

SOVIET MUSIC IN WORLD WAR II



BEFORE 1941



In *Pravda* today, one of the reports from western Ukraine styled the Poles as “the hateful enemy”. But it was only a month and a half ago that we were offering this “hateful enemy” our military help. Such is politics! Thankfully, people have short memories, and such word-spinning does not lodge in their conscious minds.

(Diary of Alexander Gladkov, 27 September 1939)

We listened to a radio broadcast of *Die Walküre* for Germany, with singers from the Bolshoi. It was prefaced with a speech by Sergei Eisenstein, who delivered it in German. He will be producing *Die Walküre* at the Bolshoi next season. It is known to be Hitler's favourite opera, so this is a kind of political courtesy. In Berlin, they staged *Ivan Susanin* and published *Quiet Flows the Don*.

(Diary of Alexander Gladkov, 18 February 1940)





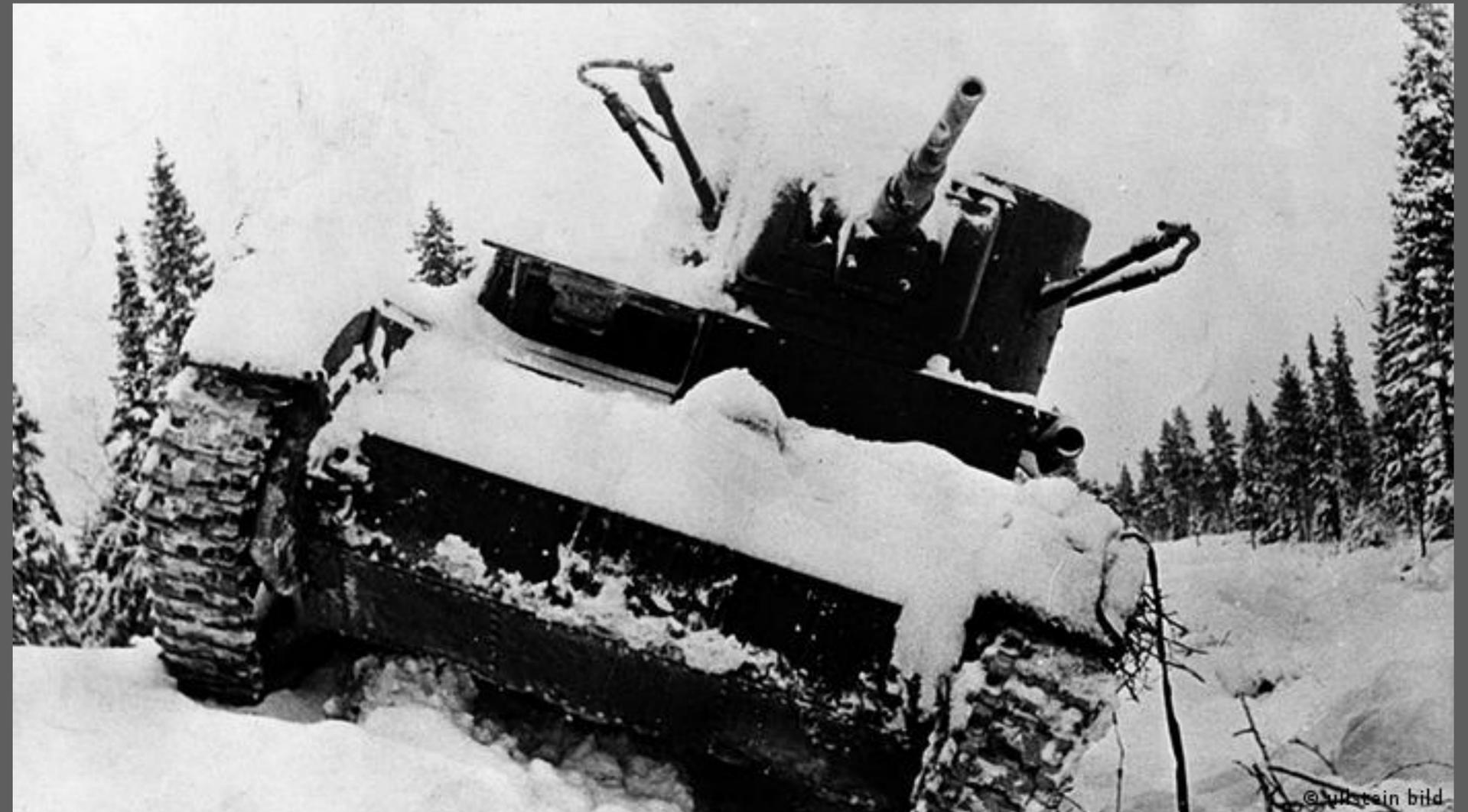
Stalin Prize 1st class

1. Shostakovich, Piano Quintet
2. Myaskovsky, Symphony No. 21
3. Shaporin *On the Kulikovo Field*, oratorio

SUITE ON FINNISH THEMES



VII. MY BELOVED IS BEAUTIFUL



THE LICENCE OF WAR

And when the war broke out, its real horrors, its real dangers, its menace of real death, were a blessing compared with the inhuman power of the lie, a relief because it broke a spell of the dead letter.

(Boris Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*)



**ARAM KHACHATURIAN, SYMPHONY NO. 2 (1943)
RSNO, CONDUCTOR NEEMI JÄRVI**

SHOSTAKOVICH SYMPHONY NO. 8

There are **no purely musical faults** in this work. Perhaps there are some longueurs, and perhaps the language is not laconic enough. It has extraordinarily powerful moments. In any case, this is a wonderful work from a musical point of view. [...]

But there are, in my view, certain **ideological shortcomings**: there's the fact that this work is **extremely pessimistic**. In our days, although we are going through much hardship, we still expect something that will rise above our painful experiences. But the Eighth Symphony gives the impression that it portrays with huge power all the darkness and pain that undoubtedly have a place in our experiences.

Alexander Goldenweiser, pianist

SHOSTAKOVICH SYMPHONY NO. 8

The Eighth, to me, is much more diverse [than the Seventh]. I would say that the two marches which follow one another [the second and third movements], make a colossal impression. The last movement seems over-expansive, and there are moments when you start to wonder “**Is the end close?**” – that is how much it tests your patience.

In my opinion, the Eighth Symphony is definitely not below the level of the Seventh. But there is one feature in Shostakovich’s music that is difficult for me personally: I can’t take it home with me after the concert. [...] Perhaps this is because of its **fearsome complexity**. But the impression is overwhelming. The Eighth Symphony is a huge work. There might be shortcomings, but those can be found anywhere. **The two marches are quite exceptional...**

Sculptor Vera Mukhina

SHOSTAKOVICH SYMPHONY NO. 8

Minister Khrapchenko:

On the last occasion, the musicians and a good many other comrades spoke positively of Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony and evaluated it highly. As far as musical technique is concerned, it is likely that this work does indeed have great potential. But I am approaching the work as an ordinary listener. I listened to it three times, and gained the impression that in his Eighth Symphony, Shostakovich returns to themes that he had addressed earlier. Here we see, I think, an idiom that is deliberately complicated, and a kind of refinement that is **not accessible** to ordinary cultured listeners. This is the first point.

SHOSTAKOVICH SYMPHONY NO. 8

Minister Khrapchenko:

Secondly, it seems to me that this work is lacking in any kind of objective element, some broad public element that every large-scale symphonic work should possess. Shostakovich is speaking on his own behalf here, rather than on behalf of the many. His work is **individualistic**, or [at least] too individual. And finally, as other colleagues have already stated here, it is an extremely **pessimistic** work.

My feeling, as one who cannot be considered expert in music, is that we have here a piece that leads Shostakovich off from the path he had followed in the Quintet and the Seventh Symphony. ... It is, I say again, a case of Shostakovich **revisiting his past**. I like Shostakovich very much, and value his talent very highly, and so it's hard for me to say this, but I cannot refrain from doing so if I am to speak honestly.

SHOSTAKOVICH SYMPHONY NO. 8

Minister Khrapchenko in a letter to Stalin and Molotov:

Deliberate over- complication and a lack of clear melody render the Symphony No. 8 incomprehensible to a wide layer of listeners. In this work, Shostakovich repeats the same **formalist errors that had typified some of his earlier works.**

242 82

arco
ppp

ppp staccato

**MIECZYŚLAW WEINBERG, PIANO QUINTET (1944)
WEINBERG AND THE BORODIN QUARTET**

33

The image shows a musical score for measures 33 through 36 of a piece. The score is written for five staves: two treble clefs (Violin I and Violin II), two bass clefs (Viola and Cello), and a grand staff (Piano). The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). In measures 33-35, the strings play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, while the violins play whole notes. In measure 36, the piano part features a complex texture with sixteenth-note runs in the right hand and sustained chords in the left hand. The strings continue their rhythmic pattern.

MIECZYŚLAW WEINBERG, PIANO QUINTET (1944)
WEINBERG AND THE BORODIN QUARTET

153

420

The image shows a musical score for piano and strings, measures 420-425. The score is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature (C). It consists of five staves. The top four staves are for the right hand of the piano, and the bottom two staves are for the left hand. The right hand part features a complex, rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, often beamed in groups of four or six, with slurs over each group. The left hand part consists of a simple, rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, often beamed in groups of two or four. The word "morendo" is written below the right hand part in measures 423, 424, and 425, indicating a decrescendo. The piano part ends with a fermata in measure 425. The string part consists of a simple, rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, often beamed in groups of two or four, in the lower register.

WEINBERG PIANO QUINTET

Architect Mordvinov:

Some youth brings us a piece of utterly unbearable rubbish. It is an outrageous thing, the most incredible cacophony, just a lot of caterwauling. There were some attempts at technical innovation: now you do it with a finger, now with a bow! We were laughing about it, that maybe he should get something attached to his back, so he could drum on it. How did this come about?

In this regard, I must raise an issue of principle here. The Stalin Prize Committee has a certain criterion of evaluation. It approaches every work from the point of view of Socialist Realism. If we were offered some kind of futurist daub as a painting, we would not even look at it. If we were offered some 'zaum' ['transrational' poetry] in literature, we wouldn't give it a hearing. So why in music do we have to listen to these formalist scams?

SHOSTAKOVICH SECOND QUARTET AND TRIO

Architect Mordvinov:

Some say, with regard to Shostakovich, that they understand nothing about music. But this music is supposed to be written for the masses. We heard Shostakovich's [Second] Quartet. How does this differ from the Weinberg Quintet? Of course, one is a teacher, the other a pupil, but it's **unbearable cacophony** [again], and it's the most you can do just to stay put in your seat. And we keep saying Shostakovich is a genius, he's a genius, a genius.

We give it our encouragement.

After this Quartet, this incredible chaos and cacophony, **we heard some rounded phrases in the Trio**, and people said that it's very good. But if you take it by itself, there is nothing particularly good about it. People liked it because they heard it after the cacophony. I think we pay too much attention to Shostakovich, and by doing so, we open the way for formalism like this in the mainstream. They say that he's won recognition in America. But how many leftist artists of various trends are recognized by English and American artists! That doesn't mean for a moment that we should encourage this formalism. This is not the main line of development – it's not the path along which music will develop. It will develop from the world's classics, whereas this is just a diversion, pure technique.

SHOSTAKOVICH SYMPHONY NO. 8

Architect Mordvinov:

When the Eighth Symphony is performed, there is a lot of cacophony there, but people hear something in it that reminds them of the cannons firing and the Katyusha rocket launchers squealing, while in the Quartet and the Trio this justification is lacking.

IV

Allegretto 

pizz.
p

pp

Musical score for the first system, featuring a violin part and a piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'Allegretto' and the key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The time signature is 2/4. The piano part includes a *pp* dynamic marking.

Musical score for the second system, continuing the violin and piano parts. The piano part continues with a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

SHOSTAKOVICH, TRIO NO. 2 I. ISAAK STERN, YO-YO-MA, EMMANUEL AX

SHOSTAKOVICH SYMPHONY NO. 9

The symphony is not of significant artistic value; it was performed in several concerts and public opinion held it to be a none-too-successful item within Shostakovich's symphonic oeuvre. The symphony has not been widely performed, and it has not been heard anywhere for more than a year now.

(Report by the Politburo Commission)

YURI LEVITIN, QUARTET NO. 7



Dmitri
Klebanov
(1907-1987)
Symphony
No. 1
1945

IN MEMORY OF THE BABI YAR MARTYRS



DMITRI KLEBANOV/DMYTRO KLEBANIV, SYMPHONY NO. 1 (1945)

MOSCOW CHAMBER ORCHESTRA, CONDUCTOR IGOR BLAZHKOV

MIKHAIL GNESSIN (1883-1957)

TRIO

IN MEMORY OF OUR PERISHED CHILDREN



The composer has strived to express our shared pain over our children, students, and young friends who perished in battles for our fatherland or who were tortured by the enemy in occupied cities; but he also seeks to stir up in his listeners' memory an image of these young people as living beings, in their youth— from childhood dreams and play, from youthful unrequited love and aspirations, to the earliest real achievements of adulthood, and then their sudden deaths. The sections of the trio linked to the poetry of children's sufferings are built on a theme . . . that was composed at age of eight by the son of the composer, Fabi, now deceased.

MIKHAIL GNESSIN (1883-1957)

TRIO

IN MEMORY OF OUR PERISHED CHILDREN

JAQUELINE SEKI (VIOLIN)
WILLIAM HARRIS (CELLO)
ELLIS THOMAS (PIANO)