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Abstract

Can music that is regulated and restrained by a dictator still be inspired? This question reveals ideology concerning how music should be created and valued. Does outside control restrict artistic integrity and autonomy? Not all composers have been free to write whatever their soul demands. People in authority have held power and control over artistic processes. Dmitri Shostakovich was a Russian composer whose work was subjected to the tastes of a tyrannical ruler and Communist party. Though Shostakovich did not compose in an environment that fostered musical exploration, his work should not be mourned but celebrated. Shostakovich was not a victim, but a victor of his music by the way he composed in the midst of the threat of denouncement. Though Shostakovich wrote music to follow the demands of others, the music was still his by the very fact that he created it; he brought it into existence and highlighted it with nuances of his being and personality as he produced each work. This research examines three critical pieces of Shostakovich's canon to ascertain whether controlled art subjected to the whims, preferences, and objectives of others can still be inspired. Though a composer might be told what to say, it is he who chooses how to word a phrase. Shostakovich's output, particularly the first symphony, his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, and fifth symphony exemplify that restrained and restricted music does not necessitate a sacrifice in artistic integrity; it can be inspired, celebrated, and worthy of study.

Keywords

Soviet Union, USSR, Stalin, Shostakovich, formalism, Socialist Realism

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Altered but not Silenced:
How Shostakovich Retained His Voice
as an Artist despite the Demands of a Dictator

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From the time of Gregorian chant to the period of Mozart and Haydn, most composers wrote for one of two institutions: the church or patrons. Therefore, whoever supported a composer dictated his output. Bach's position as the musical director and cantor in Leipzig required that he write a cantata a week for regular and special church services. When Haydn worked at the Esterháza estate, his contract required him to compose any music his employer demanded. Every composition he wrote became the property of his patron. Up until this point most composers wrote to fulfill a need of their employer, but Beethoven transformed the ideology concerning composers. He composed as a means of self-expression, passion, and experience free from the constraints and demands of an employer. This revolutionary composer altered the perceptions of how composers should write music and what should motivate their compositions. From this perspective in history, inspired music must not be regulated from an outside source. Instead it should be motivated by passions in one's inner being.

In spite of this shift, not all composers since Beethoven have been free to write as they please. Dmitri Shostakovich faced formidable rules and regulations as a composer in Soviet Russia. If he did not follow the demands of Stalin, his dictatorial patron, the consequences could be

fatal.¹ The threat of death served as a perpetual warning for those who did not submit to the proper authorities. Millions of people died during this time period by being executed, imprisoned, or starved.² In the midst of this environment Shostakovich was told what he could write, but in the end he chose how to interpret and incorporate these instructions. Even though Shostakovich wrote music to follow the demands of others, the music was still his by the fact that he created it; he brought it into existence and colored it with nuances of his being and personality as he produced each work.

The expectations of Shostakovich's position exerted constraints on his compositions, but the worth of his music cannot be discounted because it was written under the demands of Stalin and the Soviet Union. Though Stalin and his regime curbed certain aspects of his musical style, Shostakovich's skill as a composer was not suppressed, but brought out in the ways he found to meet the demands of the situation and stay true to his pursuit as an artist. Boris Schwarz contends that the conflict forged and matured Shostakovich's composing talent and strength.³ His musical voice was not silenced, but altered. Shostakovich's output, particularly the First Symphony, the opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, and the Fifth Symphony exemplify that regulated music does not necessitate a sacrifice in artistic integrity; it can be inspired, celebrated, and worthy of study.

To understand the environment that Shostakovich faced one must first understand crucial aspects of the Soviet Union and Stalinism. The Bolshevik party overthrew the former tsarist rule in October 1917 with the hopes of establishing a "dictatorship of the proletariat."⁴ Joseph Stalin rose to power in 1922 when he was elected as a member of the

¹ Vsevolod Meyerhold spoke boldly against the government's policy of art and declared it "achieved nothing more than the destruction of Russian art and culture." After this statement he was arrested and never heard from again; his wife was brutally murdered a few weeks later. Richard Leonard, *A History of Russian Music* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 291.

² David Hoffmann, ed. *Stalinism* (Malden: Blackwell, 2003), 161-162.

³ Boris Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia 1917-1970* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973), 63.

⁴ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 16.

Secretariat and given the title of General Secretary.⁵ He used this position to develop political strength, find allies, and defeat his leading competitors. By 1928 he had formed a dictatorship that would define Russian history for the next twenty-five years and continue to influence the culture and government after his death in 1953.

The Soviet philosophy towards music was articulated before Stalin came to power by Lenin. “Every artist, everyone who considers himself an artist, has the right to create freely according to his ideal, independently of everything, however, we are Communists and we must not stand with folded hands and let chaos develop as it pleases. We must systematically guide this process and form its result.”⁶ It is noteworthy that Lenin chose the word “chaos” because this is the very denigration that Shostakovich later faced in Stalin’s era. Malt Rolf compares the “Sovietized” culture created under Stalin as a hall of mirrors. He states, “Although extensive in quantity, [cultural items] were limited with regard to subjects, themes, and composing elements. Official culture under Stalin allowed no or little reference to anything outside the sanctioned Soviet symbolic cosmos.”⁷ This was the regime, mindset, and culture that Shostakovich confronted and under which he composed.

The life of this great composer began on September 25, 1906 when Dmitri Shostakovich was born to Dmitri Sr. and Sonya Shostakovich.⁸ Sonya was a musician and had been enrolled in the Conservatory of Music at St. Petersburg University when she and Dmitri Sr. met. Even from a young age, Dmitri Shostakovich exhibited musical skill. An anecdotal story from his childhood tells of Dmitri’s mother taking him

⁵ Ronald Suny, “Stalin and his Stalinism: Power and Authority in the Soviet Union, 1930-53,” In *Stalinism and Nazism: Dictatorships in Comparison*, ed. Ian Kershawn and Moshe Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 31.

⁶ Vladimir Lenin. “O Kulture I Iskusstve,” (Moscow, 1957) 519-520, As in *A History of Russian-Soviet Music*, James Bakst (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1977), 275.

⁷ Malte Rolf, “A Hall of Mirrors: Sovietizing Culture under Stalinism,” *Slavic Review* 68, no.3 (2009): 601, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25621659>.

⁸ Roy Blokker and Robert Dearling, *The Music of Dmitry Shostakovich, the Symphonies* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1979), 17.

to an opera by Rimsky-Korsakov. After one hearing Shostakovich could recount almost the entire score.⁹ Sonya Shostakovich instilled within Dmitri an appreciation for the labor involved in creating music and the benefits that can be reaped from such an effort. “She believed that art meant hard work and concentrated effort for those willing and able to pursue it, and she always encouraged such a calling for anyone who was ready.”¹⁰ Shostakovich was ready with the talent and the willingness to learn.

In 1919, two years after the February and October revolutions, Shostakovich’s parents enrolled him in the Petrograd Conservatory to study music.¹¹ The head of the school, impressed by a number of piano pieces Shostakovich had composed, placed him in both piano and composition classes. He studied piano under the direction of L. Nikolayev, considered to be one of the foremost piano instructors.¹² Maximilian Steinberg, the son-in-law of Rimsky Korsakov, taught him composition.¹³ The talent and skill evident since Shostakovich’s early childhood manifested themselves at the Conservatory. “[T]he thirteen-year-old Shostakovich found himself with peers several years his senior. Yet he stood out, and not just because of his youth. His ability to absorb the precepts of four-part writing, keyboard harmony, and aural dictation was apparently extraordinary.”¹⁴ Shostakovich excelled at the Conservatory in his musical studies and benefited from the interest Nikolayev invested in his compositions. Nikolayev instructed his students in the technical aspects of music, but also fostered “a holistic aesthetic understanding of music.”¹⁵ Shostakovich developed an excellent base of technical and aesthetic musical skills at the Petrograd Conservatory.

In addition to formal musical training, life experiences shaped Shostakovich and his music. After the death of Shostakovich’s father in 1922 his family began to feel the effects of the Revolution and the depressed economy of the USSR. Richard Leonard states, “The life of

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Blokker and Dearling, *The Symphonies*, 17-18.

¹¹ Michael Mishra, *A Shostakovich Companion* (Westport: Praeger, 2008), 39.

¹² James Bakst, *A History of Russian-Soviet Music* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1977), 305

¹³ Mishra, *A Shostakovich Companion*, 40.

¹⁴ Ibid., 39.

¹⁵ Ibid., 49.

the Shostakovich family during the post-revolution years was one of continuous misfortune, illness, and privation.”¹⁶ His family struggled collectively to fight off the plagues of poverty including cold, malnourishment, and crowded living quarters. Shostakovich struggled personally in fighting tuberculosis, the treatment of which included two surgeries and a trip to a sanatorium.¹⁷ However, it was through these personal trials that Shostakovich became intimately acquainted with the suffering and poverty that the common people faced as a result of the USSR’s birth.¹⁸

Shostakovich initially caught the attention of the Soviet government with the composition of his First Symphony which he began at the age of nineteen and finished a year later in 1926.¹⁹ This symphony, though conceived as his graduation thesis from the Conservatory, was critically acclaimed. “The audience approved of the work so heartily that they called upon the orchestra to encore the Scherzo, and both Shostakovich and conductor Malko were cheered for after curtain call.”²⁰ Shostakovich underestimated the wide appeal that his symphony would soon have. He described the night of his symphony’s premier in a letter to his mother. “It was a success though not a huge one...Everyone said the concert was very good. But I say that the concert was partially good. The first part (my symphony) was bad.”²¹ Subsequent premieres in Moscow and Berlin followed the initial premiere in Leningrad. Later premieres were given in Vienna and the United States.

The symphony is arranged with the traditional four movements, but it is intended to be played through without the traditional pauses between movements.²² The orchestration is sparse at points, illustrating the immature but growing knowledge of a student. Shostakovich understood and worked within the limitations of his youth and lack of

¹⁶ Richard A Leonard, *A History of Russian Music* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 322.

¹⁷ Blokker and Dearling, *The Symphonies*, 19.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 20.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Laurel E. Fay, ed., *Shostakovich and His World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 19.

²² Blokker and Dearling, *The Symphonies*, 43.

experience while simultaneously demonstrated his self-confidence.²³ Though his developing style and skill are evident, the symphony illustrates the burgeoning talent and imagination of the young composer. Varied and transformed themes lend structure and style to the piece; a skill that became characteristic of his style.²⁴ “Shostakovich is a master of thematic development. He exhausts every motivic and rhythmic element of a theme with a convincing inexorable logic.”²⁵ Blokker and Dearing describe the passing of themes between instruments as “clowning...always with the threat of musical anarchy.”²⁶ There is a certain grotesque quality to some of the themes, but overall the symphony evokes an energized, optimistic, and determined attitude.²⁷

The success of the First Symphony transformed Shostakovich from an unknown composer to one praised within his own country and abroad. It thrust him into the eyes of the public and placed him on the radar of Soviet leaders. “The Soviet government was quick to notice its *first* truly talented, totally Soviet artist, and was certain to make use of him.”²⁸ Music can be an incredibly powerful tool in the hands of a dictatorial leadership. Music holds the power to stir a nation, incite pride for a homeland, and provoke implicit prejudice against outsiders. The Soviet government originally supported Shostakovich in hopes that he could become a musical and artistic leader and representative.²⁹ This event marks the beginning of the tenuous relationship between Shostakovich and the Soviet Union led by Stalin.

Following the success of his First Symphony and his graduation from the Conservatory, Soviet officials commissioned Shostakovich in 1927 to write a symphony to celebrate and commemorate the ten-year anniversary of the October Revolution.³⁰ The next two years represent a flurry of compositional activity and a continued exploration of a dissonant and modern style. Shostakovich did not limit himself to one

²³ Ibid., 42.

²⁴ Bakst, *A History of Russian-Soviet Music*, 310.

²⁵ Ibid., 308.

²⁶ Blokker and Dearling, *The Symphonies*, 43.

²⁷ Bakst, *A History of Russian-Soviet Music*, 311.

²⁸ Blokker and Dearling, *The Symphonies*, 21.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Leonard, *A History of Russian Music*, 325.

style or genre. He composed music for ballets, films, plays, and in 1927-1928 he wrote his first opera, *The Nose*. “*The Nose* would be the first attempt at a domestically produced, modernist opera as well as the first Soviet opera of any standing not to employ a revolutionary or “Soviet” theme.”³¹

Shostakovich finished his second complete opera in 1932.³² This opera and its reception by the public, Soviet Union, and Stalin himself mark a decisive point in Shostakovich’s composing career. He titled his opera *The Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* and intended it to be the first of four Russian operas describing and illustrating the fate of women at different times in Russian history.³³ “The basic theme would be women, the Russian woman, depicted as the victim of her decadent surroundings through the past century and emerging in the fourth opera as ‘the Soviet heroine of today.’”³⁴ The libretto of *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* is derived from a story written by the Russian author Nicholas Leskov.³⁵ The plot follows the murderous and adulterous exploits of central “heroine” Katerina Izmailova.³⁶ Shostakovich titled the opera a “tragic satire” and used it to portray the characters Katerina and her lover with shocking realism.³⁷

The opera premiered at the Maly Opera Theater in Leningrad on January 22, 1934³⁸ and the two days later in Moscow.³⁹ The opera continued with performances throughout various cities in Western Europe and even debuted in America with the Cleveland Orchestra in

³¹ Mishra, *A Shostakovich Companion*, 59.

³² Bakst, *A History of Russian-Soviet Music*, 312.

³³ Mishra, *A Shostakovich Companion*, 73-74.

³⁴ Leonard, *A History of Russian Music*, 329.

³⁵ Bakst, *A History of Russian-Soviet Music*, 312.

³⁶ Katerina Izmailova, a married woman, poisons her father-in-law when he discovers her in the midst of an affair. Later she strangles her husband to remain with her lover Sergei. The two are sent to a Serbian prison when the body of her late husband is found. While in prison, Sergei seduces another woman. During a fight with her rival, Katerina kills the woman by jumping into a river and dragging the other woman with her, thus killing herself and ending the opera. Leonard, *A History of Russian Music*, 328.

³⁷ Bakst, *A History of Russian-Soviet Music*, 313.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Solomon Volkov, *Shostakovich and Stalin: The Extraordinary Relationship between the Great Composers and the Brutal Dictator*, trans. Antonina W. Bouis. (New York: Knopf, 2004), 97.

1935.⁴⁰ Similar to Shostakovich's First Symphony, *Lady Macbeth* was widely and positively received. Its run in Leningrad consisted of over fifty performances in the first year with only standing room available.⁴¹ Members of both right and left sides of the culturally elite initially praised the musical genius of Shostakovich; there were even allusions and comparisons to Mozart.⁴² Following the opening performance in Moscow the theater administration released a special proclamation that praised the "brilliant flowering of Soviet operatic creativity" on the authority of the "Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party."⁴³ The opera proved to be an enormous success in its first two years.

Three distinct music qualities of *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* are the tunefulness of the melodies, the integral use of the orchestra, and the blatant portrayal of realism through the music. Instead of following the recitative and arioso styles he used in *The Nose*, Shostakovich stressed the importance of the voice in this opera. He insisted that "there must be singing...all the vocal parts in *Lady Macbeth* are in the nature of cantilena, songful."⁴⁴ Beneath the singers, the orchestra provides a continuous and vital fabric of sound. Shostakovich described the orchestra as giving a "symphonic" nature to his opera.⁴⁵ Implementing the combined forces of the singers and the orchestra, Shostakovich fully depicted the personalities and actions of his characters. "The vileness, the sensuality of his characters, their hypocrisy, vulgarity, and appalling cruelty, even their gross acts of fornication are all illustrated in the music."⁴⁶ The violence, crudeness, and eroticism in the opera's themes led to tensions between Shostakovich and the Soviet ideals of appropriate music.

The fatal blow against *Lady Macbeth* fell on January 28, 1936.⁴⁷ The *Pravda*, the official Party newspaper, published an unsigned editorial article that denounced the opera as confusion or chaos, depending on

⁴⁰ Leonard, *A History of Russian Music*, 330.

⁴¹ Volkov, *Shostakovich and Stalin*, 98.

⁴² Volkov, *Shostakovich and Stalin*, 97-98.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Mishra, *A Shostakovich Companion*, 74.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Leonard, *A History of Russian Music*, 329.

⁴⁷ Gerald Abraham, *Eight Soviet Composers* (London; Oxford University Press, 1943), 25.

the translation, instead of music.⁴⁸ The article flagrantly condemned the opera. “From the first minute the listener is shocked by deliberate dissonance, by a confused stream of sounds....Here we have ‘Leftist’ confusion instead of natural human music....[Shostakovich] ignored the demand of Soviet culture that all coarseness and wildness be abolished from every corner of Soviet life.”⁴⁹ The specific charge against the opera was formalism. “Formalism meant art for art’s sake, as opposed to art with a message. It meant art for the few instead of for the many.”⁵⁰ The government endorsed a system of culture titled Socialist Realism. Socialist Realism, a term first formulated and defined in 1934 at the First All Union Congress of Writers,⁵¹ delineated what the status quo should be for artists. Maxim Gorky, a Russian expert in literature, summarized the demands of Socialist Realism on art into two succinct principles. “[F]irst, the artist must see reality in its evolution toward the socialist ideal; second, individual creativity must make way for communal and comparable work.”⁵² Shostakovich’s opera was denounced because it did not align with Soviet ideals, not because of a lack of musical merit.

While *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* underwent condemnation as being formalist music, Shostakovich was rehearsing his Fourth Symphony with the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra.⁵³ Though this symphony had been in the works since 1935, Shostakovich withdrew it after its tenth rehearsal. The reason for the sudden withdrawal of the symphony did not solely stem from fear of greater censure. Shostakovich realized the weaknesses within the work. He wrote of the symphony in 1956, “It is—as far as form is concerned—a very imperfect, long-winded work that suffers—I’d say—from ‘grandiosomania.’”⁵⁴ The symphony did not premiere until December 1961, eight years after Stalin’s death.⁵⁵ Shostakovich remained

⁴⁸ Blokker and Dearling, *The Symphonies*, 24-25.

⁴⁹ Mishra, *A Shostakovich Companion*, 89.

⁵⁰ Richard A Leonard, *A History of Russian Music*, 290.

⁵¹ Peter Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 123-124.

⁵² Francis Maes, *A History of Russian Music: From Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar*. Trans. Arnold J. Pomerans and Erica Pomerans. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 255.

⁵³ Leonard, *A History of Russian Music*, 332.

⁵⁴ Blokker and Dearling, *The Symphonies*, 57.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

musically silent for almost two years after the *Pravda* article, until the performance of his Fifth Symphony late in 1937.⁵⁶ This symphony was his “apology” to the Soviet government.

Shostakovich subtitled his Fifth Symphony, “A Soviet Artist’s Reply to Just Criticism.” There is some doubt about whether or not Shostakovich originally used the wording “just criticism,” but that wording appears on many western reports.⁵⁷ The composer Johann Adomoni, quoted by Solomon Volkov, a Russian musicologist, surmises that the Fifth Symphony was in fact a protest against the very principles it glibly endorsed by its subtitle. “The symphony could be interpreted as an expression of [Shostakovich’s] attitude to the horrible reality, and that was more serious than any issues about musical formalism.”⁵⁸ The meek and mild subtitle did the trick. The symphony instantly lifted him from the pit of denigration and ostracism and restored him as a notable Soviet composer. Daniel Huband notes that critics praised the Fifth Symphony as an excellent model in Socialist Realism; however, it did not contain many elements of the ideals of Socialist Realism. It did not reference folk music, espouse nationalistic ideas, or incorporate explicitly heroic themes.⁵⁹ Though these themes were lacking, it received a standing ovation at its premiere in Leningrad in November of 1937.⁶⁰ There are accounts that many audience members wept while saying, “He responded, and responded well.” The audience applauded Shostakovich and his work for thirty minutes.⁶¹ The symphony proved to be a success in both pleasing his audience and meeting Soviet demands.

The Fifth Symphony represents a more mature style of Shostakovich. He followed the traditional four movements, but did not implement the modern and formalistic tendencies found in his earlier symphonies. Dissonant and chromatic tendencies are replaced with tonality employed in imaginative ways along with a skillful weaving of tone colors.⁶² The theme of the symphony follows the formation of a

⁵⁶ Leonard, *A History of Russian Music*, 332.

⁵⁷ Daniel Huband, “Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony: A Soviet Artist’s Reply...?” *Tempo*, no. 173 (1990): 15. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/946394>.

⁵⁸ Volkov, *Shostakovich and Stalin*, 151.

⁵⁹ Huband, “Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony: A Soviet Artist’s Reply...?” 15.

⁶⁰ Volkov, *Shostakovich and Stalin*, 150.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁶² Huband, “Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony: A Soviet Artist’s Reply...?” 16.

personality.⁶³ Shostakovich wrote of the theme, “It is precisely man with all of his experiences whom I saw in the center of the conception of this composition, which from the beginning to end is lyrical in its cast. The finale of the symphony resolves the tense, tragic moments of the first parts into an optimistic, cheery vein.”⁶⁴ The symphony, as a practice in Socialist Realism, explores a man’s struggle in life with an ultimate victory in the end. In many ways the symphony is autobiographical in nature, by describing the struggles Shostakovich faced: writing acceptable music while retaining his artistic integrity. The symphony ends victoriously.

Some scholarship laments the “loss” or “waste” of Shostakovich as a composer. Kevin Mulcahy pronounces that Soviet cultural principles “traumatized Shostakovich’s life and so often blocked his artistic expression.”⁶⁵ Though Shostakovich did not compose in an environment that fostered musical exploration, his work should not be mourned, but celebrated. Shostakovich was not a victim, but a victor of his music by the way he composed in the midst of the threat of denouncement. Though he could not compose freely he retained his artistic integrity. Despite the demands of Socialist Realism, Shostakovich created worthwhile music. *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, his work that was most severely denounced continues to be performed here in America and in Europe. The Kennedy Center performed it in 2007 and it premiered in Zürich in April of 2013. The fact that his works are still performed today is evidence that he created music not only for the masses, but also for posterity.

Shostakovich demonstrated that regulated music can still be inspired, celebrated, and studied. It was not possible for Stalin to completely define and control music. Every work Shostakovich wrote was a product of his creative output, even though it was subjected to the whims, preferences, and objectives of another. No one questions the works of Bach or Haydn even though their music was prompted by the demands of the church or a patron. Shostakovich’s music should be treated in the same manner. Outside control may modify the manner in which a composer writes a work, but every artist, including

⁶³ Bakst, *A History of Russian-Soviet Music*, 315.

⁶⁴ Bakst, *A History of Russian-Soviet Music*, 315

⁶⁵ Kevin Mulcahy, “Official Culture and Cultural Repression: The Case of Dmitri Shostakovich.” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 18 (1984): 69, [//www.jstor.org/stable/3332676](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3332676).

Shostakovich, retains an aspect of artistic autonomy. Shostakovich found ways to adapt his works and aesthetic to suit the demands of the Soviet ideals and culture. In his First Symphony he followed the pattern of a traditional symphony but designed it to be played through without stops. He also found ways to marry the themes of Russian nationality with shocking realism in his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. He understood how to respond to criticism by writing music to pacify demands, but also to protest against Socialist Realism. With a dictator as a patron, Shostakovich still found his voice as an artist and composer. He faced dangerous circumstances and tenuous relationships, but composed despite the hazard within the Soviet Union. Though his voice was altered, it was not silenced.

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