cultural and Education division of the Central Committee in 1934. In 1936 was demoted and became second secretary of the Leningrad Party.

Schnittke, Alfred Garriyevich (1934-1998). Russian composer of German extraction. Teacher of counterpoint and composition Moscow Conservatory 1962–72. Influenced by serialist composers, but after 1966 gave dramatic, programmatic basis to his works, using quotations and pastiche.

Shumyatsky, Boris Zakharovich (1886-1938). Party functionary who became head of Soyuzkino in 1930 and remained in charge of the Soviet film industry until he was arrested and shot in 1938.

Shostakovich, Dmitry Dmitriyevich (1906-1975)

Shostakovich, Irina Antonovna (1934-) nee Supinskaya. Became third wife of Shostakovich in 1962. Literary editor.

Shostakovich, Nina Vasilyevna (1909-1954) nee Varzar. First wife of Shostakovich (married 1932) and mother of Maxim and Galina. Nearly divorced Dmitry after his affair with Yelena Konstaninovskaya in 1934. Scientist researching cosmic radiation. Tragically died in Armenia while working there.

Shostakovich, Maxim Dmitriyevich (1938-). Son of Dmitry Shostakovich. Assistant conductor Moscow Philharmonic 1963–5. Toured Europe, Japan, USA, and Mexico. London concert début 1968 (LPO). Assistant conductor USSR State Orch. 1966–71, principal conductor 1971–81. Conducted first performance of the Fifteenth Symphony in 1972, and *Suite on Verses of Michelangelo* (orch. version), 1975. Conductor of many recordings of his father's works. Settled in USA 1981.

Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr Isaevich (1918-). Russian novelist. He spent eight years in a labour camp for criticising Stalin and began writing on his release. From 1963 his books were banned in the Soviet Union, and he was exiled in 1974, eventually returning to Russia in 1994.

Stockhausen, Karlheinz (1928-2007). German composer and theorist. Studied at Cologne Hochschule with Frank Martin, and in Paris with Messiaen. During the 1950s he was at the forefront of advances in electronic music.

Taruskin, Richard (1945-). American critic and musicologist. Taught at Columbia Univ. 1973–87. Professor of music at Berkeley, University of California from 1987. Authority on 15th-cent. *chanson* and especially on Russian music from 18th century to today. Wrote *Oxford History of Western Music* (2005, 6 vols., 4272pp.).

Tishchenko, Boris Ivanovich (1939-). Composer and pianist. Taught by Shostakovich as graduate student at Leningrad Conservatory and remained close to the composer .

Vainberg, Mosche Samuilovich [Mieczyslaw Weinberg] (1919-1996). Polish-born composer. He studied the piano at the Warsaw Conservatory and, after moving to the USSR in 1939, went on to study composition at the Minsk Conservatory; in 1943 he moved to Moscow. Became a close friend and colleague of Shostakovich. Imprisoned in 1953 as part of the ‘Doctors’ Plot’. Shostakovich campaigned for his release which came after Stalin’s death. He was a prolific composer, writing no fewer than 22 symphonies, 17 string quartets, and seven operas, in addition to many works in other genres.

Ustvolskaya, Galina Ivanovna (1919-2006). Leningrad composer. Taught composition at college attached to Leningrad Cons. 1948–1977. Her music was little played during Stalin régime, being regarded as ‘narrow-minded’. Shostakovich defended her and sent her his works in MS for comment. He quotes from the finale of her clarinet trio (1949) in his Fifth String Quartet and in his *Suite on Verses of Michelangelo*. Shostakovich proposed marriage after the death of his first wife but was refused.

Vishnevskaya, Galina Pavlovna (1926-) Celebrated soprano who joined Bolshoi Theatre in 1952. Married Mstislav Rostropovich in 1955 (her second marriage). Wrote her memoirs in 1984.

Introduction

Revisionism in the Musical History of Dmitri Shostakovich: The Shostakovich Wars

The aim of this thesis is to investigate revisionist approaches in the interpretation of the life and works of Dmitri Shostakovich particularly after 1979 (when *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich as related to and edited by Solomon Volkov* was published in English). This is in light of the release of archival material about the composer and research which casts severe doubt on the authenticity of *Testimony* and subsequent revisionist publications *The New Shostakovich* (1990) and *Shostakovich Reconsidered* (1998). Other books by Volkov are also under question as both his *St Petersburg: A Cultural History* (1995) and *Shostakovich and Stalin: The Extraordinary Relationship Between the Great Composer and the Brutal Dictator* (2004) draw upon the same sources as *Testimony*.

For the purposes of this thesis, revisionism is the interpretation of historical events in the life of Shostakovich and his music at variance with the official views of the composer himself and the mainstream historical view as adhered to in Laurel Fay's *Shostakovich: A Life* (2000). Symphony No. 7 *Leningrad* provides a particularly good example of the difference between official and revisionist views. Shostakovich dedicated the symphony to the city of Leningrad and the two million people who lost their lives in the siege. The revisionist view is that the symphony is more about Stalin's oppression than Hitler's. This view is derived from a passage in *Testimony* where Shostakovich is supposedly talking about the Seventh Symphony: '...it's not about Leningrad under siege, it's about the Leningrad that Stalin destroyed and that Hitler merely finished off.'¹

Partly because of the difficulties in gathering material about Shostakovich in the West before *glasnost* and partly because they cannot be classed as revisionist, books in English

¹ Solomon Moseievich Volkov, *Testimony : The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich* (London: H. Hamilton, 1979) p. 156.

about the composer before 1979 have not been considered relevant to this study apart from the comprehensive portrayal of the Soviet musical world in *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia 1917-1970* by Boris Schwartz. Most Russian sources (which these books relied on) were unreliable until glasnost in 1985. In their book *The Unknown Stalin*, Zhores and Roy Medvedev point out: ‘Until recently, the study of history in the USSR was less an academic discipline than a tool of state and party ideology.’² This also applies to musicology. Laurel Fay when compiling her biography about Shostakovich found her main Russian source a two volume biography by Sofia Khentova, ‘...a minefield of misinformation and misrepresentation, incorrect dates and facts, errors of every stripe.’³

Up until 2004 it was difficult to discover the facts surrounding the gestation of *Testimony* - both what had happened in the Soviet Union and then subsequently in the United States where the book was first published by Harper & Row (now Harper-Collins). Fortunately *A Shostakovich Casebook* (2004) makes it possible to follow the debate with material that had been published in Russia but was inaccessible to English-speaking readers, and which includes numerous articles by the main investigators into the veracity of Solomon Volkov’s methods.

The role of *Testimony* was to overturn the image of the composer as a Communist Party stooge into a secret dissident who wrote coded messages against Stalin even in works such as the seemingly ultra-patriotic *Leningrad* symphony. Soon after its publication *Testimony* was found to have serious doubts over its authenticity. It seems that the number of interviews that Volkov had with Shostakovich were rather less than originally claimed and Volkov had obtained the composer’s signature on articles that had already been published in the Soviet press. Shostakovich did not sign any pages that Volkov had written as part of their collaboration. Since 1979 a whole new industry has been based on Volkov’s book including

² Ro A. Medvedev and Zhores A. Medvedev, *The Unknown Stalin* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003) pp. ix-x.

³ Laurel E. Fay, *Shostakovich : A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) p. 3.

films, further books based on the new image of Shostakovich and many newspaper and magazine articles.

This thesis suggests that Solomon Volkov faked the writing of *Testimony* and claiming that the book was the ‘memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich’ is one of the most questionable acts in the history of Western music. Therefore any subsequent authors (or film-makers) who quote the words of Volkov believing them to be of the composer, are undermining their own work. In this category would come Ian MacDonald’s *The New Shostakovich*, Alan Ho and Dmitry Feofanov’s *Shostakovich Reconsidered* and most disappointingly perhaps, Esti Sheinberg’s *Irony, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque in the Music of Shostakovich* (2000).⁴

In Chapter One the overwhelming popularity of Shostakovich’s music in the West in the last two decades of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty first is revealed in historical perspective against the background of the Cold War, glasnost and the break up of the Soviet Union. The release of *Testimony* undeniably played a part in the success of the music as it stirred up controversy and made the wider public aware of the debate soon to be described as the ‘Shostakovich Wars’.

Chapter Two covers the wars chronologically from before the conception of *Testimony* in the Soviet Union after Shostakovich’s death in 1975. A variety of sources are drawn upon for this historical survey. First and foremost is Paul Mitchinson’s ‘The Shostakovich Variations’ (2000)⁵ which is itself a chronological survey. Mitchinson’s fine account needed to be updated and a literature review added to ensure a fully comprehensive account of the wars. The chapter does not hesitate to portray the pettiness and posturing that was part of the conflict and letters to *The Times* and other newspapers and journals about the Volkov controversy show this.

⁴ See Richard Taruskin, "Double Trouble," *The New Republic* 225/26 (2001): pp. 30-31.

⁵ Paul Mitchinson, "The Shostakovich Variations," *A Shostakovich Casebook*, ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) pp. 303-324.

The origins of Shostakovich revisionism are explored in Chapter Two when Richard Taruskin recounts a year spent in the Soviet Union in which he attended performances of Shostakovich symphonies in Moscow where the composer was present.⁶ Taruskin realised that many in the audience interpreted the music in a different way to how Shostakovich intended but used it as a safety valve to escape the harsh realities of life in a totalitarian state. *Testimony* reflects these alternative readings and to actually have the composer admit them himself was Volkov's major coup. Unfortunately for Volkov his book has been so severely discredited that it is extremely doubtful that Shostakovich ever corroborated the revisionist agenda to the extent claimed.

Chapter Three examines the authenticity of *Testimony* and how Volkov sought to manipulate the aging composer and his friends to gain an audience with Shostakovich and then to write a book describing itself: 'The Memoirs of Dmitry Shostakovich as related to and edited by Solomon Volkov'.

Chapter Four deals with the question of the eight pages of previously published articles that were signed by Shostakovich for Volkov and ended up in *Testimony* with no acknowledgement of the original sources.

Chapter Five covers the myth of the relationship between Shostakovich and Stalin and the authorship of the infamous *Pravda* editorial 'Muddle instead of Music'.⁷

To conclude, this thesis demonstrates that revisionism in Shostakovich musical history is the cynical exploitation of a famous composer to sell a book (*Testimony*) in the West and the exploitation of some Soviet intelligentsia's alternative views of the composer's music. The cause was taken up by some who had grievances against the Soviet Union who wished to claim Shostakovich as one of their own. The true dissidents who suffered for their political views and were forced into exile for example Mstislav Rostropovich and Alexander

⁶ Taruskin, "Double Trouble."

⁷ See appendix p. 141

Solzhenitsyn, knew that Shostakovich was not one of them. Shostakovich had signed a denunciation of Solzhenitsyn whereas Rostropovich had sheltered the writer at his dacha.

The appendix of this thesis is a translation of the chapter *Zagadki «Ledi Macbeth»* [Mysteries of Lady Macbeth] from Leonid Maksimenkov's 1997 book: *Sumbur vmesto muzyki: Stalinskaia kul'turnaia revoliutsiia 1936-1938* [Muddle Instead of Music: Stalin's Cultural Revolution 1936-1938]. This is the first time, to my knowledge, that an English translation of this text has been made available.

The issue of the authorship of the *Pravda* editorial 'Muddle Instead of Music' is blindly accepted by the revisionists (Volkov, MacDonald et al) as being by Stalin and even conventional historians such as Laurel Fay have suggested that Stalin's orders were carried out by David Zaslavsky who happened to be a *Pravda* staff journalist at the time. There is no convincing proof for this apart from an alleged confession by Zaslavsky tucked away in an obscure Russian journal printed in 1991.⁸ A far more convincing version is provided by Maksimenkov who identifies Platon Kerzhentsev as the culprit. With archival evidence Maksimenkov proves that Stalin was not involved directly at all with Kerzhentsev acting on his own initiative to the extent of giving false reports to the Central Committee about a discussion he had had with Shostakovich on the *Pravda* editorial when the composer requested to see Stalin. If one accepts this compelling evidence then one is forced to admit that history must be rewritten and that there is very little to link Stalin with the *Pravda* editorial. This renders large parts of *Testimony* as historically incorrect as well as fraudulent and also seriously devalues Volkov's later book *Shostakovich and Stalin: The Extraordinary Relationship Between the Great Composer and the Brutal Dictator* (2004).

⁸ I. Rizhkin: 'Shest' desyatiletiy Moskovskogo soyuza kompozitorov 1932-1991' ['Six Decades of Soviet Composers from Moscow'] from *Moskovskiy kompozitor* (June, 1991)

Chapter One

Shostakovich in the Post-Modern Aesthetic

The meteoric rise in the popularity of the music of Dmitri Shostakovich in the concert halls of the world over the twenty years since his death in 1975 has been unparalleled in the history of Western classical music. After a promising beginning in the 1930s and universal popularity during the war years, the music of Shostakovich was largely neglected in the West from the onset of the Cold War. Today Shostakovich's music is phenomenally popular at the box office and recording studio not only with his symphonies and his string quartets but also his many film scores and light music.¹ At present Shostakovich symphonies are veritable goldmines for symphony orchestras. According to the London Symphony Orchestra: 'Shostakovich is big box office... someone attending a Shostakovich as their first classical concert is more likely to make a return visit than if they had been to any other composer.'²

This chapter looks at the performance history of Shostakovich in the West from 1929 to the present day and examines why his music has become so popular world-wide. Prior to World War Two Shostakovich's music was played frequently in Europe and the United States but after World War Two performances of his music dropped off significantly.

In the 1960s and 1970s, as a result of the Cold War, the music of Shostakovich was barely known or played let alone studied outside the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Often his music faced derision from Western critics. As a result the only exposure that many music students had to Shostakovich was a quotation from the Symphony No. 7 *Leningrad* (1941) used in Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra* (1943)

¹ An arrangement of Shostakovich's music from the 1955 film *Ovod* [Gadfly] was used in 1980s British TV series *Reilly: Ace of Spies*.

² James Inverne, "The Shostakovich Enigma," *Gramophone* July 2006: p. 16.

but not any work by Shostakovich himself. One of the foremost contemporary Russian music experts Richard Taruskin describes his early experiences of Shostakovich's music in the United States: 'The only time I recall hearing the music of Shostakovich in the classroom during my undergraduate and graduate years (roughly the 1960s) was when the "invasion" episode from his Seventh ("Leningrad") Symphony was juxtaposed with Bartok's mockery of it in his *Concerto for Orchestra*, and we were all invited to mock along.'³ The politics of the Cold War had restricted performances of Soviet composers in the West but this was to change in the 1980s.

In 1981 it was forecast that Shostakovich would become a marketing phenomenon: 'Predicting the future of musical taste may be even riskier than most prognostications: forecasting with wet tea leaves or the entrails of birds is probably more scientific. Still, it seems likely that Shostakovich's performances will proliferate in coming years. The man threatens to become the Mahler of the 80's.'⁴

1. Shostakovich's Music in the West before World War Two

Some of Shostakovich's works had gained a foothold in the West as early as 1929 with the First Symphony performed by the prestigious Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Bruno Walter. In the United States Leopold Stokowski championed Shostakovich conducting the Philadelphia and New York premières of the Third Symphony (*May Day*) with chorus omitted in 1932.⁵ Five years later Stokowski conducted four performances of the First Symphony with the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1937. The Fifth Symphony (1937) was first heard in the West when it was performed in Paris on June 1938. Stokowski conducted the Fifth Symphony five

³ Richard Taruskin, "Double Trouble," *The New Republic* 225/26 (2001): p. 26.

⁴ John Rockwell, "Could Shostakovich Become the Mahler of the 80s?," *New York Times* Feb 22 1981: p. A19.

⁵ Boris Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia, 1917-1970* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1972) p. 81.

times in 1939 with performances in Philadelphia, Washington, Baltimore and New York and recorded the work for United Artists. In 1940 Stokowski conducted the American première of the Sixth Symphony in Philadelphia. It is evident that uneasy relations between the United States and the Soviet Union restricted the performances of works that contained a political message which explains the missing chorus of the *May Day* symphony. On the other hand the more popular symphonies (the First and Fifth) received multiple performances and recordings.

In Britain performances of Shostakovich's music were rarer than in the United States with the Fifth Symphony not performed until 1940. Russian conductor Nikolai Malko had championed the cause with the First and the Third symphonies but British audiences (and critics) were not enthusiastic. In 1936 a concert performance of *Lady Macbeth* was given in London but it was not received well with the influential critics deploring its vulgarity.⁶

It was in World War Two when the Soviet Union and the United States became unexpected allies that Shostakovich's music was to receive its highest profile in the West ever. In 1942 the Symphony No. 7 *Leningrad* received its US première conducted by Arturo Toscanini. The publicity for the symphony saw Shostakovich in his fireman's hat and uniform on the cover of *Time* magazine the week before the performance. Toscanini who was not known as a champion of Shostakovich had beaten several rival conductors, including Stokowski to the première. After its American debut the symphony was performed extensively across the country with as many as thirty five performances in the period between July 1942 and January 1943.⁷ This was strictly a wartime phenomenon however and the symphony languished in

⁶ Pauline Fairclough, "The 'Old Shostakovich': Reception in the British Press," *Music and Letters* 88/ 2 (2007): p. 269.

⁷ Laurel E. Fay, *Shostakovich and His World* (Princeton, N.J. ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004) p. 64.

obscurity in the United States until the 1980s. After 1945 the onset of the Cold War largely shut off the West to the culture of the Soviet Union. What Churchill had described as an Iron Curtain had descended across Europe.

2. The Cold War

It is somewhat of an irony to note that although the miracles of modern transport and communications brought music to a wider world than ever before; ultimately the development of the nuclear bomb caused a major cultural divide. The nuclear threat was the cause of the Cold War when Western Europe and the US faced off against the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The East was closed off politically and culturally as Stalin asserted his control. Europe lurched from crisis to crisis and each flashpoint from the Berlin airlift in 1948 to the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961 tightened the Soviet grip on Eastern Europe. The politics of the Cold War was to play a large part in the separate development of music in the Western and Soviet blocs.

Serialism became the *cause celebre* of the Western avant-garde exponents Boulez in France and Stockhausen in Germany. In the US Milton Babbitt, based at Princeton University, was influential in the spread of this new musical technique. The serialists' use of mathematical models enabled them to produce non-subjective music that was politically neutral. To an extent serialism was a reaction against the totalitarian regimes in Germany and Russia particularly Hitler's glorification of Wagner. Eventually the serialists were to dominate American universities for a time as Alex Ross testifies: 'In the late sixties and early seventies, twelve tone composers were reaching the height of their influence. By some accounts, they effectively took

control of university composition departments across the country.’⁸ Unfortunately for the serialist composers concert audiences were not interested in their often severe, unsettling compositions. Audiences preferred to listen to less dissonant, more melodious music.

In 1950 at the height of post-war serialism few could have predicted how popular the works of Shostakovich would become. His music was so rarely performed in the 1950s that he was barely known in the West. As Laurel Fay has commented: ‘The post-World War II eclipse of Shostakovich’s music in the West was an unfortunate by-product of the Cold War.’⁹ Shostakovich’s music had been subject to harsh criticism by fellow composer Stravinsky who called it ‘hopelessly provincial’¹⁰ and by Boulez who called it ‘a kind of sub-Mahlerian “third pressing”’.¹¹ During his American exile Hungarian composer Bela Bartok who had an understandable dislike for authoritarian regimes, having escaped from Horthy’s Hungary, was particularly scathing about Shostakovich’s Symphony No.7 (1941) and lampooned the main theme of its first movement in his own *Concerto for Orchestra* (1943).¹²

David Schiff describes the barren years for Shostakovich’s music in the United States: ‘In America his only champion seemed to be Leonard Bernstein; the Seventh Symphony vanished from orchestra programmes. No recordings were made by other Western artists of the latest symphonies and concertos; the new quartets were barely known. In the post-Webern era Shostakovich felt like a vestige.’¹³

⁸ Alex Ross, *The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2007) p. 489.

⁹ Fay, *Shostakovich and His World* p. x.

¹⁰ Elizabeth A. M. Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (London: Faber, 2006) p. xiv.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Fourth movement

¹³ David Schiff, "Fruit of the Poison Tree," *Times Literary Supplement* May 6 2005: p. 3.

3. The Estrangement of the Audience

Perhaps it was the absence of the tonal influences of Soviet music that led to the tyranny of the modernist anti-populist avant-garde led by Boulez and Stockhausen who managed to dominate Western music academic institutions until the 1980s. Their atonal, deconstructionist methods were vastly different to the traditions that still persisted in Russia. What the musical avant-garde ignored were the conservative demands of the audience. The modern symphony orchestra and the string quartet are important purveyors of the musical traditions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Therefore music written in the symphonic tradition that is comfortable for an orchestra to perform – without extra rehearsal time – is more likely to form a stable part of the repertoire. Shostakovich as part of the symphonic tradition did not place inordinate demands on his performers and many of his symphonies are now as much of the repertoire as those of Mahler, Tchaikovsky, or Beethoven.

The gradual estrangement of the audience that began to appear in France (the Parisian riot over *Rite of Spring* in 1913) and Austria (the Second Viennese School) eventually produced a conservative reaction against the modernists who as their main spokesman Schoenberg put it were aiming for ‘the emancipation of the dissonance’.¹⁴

In 1986 Peter Burkholder wrote an article speculating which twentieth century composers would pass the test of time: ‘In the long run, perhaps the most enduring modern music will be that of composers who have appealed to both the learned and the mass audience, such as Mahler, Debussy, and the young Stravinsky’¹⁵ Now Shostakovich must be added to the list.

¹⁴ Jim Samson, *Music in Transition: A Study of Tonal Expansion and Atonality, 1900-1920* (London: Dent, 1977) pp. 146-147.

¹⁵ J. Peter Burkholder, "The Twentieth Century and the Orchestra as Museum," *The Orchestra: Origins and Transformations*, ed. Joan Peyser (New York: Billboard Books, 1986) p. 431.

In the Soviet Union Boulez (and Stravinsky before him) was condemned as 'formalistic' and woe betide any Soviet composer who was influenced by serialism (as was Edison Denisov) until even the formidable head of the Composers' Union, Tikhon Khrennikov, began to use some serialism in his own compositions in the 1970s. Some serialist-influenced music was now allowed and composers such as Rodion Shchedrin and Boris Tishchenko took advantage of this. Even Shostakovich who had often spoken out against serialism, employed some of its techniques in his Symphony No. 14. Khrennikov's relaxation did not extend to the music of Alfred Schnittke, Denisov and the Tatar composer Sofia Gudaidulina which was largely banned until *glasnost*. After the break up of the Soviet Union Schnittke and Gudaidulina promptly took up academic positions in Germany. Finally artistic freedoms were achieved in the ex-Soviet states but unfortunately for the artists, the comfort of state funding disappeared.

Poland although still in the ambit of the Warsaw Pact had more freedom to develop musically and Witold Lutoslawski and Krzysztof Penderecki were recognised as some of the leading avant-garde composers in Europe. The rise of Solidarity in Poland caused Lutoslawski to make his style more accessible following the example of his compatriot Penderecki who had also renounced his experimentalism. The two were later joined by Henryk Gorecki whose Third Symphony became a best seller in 1992. The Polish composers realised their role in society as political events became more important to them. It was now crucial for them to remain in touch with their audience as Poland hastened to democracy.

David Schiff describes the happy coincidences that hastened Shostakovich's popularity: 'In the East, the USSR was unravelling; in the West, musical Modernism was on its deathbed. When the post-Webern millennium failed to arrive, Western

concert halls showed a new openness to solidly crafted, intensely expressive music like Shostakovich's symphonies and chamber music...'¹⁶

4. The Shostakovich Renaissance

Since his death in 1975 the status and influence of Shostakovich grew immeasurably. In comparison his rival for primacy as composer laureate of the twentieth century Igor Stravinsky, also Russian but in exile has waned. In 2001 Stravinsky expert Richard Taruskin said: 'Shostakovich will surely overtake Schoenberg and Stravinsky for recognition as "the most consequential composer of the twentieth century,"'¹⁷

Many performances of his fifteen symphonies and string quartets thrust Shostakovich into the limelight; in fact such command of both the symphonic and the chamber music arenas simultaneously has not been seen since Beethoven. In comparison appearances of Stravinsky's works on the concert stage are largely restricted to his three early ballets *Firebird*, *Petrouchka* and *Rite of Spring*.

The release of Solomon Volkov's *Testimony* in 1979 led to the cleansing of Shostakovich's political image in the West. This neatly coincided with the dawn of the digital era when record company profits dramatically increased when the public began to replace their LP collections with CDs. '... world retail sales of all recordings doubled in five years after 1985, from twelve to twenty-four billion dollars.'¹⁸ The digital age spawned a golden age of recording resulting in Shostakovich cycles conducted by Kondrashin (who premiered the Fourth and Thirteenth symphonies with the Moscow Philharmonic), first on LP (Melodiya) then CD. 'Kondrashin was the

¹⁶ Schiff, "Fruit of the Poison Tree," p. 4.

¹⁷ Taruskin, "Double Trouble," p. 26.

¹⁸ Norman Lebrecht, *When the Music Stops: Managers, Maestros and the Corporate Murder of Classical Music* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1996) p. 311.

first to conduct all of Shostakovich's 15 symphonies in two concert seasons. He received many honours from his native country and in 1972 was named People's Artist of the Soviet Union, the nation's highest artistic title.'¹⁹

Kondrashin was granted refugee status in the Netherlands in 1978 on the grounds that the Soviets were stifling his artistic freedom. Unfortunately he only lived for three more years. Nevertheless he had helped to establish a tradition of Russian musical performance with the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam in his position as principal guest conductor and this has continued to the present day with Riga-born Mariss Jansons (whose father Arvids assisted Mravinsky at the Leningrad Philharmonic). Russian conductor Genady Rozhdestvensky completed a later Soviet Shostakovich symphony cycle with his USSR Ministry of Culture Orchestra and was also responsible for resurrecting the complete *Age of Gold* and the much maligned *Limpid Stream* ballets with Western orchestras. Dutchman Bernard Haitink was the first non-Russian conductor to record a Shostakovich symphony cycle for Decca with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam.

5. The Soviet Union Dissolves

On November 9 1989 the Berlin Wall was opened up resulting in the reunification of Germany in 1990. Earlier that year a Solidarity government had been elected in Poland and Hungary had adopted a multi-party system. The Czechs were about to launch their 'Velvet Revolution'. The end of the Soviet Union was nigh as its constituent republics began to demand independence. Gorbachev's Soviet Union was finally dissolved in 1991. The disastrous invasion of Afghanistan and the arms race

¹⁹ George Grove, Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., 29 vols. (London: Grove, 2001) vol. 13, p. 774.

against Reagan's America had bankrupted the country. Gorbachev had realised that he could not afford to hold on to Eastern Europe.

It is ironical that after the end of the Cold War and the dismemberment of the Iron Curtain that the music of Shostakovich conquered Western concert halls. With the eclipse of the military might of the Soviet Union its greatest composer was victorious. Now shorn of its political baggage the power of Shostakovich's music captivated Western audiences. Many excellent Soviet-trained conductors flooded into Western Europe and the United States many programming Shostakovich in their concerts. The political victories won by the West did not extend to the arts. In fact the popularity of Shostakovich's music in the concert repertoire was to eclipse Western serialism and marginalise its influence on future generations. The end of the Soviet Union did not depoliticise Shostakovich – the feud over his memoirs was to last much longer.

In 1979 the publication of the supposed memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich had been launched. The book *Testimony* sold half a million copies so its influence on the profile of Shostakovich at a time when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and détente was put on ice. At the time of its release in 1979 *Testimony* radically altered the perception of Western audiences from Shostakovich's negative stereotype (which was admittedly due to the Soviet propaganda machine: 'Soviet ideologists characterized him as the pre-eminent representative of socialist realism and as a loyal Communist.')

²⁰ an apparatchik to secret dissident (in the form of a Russian mystic – a yurodivy). Unfortunately all *Testimony* was to do was to substitute one myth for another. As Pauline Fairclough, author of a recent book on Shostakovich's Fourth symphony, comments: 'What *Testimony* did do, sadly—and *The New Shostakovich*

²⁰ Francis Maes, *A History of Russian Music: From Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar* (Berkeley, Los Angeles University of California Press, 2002) p. 343.

did if anything even more damage—was present to the Western public a cardboard image of Shostakovich and a stultifyingly limited view of his music.’²¹

Many factors have played their part in the popularity of Shostakovich’s music not least the discovery of hidden meanings and the encoding of the messages that proliferate in the composer’s later works. David Fanning believes that tonal simplicity was part of how Shostakovich appeals to audiences: ‘More than Busoni, Prokofiev or anyone else, Shostakovich added significant nuances to C major's repertoire of symbolic associations.’²²

Conductor Leon Botstein maintains that: ‘Shostakovich’s music inspires extraordinary, if not facile popularity among listeners both tutored and sophisticated, without apparent controversy.’²³

In Shostakovich’s case it was politics which first attracted the attention of the music world. Added to that was the proliferation of Russian-trained conductors including Maxim Shostakovich, the composer’s son, who programmed Shostakovich symphonies in their Western concerts. It was Kiril Kondrashin (who premiered the Fourth and Thirteenth Symphonies with the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra) who paved the way.

6. The Centenary of Shostakovich’s Birth

2006 marked the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Shostakovich in 1906). To mark the occasion Shostakovich performances and recordings went into overdrive. Russian conductors Maxim Shostakovich (Prague RSO Supraphon), Rostropovich (Warner classics mainly LSO), Rudolf Barshai (Brilliant Classics), Dmitri Kitaenko

²¹ Pauline Fairclough, "Facts, Fantasies, and Fictions: Recent Shostakovich Studies," *Music and Letters* 86/ 3 (2005): p. 456.

²² David Fanning, "Shostakovich: 'the Present-Day Master of the C Major Key'," *Acta Musicologica* 73/2 (2001): p, 108.

²³ Fay, *Shostakovich and His World* p. 356.

(Capriccio) have recorded complete cycles both recorded in Cologne. In Slovakia Russian-trained conductor Ladislav Slovak had recorded a cycle in Bratislava for the budget label Naxos. In 2006 Valery Gergiev conducted a full Shostakovich symphony cycle with the London Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican Centre. Latvian-born conductor Mariss Jansons completed yet another symphony cycle on CD with his new orchestra the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra in Munich. The success of the symphonies of Shostakovich will continue with superstar conductors Rattle and Jansons championing the cause.

More revelations about the composer's private life continue to appear - Shostakovich was not known as an outwardly religious man (as was conductor Evgeny Mravinsky) yet according to son Maxim, he had been baptised into the Russian Orthodox Church (admittedly before the 1917 Revolution) but more significantly carried a crucifix with him to bed each night.²⁴ Mravinsky was not required to join the party but Shostakovich was eventually required to become a member although he pleaded his religious beliefs as a reason for not joining.²⁵ Galina Vishnevskaya the Bolshoi soprano who sang at the premiere of Shostakovich's Fourteenth Symphony talks about the composer's religion: 'He never talked about faith, but often said "God disposes." And in his mouth it was not an empty phrase. Shostakovich bore his own cross.'²⁶

7. The Hijacking of Shostakovich

An example of the commercial exploitation of Volkov's myths is the 1997 film about Shostakovich: *The War Symphonies*. Normally one would assume that the

²⁴ Mikhail Ardov, Rosanna Kelly and Michael Meylac, *Memories of Shostakovich: Interviews with the Composer's Children and Friends* (London: Short, 2004).

²⁵ Dmitriai Dmitrievich Shostakovich, I. Glikman and Anthony Phillips, *Story of a Friendship: The Letters of Dmitry Shostakovich to Isaak Glikman, 1941-1975* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001) p. 92.

²⁶ Galina Vishnevskaya, *Galina: A Russian Story* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1984) p. 412.

film would be covering Symphonies 7, 8 and 9 all written during World War Two. But this is a different war – the war between Stalin and Shostakovich. Unfortunately Shostakovich has been hijacked by many exploiters who have little regard for the truth.

The rumours spread by former close friend Lev Lebedinsky that Shostakovich was about to commit suicide after his Eighth String Quartet (over his reluctance to join the Communist Party at the time), has been recycled to: ‘five years’ worth of A-level students who have been fed it as a fact, via the guidance notes sent to their teachers.’²⁷

The problem with Lebedinsky is that he possessed a rather colourful background which damages his credibility somewhat. Lebedinsky (1904-92) a musicologist, was not only a former agent for the Bolshevik secret police, Felix Dzerzhinsky’s notorious Cheka, and Communist Party member from 1919 but was a major leader of the RAPM (Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians) which was in major opposition to Shostakovich and other composers in the 1920s until it was dissolved by decree in 1932.²⁸ After formally criticising Shostakovich’s ‘decadent and bourgeois elements’²⁹ in 1936, the chameleon-like Lebedinsky managed to ingratiate himself with the composer in the 1950s to become ‘a close confidante’ but fell out with Shostakovich after the composer’s marriage to Irina in 1962. Some even allege that many of Lebedinsky’s anecdotes found their way into *Testimony*: ‘The musicologist Lev Lebedinsky, who liked to say that Shostakovich's symphonies were secret diatribes against the Soviet system, has been suggested as a secondary ghostwriter (of *Testimony*).’³⁰

²⁷ David Fanning, "The Reluctant Revolutionary," *The Gramophone* July 2006: p. 26.

²⁸ Levon Hakobian, "The Latest 'New Shostakovich'," *A Shostakovich Casebook*, ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) p. 234.

²⁹ Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* p. 136.

³⁰ Alex Ross, "Unauthorized," *The New Yorker* 80/25 (2004): p. 1.

The commotion that ensued when *Testimony* was released in 1979 and the many personalities who became involved are covered chronologically in Chapter Two: ‘The Shostakovich Wars.’ Volkov’s claims to the authenticity of the Shostakovich memoirs will be examined in full detail in Chapter Three: ‘A Question of Authenticity: *Testimony*’.

Volkov managed to get *Testimony* published by Harper & Row because he had eight pages with Shostakovich’s signature on them. It was the content on these pages which was to lead to the exposure of Volkov and render the contents of the book as suspect. In Chapter Four the content of the signed pages will be examined in context as they appear in *Testimony*. In Chapter Five one of the most enduring myths of Soviet musical history – the relationship between Stalin and Shostakovich is discussed with new archival evidence threatening to expose the fabrications of the myth makers.

Chapter Two

The Shostakovich Wars

The sequence of events dating from the late 1970s that came to be known as ‘the Shostakovich Wars’, could be compared to a Dostoevsky novel such is the level of intrigue. The cast of characters includes Russians on both sides but the battles have been fought primarily in the West not in Russia. The wars were initially sparked off by the publication of Volkov’s *Testimony* in the United States in 1979. The conflict, which still sporadically continues, was largely waged between Russian-speaking American academics and journalists, led by Laurel Fay, versus Solomon Volkov and his supporters mainly British and American journalists. The war was fought on the pages of the American and British Press as well as in magazine articles and books in the English-speaking world. Some academic conferences held on Shostakovich nearly came to blows. In 2004 after the publication of the seemingly conclusive *A Shostakovich Casebook* columnist Alex Ross in *The New Yorker* magazine, expressed the hope that: ‘Perhaps the so-called "Shostakovich Wars" are ready to end, and a more evenhanded assessment can begin.’¹ Unfortunately as Shostakovich’s music becomes more popular the commercial exploitation of Shostakovich that was started in *Testimony* will only continue.

Because *Testimony* was not published in Russian – its original language – the book was not easily accessible to Russian academics. Volkov’s accusers maintain that the non-publication of the book in Russian (which after all would not have required any expensive translation work for the publishers) allowed him to cover his sources more easily ² – until Russian-speaking musicologists in the USA discovered the use

¹ Alex Ross, "Unauthorized," *The New Yorker* 80/25 (2004): p. 119.

² Richard Taruskin, "Double Trouble," *The New Republic* 225/26 (2001): p. 30.

by Volkov of previously published articles printed in Soviet music journals. Therefore Russia was strangely peripheral to the battle: 'Here in the composer's homeland, up to the present time (2000), no substantial commentaries have been published and the book has not been subject to systematic investigation.'³ Another factor affecting the non-appearance of *Testimony* in Russian has been copyright issues with the Shostakovich family which have still not been addressed as Volkov continues to hold all of the rights to the book.

1. The Political Context

The aim here is to chronicle the events that occurred in the 'Shostakovich Wars' from the opening salvos until the present day. The continual evolution of events in the Soviet Union/Russia over this period had a vital bearing on the battle for the Shostakovich legacy. The most dramatic event was the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. This led to the availability of many Communist Party and related archives (the process which had begun as part of Gorbachev's *glasnost* policies). Enterprising Russian musicologists such as Leonard Maksimenkov gained access to these archives and managed to right many of the myths that persisted about Soviet cultural politics.⁴ Unfortunately the work of Maksimenkov has not been available in English allowing less scholarly, more anecdotal writers such as Solomon Volkov and Ian MacDonald to retain their dominance in the West. To some extent publications of anthologies such as *Shostakovich and His World* (2004) have provided readers in English access to the work of Russian musicologists. Perhaps the turning point in Shostakovich studies in the English-speaking world arrived with the publication of A

³ Ludmila Kovnatskaya, "An Episode in the Life of a Book," *A Shostakovich Casebook*, ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) p. 98.

⁴ Leonid Maksimenkov, *Sumbur Vmesto Muzyki : Stalinskaia Kul'turnaia Revoliutsiia, 1936-1938* (Moskva: Iuridicheskaia kniga, 1997). A translation of the chapter of this book dealing with the *Pravda* editorial 'Muddle without Music' is to be found in the appendices of this thesis.

Shostakovich Casebook in 2004. It leads off with Laurel Fay's earlier article, 'Shostakovich versus Volkov: Whose *Testimony*?' (1980) and follows up with a much later sequel 'Volkov's *Testimony* Reconsidered' (2002) where she proves conclusively that *Testimony* is a fake. More detail on Laurel Fay's findings about *Testimony* is to be found in Chapters Three ('A Question of Authenticity: *Testimony*') and Four ('The Eight Signed Pages of *Testimony* in Context') of this thesis.

2. Prelude

Actually the first shots in the battle over Shostakovich had been fired three years prior to the publication of *Testimony*. In January 1976, some six months after Shostakovich's death, there was a significant incident when the head of the Union of Soviet Composers, Tikhon Khrennikov, had demanded 'in extremely harsh language that Volkov was to "put the manuscript on the table" at a meeting of the Union in the presence of Irina Shostakovich. By this Khrennikov was referring to the records of interviews that Solomon Volkov had conducted with the late composer. Volkov had refused saying the manuscript had already been sent abroad. Khrennikov then threatened Volkov that he would never leave the Soviet Union if the documents were not shown.⁵

Despite Khrennikov's threat Volkov was allowed to leave Russia. Surely if the KGB had been involved at a high enough level, Volkov would never have been permitted to emigrate. Therefore any involvement of the KGB in the campaign against *Testimony* remained at a low level and no doubt became even less important during the *glasnost* years. Unfortunately many opponents of Volkov were labelled as stooges of the KGB – well after the KGB actually ceased to exist.

⁵ Kovnatskaya, "An Episode in the Life of a Book," p. 119.

In 1976 two leading US academics who were later to become leading opponents of *Testimony* became interested in Volkov's work with the composer. One was Richard Taruskin then a young assistant professor at Columbia University. Taruskin wrote a letter in support of Solomon Volkov's application for a research fellowship at Columbia's Russian Institute.⁶ Taruskin later related that: 'The Volkovs arrived in New York in July 1976... I was asked to interview him and write a letter of recommendation. Volkov disclosed to me that he had elicited extensive memoirs from Shostakovich He was now awaiting their piecemeal arrival from various way stations in Europe whither they had been smuggled by willing travellers.'⁷ As a result of Taruskin's letter Volkov received a fellowship at the Russian Institute at Columbia University. Taruskin later was to lament: 'Thus I became an early accomplice in what was, I later realised, a shameful exploitation'⁸ In 1978 Laurel Fay was a post-graduate student at Cornell University, completing a thesis on Shostakovich's late string quartets, when she heard about Volkov's work on Shostakovich and wrote to Volkov offering her assistance. Fay's attitude changed when she read the book itself.

Also in 1978 Henry Orlov acted as an interpreter for Volkov when he gave two lectures at Harvard. Even though Volkov seemed obsessed with the manuscript he would not reveal any of the contents of *Testimony* to Orlov or anybody else. Volkov was concerned that all of the manuscript had not arrived and was careful about divulging any secrets.

In April 1979 Orlov was approached by publishers Harper & Row to review the English manuscript of *Testimony* in order to ascertain its authenticity. Unusually prescriptive conditions were set by Volkov and his publishers regarding the security

⁶ Paul Mitchinson, "The Shostakovich Variations," *Ibid.* p. 307.

⁷ Richard Taruskin, "Opera and the Dictator, the Peculiar Martyrdom of Dmitri Shostakovich.," *The New Republic* 200/12 (1989): p. 34.

⁸ *Ibid.*

of the manuscript (Orlov was required to travel to New York and view it at Harper & Row's offices in the presence of staff). Orlov turned the publishers down.

On 26 August 1979 Orlov was approached by the publishers again with 'substantially moderated' conditions for the review. This time Harper & Row Senior Editor Anne Harris brought the four-hundred page manuscript with her to Orlov's residence in Boston. Orlov had 'a few hours' to read the book before Harris had to fly back to New York. Orlov was told by Harris that his review would have no effect on the book's future as *Testimony* was due to be released in Europe in five languages in two weeks time anyway.

3. The Publication of *Testimony*

On September 10 1979 (two months before the publication of *Testimony*) an article entitled, 'Shostakovich Memoir, Smuggled Out, Is Due' had been printed in the *New York Times* heralding the book's publication. This article included the somewhat sensational statement that the book was 'First turned down by Soviet publishers, then hunted by secret police, it was finally slipped past them, a chapter at a time, through various couriers in the West...'⁹ *Testimony* could hardly fail with this heady evocation of the Cold War in its advance publicity.

In October 1979 *Testimony* was published in the United States amidst a blaze of publicity. The book was chosen as editor's choice by the *New York Times Book Review* and reviewed by its renowned music critic Harold C. Schonberg on the front page. Other publications to review *Testimony* (favourably) were *Time*, *Saturday Review*, *the Times Literary Supplement* and the *New York Review of Books*.¹⁰ The

⁹ Herbert Mitgang, "Shostakovich Memoir, Smuggled out, Is Due," *New York Times* September 10 1979: p. C14.

¹⁰ Laurel E. Fay, "Shostakovich Versus Volkov: Whose *Testimony*?" *Russian Review* October 1980: p. 484.

problems with *Testimony* were that the book contained relatively little about Shostakovich himself, it was poorly structured and seemed to be overly based on anecdotal material. Boris Schwartz's *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia 1917-1970* may not be as entertaining as *Testimony*, but it is certainly more informative. Volkov was fortunate and able to trade on the name of one of the greatest composers in the twentieth century – the rest of Volkov's books have had nothing like the success of *Testimony*.

The timing of the book was impeccable – in two month's time on December 25 precisely the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan would be launched and relations between the West and the Soviet Union would reach a new low. As a result of the war in Afghanistan many Western countries boycotted the 1980 Olympic Games held in Moscow. For the Soviet Union the war was an absolute disaster feeding the ever-growing dissident movement. Nuclear scientist Andrei Sakharov one of the founders of the Moscow Human Rights Committee in 1970 was exiled to the closed city of Gorky (now Nizhny-Novgorod) for protesting against the war. In an era of deteriorating bilateral relations between the United States and the USSR, the release of a book representing the hitherto tight-lipped Shostakovich, supporter of the Soviet regime, suddenly turned dissident was bound to sell well.

Meanwhile in *The New York Times* Harold C. Schonberg predicted some of the *Testimony*-driven controversy to come in his review 'In the preface and introduction to this book, Mr Volkov goes into detail about the genesis and history of the memoirs. But we have to take his word for it, and that will not satisfy most musicologists and historians, a surly lot who demand proof.'¹¹

¹¹ Harold C. Schonberg, "Words and Music under Stalin," *New York Times* Oct 21, 1979: p. BR1.

4. Reactions to *Testimony*

Schonberg received his answer when Professor of Russian literature at Berkeley Simon Karlinsky published a review of *Testimony* in *The Nation* on November 24, 1979. Karlinsky was the first scholar to discover that some passages in *Testimony* had previously been published in Russian journals: 'One is perplexed... to read two pages on Igor Stravinsky which are a verbatim reproduction of a statement by Shostakovich published in the Soviet Union in 1973 in a collection of essays on Stravinsky edited by Boris Yarustovsky.'¹²

Karlinsky also discovered a passage referring to Mayakovsky that had been printed in the Soviet Union in 1963. He also objected to the translation of the book (by Antoina Bouis) as unidiomatic:

An additional handicap with which the book is saddled is the English translation. It can only be described as crude and occasionally semiliterate. On the one hand there is a profusion of anachronistic American slang which cannot possibly correspond to anything in Shostakovich's Russian.¹³

Laurel Fay's initial suspicions were confirmed by the Karlinsky review and suspected that there would be more such passages in the book (her findings are detailed in Chapters Three and Four of this thesis). Over the next few months she vigorously researched potential Russian sources for potential plagiarism. In April 1980 Fay presented her findings to the Midwest chapter of the American Musicological Society and was encouraged to publish them in *The Russian Review* a journal published by Stanford University. When given ample opportunity to do so, Volkov failed to respond to Fay's article when invited to by the editor, Terrence

¹² Simon Karlinsky, "Our Destinies Are Bad," *The Nation* /November 24 (1979): p. 535.

¹³ Ibid.

Emmons, of *The Russian Review*.¹⁴ Eventually Fay's charges against *Testimony* came to the literary world's notice but back in 1980 they had somewhat obscure beginnings compared with the publicity machine commanded by Harper & Row.

5. The Victimisation of Laurel Fay

Fay was to suffer considerable criticism from the pro-Volkov faction who often used McCarthyist-like tactics against her. Take for example Vladimir Ashkenazy's¹⁵ diatribe printed in London's *Financial Times* in 2000:

...the first western article denouncing *Testimony* and its new image of Shostakovich was written by Laurel Fay, an American musicologist and representative of the music publishers Schirmer, who was then researching Soviet music in Moscow. (Her principal contacts appear to have been the USSR Composers Union and VAAP, the Soviet copyright agency dealing with all royalties, which was effectively run by the KGB.)¹⁶

Ashkenazy is repeating a wild accusation made against Fay by one Maya Pritsker, an acquaintance of Volkov's at a Shostakovich Conference held at Mannes College of Music, New York City, on 15 February 1999. Pritsker described herself at the conference: 'I have lived in this country for eight years. I lecture sometimes at Lincoln Center, I do preview lectures, and I am now head of the Art Department for the American Russian daily newspaper, *Novoye Russkoye Slovo*.' These hardly seem adequate credentials to challenge Fay's position as a leading authority on Shostakovich. Pritsker went on to accuse Fay of close association with the KGB:

You should know that Laurel Fay was working for the Schirmer publishing house for a long time, and I think she's still there. And in this capacity she came to Russia quite frequently. She became probably the only person who frequently visited the Soviet Union for a long time. So a whole lot of information came to her through VAAP, the agency of the authorship -- which was headed by a KGB agent, as you know -- and also through the Union of

¹⁴ Laurel E. Fay, "Comparison of Texts from *Testimony* with Their Original Sources," *A Shostakovich Casebook*, ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) p. 22.

¹⁵ Ashkenazy supplied the 'overture' to the pro-Volkov book *Shostakovich Reconsidered*.

¹⁶ Vladimir Ashkenazy, "Papa, What If They Hang You for This?," *Financial Times* August 5 2000: Arts p. 8.

Composers. I knew that because I was living then in Moscow. I was a member of the Union of Composers as a musicologist, and I talked to Laurel.¹⁷

Ashkenazy and Pritsker were attempting to damn Dr Fay in truly draconian fashion - tactics that Senator Joe McCarthy would have no doubt approved. Although Fay spent time in Russia it is hardly credible to link her with the KBG through the Composers' Union and the VAAP. It seems irrelevant where Dr Fay was researching *Testimony* but there is nothing on record to suggest that it was in Russia itself. Fay was able to hit back in at Ashkenazy in 2002 with this reply:

Vladimir Ashkenazy has stated that he met Shostakovich only 'two or three times' before he left the Soviet Union in 1963... 'I shook his hand I think but I never met him properly.' Notwithstanding this admission that he hardly knew the composer and the fact that he had long been living in the West by the time Volkov began his meetings with Shostakovich in 1971, Ashkenazy has been a staunch advocate of *Testimony* and an equally obdurate foe of its critics.¹⁸

This was a rare reaction from Dr Fay who largely did not adopt the ad hominem tactics of her critics. For Pauline Fairclough author of a book on the Shostakovich Fourth Symphony, the treatment of Dr Fay was unparalleled: 'The torrent of vilification that was levelled at Laurel Fay during the late 1990s by a small but vitriolic band of music journalists (mainly based in the UK, but boosted by the American lawyer Dmitri Feofanov and the American musicologist Allan Ho) is absolutely unprecedented in the history of Western musicology.'¹⁹

Ashkenazy with his blind support of Volkov seems incapable of believing that those who challenge *Testimony* (Fay, Taruskin and Hamrick Brown for example) are not signed up members of the Communist Party who believed that Shostakovich was (as he is fond of quoting) 'perhaps Soviet Russia's most loyal musical son'. As communism in Russia barely exists any more, surely the argument is irrelevant. It is

¹⁷ Transcribed and edited by Allan B. Ho and Ian MacDonald, *Shostakovich Conference* (New York: Mannes College of Music, 1999).

¹⁸ Fay, "Comparison of Texts from *Testimony* with Their Original Sources," p. 45.

¹⁹ Pauline Fairclough, "Facts, Fantasies, and Fictions: Recent Shostakovich Studies," *Music and Letters* 86/ 3 (2005): p. 452.

better to concentrate on Shostakovich as a complex artist who was attempting to survive in a state which financially supported him (most of the time) and yet persecuted him particularly in 1936 (the *Pravda* editorials), 1948 (Zhdanovshchina) and 1960 (when he was forced to join the Communist Party).

6. Reaction to *Testimony* in the Soviet Union

The reaction to the book was swift in the Soviet Union. In a letter published in *Literaturnaia gazeta* on November 14 1979 six composers and musicologists condemned *Testimony* as fabrication. The six included former students of Shostakovich now successful in their own right – Boris Tishchenko, Veniamin Basner, Kara Karaev, and Karen Khatchaturian (nephew of Aram), a composer contemporary and close friend of Shostakovich, Moissei Vainberg. Although many questioned the accessibility of a book in English to predominantly Russian-speaking composers, there was a process organised by the Union of Soviet Composers that made certain that the six signatories to the letter were familiar with the book. In 1999 Basner's daughter, Elena wrote a letter to *Izvestia* describing how her father and fellow Leningrad composer Tishchenko were acquainted with the contents of *Testimony*: 'A representative of Tikhon Nikolaevich Khrennikov, who was president of the Composers' Union at the time, arrived at my father's place and spent the entire day reading Volkov's book to him and Boris Ivanovich Tishchenko, translating as he read "from the page." I myself was present and clearly recall their reaction to the book. They were indignant.'²⁰ Accusations from Volkov supporters that none of the composers who signed the letter had read the book before signing are rendered false by Elena Basner's testimony. She also rejects the accusation that pressure was placed

²⁰Elena Basner, "The Regime and Vulgarity," *A Shostakovich Casebook*, ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) p. 138.

on her father and his fellow composers to sign the letter. Veniamin Basner often discussed the book with his daughter (after she prompted him to get a copy) and he was particularly indignant about the fact that ‘Volkov placed all sorts of anecdotes and tales that had made the rounds among musicians into the mouth of Shostakovich.’²¹ Another of the signatories, Azerbaijani composer Kara Karaev, had read *Testimony* in its German translation. Karaev was, according to his son Faradz, fluent in German and had also told his family that Shostakovich could never have written the book in his opinion.²² Boris Tishchenko of course would have had some idea of what Volkov was likely to write as he was a vital link between Shostakovich and the author of *Testimony* for the interviews but Volkov had worked on the manuscript for three years since leaving the Soviet Union and Tishchenko would not have been aware of Volkov’s use of the plagiarised material.

Unfortunately no matter how worthy the claims of Shostakovich’s friends and former students were, at the time the letter simply provided more ammunition for the pro-Volkov lobby over the years until Elena Basner’s letter was written to *Izvestia* in 1999 (and translated into English in 2004).

7. Shostakovich family interview

On November 12 1979 the Shostakovich family was interviewed on their reactions to *Testimony*. According to *The New York Times* the Irina, the composer’s widow, and Maxim, the composer’s son, had not seen the book ‘despite their requests, until yesterday’ (November 11). They had only heard fragments of the book broadcast by Western radio stations until then. According to Irina Shostakovich ‘before he emigrated, Mr. Volkov never responded to requests from the family to see the

²¹ Ibid. p. 21.

²² Laurel E. Fay, "Comparison of Texts from *Testimony* with Their Original Sources," Ibid. p. 55.

manuscript.’²³ Apparently on December 13, 1978, at the suggestion of the VAAP (All-Union Copyright Agency) the family had cabled Harper & Row asking urgently for detailed information about the book and the exact title. They also warned the publisher about the copyright they believed they held over the composer’s name and asked that publication plans to be suspended until the family were satisfied. There was no answer from Harper & Row until January 29 when Edward A. Miller, general counsel of the publishers, cabled back and referred them to a reply the company had sent to VAAP weeks earlier. Interestingly enough the VAAP claim they never received the response apparently dated 6 December 1978.²⁴ The argument over copyright seems to encapsulate the Cold War in a nutshell. Harper and Row had no intention of listening to the Shostakovich family or the VAAP and were intent with the publication of the book going ahead as they knew that legal action was unlikely. For their part the VAAP denied they had received a cable on 6 December 1978 which they may have received or so Volkov alleged.

8. Maxim Shostakovich Defects

In April 1981 came a bombshell – conductor Maxim Shostakovich, the famous composers’s son, with son Dmitri turned himself over to police in Germany. His defection followed in the wake of other famous Soviet musicians who had close associations with Shostakovich including cellist and conductor Mstislav Rostropovich and opera singer wife Galina Vishnevskaya who defected in 1974 (mainly over the support they had given to Alexander Solzhenitsyn when he became a ‘non-person’) and conductor Kiril Kondrashin (who premiered Shostakovich’s Fourth and

²³ Craig R. Whitney, "Shostakovich Memoir a Shock to Kin," *The New York Times* November 13 1979: p. C7.

²⁴ Laurel E. Fay, "The Official Dossier," trans. Laurel E. Fay, *A Shostakovich Casebook*, ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) p. 91.

Thirteenth symphonies in Moscow) who had sought political asylum from the Netherlands in 1978. Maxim Shostakovich's reasons for defecting were 'because of the demeaning treatment of artists and musicians in the Soviet Union.'²⁵ Maxim who was now living in New York was asked for his opinions on *Testimony* he stated: 'These are not my father's memoirs. This is a book by Solomon Volkov. Mr. Volkov should reveal how the book was written.'²⁶ So even when Maxim was free from the tentacles of the Soviet security apparatus he reiterated his opposition to *Testimony* and Volkov's methods. He went on to say: 'language in the book attributed to his father, as well as several contradictions and inaccuracies, led him to doubt the book's authenticity.'²⁷ The irony of the situation was that both Maxim Shostakovich and Solomon Volkov were now living in New York.

After 1981 the front quietened down somewhat as the Soviet Union lurched through its final years of stagnation and the calamitous War in Afghanistan under Brezhnev but when he died in 1982 there was new hope that the Soviet Union would liberalise both internally and externally. These hopes were dashed when Yuri Andropov, Soviet ambassador to Hungary at the time of the 1956 Hungarian revolution and currently KGB chief became leader of the Soviet Union. Fortunately Andropov lasted only fifteen months in office. He was succeeded by Konstantin Chernenko but at that time the Soviet leadership was a poisoned chalice – Chernenko served thirteen months in the position before his death. It was the much younger and more visionary Mikhail Gorbachev who would finally take Soviet troops out of Afghanistan in 1989 but by then the Soviet Union itself was doomed.

²⁵ "Shostakovich's Son Says Moves against Artists Led to Defection," *The New York Times* May 14 1981: p. A18.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

9. Galina Vishnevskaya and Mstislav Rostropovich

In 1984 the great Bolshoi soprano Galina Vishnevskaya published her memoirs *Galina, A Russian Story*. Both she and her husband the cellist and conductor Rostropovich had left the Soviet Union in 1974. Vishnevskaya's book is important to the history of Shostakovich for its reliability – the book does not have a ghostwriter and Vishnevskaya's style has honesty and eloquence. She also has no secret agendas. Both Vishnevskaya and Rostropovich had unique links with the great composer. Both of the Shostakovich Cello Concerti - No. 1 (1959) and No. 2 (1966) are dedicated to Rostropovich who premiered them. Vishnevskaya premiered several works written for her and her husband – *Satires* for soprano and piano (1961 – accompanied by Rostropovich on the piano), played the lead role in the film *Katerina Izmailova* (1966), *Seven Verses of A. Blok*, for soprano, violin, cello and piano (1967 – accompanied by David Oistrakh, Rostropovich and Moisei Vainberg), and was the soprano soloist in the first performance of the Fourteenth Symphony (a setting of poems by Lorca, Apollinaire, Küchelbecker and Rilke in Russian translation) in 1969.

Vishnevskaya had first met Shostakovich in 1954 when he was hired as the music consultant at the Bolshoi. Soon after, she married Rostropovich and their close family friendship with Shostakovich would continue over the next twenty years.

She qualifies her reminiscences of Shostakovich with this statement: 'My account in no way pretends to be a study of the life and work of Shostakovich. These are only personal impressions, and I shall write only about what he himself told me, and what I myself witnessed.'²⁸

²⁸ Galina Vishnevskaya, *Galina: A Russian Story* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1984) p. 215.

At Zhukovka, just out of Moscow, the dachas of Rostropovich (with Solzhenitsyn living in its outhouse), Sakharov (later to be denounced by Shostakovich and other musicians) and Shostakovich were next to each other. This close proximity prompted Rostropovich to bring Solzhenitsyn and Shostakovich closer together as the composer was interested in writing an opera based on Solzhenitsyn's 'Matryona's House'. Rostropovich's efforts were in vain: 'it was plain that they wouldn't strike up a friendship... Solzhenitsyn was an uncompromising and natural-born fighter, willing to demand justice and public exposure ...But Shostakovich had been an introvert all his life, and had no stomach for the fight.'²⁹ Vishnevskaya's book manages to portray the farcical nature of Soviet society where Shostakovich could admire Solzhenitsyn's work in private and yet sign letters of denunciation against him (and Sakharov) in public.

In *Galina* there is no mention of Solomon Volkov - neither was there likely to be. Writer John Simon in his article 'Shostakovich and the Politics of Survival' writes about the Rostropovich family's attitude to Volkov: 'I myself, then friendly with Mstislav Rostropovich's daughter Olga, remember running into Shostakovich's grandson in her company. Afterward, she told me that no one in her family and circle lent any credence to Volkov.'³⁰ Vishnevskaya herself had denounced *Testimony* in 1980.³¹

²⁹ Ibid. p. 410.

³⁰ John Simon, "Shostakovich and the Politics of Survival" *New Leader* 87/6 (2004): p. 52.

³¹ Fay, "Comparison of Texts from *Testimony* with Their Original Sources," p. 44.

10. 'The Opera and the Dictator'

In 1989 Richard Taruskin wrote an article which proved significant in the Shostakovich Wars. It appeared in *The New Republic* magazine. As seemed appropriate ten years after *Testimony's* release, Taruskin outlines his earlier links with Solomon Volkov before *Testimony* had been released. He then describes how the book altered the usual perception of Shostakovich: 'Its Shostakovich was an embittered ironist, who had never been complicit, to the slightest degree, with the Soviet regime; who had, on the contrary, seen through it, mocked it, protested it all along...'³² Taruskin then details through *Testimony's* eyes how important symphonies such as the Seventh Symphony *Leningrad* were not about the siege of Leningrad or fascism but Stalinism. Similarly the Eleventh Symphony became a protest against the Soviet crack down on the Hungarian revolt in 1956 rather than its official programme to commemorate the 1905 massacre in Russia. But Taruskin dismisses this revisionism and berates the critics who praised it: 'The reception of *Testimony* was the greatest critical scandal I have ever yet witnessed.'³³

After endorsing the work of Laurel Fay and informing readers where her 1980 article, 'Shostakovich versus Volkov: Whose *Testimony*?'³⁴ could be found, Taruskin devotes the rest of his article to Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsenk*. It was in the context of the opera and its denunciation by *Pravda* in 1936 that Taruskin writes: 'Thus was Dmitri Shostakovich, perhaps Soviet Russia's most loyal musical son, and certainly her most talented one, made a sacrificial lamb, precisely for his pre-eminence among Soviet artists of his generation.'³⁵ Unfortunately for Taruskin this sentence has been seized upon by Volkov supporters ever since it was written quoted

³² Taruskin, "Opera and the Dictator, the Peculiar Martyrdom of Dmitri Shostakovich.," p. 34.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Fay, "Shostakovich Versus Volkov: Whose *Testimony*?."

³⁵ Taruskin, "Opera and the Dictator, the Peculiar Martyrdom of Dmitri Shostakovich.," p. 40.

freely out of context saying that Taruskin believed that Shostakovich was a diehard Bolshevik.

11. *The New Shostakovich*

In 1990 a book based on *Testimony* was published in the United Kingdom. Ian MacDonald's *The New Shostakovich* (1990) builds on the views of *Testimony* to produce a new likeness of Shostakovich mainly founded on the author's opinions. MacDonald who had dropped out of King's College, Cambridge after a year was not an academic writer and spoke no Russian. His motivation for the book was inspired by the image of Shostakovich as it was portrayed in *Testimony*. Primarily a rock writer with interest in many kinds of music, he was Assistant Editor of the *New Music Express* magazine from 1972 to 1975. He was also a popular song lyricist who produced an album with Roxy Music guitarist Phil Manzanera. Unfortunately MacDonald's skills as a rock writer did not equip him for the rigorous analysis of analysing classical scores and the book is littered with errors drawing the ire of Professor Malcolm Brown (Indiana University) who could not understand how MacDonald could admit that *Testimony* was a fake – then base a book upon it:

‘he admits that *Testimony* is "beyond doubt . . . a dishonest presentation" (*The New Shostakovich*, p. 245), yet he continually invokes Volkov as the authority for his own reductive readings of Shostakovich's music.’³⁶ Even though MacDonald admitted that Fay's work questioning *Testimony*'s authenticity was proven ‘beyond doubt’ that did not prevent him going after Laurel Fay with a vengeance when he teamed up with new allies Alan Ho and Dmitri Fefanov in 1998. Academics resident in Russia come in for an even greater tongue-lashing from MacDonald: ‘As for the Soviet scholars

³⁶ Richard S. Hill, Charles Warren Fox, Eva Judd O'Meara and Music Library Association., "Communications," *Notes* 50 /3 (1994): p. 1210.

who have studied the documentary record on Shostakovich in far greater detail than has so far been possible outside Russia, not a word of theirs can any longer be taken at face value.³⁷ Surely the writings and opinions of Dr Henry Orlov who immigrated to the USA in 1976 can not be discounted so readily by a rock journalist? The works of the prolific Sofiya Khentova, Shostakovich's main biographer, are a little more questionable as she was inclined to follow the official line and upset the Shostakovich family on more than one occasion. Maxim Shostakovich was quoted in 1991 as hating her work: 'She makes him look like the genuine son of the Communist Party.'³⁸ Notwithstanding Maxim's objections, Khentova's copious (at least sixteen books and numerous journal articles on the composer including the monumental two volume *Shostakovich: Life and Works*³⁹) work on the composer is still valuable, however, and Anglo/American scholars who have drawn upon her work include Elizabeth Wilson,⁴⁰ Laurel Fay⁴¹ and David Fanning.⁴²

The New Shostakovitch [sic] has no footnotes or endnotes and includes numerous errors both in fact and exposes MacDonald's inability to read a musical score. It is the book of an enthusiast but as most of it is an extrapolation of the writings in *Testimony* many of its conclusions are questionable. A sample of MacDonald's writing about the Fourth Symphony is often quoted derisively by critics: 'A little strutting promenade for bassoons and giggling piccolo leads us into the hall where thrumming harps call the conference to order. A wan waltz (the composer?) enters and sits dejectedly while flute and piccolo trill the opening remarks

³⁷ Ian MacDonald, *The New Shostakovitch* (London: Fourth Estate, 1990) p. 7.

³⁸ Paul Mitchinson, "The Shostakovich Variations," *A Shostakovich Casebook*, ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) p. 309.

³⁹ None of her output has been translated into English although one book has been translated into German

⁴⁰ Elizabeth A. M. Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (London: Faber, 2006).

⁴¹ Laurel E. Fay, *Shostakovich : A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁴² David Fanning, "Shostakovich and His Pupils," *Shostakovich and His World*, ed. Laurel E. Fay (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004).

in a mood of schoolboy hilarity.’⁴³ Unfortunately many of Shostakovich’s works are subjected to the same treatment in *The New Shostakovich*. Surely MacDonald is reducing the music he is attempting to describe to sheer nonsense with phrases of doggerel-like prose which could have come out of ‘Jabberwocky’ – only Lewis Carroll did it much better. Laurel Fay admitted that once she labelled MacDonald’s book ‘that moronic tract’, with passages such as those quoted above it is not hard to see why.

Professor Taruskin who also harshly criticises the book, refers to the cult of personality formed around the fallacious image of Shostakovich as a dissident that MacDonald helped to build: ‘Its biggest boost came in 1990, with "The New Shostakovich" by Ian MacDonald, a forceful British writer, who followed up on Mr. Volkov's suggestions by fashioning anti-Stalinist readings, of astounding blatancy and jejune specificity, for all of Shostakovich's works.’⁴⁴ Taruskin then explains why it is important to correct the dissidence myth: ‘It is important to quash the fantasy image of Shostakovich as a dissident, no matter how much it feeds his popularity, because it dishonors actual dissidents like Mr. Solzhenitsyn or Andrei Sakharov, who took risks and suffered reprisals.’⁴⁵ It should be remembered that Shostakovich put his name to a denunciation of Sakharov in August 1973. This denunciation entitled ‘He Disgraces the Calling of Citizen’ was signed by twelve prominent musicians including Shostakovich and was printed in *Pravda*. Also among the signatories were composers Dmitri Kabalevsky, Aram Khatchaturian and Rodion Shchedrin. Soviet human rights activist and writer, Lidiya Chukovskaya reacted to Shostakovich compromising himself with fury: ‘Shostakovich’s signature on the protest of musicians against

⁴³ MacDonald, *The New Shostakovich* p. 115.

⁴⁴ Richard Taruskin, "Casting a Great Composer as a Fictional Hero," *New York Times* March 5 2000: sec. 2., p. 43.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Sakharov demonstrates irrefutably that the Pushkinian question has been resolved forever: genius and villainy are compatible.’⁴⁶ Even if some claim that the composer’s hand was forced, Shostakovich displayed open hostility against other dissidents as well - he roundly criticised cellist Mstislav Rostropovich (and wife Galina Vishnevskaya) for harbouring Alexander Solzhenitsyn in the outhouse of their dacha at Zhukovka for four years from 1970-74. As a result of writing an open letter to *Pravda*, *Izvestia*, *Literaturnaya gazeta* and *Soviet Culture* to protest about Solzhenitsyn’s expulsion from the Soviet Writers’ Union, after the writer had been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1970, Rostropovich was dismissed from his guest conducting post at the Bolshoi and denied foreign concert tours. The family were finally allowed to leave the Soviet Union by the Brezhnev regime in 1974. Ironically if Rostropovich had also signed the denunciation against Sakharov his conducting and foreign touring would have been restored. He refused. Neither Rostropovich nor Vishnevskaya saw Shostakovich again. These idealistic actions of Shostakovich’s former student Rostropovich put those of Shostakovich into sharp relief. The Baku-born cellist had the courage of his convictions but Shostakovich did not - Shostakovich was no dissident. Former Shostakovich pupil Edison Denisov witnessed an embarrassing incident where Taganka theatre director Yuri Lyubimov refused to shake the hand of Shostakovich. When asked why, Lyubimov said: ‘After Shostakovich signed that letter against Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn, I can’t shake his hand.’⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Fay, *Shostakovich : A Life* p. 278.

⁴⁷ Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994) p. 433.

12. *Shostakovich, a Life Remembered*

In 1994 Elizabeth Wilson took a new approach to the standard Shostakovich biography *Shostakovich, a Life Remembered*. Wilson's book consists of carefully selected anecdotal accounts from a wide variety of sources including some accounts that are contradictory to each other. These include articles and memoirs already in print and some oral interviews from conductors, critics and close acquaintances of the composer. There are some significant names that are absent from the book they include Boris Tishchenko who was badly burnt by the *Testimony* affair and published his own volume of letters in 1997. Wilson had also asked Alexander Solzhenitsyn for a contribution about Shostakovich but he declined which is hardly surprising given the difficult encounters between the two giants of literature and music at Zhukovka (as related by Galina Vishnevskaya). Others to decline were conductor Kurt Sanderling and one-time Shostakovich intimate Galina Ustvol'skaya.

Wilson welds together the anecdotal material with narrative passages of studied neutrality often contrasting her prose with the more subjective style of the teller of the anecdote. Recognising the complexity of her subject, Wilson often presents contrasting arguments side by side for the reader to decide for themselves. It was certainly a valuable addition to the thin literature then available in English on the composer.

As careful as Wilson was to avoid controversy (if this were possible in a book about Shostakovich), she was later taken to task by the authors of *Shostakovich Reconsidered* for cutting one of her contributor's statements. The statements referred to Volkov and *Testimony*. Statements by Flora Litvinova were used quite extensively by Wilson as Litvinova was a close family friend of Shostakovich particularly when

his first wife, Nina, was alive. Wilson had commissioned an article by Litvinova which turned out to be over 70 pages long. This proved to be too much for Wilson's purposes. As Wilson states:

Originally it was at my request that Litvinova wrote her reminiscences of Shostakovich. The original was over 70 pages long, and I had to be quite selective about what I used. The passage in question about Volkov was indeed there in Litvinova's original. You ask why I omitted this passage. It may have been a mistaken decision on my part, but I did not want to get too involved in the whole vexed question about the authenticity of Volkov's *Testimony* ...⁴⁸

Flora Litvinova's heavily edited accounts of her friendship with Shostakovich are used in biographies of Shostakovich by Laurel Fay as well as Elizabeth Wilson. Fay and Wilson were well aware of Litvinova's tendency to exaggeration and not being fully accurate with dates.

The motives of Litvinova do not seem questionable (unlike those of Lev Lebedinsky it should be said). Journalist David Remnick met Flora and Misha Litvinov in January 1988: 'I was having tea and cake with Flora and Misha Litvinov at their apartment on the Frunzenskaya Embankment, where many families of Communist Party officials, active and retired, lived. The Litvinovs were a dazzling couple in their seventies, dazzling in their kindnesses and the unassuming way they seemed to know everyone and everything going on in Moscow.'⁴⁹

Unfortunately Litvinova's reminiscences originally made for Wilson's book were seized upon by Ho and Feofanov and used to support *Testimony*. In 1996 Litvinova's unedited memories of Shostakovich had been published in *Znamya (The Banner)*, and it was this account that was used by Ho and Feofanov to attack Wilson.

⁴⁸ Allan Benedict Ho, Dmitry Feofanov and Vladimir Ashkenazy, eds., *Shostakovich Reconsidered* ([London]: Toccata Press, 1998) p. 252.

⁴⁹ David Remnick, *Lenin's Tomb : The Last Days of the Soviet Empire*, 1st . ed. (New York: Random House, 1993) p. 10.

13. *Shostakovich Studies*

In 1995 Cambridge University Press published *Shostakovich Studies* an anthology of articles by Western and Russian writers. This book became a model for later such collections introducing a more scholarly and rounded view of Shostakovich's music than before. In his introductory chapter, editor David Fanning comments on the rise of revisionism in writing about Shostakovich and some of the reasons for it:

It is not difficult to see how the urge for revisionism could have arisen. For Russians it is part of an ongoing process; more specifically it is an acknowledgement that Shostakovich's music provided an emotional safety-valve for tragic experiences which for decades could not be written about... In the West it is perhaps more a case of being tempted to make Shostakovich into the kind of hero we would like him to be...⁵⁰

So for Fanning there are different motivations depending on whether the listener is Russian or Western. A Russian listener may have identified the Eleventh Symphony (1905) with the Hungarian revolution which was taking place at the same time (as Lebedinsky definitely did⁵¹) or connected the Leningrad Symphony with Stalin (as Flora Litvinova did) but what these listeners heard was not necessarily what the composer intended. A Western audience does not hear Shostakovich in the same context but, as in the case of Ian MacDonald, may impose their own agenda on the music depending on what they know or have read about the composer. Given the dominance of *Testimony* in the West (there are claims that half a million copies have been sold) that agenda will tend to be influenced by Volkov's model of Shostakovich as a dissident.

The scholar who has put most energy into refuting the dissidence myth is Richard Taruskin. In *Shostakovich Studies*, Professor Taruskin contributes a chapter

⁵⁰ David Fanning, ed., *Shostakovich Studies* (Cambridge ; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1995) p. 3.

⁵¹ Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* pp. 317-318.

on Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony entitled 'Public Lies and Unspeakable Truth: Interpreting Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony'. Taruskin spends much of the chapter deriding Ian MacDonald's interpretation of the Fifth Symphony and there is no holding back: 'So Ian MacDonald's reading is no honourable error. It is a vile trivialisation.'⁵² But there is more to come for the hapless MacDonald: 'And what kind of investigator builds sweeping forensic cases on such selectively marshalled evidence? The critic's method is precisely what is known in the West as McCarthyism.'⁵³ It is difficult to argue against Taruskin in this mood.

Other articles in the book are less controversial perhaps although there are two articles about Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. One is by David Fanning and the other is by Laurel Fay. The chapter which really catches the eye is Manashir Yakubov's: '*The Golden Age*: the true story of the premiere. Shostakovich's ill-fated ballet deserves much better treatment than it received at the time in 1930 but it became a victim of RAPM (Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians) politics. RAPM (Lev Lebedinsky was a leader of this organisation – surely Shostakovich would not have forgotten how harshly his first ballet was treated and by whom) hounded the ballet off the stage.

There is also an excellent chapter by Alexander Ivashkin about Shostakovich and Schnittke. Schnittke who is considered by some to be the successor of Shostakovich had quite post-modernistic ideas about the symphony which were somewhat different to those of Shostakovich. Ivashkin believes that Shostakovich had a natural affinity for the symphony: 'Shostakovich was one of several twentieth-century composers who continued to compose symphonies, not simply by virtue of tradition but because

⁵² Fanning, ed., *Shostakovich Studies* p. 53.

⁵³ Ibid.

the symphony (or concerto or quartet) was for them the most natural form of expression.⁵⁴

It is worth wondering, however, that if Shostakovich had not received criticism from *Pravda* against his opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* and the ballet *The Limpid Stream* in 1936 he may have written more operas and ballets and less symphonies. The symphony was a safer form of expression (as was the string quartet) in what was a totalitarian society.

14. *St Petersburg: A Cultural History*

In 1995 Solomon Volkov produced a book *St Petersburg: A Cultural History* which could have been of immense value to the student of Russian culture. The symbolism of St Petersburg is portrayed powerfully in Russian literature from Pushkin to Bely. Unfortunately Volkov spoils a potentially interesting subject with some odd theories. He hypothesises that Rimsky-Korsakov created ‘a school of composition’ which included Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Shostakovich. It is stretching credibility to include Shostakovich in this group as Rimsky died when Shostakovich was only two years old! The Second Viennese School – Schoenberg, Berg and Webern (which Volkov compares his ‘St Petersburg composers’ with) was far more unified. Schoenberg taught both Berg and Webern directly. The styles of the Austrian composers are far more similar than the music of Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Shostakovich ever could be.

It is interesting to find a stalwart defender of *Testimony*, Harlow Robinson, roundly criticising one of Volkov’s later efforts. In his review Robinson compares Volkov’s book detrimentally with Katerina Clark’s *Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural*

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 256.

Revolution (1995) which was published around the same time: 'For Ms. Clark, biography belongs near the bottom of the genre ladder, but Mr. Volkov an instinctive biographer, is undeterred by such hierarchical thinking. The result is a kind of biographical stew (in part reheated from Mr. Volkov's earlier books) full of gossipy chunks of information about legendary and eccentric artists.'⁵⁵

Volkov relies over much on anecdotal material and his odd and fanciful theories about musical history do not seem well thought out. The pattern seems all too familiar.

15. Russian Publications on Shostakovich

Soon after the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991 there came a veritable flood of books and articles dedicated to Shostakovich printed in Russia. Most of these were not translated into English so valuable insights about Shostakovich languished unread by most Western readers. One of the most significant publications as yet untranslated is archive specialist Leonid Maksimenkov's: *Sumbur vmesto muzyki: Stalinskaia kul'turnia revoliutsia, 1936-1938* [Muddle without Music: Stalin's Cultural Revolution, 1936-1938]. This book includes a revelatory chapter on the reasons behind the infamous *Pravda* editorial directed against Shostakovich.⁵⁶

Also significant is Boris Tishchenko's *Pis'ma Dmitria Dmitrievicha Shostakovicha Borisu Tishchenko* [The letters of Dmitri Dmitrievich Shostakovich to Boris Tishchenko] this collection was published in 1997 and probably explains why Tishchenko declined to contribute to Elizabeth Wilson's book in 1994 – Tishchenko wanted to give his own version of events including telling rebuttal of *Testimony*.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Harlow Robinson, "Leningrad Was Here," *The New York Times* December 3 1995.

⁵⁶ An English translation is provided in the appendix of this thesis.

⁵⁷ More detail about Tishchenko is given in Chapter Three of this thesis.

Sofia Khentova continued producing books about Shostakovich including one about the Thirteenth Symphony (1997) and a second edition of her *Shostakovich: Life and Works* (1996). Other Russian scholars were active such as Nelly Kravetz who discovered the autobiographical nature of Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony based on the composer's correspondence to Elmira Nazirova (an English translation of this article appears in *Shostakovich in Context* published in 1990) and Inna Barsova who wrote an article 'Between "Social Demands" and the "Music of Grand Passions" – The years 1934-1937 in the Life of Dmitry Shostakovich' which also appears in *Shostakovich in Context*.

In 1998 Levon Hakobian's book *Music of the Soviet Age 1917-1987* was published by Swedish publishers Melos Music Literature Kantat HB in English. In the chapter 'The Rise of Shostakovich' Hakobian describes cultural life as it existed in the Soviet Union and points out that music seemed to be treated better than literature or drama for example but is somewhat generous to the Soviet regime when he states: '... no significant composer perished in the GULAG under Stalin, very few left the country under Brezhnev, and almost no one under any general secretary was forcibly expelled from the Union of Composers.'⁵⁸ It should be said however that some very talented conductors and musicians did leave the country under Brezhnev and these included Kiril Kondrashin, Rostropovich and Vishnevskaya. Hakobian also forgets the case of Moisei Vainberg who was jailed in February 1953 because his wife's uncle – Stalin's personal physician Miron Vovsi, had been declared an enemy of the people as part of the 'Doctors Plot'. Vainberg spent three months in prison but a letter from Shostakovich to Beria on Vainberg's behalf (and probably the death of Stalin) saved him from a worse fate. Perhaps Vainberg is not regarded as a significant

⁵⁸ Levon Hakobian, "A Perspective on Soviet Musical Culture During the Lifetime of Shostakovich (1998)," *A Shostakovich Casebook*, ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) p. 220.

composer by Hakobian but he did write nineteen symphonies and some popular ballets including the well regarded *The Golden Key* (1955).

In many ways Hakobian is a very polemical writer but without his insights the dubious background of Lev Lebedinsky may never have been uncovered.⁵⁹ As could be predicted, Hakobian has little time for Volkov and *Testimony*: ‘... the book in which the figure of the composer is adjusted, so to speak, to the mediocre intellectual and professional level of the compiler, represents no interest regarding the understanding of either Shostakovich’s personality or his art.’⁶⁰

Hakobian did not spare Ian MacDonald’s *The New Shostakovich* either. He is appalled by MacDonald’s poor basic knowledge of Russian music. When Macdonald attempts to describe the second movement of the Shostakovich Tenth Symphony as a ‘Georgian gopak’, conjuring up the spirit of Stalin, Hakobian replies: ‘I find it hard to believe that MacDonald

- a. is unaware that the gopak is not Georgian but Ukrainian
- b. is unaware of the absence of any specifically Georgian (as well as, incidentally any Ukrainian) trait in the piece in question.’⁶¹

It is fortunate that Russian writers were able to correct much of the misinformation that was perpetrated in the West about Shostakovich but as already stated their work was not always available in English translation. Fortunately future compilations such as *Shostakovich in Context* (2000), *Shostakovich and his World* (2004), and *A Shostakovich Casebook* (2004) would provide an opportunity for the English-speaking reader to read the latest Shostakovich research that is taking place in Russia at present.

⁵⁹ See Chapter One p. 25

⁶⁰ Hakobian, "A Perspective on Soviet Musical Culture During the Lifetime of Shostakovich (1998)," p. 222.

⁶¹ Ibid. pp. 224-225.

16. *Shostakovich Reconsidered*

It was in 1998 that the ‘Shostakovich Wars’ really intensified. The pro-Volkov lobby published a book designed to refute the assertions of Laurel Fay and any others who might dare to question Volkov or *Testimony*. The architect was Alan Ho a lecturer at Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville. From this unlikely source Ho enlisted the services of pianist/conductor Vladimir Ashkenazy, expatriate Russian lawyer Dmitri Feofanov (Volkov’s lawyer) and Ian MacDonald to launch an attack against Laurel Fay and the other leading academics who doubted the credibility of *Testimony*. Stephen Johnson who reviewed the book in the *Times Literary Supplement* lays out the agenda of the book neatly:

In the minds of the editors of *Shostakovich Reconsidered*, Allan B. Ho and Dmitri Feofanov, and the author of the long final chapter, Ian MacDonald, there is no doubt that the crime of misrepresentation is still a major problem. The villains of the piece are the "anti-revisionist" polemicist Richard Taruskin, Laurel Fay (author of articles questioning the authenticity of *Testimony*) and David Fanning, editor of *Shostakovich Studies* (1995), all attacked with passionate ferocity.⁶²

One of *Shostakovich Reconsidered’s* novel defences for *Testimony* is to allege that Shostakovich’s ability to memorise music and literature was so developed that he was totally capable of repeating his own articles word for word back to the interviewer. This for Ho and Feofanov answers the questions that Laurel Fay first posed in 1980. Although Shostakovich did possess a remarkable memory that does not explain why the punctuation and spacing in the signed pages is identical to that of the original articles. Why Shostakovich would want to re-gurgitate already published material in this fashion cannot be explained.

⁶² Stephen Johnson, "Shostakovich Reconsidered," *The Times Literary Supplement* October 23 1998: p. 56.

All too often *Shostakovich Reconsidered* reads like a political party manifesto, which uses ad hominem attacks against academics that Ho, Feofanov and MacDonald don't happen to agree with. For example they take a passage by Richard Taruskin written about the 1936 *Pravda* editorial 'Muddle instead of Music' and take it out of context attempting to smear Taruskin's reputation. The passage is: 'Thus was Dmitri Shostakovich, perhaps Soviet Russia's most loyal son and certainly most talented one, made a sacrificial lamb, precisely for his pre-eminence among Soviet artists of his generation.'⁶³ Taruskin who was referring to the young Shostakovich of 1936 and before is merely echoing, perhaps more forcefully, what others have written concerning the composer's politics then. For example Vishnevskaya refers to Shostakovich reacting to a party ruling: 'The Central Committee's decree of April 23, 1932, "On the Restructuring of All Literary and Artistic Organisations" – was welcomed joyously by Shostakovich.'⁶⁴ English academic David Fanning has no doubt about the matter: 'The reference to "Soviet Russia's most loyal musical son" is a blatant misrepresentation of Richard Taruskin's comment made about the pre-1936 Shostakovich ...'⁶⁵ Fanning goes on to say: 'Such things detract seriously from the defence of *Testimony* which is the book's main *raison d'être*, and having presented their case in the manner of a courtroom drama—with commendable detail and perseverance, it should be said—Ho and Feofanov can hardly complain if their advocacy is shown to be flawed.'⁶⁶

This flawed advocacy can be seen clearly when Ho and Feofanov attack the composer's widow and claim that Maxim and Galina Shostakovich knew better: 'Irina's claim to often hear a "stranger's voice" in *Testimony* was not supported by

⁶³ Taruskin, "Opera and the Dictator, the Peculiar Martyrdom of Dmitri Shostakovich.," p. 40.

⁶⁴ Vishnevskaya, *Galina: A Russian Story* p. 217.

⁶⁵ David Fanning, "Shostakovich Reconsidered," *Music and Letters* 80/3 (1999).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

any examples and, in fact, has recently been contradicted by Galina and Maxim Shostakovich, both of whom knew their father for a considerably longer time than did Irina, who married the composer only in 1962, after a brief courtship.⁶⁷

Pauline Fairclough is also appalled by the attacks on Irina Shostakovich: 'In place of a proper defence, they have relied entirely on attempts to discredit the "opposition" as they perceived it, even to the point of questioning the integrity of the composer's widow and his closest friends.'⁶⁸

David Fanning questions Ho and Feofanov's tactics thus:

Having already selected essays which support their view of Shostakovich, they feel compelled to slant them with footnotes that enforce interpretations the original writers may or may not have intended. Time and again, worthwhile lines of argument are spoiled by distortion, 'vicious abstraction' (i.e., quotation out of context), and compulsive exaggeration—a kind of *augmentation ad absurdum*.⁶⁹

The authors seem intent on re-igniting old and forgotten battles in the Cold War even though the Soviet Union had broken up a full seven years before the book was published.

17. Reaction to *Shostakovich Reconsidered*

At the end of 1999 one of the most fiery debates in the entire history of the 'Shostakovich Wars' occurred in the American magazine *Commentary*. In October 1999 Terry Teachout the music critic of *Commentary* magazine wrote an article strongly in support of *Shostakovich Reconsidered*. In this article, 'The Composer and the Commissars', Teachout attacked Richard Taruskin and Laurel Fay with a vengeance:

No doubt some older, Left-leaning academics find it inconceivable that Shostakovich could have been anything other than a supporter of a regime with which they themselves sympathized. As for Fay, "Shostakovich Versus

⁶⁷ Ho, Feofanov and Ashkenazy, eds., *Shostakovich Reconsidered* pp. 81-82.

⁶⁸ Fairclough, "Facts, Fantasies, and Fictions: Recent Shostakovich Studies," p. 454.

⁶⁹ David Fanning, "Shostakovich Reconsidered," *Ibid.* 80/3 (1999).

Volkov: Whose 'Testimony'?" is the rock on which she has built her subsequent career as an academic expert on Shostakovich; it is hard to imagine her ever admitting to second thoughts.⁷⁰

By implication Teachout is accusing Taruskin and Fay that their opposition to *Testimony* is synonymous with supporting the Soviet regime. Inevitably the article drew a retort from one of the victims of the attacks, Richard Taruskin: 'If Mr. Teachout has actually read my article, "The Opera and the Dictator," from which he quotes, then he knows how flagrantly he has misrepresented my position when he places me among "some older, Left leaning academics" who "find it inconceivable that Shostakovich could have been anything other than a supporter of a regime with which they themselves sympathized."⁷¹

Teachout who is also the drama critic of *The Wall Street Journal* is undoubtedly a respected journalist but lacked the expertise and heft to debate *Testimony* with one of the world's leading musicologists and Russian music specialists. 'The Composer and the Commissars' targeted Taruskin directly: 'Taruskin's view of Testimony... is more nuanced, if less coherent. For while he continues to claim that Volkov lied about the book's authenticity, he simultaneously appears to believe that Shostakovich saw the book as an opportunity to whitewash his past...'⁷²

Taruskin has a classic reply for Teachout: 'It can only be the fraught political atmosphere that continues to swirl around Shostakovich's legacy, at least in minds like Mr. Teachout's, that would induce an otherwise intelligent critic in this one case to forswear, and then denounce, the process of scholarly testing.'⁷³

⁷⁰ Terry Teachout, "The Composer and the Commissars," *Commentary*.108/ 3 (1999): p. 53.

⁷¹ Richard Taruskin, "Shostakovich," *Ibid.*108/5: p. 14.

⁷² Terry Teachout, "The Composer and the Commissars," *Ibid.*108/ 3: p.17.

⁷³ Richard Taruskin, "Shostakovich," *Ibid.*108/5: p. 14.

As it is his column Teachout is allowed the last word which is an undisguised ad hominem attack: ‘Readers of Commentary may not recognize Mr. Taruskin's stock rhetorical strategies - the sky-high dudgeon, the sneering, arrogant bluster, the disingenuous distortions of inconvenient fact - but writers on musical subjects who are familiar with his work will find his letter characteristic. He is, unlikely as it may seem, one of America's outstanding musicologists...’⁷⁴

18. Laurel Fay’s Shostakovich Biography

In 2000 Oxford University Press published Laurel Fay’s biography of Shostakovich. It is without doubt the most authoritative account of the composer’s life in the English language currently available. Fay is scrupulous with her sources and takes care to list even her most vociferous critics’ publications (there are multiple listings for Ian MacDonald’s writings including the provocatively titled, ‘Fay versus Shostakovich: Whose Stupidity?’ which appeared in the *East European Jewish Affairs* journal in 1996). In this way – with good and thorough scholarship – she is above her critics who seem to be not capable of this.

Fay does not attempt to provide an analysis of Shostakovich’s works but concentrates on the all-important accuracy of biographical information. Her difficulties are outlined in the Introduction: ‘Unfortunately there is not a single even remotely reliable resource in Russian, English, or any other language for the basic facts about Shostakovich’s life and work.’⁷⁵ However the two main sources that Fay found ‘reasonably authoritative’ were the introductory articles to the complete Shostakovich edition that appeared between 1979 and 1987 and the two volume biography by Sofia Khentova (1996). Unfortunately both sources had problems with

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Fay, *Shostakovich : A Life* p. 3.

Soviet censorship. This reached ridiculous proportions when the composer's son Maxim defected to the West in 1981 and had to be written out of his father's biographies.

Fay states her mission: 'I have tried in the following pages to correct as much of the factual record as I can within the framework of a straightforward, basic biography of the composer.'⁷⁶ Tributes to the achievement of her goals have come from many musicologists but there were others who used the opportunity of a book written by Fay to attack her personally.

If there is a fair criticism of this book, its coverage of the 1936 *Pravda* editorial 'Muddle instead of Music' does not seem to acknowledge the work of Leonid Maksimenkov as much as it could have. Reviewer Simon Morrison believes that Maksimenkov's book *Sumbur vmesto muzyki* (1997) is 'underutilised' by Fay.⁷⁷ Maksimenkov's theory is that Platon Kerzhentsev, chairman of the Committee for Artistic Affairs at the time, wrote the infamous editorial and uses archival evidence to back it up. Fay does not include the discussion of authorship of the editorial in her main text but includes a note suggesting that there were two primary candidates for the role – Kerzhentsev and David Zaslavsky. Zaslavsky apparently confessed in an article 'Shest' desyatiletii Moskovskogo soyuza kompozitorov 1932-1991' to writing the editorial. For this reason Fay favours Zaslavsky as the prime candidate for authorship but cannot verify this enough to include it in the main text.⁷⁸

19. Reaction to *Shostakovich: A Life*

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Simon Morrison, "Laurel Fay's *Shostakovich: A Life*," *A Shostakovich Casebook*, ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) p. 351.

⁷⁸ Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* p. 304.

It was not long before Dr Fay's critics began to attack the book. Harlow Robinson, author of a book about Prokofiev, accuses Fay of making Shostakovich boring: 'Fay has squeezed her provocative subject dry. Cautious, dutiful and choked with details, her book reads more like an extended encyclopaedia entry than a biography.'⁷⁹ Robinson also takes Fay to task for ignoring *Testimony* and goes as far to claim that: '*Testimony* has become a basic text in Shostakovich studies and its contents have been accepted by many musicians and scholars.'⁸⁰ This is far from the truth – no major Russian specialists have accepted it (unless Robinson classes himself as one) and musicians are divided – Ashkenazy may accept it but Rostropovich and Maxim Shostakovich certainly did not.

The Washington Post was even more hostile about the Fay biography than *The New York Times*. Once again the reviewer seems obsessed with Volkov's writings: 'The publication of *Testimony* in 1979 was a revelation. The composer who emerged from these clandestine pages was a dissident forced to glorify the Soviet state in official speeches and articles while seeking to subvert it through the dark ironies of his music'⁸¹. The reviewer Sudip Bose devotes the major part of his article to the writings of Volkov and in the one paragraph that he bothers to mention *Shostakovich; A Life* at all, he is unfairly critical of Fay's efforts to write a well-balanced biography:

Now Fay, who dismisses *Testimony* as the deathbed rantings of a bitter man, has written a biography of Shostakovich. It is at times an unreliable book that portrays Shostakovich as a nervous Soviet patriot, "a 'true son' of the Communist Party" who "ceded unconditionally his signature, his voice, his time, and his physical presence to all manner of propaganda legitimizing the party."⁸²

⁷⁹ Harlow Robinson, "A Bitter Music," *The New York Times* January 2 2000.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Sudip Bose, "Subversive Symphonies," *The Washington Post* November 28 1999.

⁸² Ibid.

Fay has this to say about *Testimony* in her biography: ‘... even were its claim to authenticity not in doubt, *Testimony* would still furnish a poor source for the serious biographer... Since *Testimony* is highly anecdotal anyhow, offering little specificity about the composer’s activities or music, I have found it of little use.’⁸³

Unfortunately Dr Fay’s critics remained fixated on Volkov and *Testimony* and continued to belabour the subject (Robinson in *The New York Times* devotes half of his review to supporting the book which is only slightly better than Sudip Bose in *The Washington Post*).

The following diatribe found its way into the thankfully now defunct *DSCH Journal*. What it does show is the low level of debate that seems typical of the younger generation of Volkov supporters fuelled by neo-conservative politics. The ‘reviewer’ has little idea about the true nature of Shostakovich’s persona:

Her idea that Shostakovich was neither dissident nor a Soviet communist-loyalist but something in-between, a complex character and an enigma, begins to sound like an easy way to worm out of an embarrassing situation of having pitched for the wrong team. For it is not difficult to see that Shostakovich was neither as complex nor as enigmatic as Fay tries to pass him off.⁸⁴

Unlike more skilled operators Loh’s inevitable ad hominem attack is poorly executed and barely coherent:

Fay is altogether more dangerous. Her school-teacher eloquence and the attractiveness of her simple and apparently honest language lulls the reader into a false sense of assurance that at last here is one unbiased, objective person upon whom they might trust, she herself having written off the others as untrustworthy for various reasons.⁸⁵

It was this level of abuse that Richard Taruskin was referring to when he said: ‘The atmosphere of hostility and organized slander that Ms. Fay has had to endure is

⁸³ Fay, *Shostakovich : A Life* p. 4.

⁸⁴ CH Loh, "Saving Fay's Biography," *DSCH Journal* (2000), vol. 12.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, vol.

more than a little reminiscent of the atmosphere in which Soviet dissidents -- and even Shostakovich, at times -- had to carry on.'⁸⁶

The point should be made that *Shostakovich: A Life* has become the default biography of the composer due to its accuracy and its meticulous attention to detail particularly in its list of Shostakovich's works. Fay provides valuable information on and not only when and where the first performances were held but who the performers were. This is useful if one is, for example, interested in the collaboration between the composer and conductor Evgeny Mravinsky. How many symphonies did Mravinsky premiere and which ones were first performed by other conductors such as Kiril Kondrashin? Although Mravinsky had conducted first performances of five of Shostakovich's symphonies, the relationship broke down when he turned down the Thirteenth Symphony *Babi Yar*. Fay's coverage of Mravinsky's mystifying behaviour is fair and accurate.

Pauline Fairclough would be speaking on behalf of most music academics when she praises Fay's work: 'Laurel Fay's biography of Shostakovich (*Shostakovich: A Life* (Oxford, 2000)) will continue to be the chief resource of writers, scholars, and students, regardless of spiteful accusations that it is over-dry.'⁸⁷

20. *Shostakovich in Context*

Also published in 2000 was *Shostakovich in Context* edited by Rosamund Bartlett. It has a similar mix of authors as *Shostakovich Studies* – Russian, American and English academics. In this collection Russian contributions are more numerous than before. Nelly Kravetz's 'A New Insight into the Tenth Symphony of Shostakovich' provides evidence of the autobiographical nature of the symphony in

⁸⁶ Taruskin, "Casting a Great Composer as a Fictional Hero."

⁸⁷ Fairclough, "Facts, Fantasies, and Fictions: Recent Shostakovich Studies," p. 460.

contrast with the usual heavily politicised readings of Volkov and MacDonald. Inna Barsova's 'The Years 1934-1937 in the Life of Dmitri Shostakovich' provides an account of four tumultuous years although much of the article seems dedicated to an analysis of the last movement of the Fifth Symphony.

Richard Taruskin provides 'Shostakovich and Us' his perspective of the Fifth Symphony and other Shostakovich specialists Laurel Fay and Caryl Emerson contribute articles. *Shostakovich in Context* provides a more rounded picture of Shostakovich than ever before particularly Nelly Kravetz's revelations that the composer's infatuation with Azerbaijani student Elmira Nazirova lay behind much of the third movement of the Tenth Symphony.

Kravetz's research demonstrates that the alternation of Shostakovich's own motif DSCH (formed from his initials and played on flute and piccolo)⁸⁸ with that of Nazirova's motif EAEDA⁸⁹ (on first horn) is linked to an unconsummated affair that Shostakovich had with a former student of his Azerbaijani pianist Elmira Nazirova in 1953. The horn motif also echoes the tragic opening of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* one of Shostakovich's favourite works.

21. 'Double Trouble'

In 2001 the indefatigable Richard Taruskin wrote an extensive and significant article about Shostakovich in his usual vehicle *The New Republic*.⁹⁰ In it he reviews Esti Sheinberg's *Irony, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque in the Music of Shostakovich* (2000) and also Isaak Glikman's *Story of a Friendship* (2001). First of all Taruskin relates his early experiences of Shostakovich's music in the United States when his only exposure to it was when studying Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra*.

⁸⁸ Schostakowitsch is the German spelling of the composer's name. S is shortened German E-flat – Es and H is the German letter for B-natural.

⁸⁹ In French notation : E-La-MI-Re-A

⁹⁰ This article also appears in *A Shostakovich Casebook* pp. 360-383

Bartok mercilessly lampoons the invasion theme of the *Leningrad* Symphony in the concerto's fourth movement and as Taruskin says: 'we were all invited to mock along'.⁹¹

His attitude to Shostakovich dramatically changed during a year of study in the Soviet Union when he went to a performance of the Seventh Symphony in the hall of the Moscow Conservatory with negative preconceptions but saw non-conformist students, who were studying with avant-garde composers Alfred Schnittke and Edison Denisov at the time, transfixed by Shostakovich's music. Taruskin writes: 'The awful thought seized me that they valued this music, which I had been taught to despise, more highly than I valued any music, and that Shostakovich meant more to his society (and their society) than any composer meant to my society.'⁹² Taruskin describes further concerts of Shostakovich's music that he attended including the premiere of the Fifteenth Symphony with the ailing composer present. Apparently the new symphony was not well understood with its odd quotations of Rossini and Wagner but the audience paid homage to Shostakovich:

But the outpouring of love that greeted the gray, stumbling, begoggled figure of the author, then sixty-five and beset by a multitude of infirmities, was not just an obeisance to the Soviet composer laureate. It was a grateful, emotional salute to a cherished life companion, a fellow citizen and fellow sufferer, who had forged a mutually sustaining relationship with his public that was altogether outside the experience of any musician in my part of the world.⁹³

That Taruskin was profoundly influenced by this occasion is no understatement. Four years later the composer was dead and the battle for his legacy was about to commence. As one of those who has most actively campaigned against Volkov and his revisionist view of Shostakovich it is illuminating to see how Taruskin formed his views about the composer in the early 1970s in Moscow.

⁹¹ Taruskin, "Double Trouble," p. 26.

⁹² Ibid.: p. 27.

⁹³ Ibid.

Taruskin maintains that Shostakovich never originally intended his music to be dualistic that is, the ability to have his music heard several ways by an audience, but this was forced upon him by the *Pravda* editorial 'Muddle Instead of Music' in 1936. This meant for example that many members of the audience at the premiere of Symphony No. 11 (1905) in 1957 were not hearing the massacre outside the Winter Palace over fifty years before that the symphony was commemorating but were instead focusing on events in Hungary the previous year when Soviet forces had suppressed Imre Nagy's reforms. The composer himself had used Russian revolutionary songs from the era – there was nothing remotely Hungarian in the symphony at all but audiences were unrestrained by the usual pressures placed on them by heavy censorship and they had complete freedom to interpret the symphony as they wished. As Taruskin explains: 'One chose the reading that suited one's needs, and in the Soviet Union there was an enormous need for that choice.'⁹⁴ An alternative reading of a musical work served as an escape valve for members of the audience. Some unorthodox analyses of Shostakovich music were circulated in secret via samizdat in the 1950s.

The problem came when the revisionist interpretations of the composer (as exemplified by the Hungarian revolution of 1956 being super-imposed on events being portrayed in a symphony which is clearly about St Petersburg, 1905) began to dominate late Soviet and post-Soviet writing on the composer. *Testimony* is the most prominent example of the revisionists achieving dominance. The added bonus for Volkov was that he had the composer himself uttering the alternative anti-Soviet line. Since 1980, however, the authenticity of *Testimony* has been under serious doubt forcing the conclusion that many of the opinions expressed within it were those of

⁹⁴ Ibid.: p. 30.

Volkov himself not of the composer. Taruskin is dismissive about the book: ‘*Testimony* was easily exposed by scholars as a fraud within a year of its publication, and evidence has been mounting ever since.’⁹⁵

Esti Sheinberg’s *Irony, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque in the Music of Shostakovich* is given a mixed review by Taruskin. He finds much of her technique useful particularly for the analysis of simple pieces but he finds that her tendency to force her semiotic model on to more complex works such as the Thirteenth Symphony and *From Jewish Folk Poetry* limits the value of her theories. Much to Taruskin’s chagrin Sheinberg uses *Testimony* to back up her analyses: ‘Her reluctance to acknowledge that irony is as much a way of reading as of writing is a dated prejudice that greatly limits the explanatory reach of her theory... It will be surpassed, and soon.’⁹⁶ Taruskin’s point is that it is unlikely that Shostakovich would have intended his scores to be read semiotically even though Sheinberg attempts to prove links through Shostakovich’s friend Sollertinsky to Bakhtin: ‘She seems to imply that Shostakovich learned his rhetorical strategies from the Russian Formalists and Bakhtin, wasting many pages attempting to show that it was not unlikely that Shostakovich was not unaware of this critic or that one, or that he knew someone who knew someone who knew someone else.’⁹⁷

So Taruskin believes that Scheinberg has made an honest attempt to decipher the music of Shostakovich but falls short because her practice fails to match her theory. Furthermore Scheinberg’s use of the flawed *Testimony* hardly guarantees the accuracy of her analyses.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

The second book which Taruskin reviews is *Story of a Friendship* which is a book of letters from Shostakovich to Isaac Glikman.⁹⁸ Glikman was a Leningrad theatre critic and historian who taught at the Leningrad Conservatory. He was also a close friend of Shostakovich from the 1930s. It was Glikman who had helped the composer through the crisis of the forced withdrawal of the Fourth Symphony in 1936 and shared the triumph of the Fifth Symphony a year later. The most revelatory part of the book was in 1960 when Shostakovich was composing his Eighth String Quartet in Dresden whilst under pressure to join the Party from Khrushchev. In return for party membership Shostakovich would be appointed as President of the Russian Federation Union of Composers.

In a letter to Glikman Shostakovich tells his friend about the autobiographical nature of the quartet with his initials – DSCH forming the main theme. Other themes in the piece include the revolutionary song ‘Tormented by Grievous Bondage’ and many quotes from his own works. The composer was decidedly unhappy about being forced to join the Party although he had been a deputy of the Supreme Soviet since 1951. It is precisely these official duties which apparently Shostakovich carried out enthusiastically that tend to make a mockery of any secret dissidence theories.

Taruskin’s article is important because it shows the supporters of Volkov that even though he rejects *Testimony* as a fake, Taruskin still believes that Shostakovich was a complex figure who after 1936 wrote works that had a multiplicity of meanings for his listeners. It is the listener’s prerogative which version they hear. Unfortunately the subtlety of this point is lost on many music critics.

22. Taruskin versus Lebrecht

⁹⁸ This book was published in Russian in 1993 as *Pis'ma k drugu* (DSCH Publishers, Moscow, and Kompozior Publishers, St Petersburg).

British writer Norman Lebrecht is a tigerish defender of Volkov and a regular skirmisher with the feisty Taruskin. Here is an example of their exchanges: ‘The nadir -- it has to be the nadir -- was reached in a column by the English music journalist Norman Lebrecht, which compared Ms. Fay's honorable scholarly skepticism with David Irving's notorious attempts at Holocaust denial.’⁹⁹

Lebrecht’s response was typically waspish: ‘The historian Andrew Roberts wrote recently that Mr. Irving had made it untenable for anyone to call themselves a revisionist historian. The wilful distortions of Ms. Fay and her defender Mr. Taruskin, discredit revisionist musicology in much the same way.’¹⁰⁰

Later Lebrecht hit back at the Berkeley Professor in his regular internet column: ‘Taruskin has the ear of the New York Times, the only US newspaper to deal seriously with such issues; he is also preparing for Oxford a six-volume history of western music which will embed his perverse view of Shostakovich for the next generation of students.’¹⁰¹

It seems that there is a similarity in writing styles with Lebrecht and Volkov. Both exhibit a preference for colourful anecdotal material not backed by official sources. To some their books are full of inflammatory gossip and distortion but there is no doubt the books are entertaining and sell well.

23. A Shostakovich Casebook

In 2004 *A Shostakovich Casebook* seemed to deal the final blow to the credibility of Volkov and *Testimony*. The book is an anthology of essays which deals with all aspects of *Testimony*. The Casebook leads off with two articles by Laurel Fay. The first is her familiar 1980 article ‘Shostakovich versus Volkov: Whose

⁹⁹ Taruskin, "Casting a Great Composer as a Fictional Hero," p. 43.

¹⁰⁰ Norman Lebrecht, "How Dissident?," *The New York Times* March 19 2000.

¹⁰¹ Norman Lebrecht, "The Fight for Shostakovich," *La Scena Musicale* (2004), vol. March 24.

Testimony?' The second article 'Volkov's *Testimony* Reconsidered' (2002) is in many ways a response to *Shostakovich Reconsidered* as its title suggests but it is more than that. In forty-four pages she manages to demolish the credibility of Volkov conclusively. For example she finds that Solomon Volkov himself had written the introduction to Shostakovich talking about Meyerhold which was published in *Sovetskaia muzyka* in 1974. These reminiscences of the theatre director form the opening of Chapter Three of *Testimony* and this was one of the pages signed by Shostakovich. Yet Volkov maintains that he was not aware of the previously published material.¹⁰² If Volkov had indeed written the introduction to the Meyerhold article, then this is patently untrue.

In September 2000 Laurel Fay was able to examine a copy of the Russian manuscript of *Testimony* for the first time. The manuscript had been acquired by the Shostakovich Family Archive in Moscow. Dr Fay's ability to access the Russian original enabled her to solve the mystery of the first chapter of *Testimony*. Shostakovich had not signed the first page of the chapter as Ho and Feofanov claim. Instead Volkov had inserted the page signed by Shostakovich at page three. With this discovery Fay dismantled one of the few remaining defences for *Testimony* as laid out in *Shostakovich Reconsidered*.

The Casebook has been consummately planned with many articles having been translated from Russian for the first time. Ludmila Kovnatskaya's interview with Henry Orlov is a case in point. Because Orlov left the Soviet Union for the United States at the same time as Volkov and was involved in the same circles, his account of the gestation of *Testimony* is unique.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Laurel E. Fay, "Volkov's *Testimony* Reconsidered," *A Shostakovich Casebook*, ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002) p. 22.

¹⁰³ Ludmila Kovnatskaya, "An Episode in the Life of a Book," *Ibid.* (2004).

Other Russian articles included are Irina Shostakovich's 'An Answer to Those Who Still Abuse Shostakovich' first published in *The New York Times* in 2000, Boris Tishchenko's opinions on Volkov (1988, 1997) and the poignant letter that Elena Basner wrote to *Izvestia* in 1999 about her father's opinions of *Testimony* and the circumstances under which he and Tishchenko heard a translation of the book read to them in 1979 (Vaniamin Basner died in 1996).

Elsewhere in the book Paul Mitchinson's 'The Shostakovich Variations' is an informative account of the 'Shostakovich Wars' which reveals much detail about the participants in the battle. For example the experiences of Joseph Brodsky's family with Solomon Volkov form a disturbing parallel with the Shostakovich family. Brodsky collaborated with Volkov on some interviews but they clashed over Volkov's writing style and a book was not published until Brodsky's death. Perhaps if Brodsky had been a composer, *Conversations with Joseph Brodsky* (1998) might have had the potential of generating as much controversy as *Testimony* has done. As with *Testimony*, Volkov holds the sole copyright to the book. The final chapter Richard Taruskin's 'When Serious Music Mattered' is a reprinted version of 'Double Trouble'.¹⁰⁴

24. Reaction to *A Shostakovich Casebook*

It seems that as far as the major American press was concerned the reception of *A Shostakovich Casebook* was hostile and prejudiced. It would appear from the reviews in *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, that the only book these critics have read on Shostakovich is *Testimony* and that they believe every word of it. There is furthermore little evidence that either critic has even read *A Shostakovich*

¹⁰⁴ See above

Casebook properly. With his opening paragraph Tim Page in *The Washington Post* causes one to seriously doubt whether the book will receive a fair hearing from him:

Readers with an interest in literary matters may recall the numerous attempts that have been made to "prove" that Shakespeare's plays were in fact written by Francis Bacon. Similarly, a small but vocal group of musicologists has never accepted the authenticity of Dmitri Shostakovich's memoirs, *Testimony*, as "related to and edited by Solomon Volkov," which were smuggled out of the former Soviet Union and published to mingled acclaim and controversy in 1979.¹⁰⁵

Page is over-generalising when he refers to the numbers of musicologists who do not accept *Testimony*. It is impossible and unfeasible to take a survey of musicologists' opinion on the authenticity of Volkov's book. If one took a sample of Russian specialising musicologists and historians specialising in Russian music, the tide would undoubtedly be against Volkov.

New York Times critic Edward Rothstein is guilty of letting his pro-Volkov sympathies render him incapable of reviewing objectively:

' "Testimony" is still being challenged but generally not its portrayal of Shostakovich's attitudes or the kinds of musical expression that emerged. Ms. Fay now acknowledges that many recent emigre's[sic.] have confirmed the book's image of the composer's "personal views." And Mr. Taruskin, though eager to ensure that Shostakovich is not idealized, can seem to echo the voice of "Testimony."¹⁰⁶

There is nothing in Laurel Fay's articles on the subject that would confirm what Rothstein is saying about her position and Professor Taruskin is not likely to agree with the critic's summary of his views either.

In contrast to the two American papers, it is David Schiff writing in *The Times Literary Supplement* who is prepared to give *A Shostakovich Casebook* a fair hearing. Perhaps it is no accident that Schiff is an academic not a journalist: 'The entire

¹⁰⁵ Tim Page, "His Master's Voice," *The Washington Post* June 13 2004.

¹⁰⁶ Edward Rothstein, "Where Music May Owe Stalin a Little Credit," *The New York Times* April 10 2004: p. B9.

Casebook consists of essays focusing directly or indirectly on Testimony, and almost all destroy Volkov's credibility with compelling authority.'¹⁰⁷

25. Shostakovich and his World

Also published in 2004 this anthology includes the work of Russian, American and English scholars. Particularly valuable is an article by Leonid Maksimenkov about the contact (or lack of it) between Shostakovich and Stalin. The archives from Boris Shumiatsky, the deputy in charge of cinema, document Stalin's views on music more reliably than anecdotal material ever would. It was through film that Stalin knew Shostakovich's music best particularly that from the film *Counterplan* [*Vstrechniy*] (1932) from which 'Song of the Counterplan' became a favourite of Stalin. Other essays of note in the book include David Fanning's 'Shostakovich and His Pupils' which sheds more light on the little documented relationship between Shostakovich and Galina Ustvol'skaya whom the composer proposed to after the death of his first wife in 1954. Fanning points out valuable parallels between Ustvol'skaya's First Symphony (1955) and Shostakovich's Fourteenth Symphony (1968) particularly in the instrumentation. Simon Morrison's 'Shostakovich as Industrial Saboteur' discusses a work which is frequently overlooked - Shostakovich's second ballet *Bolt*.

Other contributors to the book include Caryl Emerson writing on 'Shostakovich and the Russian Literary Tradition' and conductor Leon Botstein with 'Listening to Shostakovich' where he confirms Taruskin's ideas about the duality of Shostakovich's music after 1936.

Shostakovich and his World continues the high standard of Shostakovich research in English set in the twenty first century. With more information available

¹⁰⁷ David Schiff, "Fruit of the Poison Tree," *Times Literary Supplement* May 6 2005: p. 4.

there is less likelihood of having to revert to the stereotypes of the composer that were typical of the last two decades of the twentieth century.

26. Sir Edward Speaks Out

In 2004 distinguished English conductor Sir Edward Downes gave his views about the revisionist movement and the motives of some of those behind it: 'I am very suspicious of the view promoted by [Solomon] Volkov that everything Shostakovich wrote had a dissident meaning. It does not ring true for me at all. It was very much in Volkov's interest to promote that approach because he was trying to sell a book in the west.'¹⁰⁸ Downes added that the composer himself had complained to him about people putting political agendas into his music. The conductor singles out Symphony No. 7 *Leningrad* as an example: 'The Leningrad Symphony, for example, is a very tight and well-organised musical construction. I feel almost a mission to present it as music and not as a political statement.'¹⁰⁹

27. Shostakovich Centenary 2006

The centenary of Shostakovich's birth was marked by increased performances of his music including an entire symphonic cycle in London with Valery Gergiev conducting the London Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican Centre. Record labels such as EMI and Supraphon completed their symphonic sets on CD. Several books on Shostakovich were timed for release on the centenary. Elizabeth Wilson updated her 1994 book *Shostakovich a Life Remembered* adding eighty extra pages taking the advantage of newly opened Soviet archives. The book has been translated into Russian. Some of these eighty pages are devoted to accounts of Boris Tishchenko

¹⁰⁸ Martin Kettle, "Red Ted," *Guardian* June 14 2004.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

who refused to contribute to the original book but published his own version of events together with letters to him from Shostakovich. Other new sources for Wilson include three symposia edited by Ludmila Kovnatskaya and the introductions to the ongoing 150 volume New Collected Works of Shostakovich. Unfortunately Wilson does not draw upon the research of Leonid Maksimenkov so her coverage of the 1936 *Pravda* editorials remains much the same as before with slightly erratic accounts of the performance of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* that Stalin walked out of. Wilson's book forms a valuable role in Shostakovich research and her update keeps the book current (*Shostakovich a Life Remembered* (2006)). Another book that was revised for the Shostakovich centenary was the late Ian MacDonald's *The New Shostakovich*. The book was edited by Raymond Clarke and many of the misquotations and musical errors have been corrected. In 2005 Pauline Fairclough argued that as many of MacDonald's idiosyncrasies would be posthumously smoothed over or edited out there is little point in publishing the revised version.¹¹⁰ The book dully appeared as predicted (*The New Shostakovich*, 2006).

28. 'The Shostakovich Wars' – Endgame

The current situation of the 'Shostakovich Wars' is somewhat perplexing. It seems that both sides claim victory. Laurel Fay has conclusively proven that *Testimony* was a fake but are there enough people listening to her? It seems not. In *The Times Literary Supplement* in May 2005 David Schiff painted a somewhat depressing picture of the Shostakovich wars:

¹¹⁰ Fairclough, "Facts, Fantasies, and Fictions: Recent Shostakovich Studies," p.454.

Who is winning the Shostakovich wars? The answer depends on where you locate the battleground. In *Shostakovich and His World*, edited by Laurel E. Fay, and the Casebook, American, British and Russian scholars take turns bayoneting *Testimony* and its defenders. But in concert halls, at least American ones, Volkov seems triumphant. Performances of any Shostakovich work are routinely preceded by actors impersonating the composer and his nemesis, Stalin -or are they Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader?¹¹¹

Despite the availability of high quality research including access to the official Soviet archives, and the ability to correct errors which arose from anecdotal material, which tends to be notoriously unreliable, the message is not being communicated to the wider public. It seems that Schiff is partially convinced himself – that he believes that Volkov’s book is a fake but claims that despite its flaws, *Testimony* sheds light on Shostakovich’s music. Schiff compares the misinformation of Wagner in his autobiography *Mein Leben* to the Shostakovich speaking in *Testimony*: ‘Much of the music world has reached a similar view in respect of Shostakovich: that while *Testimony* may be a fraudulent document it nonetheless provides a convincing assessment of the music.’¹¹² This sentence in particular offended Richard Taruskin who responded in a letter to *The Times*: ‘The point - the only point - about Solomon Volkov's *Testimony* that is relevant to the debate is that it has been conclusively exposed as fraudulent.’¹¹³ If Schiff is to accept *Testimony*’s views about Shostakovich’s music he would be accepting the alternative revisionist opinions that Taruskin describes in ‘Double Trouble’. Taruskin has more to say on this issue: ‘Volkov's lies are revealing not of Shostakovich's beliefs and goals but merely of Volkov's own. The light they purported to shed on Shostakovich was a calculated Cold War glare that gratified and exploited the wishes of impressionable readers. Of course he's winning in the concert hall.’¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Schiff, "Fruit of the Poison Tree," p. 4.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Richard Taruskin, "Shostakovich on Top," *Times Literary Supplement* May 20 2005: p. 15.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

In 2005 Pauline Fairclough, author of an important book on Shostakovich's Fourth Symphony,¹¹⁵ did not believe that the 'Shostakovich Wars' were over:

It has been a truly ugly story, quite possibly one of the most unpleasant in the history of any composer's reception. Volkov's defenders are still active; a reprint of *Shostakovich Reconsidered* is planned (in paperback, so as to reach that wider community of music-lovers that seems to be the authors' main target), and Ian MacDonald's *The New Shostakovich* will be out soon in a revised version, with his numerous score-reading and factual errors and misquotations posthumously corrected.¹¹⁶

Two years later Fairclough was more hopeful in about the outcome in a more recent article: 'Although the picture of Shostakovich reception is still very active and changeable, to perceive the cultural and political impetus behind major reception trends in the past may yet enable a more clear-sighted path forward.'¹¹⁷

29. The Great Divide

Today there seems to be considerable division between the opinions of academics who are specialists in Russian music and the media, which includes music critics, about the legacy of Shostakovich. As one surveys the nearly three decades of debate that has constituted the 'Shostakovich Wars' it seems that the battles are set to continue. It is simply not in the interests of commercial operators who are making money out of the legacy of Shostakovich to admit that the simplistic image of 'Shostakovich the dissident' is false. These commercial operators include publishers,

¹¹⁵ Pauline Fairclough, *A Soviet Credo: Shostakovich's Fourth Symphony* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

¹¹⁶ Fairclough, "Facts, Fantasies, and Fictions: Recent Shostakovich Studies," p. 454.

¹¹⁷ Pauline Fairclough, "The 'Old Shostakovich': Reception in the British Press," *Music and Letters* 88/2 (2007).

music companies, music critics and even symphony orchestras who are intent on selling an image of Shostakovich that is above all marketable. Whether or not this image has any foundation of fact is not a concern of the marketers. In the words of Richard Taruskin again: 'Myth, the higher truth, will beat facts any day in the world of spin. In the world of scholarship, however, the lowly facts are precious and the endless unglamorous winnowing process goes on. Eventually, as the history of Shostakovich's homeland attests, lies give way.'¹¹⁸

As the memories of the Soviet era fade Shostakovich interpretation will become less overtly political and his music will remain as an historical record of the man and his era.

¹¹⁸ Taruskin, "Shostakovich on Top."

Chapter Three

A Question of Authenticity: *Testimony*

As mentioned in Chapter Two ‘The Shostakovich Wars’, the claims of Solomon Volkov that *Testimony* contains the actual words of Shostakovich are central to the debate that has been raging since 1979. The book has become highly influential as it has sold over half a million copies and translated into over thirty languages.

This chapter examines the origins of the book that caused so much controversy and covers the investigations of Laurel Fay and others into its authenticity.

1. The Publication of *Testimony*

In October 1979 American publishers Harper & Row published the book *Testimony: the Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich*, “as related to and edited by Solomon Volkov”. This was four years after Shostakovich’s death which had been in August 1975. The authenticity of *Testimony* is an issue of central importance to the revisionism debate. If the book is what it claims to be – that is the actual words of Shostakovich - then the conventional Western image of Shostakovich and his music is substantially altered.

2. Solomon Volkov

Volkov was a Soviet journalist who had been on the staff of monthly *Sovetskaya muzyka* firstly in Leningrad and then Moscow. In 1975 Volkov had emigrated from the Soviet Union to the US soon after Shostakovich’s death. He then worked on the manuscript of *Testimony* for the next four years in his new country. Volkov claimed that *Testimony* was not a biography but contained the actual words of Shostakovich. Volkov told his American publishers Harper & Row: ‘Shostakovich did

not dictate to me. He would permit me to ask questions, which he answered in short sentences.’¹ On publication (in English) the book had a considerable impact in the West and sold thousands of copies but because the original version in Russian was not made available by the author (despite being translated into as many as 30 other languages) the book was virtually unknown in the Soviet Union.² For many Western readers aided by Communist Party propaganda,³ the Cold War perception of Shostakovich as a party loyalist who only wrote music to order from the Communist Party was turned upside down. The Shostakovich quoted in *Testimony* made insulting remarks about Stalin, his fellow composers particularly Prokofiev and Glière and conductor Yevgeny Mravinsky - remarks of such a nature that even his close family - wife (Irina) and children (Maxim and Galina) would not believe he could have said. Much of the book’s success lay in its timing, the publication date - 1979 was still seven years before the rise of Gorbachev and his policy of *glasnost*. The openness and transparency authorised by Gorbachev that led to the active uncovering of many unpleasant truths in Russia’s recent history⁴ was very much a result of *glasnost*. This unveiling of the Iron Curtain begun by *glasnost* eventually blunted some of *Testimony*’s impact as the Western press began to explore the myths of Western perception of how Soviet society operated. Much of the novelty of the book was that it showed how the intelligentsia lived their lives on the other side of the Iron Curtain. It seemed to prove that Shostakovich was a ‘good fellow’ after all who was not only critical of the Soviet regime but a secret dissident and a holy fool a *yurodivyi*. The

¹ Ludmila Kovnatskaya, "An Episode in the Life of a Book," *A Shostakovich Casebook*, ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) p. 101.

² The decision not to release the book in Russian may have had more than purely commercial motives. Laurel Fay’s investigation into the book’s authenticity was handicapped by not having access to the Russian original. Also see Taruskin ‘Double Trouble’

³ ‘Soviet ideologists characterized him as the pre-eminent representative of socialist realism and as a loyal Communist.’ Francis Maes, *A History of Russian Music: From Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar* (Berkeley, Los Angeles University of California Press, 2002) p. 343.

⁴For example the massacre of Polish Army officers by Russian security forces in Katyn forest in 1939 which was investigated by a special unit under Dmitri Volkogonov.

yurodivyi were traditionally ‘maverick holy men who would go around naked or in rags, sometimes with their faces blackened, with chains round their waists or deliberately drawing attention to sores on their bodies’⁵ Volkov appropriated and modified the term to describe his view of Shostakovich’s behaviour. In effect one does not have to rely on *Testimony* to discover that Shostakovich had never been as close to the regime as commonly supposed – he had not even joined the Communist Party until 1961 – he had suffered two major attacks on his music in 1936 (*Pravda*: ‘Muddle Instead of Music’) and in 1948 (Zhdanov’s attack on formalism in Soviet music) when he was dismissed from all his posts and had to rely on composing film music. Shostakovich became the Soviet Union’s most prominent composer on merit - not for his ability to conform to the party line. If following the party line had been the most important factor then the music of Tikhon Khrennikov (president of the Union of Composers for 40 years) would have been much more prominent than it was. Similarly the conductor Yevgeny Mravinsky, chief conductor of the nation’s top orchestra the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra for over forty years, never joined the Party and managed to stay aloof from party politics. The Party realised that the unique qualities of their premier composer (Shostakovich) and conductor (Mravinsky) must remain intact to serve the regime although Shostakovich had to learn some hard lessons on the way. Unfortunately Shostakovich’s image became somewhat tarnished in the Soviet Union and subsequently in the West when he agreed to denunciations of nuclear scientist turned human rights campaigner and dissident Andrei Sakharov and Alexander Solzhenitsyn., winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1970.

Much of this information was already available in Boris Schwarz’s comprehensive *Music and musical Life in Soviet Russia 1917–1970*, however

⁵ Geoffrey A. Hosking, *Russia and the Russians : A History* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 2001) p. 25.

Testimony purported to bring a first-hand account of cultural life in Soviet Russia from its greatest living composer. Volkov managed to convince American publishers Harper & Row to publish his book because he possessed eight signed pages which Shostakovich had initialled guaranteeing the manuscript's authenticity – supposedly. These eight pages are crucial to the book's credibility.

3. First Questions Raised

As mentioned in Chapter Two, soon after the publication of *Testimony* in 1979, major questions began to be raised by American academics about the book's authenticity. The first suspicions were raised by Simon Karlinsky, a professor of Russian at the University of California, Berkeley, who discovered two passages in *Testimony*, which bore a remarkable similarity with previously published passages in Russian publications:

Because of Solomon Volkov's musicological expertise and his well-documented closeness to Shostakovich, there is no reason to doubt that he actually wrote down what Shostakovich told him. One is perplexed, nonetheless, to read two pages on Igor Stravinsky which are a verbatim reproduction of a statement by Shostakovich published in the Soviet Union in 1973 in a collection of essays on Stravinsky edited by Boris Yarustovsky. Beginning identically, the texts in *Testimony* and in the collection of essays then diverge and go their separate ways.⁶

Karlinsky was clearly unsettled by the similarity of the two critical passages in *Testimony* about Stravinsky to articles which had been previously published in the Soviet Union. He questions the book further: 'In view of the extreme interest of the memoirs and the many startling and debatable revelations they contain, it is a pity that the book comes to us with so many unresolved questions in matters of authorship and veracity.'⁷

⁶ Simon Karlinsky, "Our Destinies Are Bad," *The Nation* /November 24 (1979): p. 533.

⁷ Ibid.

Alerted by Karlinsky's discoveries American academic Laurel Fay found five more passages in *Testimony* that were taken verbatim from Russian publications. These seven pages of published material were actually pages that Shostakovich had signed for Volkov. This detective work of Fay's was made more difficult by the fact that there was no Russian edition of *Testimony* to compare the Russian articles with. *Testimony* has never been published in Russian. When Fay eventually located an original Russian manuscript of *Testimony* she discovered where an eighth page had been inserted into the document. Fay discovered so many inconsistencies with the manuscript that the authenticity of *Testimony* as the 'actual words of Shostakovich as related to Solomon Volkov' is under question. To discover more about Solomon Volkov's motives and why he would write an allegedly fraudulent account of Shostakovich's memoirs it is necessary to examine the following:

1. Volkov's relationship with Shostakovich. Particularly in his later years Shostakovich was not accessible to would-be biographers or memoirists. Volkov has made contradictory statements about this relationship.
2. Volkov's later meetings with Shostakovich (1971-75) – The number of meetings and their frequency in this period is very much under dispute between Volkov on one side and Irina Shostakovich and Boris Tishchenko on the other.
3. The signed pages and Shostakovich's behaviour when signing articles. This is vital when one considers that without the eight signed pages that Volkov had in his possession, *Testimony* would never have been published.

4. The role of Boris Tishchenko in *Testimony*. ‘That Tishchenko was close to Shostakovich, and in a position to exploit his access to further Volkov’s cause is unquestionable.’⁸
5. Genrikh Orlov’s official opinion of *Testimony* for publishers Harper & Row and Simon Karlinsky’s doubts about the .the book’s authenticity.
6. The issue of the copyright of *Testimony*

4. Volkov’s relationship with Shostakovich

Solomon Volkov who was born in Leninabad, Tajikistan in 1944 first came to prominence in 1960 when he published an “ecstatic” review of Shostakovich’s String Quartet No. 8 in *Smena*, a Leningrad newspaper, on 7 October.⁹ Volkov was sixteen years of age and a student at the high school affiliated to the Leningrad Conservatory of Music at the time. Apparently Shostakovich read the review and was so impressed that he wished to meet the young critic. Subsequently Volkov was introduced to Shostakovich.

From 1962-7, Volkov studied the violin at the Leningrad Conservatorium. During this time, he helped to organise a festival of Shostakovich’s music (Spring 1965) and claims in his preface to *Testimony* that he managed to speak with the composer in his “rather elaborate” hotel room about the festival: “He was obviously nervous and avoided questions about his latest works. With a wry grin, he said he was writing the film score for a biography of Karl Marx. Then he stopped talking and drummed his fingers feverishly on a table.”¹⁰ Volkov does not specify the date of this

⁸ Laurel E. Fay, "Volkov's *Testimony* Reconsidered," *A Shostakovich Casebook*, ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) p. 50.

⁹ David Fanning, *Shostakovich: String Quartet No. 8*, Landmarks in Music since 1950 (Aldershot, Hants, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004) p. 173.

¹⁰ Solomon Moiseievich Volkov, *Testimony : The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich* (London: H. Hamilton, 1979) p. xiii.

meeting but Shostakovich had spent three weeks in a cardiology clinic in January 1965.¹¹ If the meeting had occurred after this, it is scarcely surprising that the composer was rather uncooperative: ‘The only concert that Shostakovich was willing to approve was the evening devoted to his students’ works.’¹² In *Shostakovich Reconsidered* however, Volkov gives a somewhat different account of his dealings with Shostakovich (to a Russian interviewer) during the festival:

The years went by and there were several stages to our relationship. The first one was the Leningrad Conservatory festival dedicated entirely to Shostakovich’s music. I had played a very active role in the organisation of the festival. My ensemble was playing his recently composed Ninth Quartet – one of its first performances – from the colotype edition. So we again met.¹³

Unfortunately Volkov is not specific where and when he and Shostakovich met. Volkov is also not clear if asking for Shostakovich’s approval meant the composer’s presence. Surely if Shostakovich did not approve of anything but his own students’ works to be played at the festival, he would not have attended a performance of Volkov’s quartet playing his own (Shostakovich’s) Ninth Quartet.

Volkov began studying the manuscripts of Shostakovich’s students and came across Veniamin Fleishman’s *Rothschild’s Violin* [‘Skripka Rotshil’da’]¹⁴. Fleishman had been killed at the front in the Second World War but had left the score of his opera behind which Shostakovich orchestrated as a tribute to his late student. There had been two concert performances of the work – at the Moscow Composers’ Union in 1960 and a radio broadcast in 1962. Volkov decided to stage the opera in April 1968. Regarding the performance Volkov wrote: ‘A marvellous opera was born onstage, and with it a new opera theatre – the Experimental Studio of Chamber Opera. I was the artistic director of the Studio, the first such group in the Soviet Union. A

¹¹ Laurel E. Fay, *Shostakovich : A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) p. 249.

¹² Volkov, *Testimony : The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich* p. xiii.

¹³ Allan Benedict Ho, Dmitry Feofanov and Vladimir Ashkenazy, eds., *Shostakovich Reconsidered* ([London]: Toccata Press, 1998) pp. 316-317.

¹⁴ A story by Chekhov, reputedly Shostakovich’s favourite author.

week before the premiere I had turned twenty-four. Then the official administrators of culture accused us all of Zionism... and it meant an irreversible closing of the production.’¹⁵ Volkov has been criticised in this statement by Laurel Fay for not mentioning the fact that *Rothschild’s Violin* had already received two (concert) performances: ‘In his description of the events leading to the closing of the production – ostensibly on the charge of Zionism – Volkov strongly implies that this was the *first* and *only* performance of the work.’¹⁶

Perhaps Fay is being somewhat pedantic about this issue but on the other hand Volkov appears to make a serious omission by implying that it was he who resurrected the work and did not acknowledge the previous performances of the opera whether staged or not. It is not clear who conducted the work. Did Volkov conduct the performances himself? Ho and Feofanov have a different interpretation of Volkov’s statement: “But Volkov never implies that the 1968 production was the work’s first performance. Quite the contrary, he makes clear, four times, that the significance of his production was that it was staged.”¹⁷ Here one must differ with Ho and Feofanov – perhaps it was Volkov’s omission of previous performances in 1960 and 1962 of *Rothschild’s Violin* that causes the doubts to arise in the first place. Volkov devoted six paragraphs to *Rothschild’s Violin*, ample space one would assume to mention the previous performances, but it did not fit Volkov’s brief to mention previous performances. Although the *Rothschild’s Violin* episode seems a small almost insignificant point of detail perhaps it reveals Volkov’s love of the big picture – a broad canvas as opposed to genuine accuracy of information. Volkov also alleged that the *Rothschild’s Violin* episode drew Shostakovich and him closer together: “I

¹⁵ Volkov, *Testimony : The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich*.

¹⁶ Malcolm Hamrick Brown, ed., *A Shostakovich Casebook* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) p. 18.

¹⁷ Ho, Feofanov and Ashkenazy, eds., *Shostakovich Reconsidered* p. 128.

could not have done it without Shostakovich, of course he helped me in every possible way. He could not come to Leningrad in April 1968 for the premiere; his son, Maxim, the conductor, came in his stead.”¹⁸

In 1968 Volkov became a staff writer for the monthly magazine *Sovetskaya Muzyka* firstly based in Leningrad and later in Moscow. Shostakovich’s daughter Galina confirms her father’s hostility to journalists here: ‘Shostakovich specially disliked journalists. Not without reason, he found them rude and uneducated, capable of asking the most tactless and provocative questions.’¹⁹ Volkov maintains that his past links with Shostakovich in 1960 and 1968 helped to gain him access to the composer. Yet Irina Shostakovich seems unwilling to acknowledge any previous relationship between Volkov and her husband: ‘...Shostakovich agreed to be interviewed by Mr Volkov, whom he knew little about, for an article to be published in *Sovetskaia muzyka*’.²⁰ Either Madame Shostakovich was not privy to Volkov’s previous meetings with her husband or chooses to downplay the association between the two. In the preface of *Testimony* Volkov seems to be emphasising his closeness to Shostakovich with the episode of *Rothschild’s Violin* yet in *Shostakovich Reconsidered* he contradicts himself:

Volkov openly admits that he was never an intimate friend of the composer – the type that would have dinner with the family – and, in ‘Muzykal’niya akademiya’, also rejects Tishchenko’s oft-repeated claim that he has ‘posed as a friend of Shostakovich’: “I have never said such a thing! This is absolute nonsense! I never claimed I was a friend of Balanchine nor a friend of Milstein. I was a collaborator in their projects. They had faith in me. My task was not to let them down.”²¹

¹⁸ Volkov, *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich* p. xiii.

¹⁹ Mikhail Ardov, Rosanna Kelly and Michael Meylac, *Memories of Shostakovich: Interviews with the Composer’s Children and Friends* (London: Short, 2004) pp. 142-143.

²⁰ Irina Shostakovich, "An Answer to Those Who Still Abuse Shostakovich (2000)," *A Shostakovich Casebook*, ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) p. 131.

²¹ Ho, Feofanov and Ashkenazy, eds., *Shostakovich Reconsidered* p. 78.

Volkov cannot deny that he tried to ingratiate himself into Shostakovich's intimate circle. Also in *Shostakovich Reconsidered* come comments that seem contradictory: 'I can only repeat: over the years we had grown close.'²² Yet Volkov was not close enough to Shostakovich to get later meetings without the auspices of Boris Tishchenko or Irina Shostakovich. Surely, the whole underlying ambience of the preface to *Testimony* seems to be how close Volkov was to the composer. How else could he have arranged dozens of secret meetings with the composer unknown to Irina Shostakovich? It does appear that Volkov was not a member of Shostakovich's inner circle.

5. Volkov's Later Meetings with Shostakovich 1971-75

There is considerable contention over the number of meetings that Volkov had with Shostakovich until the composer's death. In 1971 Volkov wrote to Shostakovich requesting a preface for a projected book entitled - *Young Composers of Leningrad* (1971), according to Volkov: "He replied at once, 'I'll be happy to meet with you,' and suggested a time and place."²³ Although Shostakovich was willing to meet Volkov for the book about young composers, he was much more reluctant to have further meetings with Volkov to talk about his own life. For this Volkov needed the auspices of Boris Tishchenko one of the young composers mentioned in the book. Volkov admits the difficulty he had with the ailing composer: "At our meeting I began talking to him about his own youth, and at first met with some resistance. He preferred to talk about his students. I had to resort to trickery: at every convenient point I drew parallels, awakening associations, reminding him of people and events."

²² Ibid. p. 322.

²³ Volkov, *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich* p. xiv.

²⁴ This raises more questions than answers: Firstly, if Volkov ‘resorted to trickery’ in 1971 did he not practise the same techniques in later meetings for the purposes of gathering material for *Testimony*?

In 1972 Volkov requested a transfer from Leningrad to Moscow and after initial resistance from the management of *Sovetskaya Muzyka*, his request was granted. Volkov admits: ‘The main objective of my move had been to get closer to Shostakovich, who lived in the building that housed the journal’s offices.’ ²⁵

A colleague of Volkov’s in *Sovetskaya muzyka* in Moscow, Galina Drubachevskaya, wrote:

‘The young violinist and musicologist, Solomon Volkov, began working for the editorial staff of our journal in the early 1970s. His social and artistic standing in Leningrad was good and respected musicians interceded on his behalf. It took a lot of effort, but eventually we succeeded in “transferring” him from Leningrad to Moscow.’ ²⁶

Volkov maintains that there were ‘dozens’ of meetings over the next four years and describes how they took place: ‘Work would begin with a phone call from him – usually early in the morning, when the office was still empty - his jangling, hoarse tenor voice asking, “Are you free now? Could you come up here?” And the exhausting hours of cautious exploration would begin.’ ²⁷ It seems convenient for Volkov that the office was empty when Shostakovich rang – therefore there are no potential witnesses to corroborate his story of the meetings. The vital question to ask about these meetings considering Shostakovich’s dire state of health at the time was: where was Irina at the time of these meetings bearing in mind how much

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid. p. xvii.

²⁶ Ho, Feofanov and Ashkenazy, eds., *Shostakovich Reconsidered* p. 315.

²⁷ Volkov, *Testimony : The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich* p. xvii.

Shostakovich was dependent on her? Here is what Olga Fyodorova says about the Shostakovich's relationship with his wife: 'the spouses almost never parted. Irina was, in point of fact, her celebrated husband's personal secretary.'²⁸

Irina Shostakovich has this to say about Volkov's secret meetings with Shostakovich:

Only someone with rich fantasy could invent something like that; it was not true if only because at that time Shostakovich was very ill and was never left on his own. And we lived outside Moscow at the dacha. There was no opportunity for secret meeting. Mr Volkov's name is nowhere to be found in Shostakovich's correspondence of the time, in his letters to Isaak Glickman for example.²⁹

Volkov's asserts that visits to Shostakovich were facilitated because the magazine's offices and Shostakovich's apartment were housed in the same building. If Shostakovich was at his dacha and was under constant medical supervision as Irina Shostakovich maintains, then the opportunity for Volkov to have extra interviews over and above the three specified surely did not exist. It seems most likely that there were fewer meetings than Volkov alleges and few if any were secret.

6. Boris Tishchenko's role in *Testimony*

It was as a journalist that Volkov managed to interview the Soviet Union's then greatest living composer – Dmitri Shostakovich. Volkov required the cooperation of Shostakovich's former student, confidante and prominent composer Boris Tishchenko because as previously mentioned Shostakovich was reluctant to talk about his life to Volkov alone. Tishchenko is hardly a composer who was close to the Soviet government. In 1966 he set Anna Akhmatova's *Requiem* to music when the poem was still banned by the Brezhnev regime. In 1988 Tishchenko said 'I was

²⁸ Olga Fyodorova, "Shostakovich and His Muses," (Moscow: Voice of Russia, 2006), vol. 1.

²⁹ Shostakovich, "An Answer to Those Who Still Abuse Shostakovich (2000)," pp. 131-132.

present during Shostakovich's conversation with the author, Shostakovich had said to me, "You see he insists on these meetings, please attend them." So I attended.'³⁰

It is apparent that without the help of Tishchenko, it was unlikely that Shostakovich would have agreed to be interviewed by Volkov: 'He published notes made during conversations with Shostakovich, which after numerous and insistent requests I had facilitated in due time, but not without resistance from D.D.'³¹

Irina Shostakovich said in 2000:

As a favour to Boris Tishchenko, his pupil and colleague, Shostakovich agreed to be interviewed by Mr Volkov, whom he knew little about, for an article to be published in *Sovetskaia muzyka*. There were three interviews; each lasted two to three and a half hours, no longer, since Shostakovich grew tired of extensive chat and lost interest in conversation. Two of the interviews were held in the presence of Mr. Tishchenko. The interviews were not taped.³²

Even though Volkov would have one believe that Shostakovich knew him very well already from their previous meetings he still admits that without Tishchenko there would have been no interviews: 'Tishchenko interceded on Volkov's behalf when Shostakovich initially had doubts about working on his memoirs and Volkov confirms that Tishchenko *was* present at the first meeting for this project.'³³

Ho and Feofanov even allege that is Tishchenko who Volkov is referring to at the end of the preface to *Testimony*: Tishchenko's hidden role in *Testimony* has been acknowledged previously by Volkov, who confirms that Tishchenko is the unnamed friend alluded to at the end of his Preface (1979) (sic.): "And finally, I thank you distant friend who must remain nameless – without your constant involvement and encouragement, this book would not exist."³⁴

³⁰ Ibid. p. 134.

³¹ Brown, ed., *A Shostakovich Casebook* p. 135.

³² Shostakovich, "An Answer to Those Who Still Abuse Shostakovich (2000)," p. 130.

³³ Ho, Feofanov and Ashkenazy, eds., *Shostakovich Reconsidered* p. 70.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 71.

Tishchenko proved to be a vital link to Shostakovich for Volkov but it appears that Volkov did not uphold his part in any agreement the two must have had. Volkov never showed the drafts of any interviews with Tishchenko or Irina Shostakovich as apparently promised yet apparently Volkov is mystified why Tishchenko is critical of *Testimony*: 'Tishchenko's criticisms have surprised even Volkov. According to the latter, Shostakovich's favourite pupil was aware both of the writing of *Testimony* and of some of the controversial views contained therein.'³⁵ Awareness is not the same as seeing hard copy in black and white. Surely Tishchenko's anger is justified here. Significantly Tishchenko refused to be interviewed for Wilson's *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* presumably scarred by his experience of Volkov questionable tactics.³⁶ Instead in 1997 Tishchenko published his own book of letters from Shostakovich with his own added commentary.³⁷ English author Ian MacDonald alleges that Tishchenko collaborated with the KGB against *Testimony*: 'he allowed himself to be manipulated by Vasily Sitnikov, the KGB general in charge of the disinformation campaign against *Testimony*. Choosing not to acquire freedom of speech by emigrating, Tishchenko was unable thereafter to disassociate himself from this campaign.' It is far more likely that Tishchenko considers that Volkov broke their agreement and escaped to America financing himself from the profits from the book.

There is little question that Tishchenko had a much closer relationship to Shostakovich than Volkov ever had but had no wish to exploit it. Because Volkov acted unilaterally and did not acknowledge the help of Boris Tishchenko or Irina Shostakovich (or split the proceeds) a great deal of bitterness was caused. Tishchenko

³⁵ Ibid. p. 69.

³⁶ Others to refuse were composer Galina Ustvolskaya (a former student who Shostakovich fell in love with), East German conductor Kurt Sanderling (who was assistant to Mravinsky at the Leningrad Philharmonic) and Dmitri Fredericks.

³⁷ Dmitrii Dmitrievich Shostakovich and Boris Ivanovich Tishchenko, *Pis'ma Dmitriia Dmitrievicha Shostakovicha Borisu Tishchenko : S Kommentariiami I Vospominaniiami Adresata* (Sankt-Peterburg: Izd-vo "Kompozitor", 1997).

wrote in 1997: 'Another far more cynical event presented to the world by Dmitri Dmitrievich's premature death ... was the commercial enterprise rushed through by that efficient journalist and music hanger-on named Volkov.'³⁸

7. The Signed Pages

Volkov had secured eight pages initialled with Shostakovich's signature. This is how he said he obtained them:

I divided up the collected material into sustained sections, combined as seemed appropriate; then I showed these sections to Shostakovich who approved my work. What had been created on these pages clearly had a profound effect on him. Gradually I shaped this great array of reminiscence into arbitrary parts and had them typed. Shostakovich read and signed each part.³⁹

As Dr Fay has proved in her articles 'Shostakovich versus Volkov *Whose Testimony?* (1980) and 'Volkov's *Testimony Reconsidered* (2002), Volkov got Shostakovich to sign articles that had already been published under his name in various publications including Volkov's own magazine *Sovetskaia muzyka*.⁴⁰ Shostakovich signed: Читал. Шостакович (Read. Shostakovich) on the pages that Volkov provided. Seven of these pages formed the start of chapters in *Testimony*. The eighth signed page forms the third page of Chapter One of the book. It should be added that all eight pages contained nothing controversial or untoward – that was because the pages had all been previously published in the Soviet Union! None of the controversial material that appeared in *Testimony* was signed by Shostakovich.

Irina Shostakovich gives her version of the signing process:

Mr. Volkov brought Shostakovich a typed version of their conversations and asked him to sign every page at the bottom. It was a thin sheaf of papers, and Shostakovich, presuming he would see the proof sheets, did not read them. I

³⁸ Fay, "Volkov's *Testimony* Reconsidered," p. 51.

³⁹ Volkov, *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich* p. xvii.

⁴⁰ Fay, "Volkov's *Testimony* Reconsidered."

came into Shostakovich's study as he was standing at his desk signing those pages without reading them. Mr. Volkov took the pages and left.

At this stage Irina believed that Volkov had brought 'a typed up version of their conversations' to sign. We now know that Shostakovich was actually signing articles that had already been published.

I asked Shostakovich why he had been signing every page, as it seemed unusual. He replied that Mr. Volkov had told him about some new censorship rules according to which the publishers would not accept his material without a signature. I later learned that Mr. Volkov had already applied for an exit visa to leave the country and was planning to use that material as soon as he was abroad.⁴¹

Volkov describes the signing somewhat differently: 'I was not asking for nor was I expecting his signature, since I was aware that the situation was too serious and he, naturally, was wary of possible complications. But the chapters kept coming back with: "Read. Shostakovich"⁴² How is one able to reconcile the two accounts of the signing process from Volkov and Shostakovich's widow? Irina is definite that Volkov asked Shostakovich to sign the pages and Volkov is just as insistent that it was Shostakovich's idea. The deputy editor of *Sovetskaya muzyka*, Liana Genina, illuminates the process somewhat when she said: 'Yes, it was his all-purpose signature: just "Read," and no evaluation whatsoever. Except when authors who were real pains in the neck got to him and then the signature changed to "Print. Shostakovich."⁴³ From this it seems that Volkov is unable to guarantee if Shostakovich had read the pages before he signed them. Dr Fay believes that Shostakovich had little idea what was happening with Volkov's machinations:

When he signed those few pages of inconsequential quotations from his previously published articles, Shostakovich may well have had no inkling of

⁴¹ Irina Shostakovich, "An Answer to Those Who Still Abuse Shostakovich (2000)," *Ibid.* p. 131.

⁴² Ho, Feofanov and Ashkenazy, eds., *Shostakovich Reconsidered* pp. 320-321.

⁴³ Fay, "Volkov's *Testimony* Reconsidered," p. 43.

how big and important Volkov's book would become, or even what kind of book it would be. The presence of his signature and stock formula above recycled passages (and *only* recycled passages) in the *Testimony* typescript provides no warranty that Shostakovich had either read the entire typescript or understood its true purpose.⁴⁴

The composer Edison Denisov said this about Shostakovich's signing procedures:

Shostakovich signed many letters mostly without so much as reading them through. There were certain things in life that he regarded very cynically. In particular, he never so much as glanced at the articles that were published in *Pravda* and *Sovietskaya Muzyka* under his name. I once asked him how he could have signed a certain article that appeared in *Pravda*. I knew the person who had written it and it stated "I cannot distinguish between the music of Boulez, Henze, and Stuckenschmidt."⁴⁵

(Stuckenschmidt was a German musicologist not a composer).

It seems most likely that Shostakovich did not look at the pages he was signing for Volkov otherwise he may have discovered a certain familiarity with the articles. One is inclined to believe Irina Shostakovich's account as it seems the most plausible. Of course it was important for Volkov to obtain signed pages from Shostakovich otherwise he would not have been able to find a publisher for his book in the United States.

In 1976 after refusing to show Irina Shostakovich or Tishchenko his notes from the interviews, citing the KGB as his reasons not to show them, Volkov emigrated to the USA and began to work on the controversial manuscript which became *Testimony*.

8. First Reviews: The Opinions of Orlov and Karlinsky

In 1976 distinguished Russian musicologist Genrikh Orlov, author of a highly praised book on Shostakovich symphonies in the 1960s⁴⁶, and who emigrated from the Soviet Union to the United States at the same time as Solomon Volkov first

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994) p. 432.

⁴⁶ G. A. Orlov, *Simfonii Shostakovicha* (Leningrad: Gos. muzykal'snoe izd-vo, 1961).

learned about the book of Shostakovich's memoirs while both were still in the Soviet Union:

I learned about Volkov's plan, in general terms, without any details, during my final weeks in the Soviet Union. I remember that, on 17 January 1976, after hiking to all the chancelleries and ministries involved in validating documents, I arrived at Anatoly Naiman's place, where, somewhat later, Volkov also turned up. Volkov arrived after a meeting at the Union of Composers with Khrennikov who, in the presence of Irina Antonovna Shostakovich, demanded in extremely harsh language that he "put the manuscript on the table," threatening him that otherwise he would never leave the Soviet Union. Volkov was frantic. He answered, according to him, by saying that he was quite simply unable to put the manuscript on the table because it had already been sent abroad.⁴⁷

Two years later in 1978 when both Orlov and Volkov were resident in the United States, it appears that Volkov was still obsessively secret about the manuscript even to Orlov who had interpreted two lectures for him at Harvard:

Volkov never said a thing about its contents or showed single line of text from the manuscript... afterward did I learn about all this, while reading his foreword to the Russian original, and even before that, from the letter of commission, in which the process of the work was described thoroughly and in detail.⁴⁸

Later Orlov was approached by publishers Harper & Row to review the English manuscript of *Testimony* in order to ascertain its authenticity. His response was negative but the book was still published. Orlov is highly critical of Volkov's methods: 'The manuscript's title makes one stumble. As far as I know, in the vast literature of the kind, this is going to be the first book of memoirs written in the first person singular, which have been neither written nor dictated by the memorialist.'⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Kovnatskaya, "An Episode in the Life of a Book," pp. 118-119.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 111.

Orlov is under no illusion who is primarily responsible for the book: 'What we are dealing with is, clearly, Mr Volkov's own original literary work based eventually on Shostakovich's statements and remarks.'⁵⁰

There seems to be little question about Orlov's objectivity while reviewing the book – why else would he have been approached by Harper & Row and given access to the manuscript?

After the publication of *Testimony* it was Simon Karlinsky, as previously mentioned, who first raised suspicions about the book. Karlinsky who was an expert on Russian literature, who had authored books on Gogol and Tsvetaeva among others, takes issue with the book's treatment of Leningrad poet Zoshchenko:

Another major problem is that Volkov fails to annotate for the benefit of Western readers those passages where Shostakovich makes statements that are contrary to known facts. Thus, he blames Stalin's persecution of the writer Zoshchenko on Stalin's supposed envy of Zoshchenko's fame and popularity abroad. But Zoshchenko's work is practically untranslatable and, outside the Soviet Union, he never had any reputation to speak of.⁵¹

The passage from *Testimony* that Karlinsky is referring to reads: 'As a result of the war, Zoshchenko's popularity in the West grew considerably. He was discussed frequently and discussed readily... Stalin weighed other people's fame carefully and as soon as it seemed to be getting a little too heavy, he threw them off the scales.'⁵²

9. The Copyright Issue

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Karlinsky, "Our Destinies Are Bad," p. 545.

⁵² Volkov, *Testimony : The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich* p. 271.

To this day Solomon Volkov retains all copyright over *Testimony*.⁵³ If the book is what he claims and contains the true words of Shostakovich then surely the family of the deceased composer would have some claims over copyright? Not according to Edward A. Miller vice president and general counsel of publishers Harper & Row: 'Shostakovich's heirs have no rights at all to this work, and their permission is not required to publish it.'⁵⁴

It seems convenient for Volkov (and Harper & Row) to use the name of Shostakovich as co-author and yet deny the rights of the Shostakovich family to any copyright. In other words Volkov is the sole author according to copyright. This seems neither fair nor ethical. If copyright law protects Volkov as the author then surely bibliographically Volkov should be the sole author as well (as it is in some libraries). The problem for Volkov is then that the book ceases to be the words of Shostakovich and becomes a book about Shostakovich written by Volkov as Orlov and many others allege. Laurel Fay in her second article on *Testimony* has this to say about the copyright issue: 'How does a music journalist who represents himself as no more than a faithful scribe, the mouthpiece for Shostakovich's reflections, come to be the sole copyright owner and financial beneficiary of these memoirs, with no rights or benefits accruing to the composer's legal heirs as recognized by international law?'⁵⁵

10. Conclusion

⁵³ Fay, "Volkov's *Testimony* Reconsidered," p. 53.

⁵⁴ Laurel E. Fay, "The Official Dossier," trans. Laurel E. Fay, *A Shostakovich Casebook*, ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) p. 91.

⁵⁵ Fay, "Volkov's *Testimony* Reconsidered," p. 53.

In conclusion, although Solomon Volkov had met with Shostakovich several times in the 1960s he could not be termed a close acquaintance - that is a member of Shostakovich's inner circle. This is important because when it came to interviewing Shostakovich for what later became *Testimony*, the earlier meetings were of little importance – Volkov still needed Tishchenko to facilitate the interviews.

Secondly in the period 1971-75 Shostakovich's bad health and lack of mobility meant that it was extremely unlikely that Volkov could have held 'dozens of meetings' with the ailing composer without the aid of Irina Shostakovich. Irina maintains there were only three meetings and there is no reason not to believe her. Ironically Volkov's interviewing methods as related to his publishers would have required many meetings to gain enough material for a book.

Thirdly in reference to the signed pages that Volkov obtained from Shostakovich, not only do the composer's widow and Volkov disagree with the methods used to get the signatures (Volkov: Shostakovich's idea, Irina Shostakovich: Volkov's idea), the material on the pages that Shostakovich was signing had been published as long ago as 1941!

Fourthly Orlov's opinions on *Testimony* are important because here is a qualified academic, author of a highly praised book on Shostakovich symphonies, who had no particular agenda to push (otherwise Harper & Row would never have entrusted him to read the manuscript of *Testimony*) yet his verdict on Volkov's work was overwhelmingly negative. He, as a fellow émigré to the United States had helped Volkov with translation work and their relations were amicable.

Lastly if Shostakovich and his heirs have no claim to the rights to *Testimony* surely one is forced to conclude that the book is little more than a dubious money-making venture by Volkov to exploit the memory of a great composer.

Chapter Four

The Eight Signed Pages of *Testimony* in Context

As previously mentioned in Chapter Three: ‘A Question of Authenticity: *Testimony*’, Laurel Fay has proved that the eight pages that Shostakovich signed for Solomon Volkov that ended up in the book *Testimony* are taken from various pre-published sources and it must be reiterated, these are the only pages that Shostakovich signed for Volkov.¹ It is important to discuss the origins of these pages and also the later context in which they appear in *Testimony* itself. The list of the sources appropriated by Volkov is as follows:

1. D. Shostakovich, ‘Avtobiografia’ [Autobiography], *Sovetskaya muzyka*, no. 9 (September 1966) p. 24.
2. *I.F. Stravinsky: Stat’i i materialy* [I.F. Stravinsky: Articles and materials], comp. L.S. Dyachkova, ed. B.M. Yarustovsky (Moscow: Sovetski kompositor, 1973), p. 7.
3. D. Shostakovich, ‘Iz vospominanii’ [From my recollections], *Sovetskaya muzyka*, no. 3 (March 1974): 54 (This article carried an introduction by Solomon Volkov).
4. D. Shostakovich, ‘Tragediia-satira’ [A tragedy-satire], *Sovetskoe isskustvo*, 16 October 1932
5. D. Shostakovich, ‘Kak rozhdaestia muzyka’ [How music is born] *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 21 December 1965; reprinted in Danilevich, *Dmitri Shostakovich*, p. 36.

¹ Laurel E. Fay, "Comparison of Texts from *Testimony* with Their Original Sources," *A Shostakovich Casebook*, ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

6. D. Shostakovich, 'Samyi blizkii' [One of my favourites], *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 28 January 1960; reprinted in Danilevich, *Dmitri Shostakovich*, pp. 34-35.
7. D. Shostakovich, 'Partitura opery' [The score of an opera], 1 May 1941; reprinted in Danilevich, *Dmitri Shostakovich*, pp. 14-15.
8. D. Shostakovich, 'Iz vospominanii o Mayakovskom' [Reminiscences of Mayakovsky], *V. Mayakovsky v vospominaniakh sovremennikov* [V. Mayakovsky in the reminiscences of his contemporaries], ed. V.V. Grigorenko et al. (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe indatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1963), pp. 315-16

With one exception (number 1) each signed page appears at the beginning of a chapter although number 3, which refers to Meyerhold, is a special case and will be examined in more detail below. It should be noted that apart from the Meyerhold reminiscence the other pages above appear verbatim apart from dates and tenses which have been changed to cover up the time differences.

It should be emphasised that on these signed pages there is nothing controversial that would have aroused the Soviet censors, in contrast to other parts of the book.

Each chapter of *Testimony* will now be examined in relation to the plagiarised passages.

1. *Testimony*: Chapter One

Testimony begins:

These are not memoirs about myself. These are memoirs about other people. Others will write about us. And naturally they'll lie through their teeth – but that's their business'

One must speak the truth about the past or not at all. It's very hard to reminisce and it's worth doing only in the name of truth.

Looking back, I see nothing but ruins, only mountains of corpses.²

Both Dr Fay and her opposition (namely Ho and Feofanov) agree that this opening paragraph would never have appeared in a Soviet publication of the time. Unfortunately for Ho and Feofanov they claim that Shostakovich signed the first page of every chapter: 'In focusing her attention on these "borrowed reminiscences", "none [...of which] could be considered controversial or inflammatory", Fay forgets to mention that the controversial "new" Shostakovich *is* evident on the first *signed* page of chapter 1'.³ Fay has now proved that the signed page in Chapter One actually occurs on the third (the fourth in the paperback editions) page not the first as Ho and Feofanov have claimed.⁴ Their argument is now in ruins. This also demolishes the claims of Terry Teachout:

Fay's claim that Volkov deceived Shostakovich as to the content of the chapters he signed rests on her contention that seven of them open with material derived from previously published sources, none of which could be considered "controversial or inflammatory." But this is not true of the book's first chapter, whose seventh and eighth sentences read as follows: "Looking back, I see nothing but ruins, only mountains of corpses. And I do not wish to build new Potemkin villages on these ruins."⁵

The page that Shostakovich actually signed can be found on page four:

I had not expressed a desire to study music before I began taking lessons, although I had some interest in music and listened ear to the wall when a quartet met at the neighbours.
My mother Sofia Vasilievna, saw this and insisted that I begin learning the piano but I hedged. In the spring of 1915 I attended the theatre for the first time and saw *The Legend of Tsar Saltan*. I liked the opera, but it still wasn't enough to overcome my unwillingness to study music.⁶

² Solomon Moseievich Volkov, *Testimony : The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich* (London: H. Hamilton, 1979) p. 3.

³ Allan Benedict Ho, Dmitry Feofanov and Vladimir Ashkenazy, eds., *Shostakovich Reconsidered* ([London]: Toccata Press, 1998) p. 211.

⁴ Fay, "Comparison of Texts from *Testimony* with Their Original Sources," p. 34.

⁵ Terry Teachout, "The Composer and the Commissars," *Commentary*.108/ 3 (1999): p. 4.

⁶ Fay, "Comparison of Texts from *Testimony* with Their Original Sources," p. 69.

Source: D. Shostakovich, 'Avobiografia' [Autobiography], *Sovetskaya muzyka*, no. 9 (September 1966) p. 24

There is nothing controversial about this passage which is hardly surprising as it was published in 1966 in *Sovetskaia muzyka* - a Soviet publication.

2. *Testimony*: Chapter Two

Source: *I.F. Stravinsky: Stat'i i materialy* [I.F. Stravinsky: Articles and materials], comp. L.S. Dyachkova, ed. B.M. Yarustovsky (Moscow: Sovetski kompositor, 1973), p. 7.

Stravinsky is one of the greatest composers of our times and I truly love many of his works. My earliest and most vivid impression of Stravinsky's music is related to the ballet *Petrushka*. I saw the Kirov Theatre of Leningrad production many times and I tried never to miss a performance. (Unfortunately I haven't heard the new edition of *Petrushka* for smaller orchestra, I'm not sure that it is better than the earlier one.)⁷

After this extract Shostakovich/Volkov flies off into somewhat controversial vein about Stravinsky:

It's another question as to how Russian a composer Stravinsky is (sic.). He was probably right not to return to Russia. His concept of morality is European. I can see that clearly from his memoirs – everything he says about his parents and colleagues is European. This approach is foreign to me.⁸

Then the book describes Prokofiev in similarly acidic fashion: 'Prokofiev and I never became friends, probably because Prokofiev was not inclined to friendly relations in general. He was a hard man and didn't seem interested in anything other than himself and his music.'⁹

⁷ Ibid. p. 71.

⁸ Volkov, *Testimony : The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich* pp. 33-34.

⁹ Ibid. p. 34.

The chapter continues with remarks about his friend Sollertinsky, the conductor Gauk and composers Glière and Glazunov usually in caustic mode (those about Glière are particularly disparaging).

3. *Testimony*: Chapter Three

Chapter Three opens with this dramatic paragraph:

I think of Meyerhold too frequently, more frequently than I should, because we are now neighbours of sorts. I often walk or drive past the memorial plaque that depicts a repulsive monster and I shudder. The engraving says: 'In this house lived Meyerhold.' They should add, 'And in this house his wife was brutally murdered.'¹⁰

This passage was not part of the page originally signed by Shostakovich but had been pasted over the signature. The inflammatory nature of the paragraph would have never been published during the Soviet era.

The text below the first paragraph runs:

My first meeting with Vsevolod Emilievich Meyerhold took place in Leningrad in 1928. He called me on the telephone and said 'This is Meyerhold speaking. I want to see you. If you can, come to me. Hotel So-and-so, room such-and-such.' And I went. Vsevolod Emilievich invited me to work in the theatre with him. I agreed immediately and a short time later I went to Moscow and began serving in the Theatre of Meyerhold in a musical capacity.¹¹

Source: D. Shostakovich, 'Iz vospominanii' [From my recollections],

Sovetskaya muzyka, no. 3 (March 1974): 54

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 77.

¹¹ Fay, "Comparison of Texts from *Testimony* with Their Original Sources," p. 72.

4. *Testimony*: Chapter Four

Source: D. Shostakovich, 'Tragediia-satira' [A tragedy-satire], *Sovetskoe isskustvo*, 16 October 1932

I have been working on *Lady Macbeth* for almost two and a half years. *Lady Macbeth* is the first part of a planned trilogy dedicated to the position of women in various eras in Russia. The plot of *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* is taken from the story of the same name by Nikolai Leskov. The story amazes the reader with its unusual vividness and depth, and in terms of being the most truthful and tragic portrayal of the destiny of a talented smart and outstanding woman 'dying in the nightmarish conditions of prerevolutionary Russia' as they say, this story, in my opinion, is one of the best.¹²

The first two sentences of this chapter have been altered in *Testimony* for chronological reasons but carry the same content: 'I worked on *Lady Macbeth* for almost two and a half years. I had announced a trilogy dedicated to the position of women in various eras in Russia.'¹³

5. *Testimony*: Chapter Five

Source: D. Shostakovich, 'Kak rozhdestia muzyka' [How music is born] *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 21 December 1965; reprinted in Danilevich, *Dmitri Shostakovich*, p. 36.

Is a musical concept born consciously or unconsciously? It's difficult to explain. The process of writing a new work is long and complicated. Sometimes you start writing and then change your mind. It doesn't always work out the way you thought it would. If it's not working, leave the composition the way it is – and try to avoid your earlier mistakes in the next one. That's my personal point of view, my manner of working. Perhaps it stems from a desire to do as much as possible. When I hear that a composer has eleven versions of one symphony, I think involuntarily, How many new works could he have composed at that time?¹⁴

¹² Ibid. p. 73.

¹³ Volkov, *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich* p. 106.

¹⁴ Fay, "Comparison of Texts from *Testimony* with Their Original Sources," p. 75.

This paragraph leads on to a description of how Shostakovich wrote his Seventh Symphony *Leningrad*. The differences between the texts are this time at the bottom of the page. The original text reads: ‘In breaks from work, I used to go outside and look with pain and pride at my beloved city. There it stood, scorched by fires, having endured all the suffering of war. Leningrad was fighting back with courage.’¹⁵

Instead Volkov pastes over this passage with a more contentious comment which leads to one of the most controversial passages in the whole book: ‘I’ve heard so much nonsense about the Seventh and Eighth Symphonies. It’s amazing how long-lived these stupidities are. I’m astounded sometimes by how lazy people are when it comes to thinking.’¹⁶

On the next page Shostakovich/Volkov says: ‘Actually, I have nothing against calling the Seventh the Leningrad Symphony, but it’s not about Leningrad under siege, it’s about the Leningrad that Stalin destroyed and that Hitler merely finished off.’¹⁷ This particular sentence was a particular favourite of the revisionist lobby claiming Shostakovich as a true dissident.

6. *Testimony*: Chapter Six

I really love Chekhov, he’s one of my favourite writers. I read and reread not only his stories and plays, but his notes and letters. (I am sincerely happy that the 100th anniversary of his birth is attracting anew to him the attention of all progressive humanity.)¹⁸

The section in brackets does not appear in *Testimony* – it was obviously omitted for chronological reasons however the extract continues with this passage from the printed source:

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 76.

¹⁶ Volkov, *Testimony : The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich* p. 155.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 156.

¹⁸ Fay, "Comparison of Texts from *Testimony* with Their Original Sources," p. 76.

Of course, I'm no literary historian and I can't give a proper assessment of the work of the great Russian writer, who I feel has not been thoroughly studied and certainly not always understood. But if I were suddenly expected to write a dissertation on an author, I would choose Chekhov, that's how close an affinity I feel for him. Reading him, I sometimes recognise myself; I feel that anyone in Chekhov's place would react exactly as he did in confronting life.¹⁹

Source: D. Shostakovich, 'Samyi blizkii' [One of my favourites], *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 28 January 1960; reprinted in Danilevich, *Dmitri Shostakovich*, pp. 34-35.

7. *Testimony: Chapter Seven*

Musorgsky and I have a 'special relationship.' He was an entire academy for me – of human relations, politics and art. I didn't study him with only my eyes and ears, for that's not enough for a composer or any professional. (That holds for the other arts as well. Think how many painters spend years slaving over copies without seeing something shameful in it.

This paragraph has been inserted by Volkov and pasted over the signature on the page. Although the subject matter is not especially controversial in nature, Volkov saw fit to include it. The copied passage begins after the inserted paragraph:

Almost simultaneously with the creation of my quintet, I was busy on a new edition of his opera, *Boris Godunov*. I had to look through the score, smooth out a few wrinkles in the harmonisation and some unfortunate and pretentious bits of orchestration and change a few discrete progressions. A number of instruments had been added to the orchestration that had been never used by either Musorgsky or Rimsky-Korsakov who edited *Boris*.

Source: D. Shostakovich, 'Partitura opery' [The score of an opera], 1 May 1941; reprinted in Danilevich, *Dmitri Shostakovich*, pp. 14-15.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 77.

8. *Testimony*: Chapter Eight

Source: D. Shostakovich, 'Iz vospominanii o Mayakovskom' [Reminiscences of Mayakovsky], *V. Mayakovsky v vospomoninaniikh sovremennikov* [V. Mayaskovsky in the reminiscences of his contemporaries], ed. V.V. Grigorenko et al. (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe indatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1963), pp. 315-16

I became fascinated by Mayakovsky's poetry at an early age. There's a book called *Everything Written by Vladimir Mayakovsky*, printed on bad paper in 1919. That was my introduction to the poet. I was very young then, barely thirteen, but I had friends, young literary men, who were great fans of Mayakovsky, and they were happy to explain the more difficult parts of the book that I liked so much. In the years that followed, I tried never to miss a single one of his appearances in Leningrad. I went to his readings with my writer friends and we listened with great interest and enthusiasm.²⁰

In this chapter Shostakovich/Volkov firstly discusses his relationship with Mayakovsky and Meyerhold then passes on to Stalin and his penchant for late night cinema sessions. Tikhon Khrennikov²¹ then comes in for some caustic treatment as the butt of several jokes. Then the author mentions the national anthem competition during the Great Patriotic War (World War 2) when Shostakovich met Stalin. Next the chapter meanders on to Leningrad poets Zoshchenko and Akhmatova and ends on the composer's illness (polio) and his great sadness.

9. Conclusion

The structure of *Testimony* is designed mostly around Shostakovich's (and others it appears) reminiscences of Soviet/Russian artists. In seven out of eight chapters the first page of the chapter has been taken from previously published

²⁰ Ibid. p. 79.

²¹ See Glossary p. 5

material. All eight of these pages were signed by Shostakovich. There are no pages signed by Shostakovich that had not been published before. In Chapters Three and Seven the signature of Shostakovich has been pasted over by text allowing Volkov to insert more controversial material.

One is inclined to agree with Alex Ross who gives this opinion on the signed pages and the origins of *Testimony*: 'Given that these pages bore Shostakovich's signature, it looked as if Volkov might have obtained the composer's approval under false pretenses — perhaps by showing him an innocuous collection of previously published material, then weaving the signed pages into a monologue of his own invention.'²²

In other words Volkov's strategy was to gain Shostakovich's signature on pages that the composer had mostly already seen and approved. Then because Volkov had a shortage of material from the small number of interviews he managed to conduct with Shostakovich, he drew upon rumours and anecdotes that he had heard or were suggested by Lev Lebedinsky and perhaps Flora Litvinova.

Testimony cannot be relied upon to give a true portrait of Shostakovich that much is clear. It may be better to judge the book as a product of its era – the final Brezhnev years.

²² Alex Ross, "Unauthorized," *The New Yorker* 80/25 (2004).

Chapter Five

The Stalin versus Shostakovich Myth

The evidence of a special relationship between Stalin and Shostakovich has been gratefully seized upon by the purveyors of the 'new' Shostakovich from Volkov and MacDonald to Ho and Feofanov. The revisionist view is that on the one hand Stalin was trying to manipulate the composer into writing the music that he required, writing the *Pravda* editorial 'Muddle Instead of Music' in 1936 to facilitate this. On the other hand Shostakovich was playing the role of the 'secret dissident' trying to undermine Stalin with his music as much as possible. Even the *Leningrad* Symphony of 1941 'dedicated to the victims of fascism', more particularly the two million deaths in the siege of Leningrad, was more about Stalin than Hitler (and the victims of Hitler) say the revisionists.

The above views about the relationship between Stalin and Shostakovich rely exclusively on anecdotal evidence but there is very little if any documentary substantiation to back them up. Archival evidence points a different way - that the personal interaction between Soviet leader and the composer was limited to two letters, a phone call and one personal meeting in 1943 (with other composers) about a new Soviet anthem.¹

The primary mystery is who wrote the *Pravda* editorial 'Muddle Instead of Music'? According to Fay's biography of Shostakovich, as many as a dozen candidates existed.² Unfortunately sources in English including Fay and Wilson do not cover this important incident well. If Stalin had written the article then that would prove that a personal interaction did exist between the Soviet leader and the

¹ Leonid Maksimenkov, "Stalin and Shostakovich: Letters to A "Friend", " *Shostakovich and His World*, ed. Laurel E. Fay (Princeton, N.J. ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004).

² Laurel E. Fay, *Shostakovich : A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) p. 305.

composer. If there is evidence to suggest that Stalin did not write the editorial then it is much less likely that there was a relationship between the two to the extent that Volkov and his supporters would suggest.

Fortunately there may be an answer to this conundrum which is less predictable than orthodox or revisionist historians may have guessed. The research of Leonid Maksimenkov is central to this answer. For the first time the crucial chapter (entitled ‘Zagadki “Ledi Makbet” [Mysteries of Lady Macbeth]) in his book *Sumbur vmesto muzyki: Stalinskaia kult’urnaia revoliutsiia 1936-1938* (1997) has been translated into English especially for this thesis. Another article by Maksimenkov which was translated for the book *Shostakovich and his World* (2004) is also highly relevant to the study of the relationship between Stalin and Shostakovich. In ‘Stalin and Shostakovich: Letters to a “Friend”³ Maksimenkov outlines the archival evidence of the relationship which is relatively sparse.

1. Pre-1936

Of all the arts Stalin was primarily interested in cinema. Fortunately for posterity, Boris Shumyatsky, deputy in charge of cinema from 1930-1938 (in 1938 he was fired, arrested and executed) took extensive notes about the views of Stalin regarding official film sessions held in the Kremlin. As many of the films had music composed by Shostakovich, Shumyatsky has provided a valuable record of Stalin’s views of Shostakovich’s music - more accurate than any comparable anecdotal memories could provide.

In 1932 the film *Vstrechniy* [Counterplan] was released. This was the first major Soviet film with sound and Shostakovich wrote the film score. The film

³ Maksimenkov, "Stalin and Shostakovich: Letters to A "Friend"."

includes a song, 'Song of the Counterplan' which became very popular. Stalin became fascinated with the song.

On the 15th of December 1934, two weeks after the murder of Kirov, Stalin and his entourage watched *Yunost' maksima* [Maxim's Youth] (1934) which again featured memorable music by Shostakovich. The film score was colourful with original songs, accordion solos, and revolutionary anthems (including 'Varshavianka' a song which Shostakovich quoted in his Eleventh Symphony and the Eighth String Quartet). There was also an appearance of the then Soviet national anthem – the 'Internazionale'.

Three days later Stalin together with Politburo members and their families again watched *Maxim's Youth*. During the scene that features 'Varshavianka', which is appropriately sung by prisoners, the audience in the Kremlin burst into song singing along to the film. Stalin said to Zhdanov, 'It's very strong. That will touch the masses of spectators.' Shostakovich's music was praised and described as 'good, cultured'. Stalin particularly liked the music of the prologue and the 'strong numbers played on accordion'⁴

Shortly after this Shostakovich was recommended for the title of Merited Activist of the Arts of the Russian Federation. He was the only composer in a long list of candidates but ultimately did not receive the award.

In 1935 on December the 25th Stalin and others saw the civil war film *Podrugi* [Girlfriends] (1934-1935) for the third time. Stalin praised the film for its 'mobilisation significance' but he was critical of Shostakovich's score: 'Its lyricism

⁴ Ibid. p. 46.

does not harmonize with the main tone of the movie... also there is an awful amount of music... The music disturbs the viewing.’⁵

From Shumyatsky’s notes it can be ascertained that Shostakovich created a primarily favourable impression on Stalin with his film music particularly with *Counterplan* and *Maxim’s Youth*. Whether or not Stalin’s disapproval of the music of *Girlfriends* still rankled when he saw *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* on the 26th of January, a month later, is a matter of conjecture.

Ian MacDonald proves how fallible his book *The New Shostakovich* can be when he says: ‘In fact prior to his *Pravda* editorial on *Lady Macbeth*, Stalin had been completely unaware of Shostakovich’s career as a serious musician, his own taste inclining more to folk songs and military marches.’⁶ Perhaps this error is corrected in the latest edition of his book.

2. The Phenomenon of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*

Shostakovich’s second opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* (1932) which was based on a novella written in 1864 by Russian author Nikolai Leskov, made its debut in Leningrad’s Maly Theatre in January 1934 and was a huge success. The opera ran for two years in Leningrad totalling eighty three performances in all and made a large profit. Its fame spread abroad to the United States, Argentina, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, Switzerland and England. After the tenth performance in Leningrad, Shostakovich was very positive about *Lady Macbeth*: ‘The show is going fine. The public listens very attentively and begins to run for its galoshes only after the final

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ian MacDonald, *The New Shostakovich* (London: Fourth Estate, 1990) p. 107.

curtain. There is very little coughing. In general there are quite a number of things that make my composer's heart rejoice.'⁷

There had been considerable rivalry between Leningrad's Maly Theatre and Moscow's Nemirovich-Danchenko Theatre over the opera. The Moscow production changed the name to *Katerina Izmailova* and emphasised the tragedy at the expense of the satire. Moscow was also forced to concede the premiere rights to Leningrad and commenced its production two nights later. Ironically it was as *Katerina Izmailova*, in a much revised version that Shostakovich managed to resuscitate his cherished opera in 1963.

From the 28 December 1935 Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre staged its production of *Lady Macbeth*. As the Nemirovich-Danchenko Theatre was still performing their version and the Leningrad Maly theatre was touring Moscow at the time, Shostakovich's opera could be seen at three venues simultaneously in the capital in late December and early January. A month later Shostakovich's honeymoon period was over with the publication of the *Pravda* editorial 'Muddle Instead of Music.' Writers about the period believe that the rebuke was caused by the attitude of Shostakovich and his friends: 'That the precocious, charmed pair, Shostakovich and Sollertinsky, had managed to generate no small degree of alienation and envy among some of their peers – their cocky attitude and irreverent, sometimes insensitive humour could be hard to stomach – inevitably contributed to the pitch of their debunking.'⁸ Galina Vishnevskaya adds the Leningrad versus Moscow factor to the mix:

⁷ Fay, *Shostakovich : A Life* p. 77.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 90.

‘For many years, Shostakovich had been a thorn in the side of his untalented colleagues – Party members, most often. But in Leningrad, his home he was the pride of the city, and it was hard to take reprisals on him.’⁹

3. The Intrigue Behind ‘Muddle Instead of Music’

There was much that was happening behind the scenes in the Soviet cultural bureaucracy during January 1936 before the appearance of the *Pravda* editorial at the end of the month on the 28th of January. One of the key figures at the time who is often overlooked was V.M. Gorodinsky who was assistant director at the Ministry of Culture for music. Gorodinsky had studied piano at the Leningrad Conservatory from 1923 to 1929 and was therefore a contemporary of Shostakovich. When Leningrad’s Maly Theatre had toured Moscow with its production of *The Quiet Don*, an opera by Ivan Dzerzhinsky, in January 1936, Gorodinsky had a full and frank conversation about the opera with Shostakovich after the opening night. Shostakovich described the discussion in a letter to his friend Ivan Sollertinsky: ‘The show was a great success. In conversation with Gorodinsky I learned his opinion. In general, negative. The words “ignoramus”, “imitator”, etcetera freely flew from his tongue.’¹⁰

Despite Shostakovich’s efforts as Dzerzhinsky’s mentor *The Quiet Don* was a mediocre opera - in fact it would never have reached the stage without the more experienced composer’s advice and considerable technical assistance. Shostakovich was aware of the work’s limitations and was in general agreement with Gorodinsky.

⁹ Galina Vishnevskaya, *Galina: A Russian Story* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1984).

¹⁰ Leonid Maksimenkov, *Sumbur Vmesto Muzyki : Stalinskaia Kul'turnaia Revoliutsiia, 1936-1938* (Moskva: Iuridicheskaiia kniga, 1997) p. 136.

In fact Gorodinsky was planning to open a ‘second musical front’ in Leningrad based around the Maly Theatre. On 11 January a letter essentially attempting to capitalise on the successes of *Lady Macbeth* and *The Quiet Don* was sent by Alexander Shcherbakov, Head of the Cultural Educational Board, to Stalin, Andreyev (secretary of ideology) and Zhdanov (the Leningrad Party chief) extolling the virtues of the Maly Theatre and its various productions ‘which stand out as a valuable contribution to the mission of Soviet culture’. The letter, actually written by Gorodinsky, then made five suggestions:

(1) to re-name LAMOT into Gosudarstvennyi Novyi Akademicheskiy Opernyi Teatr [*Leningrad Academic Maly Opera Theatre into State New Academic Opera Theatre*], (2) To award the title of People’s Artist of the Republic to Samosud, and decorate him with “Znak Pochyota” [*Sign of Honour*], (3) To award the titles of Distinguished Personalities [*Deyatel’*] to the “oldest masters of theatre” – to Distinguished Artists of the Republic P.M. Zhuravlyov and M.A. Rostovtsev, (4) to decorate the group of actors and, finally, (5) “from 1 January to equate the salary band of artistic and technical staff of the theatre to the band of Leningrad theatre of Opera and Ballet (formerly Mariinsky)”.¹¹

The original letter sent to Stalin was redirected to the Committee of Arts and was received by the recently appointed Platon Kerzhentsev (chairman of the Committee for Artistic Affairs) before 29 January. This was a change of protocol as the decision should have been made by Stalin, Andreyev and Zhdanov. Shcherbakov as a head of a Central Committee department theoretically outranked Kerzhentsev.

Shostakovich was aware of Gorodinsky’s big plans for the Maly Theatre as is evident from what he told Sollertinsky: ‘I will be back, and we will work together on

¹¹ Ibid. p. 139-140.

reconstruction on the musical scene in Leningrad, which could be based on my conversations with Gorodinsky, Dinamov and some other comrades'¹²

On 17 January Stalin, Molotov and other officials attended a performance of *The Quiet Don*. Before the final act the composer, conductor Samosud and the director were called to the official box to hear Stalin's opinion of the production. They commented favourably on the production and the opera but singled out in particular the Maly Theatre praising 'the work of the theatre in the sphere of the creation of Soviet opera, noting the considerable ideological-political value of the production of the opera *The Quiet Don*'¹³ Whether Stalin had read Shcherbakov's letter or not he certainly seemed to be affirming its sentiments.

What happened within the Soviet bureaucracy in the next ten days proved crucial for the fate of not only *Lady Macbeth* but the careers of Gorodinsky and Shcherbakov. Somehow Stalin was persuaded to attend a performance of *Lady Macbeth* at the Bolshoi Theatre presumably by Kerzhentsev who would have the most to gain if Stalin disliked the opera (as expected). It is quite likely that Kerzhentsev received Shcherbakov's letter before Stalin's visit to *Lady Macbeth* on 26 January and was in a position to set up an attack on the opera and the Maly Theatre initiative.

Further ammunition for Kerzhentsev to launch his campaign came from the Forum on 'The Ways of the Development of Soviet Opera' as reported by *Literaturnaia gazeta* on 26 January. The forum was chaired by Gorodinsky and it presented the opportunity for Leningraders – music critics K.A. Korchmarev, E.M. Braudo and librettist O.M. Brik to extoll the virtues of the Maliy Theatre in nurturing new Soviet opera and to attack the practices of the Moscow theatres: 'who failed to

¹² Ibid. p. 141.

¹³ Fay, *Shostakovich : A Life* p. 84.

show enough courage and persistence in battle for Soviet opera.’¹⁴ The aggressive tone of the Leningrad contingent was bound to affront the Muscovites and fired Kerzhentsev, a theatre expert, into action.

4. The Bolshoi Performance

There are various accounts of Stalin’s visit to the Bolshoi Theatre to see Shostakovich’s opera. One by Levon Atovmyan, who was a close friend of the composer, maintained that the extra brass required in the score: ‘got carried away and played very loudly’¹⁵ Unfortunately the reinforced brass section was directly underneath the government box. According to Atovmyan, Shostakovich blamed conductor Melik-Pashaev for the excessive noise levels: ‘What was all this, Melik-Pashaev with his excessive “shish-kebab temperament”?’ Did he have to spice up the entr’acte and the whole scene like that? I should think those in the government box must have been deafened by the volume of brass.’¹⁶

Another witness to the events that night was tenor Serghei Radamsky who was sitting in Shostakovich’s box. Radamsky could see the government box although Stalin was hidden from view. He could tell that all was not well: ‘Every time the percussion and brass played *fortissimo* we saw Zhdanov and Mikoyan shudder, then laughingly turn round to Stalin.’¹⁷

The composer who was travelling to Arkhangelsk that night had been called to the Bolshoi theatre at the last minute when the director of the Bolshoi had learned that Stalin, Zhdanov and Mikoyan would be attending the opera. Shostakovich had hoped that he would be invited to the official box and praised as Dzerzhinsky had been ten

¹⁴ Maksimenkov, *Sumbur Vmesto Muzyki : Stalinskaia Kul'turnaia Revoliutsiia, 1936-1938* p. 144.

¹⁵ Elizabeth A. M. Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (London: Faber, 2006) p. 128.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

days earlier. This did not happen - in fact the delegation walked out after the third act. Shostakovich was given an ovation by the audience at the end of the performance and then caught the train to Arkhangelsk wondering why Dzerzhinsky's inferior opera had been favoured over his own.

Galina Vishnevskaya believes that Shostakovich was set up by his enemies who were waiting for an opportunity: 'Patiently, they went about readying themselves for their revenge. They had all studied Stalin's tastes carefully, and played up to his ignorance. For Stalin had no understanding whatsoever of symphonic or any other instrumental music, and simply could not abide contemporary works.'¹⁸

Therefore Kerzhentsev was well aware what would happen if Stalin saw *Lady Macbeth* particularly at the Bolshoi Theatre which by its very performance tradition and large space tends to exaggerate any bombastic qualities a work may possess. If Stalin had seen the opera at one of the smaller theatres who may have lacked access to extra brass instruments the reaction may have differed.

5. Muddle Instead of Music

Now Kerzhentsev, who had direct access to *Pravda*, was able to strike a blow against Shcherbakov, Gorodinsky and the plans for the Leningrad Maly Theatre. Shostakovich (and *Lady Macbeth*) was just an incidental casualty in the battle between Cultural Education and the Committee for Artistic Affairs for supremacy. On 28 January *Pravda* published the editorial 'Muddle Instead of Music'.¹⁹ The campaign waged by Kerzhentsev had begun: 'Instead of the creation of the new opera theatre in Leningrad, a conspiracy of "Muddle instead of music" [*Sumbur vmesto muzyki*] was exposed, with threads leading directly to Central Committee, to

¹⁸ Vishnevskaya, *Galina: A Russian Story* p. 220.

¹⁹ The text of this editorial is reprinted in the appendices

Gorodinsky. “Lady Macbeth” was a trump card for the neutralisation of Cultural Education, Shcherbakov and Gorodinsky.’²⁰

Further proof of the advantage that Kerzhentsev had gained over his rivals, was his decision to action only one of Shcherbakov’s recommendations and ignore the other four. The conductor Samosud was recommended for the Order of Honour on 16 February 1936. This was number two of the suggestions, the others all relating to the Maly Theatre have disappeared without trace.

Other clues to the involvement of Kerzhentsev in the writing of the *Pravda* editorial include the mention of ‘Meyerholditis’ in the article. As Katerina Clark has pointed out: ‘Meyerhold was a particular focus of the campaign.’²¹ Eventually Kerzhentsev closed down Meyerhold’s theatre in 1938.

6. Other Candidates for Authorship

At the time the *Pravda* editorial seemed primarily intended as a rebuke against the opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* and as Stalin had attended the opera in Moscow two days before and had walked out before the end, it was assumed by many that Stalin had written the article himself. Then other names were added to the mix including *Pravda* staff journalist David Zaslavsky who seems a likely candidate according to Elizabeth Wilson.²² Orlando Figes believes that Andrei Zhdanov, Leningrad party chief, ‘wrote it on the personal instructions of Stalin’ and that ‘evidence suggests’ it to be Zhdanov ‘as it was rumoured at the time’²³. Unfortunately Figes does not quote any evidence to back up the rumours and so his account is no

²⁰ Maksimenkov, *Sumbur Vmesto Muzyki : Stalinskaia Kul'turnaia Revoliutsiia, 1936-1938* p. 142.

²¹ Katerina Clark, *Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Harvard University Press, 1995) p. 291.

²² Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

²³ Orlando Figes, *Natasha's Dance : A Cultural History of Russia* (London: Allen Lane, 2002).

more plausible than Wilson. Alex Ross who had every chance of accessing the latest research on the matter, disappoints by speculating: 'But the Central Committee had probably already selected *Lady Macbeth* – it had been playing for two years before Stalin went to see it – as a jumping off point against waywardness in the arts.'²⁴ The only evidence that Ross uses to back his suppositions is to quote an American Communist sympathiser Joshua Kunitz a journalist who is hardly an authoritative source on the matter.²⁵

Laurel Fay treats the matter of authorship somewhat lightly not mentioning it in the main text although her footnote is informative. Fay still believes that Stalin was behind the editorial no matter who wrote it. Now Maksimenkov has suggested that this was not the case. Fay also mentions that from the dozen candidates proposed she tends to favour Zaslavsky who apparently admitted authorship in an information bulletin published by the Moscow Union of Composers for its own members. Unfortunately the publication is unobtainable at present.²⁶ Perhaps if Fay had been more certain of this source she would have included it in her main text. Simon Morrison in his review of Fay's *Shostakovich: A Life* considers that Maksimenkov's findings are 'underutilised' by Fay.²⁷ Other possible authors on the list are Gorodinsky and Shcherbakov but as their initiatives were destroyed by the *Pravda* editorial, they can easily be ruled out. Surely Maksimenkov's arguments are the most convincing: 'Kerzhentsev had disrupted the plan of Cultural Education dealing a preventive blow to opera theatre and ballet. He did not have any strategic plan. His

²⁴ Alex Ross, *The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2007) p. 227-228.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 228.

²⁶ I. Rizhkin's 'Shest' desyatiletiiy Moskovskogo soyuza kompozitorov 1932-1991' ['Six Decades of Soviet Composers from Moscow'] from *Moskovskiy kompozitor* (June, 1991)

²⁷ Simon Morrison, "Laurel Fay's *Shostakovich: A Life*," *A Shostakovich Casebook*, ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) p. 351.

personal priority was drama theatre, but on certain grounds Shostakovich's opera appeared a suitable target'²⁸

It certainly suited Solomon Volkov's purposes to have the editorial written by Stalin as he wrote a book around the perceived relationship between Shostakovich and Stalin (published in 2004). Volkov is in no doubt: 'But informed contemporaries began saying almost straight away that the real author of "Muddle instead of Music" was Stalin'²⁹ but just who were these 'informed contemporaries' that Volkov speaks of? Volkov appears to be relying on a colourful anecdote of Mikhail Bulgakov, (who was not present at the performance) apparently based on an account from Bolshoi director Yakov Leontyev (a friend of Bulgakov) – this anecdotal evidence is lightweight Volkov has no evidence to prove that Stalin wrote the editorial.

Typically author of *The New Shostakovich* Ian MacDonald has no doubt about the author of the editorial: 'Though unsigned, the article was obviously by Stalin himself.'³⁰

The Shostakovich in *Testimony* thought Stalin was the author: 'The article on the third page of *Pravda* changed my entire existence. It was printed without a signature, like an editorial – that is it expressed the opinion of the Party. But it actually expressed the opinion of Stalin, and that was much more important.'³¹ Shostakovich actually knew more than this. He knew that Gorodinsky had approached him regarding the plans of the Maly Theatre and he was therefore surely capable of working out who really wrote the editorial.

²⁸ Maksimenkov, *Sumbur Vmesto Muzyki : Stalinskaia Kul'turnaia Revoliutsiia, 1936-1938* p. 142.

²⁹ Solomon Volkov, *Shostakovich and Stalin : The Extraordinary Relationship between the Great Composer and the Brutal Dictator* (London: Little Brown, 2004) p. 105.

³⁰ MacDonald, *The New Shostakovich* p. 103.

³¹ Solomon Moseievich Volkov, *Testimony : The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich* (London: H. Hamilton, 1979) p. 113.

7. Consequences of the *Pravda* Editorial

Although 'Muddle Instead of Music' which appeared in *Pravda* on 28 January 1936 was to put a stop (although not an immediate one) to any future performances of *Lady Macbeth*, the young composer was phlegmatic about the matter and his only response was to request his close friend Isaak Glikman (to Glikman's surprise) to take out a subscription at the post office for a press-cutting service. Shostakovich quietly monitored the hue and cry around him but did not respond in kind. He merely kept on composing. When a second editorial appeared in *Pravda* attacking Shostakovich's ballet *The Limpid Stream* entitled 'False Sounds of Ballet', Shostakovich went to see Kerzhentsev who lectured him on the error of his ways but would not grant him access to Stalin as the composer requested.

The attack on music critics such as Gorodinsky and Sollertinsky had been just as vehement as the criticism of Shostakovich. The first editorial talks about: 'Obliging musical criticism exalts opera to the skies, creates huge fame for it'. In the 'False Sounds of Ballet' music critics are again harangued when it says: 'In reality, only our musical and art criticism are undemanding. They are often over-praising the works that don't deserve it.' The main emphasis particularly in revisionist books on Shostakovich has been on the singling out of the composer and his works as if he were specifically targeted.

Revisionist writers on Shostakovich depended on there being a strong, confrontational relationship between the composer and Stalin. To concede that Stalin not only did not write the editorial but also was not the driving force behind it is a blow to their credibility. Stalin was more interested in cinema than opera or symphonies.

On 29 January the day after the *Pravda* editorial Stalin discussed the issue with Shumiatsky, Voroshilov (Commissar of Defence) and Molotov (Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars):

Voroshilov (addressing Shumyatsky): And what do you think about how the issue of Shostakovich's music was raised in *Pravda*?

Shumyatsky: It was raised correctly. I have been fighting for clear life-affirming, i.e. realistic music for a number of years. I have even written about this more than once in the past, last year in *Pravda*, for example. On the other hand, I have been arguing vehemently with composers about that character of music that is based on folklore, on the sources of folk music and the best classical music.

Stalin: Yes, I remember the article in *Pravda*. It set the course correctly.³²

Stalin did not say he had written the editorial - he said he remembered reading it. The discussion proves that Stalin was more interested in Shostakovich writing film music rather than opera or ballet. It was Kerzhentsev who Shostakovich met on February 6 to discuss the editorials not Stalin. Kerzhentsev reported to his superiors in a memorandum that he told the composer to 'change his aims, reject his formalistic mistakes and ensure that his music is understandable to the broad masses.' Shostakovich was also forced to submit any future opera and ballet libretti for approval.³³ There was no mention of film music. It is quite apparent that Kerzhentsev was setting the agenda for Shostakovich without much direction from Stalin at all. Volkov) who also accessed the same archives is highly selective with them in his book *Shostakovich and Stalin* (2004). He sees Kerzhentsev differently: 'That polite and educated (by Bolshevik standards) official ... in this case was merely playing the

³² Maksimenkov, "Stalin and Shostakovich: Letters to A "Friend", " p. 47.

³³ Shostakovich never wrote any operas or ballets again.

part of Stalin's emissary, which is clear from his memorandum to the ruler about this conversation, so important for Shostakovich's fate.'³⁴ The conversation when Stalin said he remembered the *Pravda* editorial (and therefore not writing it) is ignored by Volkov. He is so intent on manufacturing a relationship between Stalin and Shostakovich that mere archives will not stand in the way. Harvard professor Benjamin Paloff mentions Volkov's penchant for odd conclusions: 'Volkov's research is so haphazard, his management of sources so unreliable, his digressions and offhand references so unwieldy, and his conclusions so out of left field that the general reader is likely to come away confused, while specialists may simply be annoyed.'³⁵ Pauline Fairclough also finds fault with Volkov's reasoning: 'Volkov is too quick to come to the conclusion that Shostakovich and Stalin established a poet-Tsar relationship in the Nicholas I/ Pushkin mould.'³⁶

8. The Revisionist View

In his books *Testimony* and even more so in *Shostakovich and Stalin* Volkov delights in the personal relationship that he believes existed between the tyrant and his greatest composer. Volkov describes this personal relationship as an 'unprecedented duel between the composer and Joseph Stalin the country's Communist tsar and Shostakovich's personal tormentor.'³⁷

An even more blatant commercial exploitation of the alleged relationship between Stalin and Shostakovich appeared in the 1997 film *Shostakovich against Stalin: The War Symphonies* where conductor Valery Gergiev delivers 'off-the-cuff

³⁴ Volkov, *Shostakovich and Stalin : The Extraordinary Relationship between the Great Composer and the Brutal Dictator* p. 127.

³⁵ Benjamin Paloff, "The Artist as Holy Fool," *The New Leader* 87/1 (2004): p. 18.

³⁶ Pauline Fairclough, "Facts, Fantasies, and Fictions: Recent Shostakovich Studies," *Music and Letters* 86/ 3 (2005).

³⁷ Volkov, *Shostakovich and Stalin : The Extraordinary Relationship between the Great Composer and the Brutal Dictator* p. vii.

generalities' seated in the back of a limousine and quotes swathes of *Testimony* as if he believed every word.³⁸

As mentioned previously there is little evidence of much contact between Shostakovich and Stalin at all. There was one meeting in 1943 during discussion for a new state anthem and one telephone call in 1949, when Stalin wanted an explanation for the composer's refusal to join the Soviet delegation to a cultural conference in New York.

9. The Exploitation of Glinka

The commandeering of Glinka's first opera *A Life for the Tsar* by the Soviet regime to bolster its anti-Polish rhetoric shows how haphazard the machinations of Agitprop were. After duly dispatching the popular opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* off the stage by means of the *Pravda* article 'Muddle instead of Music' in 1936, less than three years later in February 1939 Glinka's first opera *A Life for the Tsar* was cynically rediscovered and adopted (renamed 'Ivan Susanin'). Its Russian patriotism and its anti-Polish rhetoric were considered ideal to support Russia's attack on Poland, in conjunction with Nazi Germany, in September 1939. 'Ivan Susanin' was another weapon to bludgeon the hapless Poles. Ironically Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth* was far closer to the spirit of Socialist Realism than a royalist Nineteenth Century opera could ever have been but Glinka suited Agitprop's purposes more than Shostakovich.

10. Conclusion

Maksimenkov's alternative view of the 'Muddle Instead of Music' affair, backed by archives, that Shostakovich was a random target picked off by the

³⁸ Larry Feinstein, *The War Symphonies: Shostakovich against Stalin* (Philips Classics, 1997).

poisonous pen of Kerzhentsev is a convincing one. Shostakovich was a scapegoat, almost a sacrificial pawn in a war between the Cultural Education Board and the newly formed Committee of Arts headed by the ambitious Kerzhentsev. In the heady days of 1935 Shostakovich was almost too visible with three productions of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* running concurrently in Moscow as well as *The Limpid Stream* ballet – there was certainly much to aim at for the cynical ideologue.

The role of Stalin was incidental to the battles of the departments. He was suitably outraged at *Lady Macbeth* when required giving Kerzhentsev the opportunity to write not just ‘Muddle Instead of Music’ but also ‘False Sounds of Ballet’ in *Pravda*. That Stalin was interested in more than Shostakovich writing good music for cinema is myth.

Conclusion

Chapter One of this thesis established that Shostakovich had become the most popular composer in the classical concert hall in the late twentieth century both in the West and the newly democratic Eastern Europe. The reasons for this popularity are many and some lie in the music itself but there are other more extrinsic factors that come into play. It is impossible to avoid the politics around much of Shostakovich's music for he lived in a state where propaganda on a massive scale was essential to its very existence. Four of his symphonies are essentially celebrations of Bolshevism.¹ Some of these symphonies particularly the Eleventh (*The Year 1905*) have become re-interpreted by revisionists as reflecting more current events - in this case the Soviet crack-down in Hungary 1956. Shostakovich admitted to no parallel programmes in his works until his alleged memoirs *Testimony*, the bible of Shostakovich revisionism, was published in 1979.

The composer's iconic status in the Soviet Union meant there were always a handful of opportunists, mainly journalists, attempting to enhance their reputations by writing about him or his music. Subsequently Shostakovich was suspicious of those journalists and musicologists who wished to write about him and granted access to a selected few. Solomon Volkov was one journalist who managed to gain the trust of the composer for some interviews the number of which is in dispute.² Volkov realised that there was money to be made if the memoirs of Shostakovich were published in the West.

Chapter Two covered the episode of the 'Shostakovich Wars' which revealed how bitter the struggle for the legacy of Shostakovich became with the politics of the Cold War

¹ Symphonies No. 2 *Dedication to October*, No. 3 *Mayday*, No. 11 *The Year 1905* and No. 12 *The Year 1917*.

² Irina Shostakovich maintains three interviews were given, Volkov claims he met with the composer 'dozens of times'.

often evoked by Volkov apologists even after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. At present academic warnings about the dangers of revisionism are not being heeded particularly by those who are making money out of his music. In fact the more daring and alternative the view of Shostakovich the more it seems to attract a captive audience. The outlandish concept behind the 1997 film *The War Symphonies: Shostakovich against Stalin* is a case in point. According to the film, the 'War Symphonies' were not just the ones written during 'The Great Patriotic War' (1941-45) as conventional history would have it - that is the symphonies numbered 7-9. Instead a different war – Shostakovich's supposed war against Stalin - has been conjured up in the minds of the film's creators dating back to 1936 and *Pravda's* denunciation of Shostakovich. It was now possible to include Symphonies 4,5 and 6 as well as the actual wartime symphonies.³ This may have added to the perceived appeal but the film is based on historically suspect premises.

Chapter Three proved that Volkov's motives were not honest and that there are many questions about his behaviour when compiling *Testimony*. For example the discovery that the eight pages which carried Shostakovich's signature had already previously been published in the Soviet Union is enough to damage Volkov's credibility on its own. Add to this the fact that the copyright of *Testimony* is owned solely by Volkov with no recourse for Shostakovich's relatives, Volkov's failure to reveal the notes that he took during his conversations with Shostakovich and the credibility gap that exists over the number of meetings Volkov claimed he had with the composer (dozens) and the number that is stated by Irina Shostakovich and Boris Tishchenko (three) all damn the book as a cynical (but successful) attempt to make money out of Shostakovich's name.

³ *The War Symphonies: Shostakovich against Stalin*. 1997. VHS (Rhombus), DVD (Philips).

Chapter Four showed that *Testimony's* lack of coherent structure is probably due to the fact that the book is built around the eight previously-published pages that Shostakovich had signed for Volkov. Seven out of eight pages form the beginning of the chapters around which Volkov constructed his anecdotal material none of which can be authenticated. The problem that Volkov had in his interviews with Shostakovich was that the composer was reluctant to talk about himself and preferred to reminisce about his contemporaries. Therefore the pre-published materials not only established a structure for the book, they helped to fill in the gaps as well.

Chapter Five exposed the myth of the supposed personal relationship between Shostakovich and Stalin and the implication that there was a direct line between the Soviet Leader and the composer. The reality was quite different. Behind Stalin was a wall of bureaucracy which protected him but also was capable of a considerable amount of in-fighting amongst itself. It was this feuding between departments namely the Cultural Education Board versus the Committee of Arts which produced the two *Pravda* editorials 'Muddle instead of Music' and 'False Sounds of Ballet' both denouncing popular works by Shostakovich. Stalin was merely an interested observer nodding approval from time to time but not playing a part in the detail of the press campaign.

Shostakovich was the victim of an ambitious skilled apparatchik who was determined to make his mark in his new position. The revealing of Kerzhentsev as the writer of the *Pravda* editorials overturns not only the revisionists' view of Stalin's close involvement with the campaign but even more conventional historians such as Elizabeth Wilson and Laurel Fay are unclear about the author of the editorials and the minimal involvement of Stalin in the campaign. Surely the fact that Shostakovich was not targeted by Stalin but was a victim of inter-departmental feuding must be recorded in the official histories of the composer without delay.

In the case of composers such as Shostakovich the meaning of his absolute music will remain hidden, opaque and concealed for the majority of listeners. Certainly the works that have been selected by the revisionist lobby for signs of dissent have been bizarre choices. Symphony No. 7 *Leningrad* was not a vehicle of secret sub-texts and hidden meanings. The survivors of Hitler's siege of Leningrad (including one Galina Vishnevskaya) were grateful for the boost in morale the symphony gave them. It would have been a cynical act indeed for a composer who received many accolades and prizes for this symphony to include a hidden agenda. It is only through the interpretation by scholars and specialists that the signs of direction will become clear and disseminated to the general public.

Appendix

Glossary

Agitprop. Department of Agitation and Propaganda of the Central Committee.

Komsomol. . The Soviet Communist youth organization for ages 14 to 28.

Komsomol'skaia pravda. The official paper of Komsomol.

Kult'pros. Board of cultural education.

MALEGOT. [Maly Akademicheskii Leningradskii Gosudarstvennyi Opernyi Teatr] Small Academic Leningrad State Opera Theatre.

Muzgiz. State Music Publishers.

Pravda. The most important government newspaper. Official organ of the Central Committee from 1912-1991.

RABIS. Union of workers of the arts.

RAPM. Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians

SNK. Council of Peoples' Commissars.

TsIK. Central Executive Committee. The chief policy-making body of the Communist Party.

VKP(b). Communist Party

Mysteries of *Lady Macbeth (Muddle Instead of Music: Stalin's Cultural Revolution, 1936-1938* pages 72-87)

(Leonid Maksimenkov) (Translated by Natalia Oryshchuk and Gerald Ginther)

On 6 January in Moscow, Shostakovich wrote to Ivan Sollertinsky about the previous evening's premiere of 'Quiet Don' during the tour of the MALEGOT [*Maly Leningradskii Gosudarstvennyi Opernyi Teatr*] theatre: 'The show was a great success. In conversation with Gorodinsky I learned his opinion. In general, negative. The words "ignoramus", "imitator", etcetera freely flew from his tongue. The whole series of sentences he pronounced in such a manner, that if it would not have been Gorodinsky, I would think that it might have been you saying them'¹.

V. M. Gorodinsky was assistant director at the Ministry of Culture for music. I. I. Dzerzhinsky was called 'ignoramus' and 'imitator' in conversation with D. D. Shostakovich ten days before the epoch-making visit of I. V. Stalin to the opera *The Quiet Don*, during which the Leader praised the libretto, music, acting and the singing of the soloists and chorus. A 33-year-old musical critic, pianist, graduate of Leningrad Conservatory (class of L.V. Nikolaev), Gorodinsky was a permanent correspondent of *Pravda* and *Komsomol'skaia pravda*. This upper nomenclature authority of the musical front was speaking to Shostakovich with rare frankness. As a musical scholar? As a party functionary? Or in both capacities? In this case his aesthetical criteria could have easily become political and ethical, which once again speaks about the subjective vagueness of ideological decisions in those years. Behind the inviolable façade there was hiding a comedy of human tastes and weaknesses, in this case – on the edge of snobbish arrogance in relation to not-enough-educated "ignoramus" Dzerzhinsky, which showed itself in intimate conversation of Leningrad Conservatory's graduate Gorodinsky and his former class-mate Shostakovich.

Victor Markovich Gorodinsky was born on 23 March 1902 in St Petersburg. His childhood was like the world of 'Wandering Stars' by Sholom-Aleikhem: 'Jew. Parents are from the bourgeois [*meshchane*]. Father (Mark Mikhailovich) – a musician-vocalist, an opera singer in the past, then a music teacher, died in 1929. Mother (daughter of a wedding musician) - a housewife, died in 1934. I myself am a musician from childhood'².

¹ Mikheeva, L. A story of one friendship ("Istoriia odnoi druzhby")// Sovetskaia muzyka, 1986. #11, c. 78

² Quoted according to the personal case of Gorodinsky, which is kept in the archive of (former) Head Office of Central Committee of Communist Party (Управление делами ЦК ВКП (б)).

From his autobiography: 'Father left the stage early (because he became blind on one eye as a result of poisoning by a toxic make-up), the family lived in poverty. That's why I received almost no education as a child. [...] Entering a public college was almost impossible, and education in private schools was unaffordable due to very high fees. Thus, from childhood I was learning only music, at first at home (all my family and close relatives were musicians, and according to the family legend, the profession of a musician had been ancestral in our kin for more than 300 years), and then at private music schools – partly at no cost, and partly on special conditions as a son of musician'³. Gorodinsky considered himself belonging to educated class [*intelligent*], not an office-worker [*sluzhashchii*] as P. M. Kerzhentsev was. He became a member of the Bolshevik party when he was 16 years old in 1918. It happened at the Nikolaevsk-on-Volga Party organisation, not very far from Tsaritsyn where in those days Stalin and Voroshilov were organising a heroic defence of the city against the White Army. He was serving in RKKA [*Workers and Peasants Red Army*] from 1918 to 1926. His last position in the army was as Head of the propaganda division of the political board of the Caspian navy. He participated in battles at river Kama in 1919 against Kolchak. He was an army propagandist and an infantry cadet in the Tsaritsyn area in 1919. He was of high army rank. He was a member of the Union of the workers of arts (RABIS) from 1917. He had tertiary music education: graduated from the department of Performing Arts of Leningrad Conservatory, specialising in piano (1923-1929); a pianist. He studied at Leningrad Conservatory from 1923 to 1929. He was a member of the board of Leningrad Conservatory and Dean for work with students from 1923 to 1925 – being only 21 years old! – and also was a Head of the Propaganda division at the same time. He was self-educating himself in the area of Party and politics. He was working as a pianist at the cinema and a concertmaster in Petrograd, Moscow and Kozlov. He was a Head of the Moscow area division of RABIS in 1929-1934; in 1934-1935 – a director of the Philharmonic Hall in Moscow. He was fluent in German and Italian. In 1926 he was reprimanded by the Leningrad provincial control committee for his participation in a student quarrel. The reprimand was withdrawn by the Central Committee's (*ЦК*) committee of Party control in 1935 before Gorodinsky's appointment to Cultural and Education division of the Central Committee. He was married, and had two children.

On 25 December 1935 Gorodinsky additionally told the Party police that in 1917 he had been involved with a group of Anarcho-Syndicalists for several months.

³ Autobiographical data was filed by Gorodinsky on 15 January 1940.

When in Moscow, in November 1932 the International organisation of Revolutionary theatre formed the First International Music Council, Gorodinsky was elected to be a Chair of the International Musical Board⁴. From 1938 to 1940 he was editing the newspaper *Soviet Art*. He was dismissed after the ‘opera discussion’ of 1940. The last nomenclature position of Victor Markovich was the job of the Chief Editor (Censor) of Muzgiz [*Muzykal’noe Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel’stvo*] in 1946-1948⁵. He was dismissed from this position after the disastrous resolution of the Central Committee, after which he got sick. He died in the age of fifty-six in 1958 in Moscow. His biography is a unique page in the history of musical front. Gorodinsky was a Phoenix of cultural Bolshevism. According to the logic of the political struggle, he should have disappeared from the stage of Agitprop at least four times: in 1936 after the scandal with *Lady Macbeth*, in 1937 after his dismissal from Central Committee, in 1940 during the ‘opera discussion’ in 1948 at the peak of the anti-Semitic campaign against cosmopolitans.

In 1932 People’s Artist of the republic A.S. Yablochkina was complaining to K.E. Voroshilov about the harassment against the Russian Theatre Society – the remnant of the old Imperial theatre – which was performed by Gorodinsky: “The last resolution of RABIS (Union of the workers of arts), as well as all the others for the last ten years, inevitably ends up with a request to pass all the estate of Russian Theatre Society to RABIS, after the Society will have been dismissed (...) But due to the fact that the Investigation Board was headed by Gorodinsky, the chief of RABIS...”⁶, etc.

Gorodinsky did not have much respect for the heirs of Imperial culture. Being a soldier of the revolution as he was, he could not be suspected to show any liberalism towards representatives of the pre-Revolutionary world of art. But could he be suspected to have any sympathy towards the troubadours of new revolutionary Art? For instance, towards Shostakovich? Could Gorodinsky feel sympathy towards him as a musician, as a person of the same generation, of a similar fate? In his not quite thirty-four years he was a major USSR musical functionary, owing the Revolution everything he had.

The answers to these questions can be partly found in a letter from Shostakovich to Sollertinsky on 9 January 1936. Making comments on articles in the magazine *Sovetskaia muzyka*, Sollertinsky confessed: ‘Perhaps I had been much behind the age, looking at everything through pink-Gorodinsky glasses’. Not ‘pink-Sollertinsky’ glasses, as the press

⁴ It was the first attempt of Internationalisation of musical front. In the meeting participated the representatives of USSR, USA, Japan, Austria and France.

⁵ Yampolsky, I.M. “V.M. Gorodinsky”, *Muzykal’naia Entsiklopediia*, Moskva, Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia, 1974, t.2, p. 12-13.

⁶ РЦХИДНИ, Ф. 74, Оп.1, Д. 404, Л.4

would be howling after the fiasco of *Lady Macbeth*, presenting Ivan Ivanovich as an evil genius of Dmitry Dmitrievich, but ‘pink-Gorodinsky’. Persuading Sollertinsky to wait before a change of profession, the composer entrusted to intercity mail one characteristic confession: ‘I will be back, and we will work together on reconstruction on the musical scene in Leningrad, which could be based on my conversations with Gorodinsky, Dinamov and some other comrades’⁷.

It is an exceptional confession. It tells of the fact that the functionary Gorodinsky was giving Shostakovich and Sollertinsky credentials for the positions of foremen of reconstruction of the musical front in the homeland of the Revolution. Shostakovich is writing in formal jargon, almost quoting from protocol Party language of the epoch. It could not be in a different way. On the top of the nomenclature pyramid, S.S. Dinamov was similar to Gorodinsky. In those days he was approved in the position of the Director of the Institute of Red Professors of Literature. ‘Some other comrades’ were only adding weight to the triumphal news. According to logic of Stalin’s words about Mayakovsky, it could not possibly be in a different way. The debacle of the RAPM [*Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians*] was in the past. The April course on the union with ‘fellow-travellers’ [*poputchiki*] also needed some correction. The words of Stalin about Mayakovsky signalled that Socialistic Art continued to be radical, innovative, and revolutionary.

In this context the content of the letter from the Head of Cultural Educational [*Kul’tprosvet*] board Alexander Shcherbakov to Stalin, Andreyev (a secretary of Central Committee responsible for current ideological work) and Zhdanov (chief of Leningrad’s Bolsheviks) becomes clearer. It was marked 11 January 1936. It refers to MALEGOT. According to the tradition of highest Party records management, it can be positively stated that the text was composed by a person responsible for the given part of the front, i.e. V. M. Gorodinsky. The content of the letter represents a variation of his earlier words about reconstruction of the musical front in Leningrad, told to Shostakovich.

Secretaries of Central
Committee of
Communist Party (of
Bolsheviks)
com. STALIN B.V.
com. Andreyev A.A.
com. Zhdanov A.A.

⁷ Mikheeva, K. “Istoriia odnoi druzhby. Chast’ vtoraya”, *Sovetskaia Muzyka*, 1986, №11, p. 79.

For about four years The Leningrad Academic Maly Opera Theatre has been working on the creation of the Soviet opera and education of the workforce of Soviet composers.

By presentation of the performances “Tikhii Don”[The Quiet Don] by Dzerzinsky, “Lady Macbeth” by Shostakovich, “Karnarinsky Muzhik” and “Irneniny” by Zhelobinsky, the theatre demonstrates now in Moscow the results of its work.

Actually, this is the only theatre, which is insistently and systematically solves an immensely important problem for the Soviet theatre — the creation of a contemporary musical show.

Further growth of opera art in the country entirely depends on the successful fulfilment of this task.

The evaluation of the whole work of the theatre by the theatre critics and Moscow community is the most positive.

The theatre created a number of productions, which stand out as a valuable contribution to mission of Soviet music culture, having proved the correctness of the total creative line of the theatre, and demonstrated its artistic proficiency and the unity of the artistic collective of the theatre and great work on creation of the Soviet opera and upbringing of the workforce of Soviet composers.

The organiser and the enthusiast of the whole work is the Artistic Administrator and the Head Conductor of the theatre, Honourable Artist of the Republic S.A. Samosud, who in the succession of the last 15 years has been a permanent Artistic and Musical Head of the theatre, and who in the direct meaning of the word raised the whole group of the young Soviet composers (Shostakovich, Dzerzinsky, Zhelobinsky).

After this introductory, self congratulatory part of the document Shcherbakov on behalf of the Board for Cultural Education [*Kul'tpros*] of Central Committee made five suggestions: (1) to re-name MALEGOT into Gosudarstvennyi Novyi Akademicheskii Opernyi Teatr [*Leningrad Academic Maly Opera Theatre into State New Academic Opera Theatre*], (2) To award the title of People’s Artist of the Republic to Samosud, and decorate him with “Znak Pochyota” [*Sign of Honour*], (3) To award the titles of Distinguished Personalities [*Deyatel’*] to the “oldest masters of theatre” – to Distinguished Artists of the Republic P.M. Zhuravlyov and M.A. Rostovtsev, (4) to decorate the group of actors and, finally, (5) “from 1 January to equate the salary band of artistic and technical staff of the theatre to the band of Leningrad theatre of Opera and Ballet (formerly Mariinsky)”.

Shcherbakov’s letter about MALEGOT is the only one from currently discovered Central Committee’s legislative initiatives in the second half of January of 1936. It is marked 11 January. Here begins a mysterious labyrinth. The letter sent from Central Committee (Cultural Education) to Central Committee (Stalin’s registry) was re-addressed

to the Committee on Arts, and had been received by Kerzhentsev's registry before 29 January. The stamp was marked by the following day after the release of the article in *Pravda*. Stalin familiarized himself with it between 11 January and 29 January, this was the same time as a behind-the-scenes game of Dinamov, Gorodinsky and 'some other comrades' with the aim to open 'the second' musical front in Leningrad was being played out. Shostakovich knew about these office manoeuvres. Shcherbakov because of his position also should have known about these plans. Stalin's instructions after his attendance of *The Quiet Don* were confirming correctness of the intuitively guessed direction of cultural politics: New Art. MALEGOT (Maly Opera, Leningrad) was almost not touched by the birth-mark of Imperial classics, as had been such formerly-imperial theatres as the Bol'shoi and the Mariinsky. That's why MALEGOT had to be crowned as 'the best and the most talented' in strategic discourse according to pseudo-Biblical creation of the 'classical Soviet opera'. From here came its new suggested grand title: 'Gosudarstvennyi Novyi Akademicheskii Opernyi Teatr' [*State New Academic Opera Theatre*]. It was matching the mythic Palace of Soviets in Moscow. Leningrad theatre was supposed to become a temple of the new Soviet opera. Such was the logic of Shcherbakov's memorandum.

Stalin's brief resolution: 'To comrade Kerzhentsev. I. St.' is important for several reasons. The hierarchy of addressees of Shcherbakov's letter is exclusively Party-like: Stalin (the leader, highest watchman of ideology, strategist), Andreyev (Central Committee's secretary, curator of tactical ideology), Zhdanov (Leningrad's leader, the question was referring to a theatre in his city). State structures (Molotov, Kalinin) were not included in the decision-making process. According to the strict scheme of existing ritual, the decision should have been made by the main 'trinity' of the Party. But here happened an unpredictable change of protocol: a suggestion from the chief of a Central Committee department (Shcherbakov), who according to his status was higher than the relevant Minister, was transferred for examination to public office, to the head of the new committee on arts (Kerzhentsev). In this way, there was given an important signal that Kerzhentsev was higher than Shcherbakov! It seemed that legislative initiatives from now on should have been originating from Kerzhentsev, not from Shcherbakov, i.e. priority of leadership in culture had been given to the Committee and the new governor.

In his letter Shcherbakov does not make a single reference in Shostakovich's disfavour. It indicates that the epicentre of musical scandal with *Lady Macbeth* was outside the Central Committee. Neither Shcherbakov, nor Gorodinsky initiated it. The document quotes critical opinion published in the press. We should not forget that Gorodinsky was acting both as an official critic of *Pravda* and *Komsomol'skaia pravda*. Critical essays

were expressing his personal musical likings. Not accidentally both ‘Sumbur...’ and ‘False sounds of Ballet’ [*Baletnaia Fal’sh*] would deal a severe blow to musical criticism (i.e. Gorodinsky). ‘Obliging musical criticism exalts opera to the skies, creates huge fame for it’ (‘Sumbur...’). ‘In reality, only our musical and art criticism are undemanding. They are often over-praising the works that don’t deserve it’ (‘False sounds of Ballet’).

If the department of Cultural Education of Central Committee had been preparing the attack on Formalism, it was regarding Fine Arts, Architecture and Book Illustrations, but it would not be directed against Music and Theatre. *Komsomol’skaia pravda* in February 1936 after Andreyev’s speech at the Central Committee meeting regarding children’s books, published a disproportionately large series of editorials about Fine Arts: ‘Harmful garbage’ (about Dm. Lebedev and N. Rozenfeld); ‘Daubery instead of drawings. There is no place for Formalistic frills in a children book’; ‘Staircase leading nowhere. Architecture upside down’; ‘Away from life. Against Formalism and cliché in fine arts’⁸. *Pravda* published an article on illustration for children ‘About artists-daubers’ only on 1 March. The article was secondary in comparison to the publication in *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, which stood close to Cultural Education.

Thus, if the Central Committee had been intending to direct attack against artists-Formalists, then Kerzhentsev had disrupted the plan of Cultural Education dealing a preventive blow to opera theatre and ballet. He did not have any strategic plan. His personal priority was drama theatre, but on certain grounds Shostakovich’s opera appeared a suitable target. Stalin attended *The Quiet Don* on 16 January. On 26 January he went to *Lady Macbeth*. Was it his original decision or he was persuaded to come by someone else - for instance, by Kerzhentsev, who by that time already had in hand Shcherbakov’s memorandum? Instead of the creation of new opera theatre in Leningrad, a conspiracy of ‘Muddle instead of music’ [*Sumbur vmesto muzyki*] was exposed, with threads leading directly to Central Committee, to Gorodinsky. *Lady Macbeth* was a trump card for the neutralisation of Cultural Education, Shcherbakov and Gorodinsky.

Kerzhentsev received the letter before 29 January, possibly before Stalin’s visit to see the performance. For Kerzhentsev, the initiatives of Cultural Education presented an exceptional opportunity for discreditation of his rivals. That’s why the leader’s visit to “Lady Macbeth” and his anger about it put Kerzhentsev in an advantageous position from the very beginning of his career in the Committee on Arts. His leadership received necessary legitimacy and weight. The documents published in *Komsomol’skaia pravda* lost their political relevance. Andreyev’s important memorandum, read on 19 January, was

⁸ See *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 1936, 14, 15, 18 February, 4 March.

published only on 29 January, i.e. the next day after publication of ‘Sumbur...’. Shcherbakov would lead discussion about Formalism quite inactively, then would be sent into factual exile, further and further from Moscow, and possibly it helped him to avoid the fate of his colleagues from other ideological departments of Central Committee: Stetsky, Tal’, Radek, Dinamov, Saltanov and “some other comrades”.

This emergency switch of the main blow from fine arts to opera was a usual occurrence for Agitprop where the role of chance always was quite high. Unusual was the fact that the centre of the campaign happened to be transferred to a public institution. The musical scandal of 1948 was prepared as a musical overture to the campaign against cosmopolites, which was temporarily directed against rootless musical critics. Because of the state apparatus’ war between Zhdanov and Malenkov, the tactical blow was dealt to composers. The beginning of this campaign would be smoothed down and postponed for one year, when after Zhdanov’s death the victims would be chosen amongst theatre critics-antipatriots. But the conflict would break out among the apparatus of Central Committee. The struggle of different groups in highest party headquarters had always been reflected on cultural and literature politics, as it would happen in China in the time of great proletarian cultural revolution.

In January 1936 Kerzhentsev became a winner in the first round of struggle for new Soviet art, classical and socialistic. It was the break of the era of grand projects in arts, and simultaneously – awards and presents, and high-flown titles. There was one more proof of the monarchic-like transformation of the regime. Kerzhentsev would be actively supporting such politics of distribution of material benefits, and manipulate it, and use it for his purposes.

Only by the middle of February Kerzhentsev lodged a petition regarding one (least significant) point of Shcherbakov’s memorandum, which had been confirmed at Politburo. Usually the decisions on Stalin’s resolutions were to be made immediately. But Kerzhentsev deferred the matter for two weeks. He knew that such deferral had been politically expedient and relevant to the leaders’ opinion. The Kerzhentsev proposal said: ‘For outstanding service in creation of Soviet opera art and education of young Soviet composers – to award the music director and head conductor of Leningrad academic Maly opera theatre, Distinguished Artist of republic SAMOSUD Samuil Abramovich by the Order of Honour’. Secretary of the Central Committee [ЦК] Akulov in a covering note communicated to Stalin: ‘For consideration of Bolshevik’s Central Committee, I am attaching a petition by the Head of All-State Committee on Arts comrade Kerzhentsev

about awarding the Order of Honour to the conductor of Leningrad academic Maly opera theatre, Distinguished Artist of republic SAMOSUD S. A.’

This wording repeated the treatment of role and significance of Samosud in Shcherbakov’s letter, but no more. The decision regarding the award was made on 16 February 1936 only in relation to Samosud, and in a very abridged form. However, this time Samosud had not been awarded a ‘People’s Artist of the republic’ title. Naturally, no talk was possible about any ‘state new academic opera theatre’, either.

On the spontaneous choice of Shostakovich’s opera for the beginning of the campaign speaks not only this report by Shcherbakov. During the scrupulous unfolding of the action in the depths of the Central Committee, such a document was absolutely impossible because it contained totally politically incorrect praise of Shostakovich himself. The would-be victims were not praised in the secret correspondence of the Central Committee. Besides, on the day that Stalin attended *Lady Macbeth*, *Literaturnaia gazeta* covered a forum on the topic ‘The ways of the development of Soviet opera’ held at the Club of the Arts Experts [Klub masterov iskusstv] in Moscow. In the light of fulfilment of Stalin’s directions on ‘Soviet classical opera’, the aggressive tone to discussion at the Forum was set by the Leningraders: music critics K.A. Korchmarev, E.M. Braudo and libretto-writer O.M. Brik. The chairman was V.M. Gorodinsky. The article-report of *Literaturnaia gazeta* was published in the editorial column, and was expressing the official point of view. *Literaturnaia gazeta* was under guidance from Shcherbakov, thus a semi-official unit of Cultural Education [Kultpros]. The whole Forum was the attack of the Leningraders (‘Leningrad musical front-line’ [Leningradskii muzfront]) on Muscovites (‘Moscow musical front-line’ [Moskovskii muzfront]). It seemed that in the main headquarters there was an overturn, and now it had to be given a status of legitimacy. The speakers from MALEGOT were pointing out that the practise of the Muscovites was a living reproach to the leaders of all Moscow opera theatres, who failed to show enough courage and persistence in battle for Soviet opera’. Under the fire of criticism appeared also ‘the director of one of the Moscow opera theatres’ (was it Stanislavsky?). It was pointed out that ‘on the ways of the struggle for Soviet opera Moscow falls behind Leningrad’.

The article passed unnoticed. The explosion from “Muddle...”, to which only a few hours had been remaining, would immediately darken all previous pro-Leningrad publicity. But Gorodinsky will be reminded of his “exposing” declaration. In one and a half month, poet Aleksey Surkov will say at the writers meeting: ‘On the eve of publication of the article “Sumbur vmesto muzyki”, in the house of Masters of Arts there was a discussion about “Quiet Don”, and one boy got to the tribune and said that music by Dzerzhinsky was

clear and good, but one should think about Shostakovich. And then one musical theoretician came down hard on this boy, and was scolding him for a half an hour. And the next day after this article the theoretician was walking around and saying: "I have wide connections with composers, and now they say: "How would I believe him?". And this theoretician is a very well-known character. And now they don't believe to many, and they say: "Maybe something will change, let's keep quiet". For instance, Mayakovsky is being quiet.' That 'very well-known character' was Gorodinsky. It seems that only because of a misunderstanding or chance *Lady Macbeth* did not cost him his career.

As has been pointed out before, on the eve of musical scandal the secretary of TsK VKP (b) [*Central Committee of Bolshevik Communist party*] A.A. Andreyev had a meeting at the Central Committee's VLKSM [*All-Russian Leninist Communistic Youth Union*] regarding children's books. Neither in the drafts of his speech, nor in the stenograph of the speech itself (nor in several corrections, nor in the final text of the speech) was there mention of formalism and naturalism. Andreyev was criticising 'artistic daubery' of illustrations for childrens' books. Judging from the text of the speech, it is logical to suggest that from the Central Committee's point of view it would be more acceptable to start the 'pogrom' (if such was plotted by the Central Committee) from the criticism of children books illustrations that, as it was claimed, were frightening kids.

Finally, the Head of Department of Propaganda of Leninism at the Central Committee VKP(b) A.I. Stetsky (who himself was a recent curator of Cultural Education) in his report on 21 January 1936, on the occasion of another anniversary of Lenin's death, also was not giving any signs of the beginning of the campaign. It started flash-like, in Stalin's style.

Once it had begun, the campaign was developing in several directions. There were discussions, party meetings of art workers, and general meetings of creative workers unions, about which both party and professional press reported from time to time. Simultaneously there were appearing instructive publications in *Pravda* on adjacent areas of art. Sometimes they were echoed by articles and commentaries in other press agencies. In the Writers Union this discussion was chaired by A.S. Shcherbakov. However, from the point of view of effective struggle with Formalism, both the campaign and the February Plenum of SSP management in Minsk had failed. They did not detect major formalists in writers environment.

P.M. Kerzhentsev was directing the campaign more effectively. It seems that he had an idea about the general plot. In his actions one could see logic and loyalty to a certain plan. In full accordance with the Resolution of the Central Committee and the SNK USSR from 17 January 1936, the Chairman was controlling all fronts of the arts: music, drama,

musical and children theatres, cinema, sculpture, painting, and museums. Despite the fact that both Kerzentssev and Shcherbakov were delivering instructional speeches, one could see certain differences and dissonances in their presentations. On the *Pravda* pages the voice of Kerzhentsev was the only one.

Shcherbakov, who was using *Literaturnaia gazeta* [Literary Gazette] to voice his ideas, at the end of February-beginning of March 1936 was insisting that there was not a campaign at all, but only routine Party work. Kerzhentsev, who would lead the campaign to its final in 1938, had been withholding such comments. He stressed on the globality of a great purge of arts, not calling the ‘pogrom’ by its true name.

It should be noted that unlike victims of political purge, victims of antiformalistic campaign were not necessarily subjected to administrative repressions. It was the process during which the subject of art was separated from the object; basis (actual person) was separated from superstructure (work of art). It was the Art that had been sentenced to elimination, but not its physical bearers. During the ideological attack, leaders and symbols of the “wrong” art had been re-grouped and entirely replaced. Doubtless, it explains the fates of Shostakovich, Eisenstein, and partly the fates of Bednyi, Bulgakov, Tairov. The tragedy of Meyerhold can be explained by the fact that the destructive force of the whole campaign from the very beginning had been directed at him. In this case, physical destruction of forbidden art and its creator can be viewed as an example of a ritual auto-da-fe.

The paradigm of art, which was represented by Meyerhold’s theatre, included Mayakovsky, Eisenstein, Shostakovich, Rodchenko, Tairov, Erdman, etc. Vsevolod Vishnevsky, who was very well informed about latest processes in the field of cultural Bolshevism, left a remarkable entry in his diary: ‘Here are two interesting enemies, maybe even antipodes: Meyerhold and Tairov. But at a closer look, one would see many similarities in two of them. There are the last of the Mohicans of Russian pre-Revolutionary theatre’⁹. The immolation of Meyerhold will become a sacrifice. Kerzhentsev will win, but the moment of victory will become his political ruin. In several days after closing of GOSTiMa he will be removed from the post of Stalin’s governor for Culture. The reason will be explained in a formal and, at the same time, ironical tone. His dismissal will coincide with the first session of Supreme Soviet of USSR of the first calling. On his personal record will appear a note: ‘Due to the failure’, exactly like the one on Yagoda’s record, and the one that will appear on Yezhov’s record half a year later.

⁹ Vishnevsky, Vs. [Diary entries with corrections and notes, 1948], *Archive*.

Muddle Instead of Music (*Pravda* 28 January 1936)

With the general cultural development of our country there grew also the necessity for good music. At no time and in no other place has the composer had a more appreciative audience. The people expect good songs, but also good instrumental works, and good operas.

Certain theatres are presenting to the new culturally mature Soviet public Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* as an innovation and achievement. Musical criticism, always ready to serve, has praised the opera to the skies, and given it resounding glory. The young composer, instead of hearing serious criticism, which could have helped him in his future work, hears only enthusiastic compliments.

From the first minute, the listener is shocked by deliberate dissonance, by a confused stream of sound. Snatches of melody, the beginnings of a musical phrase, are drowned, emerge again, and disappear in a grinding and squealing roar. To follow this "music" is most difficult; to remember it, impossible.

Thus it goes, practically throughout the entire opera. The singing on the stage is replaced by shrieks. If the composer chances to come upon the path of a clear and simple melody, he throws himself back into a wilderness of musical chaos - in places becoming cacaphony. The expression which the listener expects is supplanted by wild rhythm. Passion is here supposed to be expressed by noise. All this is not due to lack of talent, or lack of ability to depict strong and simple emotions in music. Here is music turned deliberately inside out in order that nothing will be reminiscent of classical opera, or have anything in common with symphonic music or with simple and popular musical language accessible to all. This music is built on the basis of rejecting opera - the same basis on which "Leftist" Art rejects in the theatre simplicity, realism, clarity of image, and the unaffected spoken word - which carries into the theatre and into music the most negative features of "Meyerholdism" infinitely multiplied. Here we have "leftist" confusion instead of natural human music. The power of good music to infect the masses has been sacrificed to a petty-bourgeois, "formalist" attempt to create originality through cheap clowning. It is a game of clever ingenuity that may end very badly.

The danger of this trend to Soviet music is clear. Leftist distortion in opera stems from the same source as Leftist distortion in painting, poetry, teaching, and science. Petty-bourgeois "innovations" lead to a break with real art, real science and real literature.

The composer of *Lady Macbeth* was forced to borrow from jazz its nervous, convulsive, and spasmodic music in order to lend "passion" to his characters. While our critics, including music critics, swear by the name of socialist realism, the stage serves us, in Shostakovich's creation, the coarsest kind of naturalism. He reveals the merchants and the people monotonously and bestially. The predatory merchant woman who scrambles into the possession of wealth through murder is pictured as some kind of "victim" of bourgeois society. Leskov's story has been given a significance which it does not possess.

And all this is coarse, primitive and vulgar. The music quacks, grunts, and growls, and suffocates itself in order to express the love scenes as naturalistically as possible. And "love" is smeared all over the opera in the most vulgar manner. The merchant's double bed occupies the the central position on the stage. On this bed all "problems" are solved. In the same coarse, naturalistic style is shown the death from poisoning and the flogging - both practically on stage.

The composer apparently never considered the problem of what the Soviet audience looks for and expects in music. As though deliberately, he scribbles down his music, confusing all the sounds in such a way that his music would reach only the effete "formalists" who had lost all their wholesome taste. He ignored the demand of Soviet culture that all coarseness and savagery be abolished from every corner of Soviet life. Some critics call the glorification of the merchants' lust a satire. But there is no question of satire here. The composer has tried, with all the musical and dramatic means at his command, to arouse the sympathy of the spectators for the coarse and vulgar inclinations and behavior of the merchant woman Katerina Ismailova.

Lady Macbeth is having great success with bourgeois audiences abroad. Is it not because the opera is non-political and confusing that they praise it? Is it not explained by the fact that it tickles the perverted taste of the bourgeois with its fidgety, neurotic music?

Our theatres have expended a great deal of energy on giving Shostakovich's opera a thorough presentation. The actors have shown exceptional talent in dominating the noise, the screaming, and the roar of the orchestra. With their dramatic action, they have tried to reinforce the weakness of the melodic content. Unfortunately, this has served only to bring

out the opera's vulgar features more vividly. The talented acting deserves gratitude, the wasted efforts - regret.

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