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THE EVOLUTION OF THE XYLOPHONE THROUGH THE SYMPHONIES OF DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

By

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ABSTRACT

This treatise focuses on the evolution of the xylophone in the music of Dmitri Shostakovich. The xylophone occupied an important position in Shostakovich's compositional aesthetic, evidenced in the exposed solos of the *Jazz Suite No. 1* and the *Polka from The Golden Age.* In his symphonies, Shostakovich's use of the xylophone expanded the role of the instrument from a demarcation or coloristic device to a vehicle of complex cultural and personal ideas ranging from the struggle of the Soviet people under Joseph Stalin, the composer's own hatred of war, and prominently, the multi-faceted idea of betrayal. This document presents a biographical overview of Shostakovich's life, an overview of the history of the xylophone from antiquity through the Twentieth Century, and an analysis of the use of the xylophone in Shostakovich's symphonies. Rhythmic and melodic motives, orchestrational effects, and pitch class relationships are examined in addition to specific score examples.

CHAPTER ONE

THE LIFE OF DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

Dmitri Shostakovich was born on September 5th, 1906 in St. Petersburg, Russia to Dmitriy and Sofya Shostakovich. Dmitriy had been born in exile in Siberia, but attended St. Petersburg University, and graduated in 1899. Sofya's parents were also of Siberian descent, and she moved to St. Petersburg to study piano at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. After Dmitri and Sofya met and married, Sofya abandoned her studies to devote herself full time to her husband and to raising a family.[1] However, music remained an important part of the Shostakovich household. Both Dmitriy and Sofya were musically inclined, and their house was filled with the music of Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, and Chopin, as well as renditions of gypsy romance songs by Dmitriy.[2]

It was not until 1915 that Dmitri Shostakovich received his first piano lesson from his mother. After hearing his older sister, Mariya, perform a "Galop" for piano six-hands by Jean-Louis Goebbaerts with two of her friends, young Mitya, as he was known, asked his mother to help him decipher two of the parts on the keyboard. Within minutes of this first lesson, Sofya realized her son possessed perfect pitch and a phenomenal musical memory. He was soon playing pieces by Haydn, Mozart, and Tchaikovsky. Mastery of notation and an exceptional facility for sight-reading propelled the young Shostakovich to advance quickly.[3]

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[1] Wilson, Elizabeth. *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 8

[2] Ibid., 8

[3] Ibid., 9

That same year, Shostakovich began studying with Ignatiy Glyasser, the leading piano teacher in Petrograd. He also enrolled in the Shidlovskaya Commercial School, home to the children of the prominent liberal intelligentsia. After the school was nationalized in 1918 by the Bolshevik government, it became known as the 108th Soviet School and was closed in 1919. He transferred to his sisters' school, the Stoyunina School, and enrolled at the Petrograd Conservatory, at the behest of the Conservatory Director, Alexander Glazunov, to study piano and composition.[4]

Shostakovich's years at the Conservatory were a mixture of intense study, significant accomplishments, and personal tragedies. He spent his first two years studying piano with Alexandra Rozanova, his mother's former teacher, and Leonid Vladimirovich Nikolayev, who was also an amateur composer known for mentoring "thinking" musicians. In, Nikolayev, Shostokovich found a teacher who was able to encourage and critique both his compositional voice and progress on the piano.[5]

In 1922, the Shostakovich family suffered tragedy when Dmitriy Shostakovich died from pneumonia on February 24. The family was plunged into poverty, with Sofya taking employment as a typist, and Mariya offering private piano lessons out of the family's home to keep Dmitri in school. Unfortunately, the family's misfortunes continued, with the young Shostakovich being diagnosed with tuberculosis in 1923, and subsequently sent to the Crimean Peninsula during the summer of 1923 for treatment.[6]

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[4] Ibid., 12.

[5] Fay, Laurel. *Shostakovich: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press), 22.

[6] Wilson, *Shostakovich*, 28-29.

Shortly after returning to the Leningrad Conservatory, Shostakovich was denied admittance to the Academic Course (graduate study) in piano. This led to a brief flirtation with transferring to the Moscow Conservatory. Dmitri was accepted to the Moscow Conservatory for both piano and composition, but his mother's controlling personality prevented him from transferring.[7]

Shostakovich remained at the Leningrad Conservatory where he focused on the completion his composition studies. After another recuperative period in the summer of 1924, Shostakovich began work on his Symphony No. 1. He also took his first job as a cinema pianist, working at the Bright Reel Cinema for 100 rubles a month.[8] The symphony was completed in April 1925, and given its two piano-version premiere that same month. The orchestral version was finished in July 1925 and finally premiered in May1926 by the Leningrad Philharmonic under Nikolai Malko.[9]

The success of Symphony No. 1 exceeded the composer's own expectations. After resisting the corrections and advice of his composition teachers, Shostakovich felt vindicated that the work was so warmly welcomed - the Scherzo had to be repeated due to popular demand. The event became a seminal point in the composer's life, with the date of the premiere, May 12, 1926, becoming an anniversary the composer would celebrate for the rest of his life.[10]

The next two years, Shostakovich branched out as both a composer and concert pianist. In 1926, the young Shostakovich composed his *Sonata No. 1* for piano, and was selected to be

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[7] Fay, *Shostakovich, 25.*

[8] Ibid., 25-30

[9] Ibid., 25-30.

[10] Ibid., 32

one of five pianists to represent the Soviet Union in the Chopin Competition, held in Warsaw in January 1927.[11] Although his performance in Moscow a week before the competition was deemed "technically unpolished,"[12] Shostakovich advanced to the finals of the Chopin Conservatory, playing Chopin's Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra. Shostakovich made such an impression in Warsaw that an extra concert appearance was scheduled for him and his colleague, Russian pianist Lev Oborin. At this concert Shostakovich played his First Sonata, which he reported was a "colossal success."[13]

Shortly after he returned home from Warsaw, Shostakovich was given the opportunity to meet one of his idols: Sergei Prokofiev. Prokofiev had recently returned to Russia for the first time since the Revolution in 1918. After a concert on February 22, 1927, Vladimir Shcherbachov, Professor at the Leningrad Conservatory, arranged a meeting between Prokofiev and some of the composition students from the Conservatory. Shostakovich played his recently composed Sonata No. 1 for Prokofiev, who recorded in his diary: "The second person to play is Shostakovich, a very young man who is not only a composer but also a pianist. He gives me the score and plays boldly, by heart. His sonata starts with lively two-part counterpoint in Bach-like style. In the second movement, which follows without a break, the harmonic style is quite mellow and there is a melody in the middle - nice enough, but diffuse and a bit too long. This Andante changes into a fast Finale which, compared to the rest, is disproportionately

[11] Wilson, *Shostakovich,* 57.

[12] Fay, *Shostakovich,* 36.

[13] Ibid., 37

short...Asafyev laughs at me, saying I like Shostakovich so much because the first movement is so clearly influenced my me."[14]

In March of 1927, Shostakovich received his first commission - an invitation from the Propaganda Division of the State Publishers' Music Section to compose a piece commemorating the tenth anniversary of the 1918 Revolution. This work would become his Symphony No. 2. Shostakovich was not thrilled about the work, as the State publisher's Music Section had chosen to set Alexander Bezimensky's poetry to music - verses Shostakovich deemed "quite disgusting".[15] Regardless of Shostakovich's personal opinions, Symphony No. 2 was premiered on November 5th by the Leningrad Philharmonic under Nikolai Malko and given critical praise for its "embodiment of the Revolution."[16]

During this time, Shostakovich also started work on his first opera, *The Nose*, after a short-story by Nikolai Gogol of the same name, and met the man who would become his closest friend for the rest of his life: Ivan Ivanovitch Sollertinsky. Sollertinksy was a Russian intellect; master of languages, literature, and cultural history; and, although not formally trained, a deep lover of music. Shostakovich and Sollertinsky bonded immediately, with each man challenging the other intellectually. Sollertinsky provided Shostakovich with a knowledge of history and literature after Shostakovich's own academic studies had been cut short by the Conservatory. Shostakovich, in turn, offered his critical ear to Sollertinsky's musical criticisms, as Sollertinsky's aesthetic positions increasingly reflected those of Shostakovich.

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[14] Ibid., 38

[15] Wilson, *Shostakovich,* 61.

[16] Fay, *Shostakovich,* 41.

Early in 1928, Shostakovich took a job as a temporary pianist for the Meyehold Theater. Vsevolod Meyerhold's innovative approach to staging and theater was an influence on Shostakovich, and had provided the impetus for Shostakovich to begin work on *The Nose.* While working at the Meyerhold Theater, Shostakovich completed Acts I and II of his opera. In May of 1928, he auditioned the first two acts of *The Nose* before the Artistic Council of the Leningrad Opera House. The Opera was scheduled for production at the Maliy Opera Theater for the 1928-1929 season at Moscow's Bolshoy Theater. Meyerhold was hired to produce the opera, but the project was repeatedly postponed. Shostakovich, eager to hear his new work, arranged a suite of music from *The Nose,* but when a concert version of the opera was scheduled at the 1929 All-Russian Musical Conference in Leningrad, Shostakovich protested the performance. "...*The Nose* loses all sense to me if it is viewed only from the musical standpoint. For its musical component is derived exclusively from the action...I repeat once more: the presentation of *The Nose* in concert performance will be its death.[17]" The suite was premiered by Malko in Moscow on November 25, 1928, and the full opera premiered on January 18, 1930.

Although Shostakovich was fond of *The Nose*, the opera was ruthlessly criticized as "formalist" and "decadent" after its premiere.[18] Despite Shostakovich's attempt to to halt production, *The Nose* received fourteen performances between January and June of 1930.

While Shostakovich was working on *The Nose*, he was also commissioned to write the music for a new libretto by Alexander Ivanovsky, titled *Dinamiada*, which would later be renamed *The Golden Age.* Shostakovich focused on two musical ideas in his music to *The*

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[17] Ibid., 55.

[18] Wilson, *Shostakovich,* 70.

Golden Age: music derived from Western bourgeois culture (foxtrots, tangos, salon dances) and music of the Soviet proletariat (marches, pioneer songs).[19]

After many setbacks, including several changes in personnel, *The Golden Age* was premiered on October 25, 1930. Shostakovich reported that the ballet was a success among the patrons, but he felt the production was a failure, as "in any musical spectacle, music plays the primary and not a servile role, and if this is not taken into account in the production of the spectacle, then the spectacle will not succeed."[20]

Despite his feelings about *The Golden Age*, and the generally negative critical reviews of the ballet, Shostakovich was commissioned by the same theater to write music for a new ballet, *The Bolt.* This new ballet was a complete failure, and was removed from the repertory only two weeks after its April 8, 1931 premiere. Shostakovich's music for *The Golden Age* and *The Bolt* far outlived the ballets. His suite of music from *The Golden Age* has gained a place in the international symphonic repertoire, and his music from *The Bolt*, which the composer arranged into six movements, went on to "supercede its predecessor after its premiere in January, 1933."[21]

After his many critical failures with film and theater music during this period, Shostakovich delivered a scathing manifesto, the *Declaration of a Composer's Duties*, in which he concluded that the abyssmal state of Soviet music was fully the blame of the theater, where "music is employed as a series of clichés - a 'jolly' dance for a hero, a 'foxtrot' to portray decadence, and 'brisk' music for the optimistic finale."[22]

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[19] Fay, *Shostakovich,* 60.

[20] Ibid., 61.

[21] Ibid. 62.

[22] Wilson, *Shostakovich*, 94.

Unbeknownst even to his closest friends, and in direct contrast with his proclamation, by late 1931 Shostakovich had already begun work on a new uncommissioned opera, *Lady MacBeth of the Mtsensk District.* Based on a 19th Century Russian tale about a "bored, sexually unfulfilled, and frustrated"[23] woman who commits adultery and murders her husband, this work brought both the highs of success and the crushing blows of rejection.

Premiered on January 22, 1934, *Lady MacBeth of the Mtsensk District* had high expectations to fulfill. In the light of the liquidation of the RAPM (Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians), in 1932, many believed that Shostakovich's opera symbolized a new era of Soviet opera. The critics were not disappointed. Hailed as "the apex of Shostakovich's creative work"[24] and "...a masterpiece, the best in the Russian operatic literature of the past half-century" by Samuíl Samosud, artistic director of the Leningrad Malïy Opera Theater, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* received over 120 performances in Moscow and Leningrad from 1934-1936.[25] It was also during the period of writing *Lady Macbeth* that Shostakovich met and married his first wife, Nina Varzar, and celebrated the birth of his first daughter in 1936.

The infamous and anonymous *Pravda* article, "Muddle Instead of Music", that criticized *Lady MacBeth* as well as threatened the life of Shostakovich, left the Soviet artistic community shocked. The article's primary objection to the opera centered around its lack of a "simple, accessible musical language" in favor of "quacks, hoots, pants, and gasps".[26] Shostakovich was accused of submitting to formalism, and indeed, the opera's success with audiences in the West

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[23] Fay, *Shostakovich,* 68.

[24] Ibid., 76.

[25] Ibid., 77.

[26] Ibid., 85.

was seen as proof of his rebellion against "Soviet Realism." The article was blunt with its threatening message: "This is a game...that may end very badly."[27] For Shostakovich, who was thrown immediately from the pinnacle of success, life would never be the same.

Despite the seriousness of the *Pravda* attack, several of Shostakovich's friends came to his aid. Maxim Gorky, the influential writer and chief conceptualizer of "Soviet Realism," appealed directly to Stalin against the *Pravda* article, saying "But what the *Pravda* article did was to authorize hundreds of talentless people, hacks of all kinds, to persecute Shostakovich. And that is what they are doing...You can't call *Pravda*'s attitude to him "solicitous," and he is deserving precisely of a solicitous attitude as the most talented of all contemporary Soviet musicians."[28]

Shostakovich's most therapeutic means of dealing with this crisis was to continue composing. He continued composing his Symphony No. 4 at this time, after starting early sketches for the piece in 1934. Completed in May of 1936, Symphony No. 4 exposes Shostakovich's fascination at this time with the works of Gustav Mahler. Although the *Fourth Symphony* is not his longest work, it was "his most ambitious and wayward, most prodigal of material, sandwiching a relatively brief 'scherzo' between outer movements, each lasting nearly half an hour."[29] With an orchestra consisting of twenty woodwinds, seventeen brass, and a large component of strings and percussion, the Symphony No. 4 was Shostakovich's largest and most monumental work to date.

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[27] Ibid. 85.

[28] Ibid. 91.

[29] Ibid. 94.

Although the *Fourth Symphony* was grand is scope and design, and had been favorably received by Otto Klemperer upon hearing a piano reduction, it was withdrawn by the composer the day of the premiere after representatives of the Union of Composers attended an open rehearsal of the piece. Several stories are given as to the exact reason the work was withdrawn, including lack of orchestra preparation, but it was clear that Shostakovich was apprehensive about the piece's reception by the Party.

During this time, the "purges" of the Party, in which prominent members of the intelligentsia and artistic crowd were known to disappear, were growing closer to Shostakovich. On June 18, 1937, Maxim Gorky was killed on what is believed to be Stalin's orders. Other high ranking friends of Shostakovich's, such as Vyacheslav Dombrovsky, an officer with Leningrad's Office of Internal Affairs, were also liquidated. Shostakovich's own family, including his brother-in-law, sister, and mother-in-law, were arrested, exiled, or sent to labor camps at this time.[30]

By April 1937, no new works of Shostakovich's had been offered to the public for two years. In May of 1937, Shostakovich began to work on his Symphony No. 5. It was premiered by the Leningrad Philharmonic under Evgeny Mravinksy in November of that year. The premiere was a great success, and audience members "demonstrated their enthusiasm for over half an hour"[31] upon hearing it. Reception to the symphony was so positive, and Shostakovich called to the stage so many times, that many feared it would be looked upon by The Party as a demonstration. In fact, Mikhail Chulaki, then director of the Leningrad Philharmonic, confirmed

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[30] Fay, *Shostakovich,* 98.

[31] Wilson, *Shostakovich,* 134.

that bureaucratic functionaries did "interpret the unrestrained uproar of the premiere as a challenge to the Party's aesthetic leadership."[32]

Critical reception to the *Fifth Symphony* was also positive. Although many were not entirely convinced of the authenticity of the "optimistic ending," almost everyone agreed that Shostakovich was heading in the direction of Soviet Realism. Within months of its premiere, the *Fifth Symphony* was being promoted worldwide as a beacon of Soviet contribution to the international symphonic repertoire.[33]

For almost a year after Symphony No. 5, Shostakovich composed nothing of historical significance. Instead, he focused on his teaching, family (his second child, Maxim, was born in May, 1938), and public service. It was not until September 1938, that Shostakovich announced his work on the Symphony No. 6. At first based on the poem "Vladimir Ilyich Lenin" by Mayakovsky, and including soloists, chorus, and orchestra; the final version of the *Sixth Symphony* was purely instrumental and reflected moods of "spring, joy, youth, and lyricism."[34] Premiered on November 5, 1939 by Mravinsky and the Leningrad Philharmonic, the *Sixth Symphony* failed to garner the response of the *Fifth Symphony* two years earlier.[35]

Shostakovich did not give up on his "Lenin" themed symphony at this juncture, though, and in August of 1939 - three months before the premiere of the *Sixth Symphony* - he was already outlining the content of his next symphony. "First movement - Lenin's youthful years, second - Lenin at the head of the October Storm, third - the death of Vladimir Ilyich and, fourth - without

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[32] Fay, Shostakovich*,* 100.

[33] Ibid.. 104.

[34] Ibid., 115.

[35] Wilson, *Shostakovich,* 130.

Lenin on the Leninist path."[36] Shostakovich continued with this plan for the *Seventh Symphony*, reporting that the first and second movements were completed in early 1940, and scheduling a performance of the symphony with the Leningrad Philharmonic during their 1940-1941 season. However, when Germany invaded Russia on June 22, 1941, the "Lenin" theme was abruptly dropped.[37]

After the declaration of war, Shostakovich immediately volunteered for the army. He was rejected for service twice, but managed to join the firefighting brigade at the Leningrad Conservatory where he was responsible for protecting the roof against incendiary attacks.[38] In July, he started on what would become his Symphony No. 7. By late August, Shostakovich had completed the first movement of the symphony, and he was being encouraged to evacuate Leningrad. He refused to evacuate, and the Nazis began shelling the city on September 4. By the end of September, he had completed the second and third movements, and had been ordered to evacuate to Moscow, then to Kubïshev. The fourth movement was not completed until December, and the premiere of the *Seventh Symphony* did not occur until March 5, 1942. The delay of the symphony can be attributed to the circumstances surrounding its creation - most notably that the composer's mother, sister, nephew, and his wife's family were left in Leningrad, and the composer's time was spent lobbying for their successful evacuation to Kubïshev.[39]

The reception of the *Seventh Symphony* is hard to overstate. The Symphony was exceedingly large, both in dimensions and in orchestration. The emotional impact of its

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[36] Fay, *Shostakovich,* 119.

[37] Ibid., 122.

[38] Wilson, *Shostakovich,* 148.

[39] Fay, *Shostakovich*, 123.

immediacy on a nation at war turned it into a "national - and even international - symbol of just cause and steely resolve in the war against fascism."[40] Performances in the West were secured, with premieres in London by Henry Wood with the London Symphony, and Arturo Toscanini with the NBC Orchestra. The impact of the *Seventh Symphony*, and its importance to the Soviet people can be seen in the performance of the piece on August 9, 1942 in the blockaded city of Leningrad. Extraordinary length were used to ensure a performance of the piece - brass players were called back from the front lines, and special rations were given to the musicians so they had the strength to perform. The concert was also broadcast on loudspeakers through the city, and to the German troops stalled outside of Leningrad in a play of psychological warfare.[41]

Although Shostakovich continued to compose immediately afterward, it was not until August of 1943 that he began work on his next large-scale piece, the Symphony No. 8. By this time, Shostakovich had accepted a teaching position at the Moscow Conservatory, and had relocated his extended family there. Written quickly, over the span of only two months, the *Eighth Symphony "*...is an optimistic, life-affirming work...in mood it is closest to my *Fifth Symphony*...I can sum up the philosophical conception of my new work in three words: life is beautiful. Everything that is dark and gloomy will rot away, vanish, and the beautiful will triumph."[42] Lacking the immediate appeal of the *Seventh Symphony*, Shostakovich's *Eighth Symphony*, premiered on November 4, 1943 in Moscow, was coldly received by the Party, who expected a more optimistic work celebrating the inevitable defeat of the Nazis.[43]

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[40] Ibid., 131.

[41] Ibid., 133.

[42] Ibid., 134.

[43] Wilson, *Shostakovich,* 174.

Almost immediately after finishing the *Eighth Symphony*, Shostakovich revealed plans for his *Ninth Symphony*, for "...chorus and solo singers as well as an orchestra..."[44] The inclusion of soloists and chorus in his *Ninth Symphony* invariably led to comparisons with Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony.* This comparison, combined with the pressure of completing his "war-trilogy" with a victory symphony commemorating the now-imminent defeat of the Nazis, led Shostakovich to cease work on this symphony until July 1945. The *Ninth Symphony* that appeared hereafter was an entirely new work - a five-movement symphony lasting under half an hour, lacking soloists, chorus, and any celebratory majesty. It was, in short, the antithesis of what was expected. "In character, the Ninth Symphony differs sharply from my preceding symphonies…If [they] bore a tragic-heroic character, then in the *Ninth* a transparent, pellucid, and bright mood predominates.[45]" The premiere of the *Ninth Symphony*, by Mravinsky and the Leningrad Philharmonic, took place on November 3, 1945. Although differing from common expectations, the *Ninth Symphony* was received well by critics and colleagues, with Aram Khachaturian predicting a "great future for the symphony."

During the war years, The Party's suppression of Soviet artists had naturally waned as more attention was focused on defeating Hitler. After victory over Hitler's Nazi forces, many in the artistic community felt that this increased laxness in regulating appropriate aesthetic forms and content would continue. This did not occur. As Stalin became more concerned with challenges to his power both from within the country and from the capitalist West, with whom

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[44] Fay, *Shostakovich,* 146.

[45] Ibid., 147.

the Soviet empire had worked to defeat Hitler, he increased his domineering control over the artistic community.

In 1946, Stalin appointed Andrey Zhdanov as his cultural watchdog within the Party. Later that year, the Central Committee of the Communist Party issued a decree, "On the Journals *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*," triggering a series of purges that would bear Zdanov's name. Just as in the *Pravda* article from 1936, this decree reprimanded the artistic community for its "vulgarity, lack of moral principle, and an apolitical attitude...the exponent of bourgeois-aristocratic aestheticism and decadence."[46] The implications for music could not be clearer.

For a while, Shostakovich remained in good standing. He was awarded his third Stalin Prize and the Order of Lenin as one of the Moscow Conservatory's most distinguished professors. In addition, he was invited to teach the composition class at the Leningrad Conservatory after his former teacher, Maximilian Steinberg, died in 1946.

In early 1948, Stalin attended a rehearsal at the Bolshoy Theater of Vano Muradeli's opera *The Great Friendship.* Stalin was not pleased with the opera. The ordeal might have ended there if the opera had not already been publicly unveiled in November of 1947 at the Bolshoy and numerous regional theaters.[47]

On January 10, 1948, the Central Committee of the Communist Party held a conference at the Kremlin on the state of Soviet art, and more that seventy composers, musicologists, and conductors were presented to Zhdanov. At the conference, Zhdanov compared *The Great Friendship* to *Lady Macbeth of the Mtensk District*, and forced the musicians to publicly name

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[46] Ibid., 150.

[47] Ibid., 154.

the formalists currently in their ranks. After three days of testimony, Zhdanov was convinced that Soviet music was in a state of deep decay.

Shostakovich was summoned before Zhdanov at this conference, and, as he had escaped the ordeal back in 1936, this time he was made to publicly humble himself before Zhdanov, acknowledging the formalist tendencies in his music. At the conclusion of the conference, the Central Committee recommended that the Party take "all necessary measures to liquidate the defects and promote the development of a realistic direction in Soviet music.[48]" Consequently, a list of banned works, including Shostakovich's *Sixth, Eighth,* and *Ninth Symphonies*, was published in February 1948. Although the *Fifth* and *Seventh Symphonies* were not on the banned-works list, most performers and concert managers removed all of Shostakovich's music from their repertoire. Shostakovich was also relieved from his teaching duties at the Moscow and Leningrad Conservatories. For the second time in his life, Shostakovich's fortunes reversed seemingly overnight.

The depth of Shostakovich's grief and depression at this point in his life can only be imagined. Following the 1948 Zdanov Decree, Shostakovich did not engage in writing another symphony for five years. During this time, he wrote his *24 Preludes and Fugues* for piano and the unpublished *From Jewish Folk Poetry.* In 1949, Shostakovich was hand-picked by Stalin to represent the Soviet Union as a member of the official delegation to the Cultural and Scientific Congress for World Peace in New York. After initially refusing to join the delegation on the basis that he "would be pestered there with questions about the recent resolutions..was sick....and

[48] Wilson, *Shostakovich, 200.*

that the music of Prokofiev, Myaskovsky, Khachaturyan, and myself was not being performed,"[49] Shostakovich was shocked to receive notice that the banned list of musical works by formalist composers had been rescinded by Stalin. On March 25, Shostakovich made his first journey to the United States.

Shostakovich's stay in America was an exercise in "cold-war hyperbole and controversy."[50] Igor Stravinsky, when asked to sign his name to a telegram welcoming Shostakovich to the U.S., responded, "Regret not to be able to join welcomers of Soviet artists coming this country. But all my ethic and esthetic convictions oppose such gesture."[51] Although he dutifully "toed the party line," condemning most Western music and glorying the rise of the Soviet music culture, there is no doubt that Shostakovich's speeches and remarks were carefully written and conceived by the Party members in charge of the Waldorf-Astoria conference. Shostakovich's own political views would remain a mystery throughout his life - even after the death of Stalin, the composer was remarkably stubborn at clarifying he genuine feelings on politics.

Upon returning to the Soviet Union, Shostakovich began writing his response to the Zhdanov Decree. This took the form of an Oratorio, *Song of the Forests*, which extolled the virtues laid out in the Zdahnov Decree - tuneful, folk-inspired, and "infused with the genuine zeal of Soviet construction, the zeal of Soviet Patriotism."[52] Although clearly a piece inferior to his symphonies, *Song of the Forests* was successful in rehabilitating Shostakovich. He was

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[49] Fay, *Shostakovich,* 172.

[50] Ibid., 172.

[51] Wilson, *Shostakovich*, 239.

[52] Fay, *Shostakovich*, 175.

awarded the Stalin Prize in 1950, along with 100,000 rubles and a country house outside of Moscow.[53]

On March 5, 1953, Joseph Stalin died. Shostakovich produced the official sentiments of deep grief regarding Stalin's death, but remained pessimistic about the future of the country, stating "The times are new, but the informers are old." However, only a few months later, Shostakovich would start on his next work, the *Symphony No. 10.* He worked steadily through the summer, and completed the work on October 25, 1953. The *Tenth Symphony* marks the first use of Shostakovich's monogram, the notes D-Eb-C-B, after the letters D-S-C-H, in a composition. He also used the name of a young pianist, his muse, Elmira Nazirova, to develop a theme comprised of the notes E-A-E-D-A.[54]

The premiere of the *Tenth Symphony* was given by Mravisnky and the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra, and was quickly embroiled in the renewed attempt to once again define the Soviet aesthetic policy. Although the opinion among artists and musicians that the stifling, ideologically driven criteria was detrimental to Soviet art was growing popular - an article condoning the "fundamental right to creative freedom and bold experimentation" of the Soviet artist had appeared recently in *Pravda* - the climate was not yet warm enough to reward Shostakovich's work on the *Tenth Symphony* with a Stalin Prize. However, no repressive measures were taken against Shostakovich, and the *Tenth Symphony* was widely performed within the Soviet Union.[55]

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[53] Wilson, *Shostakovich*, 242.

[54] Ibid., 185-187.

[55] Wilson, *Shostakovich.* 264.

On February 25, 1956, Nikita Khrushchev delivered a speech to a closed session of the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party in which he denounced Stalin and the "cult of personality" surrounding him. This speech marked a turning point in history, and also signaled the slow process of releasing political prisoner and rehabilitating those who had been killed.

In late 1956, after the composer's fiftieth birthday, he began work on the *Eleventh Symphony*, a work commemorating the Revolution of 1905. Work on the symphony was slow, as the composer also completed his *Second Piano Concerto* during this time and participated in the Second All-Union Congress of Composers. When he completed the symphony in August 1957, it was decided that the premiere should be given to the USSR State Symphony Orchestra under Natan Rakhlin instead of Mravinksy because of the upcoming fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution. The *Eleventh Symphony*, with its Revolutionary program and inclusion of Russian songs, was a massive critical success and was awarded a Lenin Prize in 1958.[56]

By the summer of 1959, Shostakovich had publicized his intent to write a major work dedicated to the memory of Vladimir Lenin. The *Twelfth Symphony*, as it would become, was not completed for another two years, however. Several factors contributed to the delay in completing the *Twelfth Symphony*. During this time Shostakovich completed two other major works, his *Cello Concerto*, premiered by Mstislav Rostropovich and the Leningrad Philharmonic under Mravinksy, and his autobiographical *String Quartet No. 8*, premiered by the Beethoven Quartet on October 2, 1960. In addition, an emotional breakdown spurred by Shostakovich's

[56] Fay, *Shostakovich*, 201.

puzzling and inconsistent application to officially join the Communist Party, coupled with myriad health problems slowed his work on the Lenin-inspired symphony.[57]

On August 12, 1961, Shostakovich announced that he had completed his *Twelfth Symphony: The Year 1917*. The symphony was scheduled for rehearsals on September 25 and premiered on October 1, 1961 by the Leningrad Philharmonic conducted by Mravinsky. The symphony, which was highly anticipated following Shostakovich's official membership in the Communist Party, was zealously heralded by the Party as a "worthy successor to the *Eleventh Symphony,"* and a "folk-hero epic."[58] However, the artistic community and the general public felt that the music did not offer any sub-text and was inferior to Shostakovich's earlier works because of its perceived shallowness. Despite the praise of the Party, however, the symphony was not awarded a Lenin Prize.[59]

Only two months after the premiere of the *Twelfth Symphony*, Shostakovich's *Fourth Symphony* was finally premiered by the Moscow Philharmonic under Kirill Kondrashin on December 30, 1961. The *Fourth Symphony* was a critical and popular success, considered by many, including Shostakovich, to be better than his more recent works.[60]

In September of 1961, the poem "Babi Yar," a condemnation of Russian anti-semitism by Yevgeniy Yevtushenko, had been published in *Literaturnaya gazeta.* The poem resonated deeply with Shostakovich, mirroring his own feelings about anti-semitism. He soon called the young poet to ask permission to set his poetry to music. Originally intended to be a symphonic poem

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[57] Ibid., 219.

[58] Ibid., 224.

[59] Wilson, *Shostakovich,* 345.

[60] Fay, *Shostakovich,* 226.

for bass, bass chorus, and orchestra, this music became, with the inclusion of another collection of poems by Yevtushenko, the *Thirteenth Symphony.*[61]

By the time Shostakovich set "Babi Yar" to music, Yevtushenko was already under intense criticism for his poem. Accused of exalting the suffering of the Jewish people over the Russians and Ukrainians in World War II, "Babi Yar" coincided with a renewed interest by Krushchev to realign artistic aesthetics with the Party ideology. In fact, due to the nature of the material within the poem, and the fear of more "decrees" by the party, Shostakovich lost both his preferred bass soloist, Boris Gmïrya, and his long-time collaborator, Mravinsky. Consequently, the premiere of the *Thirteenth Symphony* was given to Kondrashin and the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra.[62]

Despite the circumstance surrounding the performance, the *Thirteenth Symphony* was premiered on December 18, 1962. However, the premiere was virtually ignored by the press, given the political leanings associated with the work. After the premiere, Shostakovich and Yevtushenko were given an ultimatum: change the poetry to accurately reflect the suffering of Jews, Russians, and Ukrainians equally or the symphony would be banned. The collaborators acquiesced, and new verses were added to reflect these demands.[63]

Despite the difficulties with which the *Thirteenth Symphony* was written and premiered, Shostakovich was able to gain some satisfaction during this time from seeing his once-denounced opera, *Lady MacBeth of the Mtsensk District* revived. After an official screening of

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[61] Ibid., 228.

[62] Wilson, Shostakovich*,* 355.

[63] Ibid., 362.

the opera by the Central Committee, *Lady MacBeth* "passed muster and would be staged."[64] Excluding some "unofficial" premieres and open rehearsals in December, 1962, the newly-revised *Lady MacBeth of Mtsensk District* was premiered on January 8, 1963 by the Stanislav-Nemirovich-Danchenko Theater. Shostakovich was deeply involved in this production, as he felt much was at stake. In the wake of the premiere, *Pravda* issued an article stating that "...the opera had been unfairly discredited during the year of the personality cult and forgotten." Shostakovich would spend the remaineder of 1963 traveling and supervising productions of *Lady MacBeth* all over Europe.[65]

It would be seven years before Shostakovich attempted another symphony. He turned his work towards chamber music and concertos. During the intermittent years between the *Thirteenth* and *Fourteenth Symphonies*, Shostakovich would complete his *Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh,* and *Twelfth Quartets*, as well as the *Second Cello Concerto, Second Violin Concerto,* the *Violin Sonata*, and the *Seven Verses of A. Blok* for vocalist and mixed ensemble. These years were also troubling to his health, as the composer continued to suffer the chronic weakening of his right hand due to poliomyelitis.[66]

In January of 1969, while again in the hospital for various illnesses, Shostakovich began work on an oratorio based on the texts of Federico Garcia Lorca, Guillaume Apollinaire, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Wilhelm Küchelbecker that was scored for soprano, bass, and orchestra. The

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[64] Fay, *Shostakovich,* 236.

[65] Ibid., 237.

[66] Ibid., 255-260.

next month, while completing the piano score to the piece, Shostakovich reflected that the designation "oratorio" was not correct and in fact he had written his *Fourteenth Symphony*.[67]

Inspired by Musorgsky's *Songs of Dances and Death and* Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*, composers and works that Shostakovich greatly admired, the *Fourteenth Symphony* presented a stark view of death and "...denial of spiritual redemption" following it.[68] Although Shostakovich denied it in prepared remarks given before an open rehearsal of the piece, it is impossible to set aside the composer's own health problems surrounding the composition of the symphony, and in fact, Shostakovich was fearful he would die before hearing the premiere.

The official premiere of the *Fourteenth Symphony* took place at the Leningrad Capella Theater on September 29, 1969 by the Moscow Chamber Orchestra. News of the piece, and of the death of Party member Pavel Apostolov, former persecutor of Shostakovich's work, at the "closed" concert a few months earlier, had assured that the premiere was attended by not only the high-music circles of Leningrad but also by many prominent cultural figures. The *Fourteenth Symphony* was received well and given its "western" premiere on London on June 14, 1970 by the English Chamber Orchestra with Benjamin Britten conducting.[69]

Following the success of the *Fourteenth Symphony,* Shostakovich flew to Kurgan, Siberia to undergo experimental treatment for poliomyelitis. His doctor, Gavriil Ilizarov, had earlier cured the Russian Olympic high jumper Valeriy Brumel of a serious compound fracture, and Shostakovich was optimistic that Ilizarov would be able to cure his ailments. Shostakovich would spend much of 1970 and 1971 in Kurgan, only returning to Moscow to accept awards or

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[67] Wilson, *Shostakovich,* 411.

[68] Fay, *Shostakovich,* 263.

[69] Ibid., 263.

attend premieres of his music. In June 1971, while at Kurgan, Shostakovich began work on the *Fifteenth Symphony,* his last. The composer remarked to his friend and colleague, Issac Glikman that the *Fifteenth Symphony* was "turning out lacking in ideological content, something along the lines of my *Ninth."*[70] For this last symphony, Shostakovich returned to tradition, composing a four-movement work for purely instrumental forces. Completed on July 29, 1971, the *Fifteenth Symphony* was premiered by Shostakovich's son, Maxim Shostakovich, with the Large Symphony Orchestra of All-Union Radio and TV in Moscow on January 8, 1972.

Earlier, the *Fifteenth Symphony* had been given the official seal of approval by the Union of Composers. With the intriguing mystery behind the musical quotations found in the score, and the generally ambivalent music, critics rallied behind the symphony as "one of the most profound of Shostakovich's works. It is full of optimism, the affirmation of life, and belief in man's inexhaustible strength.[71]

The remaining years of Shostakovich's life were spent tending to his ailing health. He continued to maintain a high public profile, serving as chairman of the Soviet-Austrian Society and chairman of various Soviet music societies aimed at celebrating the lives of famous composers of the past. He also continued to compose, finishing the *Fourteenth* and *Fifteenth String Quartets,* and attending performances of his music, such as the premiere of *Katerina Izmailov* in Berlin. He continued treatment for his hand, but was diagnosed with lung cancer in 1972. The cancer metastasized to his liver by 1975, and Shostakovich died on August 9th, 1975.

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[70] Ibid., 270.

[71] Ibid., 272.

CHAPTER TWO

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE XYLOPHONE

2.1 Introduction

An examination of the role Dmitri Shostakovich assigned the xylophone in his symphonic output must necessarily begin with the examination of the xylophone as an orchestral instrument. Although not used in an orchestral setting until Camille Saint-Saëns's 1874 tone-poem *Danse Macabre*, the xylophone is one of the oldest instruments in history, with primitive forms of the instrument dating back to antiquity.

2.2 From Antiquity

The instrument appears to have developed similarly in both Southeast Asia and Africa. The earliest known form of the instrument, the leg xylophone, consisted of two or three slabs of wood that rested on the player's legs as he sat on the ground. A pit was dug underneath the player's legs to form a resonating chamber, and the wooden slabs were struck with wooden sticks or clubs.[72] The first innovation in construction came when the keys were loosely laid across two parallel logs, known as the log xylophone.[73] Further innovations were developed when the bars were fastened to a table (table xylophone), or suspended from the player's neck and held away from the body (bail xylophone).[74]

Several direct descendants of these primitive xylophones have been found across the globe. In 1949, ethnologist George Condominas discovered a lithophone of eleven keys of

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[72] Blades, James. *Percussion Instruments and their History* (Oxford, Oxford University Press), 71.

[73] Sachs, Curt. *The History of Musical Instruments* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1940), 53.

[74] Ibid., 54.

schistic rock in Vietnam. This lithophone is considered to be the oldest melodic instrument in existence.[75] In addition, lithophones have been found in Greece dating back to 2300 B.C.[76]

In Indonesia, the instrument continued to develop with the construction of the *gembang*, a wooden-key instrument in which the bars are suspended over a trough-like resonator, and the *saron* and *gender,* two bronze-key xylophone-like instruments that are used in the traditional Javanese and Balinese *gamelan* ensembles. The *gender* is of particular importance due to the inclusion of tuned bamboo resonators underneath each key, which may be the first xylophone-like instrument to incorporate tuned resonators for each bar.[77]

The development of the Indonesian xylophone instruments is an important part of the overall history of bar percussion, particularly in reference to the influence on early African xylophones and marimbas. Curt Sachs explains: "many implements, tools, weapons, and instruments in a well-defined area of African Bantu districts are so closely connected with the corresponding objects of southeastern Asia that an early communication across the Indian ocean through the Zambezi valley can be assumed."[78]

Although the xylophone has its origins in Asia and Africa, European musicians developed it further. Two of the earliest known xylophone instruments in Europe are the *ranat,* a trough-resonator instrument descended from Indonesia, and the *strohfiedel,* which was a simple collection of bars laid on any convenient surface.[79] The lineage of the *strohfiedel* is unknown,

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[75] Chenowith, Vida. *The Marimbas of Guatemala* (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1964), 53.

[76] Kite, Rebecca. *Keiko Abe: A Virtuosic Life* (Leesburg, Virginia: GP Percussion, 2007), 127.

[77] Chenowith, *The Marimbas of Guatemala*, 53.

[78] Sachs, *History of Music Instruments,* 238.

[79] Kite, *Keiko Abe,* 128.

but was perhaps descended from the Polish *Jerova I Salame* and reflects a uniquely European version of the xylophone.[80] The *strohfiedel* is mentioned as early as 1511 by Arnold Schlick in his *Spiegal del orgelmacher und organistan* and again in Martin Agricola's *Musica instrumentalis deudsch (*1528) and Michael Praetorius' *Syntagma musicum* (1618).[81] The *strohfiedel* was a simple instrument, consisting of wooden bars laid over four rows of straw. The instrument was played with wooden spoon-shaped hammers, and was popular with the wandering musicians of Eastern Europe.[82]

Despite being present in Europe from the sixteenth century, the xylophone was not used in orchestral music until the mid-nineteenth century. The simplicity of the instrument, along with its associations with peasant music and wandering musicians, kept the *strohfiedel* from any serious musical ambition. The eventual inclusion of the xylophone into the Western Art Tradition can almost certainly be traced back to the technical and musical contributions of the *strohfiedel* virtuoso Michal Jozef Guzikow.[83]

Born into a poor Jewish family in 1806, Michal Jozef Guzikow was originally trained on flute and performed as a street musician with this father. In 1831, after getting married and fathering two children, he contracted a lung disease that left him unable to continue playing the flute. In desperation, he turned to the *Jerova i Salamo,* an instrument on which he had little experience. Attempting to illicit the same level of musical sophistication from the xylophone as

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[80] Beckford, John. "Michal Jozef Guzikow: Nineteenth Century Xylophonist, Part II", *Percussive Notes* 33, no. 4 (1995): 73.

[81] Eyler, David P. "Early Development of the Xylophone in Western Music," Percussive Notes 41 no. 6 (2003): 42.

[82] Beckford, "Michal Guzikow II," 73.

[83] Ibid., 73.

he had from the flute, Guzikow immediately improved on the design of the instrument and the tone-bars. Among other improvements, Guzikow extended the range of the instrument from fifteen to twenty-eight bars, tapered the ends of the bars to increase pitch clarity, and rearranged the order of the bars to facilitate a more ergonomic organization.[84] Working on the frame of the instrument to achieve greater resonance, Guzikow wrapped five thin pieces of wood with straw to form the base upon which the bars rested. The wood-straw bundles were placed equidistant from each other on a table, perpendicular to the player. The tone-bars were then gently rested on the bundles, and the space between the bars and the table acted as a resonating chamber for the bars.[85] Guzikov's improvement to the *Jeroma i Salomo,* and his unrivaled performance abilities on the instrument did not go unnoticed. News of the xylophone virtuoso spread to Moscow, and Guzikow soon embarked on a three-year tour of Russia and Europe.

From 1834 to 1837, Guzikow gave concert performances on his instrument in Kiev, Moscow, and Odessa, and in 1835 in Warsaw, Berlin, and Paris. His concerts were enthusiastically received by the attendees.. Guzikow's success was demonstrated by prestigious private performances for royalty such as Austrian Emperor Franz II, and support from some of the wealthiest patrons of the arts, including Prince von Metternich in Vienna and Count Waranzow in Odessa.[86]

In addition to royalty and wealthy patrons, Guzikow attracted the attention of the elite Western Art Tradition composers. Felix Mendelssohn was particularly taken with Guzikow's

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[84] Ibid., 73.

[85] Ibid., 74.

[86] Beckford, John. "Michal Jozef Guzikow: Nineteenth Century Xylophonist, Part I," Percussive Notes 33 no. 3 (1995): 75.

performance, and in 1836 Felix he wrote to his sister Fanny, "I have heard the phenomenon, and without being ecstatic, like most people, must own that the skill of the man beats everything that I could have imagined, for with his wooden sticks resting on straw, his hammers also being of wood, he produces all that is possible with the most perfect instrument. It is a complete riddle to me how the thin sound the thing gives, something like Papageno's flute, can be produced with such materials."[87]

Guzikow's contributions to the xylophone, both in construction and virtuosity, greatly increased the popularity of the instrument as a regular feature in public entertainment. By this time, the instrument was known throughout Europe and was given several different names: *xylosistron, xyloharmonicon,* and the *tryphone.* The *tryphone,* credited to the French xylophonist Charles de Try, is believed to be one of the earliest examples of the xylophone with key placement similar to that of a piano.[88]

2.3 In the Western Art Tradition

Soon after de Try's improvements on the instrument, the xylophone was given a part in the symphony orchestra. Although Camille Saint-Saëns *Danse Macabre* has been considered the first use of the xylophone in an orchestral work, new research has uncovered a piece from 1845 by the Danish composer Hans Christian Lumbye called *Champagne Gallop.*[89] However, with the relative obscurity of this piece until recently, it is clear that Saint-Saëns' use of the xylophone in *Danse Macabre* facilitated the expansion of the instrument into the Western Art Tradition. Traditionally, percussion instruments have been used in Western Music for the purposes of

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[87] Blades, *Percussion Instruments,* 307.

[88] Ibid., 307.

[89] Eyler, "Western Xylophone," 43.

formal demarcation, apotheosis, coloristic or timbral effect, or extra-musical connotations (janissary or military bands). These uses remained in effect with the addition of the xylophone. Although the inclusion of the xylophone into the music of the Western Art Tradition was revolutionary to the development of the instrument, the composers who used the xylophone kept it confined within these established parameters.

In Camille Saint-Saëns *Danse Macabre*, the xylophone is used to mimic the sound of rattling bones. Saint-Saëns employs both a coloristic effect by using the xylophone to add character to the woodwind musical line as well as an extra-musical effect with the suggestion of rattling bones. Although certainly innovative in its instrumentation, *Danse Macabre* does little to advance the concept of the xylophone as an expressive instrument, instead using the instrument to convey the extra-musical idea of rattling bones and dancing skeletons. Saint-Saëns used this same xylophone part in his 1886 suite, *Carnival of the Animals* to conjure the image of fossils.

The xylophone made its symphony debut with Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 6. Mahler's use of the percussion section to evoke extra-musical scenes and his expansion of the percussion section as an equal sub-section within the symphony orchestra is well-established. His *Sixth Symphony* is particularly revolutionary for percussion, with the inclusion of almglocken, the "Mahler Box" and hammer, and the use of the xylophone.

Mahler only uses the xylophone in the first two movements of his *Sixth Symphony*, and, much like Saint-Saëns, primarily uses the instrument as a timbral effect to add articulation and color to a musical line played by another group of instruments. However, in the second movement, Mahler does include a short, two-measure "solo" in which the xylophone has the lead line while accompanied by the strings. Although innovative in instrumentation, Mahler does not

use the xylophone as an expressive instrument, but rather as a coloristic effect. Of particular note is Mahler's use of the xylophone to double contrasting sub-groups of instruments. He uses the xylophone to color both the winds and the strings in different sections. Mahler never again used the xylophone in an orchestral work, but his use of the instrument in the *Sixth Symphony* paved the way for the xylophone to be included in the percussion section of the symphony orchestra. Shostakovich, heavily influenced by Mahler, no doubt took a large cue from Mahler's inclusion of the xylophone in this work.

In the early twentieth-century, Igor Stravinsky used the xylophone in his ballets *The Firebird* and *Petrushka. The Firebird* in particular is worth noting, as Stravinsky assigns the dancing motif of the firebird to the xylophone. This use of the instrument, while more significant than Saint-Saëns and Mahler, nevertheless uses the xylophone to represent a literal extra-musical event, and does little to add emotional depth to the instrument.

While all of these examples highlight an increased use of the xylophone, the instrument maintained the typical role of percussion instruments in that they were used as color, extra-musical, or reinforcement instruments rather than equal players in the unfolding of a symphonic story.

CHAPTER THREE

THE XYLOPHONE IN THE SYMPHONIES OF DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

3.1 Introduction

Shostakovich's use of percussion in his symphonic works can be considered traditional in many respects, as he continues use of the instruments in many of their most effective roles — as important formal demarcation, apotheosis, and timbral devices. However, from his earliest works, one can observe a maverick attitude with the use of percussion in general, and a desire to see the instruments pushed beyond their traditionally-associated roles.

The most salient example of this use of percussion in Shostakovich's early works comes from his opera, *The Nose.* In *The Nose*, Shostakovich writes an extended solo for percussion ensemble in the form of an *Intermezzo*. Here, the composer is using the instruments in their traditional roles, but the inclusion of an all-percussion work in the middle of the opera suggests a respect for the percussion instruments as valued tools of musical expression. The *Intermezzo* from *The Nose* remains the first stand-alone percussion music in the Western Art Tradition, predating Varese's *Ionisation* by a full two years.

Other examples of Shostakovich's innovative use of percussion include the use of the solo timpani in his *Symphony No. 1* as a bridge between the third and fourth movements, and a foreshadowing of a future theme.

3.2 Symphonies No. 3 and 4

Shostakovich's first use of the xylophone in a symphony occurs in his Symphony No. 3. In the Third and Fourth Symphonies, we see a traditional use of the xylophone as a coloristic effect, doubling both the woodwinds and string sections to produce a variety of textures. In addition, Shostakovich uses the xylophone to reinforce important structural elements such as the first theme in Symphony No. 4, and incorporates tremolo, double stops, and glissando to further the expressive capabilities of the instrument.

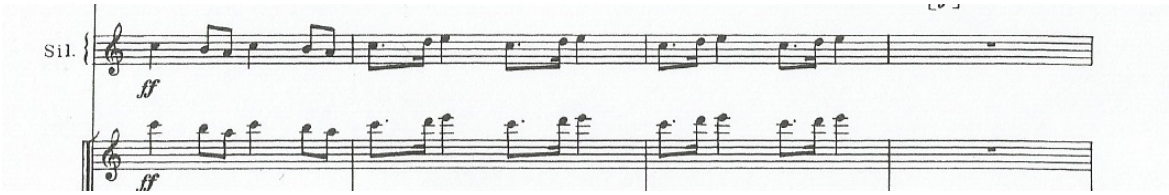

Fig. 3.1 - Symphony No. 3, mvt. 1, mms. 145-148, doubling of the xylophone with violins

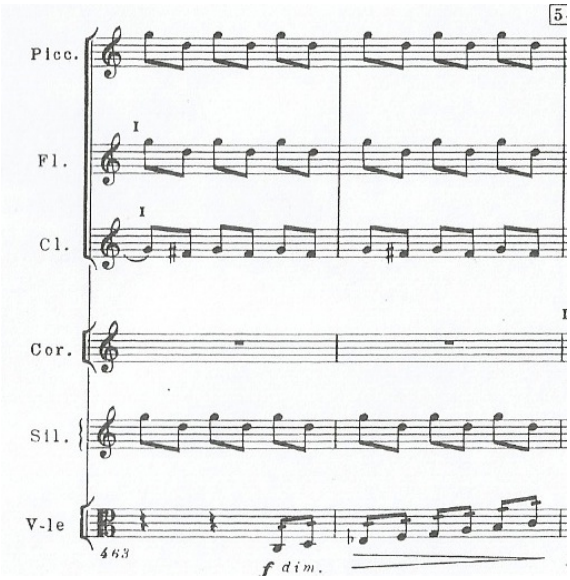

Fig. 3.2 - Symphony No. 3, mvt. 1, mms. 463-464, doubling of the xylophone with the winds

Fig. 3.3 - Symphony No. 4, mvt. 1, mms. 1-5, tremolo in xylophone

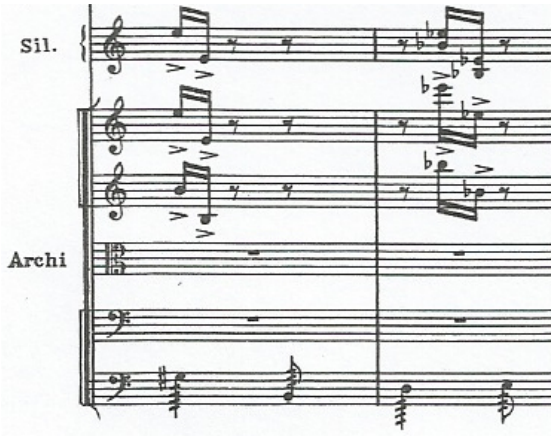

Fig. 3.4 - Symphony No. 4, mvt. 1, mms. 466-467, double-stops in xylophone

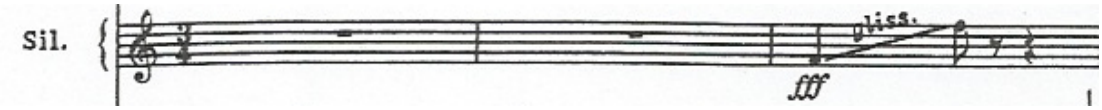

Fig. 3.5 - Symphony No 4, mvt. 1, mms. 770-772, glissando in xylophone

3.3 Symphony No. 5

It is in the Symphony No. 5 that Shostakovich makes his first clear use of the xylophone as an expressive, personal voice. In order to demonstrate this use, however, a brief examination of two of the motifs used in this symphony, and indeed, in much of Shostakovich's successive work, must be examined. First, the use of a one-note motif, called the "servant" motif, which is often a single note repeated in various rhythms, and second, the use of a two-note motif, most often demonstrated by an exaggerated tonic / dominant relationship, used by Shostakovich in both his Symphony No. 4 and in *Lady MacBeth of the Mtensk District* to "stand for crudity and

brutality - especially that of the police, in which context Stalin supposedly recognized himself."[90] Taken together, these two motives represent the master (two-notes) and servant (one note). With this information, it is possible to examine Shostakovich's use of the xylophone in Symphony No. 5 as a vehicle of personal expression.

After the solemn introduction in the opening movement, these two motives begin to appear in the winds (repetition of a single note in quarter notes), the brass (repeated eighth-notes alternating between two pitches), and the stings (trepak rhythm repeated on a single note), leading to a frenzy which is resolved with the entrance of the the percussion section, sans xylophone, in an overblown, satirical march - symbolic of Stalin. After sixteen measures of this pompous, grotesque march theme, the main theme of the first movement reappears in rhythmic elongation in the tuba, trombone, and bassoon, and low strings while the xylophone and high strings take over the servant motive.

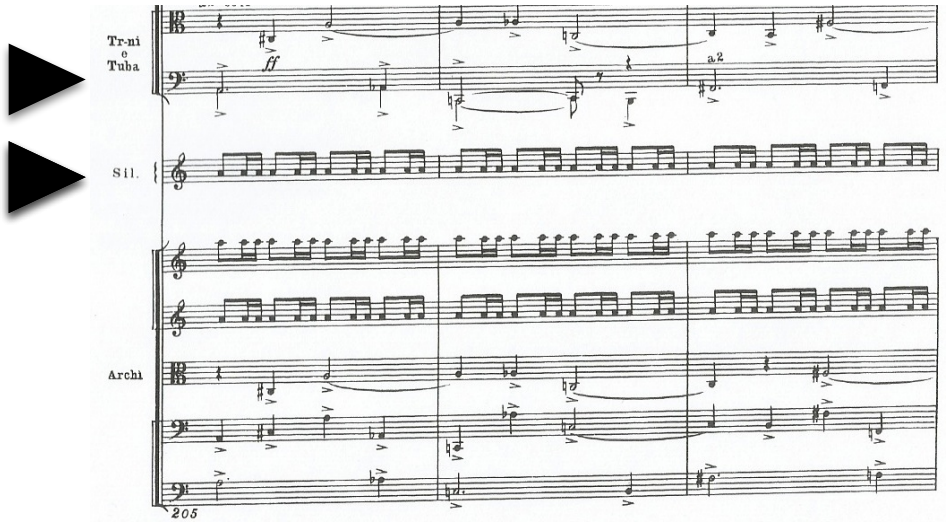

Fig. 3.6 - Symphony No. 5, mvt. 1, mms. 205-207, xylophone playing servant motive under rhythmically elongated main theme

[90] MacDonald, Ian. The New Shostakovich (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990), 129.

This is revealing of Shostakovich's changing attitude toward the xylophone. In one gesture, he suggests multiple meanings. Viewed in one light, Shostakovich is combining the trepak rhythm, militaristic in nature, and the xylophone, an instrument heavily associated with jazz, ragtime, and the Bourgeois West. In the same passage, Shostakovich combines the servant motive, played on the xylophone, and the emotionally-revealing opening theme to the Symphony, creating a link that suggests the nature of his sorrow is for the people of Russia, servants to Stalin. In addition, the absence of xylophone in the march, where its sardonic and grotesque character seems most appropriate, reinforces the idea that the xylophone is not only a color or characteristic implement to Shostakovich, but an instrument that represents an idea close to the composer's heart.

The xylophone continues its uncharacteristic use throughout the rest of the Symphony No. 5. Indeed, this is the first symphony in which Shostakovich uses the xylophone in every movement. It is a testament not only to his fondness for the instrument but also his general attitude towards percussion. His inclusion of the xylophone in the majority of his symphonies helped propel the instrument from an infrequently used novelty to the primary melodic percussion instrument in the modern symphony orchestra.

In the second movement of the Symphony No. 5, Shostakovich uses the xylophone briefly in a figure that can be closely related to one of his signature motives, the "betrayal" motive, as formulated by Ian MacDonald. This short, three-note figure, first used in Lady MacBeth of Mtensk, is one of Shostakovich's "most complex codes"[91] and can be found an almost all of his works, most notably the Symphony No. 10. It can be purely rhythmic or

[91] Ibid., 115.

melodic, with the melodic form taking a descending profile. Here, in Symphony No. 5, the composer gives this motive to the xylophone.

Fig. 3.7 - Symphony No. 5, mvt. 2, mms. 204-206, betrayal motive in xylophone

In the third movement, the Largo, the xylophone is the lone percussion instrument used, except for the timpani. This movement is described by Ian MacDonald as "more nakedly direct than anything the composer had written before...no disguises, no ironies."[92] In what is his most personal, honest, and emotional moment of the Symphony, it is significant that Shostakovich used the xylophone. However, despite the overwhelming mood of sadness, Shostakovich keeps his intellect intact, employing the xylophone in motivic connections with previous movements.

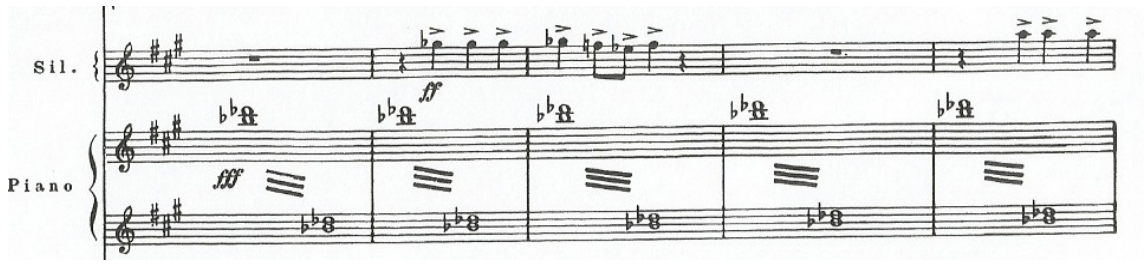

Fig. 3.8 - Symphony No. 5, mvt. 3, mms. 120-124, multiple motives in xylophone

Here, it is possible to see two themes in this small passage: the one-note motive, associated with the servant, and the betrayal theme, seen rhythmically. The juxtaposition of these two motives leaves little to question — Shostakovich views himself as servant under Stalin, betrayed by the events surrounding Lady MacBeth of Mtsensk and perhaps by the people who distanced themselves from him in the aftermath. The use of the xylophone, in conjunction with other

[92] Ibid., 130.

instruments, suggests the xylophone as a personal voice to the composer, and one that he is using to express complex emotions not previously associated with the instrument.

At the apex of this movement, found only a few bars later, Shostakovich again uses the xylophone, this time in a rising, three-note figure that is the inversion of the betrayal motive. Perhaps this is Shostakovich expressing his resilience against those who betrayed him, or it is a symbol of hope-to-come. Although the particular meaning of this passage is difficult to define, it is again significant for the evolution of the xylophone that Shostakovich is employing this percussion instrument during his most emotionally vulnerable moments.

Shostakovich uses the xylophone in the last movement in an extended, intense form of the one-note servant motive.

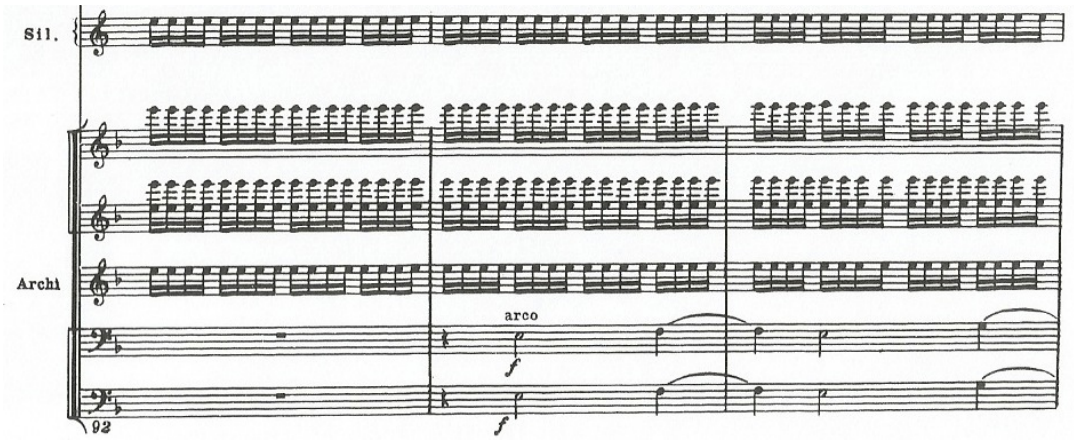

Fig. 3.9 - Symphony No. 5, mvt. 4, mms. 92-94, servant motive

However, the composer does not use the xylophone during the controversial ending to the symphony. Many have claimed that this ending represents "forced rejoicing," or that Shostakovich was providing a hollow major-key ending to an overwhelmingly pessimistic work. The fact that the xylophone is not used during this finale, despite the use of the full percussion

section and orchestra at *fortissi-issi-iss-imo* dynamic levels, points again to the idea of the xylophone as an instrument in which Shostakovich confides his true feelings.

3.4 Symphony No. 6

Shostakovich's Symphony No. 6 remains one of the composer's most enigmatic works. The complete symphony lasts only twenty-five minutes, with the opening *Largo* constituting fifteen minutes. No other work of Shostakovich's contains such diametrically-opposed moods between the movements of the symphony. Written at a time that Shostakovich himself described as "difficult and mean, unbelievably mean and hard..."[93], The Sixth Symphony seems to mirror the time in which it was written, offering a colorless, stark Largo followed by a hyperactive, yet empty second and third movements.

The use of the xylophone in this work is sparse. The same overarching motives from Symphony No. 5 are present, notably the servant and master motives previously discussed. One salient example of the servant motive is found in the second movement. This moment stands out of the busy texture of wind and string notes almost as a respite, as if Shostakovich is reminding his listeners that the servant still exists in this busy and forced music.

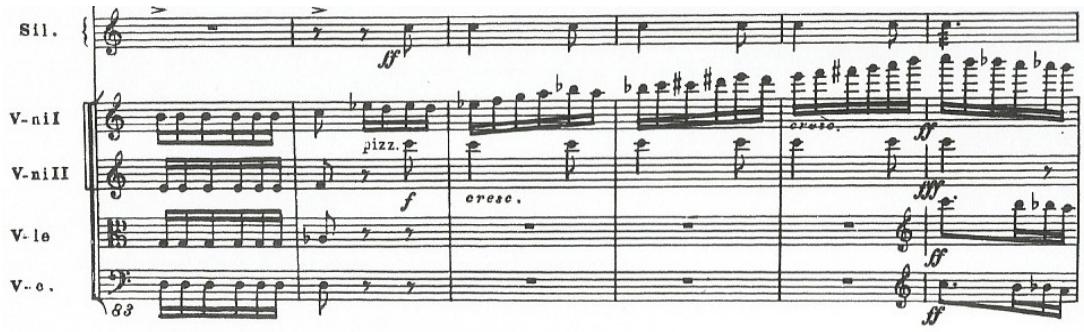

Fig. 3.10 - Symphony No. 6, mvt. 2, mms. 83-88, servant motive in xylophone

[93] Ibid., 143.

Further in the second movement, there is a brief two-note master motive in the xylophone and strings underneath a three-note figure that is related to the ubiquitous three-note descending betrayal motive in the trombones. Both motives are hidden in hemiola rhythms, but it is one of Shostakovich's more transparent moments, as it suggests a direct link between the master, Stalin, and the betrayal motive.

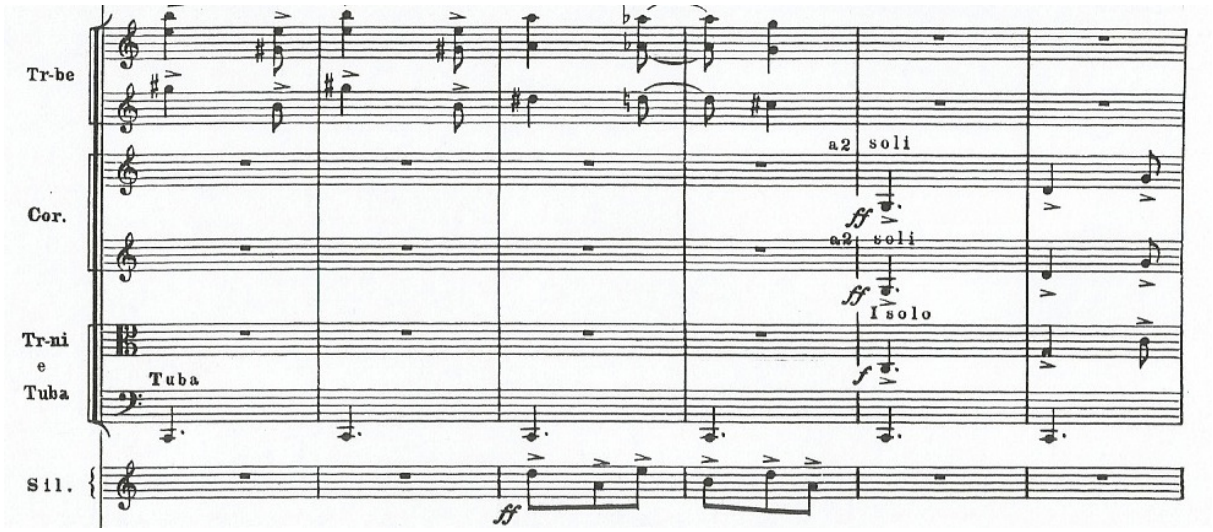

Fig. 3.11 - Symphony No. 6, mvt. 2, mms. 142-147, betrayal and master motives heard in unison

In the third movement of the Symphony No. 6, Shostakovich uses the xylophone to reference a motive used in the opening Largo. Rhythmically, the Largo is based on a funeral march, with dotted rhythms and triplets appearing in the opening measures in the woodwinds.

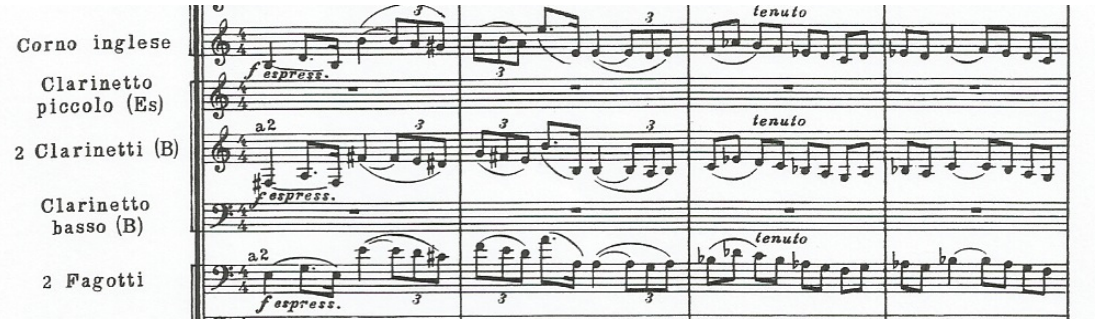

Fig. 3.12 - Symphony No. 6, mvt. 1, mms. 1-4, funeral march

Shostakovich disguises this figure in the xylophone and winds during the Presto.

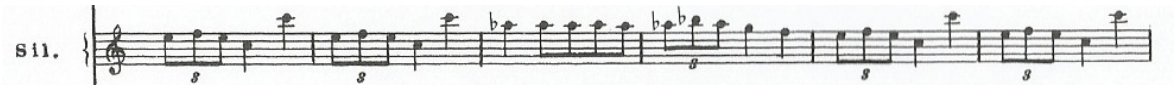

Fig. 3.13 - Symphony No. 6, mvt. 2, mms. 205-210, disguised funeral march rhythm

This figure, comprised of a descending triplet followed by a leap up in pitch, is a clear reference to the opening funeral march from the first movement with a funeral march. Shostakovich's use of the xylophone to play this is significant in that, once again, he is using this percussion instrument to convey a deeper meaning. As Ian MacDonald writes, "The Soviet authorities had demanded light music and they were getting it: light music with a vengeance"[94] Within this "light" music, Shostakovich uses the xylophone to remind his listeners of the horrors of contemporary Soviet life for the artist.

3.5 Symphony No. 7

Shostakovich's Symphony No. 7 is steeped in controversy. The incongruent claims about its source material, whether that is the march on Leningrad by Hitler's army, or the state of life under Stalin's rule, is hotly debated. What is clear, when the score is examined, is that Shostakovich was using the advance of Hitler's army and the inevitable war on a surface level to write about the horrors of life under Stalin.

The most salient example of the dual meaning is in the invasion theme from the first movement. In the sixth and seventh measures of the theme, a six-note descending scalar passage is played. This string on notes is both similar to "da geh ich zu Maxim" from *The Merry Widow,* Hitler's favorite opera, and, when it returns after the symphony has modulated to C-sharp minor,

[94] Ibid., 145.

a direct quote from Tchaikovsky's *Fifth Symphony*. In this way, a deceptively simple theme comes to represent both German and Russian totalitarianism.[95]

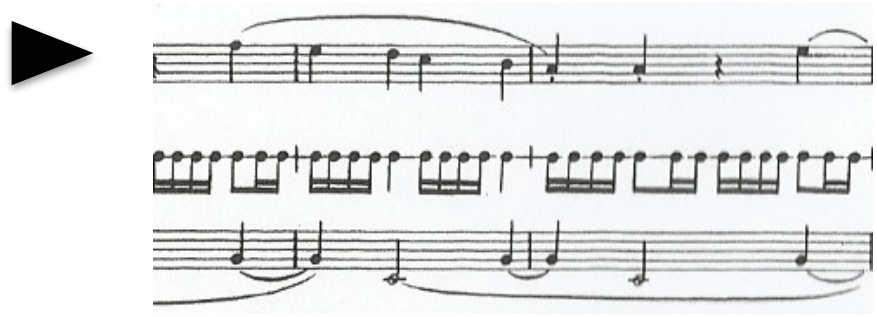

Fig. 3.14 - Symphony No. 7. mvt. 1, mms. 176-178, Six-note descending pattern

Like Symphony No. 5, Symphony No. 7 is important for how it does not use the xylophone. In the famous march of the first movement, the xylophone is among the last of the instruments to fall into the prevailing melody. Instead, it is given a background role, a simple repeating cell, possibly harkening back to the simple, pastoral depictions of Soviet life found in the introduction to this movement. As this figure becomes distorted and picked up by other instruments groups, the xylophone drops out, only to return in the movements most plaintive melodic line.

Fig. 3.15 - Symphony No. 7, mvt. 1, mms. 448-452

Although sparse, the use of the xylophone in Symphony No. 7 is significant in its continued use as a vehicle of expression in Shostakovich's music, now representative of the Soviet people oppressed by both Hitler's invading army and Stalin's maniacal reign.

[95] Ibid., 160.

3.6 Symphony No. 8

The Eighth Symphony of Shostakovich marks the end of Shostakovich's "wartime trilogy," consisting of the Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Symphonies, and contains more direct references to the atrocities committed under Stalin by using many of the motives examined thus far.

The first movement begins with a funeral march similar in tone to the opening of Symphony No. 5.

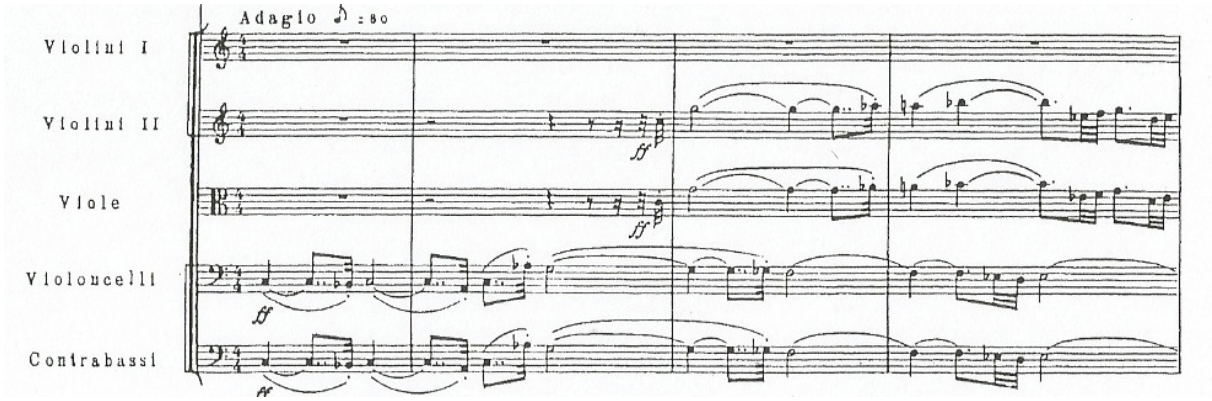

Fig. 3.16 - Symphony No. 8, mvt. 1, mms. 1-4, funeral march rhythm

As the opening Largo progresses, it eventually gives way to an *allegro non troppo* that is saturated with the betrayal motif on different levels. In the strings and flutes, a rhythmic betrayal motive is repeated. In the midst of this flurry of three-note groupings, the xylophone, along with the double reeds, plays a rhythmic and melodic figure from the opening funeral march.

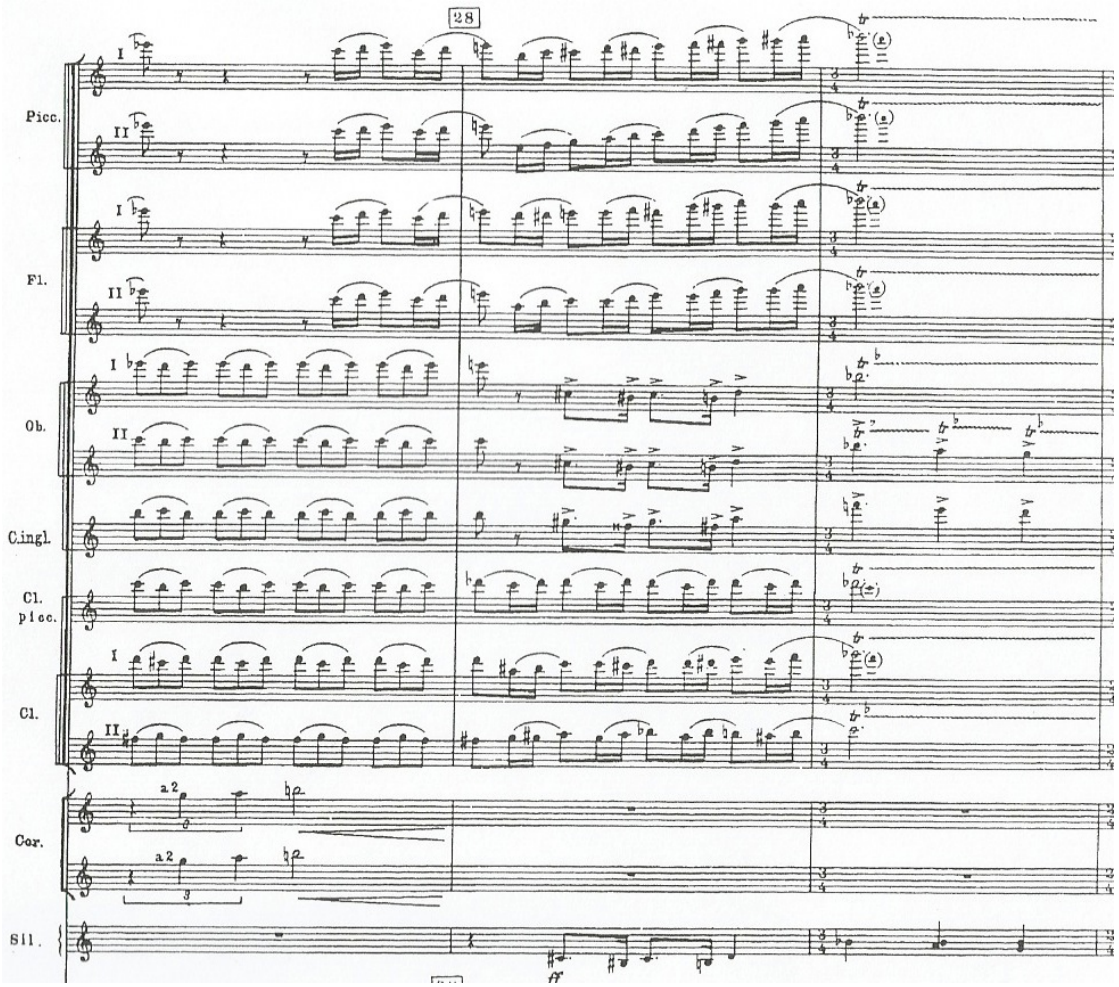

Fig. 3.17 - Symphony No. 8, mvt. 1, mms. 222-224, funeral march theme

Much like Symphony No. 6, Shostakovich is inserting a previous theme - the funeral march - into a passage saturated with energy. While the busyness of the Sixth Symphony was hollow, the passage in the Eight Symphony links Shostakovich's grief, expressed through the funeral march, with the betrayal motive, now linked directly to Stalin. The audaciousness of a move this blatant on Shostakovich's part can be backed by examining the composer's personal experiences at this time. Symphony No. 8 was the first symphony written outside of Leningrad, as the composer had be moved from the city during the Nazi seige. Upon meeting other

refugees, the extent of Stalin's arrests and executions must have become apparent to Shostakovich, igniting a fresh rage that is best exemplified in the screaming climax of the movement's Adagio.[96]

Not only is Shostakovich using the xylophone here to echo feelings of loss, sadness, and anger, he is also using the xylophone in conjunction with the double reeds. This is significant, for later in the movement, after the apex, Shostakovich writes a "post-disaster"[97] English Horn solo, arguably the most intimate moment of the symphony, in which the English Horn seems to reflect on the composer's inextinguishable sadness at the tragedies of Stalin. As evidenced in earlier symphonies, Shostakovich's use of the xylophone, both in assigning important motivic ideas and in meaningful instrument pairings, gives new weight to the instrument as an expressive tool in the symphony orchestra.

3.7 Symphony No. 14

Shostakovich's Symphony No. 14. features some of the composer's most innovative uses of percussion. This symphony, consisting of only strings and percussion, marks a dramatic shift in the composer's orchestration, incorporating castanets, woodblock, tom-toms, whip, chimes, vibraphone, and xylophone. The xylophone features prominently in three of the symphony's eleven movements, and it is in these three movements that we find Shostakovich using the xylophone in both new and familiar ways.

The first movement to use the xylophone, *Loreley*, tells the story of the sorceress Loreley, whose despair over her lover's decision to leave for a far-off land causes her to throw herself off

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[96] Ibid., 169.

[97] Ibid., 169.

a cliff. Initially, the xylophone is paired with the bass soloist, interjecting harmonies in the rests between the singer's phrases. This is directly related to the concert bass's harmonic interjections when the soprano soloist sings.

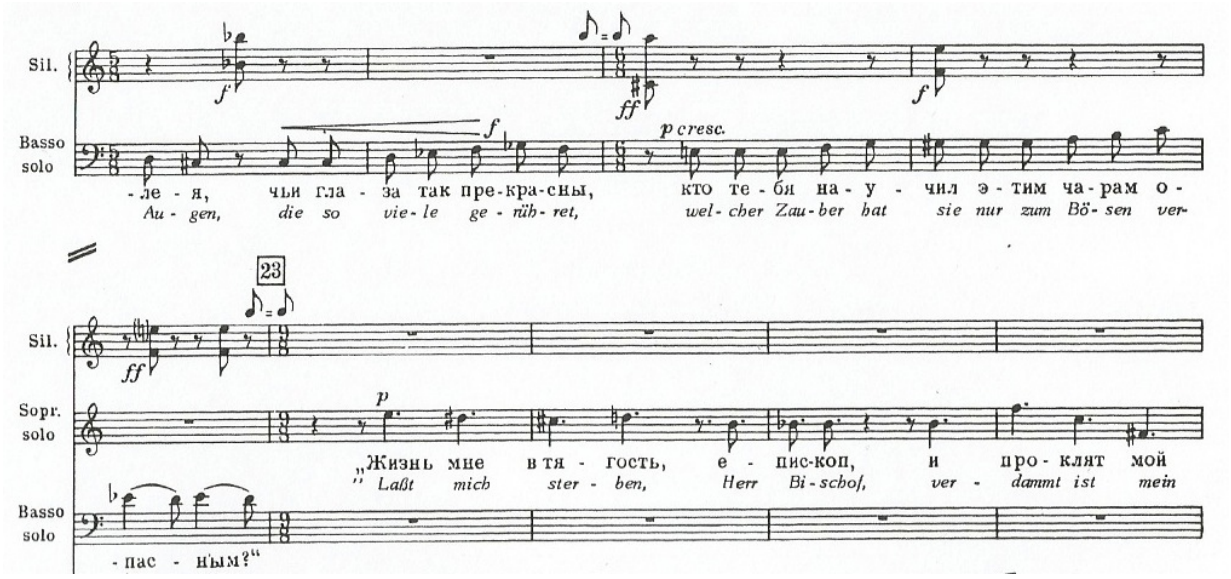

Fig. 3.18 - Symphony No. 14, mvt. 3, mms. 19-27, xylophone solo as accompaniment

This is new territory for Shostakovich with the xylophone. Here we have the xylophone supplying the sole harmonic role for the soloist in a recitative-like setting, with the comical pairing of soprano soloist/concert bass and bass soloist/xylophone. Although not using the xylophone in a motivic way, it nevertheless represents an expansion in the use of the instrument for both Shostakovich as well as art music.

The next movement to incorporate the xylophone, On The Alert, can be viewed as the beginning of the "scherzo" section of Symphony No. 14. The movement opens with a multi-layered xylophone solo.

Fig. 3.19 - Symphony No. 14, mvt. 5, mms. 1-8, xylophone solo

The most salient feature of this xylophone solo is that it is a twelve-tone row. Shostakovich has cleverly disguised this in a series of perfect fourths and fifths, but it nevertheless retains the harmonic instability and unsettling effect of a dodecaphonic composition. The fact that this passage contains the compositional technique of serialism, a long-associated technique of the bourgeois West, coupled with the title of the movement, On the Alert, is a clear reference to Shostakovich's own life during the 1930s. Viewed in another light, Shostakovich can be seen poking fun at Stalin and the obliviousness of his government, combining a militaristic march with the serialist technique so associated with the bourgeois West.

When viewed against the lyrics of the poetry, the xylophone takes on a completely new meaning. While the poem speaks from a woman's view about the inevitable death of her lover in the trenches of war, the "alert call" from the xylophone takes on the character of cruel laughter at the banality of war and the death that results from it. This is no majestic call to arms, but a thin, brittle reminder of the stupidity of war.

In the next movement, Look Here, Madame!, we see Shostakovich return to some of his previous motives, most notably the three-note betrayal motive. The betrayal motive appears six times in the xylophone during this movement. However, Shostakovich is no longer dealing with the betrayal of Stalin or his comrades, but the betrayal of faithfulness on the part of the individual. The poem is about a woman who has lost her heart. When she is told that her heart is lost, she replies "It's my heart - not much of a thing," followed by the betrayal motive in the xylophone.

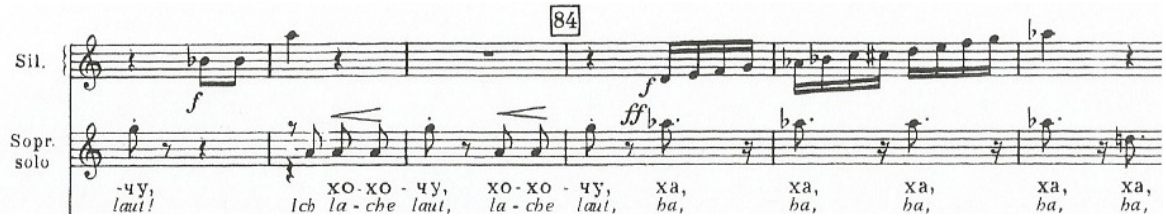

Fig. 3.20 - Symphony No. 14, mvt. 6, mms. 29-34, betrayal motive in xylophone

Here, the flippant abandonment of the woman's heart represents the ultima.te expression of faithlessness. While not directly attributed to Stalinist Russia and the ideas of betrayal he so often wrote about, it is still possible Shostakovich was writing about the effect of Stalin on the people of Russia in general, the shallowness of those willing to remain in good standing with the party, and how they ultimately betrayed their humanity.

3.8 Symphony No. 15

Shostakovich's last symphony is riddled with ambiguity. It is clearly a dark piece, but scored in A major. Most of its music seems upbeat, but below the surface a more ominous meaning hides. In it, Shostakovich quotes music from his childhood with the "William Tell Overture" as well as music from Mahler's Symphony No. 4.

From a percussion standpoint, this work stands with his later works in that it uses a wider variety of percussion instruments than Shostakovich had used in his previous periods, and the percussion instruments are used in a more soloistic fashion. In addition to the standard percussion instrumentation on which he had previously relied, Shostakovich composes a percussion section comprised of timpani, triangle, castanets, woodblock, whip, tom-tom, snare drum, cymbals, bass drum, and tam-tam.

The opening movement of Symphony No. 15 is significant in that it is Shostakovich second use of the solo xylophone in a symphony, following Symphony No. 14. Although difficult to determine a precise meaning behind his use here, an examination of how this fits within the entire movement is necessary to ascertain what Shostakovich may have intended.

The many references to childhood, from the *William Tell Overture* (which uses the same rhythm as Shostakovich's own ubiquitous "betrayal motive"), Mahler's Symphony No. 4, and a quote from the composer's own Funeral March for the Victims of the Revolution are clues to the subtext with which Shostakovich was working. When these references are taken in context with the composer's own words about the movement — "we are all marionettes"[98] — one can view the use of the xylophone with a deeper meaning.

The entirety of the movement possesses the attitude of a childhood fantasy (or nightmare) of toys coming to life. Shostakovich is making reference to the idea of adult "puppets" or "marionettes" under the rule of Stalin. Associating the xylophone with children's toys or games is commonplace, but Shostakovich takes it a step further with his penchant for the grotesque and makes an ominous mockery out of it.

Taken a step further, the continual struggle between the numbers 2 — master, or Stalin — and 3 — betrayal, or the common people — occurs within time signature changes during the xylophone solos.

[98] Ibid., 242.

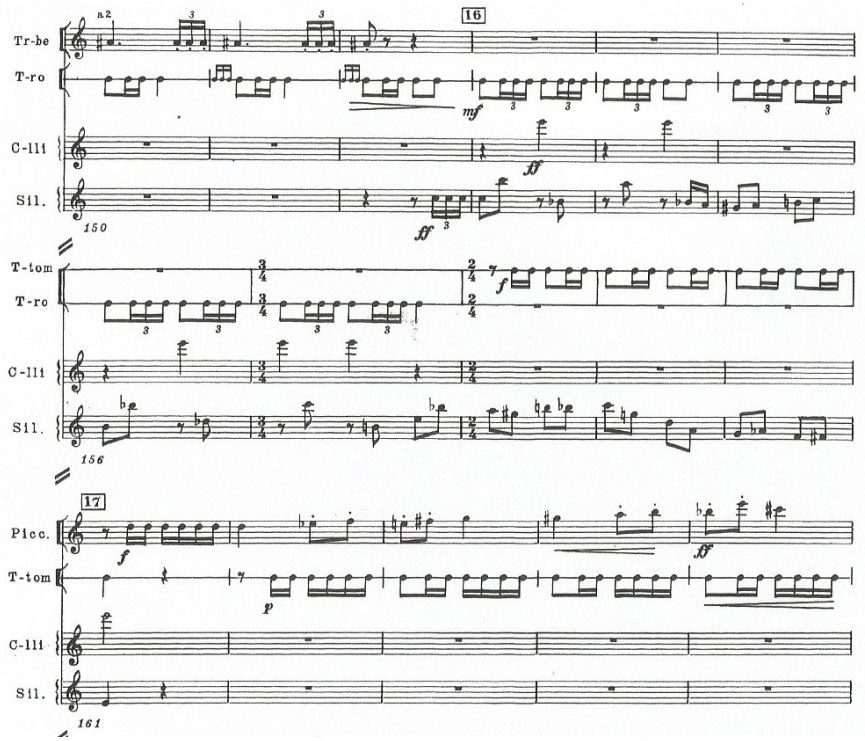

Fig. 3.21 - Symphony No. 15, mvt. 1, mms. 150-161, xylophone solo, 2 / 3 conflict

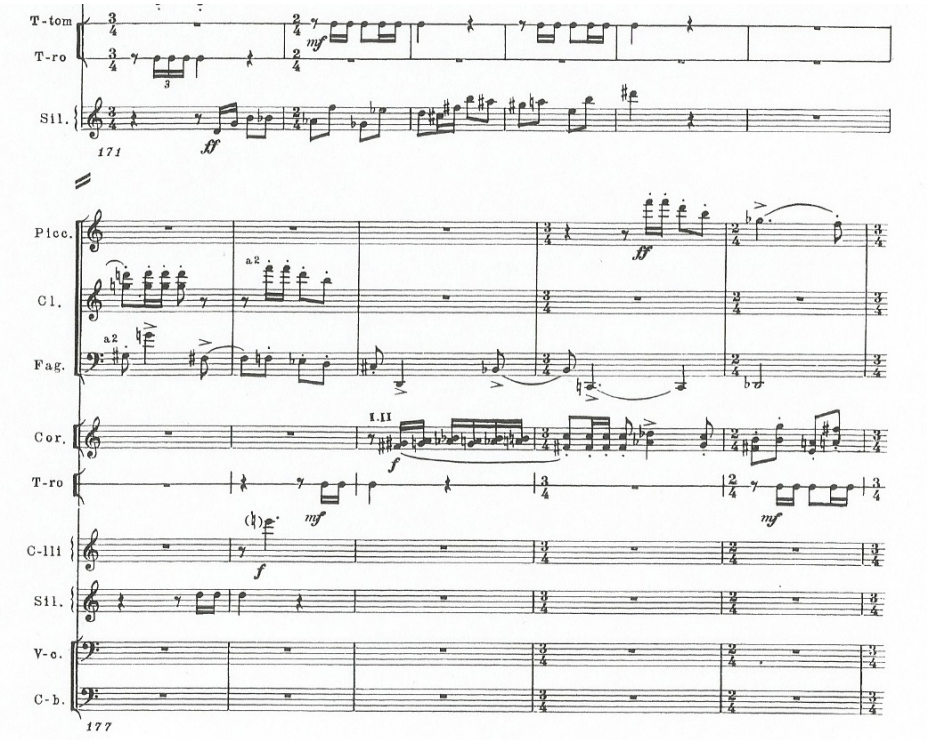

Fig. 3.22 - Symphony No. 15, mvt. 1, mms. 171-181, xylophone solo, 2 / 3 conflict

The lack of an accessible meter in these solo passages, along with the changes in time signature between 2/4 and 3/4, signifies an ambivalence in feeling as well as consistently confusing the role of the xylophone. Depending of the passage, the xylophone can be viewed as expressing ideas related to both the common people, Stalin, and betrayal. Shostakovich is using the xylophone to express complex emotions directly related to his personal experiences with Stalinist Russia, again highlighting the loss and betrayal of humanity in those years by the people in his life who opted to save their own lives by playing the part of Stalin's puppets.

3.9 Conclusion

Although the role of the entire orchestral percussion section changed under many composers during the 20th century, only Shostakovich was able to achieve new expressive heights with this sub-section of the orchestra. Through Shostakovich's compositional aesthetic the xylophone, a member of the percussion family since antiquity, came to be a prominent and permanent member of the orchestral percussion family. While the xylophone had been used by composers such as Saint-Säens, Gustav Mahler, Belá Bartok, and Igor Stravinsky to represent abstract and extra-musical ideas, only Shostakovich was able to use the xylophone to represent complex and intimate emotions like betrayal, poignancy, and banality. Through his use of and writing for the orchestral xylophone, Shostakovich changed the course of percussion history and made important strides in changing the concept of the xylophone from a novelty, coloristic device to an expressive member of the orchestra.

APPENDIX A

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- Measures: 1-5, 466-467, 770-772

SYMPHONY NO. 5 IN D MINOR OP. 57
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- Measures: movement 1: 205-207, movement 2: 204-206, movement 3: 120-124, movement 4: 92-94

SYMPHONY NO. 6 IN B MINOR OP. 54
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- Measures: movement 2: 83-88, 142, 147, 205-210, movement 1: 1-4

SYMPHONY NO. 7 IN C MAJOR, OP. 60
By Dmitri Shostakovich

- Measures: movement 1: 176-178, 448-452

SYMPHONY NO. 8 IN C MINOR, OP. 65
By Dmitri Shostakovich

- Measures: movement 1: 1-4, 222-224

SYMPHONY NO 14 OP 135
By Dmitri Shostakovich

- Measures: movement 3: 19-27, movement 5: 1-8, movement 6: 29-34

SYMPHONY NO. 15 IN A MAJOR, OP. 141
By Dmitri Shostakovich

- Measures: movement 1: 150-161, 171-181

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Justin Alexander is currently serving as Visiting Assistant Professor of Percussion at Virginia Commonwealth University where he teaches applied lessons, percussion methods and techniques, and directs the VCU Percussion Ensemble. Prior to his appointment at VCU, he served as Adjunct Instructor of Percussion at Troy University, teaching applied lessons and assisting with the Troy University Percussion Ensemble, winners of the 2012 Percussive Arts Society International Percussion Ensemble Competition.

An active and diverse performer, Justin has given recitals, clinics, and masterclasses throughout the United States. He co-founded and performed with the Denkyem Percussion Group at the "Promising Artists of the 21st Century" Festival held at the North American Cultural Center in Costa Rica and at the College Music Society's Regional Convention in New Orleans. He has performed with the The Florida Orchestra, The Aspen Festival Orchestra, The Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, The Eastern Philharmonic Orchestra, and The Santo Domingo Music Festival Orchestra.

Justin has commissioned and premiered works by John Luther Adams, Blake Tyson, Halim El-Dahb, Brian Nozny, Ian Dicke, Nathan Daughtrey, Christopher Adler, and can be heard on Nathaniel Bartlett's new release, Far Reaches, The Florida State University Percussion Ensemble's Volume One and Volume Two, and Omar Carmenates's The Gaia Project. As a co-founder of Garnet House Productions, Justin's work as an audio engineer can be heard on Blake Tyson's newly released Firefish, Thomas Burritt's Groundlines, Omar Carmenate's The Gaia Project, and Line Upon Line Percussion's self-titled debut. In addition, Justin's arrangement of

From My Little Island for percussion ensemble was premiered by the Florida State University Percussion Ensemble at the 2011 Percussive Arts Society International Convention.

Active in the Percussive Arts Society, Justin currently serves on the PAS Drum Set and University Pedagogy Committees. He served as chair of the PAS University Committee from 2009-2012.

Justin holds the Doctor of Music degree from The Florida State University and the Masters and Bachelors of Music degrees from The University of Central Arkansas. His primary teachers include Dr. John W. Parks IV, Dr. Blake Tyson, and Prof. Leon Anderson. Justin is a proud endorser of Innovative Percussion sticks and mallets, Pearl/Adams Musical Instruments, and Zildjian cymbals.