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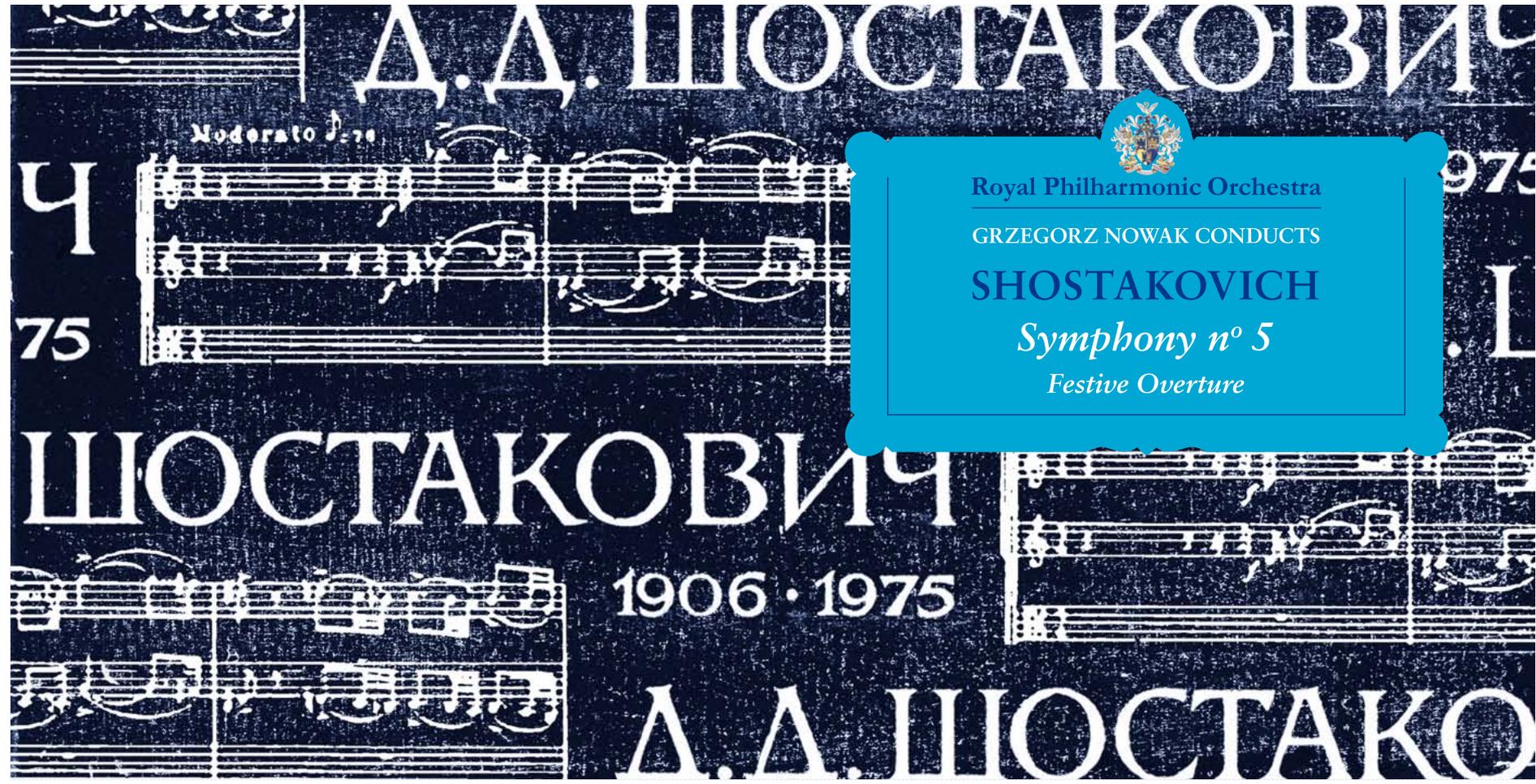
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DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906–1975)

Dmitri Shostakovich was born in St. Petersburg in 1906 and died in Moscow in 1975. Despite periods of official censure, he was one of Russia's greatest and most successful composers, achieving international recognition with his fifteen symphonies, piano concertos, ballet music, string quartets and vast quantities of film music. His operas include *The Nose*, based on a story by Gogol, and *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District*.

“Music has a great advantage: without mentioning anything, it can say everything.”

Ilya Ehrenburg

Symphony No. 5 in D minor, Op.47

- I. *Moderato*
- II. *Allegretto*
- III. *Largo*
- IV. *Allegro non troppo*

The fortunes of the young Dmitri Shostakovich hit a sudden downward curve in 1936, when he fell foul of the Soviet authorities and, in particular, incurred the wrath of Joseph Stalin. The occasion was a performance of Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District*, which Stalin attended in 1936. The opera had been wildly successful, attracting worldwide attention through performances in London and New York. Shortly after Stalin's visit, however, the composer was shocked to read an article in *Pravda* which, under the heading 'Chaos instead of Music', heaped venomous scorn on the opera. The music, it averred, was a deliberately dissonant and confused collection of grinding and screaming noises, and was the antithesis of what a good opera ought to be. It was, claimed the article, a piece of cacophonous pornography, and was an insult to the Soviet people. Virtually overnight, the composer was in disgrace and the *Pravda* article (almost certainly written by Stalin himself) paved the way for a series of personal and professional attacks. Shostakovich's music disappeared from concert programmes, performances

of films and plays for which he had written the music were cancelled, and such was the fear instilled in every Soviet citizen by the Stalinist terror that his own friends and colleagues began to disassociate themselves from him.

Shostakovich's immediate response was to cancel the première of his Symphony No.4, which he feared would land him in even greater trouble, and he has recounted how the ensuing months were a time of great misery and terror. Thousands of people had already 'disappeared' overnight for their alleged anti-Soviet activities and even the composer's international fame would not have saved him from internment in one of Stalin's infamous work camps. He lived in constant fear of arrest and, like thousands of others at the time, always kept a small bag packed with personal belongings in case he was taken off in the middle of the night. Notwithstanding the appalling psychological and emotional turmoil he was suffering, he commenced work on a new symphony, having hidden away the score of the 'dangerous' Symphony No.4, and the new work, Symphony No.5, was allowed a première on 21st November 1937.

The audience that attended Leningrad's Philharmonic Hall that evening must have been wondering about the music they were going to hear. Would there be evidence of some kind of atonement in the new symphony,

which bore the legend 'A Soviet Artist's Practical Creative Reply to Just Criticism'? Or would he fly in the face of authority and produce another harshly dissonant score that would be an offence to Soviet sensibilities? In terms of initial response, the Symphony's effect on that first-night audience was electrifying. People wept openly during the third movement and at the end, according to one report, 'everyone rose and the auditorium shook with applause...When thirty minutes later my friend and I left the auditorium the ovation was still under way'. The cellist Rostropovich was of the opinion that the government would really have preferred to have Shostakovich executed: 'But it so happened that the ovations after the Fifth Symphony lasted more than forty minutes. They had never seen such an audience success. And so of course the government knew that, so they put a face on it, saying "We've taught him and now he's writing acceptable music"'.

The real meaning of Symphony No.5 has continued to baffle critics and musicologists ever since. Its wonderful melodies and stirring rhythms have an immediate audience appeal and the victorious finale was clearly intended to present the mood of optimism and celebration that was considered necessary in any good Soviet symphony. But there are darker, more questioning aspects hidden below the surface and the score appears to contain coded messages

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and private references that, according to one biographer, only those closest to the composer would ever have understood. The first movement introduces a short-short-long rhythm on repeated As that many critics have associated with the personality of Stalin himself and the harsh, dissonant march that subsequently erupts, complete with snarling brass and side-drum, has been compared to the terrifying entrance of the great leader at a public rally. The second movement is a bitter, rough-hewn scherzo that owes much to Mahler, actually quoting material from the Austrian composer's Symphony No.2 (Mahler was a strong and persistent influence on Shostakovich's music). There follows a *Largo* movement in which the elegiac mood of tragedy and loss is unmistakable, and there are more echoes of Mahler's music in the delicate woodwind writing. It is hard to say whether the jubilant finale is indeed the optimistic conclusion it was heard to be, or rather a cleverly constructed send-up of the whole Soviet political machine. And even within its tub-thumping context there are references to earlier themes, appearing now in strange, half-lit colours and in surreal transformations.

It seems unlikely that we will ever know for certain what this symphony is really about, especially since many of the composer's pronouncements on the work may have

been made to throw the authorities off the scent and not all the articles that appeared under his name were actually written by him. Ultimately, perhaps, it doesn't matter, since what remains is a score of tremendous power and beauty and, as Ilya Ehrenburg wisely remarked, music, without mentioning anything, can say everything

Festive Overture, Op.96

The 'politically correct' Symphony No.5 was Shostakovich's solution to the criticism following the performance of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District*, and he maintained thereafter – at least in public – the persona of a composer who was fully aware of his responsibilities as a Soviet artist. With the death of Stalin in 1953 these creative restrictions were slightly relaxed. Shostakovich felt sufficiently emboldened to issue such a 'dangerous' work as Symphony No.10, whose dark and violent second movement is almost certainly an unflattering portrait of the deceased despot, but still continued to compose the safer kind of music expected of him. In complete contrast to Symphony No.10 is the bright and irrepressibly breezy *Festive Overture*, composed in 1954 in celebration of the thirty-seventh anniversary of the October Revolution of 1917. The Overture was written at speed in the days before a concert at the Bolshoi Theatre to commemorate

the anniversary of the Revolution, after the conductor, Vassili Nebolsin, found himself without a suitable new work with which to open the event.

Introduced by suitably ceremonial flourishes on the brass, the Overture quickly settles into a lively presto, whose effervescent main theme is given initially to the clarinet. The lyrical second theme appears abruptly, leading to a passage for pizzicato strings in imitation, perhaps, of a giant balalaika. The Overture, which is quite transparent in its structure, proceeds to discuss these ideas until a return of the opening flourishes leads to a short, lively coda.



GRZEGORZ NOWAK
Conductor

Grzegorz Nowak is Principal Associate Conductor of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. He has led the orchestra on tours to Switzerland, Turkey and Armenia and in numerous appearances throughout the UK, including a successful tour with an all-Shostakovich programme. His Royal Philharmonic Orchestra recordings include Mendelssohn's *Scottish and Italian Symphonies*, all of Schumann's symphonies and Dvořák's Symphonies Nos.6-9. Upcoming releases include Chopin Piano Concerti with Roustem Saïtkoulov, Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and the complete symphonies of Brahms and Tchaikovsky.

Grzegorz Nowak's recordings have been highly acclaimed by the press and public alike, winning many awards. *Diapason*



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in Paris praised his KOS live recording with Martha Argerich and Sinfonia Varsovia as 'indispensable...a must' and its second edition won a Fryderyk Award. His recording of *Polish Symphonic Music of the Nineteenth Century* with Sinfonia Varsovia won the CD of the Year Award, the Bronze Bell Award in Singapore and a Fryderyk Award nomination; the *American Record Guide* praised it as 'uncommonly rewarding...sixty-seven minutes of pure gold' and hailed his Gallo disc of the music of Frank Martin with the Biel Symphony Orchestra as 'by far the best'. His Hänssler Classics disc of Czerny's Symphonies Nos.2 and 6 (world première recording) was praised as 'delightful...marvellously colourful...memorable' by *Classics Today* and as a 'great musical discovery' by the Musical Heritage Society, while his recording of Weill's music with Anja Silja won two Classical Internet Awards and was reviewed by *Classics Today* as 'the finest recording of *The Seven Deadly Sins* currently available... simply marvellous...tremendous recording'. Grzegorz Nowak's CBC record with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra and Amanda Forsyth won the Juno Award and his Dvorák CD with Wen-Sinn Yang on the ARTS label was hailed as 'a disc to treasure'. His CD-Accord recordings of Chopin Piano Concerti with Janusz Olejniczak and Sinfonia Varsovia won the Fryderyk and CD of the Year awards and another Chopin CD with

Stanislaw Drzewiecki won Golden CD status and a Fryderyk Award. *MusicWeb International* hailed a disc of Verdi and Puccini arias with Joanna Kozłowska as 'superb...the orchestra and the conductor in outstanding form' and *Gramophone* magazine praised his ASV recording with the London Symphony Orchestra as 'outstanding...superbly caught.' Grzegorz Nowak began his international career by winning First Prize at the Ernest Ansermet Conducting Competition in Geneva and prizes at other competitions including the Grand Prix Patek Philippe, Rolex Prize, Swiss Prize and American Patronage Prize, as well as the Europäische Förderpreis für Musik for the European Musician of the Year in Basel. He is Artist-in-Residence at the Florida International University in Miami, was honoured with the Distinguished Teacher Award during his tenure as Professor at the BGSU University in Ohio and the University of Alberta bestowed upon him the title of Honorary Professor.

After studying conducting, composition and violin at the Music Academy in Poznan, Grzegorz Nowak was awarded a doctorate fellowship to the renowned Eastman School of Music, where he studied with David Effron and David Zinman. He honed his skills at Tanglewood on a Serge Koussevitzky Fellowship with such masters

as Leonard Bernstein, Seiji Ozawa, Erich Leinsdorf and Igor Markevitch, before assisting Kurt Masur with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra.

Since then, he has conducted the world's finest orchestras. In Europe, Grzegorz Nowak has worked with such prestigious ensembles as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Monte Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestre National de France, Orchestre Lamoureux in Paris, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, RAI orchestras in Milan, Rome and Turin, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande in Geneva, Tonhalle Orchestra in Zürich, Berliner Symphoniker, Belgian National Orchestra, Luxembourg Philharmonic Orchestra, Warsaw National Philharmonic Orchestra, National Orchestra of Spain and the Gulbenkian Orchestra in Lisbon. He has also conducted numerous times in Scandinavia, performing with the Philharmonic and Radio orchestras of Oslo, Stockholm, Helsinki and Copenhagen.

In North America, Grzegorz Nowak has conducted many of the leading orchestras, including the Montréal Symphony, Vancouver Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, San Diego Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic, Daytona Philharmonic, Quebec Symphony, Calgary Philharmonic, Edmonton Symphony,

National Arts Centre, Winnipeg Symphony, Regina Symphony, Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, Mexico State Symphony, Mexico Bellas Artes Chamber and Xalapa Symphony orchestras as well as orchestra London, Symphony Nova Scotia and the Orquesta Filarmónica de la Ciudad de México. He has also earned critical acclaim for his performances with the Philharmonic and Yomiuri orchestras in Tokyo, Hong Kong Philharmonic orchestra, Taipei Philharmonic orchestra in Taiwan and with the Jerusalem and Haifa Symphony orchestras.

Grzegorz Nowak had held the position of Music Director for orchestras and opera companies in the USA, Switzerland, Canada, Poland and Germany, including the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, Polish National Opera in Warsaw, SWR Radio Orchestra in Germany, Sinfonia Helvetica and the Musique & Amitié Festival in Switzerland.

Grzegorz Nowak has conducted operatic productions in Italy, Monte Carlo, Switzerland, Germany, Poland, the UK, Sweden, the USA and Canada, including works by Mozart (*The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *Il Seraglio*, *Così fan tutte*, *The Magic Flute*), Rossini (*The Barber of Seville*, *Semiramide*), Beethoven (*Fidelio*), Bizet (*Carmen*), Borodin (*Prince Igor*), Moniuszko (*Halka*, *The Haunted Manor*), Verdi (*Otello*, *Don Carlos* and *the Polish*



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première of Simon Boccanegra) and Puccini (*Madama Butterfly*, *La Bobème*, *Turandot* and *Tosca* – including a tour with Welsh National Opera). His production of Debussy's *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien* was broadcast live from Rome on the Eurovision television network. He received rave reviews at the 2006 Maifestspiele festival in Wiesbaden for conducting Giordano's *Andrea Chénier*, directed and staged by Mariusz Trelinski for a co-production by the Warsaw National Opera with Plácido Domingo and the National Opera in Washington.

Grzegorz Nowak has performed alongside many of the most widely respected soloists of our time, including Krystian Zimerman, Mstislav Rostropovich, Martha Argerich, Henryk Szeryng, Anne-Sophie Mutter, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Pinchas Zukerman, Midori, Nigel Kennedy, Garrick Ohlsson, André Watts, Gil Shaham, Yefim Bronfman and Shlomo Mintz, and has worked with such singers as Marilyn Horne, Kathleen Battle, Gwyneth Jones, Anja Silja, Janet Baker, Wilhelmenia Fernandez, Ewa Podles, Małgorzata Walewska, Kristján Johannsson, Wiesław Ochman and Ben Heppner.

ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Artistic Director and Principal Conductor: *Charles Dutoit*

Acknowledged as one of the UK's most prestigious orchestras, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO) enjoys an international reputation for bringing audiences worldwide first-class performances and the highest possible standards of music-making across a diverse range of musical repertoire. This was the vision of the Orchestra's flamboyant founder Sir Thomas Beecham, whose legacy is maintained today as the Orchestra thrives under the exceptional direction of its Artistic Director and Principal Conductor, Maestro Charles Dutoit.

The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra is London-based and performs a prestigious series of concerts each year at Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall, featuring artists of the highest calibre. The Orchestra's London home is at Cadogan Hall, just off Sloane Square, where concert-goers enjoy an intimate atmosphere in an idyllic location. Complementing the concert series at Cadogan Hall, the Orchestra regularly performs in the magnificent Royal Albert Hall, presenting works of great magnitude designed to suit the immensity of this historic and grand venue.

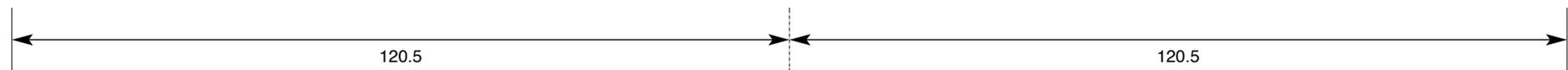


Within the UK, the Orchestra is committed to offering an extensive regional touring programme, including established residencies in Croydon, Northampton, Lowestoft, Reading and Crawley. As an international orchestra, the RPO has toured more than thirty countries in the last five years. Recent tours have included performances in Azerbaijan, Turkey, China, a month-long tour of the US and Canada with Charles Dutoit and Pinchas Zukerman, and as resident orchestra of the Montreux Festival.

The Orchestra is also recognised for its artistic work through a vibrant and innovative community and education programme, titled RPO resound. Specially trained members of the Orchestra, alongside accomplished project leaders, provide comprehensive workshops where music is used as a powerful and inspirational force.

Frequently found in the recording studio, the Orchestra records extensively for film and television as well as for all the major commercial record companies. The Orchestra also owns its own record label and is proud to be the first UK orchestra to stream its entire series of concerts live from Cadogan Hall.

www.rpo.co.uk



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