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**Chandos**

**DIGITAL**

# SHOSTAKOVICH

**PIANO QUINTET** in G minor Op.57  
**PIANO TRIO NO. 2** in E minor Op.67

**THE BORODIN TRIO**

with Mimi Zweig (violin) Jerry Horner (viola)





## Dubinsky remembers..

"Perhaps in the whole history of the Soviet Union, the year 1940, that is the year before Germany invaded, was relatively 'quiet', like the calm before the storm. The 'Red Terror' of the first years of the revolution had passed, millions of peasants had been rounded up, because of the 'collectivization' during 1929/30 and deported from their lands to Siberia. Political trials of the years 1935/36 had passed and the wave of mass arrests which threatened to engulf the whole country had retreated during 1937/38.

In 1939 Hitler's Germany signed a 'non-aggression and friendship pact', the word 'fascism' was withdrawn from circulation and the 'Bolshoi' theatre produced Wagnerian operas in honour of Hitler. It seemed there was a respite and life became more relaxed. Caviar of all kinds was being sold in shops at reasonable prices and one saw more smiles on the faces of the people. Shostakovich wrote a quintet for piano and string orchestra Opus 57. We often called Shostakovich 'Pimen' after the chronicler of Pushkin's tragedy *Boris Godunov*. During the Soviet rule of course, Pimen would have paid with his life for his 'zealous, anonymous toil' and 'true legends'.

The compositions of Shostakovich as a musical reflection of this time epitomize a civilized force and give insight into social pathos. It is not surprising that the Soviet Powers twice prohibited the performance of his music during his lifetime. But having given permission later on, they made their task more difficult, because the truth about the Soviet Union began to penetrate through the music of Shostakovich straight into the hearts of the people of the whole world.

The first performance of the Quintet was on the 23rd November 1940 in the 'Small Hall' of the Moscow Academy of Music. The composer and the Beethoven Quartet performed. For a time the Quintet overshadowed even such events as the football matches between the main teams; the Quintet was discussed in trams, people tried to sing in the streets the second defiant theme of the finale.

War which soon started completely changed the life of the country as well as the consciousness of the people. If previously there was a faint hope of a better life, and a hope that the 'sacrifices' of the revolution were not in vain this hope was fated never to return. The Quintet remained in the consciousness of the people as the last ray of light before the future sank into a dark gloom."

"...The 2nd World War was coming to an end, but inside the Soviet Union a new war against its own people was only beginning with a new force. The 'Cosmopolitanism' campaign was in progress and a newly-coined word-combination 'Rootless cosmopolit' had just appeared. Not quite able to understand what these words were supposed to mean, people would substitute for them the simpler word 'Jew'. Institute doors were closing for young Jews one after the other, Jews were gradually prevented from taking administrative jobs, then simply any kind of work altogether. At the Conservatory several Jewish teachers were fired and Russians invited to take their places. Mendlessohn's portrait in the Big Hall of the Conservatory disappeared from its vault. Newspapers began to prepare public opinion. Each day articles with specially picked Jewish names would appear. This would arouse people, give direction to their thoughts and actions, allowing them to insult Jews on the streets with impunity. Officially, anti-semitism was against the law, there was even a specific article forbidding it in the Soviet Constitution, but the thought of referring to it seriously would not enter anyone's mind. Jews were living in a constantly growing state of alarm, and, to hide it, would whisper significant anecdotes to each other. Such jokes would relieve tension briefly; Jews would hide their fear behind them and continued to lay their heads submissively under the unceasing blows of fate..."

Shostakovich created the Trio Op. 67 in 1944. The opening night was in Moscow. At the first performance the composer and members of the Beethoven Quartet, D. Tzyganov and S. Shirinski played. The music left a devastating impression. People cried openly. The last, the 'Jewish Part' of the Trio, by popular acclaim had to be repeated. An embarrassed, nervous Shostakovich repeatedly came onto the stage and bowed awkwardly...

After the first performance it was forbidden to play the Trio. Nobody was surprised. The Trio not only expressed music, something else was there, as if it were a truthful interpretation of our reality. Only instead of words there were musical sounds.

To translate these sounds into words is an ungrateful task. All the more because every listener interprets music in his own way. But if after the execution of the Trio the whole audience is depressingly silent and does not hurry to applaud, does it not say that the bitter tale of the much abused composer has been heard and understood?

Officially the Trio has no programme. But having closely worked with Shostakovich



for 30 years, having played all his string Quartets, repeatedly having played together his Quintet, how could one not understand what he felt and what he wanted to say with his music?

And yet if one wants to express the music of the Trio in words, its very beginning sounds like an anxious premonition of misfortune. We feel how it overwhelms us without mercy and eventually in the second part of the Scherzo there is a burst of fiendish, destructive dance of death. In the 3rd part, the Passacaglia, one hears bloodcurdling piano cords. Is it not the sound of a hammer on a piece of railway line which tells the prisoners of the concentration camp, that 'One more day in the life of Ivan Denisovich' has started? While this evil sound resounds across the hall as if in a concentration camp, the violin and cello weep, rather pray for the people who perished.

The finale of the Trio is its culmination and also one of the culminations of Shostakovich himself. The Jewish motif in it reaches the height of a powerful angry protest. The civic courage of an artist who dares to tell the truth and who for this in 4 years time will be culturally condemned to death, has no parallel in the whole history of Russian music during the Soviet period.

The Finale develops continually increasing in tension, achieving in chamber music a rarely attained nuance 'FFF'. When it seems that all means of expression are exhausted the violin and cello unexpectedly become mute. Then in deathly agony a wail escapes from a throat strangled by an iron hand.

The Trio ends with the initial Jewish motif disappearing into a state of non-existence like a question mark about the fate of the whole nation.

"...The Jews were celebrating. They would congratulate each other with being saved, embrace each other on the streets, weeping with happiness and talk loudly Yiddish. And the cause for their celebration was more than sufficient. The last artillery salvos from Stalin's funeral had not stopped echoing when the newspapers already carried the news of the close of the 'Case of the Doctors' and of their full vindication. The many-year-long dread of the entire Jewry being sent into exile to the far East, to Birobirzhan, was disappearing. Everyone knew that in the barren *taiga* barracks were already being built for them. We could never completely believe that such a fate would be in store for absolutely all the Jews. To substantiate as unarguable proof of this the names of Oistrakh Gilels, Ehrenburg, Botvinnik, and other famous and extremely popular

Jewish names would be offered. It would be agreed that people such as those would not of course, be touched, but what awaits the other three million people?

It gradually became known that the trial of the Jewish doctors, two years in preparation, was to have begun in the summer of 1953. By Stalin's plan they were to be publicly hung on Red Square and subsequently to 'save' the Jewry of Russia from 'the people's justified wrath', to resettle the Jews far from Moscow. A total evacuation was being planned, involving special railways with trains of fifty and more cars in each. A hundred kilometers out, special forces were to select one hundred men from the train and send them for work on the land. The wives and children would be told that they were needed for some kind of urgent governmental task and that their husbands and fathers would rejoin them further on. These hundred were to be taken away from the work along the railway, be given shovels and ordered to dig out a ditch. At night they were to be lined up along its edge, quickly shot, thrown into the ditch, the ditch quickly filled over with the rest of the land, and wild flowers planted on top. By morning not a trace would be left of this monstrous dispensation of justice. And in another hundred kilometers to the east this picture was to be repeated and the next hundred men, performing 'an urgent governmental task' would similarly find their eternal rest. Russia is an enormous land and the way to the East a long one. According to Stalin's plan, only women, children, and old men were to reach 'the promised land', where without the men, in the inhumanly difficult conditions of life on the *taiga*, they would imminently perish.

Everything would have been just so, as it was thought up by the 'vozhd', the leader. Nothing could have obstructed his will, and the plan would have been executed with the speed and the efficiency of a machine. Then the implementers of this operation would themselves be liquidated, and there would not be a single witness left of this extermination of an entire people. Only the price of building 'a model Socialist society' would have increased by another three million lives. It took the death of one person to save the lives of millions. The salvation seemed like a real miracle, as if some other, supernatural forces had become involved in the life here on earth, as at some time long long ago, in the Bible, God had taken the Jews under His protection. But then how could He have let another six million of His people perish during the war?"



Shostakovich died on the 9th August 1975. He never spoke about his music, never explained it, but was always excited and happy when the musicians understood it and only after his death do we read in his book of reminiscences — *Testimony*,  
"My music says it all"...

**These extracts are from Rostislav Dubinsky's book *Not by Music Alone*.**

Shostakovich was a capable pianist and even went so far as to enter the Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw two years after the appearance of the First Symphony in 1925 had launched him on a successful career as a composer. He recorded both his piano concertos and the two works on the present disc, and maintained a presence on the concert platform well into the late 1950s. His Piano Quintet arose from his association with the Beethoven String Quartet who had given the Moscow première of his First String Quartet of 1938. The 1930s had been eventful and productive years for Shostakovich, albeit clouded by the controversy unleashed by the opera, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. This brought in its wake the Fifth Symphony, subtitled 'A Soviet Artist's Reply to Just Criticism' and a change of emphasis and direction rather than style.

Admittedly the high norm of dissonance one encounters in the Fourth Symphony was displaced by the simpler harmonic language of the Fifth, and by the first Quartet and the present work. These same years saw the international situation deteriorate rapidly and by the time of the Sixth Symphony (1939) war had engulfed most of Europe. Whatever its programmatic aspirations, the first movement of the Sixth Symphony graphically expresses the appalling sense of despondency and desolation the war years were to arouse. After the symphony, first heard in the autumn of 1939 and the completion of two film scores, Shostakovich turned to the quintet: he himself took part in its first performance with the Beethoven Quartet in November 1940. By the side of the dark, brooding atmosphere of the first movement of the Sixth Symphony, the Piano Quintet strikes a note of grave serenity.

The five-movement layout was one that appears to have interested Shostakovich at this time: the Eighth and Ninth symphonies are so constructed and so, too, is the post-war Third String Quartet. Shostakovich's keyboard writing is distinguished by great simplicity: lines are often doubled two octaves below and there is little complex chromatic inter-part writing to thicken the sound. Hence this serves to enhance the effectiveness and above all, clarity of the texture, which is the distinguishing feature of the piece. The *Prelude* opens much in the style of a Bach prelude; the piano's imposing entry is answered by the quartet, after which the mood changes and a related idea in 3/8 comments somewhat playfully on the main idea. Finally the opening reasserts its authority and dignity. The fugue itself is based on the idea of simple serene contour which builds up a climax of real lyrical intensity. The opening idea of the *Prelude* interrupts its course briefly but the movement as a whole is of great lyrical strength and

striking beauty. The brilliant scherzo that follows serves as a foil to the gravity of the fugue and its gaiety and wit serve as a reminder of the Shostakovich of the Cello Sonata or the *Polka* from *The Age of Gold*, a side of Shostakovich's personality that has never been muted for long at a time. The fourth movement is restrained in feeling and colour, tinged with regret and an emotion all the more powerful for being recounted in tranquillity. It leads into a finale, cast in a sonata mould, in which gentle (and at times almost robust) good humour, whimsy and wit are the victors.

The piano trio is one of the most exacting media in all chamber music and poses problems of balance that have daunted all but the greatest masters. Indeed, relatively few piano trios after Schubert and Mendelssohn show their composers completely at ease in the medium. In the present century Ravel's Trio is a distinguished exception to which one could perhaps add that of Fauré, and certainly the present work. There is an earlier trio, in C minor, composed in 1923 and listed as Op.8. It is in one continuous movement, with alternating fast and slow sections, but its language is not particularly characteristic.

The Piano Trio in E minor dates from 1944, the same year as the Second Quartet; both works had their first performance at the same concert, and like the Eighth Symphony, it bears the imprint of its times. The sufferings and tragedies of war hover very much in the background. The dedication is to the memory of a close friend, Ivan Sollertinsky, who had died in a Nazi camp in 1944; the moments of gaiety and triviality have the air of a mask assumed to disguise feeling. The opening of the first movement is highly original: plaintive melody is heard on cello harmonics *con sord.* and the effect is undoubtedly a haunting one. The Andante introduction treats the material in fugato fashion though the movement as a whole is in a clearly-defined sonata design. It is in this movement, I think, even more than in some of the orchestral works, that the parallel with Mahler is most striking: material which is outwardly cheap or commonplace is invested with significance by the ambiguities of the emotional context in which it is placed. And the Trio has the same discipline and harmony that distinguishes works like the Piano Quintet (1940) and the First Quartet (1938) for all its wartime background.

The scherzo has something of a rondo character and its robustness has a slightly forced gaiety and brightness. The third movement is a passacaglia with six statements of the theme which modulates from B flat minor to B minor before being pulled back to its tonic. It is into this movement that Shostakovich pours the most deeply-felt inspiration in

the work. The B, on its last appearance, becomes the dominant of the finale, which returns us to E, the key of the whole work. The finale is a kind of sonata-rondo but its light-hearted mocking has uneasy overtones. As Dmitri Rabinovich in his study of the composer has said, "in the Trio, the mocking executioner and the defenceless victim merge into one musical image", and he suggests that this has its origins in the atrocities of the Nazi death camps and the stories of how the SS made their victims dance on their own graves. It is a measure of his artistic achievement that Shostakovich makes no artistic capital out of these sufferings but it would be inconceivable that they should not register.

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**THE BORODIN TRIO** – a renowned ensemble whose violinist is Rostislav Dubinsky who was for thirty years first violinist of the celebrated Borodin String Quartet. The Trio was formed after the three musicians – Dubinsky with Luba Edlina (piano) and Yuli Turovsky (cello) – left Russia in 1976.

**LUBA EDLINA** is especially noted for her brilliant performances and recording with the original Borodin String Quartet. When she was studying with Jakob Flier at the Moscow Conservatory she met fellow student Rostislav Dubinsky and they were later married. During her 20-year association with the Quartet, she was permitted to appear with them in the West only once, when they gave a rapturously acclaimed concert in the Palace of Versailles. She and her husband now live in the U.S.A. where they both hold teaching posts at Indiana University.

**ROSTISLAV DUBINSKY**, after completing his studies with Abraham Yampolsky at the Moscow Conservatory in 1944, became first violinist of the newly-formed Moscow Conservatory Quartet, later known as the Borodin String Quartet. The ensemble received the Russian decoration for 25 years of service as 'Musical Artists of Great Merit' in 1968, and by 1976 when he left the Soviet Union with his wife Luba Edlina, the Borodin Quartet had given some 3000 concerts around the world. During this period he became a celebrated chamber music coach, preparing a number of prize-winning



groups for international competition, and he is now Director of Chamber Music at the University of Indiana School of Music, Bloomington in the U.S.A. Mr. Dubinsky and Ms. Edlina also now perform in concert and on record as The Dubinsky Duo.

**YULITUROVSKY**, who studied with Galina Kozolupova at the Moscow Conservatory, was a cello soloist with the Moscow Chamber Orchestra under Rudolf Barshai, appearing with them on international tours until his emigration from the Soviet Union in 1976. While still in Russia, he made a number of recordings both as a soloist and in chamber groups with such musicians as Vladimir Spivakov – with whom he appeared in 1979 at the Mostly Mozart Festival in the Lincoln Center in New York. He has lived in Montreal since 1976 where he now teaches at the Conservatoire du Musique. He also gives concerts with his wife Eleonora who plays the violin and viola.

**MIMI ZWEIG** appears often in chamber music performances with such noted artists as Janos Starker, Erik Friedman, Eliot Chapo and Jaime Laredo, as well as with such ensembles as the Fine Arts Quartet and the Borodin Trio. Ms. Zweig was a student of Louis Krasner, Raphael Bronstein and Tadeusz Wronski. She is a colleague of Rostislav Dubinsky and Luba Edlina at Indiana University, where she is also a member of the faculty of the School of Music.

**JERRY HORNER** is violist of the Fine Arts Quartet and a member of the faculty of the University of Wisconsin/Milwaukee where the Quartet is in residence. He was a student of David Dawson and William Primrose. A solo artist as well as a chamber player, Mr. Horner has appeared with the Pittsburgh and Dallas Symphony Orchestras and performed with such noted conductors as William Steinberg and James Levine. He is often guest violist with chamber ensembles and has joined the Borodin Trio on several occasions.

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## DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-75)

### Piano Quintet in G minor, Op. 57

TT = 35:54

- |   |                         |       |
|---|-------------------------|-------|
| 1 | 1. Prelude (Lento)      | 4:44  |
| 2 | 2. Fugue (Adagio)       | 12:13 |
| 3 | 3. Scherzo (Allegretto) | 3:47  |
| 4 | 4. Intermezzo (Lento)   | 7:21  |
| 5 | 5. Finale (Allegretto)  | 7:34  |

### Piano Trio No. 2. in E minor, Op. 67

TT: = 29:33

- |   |                       |       |
|---|-----------------------|-------|
| 6 | 1. Andante – Moderato | 8:14  |
| 7 | 2. Allegro non troppo | 3:33  |
| 8 | 3. Largo –            | 6:06  |
| 9 | 4. Allegretto         | 11:26 |

DDD

### THE BORODIN TRIO

with Mimi Zweig (violin) Jerry Horner (viola)



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