

PERSONNEL

VIOLIN I

Simeon Brown,
concertmaster
Miya Saito-Beckman
Nicholas Sharma
Tina Glausi
Cilka Daniels
Bashar Matti
Julia Frantz
Della Davies

VIOLIN II

Megan Letky,
principal
Ben Gardner
Ellie Van Hattem
Kaydee Willis
Nolan Bjorn
Melissa Henriquez
Kelsey Hollenbaugh
Gillian Frederick
Arnaud Ghillebaert

VIOLA

Hannah Breyer,
principal
Forrest Walker
Kailie DeBolt
Lily Coker
Rubi Yan
Ricky Waterman
Ziyun Wei
Lauren Culver

CELLO

Lizzy Donovan,
principal
Joseph Eggleston
Nora Willauer
Connor Balderston
Hendrik Mobley
Clair Dietz
Titus Young

BASS

Hayden Martinez,
principal
Yixao Pan
Garrett Baxter
Mario Rodriguez
Andrew Mell

FLUTE

Annabel McDonald
Holly Chapman
Brynna Paros

OBOE

Wesley Becherer
Ryan Strong
Noah Sylwester

CLARINET

Darlene Mueller
Esther Kwak
Dante Hoge

BASSOON

Daniel Yim
Bronson York
Dylan Myers

HORN

Andrea Kennard
Shae Wirth
Amrit Gupta
Sean Brennan
Andres Rodriguez

TRUMPET

Joseph Vranas
Luke Harju
Carla Lamb

TROMBONE

Kenny Ross
Brandon Pressley
Jon Caponetto

TUBA

Clare Brennan

PERCUSSION

Crystal Chu
Daniel Surprenant
Kathie Hsieh
Luke DeDedominces



UNIVERSITY OF
OREGON

SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND DANCE

University of Oregon Symphony Orchestra



Beethoven

Shostakovich

David M. Jacobs
conductor

Jonathan DeBruyn
assistant conductor

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Season 117, Program 56

Beall Concert Hall
Saturday, March 17, 2018 | 7:30 p.m.



Egmont Overture (1810) Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)
[8 min]
Jonathan DeBruyn, conductor

Symphony No. 10 in E minor (1953) Dmitri Shostakovich
(1906-1975)
[55 min]
I. Moderato
II. Allegro
III. Allegretto – Largo – Più mosso
IV. Andante – Allegro – L'istesso tempo

PROGRAM NOTES

Egmont Overture

Beethoven's significance in the transition from Classicism to Romanticism is apparent in his dramatic music. There he was concerned with extra-musical ideas and with establishing moods in the Romantic vein, but he also cast his expressions in the mold of Classical forms.

In 1810 Beethoven composed an overture, songs and incidental music for a Vienna Court Theatre revival of Goethe's drama *Egmont*. In the story, Count Egmont is a symbol of strength and courage for the citizens of Brussels in their resistance to Spanish tyranny in the sixteenth century. The overture opens with a loud unison tone and a dramatic minor-key series of chords reminiscent of the Spanish dance, sarabande, that foreshadow tragedy. Short melodic motives bring the introductory material into a transition and the main body of the overture, a fast triple meter with two main ideas, is presented in a classic sonata-allegro form. Interest centers upon musical structure rather than melodic appeal. Architectural balance between variety and unity in the overture frequently is interpreted as demonstrating the story of conflict and Count Egmont's steadfast virtue. The coda, a normal appendage to sonata-allegro form, states the "Symphony of Triumph," a joyous march that recurs to close the drama as the hero is led to his execution and

unaccompanied solo for cellos and basses, just like the first movement. We seem to be back to the brooding, meditative opening of the symphony. More extended instrumental solos follow (for oboe, flute, and bassoon). The theme of the Allegro section is born gradually: first we hear only an ascending perfect fifth, then a little melodic flourish is added, and then suddenly the theme is there, with its rushing scales and excited accompaniment. The joyful melody is interrupted by reminiscences of earlier movements: music from the cruel second-movement scherzo crops up, followed by the "D-S-C-H" theme from the third movement. The recapitulation is preceded by the last lengthy solo, for bassoon playing in its low register. This solo is, however, playful rather than meditative, in keeping with the general character of the movement which becomes more and more exuberant to the end. The last word belongs to "D-S-C-H," proclaimed loudly by the brass and hammered out by the timpani as the symphony reaches its resounding conclusion.

Given the complexity of the work and Shostakovich's terrible experiences with Party critics, it is understandable that the composer did not want to comment on his Tenth Symphony in any great detail. His statement in *Sovietskaia Muzyka* was almost absurdly self-deprecatory. Shostakovich, who had so often been forced to exercise self-criticism in the past, now carried it to the point where it almost turned into its total opposite: "Like my other works I wrote it very quickly. That is probably more of a defect than a virtue because there is much that cannot be done well when one works so fast." What this statement was really trying to do was beat the critics at their own game of Shostakovich-bashing by coyly downplaying the work's importance. Critics swallowed the bait and duly castigated the work for its "pessimistic," "individualistic" tendencies. Musicians and audiences, on the other hand, took to the new symphony immediately, both in the Soviet Union and abroad. It is, next to the Fifth and the First, the most frequently performed Shostakovich symphony. A recent compilation lists no fewer than 47 recordings, including a piano-duet version played by the composer and his friend and fellow composer, Mieczyslaw Weinberg.

carried on an intense (and probably largely one-sided) correspondence with her. Although Nazirova undoubtedly served as his muse during the period of composition, it seems that it was a temporary obsession with her image that sustained Shostakovich's inspiration, rather than a need to fuel a concrete physical relationship.

What is the connection between Elmira and the horn motif? Shostakovich combined the French and German systems to come up with musical equivalents of the name's letters: "E" is e, "L" is "la" (a), "M" is e, "R" is "re" (d), and "A" is a. This may seem contrived, but it is really nothing particularly new. Renaissance composers (for example, Josquin Desprez) had already been fond of such subtle games.

Once we know all this, the movement takes on an entirely new meaning. The motifs of Shostakovich and Elmira are repeated unchanged throughout the entire movement, while the opening theme undergoes numerous transformations. Two people in the middle of a turbulent world? At any rate, the ending of the movement is highly symbolic: the horn plays the Elmira theme one last time, with mute, and the flute and piccolo respond with "D-S-C-H" in soft *staccato* (short and separated) notes.

Let us stop here for a moment. What if we hadn't been given all this personal information about Shostakovich and Elmira? Isn't the music supposed to stand on its own and be intelligible without any external explanations?

Of course it is, and this symphony has been admired by musicians and audiences who had never heard of Elmira Nazirova. But that horn call is so insistent that it is hard to believe it is not there for a specific reason, even if they don't know what the reason is. And the reason does not have to be known for the statement to take its effect. The Nazirova story is important because it tells us how the movement became what it is. That is not apparent from the work itself but knowing about it adds new depths to our understanding. The last movement of Shostakovich's Tenth begins with a slow

martyrdom that is symbolic of his followers' eventual triumph over the Spaniards.

Shostakovich Symphony No. 10

Shostakovich was probably the only composer born in the 20th century to have developed an instantly recognizable type of symphony that could stand beside those of Beethoven, Mahler, or Sibelius. While each one of Shostakovich's symphonies has its distinctive characteristics, they share a great deal with one another as a group. Except for the vocal symphonies, most works build upon the traditional categories such as scherzo, slow movement, etc. What Shostakovich did with those categories, however, was completely unique. His scherzos, grim and sarcastic, are not like any others, and his opening movements, often slower than what one is used to, are also unmistakably his own.

In discussions of Shostakovich's works, the immediate social context is often overemphasized at the expense of the larger picture. Granted, Shostakovich was more strongly affected by the vagaries of history and politics than most composers, since he lived in a country where "Big Brother" was constantly watching everyone. But there must be more to his work than politics, or it would not have survived the Communist state in which it was born. Forty years after the composer's death, it is becoming increasingly clear that Shostakovich's artistic journey has its own internal logic from his first symphony written at the age of 19 to his fifteenth, completed at 65. Wars, hardships, repression and brutal criticism affected him but never deterred him from his path. For nearly fifty years, he was working on the Shostakovich symphony. In No. 10, composed at mid-career, he created what many consider the most perfect realization of that ideal.

Most sources give the summer of 1953 as the date of composition for the Tenth Symphony. It has been alleged that Stalin's death in March of the same year had provided the main impetus for the symphony, and the second movement, in particular, is a portrait of the deceased tyrant. In her book, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (Princeton University Press, 1994), Elizabeth Wilson

shows, through a number of interviews with people who had been close to the composer, that the symphony dates, at least in part, from 1951, two years earlier than previously thought. This piece of information is significant because it raises the question: How much of the work really owes its existence to the news of Stalin's death? Wilson also reports the findings of Manashyr Yakubov, the curator of the Shostakovich Archive, who examined the sketches of an unfinished violin sonata dating from 1946 and found that its themes are close or identical to those of the first movement of the Tenth Symphony. Wilson concludes: "This implies that Shostakovich had been mulling over this musical material for many years before it eventually got written down in finished form as the Tenth Symphony." Nevertheless, if the story reported by Wilson about Elmira Nazirova and the horn call in the third movement (see below) is true, the composition must not have received its final form until 1953.

The longest movement in the Tenth Symphony is the first, a dark and brooding *Moderato* describing a huge arch from piano to *pianissimo* with a great *fortissimo* climax in the middle. Two scherzos follow, one cruel and inhuman, and the other more relaxed though still unsettling at times. There is no independent slow movement, but the lengthy introduction to the finale almost grows into one. The tone of the music lightens in the final *Allegro*, but it would probably be an exaggeration to speak of unmitigated joy and triumph. Shostakovich modified the characters of each of the traditional symphonic movements to fit his personal emotional world in which pain and joy, fear and laughter are inseparable.

Many of Shostakovich's orchestral and chamber works contain extended passages for one instrument only. In the first movement of the Tenth Symphony alone, there are a good dozen such passages, where a wind instrument, or one of the string sections, carries a long, meandering melody, while the rest of the orchestra is either silent or plays a simple and sparse accompaniment. These isolated, meditative lines are quite palpable symbols of loneliness. In the course of the symphony, the number of such solos gradually

decreases, as the work slowly abandons the meditative mood of the opening and embraces a more "communal" tone, as expressed by the full orchestral sound heard through much of the finale.

Next comes one of Shostakovich's most brutal scherzos; some have heard it as a caricature of Stalin. This diabolical movement has counterparts in such earlier Shostakovich works as the Sixth and Eighth Symphonies and the First Violin Concerto. It is, in a way, the flip side of the serious first movement, equally tragic but also sarcastic in nature. We need this crude joke, maybe, to exorcise our tragic feelings before moving on towards a more tranquil state of mind.

The first step in that direction is made in the third-movement *Allegretto*, which is jovial and easy-going most of the time, though not impervious to dramatic disruptions. At their first entrance, the woodwinds play Shostakovich's musical monogram, the letters D-S-C-H (derived from the German transliteration of the composer's name, Dmitri Schostakowitsch, played as the notes D-E-flat-C - B, or D-S-C-H; in German, "s," or "es," is the name of the note E-flat, and "h" is B-natural). Shostakovich used this motif in several of his works (most extensively in the Eighth String Quartet). His procedure can be likened to that of a painter who creates a canvas with a large number of figures and includes a self-portrait in a conspicuous spot.

We must add, however, that it is not the notes alone that make this theme so personal: they are all part of the C minor scale and a child could have written them down. It is the poignant rhythm and the powerful orchestration that gives the theme its special cachet.

The personal nature of this movement is further enhanced by a revelation first published in Wilson's book. The resounding (and at first unaccompanied) horn call E-A-ED-A is also a musical cipher, standing for the name Elmira. Elmira Nazirova was an Azerbaijani pianist and composer who had studied with Shostakovich. Wilson writes:

During the summer months of 1953 Shostakovich