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SHOSTAKOVICH

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FIVE BALLET SUITES

SUITE FROM KATERINA ISMAILOVA
FESTIVE OVERTURE

ROYAL SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA

NEEME JÄRVI

DIGITAL



DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

COMPACT DISC ONE

Ballet Suite No. 1 (1949) (13:34)

Ballettsuite Nr. 1; Suite de ballet no. 1

- 1 I Lyric Waltz (2:14)
- 2 II Dance (1:38)
- 3 III Romance (3:02)
- 4 IV Polka (1:51)
- 5 V Waltz-Joke (2:57)
- 6 VI Galop (1:36)

Ballet Suite No. 2 (1951) (19:37)

Ballettsuite Nr. 2; Suite de ballet no. 2

- 7 I Waltz (2:13)
- 8 II Adagio (6:26)
Soloist: Timothy Waldon, cello
- 9 III Polka (2:14)
- 10 IV Sentimental Romance (2:56)
Soloist: John Gracie, trumpet
- 11 V Spring Waltz (from 'Michurin') (2:19)
- 12 VI Finale (3:21)

Ballet Suite No. 3 (1952) (15:46)

Ballettsuite Nr. 3; Suite de ballet no. 3

- 13 I Waltz (from 'The Human Comedy') (2:29)
- 14 II Gavotte (from 'The Human Comedy') (2:30)
- 15 III Dance (2:11)
- 16 IV Elegy (from 'The Human Comedy') (3:15)
- 17 V Waltz (2:07)
- 18 VI Galop (3:07)

Festive Overture Op. 96 (1947) (5:52)

Festliche Ouvertüre; Ouverture de Fête

2

TT = 55:12

COMPACT DISC TWO

Ballet Suite No. 4 (1953) (12:49)

Ballettsuite Nr. 4; Suite de ballet no. 4

- 1 I Introduction (Variation) (5:52)
- 2 II Waltz (3:24)
- 3 III Scherzo (3:27)

Ballet Suite No. 5 from 'The Bolt' Op. 27A (1931) (29:17)

Der Bolzen (Suite Nr. 5), Op. 27A; Suite tirée du ballet 'Le Boulon' Op. 27A

- 4 I Overture *Ouverture; Ouverture* (5:15)
- 5 II The Bureaucrat *Der Bürokrat; Le bureaucrate* (2:42)
- 6 III The Dance of the Drayman *Tanz des Rollführmanns; La danse du charretier* (1:40)
- 7 IV Kozelkov's Dance with friends *Koselkows Tanz mit Freunden; Danse de Kozelkov avec des amis* (5:17)
- 8 V Intermezzo (4:06)
- 9 VI Dance of Colonial Woman Slave *Tanz der Kolonialsklavin; Danse de l'esclave des Colonies* (3:31)
- 10 VII The Appeaser *Der Beschwichtiger; Le conciliateur* (3:19)
- 11 VIII General Dance and Apotheosis *Allgemeiner Tanz und Apotheose; Danse générale et apothéose* (3:16)

Suite from 'Katerina Ismailova'

(Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District) (1934/1962) (16:59)

Five Entr'actes:

- 12 I Allegretto (between scenes 1 and 2) (2:52)
- 13 II Allegro con brio (between scenes 2 and 3) (1:53)
- 14 III Largo (between scenes 4 and 5) (8:32)
- 15 IV Allegretto (between scenes 6 and 7) (1:37)
- 16 V Presto (between scenes 7 and 8) (2:00)

DDD

TT = 59:24

ROYAL SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA
NEEME JÄRVI, Conductor

3

ALL the music in this programme was first written before Shostakovich was 30 with the exception of the *Festive Overture* written in 1947, one movement of the second suite written in 1948 and middle movement of the fourth suite written in 1954, the last two extracted from film scores. The suites in which they were arranged date from later in the composer's career as does the version of the opera.

The young Dmitri Shostakovich was very much a child of the Russian revolution who wanted his music to serve the socialist state. 'I am a Soviet composer, and I see our epoch as something heroic' he wrote as a young man, and later added 'I consider that every artist who isolates himself from the world is doomed'. He came to maturity during that artistically highly fruitful period in Russia immediately after the death of Lenin. Shostakovich's *First Symphony*, written as a graduation exercise at the age of 19, while he was a pupil of Maximilian Steinberg at the Leningrad Conservatoire, gave him an international reputation. His youthful revolutionary fervour was channelled into music which was remarkably innovative. He quickly produced two further symphonies before the end of the twenties, both at first enormously popular. Such music exemplifies his aptitude for the popular media of the stage and screen into which he put considerable energies.

Shostakovich completed his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* at the age of 27, and it was produced in Moscow in January 1934 and again in Leningrad in May, reaching nearly 200 performances in all. Within a year it was seen in the USA, and in the pioneering season of 1936, the BBC gave a concert performance in English conducted by Albert Coates. In Russia and elsewhere it had been greeted with great enthusiasm, being given 83 times in Leningrad alone between 1934 and January 1936; in England it was received perhaps less deliriously. However the opera was to be the young composer's undoing, for in January 1936 Stalin attended a performance and it was immediately condemned in an editorial in *Pravda*. This single issue of a newspaper, Shostakovich tells us, 'changed my whole existence'. It only reappeared, sanitised as *Katerina Ismailova*, long after Stalin's death, in 1962. The original had to wait until the 1980s.

Shostakovich's suite from his opera consists of the entr'actes between some of the scenes. As well as allowing for scene changes these orchestral passages are dramatic links, giving an almost cinematic quality to its flow. Shostakovich was at pains to emphasise that in the opera his music always developed symphonically — 'the flow is always uninterrupted'. Thus the interludes establish psychological and musical connections while foreshadowing the action that follows.

Shostakovich saw Katerina Ismailova as a 'vigorous, talented, beautiful woman, who perishes in the dismal, cruel domestic environment of the Russia of merchants and serfs'. Katerina is married to a wealthy merchant Zinovy Ismailov, but he is feeble (she sings: 'all nature is bursting with life . . . only I have not been awakened. Only I am

dead with boredom') and she takes up with a young estate worker, Sergei. At the end of the first scene she encounters Sergei and bids her husband farewell, as Katerina's servant Aksinya chides Sergei. After the first interlude the second scene begins with some workmen, incited by the resentful Sergei, taunting Aksinya in a crude manner and trying to put her into a barrel. The interlude anticipates the horseplay while underlining the disquiet felt by Katerina at meeting Sergei, to whom she impulsively subsequently addresses an arioso. The headlong scherzo interlude that follows, combining a motif from her song with Sergei's responses, tells us how quickly their relationship develops. Later Katerina's father-in-law, Boris, who also has an eye for Katerina, catches Sergei climbing out of Katerina's bedroom and proceeds to flog him. Boris then demands food but Katerina gives him poison.

Scene four ends with a priest reading prayers over the dead Boris, but is cut short by the ensuing entr'acte between scenes four and five. This *Largo*, a powerful passacaglia, is worked to a tragic climax, and is the pivotal point of the opera. It develops a sense of evil and foreboding that heralds the fifth scene in which Sergei kills Katerina's husband, and the couple hide the body in the cellar. Both the remaining entr'actes might well be music to a silent film. The grotesque *Allegretto*, another typical driving scherzo, depicts a drunk, who breaking into the cellar looking for booze has found Zinovy's body. He rushes to the police station with his news. The policemen are Keystone cops figures and in the final *Presto* they and the drunk hurry to the Ismailovs' house. When they get there in scene eight Sergei's and Katerina's wedding feast is in full swing to a fast fugue derived from a motif in the interlude. In the final scene we see the convicts on the road to Siberia. Sergei transfers his attentions to another convict who Katerina pushes in the river, flinging herself after.

When Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* was banned in 1936, his ballet *The Limpid Stream* was also proscribed, though attracting less publicity. It was to this score that he turned in his first four ballet suites which Lev Atovmyan edited for publication. The first three took 4, 3 and 3 movements respectively from *The Limpid Stream*, while in the Fourth Suite the last movement also came from this source.

The First Suite also takes a movement from his earlier ballet *The Bolt* and the Third three movements from the incidental music he wrote for a play after Balzac's *Comédie humaine*. Two other movements, the opening movement of the First Suite and the central Waltz from the three-movement Fourth Suite, look to his early *Suite for Jazz Orchestra No. 1* of 1934 and the much later film *Song of the Great Rivers* of 1954. However, the Fifth Suite is quite different in that it is exclusively from the music for *The Bolt*, and was made by the composer at the time the ballet was first produced.

Svetl'i ruchei, in English *The Limpid Stream* or *Bright Stream*, is actually the name of a collective farm. It is harvest time, and from the music and the production photographs, it looks to have been fairly traditional: certainly

little of Shostakovich the young iconoclast can be heard in the score. Yet in spite of this it was still a victim of Shostakovich's fall from grace in 1936.

The action of *Bright Stream* takes place in the Russian farming region of Kuban known for wheat, maize and sunflower production. It involves collective farmers and performers who have come to the farm to provide entertainment. 'I would call it a choreographic comedy' Shostakovich remarked. The ballet had been a success when first seen at the Maly Opera House in Leningrad in April 1935. This was Shostakovich's third ballet and he was pinning considerable hopes on it. In November it was seen in Moscow, but it was not banned until after *Lady Macbeth* had fallen foul of Stalin, who presumably never heard it. After the work was withdrawn it was forgotten until after the Second World War, when Atovmyan assembled eleven of its movements as the main thread of the first four ballet suites of light music, and as such they were published consecutively between 1950 and 1953.

The Fifth Suite comprises eight movements from Shostakovich's three-act ballet *The Bolt*, written in 1930-1931 and first performed by the Kirov Opera and Ballet Theatre, Leningrad, on 8 April 1931. The setting is a Soviet factory: drunken workers are sacked and in revenge one tries to sabotage a lathe by persuading the operator to drop a bolt into the machine. At the last minute the machinist repents and the saboteur is arrested. The music is extremely vivid in the composer's headlong rhythmic poster-pantomime style, satirising the petit-bourgeois. It may be significant that it was preceded in his output by the film score *Alone* whose sound track excluded all dialogue, and was followed by the incidental music for Adrian Piotrovsky's satirical play *Rule Britannia*.

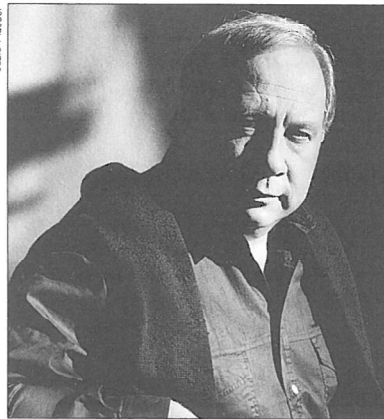
In 1931 the composer extracted the suite of eight movements here recorded, which was first performed in Leningrad in January 1933. The following year Shostakovich revised the suite for publication, deleting movements 6 and 7 and using less explicit titles. The music consists of a succession of caricatures. The overture is heralded portentously by a three-trumpet fanfare, and self-important gesturing by the full orchestra, and then runs away in a contrasting *Allegro*, followed by a cheeky duet for flute and bassoon. The momentum is maintained (as it is for most of the suite) by the music for the dull bureaucrat ('Polka' in the revision). We now have humour of the trombone glissando kind, characterised by extremes of the piccolo and bassoon register. The composer eventually launches into a typical galop. The Drayman's dance (just 'variations' in the Collected Edition) has more trombone 'rhubarbs' and a galumphing dance from the whole orchestra. Kozelkov dances with his friends (later 'Tango') in an extremely sectional piece, presumably each section characterising a different friend. The spoof slow opening threatens to become a gorgeous waltz, but instead becomes an equally slow tango before the tempo increases to the inevitable invigorating galop.

The gentle, lyrical, *Intermezzo* is quite literally an interlude, followed by the reflective lyricism and pleading cor anglais of the colonial slave. While this brings a moment of repose in a generally urgent and brittle score, even here the composer cannot resist interposing frenetic running strings before returning to the elegiac cor anglais tune.

The seventh movement is a brilliant extended xylophone solo, apparently depicting a figure of fun; the Russian title has been variously translated as 'yes-man' or 'the conciliator' — 'appeaser' conveys the sense. Shostakovich rounds off this high spirited music with a cheerful tune in the extrovert fast finale, ending with another galop over oompa bass, all written in great haste in response to the demands of the theatre.

The songful *Festive Overture* dates from 1947 and is socialist realism at its extrovert best. First performed on 6 November 1954 it was written for the 30th anniversary of the October Revolution but not performed until the 37th celebration. Shostakovich said he wanted to 'convey the feelings of a man who has experienced the hardship of the war years' and 'the enthusiasm of peaceful labour at the construction projects of the new five-year plan'.

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NEEME JÄRVI

• **A Chandos Digital Recording**

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