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The Reception of Dmitri Shostakovich in France, 1934–2000

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Abstract

In 1989, the French record company Le Chant du Monde sponsored a year-long festival dedicated to the music of the Soviet composer Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975). Coinciding with the bicentennial of the French revolution and the restructuring of the Soviet Union, this ‘Année Chostakovitch’ included the French premiere of the opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1932), French releases of earlier Soviet recordings of Shostakovich’s music, and a revival of the composer’s fifteen symphonies. The festival came more than fifty years after Shostakovich’s music was first heard in France: when his popular song ‘Au-devant de la vie’ became the anthem of the Front populaire movement in 1930s Paris, and his Fifth Symphony was promoted by French Communists in Paris in June 1938.

This thesis maps the trajectory of Shostakovich’s music in France from late 1934—the year in which his music first gained notoriety in Paris—to the end of the twentieth century. Using ideas from reception theory, it interrogates a wide cross-section of press and other print sources from Paris and the French provinces containing critical discussions of Shostakovich’s fifteen symphonies, his opera *Lady Macbeth*, and his song ‘Au-devant de la vie.’ In addition to expanding the literature on musical life in France, this thesis complements existing studies of Shostakovich reception in the United States of America, Britain, and Germany.

The thesis is structured chronologically in five chapters, preceded by an Introduction and followed by a short Conclusion. It situates critical responses to Shostakovich’s music within France’s evolving political landscape, and suggests that these responses were shaped largely by France’s shifting relations with the Soviet Union, the rising and falling influence of the French Communist Party, as well as trends and preferences in French musical life. I also conclude that writing about Shostakovich’s music throughout the twentieth century served as a means for French critics to articulate their ideas, opinions, and concerns about the USSR.

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This is to certify that:

- (i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD;
- (ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text towards all other material used;
- (iii) the thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices

Signature:

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Date: 9 September 2022

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Notes on Translations and Referencing of Press Sources

The French to English translations in this thesis are my own unless otherwise stated. The translated material is provided in English in text, with the French in brackets or a footnote, depending on length and perceived relevance of the original. Where English translations fail to convey some of the original meaning, I also provide relevant French terms or phrases in brackets within the translated passages. Excluding the epigraph of the Introduction, French quotations that exceed thirty words are presented in the appendix corresponding to that chapter.

For press sources in footnotes, I provide archival references only when I was unable to cross-reference the clippings with their original publications. Where references to press sources do not include author name, publication title, date, or page numbers, this is because that information was unavailable; I do not use terms such as ‘unsigned’ or ‘n.d.’

Abbreviations for sites in archival references are:

AIDC: Association Internationale ‘Dimitri Chostakovitch’

AN: Archives nationales (France)

BmO: Bibliothèque-musée de l’Opéra

BnF: Bibliothèque nationale de France

Introduction

Les enfants qui avaient huit ou dix ans lors de la chute du tzarisme sont à présent des hommes. Dans cette génération neuve, quels sont les musiciens sur lesquels nous pourrions compter, quels sont ceux qui se dégageront des entraves scriabiniennes ? Que feront-ils ? Qui sont-ils ? Existent-ils ? Vers quel art tourneront-ils ?¹

[The children who were eight or ten years old at the time of the fall of Tsarism are now men. In this new generation, who are the musicians we will be able to count on, who will free themselves from Scriabinian shackles? What will they do? Who are they? Do they exist? To what art will they turn?]

Darius Milhaud's 'La Vie musicale en U.R.S.S.,' published in *Le Ménestrel* in 1926, is an early example of the interest that many French artists and intellectuals of the twentieth century held in the Soviet Union. The tone of fascination and curiosity that Milhaud conveyed in this essay speaks to the situation early in the interwar period in France, when Soviet composers were not yet the focus of international attention. Although the French were familiar with Stravinsky, Prokofiev, and many other Russian artists who worked abroad, it was not until the early 1930s that the public was exposed to music by composers who had matured in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Undoubtedly the best known of this first generation of Soviet composers was Dmitri Dmitrievich Shostakovich (1906–1975), who spent his entire life as a resident of the USSR, and whose music therefore reflects many of the state's musical aesthetics and cultural policies.

This thesis surveys the reception of Shostakovich in France, from 1934—when his music first gained notoriety in Paris—until the end of the twentieth century. In doing so, it continues the conversation around responses to Shostakovich's music outside of the Soviet Union and Russia, adding France to the map of existing literature on Shostakovich reception in the United States of America, Britain, and Germany. By interrogating how Shostakovich's music was received in France from year to year, or decade to decade in the twentieth century, this thesis asks: in what ways do these responses reflect the shifts in Franco-Soviet relations throughout the history of the USSR? To what extent did trends and preferences in the changing musical landscape of

¹ Darius Milhaud, 'La Vie musicale en U.R.S.S.,' *Le Ménestrel* 88, no. 24 (1926): 266–67.

France dictate French reactions to Shostakovich's music? In addition to these overarching questions, a number of other themes permeate specific decades of the twentieth century. First, the framework of the study offers a window of understanding into how the French Communist Party (Parti communiste français, PCF) attempted to shape the reception of Soviet music in the 1930s and '40s, when the party was at its most powerful. In the 1950s and '60s, when discussions of Soviet music could be found in mainstream press outlets, studying Shostakovich's French reception offers a novel outlook on French perceptions of Soviet culture at the height of the Cold War. Around the time of the composer's death in 1975 and towards the end of the century, French writings on Shostakovich's music reveal how the early history of the USSR was interpreted in France after destalinisation and the 'Thaw'—and, for the years 1991 to 2000, analysing such writings offers insights into how the French looked back on the Soviet Union altogether. Finally, the later decades of the study show how the now infamous *Testimony* (1979), Shostakovich's supposed memoirs 'as related to and edited by Solomon Volkov'—in which the composer was painted as a covert dissident—began to shape French attitudes towards Shostakovich and his music after it was translated into French in 1980.²

Works Considered

Shostakovich produced an extensive body of music throughout his lifetime, including symphonies and orchestral works, suites, concertos, string quartets and other chamber works, music for piano, operas, choral and vocal works, ballets, film scores, incidental music, and orchestrations of works by other composers. Clearly, even a doctoral thesis offers insufficient space to account for the reception history of this much music; thus, I have chosen a collection of pieces (presented in Table 0.1) to act as representatives of Shostakovich's music. Of this selection, the most substantial portion comprises the composer's symphonies. As these are fifteen in total, spanning forty-six years of composition and over 130 opus numbers (beginning at op. 10 and ending at 141), these works provide arguably the best encapsulation of the diversity and multifaceted nature of Shostakovich's musical style throughout his career. Yet, to trace the reception histories of Shostakovich's symphonies accurately, it is important also to account for that of his second opera, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1932), since this work became entangled with the premieres and afterlives of his Fourth and Fifth Symphonies (the Fourth having been withdrawn from rehearsal after *Lady Macbeth* was denounced by Soviet authorities,

² Solomon Volkov, *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich as Related to and Edited by Solomon Volkov*, trans. Antonina W. Bouis (New York: Harper & Row, 1979). These memoirs have since been authoritatively discredited. See Laurel Fay, 'Shostakovich Versus Volkov: Whose Testimony?', *Russian Review* 39, no. 4 (1980): 484–93.

the Fifth having been perceived as Shostakovich's redemption after this denunciation). Symphonies and opera pair well together for the purposes of a reception study, since both genres are large scale and necessitate performances in public (as opposed to chamber or solo instrumental music, which can be performed in more intimate settings). Furthermore, in order to balance the cost of performing these large-scale pieces, concert organisers strive to entice large groups of people to attend them, and these performances consequently serve a societal function, drawing together a sector of the public and offering them a shared cultural experience. Each of these factors is conducive to more critics attending and writing about the performances—a crucial consideration when documenting reception through analysis of published writings.

In addition to the symphonies and opera, this study considers one other piece: a short, popular song that Shostakovich composed originally for the 1932 Soviet film *Counterplan*. Elsewhere in the world, the 'Song of the Counterplan,' known in France as 'Au-devant de la vie,' is perhaps not considered a major component of Shostakovich's oeuvre, but in France it was the first piece for which Shostakovich was recognised, and—as I will show in the first chapter—it laid a foundation for early performances of Shostakovich's symphonies and other concert works. It is therefore important to include it when attempting to account accurately for the French reception of Shostakovich's symphonies and opera.

Table 0.1. Works by Shostakovich encompassed in this study

Title	Opus No.	Composed	Premiered
Symphony No. 1 in F minor	10	1924–25	1926
Symphony No. 2 in B Major, 'To October,' for mixed chorus and orchestra	14	1927	1927
Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major, 'The First of May,' for mixed chorus and orchestra	20	1929	1929
'Au-devant de la vie' (<i>'Song of the Counterplan'</i>)	33 (Film score to <i>Counterplan</i>)	1932	French lyrics created 1933–34
<i>Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District</i> , opera in four acts after Leskov; revised as <i>Katerina Ismailova</i>	29; rev. 114	1932; rev. 1962	1934; 1962
Symphony No. 4 in C minor	43	1936	1961
Symphony No. 5 in D minor	47	1937	1937
Symphony No. 6 in B minor	54	1939	1939

Symphony No. 7 in C Major, 'Leningrad'	60	1941	1942
Symphony No. 8 in C minor	65	1943	1943
Symphony No. 9 in E-flat Major	70	1945	1945
Symphony No. 10 in E minor	93	1946–53	1953
Symphony No. 11 in G minor, 'The Year 1905'	103	1957	1957
Symphony No. 12 in F minor, 'The Year 1917'	112	1961	1961
Symphony No. 13 in B-flat minor, 'Babi Yar,' for bass, bass chorus, and orchestra	113	1962	1962
Symphony No. 14 in G minor, for soprano, bass, string orchestra, and percussion	135	1969	1969
Symphony No. 15 in A Major	141	1970–71	1971

Theory and Methodology

This thesis is situated within the domain of reception theory, and uses ideas from Hans Robert Jauss and German literary theory of the 1960s and '70s. Jauss advocated for a shift in focus from the creator of a work to its receiver—that is to say, from the author to the reader—and labelled this study of how works are received and interpreted by those who experience them as the 'aesthetics of reception.'³ In their more recent volume on literary reception theory, however, James Machor and Philip Goldstein contend that modern reception study 'undertakes the historical analysis of changing interpretive practices.'⁴ As Jim Samson writes, musicologists were considering the listener's perspective long before the term 'reception' was coined in literary history, since performances and audiences have always been integral in the creation of musical works; thus, these ideas lend themselves well to the study of music.⁵

This thesis documents the 'changing interpretive practices' of Shostakovich's music in France through an examination of published writings, principally those by French writers who experienced Shostakovich's music in either Paris or one of the nation's provinces. For periods in which there were little or no (recorded) performances in France to stimulate French thoughts on

³ Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

⁴ James L. Machor and Philip Goldstein, 'Introduction,' in *Reception Study: From Literary Theory to Cultural Studies*, ed. James L. Machor and Philip Goldstein (New York; London: Routledge, 2001), xii.

⁵ Jim Samson, 'Reception,' in *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com.

Shostakovich, however, I analyse commentary from foreign correspondents who reported in French on Shostakovich's music from the USSR. As a result, my sources come from a combination of French critics, musicologists, journalists, and other writers whose ideas about Shostakovich were published in France and prepared for a French readership. For the purposes of this study, I treat the writers who heard Shostakovich's music in France as broadly representative of the audiences with whom they shared this experience. Inevitably this is an imperfect approach, as many nuances in taste and preference can affect how a particular critic responds to a particular work at any given time. But to again borrow from Jauss, the social and historical experiences that critics have in common with their fellow audience members allow them to share a 'horizon of expectation': a similar system of references that are brought by the receiver (the audience) to the work at hand, and used to understand it.⁶ According to James H. Johnson,

the use of critics and journalists is as valid an indicator of the mechanism of change in perceptions as any. Moreover, by correlating these aesthetic assumptions with their manifestations in behaviour ... one may perhaps make useful generalizations about the musical perceptions of those spectators whose behavior we see but whose thoughts are silent.⁷

The shared horizon of expectation thus provides a useful avenue for understanding how particular works were received in a particular place at a particular time. Of course, critics cannot always be equated with audiences—in France, especially in Paris of the 1930s, the social and economic class of certain critics would have been quite different from many spectators—but surveying their reactions still offers a window of understanding into the sector of French society that each critic worked within, and the meaning of Shostakovich's music for that sector. To justify this point it may be helpful to turn to Benedict Anderson, whose understanding of nation as an 'imagined community' explains how people feel a sense of belonging to and identification with their community, despite not knowing all of its members.⁸ If we approach critics as representatives of their imagined community, their views can therefore be treated as representative of that group, if only to an extent. In the context of this thesis, these communities are sometimes national ones, but often they are shaped by a more precise location or interest, such as the community of a particular city, a province, or a political or social cause. In fact,

⁶ Hans Robert Jauss and Elizabeth Benzinger, 'Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory,' *New Literary History* 2, no. 1 (1970): 7–37.

⁷ James H. Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 5.

⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

Jeremy Popkin has argued that many of these imagined communities in France have historically been formed and strengthened via press outlets, which have a history of being more than ‘purveyors of information and ideology,’ but ‘important sites for the construction of social and cultural identities.’⁹ For these reasons, I am satisfied to treat the commentary made in French press outlets throughout the twentieth century as representative of broader French attitudes towards Shostakovich’s music. This study, via the press, of how audiences reacted to Shostakovich’s music, what meaning they took from it, and how this process changed throughout the century, has the potential to shed light on different meanings of the same or similar works in different times and different settings, thus revealing new perspectives on the world in which the audiences lived and how it evolved over time.

Sources

There is diversity in the format, region, political bias, and time period in the sources consulted throughout this thesis. As the study is structured chronologically, it begins in the late interwar period in Paris, a period in which the dynamic press of the nineteenth century had declined substantially.¹⁰ Pierre Albert explains that daily circulation figures did not manage to recover after World War I, and readers in the interwar period were less loyal to specific publications than they had been previously.¹¹ Nonetheless, a broad range of daily, weekly, and monthly publications were in operation during the 1930s. Of the daily newspapers active in Paris during this period, several published articles on and reviews of Shostakovich’s music: these included *Ce Soir*, *Le Figaro*, *L’Humanité*, *L’Intransigeant*, *Le Matin*, *Paris-Soir*, and *Le Temps*. Unlike most dailies—the French Communist *L’Humanité* being an exception—other, specialist publications offered reports on Shostakovich that discussed not only his music that was being heard in Paris at the time, but how his career fared abroad. The arts publications that prepared such commentary were *La Revue musicale*, *Le Ménestrel*, *L’Art musical*, the *Mercure de France*, and *Comœdia*. Finally, discussions of Shostakovich’s music also appeared in several non-daily, non-arts specialist publications: these included *Regards*, the French Communist monthly known for its early use of photojournalism; *L’Europe nouvelle*, the weekly review with reports on international, economic, and literary issues; and *La Correspondance internationale*, the French-language issue of the Communist International’s weekly bulletin. These sources were consulted mainly online, via the

⁹ Jeremy D. Popkin, *Press, Revolution, and Social Identities in France, 1830–1835* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 9–14.

¹⁰ Christophe Charle, *Le Siècle de la presse (1830–1939)* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2004), 247–59.

¹¹ Pierre Albert, ‘La Presse française de 1871 à 1940,’ in *Histoire générale de la presse française*, vol. III, ed. Claude Bellanger et al. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1975), 457–61.

Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF)'s online press databases *Gallica* and *RetroNews*, as well as in the Bibliothèque de recherche at the BnF site François-Mitterrand.

Despite the range of sources consulted, the French Communist press is used more in this initial period than in the ensuing chapters. The reason for this over-representation is that the Communists were the nation's first champions of Shostakovich, with only *La Revue musicale* rivalling the amount of space that PCF-funded publications dedicated to discussions of his music. Although seemingly niche, this attention from the French Communists was not insignificant: the PCF organ *L'Humanité* had a much wider readership than the party's membership alone. Its daily circulation was the fourth highest of any daily active at the time, peaking at 350,000 by the end of the interwar period.¹²

Chapter Two, which covers the years 1939 to 1947, again consults primary sources representing a wide variety of political and social viewpoints. However, the representation of these viewpoints is more evenly weighted than in the first chapter—that is to say, the sources are not drawn mainly from the Communist press and specialist music publications. In addition to some of the publications used in the first chapter (those that managed to survive the war years), Chapter Two draws upon commentary on Shostakovich's symphonies published in the periodicals *Arts*, *La Bataille*, *Carrefour*, *Combat*, *Fontaine*, *La France*, *Les Étoiles*, *Gavroche*, *Les Lettres françaises*, and *Temps présent*. Importantly, this post-war era also witnesses the establishment of *Le Monde*: the 'serious' newspaper created at the request of de Gaulle's government, so that France would have an internationally reputable daily akin to *The Times* of Britain or *The New York Times*.¹³ Aside from the *Monde* articles, which were accessed through the newspaper's online archive, the press sources cited in this chapter were taken from the collection of clippings in the 'Chostakovitch' dossier of the Fonds Montpensier in the BnF Département de la musique. Since preparing this chapter, some of these articles (though not all) have been made available via *RetroNews*.

Le Monde is the dominant source of news relating to Shostakovich in Chapters Three and Four. The third chapter is the first in this thesis to branch out from Paris to the provinces, and it discusses regional commentary on Shostakovich from the Bordeaux daily *Sud Ouest*, and Fédération musical populaire's monthly bulletin *L'Art musical populaire*, both of which were consulted at the BnF site François-Mitterrand. This regional focus is expanded further in

¹² Jean K. Chalaby, 'Twenty Years of Contrast: The French and British Press During the Inter-War Period,' *European Journal of Sociology* 37, no. 1 (1996): 151.

¹³ Patrick Eveno, *Le Monde : Histoire d'une entreprise de presse, 1944–1995* (Paris: Le Monde Éditions, 1996).

Chapter Four, which places a spotlight on Nice on the Côte d’Azur. The commentary in this section was sourced from a combination of hardcopy and microfilm newspapers in the Archives municipales and the Archives départementales de Nice.

The final chapter draws upon the richest array of press sources in the thesis. The great diversity here is firstly thanks to Emmanuel Utwiller and the staff at the Centre Chostakovitch in Paris, whose dossier on the ‘Année Chostakovitch’ collates many press clippings from 1989, which I use to analyse the French reception of Shostakovich’s symphonies throughout this year. For the reception of *Lady Macbeth* in Paris in 1992 and beyond, I use both *Le Monde*, and a folder of press clippings on *Lady Macbeth* held at the BnF site Bibliothèque-musée de l’Opéra national de Paris. The photos of this 1992 Parisian production were accessed through a digital repository in the BnF Département des Arts du spectacle. The regional press sources in Chapter Five were consulted in physical copy and on microfilm in the Archives municipales de Nancy and the Bibliothèque municipale de Dijon, whereas the sources from Nantes—held as clippings in the Archives municipales de Nantes—were made available to me in digital copy thanks to the generosity of the archival staff.

In addition to press sources, this thesis interrogates a number of other primary sources on Shostakovich published in France throughout the twentieth century. Most important is the series of monographs and other published studies, from the first French-language monograph on the composer published in 1945, to a translated edition of a German study published in France in 1988. Other primary sources are used to contextualise the French reception of Shostakovich’s symphonies, opera, and popular song beyond the concert hall: in the first chapter only, I look at press advertisements for *Lady Macbeth* on radio, since, alongside informal performances of the song ‘Au-devant de la vie,’ radio broadcasts helped to disseminate Shostakovich’s name to the Parisian public before his music had started to be performed there. In addition to concert music and these radio broadcasts, Chapter One looks at the 1936 French Communist propaganda film that featured ‘Au-devant de la vie’ in its soundtrack; and Chapters One and Two discuss the two French editions of sheet music for ‘Au-devant de la vie’ released in 1936 and 1945. Finally, across all five chapters I consider the French audio releases of Shostakovich’s symphonies, opera, and song, beginning with Roger Désormière’s 78 rpm recording of ‘Au-devant de la vie’ at the end of Chapter One, and culminating with the Opéra de Paris’s monumental recording of *Lady Macbeth* on compact discs in the middle of Chapter Five.

Given the breadth of primary sources that this study encompasses, it is important to stress that it is not comprehensive. I do not claim to have analysed every piece of French writing on, or every French recording of, Shostakovich's symphonies, opera, and popular song from the twentieth century (in fact, I am certain that this is not the case, as not every source I came across during the research process has been analysed in the thesis). Instead, the study places a focused lens over specific moments in its time period, allowing me to identify the changes in trends of reception, and thus offer a broad overview. This thesis puts forth the view that these changing trends in reception tend to mirror the socio-political climate: Shostakovich's French reception in the twentieth century was largely influenced by France's evolving relationship with the Soviet Union, and the fluctuating power of the French Communist Party and its affiliated cultural organisations. There are of course other factors that apply to specific periods, but this overarching political influence remains relevant throughout the century.

Review of Literature

In terms of scholarly literature, two primary fields have informed the framework of this thesis: Shostakovich reception studies, and studies of French cultural and political history. A third, broader field of Shostakovich studies consists of a vast breadth of literature by scholars such as Laurel Fay, Pauline Fairclough, Richard Taruskin, David Fanning, Elizabeth Wilson, and many others.¹⁴ These texts provide a crucial background for this thesis and have informed my discussions of Shostakovich's life and career. However, other than the article and two book chapters discussed below, they do not concentrate on Shostakovich's reception outside of the Soviet context.

Terry Klefstad was the first scholar to produce an extended academic study of Shostakovich reception outside of the USSR. Her 2003 PhD dissertation traced Shostakovich's American reception between 1928 and 1945, linking the shifts in reception of the first nine symphonies and *Lady Macbeth* to changing relations between the United States and the Soviet Union.¹⁵ In 2004,

¹⁴ The principal sources that have consolidated my knowledge of Shostakovich are: Laurel Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (New York: OUP, 2000); Fay, ed., *Shostakovich and His World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); David Fanning, ed., *Shostakovich Studies* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995); Pauline Fairclough, ed., *Shostakovich Studies 2* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010); Fairclough, 'Facts, Fantasies and Fictions,' *Music and Letters* 86, no. 3 (2005): 452–60; Fairclough, *Dmitry Shostakovich* (London: Reaktion Books, 2019); Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); and Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). A full list of literature on Shostakovich and Soviet music that I have consulted for this thesis can be found in the bibliography.

¹⁵ Terry Wait Klefstad, 'The Reception in America of Dmitri Shostakovich, 1928–1945' (PhD dissertation: The University of Texas at Austin, 2003).

Christopher Gibbs focused specifically on the Seventh Symphony for his monumental documentary essay, which demonstrated how nuances of the time and place were reflected in American critical responses to this work during the 1942–43 season.¹⁶ In her 2007 article ‘The “Old Shostakovich”’, Pauline Fairclough documented Shostakovich reception in the British press, here concentrating on the Fifth Symphony. As her study extended from the early 1930s until the 1980s, Fairclough was able to reconstruct the image of Shostakovich that had existed in the British press prior to the publication of Volkov’s *Testimony* in 1979.¹⁷ In 2008, Erik Levi contributed to the *Cambridge Companion to Shostakovich* (ed. Fairclough and Fanning) a chapter titled ‘A Political Football: Shostakovich Reception in Germany,’ which discussed the role of Shostakovich’s music and how it was received from the Weimar Republic to mid-1980s Germany.¹⁸ My thesis, conceptualised in the vein of these Shostakovich reception studies, extends the conversation to France.

Some publications exist in this area: in the year 2000, Alan Mercer, founder of the DSCH Society, prepared an article on Shostakovich in France for the *DSCH Journal*, and halfway through my candidature Thomas Thisselin submitted a doctoral thesis on the music from the ex-Soviet Socialist Republics in France between 1945 and 1956.¹⁹ I do not refer to either of these texts in the body of my thesis, however, since the first, although interesting and well written, was not prepared for a scholarly publication, and the second was completed after I had prepared my chapters on the same time period (and is still under embargo at the time of writing). In 2019, I published a short article that forms part of my discussion in Chapter Five; yet, owing both to the passage of time and opportunities for further research, the discussion here is more developed, and makes use of a greater number of sources.²⁰

As well as expanding the area of Shostakovich reception studies, this thesis adds to the literature on French cultural life during the twentieth century. Jann Pasler, Annegret Fauser, and Elaine Brody have each documented how Russian culture became a source of fascination for the

¹⁶ Christopher H. Gibbs, “‘The Phenomenon of the Seventh’: A Documentary Essay on Shostakovich’s “War” Symphony,” in *Shostakovich and His World*, ed. Fay, 59–113.

¹⁷ Pauline Fairclough, ‘The “Old Shostakovich”: Reception in the British Press,’ *Music and Letters* 88, no. 2 (2007): 266–96.

¹⁸ Erik Levi, ‘A Political Football: Shostakovich Reception in Germany,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Shostakovich*, ed. Fairclough and Fanning, 285–97.

¹⁹ Alan Mercer, ‘Shostakovich and France,’ *DSCH Journal* 13 (July 2000): 73–76; Thomas Thisselin, ‘L’Importation en France de la musique soviétique entre 1945 et 1956 : Formes, enjeux et débats’ (PhD thesis: Université de Lorraine, 2019).

²⁰ Madeline Roycroft, ‘Programming Politics: The 1989 “Year of Shostakovich” in France,’ *Context: Journal of Music Research* 44 (Winter 2019): 61–69.

French between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Pasler's *Composing the Citizen* accounts for the Russian-themed concerts that began to proliferate in France from 1891, when France and Russia began negotiations for an alliance that would be formed in 1894.²¹ Fauser's study of music at the 1889 Exposition Universelle interrogates the two concerts of new Russian music performed by Russians in the Trocadéro, arguing that the reception of these concerts reflected French sympathies for the Russians' rejection of German models, but also their view of Russia as 'exotic' (and therefore, as Fauser writes, 'not quite where France was situated in the (French) hierarchy of national musics').²² Brody's chapter on the Russians in *Paris: The Musical Kaleidoscope, 1870–1925* details the programming of Russian music by the Concerts Lamoureux, Colonne, and Pasdeloup, as well as numerous other Russian piano and vocal performances in the French capital. Her survey of *Le Guide musical* from 1889 to 1914 also sheds valuable light on the many Franco-Russian exchanges of the period preceding that of this thesis.²³ This developing Russian interest, and the attractiveness of Paris to Russians, was reflected in daily and musical life in the early twentieth century. At the 1900 Exhibition, France celebrated its alliance with Russia with the inauguration of the Pont Alexander III—an ornate, Beaux-Arts style bridge in Paris named in honour of the Tsar—and from 1909 until his untimely death in 1929, Diaghilev's Ballets Russes revolutionised the artistic landscape of Paris, bringing Russian musical and visual artists to the forefront of public attention. The extensive interest that scholars have shown towards the Ballets Russes and its composers during the 1910s and '20s—Stravinsky and Prokofiev in particular—has revealed much about the unique cultural links between France and Russia in the early twentieth century.²⁴

These links have also been explored in artistic domains beyond music and ballet, since Paris became a centre for Russian emigration in the wake of the October Revolution, and was the

²¹ Jann Pasler, *Composing the Citizen: Music as Public Utility in Third Republic France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 666–69.

²² Annegret Fauser, *Musical Encounters at the 1889 Paris World's Fair* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005), 43–44.

²³ Elaine Brody, *Paris: The Musical Kaleidoscope, 1870–1925* (New York: G. Braziller, 1987), 190–212.

²⁴ On Prokofiev's life outside of Russia, see David Nice, *Prokofiev—A Biography: From Russia to the West, 1891–1935* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); and Natalya Pavlovna Savkina, 'Some Materials Relating to Prokofiev's Life Abroad,' *Fontes Artis Musicae* 53, no. 3 (2006), 214–19. On Stravinsky in France, see Stephen Walsh, *Stravinsky: A Creative Spring: Russia and France, 1882–1934* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999); Barbara L. Kelly, *Music and Ultra Modernism in France: A Fragile Consensus, 1913–1939* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013); and Leslie A. Sprout, 'From the Postwar to the Cold War: Protesting Stravinsky in Postwar France,' in *The Musical Legacy of Wartime France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 151–84. On the Ballets Russes, see Davinia Caddy, *The Ballets Russes and Beyond: Music and Dance in Belle-Époque Paris* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012); Juliet Bellow, *Modernism on Stage: The Ballets Russes and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); and Joan Ross Acocella, 'The Reception of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes by Artists and Intellectuals in Paris and London, 1909–1914' (PhD dissertation, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 1984).

artistic, intellectual, and political capital of Russia-in-exile from approximately 1924.²⁵ Since this community of approximately 100,000 Russians in Paris was characterised by a high level of education, cultural ambition, and political activity, many of its members were active in artistic and literary circles of the 1920s, and these engagements have inspired a variety of recent academic discussions (to which Leonid Livak in particular has contributed prolifically).²⁶ However, the writings of the Russian diaspora are not specifically relevant to this study, as these figures contributed little to the discussion of Soviet music—perhaps surprisingly, since Boris de Schloezer, André Levinson, Vladimir Pozner, and Wsevolod de Vogt all published in influential journals of the period, and many leading French publishing houses published the works of Russian authors.²⁷ But these refugee writers were also overwhelmingly hostile to the Soviet Union, and sought in Paris not only refuge from socialism, but as Livak writes, ‘it was in French cultural life that they hoped to draw values that would strengthen their resistance by anchoring it in the traditions of European humanism and democracy.’²⁸ Thus, for those who critiqued music in the Parisian press, Soviet composers were not a focus. The 1931 essay for *La Revue musicale* by Arthur Lourié—which stated that the music being composed in the USSR was no longer Russian: Russian music had instead left Russia, and it was the diaspora musicians composing new Russian music after the Revolution—is the primary document that reflects this émigré perspective on Russian versus Soviet music, and it was interrogated at length by Richard Taruskin in Patrick Zuk and Marina Frolova-Walker’s 2017 volume on Russian music.²⁹ Finally, the anti-Soviet Russian community does not factor greatly into this thesis because it largely predates the time period: the community was far less influential in Paris of the 1930s than the 1920s, and did not survive the Second World War (the United States instead became the favoured destination for emigration at the end of the 1940s).³⁰ The émigrés that assimilated and engaged with Shostakovich’s music after the war—namely de Schloezer—only did so to a limited degree, probably due to their ongoing disdain for the USSR.

²⁵ Leonid Livak, *Histoire culturelle de l’émigration russe en France, 1920–1950* (Paris: Eur’Orbem Éditions, 2022), 5.

²⁶ Ibid., 5–6. See also Leonid Livak, ‘Le Studio franco-russe, 1921–1931,’ *Revue des études slaves* 75, no. 1 (2004): 109–23; Livak, *Russian Emigrés in the Intellectual and Literary Life of Inter-War France: A Bibliographical Essay* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010); and Claude de Grève, ‘Des émigrés russes comme acteurs du renouvellement de la critique des classiques russes en France, au XX^e siècle,’ in *Figures de l’émigré russe en France au XIX^e et XX^e siècle*, ed. Charlotte Kraus and Tatiana Viktoroff (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill/Rodopi, 2012), 491–507.

²⁷ Livak, ‘Le Studio franco-russe,’ 109.

²⁸ Ibid., 110. ‘C’est dans la vie culturelle française qu’ils espéraient puiser des valeurs susceptibles de renforcer leur résistance en l’ancrant dans les traditions de l’humanisme et de la démocratie européennes.’

²⁹ Richard Taruskin, ‘Is There a “Russia Abroad” in Music?’, in *Russian Music since 1917: Reappraisal and Rediscovery*, ed. Patrick Zuk and Marina Frolova-Walker (Oxford: OUP/Proceedings of the British Academy, 2017), 307–29.

³⁰ Livak, *Histoire culturelle de l’émigration russe en France*, 12–17.

For the 1930s, there is a wealth of sources on Parisian musical life that have discussed, to varying extents, the French interest in music of the USSR. Pascal Ory's *La Belle Illusion: Culture et politique sous le signe du Front populaire 1935–1938*, and Jane Fulcher's *The Composer as Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France 1914–1940* are two rich sources on the left-wing cultural and political engagement of French intellectuals, composers, and other artistic figures during the interwar period.³¹ Furthermore, Barbara Kelly and Christopher Moore's 2018 volume *Music Criticism in France, 1918–1939: Authority, Advocacy, Legacy* situates several critics who wrote about Shostakovich's music during the interwar years—this thesis complements the work in this volume by interrogating their writings on Soviet music.³² Moore's 2006 doctoral thesis on the cultural influence of the French Popular Front, as well as his subsequent article on the same topic, both include discussions of Shostakovich's 'Au-devant de la vie,' and how this song became symbolic of leftist politics in France during the 1930s and beyond.³³ Parts of this thesis extend Moore's work to consider the place of this song in Shostakovich's French reception more broadly: not only how it became intertwined with the Popular Front movement, but how its popularity in this political context overlapped with the promotion and reception of *Lady Macbeth* and the early symphonies.

Finally, this thesis builds upon several publications by Katharine Ellis on musical life in the French provinces.³⁴ Ellis's work on 'decentring the capital', and not viewing Paris as representative of France in its entirety—discussed in detail in her 2019 article 'Taking the Provinces Seriously'—has informed my discussions of the regional productions of *Lady Macbeth* throughout Chapters Four and Five. These chapters thus contribute discussions of Shostakovich's opera in Nice and Nancy in the second half of the twentieth century to the existing literature on opera in France's regions during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries.³⁵

³¹ Pascal Ory, *La Belle Illusion : Culture et politique sous le signe du Front populaire, 1935–1938* (Paris: Plon, 1994); Jane F. Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France 1914–1940* (New York: OUP, 2005).

³² Barbara L. Kelly and Christopher Moore, eds, *Music Criticism in France, 1918–1939: Authority, Advocacy, Legacy* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018).

³³ Christopher Lee Moore, 'Music in France and the Popular Front (1934–1938): Politics, Aesthetics and Reception' (PhD thesis: McGill University, 2006); Christopher Moore, 'Socialist Realism and the Music of the French Popular Front,' *The Journal of Musicology* 25, no. 4 (2008): 473–502.

³⁴ Katharine Ellis, *French Musical Life: Local Dynamics in the Century to World War II* (Oxford: OUP, 2022); Ellis, 'Taking the Provinces Seriously,' *Mużikologija* 27 (2019): 51–69; Ellis, 'How to Make Wagner Normal: *Lohengrin*'s "tour de France" of 1891–92,' *Cambridge Opera Journal* 25, no. 2 (2013): 121–37.

³⁵ Regional opera (in Brittany specifically) is also explored in Jennifer Janice Millar, 'Regionalist Themes in "Breton" Operas, 1850–1954: Four Case Studies' (PhD dissertation, The Open University, 2010).

Chapter Outline

Since communism in France is a consideration throughout this thesis, but particularly in the first chapter, Chapter One begins with a summary of French politics from 1920 to 1934, the period that gave rise to the PCF and the French Communist movement. It then discusses the adoption of ‘Au-devant de la vie’ by the PCF and the French Popular Front, followed by the radio broadcasts of *Lady Macbeth*. I identify an absence in the Parisian press of any reporting on the infamous ‘*Lady Macbeth* affair’ (the denunciation of *Lady Macbeth* as ‘Muddle Instead of Music’ in the Soviet Communist Party organ), and compare this lack of reporting to the parallel circumstances in the US and Britain. In the second half of the chapter, I examine the Parisian premieres of Symphonies Nos. 1 and 5, and how these performances, especially the latter, tied in with the French Communist sponsorship that had already been established with the promotion of the song. I also link the lukewarm reception of Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony in 1938 to the Parisian press’s lack of reporting on the Soviet condemnation of *Lady Macbeth*. The chapter ends in 1938, the year of collapse for the Popular Front government.

Chapter Two spans from 1939 to 1948. The first half discusses the continued importance of ‘Au-devant de la vie’ in French Communist culture; the repurposing of a Shostakovich symphony for French ballet in May 1939; and the absence of Soviet music during Vichy France and the German Occupation. The second half of the chapter examines the influx of Shostakovich symphonies premiered in Paris in the years following the Liberation. By looking at the organisations that promoted Symphonies Nos. 7, 8, 9, and 6, and how these works were received in Paris, I argue that Shostakovich’s wartime symphonies were able to enjoy a warm reception in this period—particularly in 1945—because of the improved public perception of the Soviet Union and appeal of communism in France after World War II. Finally, these years were marked by a number of French publications, which contributed to the increase in public knowledge of Shostakovich after the war.

Chapter Three covers Shostakovich’s French reception in the early years of the Cold War. Of all the chapters, this one contains the most diverse range of topics: it begins by analysing the representation in the French press of the 1948 Zhdanov Decree, and subsequently shows how Nicholas Nabokov’s *L’Œuvre du XX^e siècle*, an American-organised festival held in Paris in 1952, co-opted Shostakovich’s *Lady Macbeth* to spread a message of anti-communism in France. The remainder of the chapter extends from the death of Stalin in 1953 to 1963, the period referred to in Soviet history as ‘the Thaw’. The most significant event in this period was

Shostakovich's 1958 visit to France, during which he attended the premiere of his Eleventh Symphony in Paris, and spent several days recording with André Cluytens and the Orchestre de la Radiodiffusion française. By examining both Parisian and provincial press from this time, I argue that Shostakovich's visit built upon the notoriety he had achieved in France around the Symphony No. 7 premiere, and cemented his status as a widely recognised public figure. Yet, despite the positive publicity Shostakovich received in 1958, the press frequently published articles in the late 1950s and '60s that positioned him as an anti-dodecaphonist—a phenomenon that I suggest resulted both from the aesthetic differences between his music and that of the more experimental schools popular in France at the time, and the prevailing 'East vs West' tensions between the USSR and NATO countries. Next, Chapter Three looks at commentary on several symphonies: Nos. 12 and 13, neither of which were performed in Paris at this time, but were reported on by French correspondents from Moscow; and No. 4, which was warmly received in Paris in October 1963. The chapter concludes with a final look at the continued engagement with 'Au-devant de la vie' in French leftist culture. Since the song retains its status as a French Communist anthem throughout the timeline of this chapter, whereas the symphonies move into the mainstream—no longer depending on French Communist sponsorship, and effectively disentangling themselves from the meaning of the song—this discussion of 'Au-devant de la vie' is the final one in the thesis.

Beginning at the end of the Thaw, Chapter Four is set against a political and social backdrop that, from 1968 until the end of the 1970s, leads French commentators to become more receptive to Soviet culture. The first half discusses *Katerina Ismailova*, the revised version of Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth*, which received its French premiere in Nice in 1964. Through looking at the reception of this season, as well as the programming on offer in Paris at the same time, I describe this staging of Shostakovich's opera as an example of a city in one of France's regions engaging in cultural practices distinct from the capital. The second half of the chapter concentrates on the increased presence of Shostakovich's symphonies in French concert halls from 1969 to the end of the 1970s. I consult reviews in *Le Monde* to trace the evolution of mainstream reception in this period, identifying the critic Jacques Lonchamp as an advocate for Shostakovich's symphonies, as well as a pattern of touring conductors performing Shostakovich's symphonies with French orchestras. Around these principal topics, smaller threads throughout Chapter Four cover a new French-language book on Shostakovich; reviews of newly released LP recordings of *Katerina Ismailova* and the fifteen symphonies; and lastly, the press response to the composer's death in 1975.

Encompassing the years 1980 to 2000, the final chapter, Chapter Five, centres around a year-long Shostakovich festival in 1989, coined the ‘Année Chostakovitch’ by the French press. I begin by providing an overview of the events contained within this ‘Shostakovich Year,’ before suggesting political reasons that may explain the intensive programming of Soviet music in France throughout 1989, and how this compares to the programming for the majority of the 1980s. In this discussion of French programming of the symphonies, I illustrate the impact of the French translation of Volkov’s *Testimony* in 1980 on the reception of Shostakovich, particularly his Fifth Symphony, in the years leading up to and during the 1989 festival. The central sections of Chapter Five are dedicated to *Lady Macbeth* in its original version, which received its French premiere in Nancy, a city of the Grand Est region, as one of the major Année Chostakovitch events. I examine the Nancy performances and reception, and suggest that this production was influential on opera programming in the capital, since *Lady Macbeth* received its Parisian premiere only three years later, in 1992. After analysing an extensive body of press coverage generated from the Paris performances, I refer to further French productions of *Lady Macbeth* up to the year 2000 to demonstrate the opera’s ongoing legacy in both Paris and the French provinces. Finally, I illustrate the enduring impact of the Année Chostakovitch on the reception of Shostakovich’s symphonies from 1990 to 2000.

Given the chronological structure of this thesis, it is at times difficult to compare events that took place many years apart, as they are necessarily written about in different chapters. Therefore, in addition to summarising the findings, the Conclusion of this thesis seeks to connect some of the ideas that cut across the different time periods. It begins with a precis of the trajectory that Shostakovich’s music followed in France from 1934 to 2000, and subsequently engages with some of the larger ideas and tangents that arose in the process of conducting this research. In amongst these discussions, I reflect on the benefit of undertaking this research project, and offer some suggestions for future work that would extend and complement its findings.

Chapter One: 1930s Paris

To analyse France's first exposure to Shostakovich's music and paint a picture of the socio-political setting in which it was first heard, this chapter provides political context from 1920 to 1934, then focuses on Paris from 1934 to 1938. In this latter period, four works relevant to the scope of this thesis were heard in the French capital either live or via radio: Shostakovich's second opera, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1932); his popular song 'Au-devant de la vie'; and Symphonies Nos. 1 and 5. Between its 1934 premiere and 1937 suppression in the Soviet Union, *Lady Macbeth* had been performed in Leningrad, Moscow, and numerous other cities across Western Europe, North America, and Scandinavia. But, despite the city having one of the richest histories of opera in the Western world, no production of *Lady Macbeth* was staged in Paris during this initial period of popularity: the most exposure it received was via several broadcasts on French radio, and when a reduction of the score was performed in a 1935 piano recital. In addition to providing accounts of these early performances and transmissions of *Lady Macbeth* in France, this chapter will examine the role of Shostakovich's song in the composer's early French reception. Composed originally for the 1932 Soviet film *Counterplan*, but known in France as 'Au-devant de la vie,' the song developed associations with the leftist Front populaire movement of the mid-1930s, a link that appears to have been more influential than *Lady Macbeth* in shaping first impressions of Shostakovich France.

The final part of this chapter examines the initial reception of Shostakovich's First and Fifth Symphonies, which premiered in 1936 and 1938 respectively. These works were unveiled in a very different context to that of the first two covered in this chapter: that of the Parisian concert hall. As explained in the Introduction, the societal function and large-scale design of symphonies tends to generate a greater amount of press coverage than performances in smaller-scale genres, which allows me to discuss the press reception of these pieces in the second half of this chapter with a level of detail and nuance not offered in the first.

Background: French Communism and Leftist Minorities, 1920–34

To contextualise these early appearances of Shostakovich's music in France, I will begin with a review of the political climate of France between 1920 and 1934. Most important to this review is France's principal communist party, the Parti communiste français (PCF), as this group was instrumental in the early dissemination of Shostakovich's music in France. From its inception in

1920 to the end of the 1930s, the PCF was a close ally of the Soviet Union; in fact, it was described in the twentieth century as ‘the most strictly Stalinist party in the West.’¹ Its influence in Paris was inconsistent throughout the 1920s, though, which can perhaps be attributed to its shaky formation in 1920 at the eighteenth National Congress of the Section française de l’Internationale ouvrière (SFIO), France’s historical Socialist party. A disagreement at the Congress over whether to join the Communist International caused the SFIO to split into two major parts, with the members in favour forming the PCF.² By 1921, the party had amassed 109,000 members.³

No political party could be described as dominant throughout the 1920s in France, and the instability of this era launched a series of turbulent changes to the French cabinet that would continue until the end of the Third Republic. Beginning under the governance of the *Bloc national*, a conservative coalition led by Raymond Poincaré (1860–1934), the first major upset of the 1920s was the nation’s failure to collect reparations from Germany in the wake of World War I. The public consequently began to lose faith in Poincaré’s government, generating discord among its members and leaving it vulnerable to the Left. This threat became a reality in May 1924, when the Cartel des gauches (CDG), Édouard Herriot’s (1872–1957) coalition of SFIO and Radical parties, won the legislative elections. But this leftist alliance lasted only two years in office: Poincaré swayed the Radical party to realign with his Democratic-Republican Alliance (Alliance républicaine démocratique, ARD), causing the CDG to fall in 1926. Poincaré’s fourth Prime Ministership as head of the ARD also ended after a two-year term: in 1928, the Radicals halved to form the Radical-Socialist Party and the Independent Radicals, the latter of which remained allied to the ARD. Meanwhile, after a promising initial spike in membership numbers, the PCF’s growth rate had plateaued. Its 1928 membership comprised almost entirely young, working-class men, and the party had limited power in French politics.⁴

¹ Ronald Tiersky, *French Communism: 1920–1972* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 25.

² The Communist International, or Comintern, was a Moscow-based organisation advocating for world communism formed by the Bolsheviks after the 1917 October Revolution. To join the Comintern, parties had to adhere to Lenin’s Twenty-One Conditions. Jean Burles lists and describes all twenty-one Conditions of Admission to the Communist International in *Le Parti communiste dans la société française* (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1979), 131–38. Although the split in the SFIO initially went three ways, the third faction eventually rejoined the Socialist party. The Communist faction initially referred to themselves as the *Section française de l’Internationale communiste*. The minority that chose to remain in the Socialist alliance preserved the original name of SFIO—this group believed in the principles of communism but was unwilling to submit to the Comintern’s entry requirement. Remaining under the leadership of Léon Blum, the SFIO sustained a huge reduction in residual numbers.

³ Yves Santamaria, *Histoire du Parti communiste français* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1999), 24.

⁴ Only 4.6% of the membership were women. Santamaria, *Histoire du Parti communiste français*, 25.

By the 1930s, the decade in which Shostakovich's music was first heard in France, the nation as a whole was experiencing a difficult period, as citizens began to feel the effects of the Great Depression. The public elected a second CDG government in 1932, and this ascension of the political Left was mirrored in artistic life, with the establishment of left-wing artistic societies (some of which are examined below). But the CDG held a weak parliamentary majority during its term, mainly due to disagreement between its parties, and protests from far right 'leagues', which placed immense pressure on the government. When Édouard Daladier (1884–1970) was appointed head of the cabinet in 1934—the sixth new leader in the CDG's two-year stint—he succumbed to the pressure of these protests and other public demonstrations. On 6 February 1934, fifteen people were killed and hundreds injured in a riot that ended Daladier's term as prime minister, only days after it began. The CDG disassembled again, marking the first instance in the Third Republic that a government had collapsed due to public protest.

A conservative National Unity government was appointed in the week following Daladier's resignation, sparking counter-demonstrations from French Communists, Socialists, and trade unionists. Under the leadership of the noted pacifist Léon Blum (1872–1950), the SFIO did not engage in street protests, but the PCF's membership had no such inhibitions, and the violent, public confrontations between Communists and members of the far right led to a surge in the PCF's recruitment rate.⁵ Membership was growing at a similarly fast rate at the other end of the political spectrum, however, and within months it became clear to both the PCF and SFIO that combining forces was the only feasible way to counter the rise of fascism. Thus, the Front populaire was formed. The coalition appealed both to left-wing intellectuals and the nation's working classes, thus symbolising to many France's potential for radical social change.⁶ Blum would later describe the French Popular Front as 'a grouping of forces rather than of parties ... a defensive coalition, formed spontaneously after February 5 1934, by a sort of survival instinct for the defense of democratic principles.'⁷ By July 1935, the Front populaire had also garnered the support of the Radicals, who aligned themselves primarily out of their fear that fascism would take away the liberties of the people. The addition of this faction gave the party a large enough majority to set its sights on winning the following year's election.

⁵ Jessica Wardhaugh, *In Pursuit of the People: Political Culture in France, 1934–9* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 26.

⁶ Popular Front governments would later become a common avenue for Communist politics in capitalist countries, but the Front populaire in France was the first of its kind. See Dan La Botz, 'The Popular Front, A Social and Political Tragedy: The Case of France (1936),' *Europe solidaire sans frontières* (15 Jan 2011), www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article20821#nb2.

⁷ Tiersky, *French Communism*, 54.

Shostakovich and the Front populaire

Against this turbulent backdrop, the early 1930s saw several sectors of the French public become acquainted with the music of Dmitri Shostakovich. His name had appeared in the French press at various points in the late 1920s, but in the context of foreign correspondents' reports on music in Russia—his music was not actually performed in France until the subsequent decade.⁸ Shostakovich's first piece to receive significant attention in France was in fact a short one for chorus, adapted from his soundtrack to the 1932 Soviet film *Counterplan*.⁹ Originally titled 'Song of the Counterplan,' the song received, some time in either 1933 or 1934, a new set of French lyrics courtesy of the poet and PCF member Jeanne Perret.¹⁰

The resulting song was given the French title: 'Au-devant de la vie.' Perret's lyrics are not directly translated from the original—which, with their references to a river, the freshness of the morning, and the Narva Outpost, were specific to the USSR—but they nonetheless retain the youthful optimism that characterises Boris Kornilov's original text.¹¹ Perret's lyrics are provided alongside a loose English translation in Figure 1.1. Figure 1.2 shows the cover of the first French edition of 'Au-devant de la vie,' produced in 1936 by the French Communist publishing house Éditions sociales internationales (ESI).

⁸ See, for example, Victor Bélaiev, 'Le Mouvement musical à l'Étranger : Russie,' *Le Ménestrel* 88, no. 40 (October 1926): 415.

⁹ Lev Arnshtam, Fridrikh Ermler, Leonid Lyubashevsky and Sergei Yutkevich, *Vstrechnyy*, dir. Fridrikh Ermler and Sergei Yutkevich (Leningrad: Lenfilm, 7 November 1932).

¹⁰ There is disparity among the relevant sources as to which year Perret's lyrics were created in, but they were published in 1935 in the first volume of *Lectures de la jeunesse*. See Pascal Ory, *La Belle Illusion : Culture et politique sous le signe du Front populaire, 1935–1938* (Paris: Plon, 1994), 325.

¹¹ A rough translation of the original Russian into English can be found at: lyricstranslate.com/en/песня-о-встречном-pesnia-o-vstrechnom-song-welcome.html.

French lyrics (Jeanne Perret, 1934):

Ma blonde, entends-tu dans la ville
Siffler les fabriques et les trains ?
Allons au devant de la vie,
Allons au devant du matin

Debout ma blonde,
Chantons au vent
Debout amie !

Il va vers le soleil levant
Notre pays

Rough translation:

My darling, do you hear in the city
The whistling of factories and trains?
Let's go out to meet life,
Let's go out to meet the morning.

Get up, my darling,
Let's sing to the wind
Get up, my friend!

Our country is moving towards
The rising sun

Figure 1.1 Jeanne Perret's lyrics for 'Au-devant de la vie'

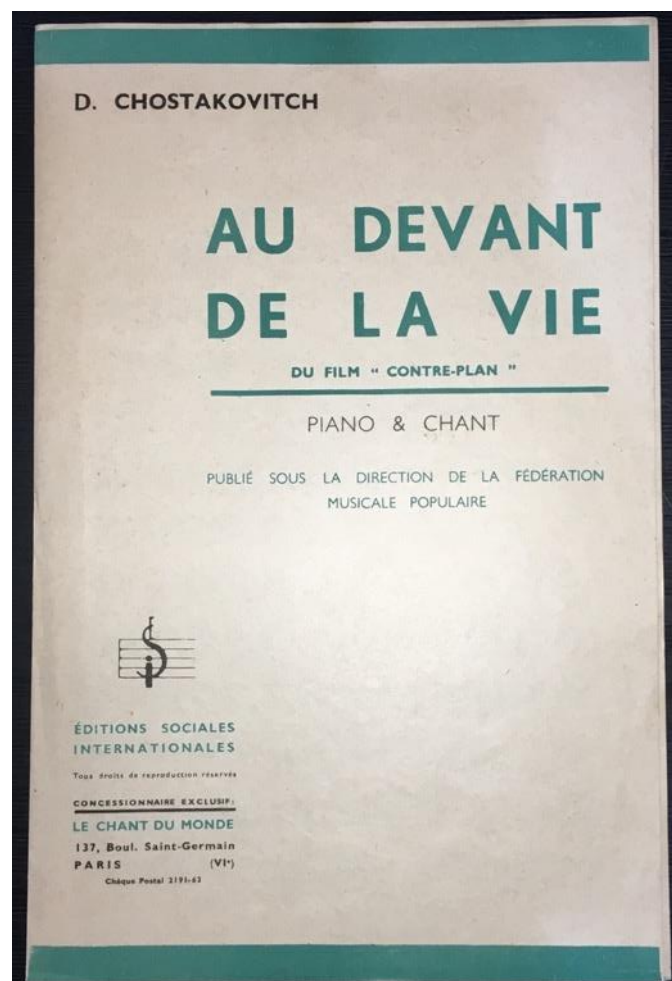


Figure 1.2. The first edition of 'Au-devant de la vie' published in France (Paris: ESI, 1936)¹²

¹² Archive Fédération musicale populaire, Fonds de l'Association des Maisons de la Culture, Archives nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, France.

As Christopher Moore has written, it is ‘not surprising that this little song, with its joyful faith in a better world to come, appealed to French and international audiences committed to the ideals of the Left.’¹³ By 1935, the popularity of ‘Au-devant de la vie’ had spread to such an extent that it became one of the Front populaire’s official chants, and an aural symbol of the Lefist cultural movement associated with this party. The Front populaire relied heavily on music throughout its political and social campaign, which sought to unite left-wing intellectuals with the working classes by making ‘high art’ accessible to all. Some of the most influential French composers of the 1930s—including Darius Milhaud, Arthur Honegger, Louis Durey, Georges Auric, Jean Wiéner, Albert Roussel, and Charles Koechlin—contributed music for this cause.¹⁴ As choral singing and community music-making environments were ideal for delivering the Front populaire’s ideological message—that culture was for everyone, not just the social and intellectual elite—the pieces they composed took forms accessible to people with little or no formal training, such as workers’ choruses, campfire songs, band music, and collaborative theatre.¹⁵ As can be seen in the score shown in Figure 1.3, Shostakovich’s ‘Au-devant de la vie’ features an easily singable melody in a range ideal for untrained voices, and its six bars of harmony only demand simple thirds and fifths, easily achievable when singing by ear. The Chorale populaire de Paris—the chorus of the Association des écrivains et artistes révolutionnaires, discussed below—incorporated Shostakovich’s song into their repertory of workers’ choruses in 1934.¹⁶

¹³ Christopher Moore, ‘Music in France and the Popular Front (1934–1938): Politics, Aesthetics and Reception’ (PhD thesis: McGill University, 2006), 58.

¹⁴ ‘Répertoire,’ Box 104AS/5, Fonds de l’Association des Maisons de la Culture, Archives nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, France.

¹⁵ Christopher Moore, ‘Socialist Realism and the Music of the French Popular Front,’ *The Journal of Musicology* 25, no. 4 (2008): 475–76. ‘Collaborative theatre’ invites audience members and/or untrained actors to participate in the live performance.

¹⁶ See ‘Notre histoire... en détail,’ *Chorale populaire de Paris*, www.chorale-populaire-de-paris.com/b_histoire_details.html.

AU-DEVANT DE LA VIE

Paroles françaises de
JEANNE PERRET

Musique de
D. CHOSTAKOVITCH

Allegretto

Chant
 Piano

Ma blond', entends-
 tu dans la vil - le Sif - fler les fabri - qués et les trains?
 Al - lons au-de - vant de la bi - se Al - lons au-de-
REFRAIN
 - vant du ma - tin De - bout ma blond' chantons au
 vent! De - bout, a - mis! Il va vers le so -
 - leil le - vant No - tre pa - ys.

2
 La joie te réveille, ma blonde
 Allons nous unir à ce chœur
 Marchons vers la gloire et le monde
 Marchons au devant du bonheur.
 (au refrain)

3
 Et nous salu'rons la brigade
 Et nous sourirons aux amis
 Mettons, en commun, camarades
 Nos plans, nos travaux, nos soucis
 (au refrain)

4
 Dans leur triomphant' allégresse
 Les jeunes s'élanc'nt en chantant
 Bientôt une nouvelle jeunesse
 Viendra au-devant de nos rangs.
 (au refrain)

5
 Amis, l'univers nous envie
 Nos cœurs sont plus clair que le jour
 Allons au-devant de la vie
 Allons au-devant de l'amour.

REFRAIN:
 Debout, ma blond'! chantons au vent!
 Debout, amis!
 Il va vers le soleil levant
 Notre pays!

Tous droits de reproduction réservés pour tous pays.

Imp. CHAFFANGE et C^{ie} XXXIX
 Rosny-sous-Bois (Seine) Téléph. 55

Figure 1.3. Score of Dimitri Chostakovitch/Jeanne Perret, ‘Au-devant de la vie’ (ESI, 1936)

From April 1936, 'Au-devant de la vie' developed further significance for the French Left when it appeared in *La Vie est à nous* ('Life Belongs to Us'), a propaganda film subsidised by the PCF and made by a team of directors, most notable of whom was the cinema auteur Jean Renoir.¹⁷ The PCF had actually planned to shoot the film since the end of 1935, before the formation of the Popular Front, but it was not commissioned until 1936. For the PCF, Renoir was an ideal choice of director: he had collaborated recently with the agitprop cinema company Groupe Octobre on *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange* (1936), a film that allowed Renoir to express his communist sympathies by filming the fictional struggles of the mild-mannered and hardworking clerk, Amédée Lange, who liberates himself from his mediocre life driven by the pursuit of

¹⁷ Jacques Becker, Jacques B. Brunius, Jean Renoir and Pierre Unik, *La Vie est à nous*, dir. Jean Renoir (Paris: Collective Films/Parti communiste français, 7 April 1936).

capital.¹⁸ In *La Vie est à nous* Renoir took his engagement a step further. The film urged working French people to mobilise against the ruling classes, blending fictional sequences performed by a cast of non-professional actors with documentary footage of the nation's agricultural abundance and struggling workers. It also satirised fascist movements at home and abroad—a brief sequence shows Hitler giving a speech with his voice replaced by a barking dog.¹⁹ Overall, the narrative presented the PCF as the only party capable of creating equality in a presently unfair system, and supporting the Front populaire as the only way to put true leftist policy into effect.²⁰

At approximately 49 minutes into its screenplay, *La Vie est à nous* features a scene in which several members of the Chorale populaire de Paris are standing in the street, singing and conducting jovially several verses of Shostakovich's 'Au-devant de la vie.' This cheerful setting provides the viewer with welcome relief from the previous sequence, in which a soup kitchen closes abruptly, and a long line of hungry people are turned away ('*on a attendu pour rien*, 'we waited for nothing,' one man mutters to another). Against solemn background music—a hummed rendition of Hanns Eisler's 'Le Front des travailleurs'—the younger of the two men collapses in the street, only to be picked up by comrades who carry him to a gathering of PCF members who sing Shostakovich's song.²¹ During this chorus, the camera rests on a poster advertising a PCF-sponsored social singing event (see Figure 1.4), emphasising the social utility of this song and the sense of solidarity it was being used to foster.

¹⁸ Jean Renoir, Jacques Prévert and Jean Castanier, *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange*, dir. Jean Renoir (Paris: Groupe Octobre, 1936). See Michel Fauré, *Le Groupe octobre* (Paris: C. Bourgois, 1977).

¹⁹ The French government banned *La Vie est à nous* from public screenings during the 1936 electoral period out of fear that it would lead to protests from the far right (however, it was still screened at gatherings organised by the Left). See Charles Rearick, *The French in Love and War: Popular Culture in the Era of the World Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 200–201.

²⁰ Wardhaugh, *In Pursuit of the People*, 98.

²¹ As with the 'Song of the Counterplan,' Jeanne Perret was the translator of Bertold Brecht's lyrics for 'Einheitsfrontlied' into French. A recording of the song was subsequently released on the Chant du Monde label: *Le Front des travailleurs*, Jeanne Perret, aut., Hanns Eisler, comp., Chorale du Chant du Monde, Roger Désormière, cond., Le Chant du Monde 10.862 1/2, 1938, 78 rpm disc.

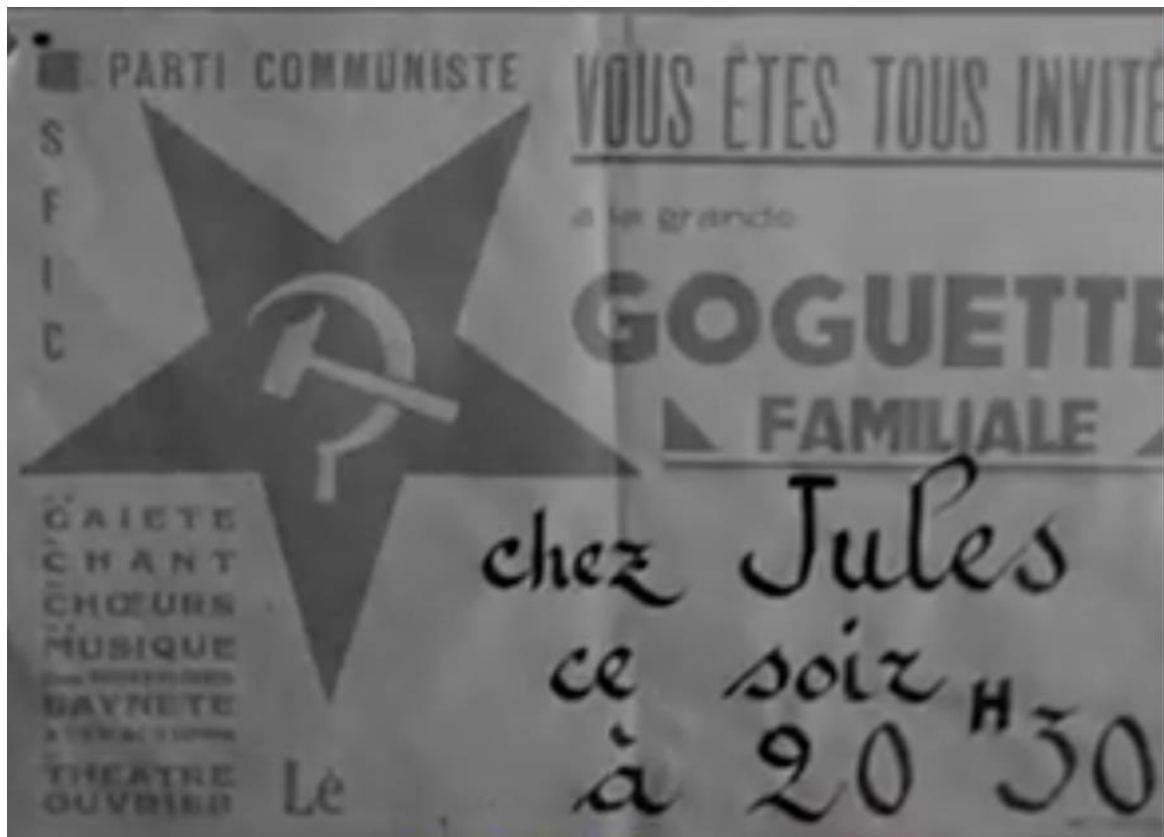


Figure 1.4. A still from *La Vie est à nous* shown throughout the refrain of Shostakovich's 'Au-devant de la vie'

In *La Belle Illusion*, Pascal Ory explains the importance of Shostakovich's song (and music in general) in the Front populaire's attempts to unify working class citizens with left-wing intellectuals. The coalition's main method of making highbrow art accessible to France's working class was to engage these potential new members through choral singing. Ory suggests that the party adopted Shostakovich's 'Au-devant de la vie' as an official chant because the song represented an ideal synthesis of a highbrow artform with a working-class demographic. 'Double charactered' is the description given by Ory, since Shostakovich's song was from a popular film that sounded like a simple and accessible *air populaire*, yet it had been written by a young, 'serious' composer.²² Having the signature of Shostakovich elevated the song into a space that transcended any superficial classifications of high or lowbrow art,²³ allowing us to describe it retrospectively as the musical equivalent of a party that aimed to unify the different social classes of the French Left.

²² Ory, *La Belle Illusion*, 325.

²³ Ibid., 326. For further exploration of the 'serious yet accessible' nature of Shostakovich's music (and that of other Soviet composers), see Pauline Fairclough, 'Was Soviet Music Middlebrow? Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony, Socialist Realism, and the Mass Listener in the 1930s,' *The Journal of Musicology* 35, no. 3 (2018): 336–67.

Taking into account both the target demographics of *La Vie est à nous*, and the fact that this on-screen appearance of ‘Au-devant de la vie’ would have granted Shostakovich’s music its greatest exposure in France thus far, we can assume that the first members of the French public to be exposed to Shostakovich’s music (other than leftist intellectuals) were young and working class—perhaps not the standard audience for a composer who was elsewhere known primarily for his art music compositions. It is interesting to consider, however, that Shostakovich’s piano music and opera were simultaneously being received in France—either live or via radio—by an audience likely separate from those who were exposed to Shostakovich’s music via the Front populaire movement. Due to both the cost of attending live performances and the accessibility of radio listening in the mid-1930s, I would suggest that there was a distinction between the working-class people targeted by the Front populaire campaign, and those who would have encountered Shostakovich’s music at piano recitals, symphony orchestra concerts, or via opera broadcasts on personal wireless radios. This is not to suggest that there was no overlap whatsoever—as will be elaborated upon shortly, many artistic figures who drove and participated in Front populaire-affiliated activities were from wealthy or upper-middle class backgrounds—but it is important to note that the working classes of 1930s France were largely isolated from radio listening until 1938. Radio receivers cost more than two months’ wages of a labourer’s salary, and in the mid-1930s it was necessary for working-class families to spend half of their income on food.²⁴ Increasing labourers’ access to radio was one of the major engagement efforts of the Front populaire; however, it did not manage to put its programme of installing public loudspeakers and listening halls in communal spaces into effect until 1938, meaning access to radio among the working classes was still restricted at the time *La Vie est à nous* was released.²⁵ As for the possibility of working-class people attending live music performances, the well-documented class divisions of the nineteenth and early twentieth-century were still in effect in 1930s Paris. André Michael Spies writes that opera in early twentieth-century Paris was still attended only by ‘the very highest social, financial and political elites,’²⁶ and it is a well-known fact that the elevated entry fees of opera in France have historically excluded working-class people from the genre altogether.²⁷ While these structures did loosen to a certain degree during the interwar period, it is still difficult to imagine a communist propaganda film like Renoir’s

²⁴ Rebecca Scales, *Radio and the Politics of Sound in Interwar France, 1921–1939* (Cambridge: CUP, 2016), 168.

²⁵ Scales, *Radio and the Politics of Sound*, 168–69.

²⁶ André Michael Spies, *Opera, State and Society in the Third Republic, 1875–1914* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1998), 73.

²⁷ Spies, *Opera, State and Society*, 78.

drawing the same audience as an opera, given the non-inclusive history of the latter genre in France.

Lady Macbeth in the Press, in Concert, and on Radio

While the popularity of 'Au-devant de la vie' grew alongside the influence of the PCF, an awareness of Shostakovich's art music also became more commonplace in France as his opera *Lady Macbeth* made its mark on the international stage. Between 1934 and 1936, radio listeners and concert-goers in France were introduced to the work via a number of international wireless broadcasts, and a concert piano arrangement performed in Paris on 18 November 1935 by the Polish virtuoso Arthur Rubinstein.²⁸ In addition to the excerpts from *Lady Macbeth*, this programme included the French premieres of two more early Shostakovich works: a selection of the 24 Preludes for piano, op. 34 (1932–33), and the Polka from the 1930 ballet *The Golden Age* (*Zolotoy vek*), op. 22. Beyond comprising the first live performance of music from Shostakovich's opera in France, Rubinstein's recital had greater significance in that it helped to promote the composer amongst French concert audiences more broadly. Both *L'Excelsior*, a daily known for its early inclusion of photographs, and the conservative *L'Intransigeant* published the following comments from an anonymous journalist ahead of Rubinstein's recital:

The name of Shostakovich is hardly known in Paris, although he is undoubtedly among the most famous composers of the young Russian School. His opera *Lady Macbeth*, which is currently the most appreciated (*goûtée*) work in Russia, was a sensational success at the Metropolitan Opera, and it is also in New York that the maestro Toscanini will conduct, during this season, Shostakovich's First Symphony. In Paris, it will be Arthur Rubinstein, to whom we owe the revelation of so many modern Russian works, who will perform at his recital on November 18 in the Salle Gaveau, in a Parisian premiere, thirteen Preludes and a Polka of this composer.²⁹

In his December 1935 summary of recent Parisian recitals in *Paris-Soir*, the dominant tabloid of the period, the journalist, composer, and pianist Henri Gil-Marchex also praised Rubinstein for programming Shostakovich. Gil-Marchex provided his readers with the following description of the composer's music:

²⁸ 'Bruits de coulisses,' *Paris-Soir*, 3 November 1935, 4.

²⁹ 'Musique,' *L'Excelsior*, 2 November 1935, 4; and *L'Intransigeant*, 4 November 1935, 8.

Shostakovich! All musicians must remember this name. Arthur Rubinstein has had the good idea ... of including in his programme fifteen preludes of this composer still unknown in France but already extremely popular in the USSR. The music of Shostakovich is reminiscent of Darius Milhaud and Prokofiev, of Georges Auric and Béla Bartók.³⁰

Interestingly, Gil-Marchex's review was the first French account of Shostakovich's trademark musical irony; his observations from Rubinstein's recital were that the melodies were 'always very apparent, very sincere,' yet many of the accompanying lines would seem 'almost banal' were it not for their 'deadpan flair,' which gave the impression of cheekiness or mocking (*une allure gouailleuse*).³¹

While Rubinstein's recital marks the first live performance in France of music from *Lady Macbeth*, at the time of his performance the entire opera had actually been disseminated via radio numerous times. The first instance was eighteen months earlier, in March 1934. Under the subheading 'Les Ondes rouges' (which listed upcoming broadcasts from the USSR, and preceded a second radio section, 'Les Ondes capitalistes'), the PCF organ *L'Humanité* advertised a broadcast of the opera scheduled for Wednesday 7 March at 4:25pm. It was referred to as 'Katherine Ismailova,' suggesting that the transmission may have come from the alternately titled production (*Katerina Ismailova*) at Moscow's Nemirovich-Danchenko Theatre.³² This advertisement is shown in Figure 1.5.

³⁰ Henri Gil-Marchex, 'Musique : À travers les concerts,' *Paris-Soir*, 6 December 1935, 9.

³¹ Gil-Marchex, 'Musique : À travers les concerts,' 9. 'Une ligne mélodique toujours très apparente, très franche est soutenue par des formules d'accompagnement qui seraient presque banales si une verve très pince-sans-rire ne leur donnait une allure gouailleuse.'

³² 'Les Ondes rouges,' *L'Humanité*, 7 March 1934, 6.

RADIO-CONCERTS

MERCREDI 7 MARS

LES ONDES ROUGES

Comintern (1.714). — 16 h. 30: émission pour l'Armée Rouge. Au microphone: femmes, musiciens, écrivains, compositeurs; 19 heures: émission littéraire, « Kosma Proutkoff », exéc. par l'ensemble des lecteurs et l'orchestre du Radiokomité.

VZSPS (748). — Emission littéraire; nouveautés de la littérature et musique contemporaine; 17 h. 30: transmission d'un concert.

Staline (360). — Concert thématique, « Exposition d'exécution musicale soviétique », Lew Oborine, piano, et Fischman, violon; 16 h. 25: transmission de l'opéra « Katherine Ismailova », de Schostakivitch; 20 heures: musique de danse.

LES ONDES CAPITALISTES

Radio-Paris (1706). — 7 h.: disques; 8 h.: disques; 12 h. 15: orchestre Goldy; 20 h. 45: concert par l'Association des Concerts Colonne, direction Paul Paray.

Paris P.T.T. (431,7). — 12 h. 30: orchestre Gosselin; 14 h. 15: disques; 15 h.: concert; 19 h. 50: depuis l'Opéra-Comique: « La Tosca », drame lyrique en 4 actes, musique de Puccini.

Poste Parisien (312,8). — 7 h. 10: disques; 12 h. 45: musique de danse avec le jazz symphonique du Poste Parisien; 19 h. 30: concert; 20 heures: « Mon-amant », opérette en 3 actes.

Radio-Vitus (222,6). — 19 h. 30: concert; 20 h. 30: concert; 21 h.: concert varié; 22 h.: musique de danse.

Figure 1.5. A radio advertisement for *Lady Macbeth* in *L'Humanité*, 7 March 1934, 6

The opera also received a sizable amount of coverage in print. In April 1934, the esteemed *Le Ménestrel* published a detailed account that summarised for French readers the storyline of *Lady Macbeth* and how it differed from the original Leskov novella. It also explained the structure of the opera, and style of Shostakovich's orchestration: mainly that it is 'brilliant, and uses modern techniques with impeccable mastery,' and that the music 'penetrates the soul of the listener and moves them profoundly.'³³ The correspondent noted how warmly the work had been received thus far by the Leningrad and Moscow press, and finished by providing information on where it was being staged and who was involved in the *mise-en-scène*.

In January 1935, a report on the Moscow production of *Lady Macbeth* appeared in the influential Parisian performing arts daily *Comœdia*, whose correspondent described it as 'one of the glories of Soviet music.'³⁴ Then in September, *L'Humanité* reported that 'Catherine Ismailova, an opera by Soviet composer Shostakovich' would close the second day of the Third Festival of Soviet

³³ S. Levique, 'Le Mouvement musical à l'Étranger: Russie,' *Le Ménestrel* 96, no. 14 (April 1934): 139–40.

'L'orchestration est brillante et utilise toute la technique moderne avec une maîtrise impeccable' ... 'pénètre dans l'âme du spectateur et l'émeut profondément.'

³⁴ 'Créations et reprises en Russie,' *Comœdia*, 7 January 1935, 2. 'L'une des gloires musicales soviétiques.'

Theatre in Moscow.³⁵ Organised by the Soviet Union's Society of Cultural Relations (Vsesoiuznoe Obshchestvo Kul'turnoi Sviazi s zagranitse, VOKS), this international festival drew guests from the United States, Great Britain, the Czech Republic, and Finland. The report does not indicate that there was any French involvement in the festival; nonetheless, it exemplifies the commitment of the Communist press in interwar France to informing its readership of successes in Soviet art and culture. By reporting on the prominent place that *Lady Macbeth* held in the festival programme, *L'Humanité* positioned the opera as a Soviet work worthy of international recognition, thus affiliating the composer with a narrative of Soviet excellence before his music had even been performed in a French concert venue. The journalist Simone Téry (1897–1967) endorsed this angle in October 1935 with a review of the Moscow Festival, in which she described the genius of Shostakovich's works: how, with *Lady Macbeth*, he 'renewed old, fossilised opera'; and how the performance she attended at the Nemirovich-Danchenko Theatre 'would reconcile even the most exacting music lovers with opera.'³⁶ *Lady Macbeth* was once again relayed to France from Moscow in the final weeks of 1935. *L'Humanité* greeted the broadcast with enthusiasm, but its correspondent seemed to lament the fact that the opera had not yet entered the French mainstream: 'Moscou-Tehekova is broadcasting the remarkable opera by the Soviet composer Shostakovich, *Lady Macbeth*. Of course, no French station is broadcasting this concert.'³⁷

'Muddle Instead of Music'

The source materials on *Lady Macbeth* in France covered so far all date from before January 1936: the month of Shostakovich's first public denunciation in the Soviet Union. Yet, in the wake of the 'Muddle Instead of Music' article in *Pravda*, there were no reports of the incident in the French press. As will be elaborated on below, *Lady Macbeth* continued to appear in French concert and radio programmes without any acknowledgement of the controversy it had caused in the USSR. Of course, this absence does not mean that French press agencies were necessarily unaware of Shostakovich's situation, simply that a truthful account of its severity would have been hard to come by in 1936. Apart from *La Correspondance internationale*, the French-language version of the Communist International's weekly bulletin, the only French newspaper regularly

³⁵ *L'Humanité*, 6 September 1935, 4. 'Un opéra du compositeur soviétique Chostakovitch, Catherine Ismailova.'

³⁶ Simone Téry, 'Le Festival théâtral de Moscou,' *L'Europe nouvelle : Revue hebdomadaire des questions extérieures, économiques et littéraires* 921 (1935): 965. 'Il a renouvelé le vieil opéra fossilisé ... Catherine Ismailova, telle qu'elle fut jouée au théâtre Némirovitch Dantchenko, réconcilierait les mélomanes les plus exigeant avec l'opéra.'

³⁷ 'Les Émissions soviétiques,' *L'Humanité*, 13 December 1935, 6. 'Moscou-Tehekova diffusent le remarquable opéra du musicien soviétique Chostakovitch, « Lady Macbeth ». Bien entendu, aucun poste français ne relaye ce concert.'

reporting news from the Soviet Union was *L'Humanité*. It is also well documented that left-wing intellectuals in interwar France (and further into the twentieth century) were often reluctant to accept any reports that Communist states were not the political utopias they imagined them to be; therefore, it is at least possible, if not probable, that *L'Humanité's* editor-in-chief Paul Vaillant-Couturier (1892–1937) fell into this pattern in the 1930s.³⁸ Vaillant-Couturier was a founding member of the PCF and had worked as a journalist in the USSR for two years prior to his appointment at *L'Humanité*. From Moscow, he had reported on Stalin's first five-year plan and acted as secretary of the International Union of Revolutionary Writers (IURW), a network of proletarian writers active from 1925 to 1935.³⁹ Upon his return to France in 1932, Vaillant-Couturier formed the Association des Écrivains et Artistes révolutionnaires (AEAR) as the French section of the IURW. Comprising artists and writers of communist, communist-sympathising, or other anti-fascist alignments,⁴⁰ the AEAR was subsidised by the PCF and retained strong ties to the Soviet Union. With these networks considered—plus the fact that an analysis of why Shostakovich's opera and ballet works did not correspond to the *époque socialiste* had been distributed in *La Correspondance internationale* in mid-March—it is difficult to imagine that Vaillant-Couturier would have been uninformed of major socio-political developments in Soviet artistic life in 1936.⁴¹

In his essay on the life and work of Vaillant-Couturier, Jean-Paul Loubes mentions how, in Western countries, information that would have negatively impacted the USSR's image was particularly hard to come by from 1936 to 1937.⁴² To explain this point, he takes the number of premeditated deaths Stalin orchestrated in Ukraine and Kazakhstan as an example, which is of course a significantly more profound and disturbing example than the denunciation of one musical work and its composer. Still, given Shostakovich's international status as the emerging

³⁸ Further information on this phenomenon can be found in Stéphane Courtois, 'La Gauche française et l'image de l'U.R.S.S.', *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps* 9 (1987): 15–19; François Dosse, *La Saga des intellectuels français, 1944–1989* (Paris: Gallimard, 2018); David Drake, 'Fascism, Anti-Fascism, Communism, Anti-Communism and Pacifism,' in *French Intellectuals and Politics from the Dreyfus Affair to the Occupation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 103–48; Andrew Sobanet, *Generation Stalin: French Writers, The Fatherland, and The Cult of Personality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018); Ludmila Stern, *Western Intellectuals and the Soviet Union, 1920–1940: From the Red Square to the Left Bank* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

³⁹ James Francis Murphy summarises the genesis of this movement in *The Proletarian Moment: The Controversy Over Leftism in Literature* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 36–39.

⁴⁰ Initially known as the International Bureau of Revolutionary Literature. Membership was open to any writer who opposed fascism and imperialist war. See Nicole Racine, 'L'Association des écrivains et artistes révolutionnaires (A.E.A.R.), la revue "Commune" et la lutte idéologique contre le fascisme (1932–1936),' *Le Mouvement social* 54 (1966): 29–47.

⁴¹ L.F. Boross, 'La Lutte autour de la création musicale de l'époque socialiste,' *La Correspondance internationale* 12 (1936): 328–29.

⁴² Jean-Paul Loubes, *Paul Vaillant-Couturier : Essai sur un écrivain qui s'est empêché de l'être* (Paris: Éditions du Sextant, 2013), 146.

face of Soviet artistic production, coupled with the positive associations his music had already developed among Front populaire supporters, news that he had been denounced by the Soviet government would probably have tarnished the image of the USSR that the PCF was helping to propagate in France. If *L'Humanité's* editorial staff—culturally engaged intellectuals with close ties to the Soviet Union—were aware of the attacks against Soviet composers in January 1936, it would have been detrimental to their cause for PCF supporters to learn of such an attack at the hands of the state to which they looked for inspiration. Furthermore, as one third of the Front populaire, real political power was finally within the PCF's reach, so it would have been even more harmful to impede the momentum of the party at this crucial stage. Thus, it is possible, if not probable, that an editorial decision was made at *L'Humanité* in early 1936 to withhold a report on Shostakovich's denunciation in the USSR.

This hypothesis—that, if French commentators were aware of Shostakovich's denunciation, they chose not to report on it—can be supported by looking elsewhere in the French press coverage of this opera. At *La Revue musicale*, there seemed to be an overt reluctance to engage with the issue of Soviet musical censorship: in December 1936, an unnamed correspondent began their review of *Lady Macbeth* in London by stating that *La Revue musicale* 'avoids any incursion into the political domain,' a preface that alludes to extra-musical controversy around the work without having to explain it directly. The author steered away from any discussion of politics to focus on Shostakovich's heightened presence on the international stage, and complimented his ability to ask questions—even to himself—about the 'social role' of music.⁴³ If an editorial decision was made at *La Revue musicale* that a concert review was not the right place to engage overtly with the issue of political censorship, the publication's two accounts of 'Musical Life in the USSR' from March and November 1936 may have been more suitable.⁴⁴ Yet, neither made any mention of the *Lady Macbeth* affair. Then again, these accounts were part of a broader series called '*Musique à l'étranger*,' whose instalments served as brief, introductory backgrounds on music in countries with which *La Revue musicale's* readers were likely unfamiliar. Moreover, the USSR reports were delivered by the young Soviet composer and musicologist Julien Krein (Yulian Kreyn), who had returned to Moscow in 1934 after studying and working in Paris since 1928. As Kreyn's musical language had been heavily influenced by French music, he was in a difficult position professionally and politically after returning to the USSR, and was clearly not in a position to

⁴³ 'Chostakovitch,' *La Revue musicale* 170 (1936): 433. 'Un artiste qui pose et se pose avec netteté la question du rôle social de la musique.'

⁴⁴ Julien Krein, 'La Vie musicale à Moscou,' *La Revue musicale* 164 (1936): 226; Julien Krein, 'La Saison musicale à Moscou,' *La Revue musicale* 169 (1936): 365.

discuss the sensitive issue of musical censorship.⁴⁵ In July 1937, the Roman Catholic daily *La Croix* listed Shostakovich as one of many names affected by ‘the war on Trotskyists,’⁴⁶ but no specific details of the event are provided. It was not until June 1938—almost two and a half years after *Pravda*’s denunciation of *Lady Macbeth*—that a French newspaper described the *Pravda* scandal explicitly in relation to Shostakovich’s music.⁴⁷

This absence of press coverage in early 1936 has similarities and contrasts with what Terry Klefstad and Pauline Fairclough have shown in their respective Shostakovich reception studies: in the US, both *The New York Times* and the *New York Herald Tribune* reported on the ‘Muddle Instead of Music’ article in the weeks after its appearance,⁴⁸ and coverage of the scandal appeared between February and March 1936 in British newspapers the *Manchester Guardian*, *News Chronicle*, and the *Daily Telegraph*.⁴⁹ However, in the British context, Fairclough has highlighted how the early reception of Symphony No. 5 did not mention the infamous reprimand, despite the press reporting on it, and the fact that the film concert premiere of the symphony had been preceded by a talk that provided at least a simplified account of the denunciation.⁵⁰ That British critics presumably knew of this context but did not discuss it in print suggests that it is possible that French critics too were somehow made aware of the *Pravda* denunciation, and likewise chose not to discuss it. However, there are some relevant points of difference between the British and French press here: firstly, the latter did not publish adequate reports on the denunciation in early 1936 (although, is not impossible to conceive of any of these foreign newspapers travelling to Paris and being read by English-speaking members of the Parisian public); and secondly, the two spaces are not exactly comparable given the time difference: Symphony No. 5 premiered at the Salle Pleyel almost eighteen months before the British film premiere in November 1939, and the concert premiere in the Queen’s Hall in London took place another four and a half months after that.

⁴⁵ Galina Grigor’yeva, ‘Kreyn Family: (3) Yulian Grigor’yevich Krein,’ in *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com.

⁴⁶ ‘La Chasse aux trotskystes en Russie,’ *La Croix*, 9 July 1937, 7.

⁴⁷ ‘La Cinquième Symphonie de Chostakovitch au concert de « Chant du Monde »,’ *L’Humanité*, 14 June 1938, 7. This article was published in *L’Humanité* on the day Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony was set to premiere in Paris (see Figure 1.9 on page 50).

⁴⁸ Terry Klefstad, ‘The Reception in America of Dmitri Shostakovich, 1928–1945’ (PhD thesis: University of Texas at Austin, 2003), 140–41. Unlike the *New York Herald Tribune*, the historical, Paris-based *International Herald Tribune* (presently titled the *New York Times International Edition*) did not report on Shostakovich’s denunciation at this time, for it published fewer reports than its New York-based sister publication, targeted primarily at English-speaking businesspeople in Europe.

⁴⁹ Pauline Fairclough, ‘The “Old Shostakovich”: Reception in the British Press,’ *Music and Letters* 88, no. 2 (2007): 269–71.

⁵⁰ Fairclough, ‘The “Old Shostakovich”,’ 269–71.

The first performances in the US, on the other hand, was closer to the time of the of the French one, with the initial NBC broadcast occurring in April 1938, and the concert premiere taking place in Boston in January 1939.⁵¹ Yet Klefstad's work reveals how, when American critics began to review the Fifth Symphony, many blamed its 'uneven qualities and lack of originality' on the influence of the *Lady Macbeth* affair, and the symphony's status as a socialist realist work—a description that was never mentioned in the press coverage of Shostakovich's music in the 1930s.⁵² Furthermore, Klefstad mentions that the symphony's concert premiere was accompanied by programme notes detailing the condemnation—which also did not occur in France—and speculates that these notes played a role in the Fifth Symphony's early, 'fairly negative' critical reception in the US.⁵³ In short, as there were allusions to the denunciation in France, and as it appears to have been known about in the rest of Western Europe and the US, it is unclear whether French critics were genuinely unaware of it, or they collectively decided that it would be in poor taste to discuss a composer's denunciation when reviewing a performance of their music. Regardless, if members of the French public did know the story of the *Lady Macbeth* affair within two years of it occurring, it was probably not via any reporting from French publications.

Totalitarianism?

Given the work that figures like Vaillant-Couturier put into building a communist presence in France, it is retrospectively unrealistic to expect him, or any other informed left-wing intellectual, to have willingly reported on how far the Soviet Union's Marxism-Leninism had strayed from the original principles of their ideologies. Truthful accounts of the situation in the Soviet Union were also not readily available in the 1930s, as only prominent intellectuals were treated to highly controlled tours of the state, many of whom were Communists. Jan C. Behrends writes that these *compagnons de route* were 'expected to give an "authentic" picture of life in the Soviet Union upon return,'⁵⁴ meaning that reliable descriptions were hard to come by, and many positive opinions were informed by biased, second-hand descriptions published in French Communist sources.

⁵¹ Klefstad, 'The Reception in America of Dmitri Shostakovich,' 156.

⁵² Ibid., 151.

⁵³ Ibid., 152–53.

⁵⁴ Jan C. Behrends, 'Back from the USSR: The Anti-Comintern's Publications on Soviet Russia in Nazi Germany (1935–41),' *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 10, no. 3 (2009): 535.

The most notable Frenchman to tour the USSR in this period was André Gide (1869–1951), who did so in 1936 at the invitation of the Soviet Union of Writers.⁵⁵ Gide had made a bold statement by turning publicly to communism in 1934—his status both as a descendant of an old French family and as ‘the symbol of an over-refined intellectualism’⁵⁶ were clear indicators that the bourgeoisie in Paris was reaching the end of its reign.⁵⁷ Gide never formalised his membership with the PCF, but in 1935 he was appointed honorary chair of the Communist-supported International Congress of Writers for the Defence of Culture in Paris. He declared his commitment to the Communist cause in a letter to the Soviet ambassador at the conclusion of this conference: ‘For many French revolutionaries, and revolutionaries of all countries, the USSR has become, as you know, an ideal fatherland; *we belong to it*, and we are ready to fight for it.’⁵⁸

With the signing of the Franco-Soviet pact in May 1935, public figures from France faced pressure to consolidate relations with the USSR, and Gide’s pilgrimage to the Soviet Union—planned since 1933—finally occurred in June 1936.⁵⁹ A prolific author, Gide was no doubt invited in the hope that he could relay the success of Stalin’s model to his home country in the form of a book. However, his resulting *Retour de l’U.R.S.S.* was far from what Soviet officials were wanting, and Communists in France were expecting, to hear. Published in November 1936, the book was an overnight sensation,⁶⁰ for it documented Gide’s biggest issues with the Soviet state: namely its oppressive legislations against homosexuality and abortion; how his translators insisted on adding extra praise in his address to Stalin; and the fact that Stalin’s very position went against Communist principles.⁶¹ Of Soviet society, Gide wrote:

What is wanted now is compliance, conformity. What is desired and demanded is approval of all that is done in the USSR, and an attempt is being made to obtain an approval that is not mere resignation, but a sincere, an enthusiastic approval. What is most astounding is that this attempt is successful. On the other hand, the smallest protest, the least criticism, is liable to the severest penalties, and in fact is immediately stifled. And I doubt whether in any other country in the world, even Hitler’s Germany,

⁵⁵ Gide’s trip bears many similarities to the one made by John Dewey in 1928, documented in his book *Impressions of Soviet Russia and the Revolutionary World* (New York: New Republic, Inc., 1929).

⁵⁶ Waldemar Gurian, ‘André Gide’s Return from the U.S.S.R.,’ *Blackfriars* 18, no. 204 (1937): 183.

⁵⁷ Racine, ‘L’Association des écrivains et artistes révolutionnaires,’ 30–31.

⁵⁸ Herbert R. Lottman, *The Left Bank: Writers, Artists, and Politics from the Popular Front to the Cold War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982), 60.

⁵⁹ Lottman, *The Left Bank*, 109, 111.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 115. The book sold 146,300 copies from its publication to September 1937.

⁶¹ André Gide, *Back from the U.S.S.R.*, trans. Dorothy Bussy (London: Secker and Warburg, 1937).

thought be less free, more bowed down, more fearful (terrorised), more vassalised.⁶²

Gide's description of the Soviet Union was embraced warmly not only by right-wing commentators,⁶³ but also other factions of the Left. Three weeks after the release of *Retour*, the Socialist organ *Le Populaire* reproduced a passage from the book that alluded, amongst other things, to Shostakovich's plight following the denunciation of *Lady Macbeth*. Gide recounts a conversation he allegedly had with an unnamed artist, to whom he refers simply as 'X':

'You see,' explained X, 'it wasn't at all what the public asked for; not at all the kind of thing we want nowadays. Before this he had written a very remarkable ballet which had been greatly admired.' (He was Shostakovich, whom I had heard praised in terms usually reserved for geniuses.) 'But what is the public to do with an opera that leaves them with no tunes to hum when they come out?' (Heavens! Is this the stage they're at? I thought to myself. And yet X is himself an artist and highly cultivated, and I had never before heard him say anything that was not intelligent.) 'What we want nowadays are works everyone can understand, and understand immediately. If Shostakovich doesn't feel that himself, he will soon be made to, by losing all his listeners.'⁶⁴

Gide alienated many of his colleagues with this book. The notion that the Soviet state was stifling artistic production, as opposed to inspiring it, was unthinkable for many French left-wing intellectuals who looked aspirationally to the USSR for socio-political solutions—although, this line of thinking did align closely with Paris's anti-Soviet, Russian intellectual diaspora community, with whom Gide was closely associated.⁶⁵ In the USSR, officials were even more incensed by Gide's comments, as evidenced by the public statements made by the intellectual and Bolshevik revolutionary Mikhail Koltsov (1898–1940). Attending the Second International Congress of Writers for the Defence of Culture in Valencia in 1937 as a correspondent for *Pravda*,⁶⁶ Koltsov delivered an impassioned speech that urged 'Republicans, anarchists, Marxists, Catholics, and people who simply have no political affiliation' to band together to fight against

⁶² Gide, *Back from the U.S.S.R.*, 62–63.

⁶³ See 'Retour d'U.R.S.S. : un militant ne peut dire sa déception,' *L'Action française*, 26 December 1936, 2; Thierry Mulnier, 'Quand on revient d'U.R.S.S.,' *L'Action française*, 21 January 1937, 3.

⁶⁴ Gide, *Back from the U.S.S.R.*, 74–75.

⁶⁵ Leonid Livak, *Russian Emigrés in the Intellectual and Literary Life of Inter-War France: A Bibliographical Essay* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 33–34; Leonid Livak, *Histoire culturelle de l'émigration russe en France, 1920–1950* (Paris: Eur'Orbem Éditions, 2022), 118.

⁶⁶ See Robert S. Thornberry, 'Writers Take Sides, Stalinists Take Control: The Second International Congress for the Defense of Culture (Spain 1937),' *The Historian* 62, no. 3 (2000): 589–605.

‘the common enemy: fascism.’⁶⁷ He also declared that the only people who do not belong in this fight are ‘those who believe in some possibility of compromise with the enemy,’⁶⁸ categorising Gide’s book as a material representation of such beliefs:

It is by the example of André Gide that this truth is best confirmed. By publishing his lampoon of slimy defamation against the Soviet Union, Gide has tried—in vain—to maintain an illusion of neutrality, hoping to stay in the milieu of leftist writers. But, it immediately fell into the hands of the French fascists, and the book and its author were turned into a symbol of fascism.⁶⁹

A French transcript of Koltsov’s speech was later published in the AEAR’s monthly journal *Commune*, meaning French Communists who were unable to attend the congress in Spain were still informed of the outrage Gide’s observations had prompted among Soviet officials.

In an effort to understand the pushback to Gide’s *Retour* from Communists and communist sympathisers in France, it is useful to turn to Abbott Gleason’s work on the history of totalitarianism in Western thought. Although it came into existence as early as 1923, Gleason has shown how the term ‘totalitarianism’ was not commonplace in the West until 1939.⁷⁰ Of the era immediately before World War II, he suggests that

it is not difficult to understand the Left’s, even the moderate Left’s reluctance to understand the Soviet Union as a totalitarian state like Germany or even Italy. Whatever the excesses of Stalinism—and neither the British nor the American Left was on the whole eager to confront them—men and women who had staked their intellectual and moral faith on the necessity or desirability of revolutionary change had enormous difficulty in believing that the Russian Revolution had gone so badly wrong as to produce a regime that was typologically akin to Fascism.⁷¹

In this context, Gleason refers primarily to American and, to a lesser extent, English perspectives, but the Communist Parties of the US and Britain formed no part of their respective governments at any stage of the twentieth century. This was, however, the case during the

⁶⁷ Mikhail Koltsov, ‘Extraits des principaux discours du Deuxième congrès international des écrivains pour la défense de la culture : L’Union soviétique,’ *Commune*, September 1937, 19.

⁶⁸ Koltsov, ‘Extraits des principaux discours,’ 19. ‘Pour ceux-là seuls qui croient à quelque possibilité de compromise avec l’ennemi, qui le veulent, pour ceux-là seuls il n’y a pas de place.’

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 19–20.

⁷⁰ Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism* (New York: OUP, 1995), 12.

⁷¹ Gleason, *Totalitarianism*, 46.

Popular Front era in France, which makes Gleason's statements arguably even more applicable to the French Left. Considering the Communist participation in the Front populaire government, and how strongly the faction modelled its social policies on those of the Soviet Union, it would probably have been even more challenging for the Communist and communist-sympathising public of 1930s France to acknowledge critically the totalitarianism of the Soviet Union.

That the French public did not yet understand the Soviet Union as a totalitarian state meant that the French reception of Soviet musical works in the 1930s could not yet be clouded by the idea of totalitarianism as we understand it today. As we will soon see in more detail, Shostakovich's name was established in French radio programming and concert repertoire between 1936 and 1938; so, we may question whether the early reputation of his music in France would have followed the same trajectory had French listeners been openly informed of the circumstances under which the composer lived and worked. Nevertheless, following the composer's first denunciation, the popularity of his opera in France appeared unaffected: a Swiss production of *Lady Macbeth* was broadcasted via radio only a week after the *Pravda* article,⁷² and in March the opera received what was hitherto its greatest exposure, when excerpts from the orchestral score were featured in a concert of Soviet music in Paris:

Last year, the FMP presented a huge festival of the Soviet Union's songs of the people. Since then, a certain number of songs (such as 'Les Partisans' and 'Au-devant de la vie' by Shostakovich) have become popular throughout France. But in France, we perform neither Soviet opera nor symphonic music. Certain names of Soviet composers, famous in England and America, are unknown to the French public. The FMP, in its concert on 28 March, intends to popularise these names.⁷³

Shostakovich's inclusion in the concert was promoted by focusing on his educational pedigree and the accessibility of his music to Western listeners:

Shostakovich is a member of the Leningrad school. Not yet thirty years old, he has been profoundly influenced by Western techniques. He is known in France for the popular song 'Au-devant de la vie,' taken from the film *Counterplan*. Of his works, the programme

⁷² 'Radio,' *Paris-Soir*, 3 February 1936, 7. 'Suisse Romande (443) – 19 heures, Caterina Izmaïlova, opéra de Dmitri Chostakovitch.'

⁷³ Jean Train, 'La Musique – Concert soviétique,' *L'Humanité*, 22 March 1936, 8.

comprises two pieces for orchestra and an excerpt from the opera *Katerina Ismailova*, which has been successfully performed in London and New York.⁷⁴

The advertisement for this concert is distinct from others covered in this chapter so far in that it presents the success of Shostakovich's popular song as equal to his international operatic achievements. 'Au-devant de la vie' was already well known among the working classes for its appearance in Renoir's *La Vie est à nous* and its association with the Front populaire; on the other hand, the focus on Shostakovich's 'profound Western influence' and the popularity of his opera in two influential Western cities may have appealed to a separate audience, one more likely to engage with Shostakovich's art music via concert performances or radio broadcasts. By placing these two contrasting achievements on the same bill, this concert brings the appeal of high art to the working classes: an intersection that became typical of the concert's organising body, the Fédération musicale populaire (FMP).

The Fédération musicale populaire

Before providing more detail on the FMP, it is necessary to lay out the structure of its sister organisation, the AEAR, Vaillant-Couturier's union of revolutionary artists and writers active in France from 1932 to 1939. The AEAR's membership comprised prominent communist and communist-sympathising figures including the journalist, historian, and film critic Léon Moussinac (1890–1964), the poet and playwright Charles Vildrac (1882–1971), and the writer, artist, and political activist Francis Jourdain (1876–1958). Three years after forming the AEAR, Vaillant-Couturier established the Maison de la Culture, an umbrella-like cultural establishment based on the Soviet Union's Palaces of Culture. These Palaces or Houses of Culture (*dom kulturey*) were usually based in community centres or clubhouses in towns throughout the Soviet Union and across the Eastern bloc. Much like the People's Houses that became popular throughout Russia, Britain, and many European states in the nineteenth century, the Soviet Culture Palaces sought to bring education, art, and leisure activities to the masses by allowing children, workers, and retirees to participate in meaningful leisure activities. John Dewey described his visit to a Leningrad Palace of Culture in his *Impressions of Soviet Russia and the Revolutionary World* (1929):

Here was a fine new building in the factory quarter, surrounded by recreation grounds, provided with one large theater, four smaller assembly halls, fifty rooms for club meetings, recreation and games, headquarters for trade unions, costing two million

⁷⁴ Train, 'La Musique,' 8.

dollars, frequented daily—or rather, nightly—by five thousand persons as a daily average. Built and controlled, perhaps, by the government? No, but by the voluntary efforts of the trade unions, who tax themselves two percent of their wages to afford their collective life these facilities.⁷⁵

This model of educating the masses via art and communal activities aligned closely with the values of the French Popular Front. Under the patronage of the PCF, and the guidance of Paul Vaillant-Couturier and Louis Aragon, the first French Culture House opened in Paris in April 1934. It offered access to music, radio, poetry and other arts, as well as lectures on film, literature, politics and foreign relations.⁷⁶ With its structures in place, the Maison de la Culture became a parent organisation for several discipline-specific branches, which included the existing AEAR; its newly formed musical equivalent, the FMP; as well as various other federations in fields such as painting and sculpture, cinema, museums, photography, architecture, and independent theatre.⁷⁷ To fight fascism by decentralising the arts was the goal of these organisations, and Vaillant-Couturier and Aragon strived to achieve this by making all forms of high art accessible to working-class audiences. René Blech, a French Communist novelist, summarised the Maison de la Culture's social mission as follows: 'There are not two cultures ... but only one, to which the working classes have as much right as intellectuals.'⁷⁸

Initially referred to as the AEAR's 'section musique',⁷⁹ the FMP advocated for socially progressive music in the same way that the AEAR facilitated the creation of socially progressive literature. Its managerial body comprised a collective of politically engaged, leftist musicians, with Albert Roussel (1869–1937)—the former naval officer turned composer, whose socialist sympathies advanced significantly after the First World War—appointed as the first director.⁸⁰ Roussel considered independence and innovation to be as important in music as it was in daily life, and was therefore the ideal spokesperson to promote the FMP's cultural agenda from 1936 until his death in August 1937.⁸¹ Throughout 1936, the FMP became the vessel through which the cultural values of the Front populaire were disseminated to the masses. Jane Fulcher

⁷⁵ Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 32–33.

⁷⁶ Lottman, *The Left Bank*, 60.

⁷⁷ 'Liste des associations affiliées à l'Association des Maisons de la Culture,' Box 104AS/3 (1930–1939), Fonds de l'Association des Maisons de la Culture, AN.

⁷⁸ René Bloch quoted in Ory, *La Belle Illusion*, 71. 'Il n'y a pas deux cultures ... mais une seule, à laquelle ont droit les masses laborieuses aussi bien que les intellectuels.'

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 298.

⁸⁰ Roussel also notably dissociated himself from Vincent d'Indy and the Schola Cantorum in the interwar period. See Jane F. Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual* (New York: OUP, 2005), 214.

⁸¹ Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual*, 214.

describes it as a ‘matrix for the implementation of the musical goals of the Popular Front,’⁸² as the organisation was more closely aligned with the politics of its instigators than any other of the Maison’s specialised branches. One of its directors even remarked that the acronym ‘FMP’ could, in fact, have stood for ‘Front musical populaire.’⁸³ In France during the summer of 1936, the FMP established 140 new musical groups, most of which were choral ensembles (ideal for their no-cost and all-inclusive nature).⁸⁴ Some syndicates employed musical directors, whereas others offered free music classes, advertised in the national trade union magazine *La Vie ouvrière*. Evidence also points to the existence of at least one trade union jazz band.⁸⁵

Yet, with Vaillant-Couturier’s close ties to the USSR, and the distinct nod to Soviet cultural policy in the French Culture Houses, it is unsurprising that many of these efforts to decentralise the arts in France often resulted in the promotion of Soviet art and culture. In the case of the FMP, this has already been evidenced by the Soviet composers’ concert (held on 28 March 1936); but the group was also known to put on festivals like ‘Chants de la Liberté’ (Songs of Freedom) and ‘Musique soviétique,’ the scheduling of which tended to align with political events in France.⁸⁶ The very title of the FMP’s aforementioned ‘Concert soviétique’ was likely a direct appeal to those who were sympathetic towards the Soviet Union, and therefore curious to hear what Soviet cultural production sounded like (note the adjective ‘soviétique’ as opposed to ‘russe,’ which at this time would have denoted either Russian music of the nineteenth century or the work of an émigré composer). In France, a demographic attracted to *musique soviétique* would have comprised almost exclusively Communists and communist-sympathisers, and in March 1936, with the legislative elections only weeks away, it was important for the Front populaire to garner as much support from this sector as possible. At the end of its 1936 campaign, the coalition emerged victorious—a victory that would not have been possible without the substantial gains made by its Communist faction. As well as the exponential growth of the party’s committee and membership, the increase in this sector can be seen in the readership statistics of its organ, *L’Humanité*, whose daily circulation grew from 200,000 in 1935 to 2 million by June 1936.⁸⁷ These democratic elections, held between April and May 1936, would be the last of the Third Republic, and the last before World War II.

⁸² Ibid., 211.

⁸³ Ory, *La Belle Illusion*, 299.

⁸⁴ Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual*, 211.

⁸⁵ Ory, *La Belle Illusion*, 298, 301.

⁸⁶ Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual*, 212.

⁸⁷ Santamaria, *Histoire du Parti communiste français*, 33. The PCF won 72 seats and took 15.2% of the total vote.

Symphonies: From First to Fifth

So far, I have examined two pieces of music in contrasting styles: a provocative opera, and a politically engaged popular song. Although Shostakovich would later become better known in France for his symphonies, these other pieces were important stepping-stones to the earliest French performances of his works for orchestra, which started to appear in concert halls from the end of 1936. In other words, without the presence of ‘Au-devant de la vie’ and *Lady Macbeth* in different sectors of French musical life throughout the early and mid-1930s, Shostakovich may not have garnered enough popularity in France to motivate anyone to organise a performance of his symphonic music (which demands more coordination and manpower than organising a radio broadcast of a prearranged production, or performing a straightforward choral piece). The remaining discussion in this chapter will be dedicated to Shostakovich’s First and Fifth Symphonies, which premiered in Paris in 1936 and 1938 respectively.

The first performance of Symphony No. 1 in France was held at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées on 10 December 1936. The most high-profile live performance of Shostakovich’s music in France to date, the premiere was conducted by the celebrated Italian conductor Arturo Toscanini, who had also given the work its American premiere in April 1931.⁸⁸ Shostakovich’s symphony appeared in a diverse programme of contemporary music, including works by Ferruccio Busoni, Giulio Sonzogno, Vincent d’Indy, and Claude Debussy.⁸⁹ The French musical press advertised the upcoming premiere of the First Symphony by describing Shostakovich as ‘the most prominent of the young musicians of Soviet Russia,’ and observing the distinct genres across which he was achieving success, both in France at the time and internationally:

At barely 30 years of age, [Shostakovich] has already produced a monumental body of symphonic work, chamber music, and music for theatre. His opera *Lady Macbeth* has been performed all over the world, and has consistently been met with great success. In addition, he has written popular songs, which almost constitute a new kind of folklore.⁹⁰

Although the tone of this advertisement is enthusiastic and supportive, the concert received limited coverage elsewhere. Toscanini’s performance was, however, memorable enough for it to be referred to in the French press eighteen months later in advertisements for the upcoming

⁸⁸ Klefstad, ‘The Reception in America of Dmitri Shostakovich,’ 83.

⁸⁹ ‘Concerts et récitals d’aujourd’hui,’ *Comœdia*, 10 December 1936, 2.

⁹⁰ ‘Toscanini,’ *L’Art musical : Théâtres, concerts, T.S.F., disques, cinéma*, 4 December 1936, 225.

premiere of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony, the press coverage for which easily surpassed that of Symphony No. 1.

No additional Shostakovich symphonies premiered in France between Nos. 1 and 5. It appears that the more experimental characteristics of the Second and Third symphonies limited their popularity outside of the Soviet Union and the US,⁹¹ while the circumstances surrounding the premiere of Symphony No. 4 put any possibility of a French premiere entirely off the table. Shostakovich had half-finished composing it when the 'Muddle Instead of Music' article appeared, and although he had intended the work to premiere at the end of 1936, he withdrew it from rehearsal in December.⁹² Four months later, he began working on the Fifth. Surtitled the 'Creative answer of a Soviet artist to just criticism' (words of an unnamed Soviet critic, subsequently adopted by the composer), Symphony No. 5 satisfied the artistic principles of socialist realism that were imposed more forcefully upon the arts after the denunciation of *Lady Macbeth*.⁹³ Soviet symphonies were 'expected to embody some identifiable human content, if not a specific programme,'⁹⁴ and in the Fifth, Shostakovich depicted the triumph of man after conflict and struggle. Although not explicitly programmatic in nature, the work alludes to a victorious narrative by unfolding in the minor-to-major tradition of the fifth symphonies of Beethoven, Mahler, and Tchaikovsky.⁹⁵ Laurel Fay explains how Shostakovich

embraced Tolstoy's metaphor of the 'formation of a personality' and his rationalization for the tragic impulse behind the symphony: 'it was man, with all his sufferings, that I saw at the center of this work, lyrical from start to finish. The finale of the symphony resolves the tragically tense moments of the opening movements in a life-affirming, optimistic plan.'⁹⁶

⁹¹ Terry Klefstad accounts for three performances of Symphony No. 3 in America from 1932–33. See 'The Reception in America of Dmitri Shostakovich,' 141. Symphony Nos. 2 and 3 were not performed in France until 1989 (see Chapter Five).

⁹² For an in-depth explanation of the complexities surrounding this withdrawal, see Pauline Fairclough, *A Soviet Credo: Shostakovich's Fourth Symphony* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006). Symphony No. 4 would not premiere until after the death of Stalin. The first performance was given by Kirill Kondrashin and the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra on 30 December 1961.

⁹³ Pauline Fairclough, *Dmitry Shostakovich* (London: Reaktion Books, 2019), 62. Socialist realism required that Soviet music be harmonically unambiguous, with an optimistic and triumphant narrative. See Jonathon Walker, 'Socialist Realism,' in *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com. For an analysis of the contradictory nature of applying these doctrines to music, see Fairclough, *A Soviet Credo*, xv–xxii.

⁹⁴ Hugh Ottaway, *Shostakovich Symphonies* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1978), 9.

⁹⁵ Ottaway, *Shostakovich Symphonies*, 25.

⁹⁶ Shostakovich quoted and translated in Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, 102.

At the Leningrad premiere on 21 November 1937, the Fifth Symphony received a standing ovation that lasted over half an hour.⁹⁷ It is nowadays accepted, thanks to the work of Fay, that the Fifth Symphony should be read only as a creative ‘answer’ to criticism—not an apology or a retraction—since it did not actually reflect any fundamental changes in Shostakovich’s musical style; but Richard Taruskin has suggested that, at the time of its premiere, the multitude of potential readings for the symphony is precisely what made it so appealing.⁹⁸ As Shostakovich’s last Soviet biographer wrote, ‘the people of the thirties recognised themselves, grasping not only the music’s explicit content, but also its general feeling.’⁹⁹

In France, the premiere of Symphony No. 5 appeared in another concert of contemporary music, this time conducted by Roger Désormière (1898–1963).¹⁰⁰ The premiere was held at the Grand Salle Pleyel in Paris on 14 June 1938—only seven months after the symphony was first heard in Leningrad, which offers quite a contrast to France’s ten-year delay in receiving Symphony No. 1. This increased profile of Shostakovich in France can also be seen in the amount of press coverage the performance generated. Less than two years had elapsed since the premiere of the First Symphony, but the difference in this regard is striking. Moreover, this programme would mark the first time that a Shostakovich work was the feature of a Parisian concert. Even though he was programmed alongside Auric and Koechlin, the majority of advertisements featured Shostakovich’s name most prominently (see Figures 1.6 and 1.7). That a Soviet composer would be the centrepiece over two well-known French composers suggests that the radio broadcasts of his opera, and the association of his music with the Front populaire movement in the preceding years, had had a tangible impact on Shostakovich’s popularity in Paris; it also reflects the pro-Soviet sentiment that the concert’s organisers were striving to foster. But the coverage of the Fifth Symphony was unlike that of many earlier performances or broadcasts of his music in that it extended beyond the French Communist press: most of the major Parisian newspapers published at least one advertisement in advance of the Tuesday evening performance. Yet, this increased reach of Shostakovich’s music did not mean it lost its ties to French Communism, which is clear from scrutinising the organising body of this 1938 concert: *Le Chant du Monde*, a French publishing house and affiliate of both the PCF and the FMP.

⁹⁷ Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered*, 158.

⁹⁸ Fairclough, *Dmitry Shostakovich*, 62; Richard Taruskin, ‘Public Lies and Unspeakable Truth, Interpreting Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony,’ in *Shostakovich Studies*, ed. David Fanning (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), 17–56.

⁹⁹ Sofya Khentova quoted in Taruskin, ‘Interpreting Shostakovich’s Fifth,’ 36.

¹⁰⁰ See various advertisements in *Le Figaro*, *L’Humanité*, *Le Temps*, *Regards*, and *Paris-Soir* between 31 May and 14 June 1938.



Figure 1.6. An advertisement in *L'Humanité*: 'For the first time in Paris, the Fifth Symphony of the great Soviet composer D. Shostakovich will be performed on Tuesday 14 June at the Grande Salle Pleyel'

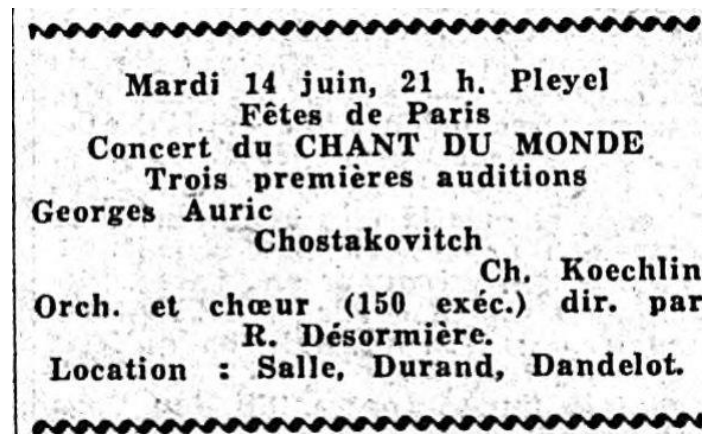


Figure 1.7. An advertisement for the French premiere of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5 in *Le Figaro*



Figure 1.8. ‘A Unique Concert!’: the French premiere of Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 5 advertised in *Regards*

Le Chant du Monde and French Communist Sponsorship

Although it specialised initially in music only from France and Russia, Le Chant du Monde became a highly influential publishing house in the twentieth century. The firm was established in Paris in 1938 by Léon Moussinac, co-founder of the AEAR and resident cinema critic at *L’Humanité*.¹⁰¹ To establish a financial backbone for his organisation, Moussinac engaged several members of the left-wing artistic circles through which he moved; at its inception, Le Chant du Monde’s artistic committee comprised some of the most influential musicians of 1930s Paris: the composers Auric, Honegger, Koechlin, Milhaud, Roussel, and Francis Poulenc, and conductors Roger Désormière (1898–1963) and Manuel Rosenthal (1904–2003). Désormière, Honegger, and

¹⁰¹ Le Chant du Monde became more oriented towards popular and world music styles as the century progressed. In 1993 the company merged with another French label Harmonia Mundi, and as of 2016 its printing division is owned by the UK-based Music Sales Group. Despite its loss of autonomy, Le Chant du Monde is (at the time of writing) the oldest extant French dual printing and recording label. The company’s role in the reception of Shostakovich in France later in the century is covered in Chapter Five.

Koechlin were PCF supporters, and—with the exception of Rosenthal and Poulenc—the remaining members were active in the FMP.¹⁰²

The label's first audio release was a four-disc collection of revolutionary songs made popular in Paris through the Front populaire-associated communal singing movement. Recorded by Désormière, the Chorale populaire de Paris, and a children's choir called Les Jeunes Filles de France, the discs featured Honegger's 'Jeunesse' (text by Vaillant-Couturier); Auric's 'Chantons, jeunes filles' and 'Corvée d'eau' (texts by Moussinac and Vaillant-Couturier respectively); François-Joseph Gossec's 'Hymne à la victoire' and 'Ronde nationale' (1792); the communist classics 'L'Appel du Komintern' and 'Le Drapeau rouge'; and Shostakovich's 'Au-devant de la vie'.¹⁰³ From May 1938, Le Chant du Monde began to complement its printed and recorded output by presenting live music performances. The first, 'La Musique et le peuple,' offered a diverse programme of '*grands classiques*' (excerpts from works by Beethoven, Bizet, Fauré, Mozart, Méhul, Schubert, Smetana, and Strauss), performed alongside extracts from the contemporary music of Spain and the USSR (music by Rodolfo Halffter and Lev Knipper).¹⁰⁴ In addition, the programme included seven popular songs from the French provinces, performed by the Chorale Yvonne Gouverné in a series of new arrangements courtesy of Auric, Marcel Delannoy, Honegger, Maurice Jaubert, Koechlin, Milhaud, and Henry Sauveplane (1892–1942), who was also Le Chant du Monde's Artistic Director.¹⁰⁵ Presumably, this inaugural programme was yet another Front populaire-inspired effort to unify high art and popular song, as well as one intended to showcase the firm's inclusivity and internationalist aspirations.

The second Chant du Monde concert on June 14 was less ambitious in variety, but more grandiose in scope. The programme comprised three symphonic works: in addition to Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony, it featured Koechlin's *Symphonie d'hymnes* (1936) and Auric's *Ouverture* (1932). As has been alluded to numerous times already, both Koechlin and Auric were engaged with the French Left in the interwar era; following the death of Roussel in August 1937,

¹⁰² For discussion on Poulenc's grapples with communism, see Christopher Moore, 'Constructing the Monk: Francis Poulenc and the Post-War Context,' *Intersections* 32, no. 1–2 (2012): 203–30 and Jane Fulcher, 'Musical Style, Meaning and Politics in France on the Eve of the Second World War,' *The Journal of Musicology* 13, no. 4 (1995): 433.

¹⁰³ For a review of this collection at the time of its release, see M.S., 'Les Disques "Chant du Monde",' *L'Humanité*, 9 April 1938, 8. Désormière's recording can nowadays be heard on the album *Les Chansons de l'histoire, 1935–1938*, EPM Musique, 2002.

¹⁰⁴ 'Un grand concert populaire,' *L'Humanité*, 17 May 1938, 7; Henry Sauveplane, 'La Musique et le peuple à la Gaîté-Lyrique : Donner aux chants populaires de notre patrimoine national l'expression qu'ils méritent...', *L'Humanité*, 17 May 1938, 7.

¹⁰⁵ 'La Musique et le peuple à la Gaîté-Lyrique : Le premier concert de « Chant du Monde » fut un triomphal succès,' *L'Humanité*, 19 May 1938, 7.

Koechlin was appointed president of the FMP,¹⁰⁶ which became an even more radical political force under his leadership than it had been under that of his predecessor.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, Auric wrote prolifically for the French Communist press in the 1930s,¹⁰⁸ and became a member of both the AEAR and the FMP in 1935. He joined the *presidium d'honneur* of the latter group in 1937, the same year that Koechlin assumed presidency. This left-wing engagement on Auric's part can be seen as somewhat ironic, given that he had ridiculed his mentor Erik Satie for joining the PCF at the beginning of the previous decade.¹⁰⁹ However, the clear shift in his political alignment reflects his opinions regarding the social utility of music, and his compositions from the 1930s display greater social and political engagement than those of the 1920s.¹¹⁰ Colin Roust has shown that this is indeed the case with Auric's *Overture*, which was written especially for the concert of 14 June 1938. Summarising the enhanced populism of the short piece, Roust writes:

This is music that no longer relies on finesse and inside jokes to reach an elite audience in the know, nor does it rely on the traditional forms and emotional signs of German Romantic music. Instead, this is music that aims to please a broad audience through catchy and easily recognizable melodies, the various restatements of which define the form of the piece.¹¹¹

With the programming of this concert, it seems that Sauveplane, Désormière, and the rest of the Chant du Monde committee had made an effort to place Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony alongside French music that would complement both its musical language and sentiment: all three composers produced high-quality yet accessible orchestral works, and Koechlin's radical leftism and Auric's democratic values would likely have appealed to at least a similar sector of the public as the one interested in hearing a Soviet symphony in 1938.

Advertisements for the concert began to appear in leading French newspapers from the end of May,¹¹² and the performance was disseminated live via Radio Tour Eiffel.¹¹³ In a feature article published in *Le Figaro* three days before the concert, Sauveplane promoted his firm's upcoming

¹⁰⁶ Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual*, 215.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 216. Koechlin had propagated the Popular Front's most extreme leftist views since 1936, when he authored *La Musique et le peuple*: a book that expressed his desires for an art that combines the elements of 'high' and 'low' social classes. See Charles Koechlin, *La Musique et le peuple* (Paris: Éditions sociales internationales, 1936).

¹⁰⁸ Colin Roust, 'Reaching a "Plus Grand Public": Georges Auric as Populist,' *The Music Quarterly* 95, no. 2 (2012): 345.

¹⁰⁹ Roust, 'Georges Auric as Populist,' 344–45.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 344.

¹¹¹ Colin Roust, 'Sounding French: The Film Music and Criticism of Georges Auric, 1919–1945' (PhD thesis: University of Michigan, 2007), 150.

¹¹² 'Musique,' *Figaro*, 31 May 1938, 4.

¹¹³ 'La Radio,' *Figaro*, 14 June 1938, 5.

concert by singing the praises of Shostakovich's symphony. Of course, there is inherent bias in Sauveplane's opinions on Soviet music, as he was not only the director of a Communist publishing house, but a member of the Popular Front-affiliated Comité de vigilance des intellectuels antifascistes (CVIA), a left-wing political organisation formed by French intellectuals in response to the February 1934 riots.¹¹⁴ Still, his comments appeared in one of the major newspapers of the period, and an endorsement from a fellow composer would likely have set public expectations for the Fifth Symphony relatively high. Sauveplane likened Shostakovich to the greatest exponent of symphonism by describing the laconic opening measures of his Fifth Symphony as '*d'une simplicité beethovénienne*.'¹¹⁵ In awe of the work's immense scale and emotive subject matter, he wrote that Shostakovich was: 'imbibed by what he calls "affirmation of life which illuminates Shakespearian tragedies",' and suggests that the Fifth Symphony was 'indisputably conceived ... as a vast lyrical tragedy.'¹¹⁶ He assured the readership of *Le Figaro* that they would not be disappointed by the forthcoming premiere: 'We will appreciate the brilliant development of his musical thought, and in any case, we can notice sure signs of an already affirmed genius.'¹¹⁷

Reminiscences of the Symphony No. 1 premiere also surfaced in the promotional material for Symphony No. 5, with Toscanini's involvement appearing to have been particularly memorable. In *Marianne*, a leftist political and literary journal active in France from 1932 to 1940, an unnamed journalist asked:

Who is this Soviet composer that Toscanini—who is not exactly a new music enthusiast—introduced to France? At only 32 years of age, the genius of this young man has already been established many times. At age 20 he wrote the First Symphony, which Toscanini premiered in Paris a few years ago. Since then, [Shostakovich] has continued to produce works that exemplify him as one of the most remarkable talents of today.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ 'Comité de vigilance des intellectuels antifascistes : membership list,' *Archives André Breton*, www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100576110. For a detailed explanation of this organisation, see Nicole Racine-Furlaud, 'Le Comité de vigilance des intellectuels antifascistes (1934–1939): Antifascisme et pacifisme,' *Le Mouvement social* 101 (1977): 87–113.

¹¹⁵ Henry Sauveplane, 'Trois importantes premières auditions,' *Le Figaro*, 11 June 1938, 8.

¹¹⁶ Sauveplane, 'Trois importantes premières auditions,' 8. 'L'auteur, très pénétré de ce qu'il nomme « l'affirmation de la vie qui illumine les tragédies shakespeariennes » a incontestablement conçu la Cinquième Symphonie comme une vaste tragédie lyrique.'

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 'On appréciera l'étincelant développement de sa pensée musicale, et en tous cas l'on y peut remarquer le signe certain d'un génie déjà affirmé.'

¹¹⁸ 'Chostakovitch,' *Marianne : Grand Hebdomadaire littéraire illustré*, 8 June 1938, 17.

L'Humanité also reflected upon Toscanini's 1936 performance with a flattering description of the young composer:

The young Soviet composer Dmitri Shostakovich, who—since the day that Toscanini became champion of his First Symphony—has been counted among the most remarkable musicians of our time, will tonight have his Fifth Symphony performed in a concert of modern music given by Le Chant du Monde.¹¹⁹

The anonymous author also stated that, 'in the last few years, Shostakovich has produced a large number of works, all of which have been remarkable.'¹²⁰ While such unapologetic support of a Soviet composer is entirely characteristic of the PCF organ, this article is significant in that it contains the first explicit mention of Shostakovich's denunciation in the Soviet Union:

We remember that Shostakovich was violently criticised in the Soviet press, particularly for his opera, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, and for his Fourth Symphony, works judged too scholarly and too formalist. His Fifth Symphony has won him all the votes once more, it seems. We shall soon see why.¹²¹

As this 'violent criticism' of Shostakovich would likely have shocked *L'Humanité's* readership in 1936, the editors appear to have held onto the story until June 1938, recounting it offhandedly to promote the triumphant genesis of Shostakovich's new work. After glossing over the details of this enforcement of socialist realism upon the arts, *L'Humanité* provided a listening guide for the Fifth Symphony (shown in the article in Figure 1.9). The author paraphrased in French Shostakovich's famous description, and added the following comments on the composer:

The musical and dramatic movement of his symphony progresses and grows through dazzling contrasts of shade and light, contrasts obtained by a wise economy of means of expression, which is the distinctive sign of true orchestral mastery. We can confirm that this work reveals a certain and already affirmed genius.¹²²

As the final affirmation about Shostakovich is almost identical to the one published in *Le Figaro*, this unsigned article may also have been written by Sauveplane, or was at least prepared from a Chant du Monde press release.

¹¹⁹ 'La Cinquième Symphonie de Chostakovitch au concert de « Chant du Monde », *L'Humanité*, 14 June 1938, 7.

¹²⁰ 'La Cinquième Symphonie,' 7. 'En quelques années, Chostakovitch a produit un grand nombre d'œuvres, toutes marquantes.'

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

**POUR LA PREMIÈRE FOIS A PARIS
CE SOIR SALLE PLEYEL...**

**... la cinquième symphonie
de CHOSTAKOVITCH**

au concert de « Chant du Monde »

Le jeune compositeur soviétique Dimitri Chostakovitch, qui comptait déjà parmi les musiciens les plus marquants de notre époque depuis le jour où Toscanini s'était fait le parrain de sa « Première Symphonie », aura sa « Cinquième Symphonie » jouée ce soir au cours d'un concert de musiques moderne donné par le « Chant du Monde ».

Chostakovitch est né en 1906 à Lénin-grad et fit ses études musicales au Conservatoire de cette ville. C'est également là qu'il a fait ses débuts à la Philharmonie académique d'Etat.

En quelques années, Chostakovitch a produit un grand nombre d'œuvres, toutes marquantes. Citons son « Concerto pour piano et instruments à vent » (1933), une « Sonate pour piano » (1926), vingt-quatre préludes pour piano également (1934), une « Sonate pour violoncelle et piano » (1934), cinq symphonies (la première date de 1925-26), deux opéras, « Le Nez », d'après Gogol, et « Lady Macbeth du district de Mzensk », d'après Jekov, des ballets, de la musique pour films et pour le théâtre, dont une musique de scène pour « Hamlet », de Shakespeare, qui fut jouée au théâtre Vakhtangov en 1932.

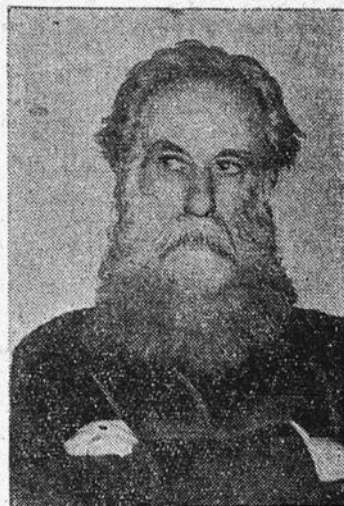
On se souvient que Chostakovitch fut violemment critiqué dans la presse soviétique, en particulier pour son opéra « Lady Macbeth du district de Mzensk » et pour sa « Quatrième Symphonie », œuvres jugées trop savantes et trop formalistes.

Sa « Cinquième Symphonie » lui a acquis de nouveau, semble-t-il, tous les suffrages. On jugera pourquoi.

Le sujet en est, dit l'auteur lui-même, « le devenir de la personnalité ». C'est l'homme précisément qui se trouve au centre de la conception de cette œuvre, dont la structure est tout entière lyrique. Le final de cette « Cinquième Symphonie » résout la tension tragique des premières parties sur le plan optimiste de la joie vitale.

Le mouvement musical et dramatique de sa symphonie progresse et s'accroît à travers d'éblouissants contrastes d'ombre et de lumière, contrastes obtenus par une sage économie de moyens d'expression, ce qui est le signe distinctif d'une véritable maîtrise orchestrale.

On peut affirmer que cette œuvre dé-



Charles KOEHLIN, prix Crescent 1938, dont la Symphonie d'Hymnes sera également exécutée au concert de « Chants du Monde » ce soir salle Pleyel

montre un génie certain et déjà affirmé.

Figure 1.9. An extended article in *L'Humanité* on Shostakovich and the Fifth Symphony

Symphony No. 5: Reception in the Parisian Press

After the performance of 14 June 1938, Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony was reviewed in a wide cross-section of French newspapers, magazines, and journals. Naturally, its most glowing evaluations appeared in those funded by the PCF: in the monthly periodical *Regards*, for instance, Jean Loiseau described the symphony as a work of the 'very first order,' one that would be

‘enough to class Shostakovich among the greatest composers of the present century.’¹²³ For the French Communist daily *Ce Soir*, the composer and conductor Daniel Lazarus (1898–1964)—artistic director of the Paris Opéra-Comique at the time—reported that the Fifth Symphony proved Shostakovich to be ‘a true musician of our time, from whom we can expect the greatest things.’¹²⁴ Lazarus saw the work as fitting into a legacy of classical masterworks, and noted how it leaves an impression of wholesome, pure, and almost naïve grandeur; it is devoid of arbitrariness and prejudice; it does not lower the horizon; it does not fight *against* a doctrine or school. It ‘lives’ splendidly a musical destiny, with which we join in with joy and confidence, because above all, that’s what it is—it is a work, it is music, that gives us *confidence* [original emphases].¹²⁵

From this optimistic and evocative assessment, we can glean that Lazarus was aware that Shostakovich was expected to compose according to the doctrine of socialist realism—he appears to imply that the composer had embraced it willingly, rather than fighting it—but the term itself was not used, nor was the concept explained in any precise detail. *L’Humanité*, on the other hand, went a step further, providing an allusion to Shostakovich’s denunciation in *Pravda*; however, it was even more fleeting than the announcement published by the same newspaper on the day of the Fifth Symphony’s premiere. The critic, writing under the initials E.B., began by making similarly encouraging comments to those of Loiseau and Lazarus:

Overall, we received the impression that this was very sincere, fresh music.

Shostakovich’s music has certainly not been spoiled by recent events. He seems to completely ignore what has been written in the last forty or fifty years ... and remembers only Tchaikovsky.¹²⁶

This suggestion that the work has more in common with late nineteenth-century music than contemporary music is a valid and strategic one. Comparing Shostakovich’s skill to a nineteenth century master not only dismisses any suggestion that Soviet cultural policy has had a negative effect on artistic production, it also avoids acknowledging that a symphony with as much excess as Shostakovich’s Fifth would probably have sounded passé compared with many works of

¹²³ Jean Loiseau, ‘Le Courrier des loisirs : Le 2^e concert du Chant du Monde,’ *Regards* 232 (1938): 15. ‘Œuvre de tout premier ordre ... cette V^e Symphonie suffit pour classer Chostakovitch parmi les plus grands compositeurs du siècle présent.’

¹²⁴ Daniel Lazarus, ‘La Musique,’ *Ce Soir*, 21 June 1938, 6. ‘Saluons donc un véritable « musicien » de notre temps, dont nous pouvons attendre les plus grandes choses.’

¹²⁵ Lazarus, ‘La Musique,’ 6.

¹²⁶ E.B., ‘Chostakovitch, Auric, Koechlin, au concert de « Chant du Monde »,’ *L’Humanité*, 18 June 1938, 8.

1930s Paris, but not necessarily all of them. The musical language employed in Symphony No. 5 is certainly unlike the complex and innovative (yet arguably inaccessible) brand of modernism characteristic of some French symphonic works of the period—Schmitt’s *Symphonie Concertante*, op. 83 (1932), for example—but there are elements of similarity in others, such as Honegger’s *Mouvement Symphonique No. 3* (1932–33).¹²⁷ The similarities to Auric, who eschewed musical elitism in favour of reaching a wider audience, are also worth restating. But, to return to the critic’s comparison of Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony to Tchaikovsky, Barbara Kelly has shown how Tchaikovsky’s influence was still present in the music of interwar France, specifically in Poulenc’s *Les Biches* (1923) and Stravinsky’s *Mavra* (1922), and famously in the latter composer’s 1928 pastiche work *Le Baiser de la fée*—although these works admittedly date from the more progressive decade of the interwar period. Yet, Kelly has also explained how efforts to work ‘against the grain’ were also valuable in France between the wars, as seen in the activities of groups like the Société musicale indépendante (which was still active until 1935, and of which Koechlin was a member) and La Jeune France (whose 1936 manifesto advocated for a spiritual, neo-Romantic aesthetic).¹²⁸ Thus, reactions to Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony in 1938 cannot be explained solely by the public’s preference for the ‘stripped-back’ style and focus on simplicity that marks a lot of the music of the interwar period in France. (Although, interestingly, that it was ‘deliberately pared down,’ ‘*volontairement dépourillée*,’ was the sole descriptor of Shostakovich’s symphony given by the composer, organist, and critic Gustave Bret in *Intransigent* after the 1938 premiere—however, it is unclear whether he intended this to be a positive or a negative statement.)¹²⁹ The public of late 1930s Paris had a wide variety of tastes and personal artistic preferences, which played their part to an extent in the reception of Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony, but it is also important to consider their political biases. The Communist allegiance of the *Humanité* reviewer would surely have influenced their appreciation of Shostakovich’s work in a way that transcends musical style and structure. They found that the emotional magnitude of Shostakovich’s piece, particularly its opening, more than made up for the work’s unfashionable expansiveness:

Most of all, we would like to speak of the end of the symphony’s first movement. During a lengthy, sustained, and masterfully composed episode, he grips you, he disturbs you.

¹²⁷ Emily MacGregor provides an interesting analysis of Honegger’s often-overlooked *Mouvement Symphonique No. 3* in ‘The Symphony in 1933’ (PhD thesis: University of Oxford, 2016).

¹²⁸ Kelly, *Music and Ultra-Modernism*, 224–25.

¹²⁹ Gustave Bret, ‘Musique – Les Concerts : Mme Myra Hess, Mlle Meyrand, Mme Waller, Mme Lionel Duval, Mme Suzanne Duval, M. Marcilly, Concerts du « Chant du Monde » et de « La Sérénade »,’ *L’Intransigent*, 27 June 1938, 4. Given the multitude of concerts covered in this one column, very few words were allocated to each.

He moves you ... We can no longer deny the spark of genius in Shostakovich, which erases any reservations we might have had regarding certain lengths and repetitions.¹³⁰

Although only the French Communist press focused exclusively on the positive attributes of Symphony No. 5, there were other voices on the spectrum of critical opinion who took issue with certain aspects of the symphony, but acknowledged these issues in an optimistic and diplomatic manner. Michel-Léon Hirsch (1908–1989) stated in the influential *Le Ménestrel* that, ‘in spite of the forms of both the first movement and the Adagio, the work attests to a high-aiming, interesting and audacious personality.’¹³¹ Hirsch also noted the work’s ‘powerful ambitions, conceived in the style of Beethoven.’¹³² These comments are perhaps less forthcoming with praise than their counterparts in *L’Humanité*, but their essence is the same: Shostakovich’s talent as a composer made amends for any perceived issues in musical language and structure. In *Paris-Soir*, Gil-Marchex was still clearly taken by Shostakovich’s music; he made similarly forgiving remarks regarding the symphony’s mass appeal and potentially unfashionable structure:

The Soviet composer is not afraid to use the most conventional of forms ... His style excludes everything that is not directly and easily transmissible to the least educated pair of ears. However, it is the sincerity of his Romantic lyricism that miraculously prevents him from falling into banality.¹³³

That Symphony No. 5 could be consumed and appreciated by non-specialist ears ties in with Front populaire values of radio accessibility and mass listening: something that would have enhanced the appeal of the work for those who supported the coalition between 1936 and 1938. Furthermore, this assessment was probably a happy outcome for Le Chant du Monde, as the concert’s organisers had intended to attract a non-specialist audience by offering discounted places for members of workers’ associations (*organisations ouvrières*) (see Figure 1.6 above). Yet, not all publications expressed views sympathetic to the perceived simplification of Shostakovich’s compositional language. On behalf of the prestigious and purportedly politically neutral *La Revue musicale*, Claude Chamfray made the following announcement:

¹³⁰ E.B., ‘Chostakovitch,’ 8.

¹³¹ Michel-Léon Hirsch, ‘Concerts divers : Le Chant du Monde,’ *Le Ménestrel* 100, no. 25 (June 1938): 171. ‘Il n’en demeure pas moins qu’en dépit des formules du premier mouvement et de l’Adagio, l’œuvre atteste une personnalité intéressante, audacieuse, et qui vise haut.’

¹³² Hirsch, ‘Concerts divers,’ 171. ‘La pièce de résistance était fournie par l’œuvre de Chostakovitch : il s’agit d’un morceau de grande envergure et de puissantes ambitions, conçu sous le signe de Beethoven.’

¹³³ Henri Gil-Marchex, ‘Le Chant du Monde, La Jeune France, une Ouverture de Georges Auric,’ *Paris-Soir*, 15 June 1938, 6.

We must confess our disappointment regarding the Fifth Symphony of Shostakovich. This composition by the Russian musician is no more than a collation of badly disguised, well-known themes. Nothing is new in this symphony. No trace of originality. We truly expected better from Shostakovich!¹³⁴

The culture at *La Revue musicale* was certainly elite, but that did not mean that its prominent critic Chamfray was opposed, in principle, to the Fifth Symphony's unpretentious musical language, as the same review of the June 1938 concert complimented the accessibility and quality of Auric's overture.¹³⁵ However, since Chamfray's body of articles and interviews in *La Revue musicale* reflect a primary interest in French composers—among them Messaien, Auric, Poulenc, Henri Tomasi, Florent Schmitt, Emmanuel Bondeville, and Serge Nigg—perhaps this preference for Auric's work was spurred simply by the author's national pride. But in the *Mercure de France*, a long-running, bimonthly literary review, the leading literary critic and musicologist René Dumesnil also pointed out the Fifth Symphony's lack of originality. Dumesnil wrote prolifically on music and literary history, with musical publications up to 1938 concerning such diverse topics as Mozart, Wagner, and contemporary French composers. Yet, with no ostensible interest in music of the Soviet Union, he was predictably unimpressed after hearing the Fifth Symphony. Even before the concert had started, Dumesnil was displeased with the amount of detail provided in the programme. The critic's sarcastic remark, '*Voilà qui aide à comprendre...*', indicates that he did not deem the French translation of Shostakovich's 'formation of a personality' description to be sufficient information to understand the meaning of the work.¹³⁶ Dumesnil thought that the music itself fortunately communicated more than the accompanying text, but he also described the symphony's fundamental idea as '*nébuleuse*.' His overall assessment was that 'It has major flaws,

of which the most significant is to repeat at times until satiety, and even, in certain passages, until it is overwhelming (*jusqu'à l'accablement*), which creates an effect of unbearable length. Excessive developments are always tedious; but when, from one end of a long work to the other, we seem to be getting nowhere instead of moving forward, we give the most willing listener a profound *ennui*; we put them to sleep.'¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Claude Chamfray, 'V^e Symphonie : Chostakovitch,' *La Revue musicale* 185 (1938): 53.

¹³⁵ Colin Roust, 'The Popular Front Years and World War II,' in *Georges Auric: A Life in Music and Politics* (Oxford: OUP, 2020), 124.

¹³⁶ René Dumesnil, 'Musique : Dimitri Chostakovitch : Cinquième Symphonie — Koechlin : Symphonie d'Hymnes, concert du « Chant du Monde »,', *Mercure de France* 964 (August 1938): 209.

¹³⁷ Dumesnil, 'Musique,' 209.

Jean Prudhomme, critic of the moderate republican daily *Le Matin*, put forward a similar assessment to Dusmenil, admitting that the work was ‘*intéressante*,’ but also that it was repetitive, too ambitious, and lacking in balance.¹³⁸ Most severe though were the words of the composer and controversial critic Florent Schmitt in the historical newspaper of record, *Le Temps*. It is widely known now that Schmitt harboured pro-Nazi sympathies: something that would lead him to collaborationism in the World War II years. Though Schmitt’s opinions on music from the Soviet Union reflect the influence of politics that we now consider objectionable and dangerous,¹³⁹ the fact remains that his scathing deconstruction of Symphony No. 5 appeared in a major, reputable French newspaper, allowing his views to be widely disseminated. According to Schmitt, the Fifth Symphony of Shostakovich

comprises four movements, three of which are completely insignificant. The initial *Allegro*, synonymous with platitude, boredom and self-importance, is built, one could say, like the interior of a cannon, the only difference being that the empty space is surrounded by cheap lead instead of high-quality steel. Themes—if there are any—are poor and uninspired. The orchestra was unpleasant and inconsistent. I hardly had a better impression of the inoffensive little waltz that followed, which claimed to replace the traditional scherzo ... As for the final march, it is accordingly devoid of all ideas, and of a vulgarity that makes [Auric’s] Overture seem supremely aristocratic.¹⁴⁰

Schmitt did, however, manage to find favour in the third movement, interestingly because of the aesthetic features he perceived as similar to those in *Lady Macbeth*:

The *Andante* makes amends for all the previous and subsequent errors. Almost shamefully, it contains some music, even a beautiful melody that develops considerably, reaching a kind of rough, fierce grandeur, exactly like I had noticed in *Lady Macbeth*, and because of which I will retain some regard for this composer.¹⁴¹

Coupled with his general aversion to the Soviet Union, this excerpt suggests that Schmitt’s negative reaction to Shostakovich’s symphony is due to its shift away from the modernist musical devices he observed in *Lady Macbeth*. While audiences abroad may have understood the necessity of any perceived changes in the way Shostakovich was composing, it is interesting to

¹³⁸ Jean Prudhomme, ‘Théâtres : Les Grands Concerts,’ *Le Matin*, 19 June 1938, 6. ‘Il se répète, s’écoute trop volontiers, déclame plus qu’il ne s’exprime et ne sait pas toujours conserver l’équilibre.’

¹³⁹ Jann Pasler and Jerry Rife, ‘Florent Schmitt,’ in *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com.

¹⁴⁰ Florent Schmitt, ‘Les Concerts,’ *Le Temps*, 25 June 1938, 3.

¹⁴¹ Schmitt, ‘Les Concerts,’ 3.

consider whether the apparent lack of media coverage in France meant its critics were not drawing upon the extra-musical considerations that contextualised these changes. With no consideration of Shostakovich's specific circumstances, Schmitt channelled his reaction to Symphony No. 5 into a generalisation about the inadequacy of Soviet music in upholding the musical traditions of nineteenth-century Russia: 'It is sad that, under the guise of liberty and resurgence, we feed the Russian people such insufficiency. This music of Shostakovich does not align with that of his glorious ancestors, Mussorgsky, Borodin, Rimsky, Balakirev.'¹⁴² Schmitt appears to romanticise nineteenth-century Russian traditions by listing these names from the Five, revealing that he saw the work of Shostakovich—specifically, his Fifth Symphony—as representative of everything that had since changed in Russia, and thus everything that displeased him about the Soviet Union.

Conclusion

In 1930s France, Shostakovich's name became inextricably linked to left-wing politics. He was introduced to radio listeners as an opera composer as early as 1934, while his popular song was used as French Communist propaganda in the political campaign of 1936. The reputation he developed from this association subsequently affected the reception of his more 'serious' symphonic works, at least in French Communist publications, which gave voice to the composer's most dedicated supporters.

Shostakovich's First Symphony garnered limited recognition in France in 1936, and the wider reception of his Fifth in 1938 reflects French knowledge and impressions of the Soviet Union at the time. Instead of exploring the reasons why Shostakovich's musical language seemed to embody a shift away from that employed in *Lady Macbeth*, French reviews of the Fifth Symphony either focused on the emotive aspects of the work that made up for its structural excess, or dismissed it altogether, either due to dissatisfaction with what it sounded like or what it represented (or in the case of Schmitt, both). Although the French Communist press consistently embraced the work for its great emotional power, we may wonder whether the critics of *La Revue musicale*, the *Mercure de France*, *Le Matin*, and *Le Temps* would have criticised its musical style in the same way had they been willing and/or able to discuss the work in relation to artistic censorship in the USSR.

¹⁴² Ibid.

France in 1938 may have had a greater awareness of Soviet censorship than it did in 1936, but the political stability of the earlier year had since dissolved completely. With the threat of war looming, the Front populaire lost the united front that had won the coalition the 1936 elections. Five successive governments were formed in the space of two years, and by April 1938, Blum had been replaced (for a second time) by the radical Daladier, former leader of the CDG. Daladier signed the Munich Agreement at the end of September, causing the PCF to withdraw its support, thus destroying any chance of stability in the alliance.¹⁴³ France was vulnerable, and with World War II on the horizon, the nation would soon have new limitations on artistic life to contend with.

¹⁴³ Tiersky, *French Communism*, 68.

Chapter Two: World War II and Beyond

This chapter covers a nine-year period beginning in 1939. The first part of the chapter, situated in the era immediately before World War II, details the continued importance of ‘Au-devant de la vie’ in French Communist culture before World War II, as well as the repurposing of a Shostakovich symphony for French ballet in May 1939. As I have found no evidence to suggest that any performances of Shostakovich’s music took place during Vichy France and the German Occupation, I will then summarise the circumstances that made Soviet music largely unsuitable for performance in France between 1940 and 1944.

The second part of the chapter and most of its discussion concerns the period immediately following World War II. Between 1945 and 1946, three premieres of Shostakovich’s symphonies took place in Paris: in 1945, the Seventh Symphony was performed by a French orchestra on two separate occasions, and the Eighth, Ninth, and Sixth symphonies premiered in Paris between 1945 and 1946. With a focus on the organisations that promoted Shostakovich’s music, this chapter employs a political lens to account for the increased presence of, and warm reception received by, Shostakovich’s symphonies in France in the years immediately after the Liberation. This post-war period is also marked by a number of publications—two monographs, one chapter, and a new edition of sheet music for ‘Au-devant de la vie’—which together constitute the final analysis of the chapter.¹

Shostakovich in Paris, 1939

Following the 1938 performance of Symphony No. 5, no further Shostakovich symphonies would premiere in France until after World War II, when the Sixth, Seventh, Eighth and Ninth symphonies all premiered within the space of two years. But, unlike his symphonies, Shostakovich’s popular song ‘Au-devant de la vie’ maintained its presence in France amongst the French Communist demographic of Paris. It remained in the official performance repertoire of the FMP until the Maison de la Culture closed in August 1939, and no doubt continued to be sung informally after that.² The nature of the communal environments in which ‘Au-devant de la vie’ was sung throughout the 1930s makes it difficult to account quantitatively for its presence in

¹ Marguerite Sahlberg-Vatchnadzé, *Chostakovitch* (Paris: Éditions Romance, 1945); Dimitri Chostakovitch (Lyrics by Jeanne Perret), *Au devant de la vie*, (Paris: Les Éditions Le Chant du Monde, 1945).

² Box 104AS/5, Archive Fédération musicale populaire, Archives nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, France.

France, but press sources indicate that the song did have at least one public performance between the collapse of the Front populaire and the outbreak of World War II. In May 1939, it was sung by a youth choir at a public address from French Communist leaders at the Place des Fêtes in Paris.³

In addition to the communal singing environment, there is a final instance in which Shostakovich's music was heard in France just prior to World War II. Although Shostakovich's music for ballet is beyond the scope of this thesis, I make an exception for *Rouge et Noir*, the 1939 ballet choreographed by Léonide Massine to the score of Shostakovich's First Symphony. As director of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, Massine made a name for himself in the 1930s for his 'symphonic ballets', which featured allegorical choreography set to famous pieces of symphonic music.⁴ *Rouge et Noir* presented sets and costumes designed by Henri Matisse in his characteristic late style: painted paper cut-outs (shown in Figure 2.1), some of which were pinned to the dancers' bodies (see Figure 2.2). Matisse realised Massine's vision—that Shostakovich's symphony would appear as a 'vast mural in motion'—by interpreting the work in black, white, and the three primary colours. Massine then gave a specific meaning to each of Matisse's colours: black signified violence, white represented man and woman, and yellow, blue, and red symbolised wickedness, nature, and materialism respectively.⁵ The resulting work was a semi-abstract, semi-programmatic ballet, in which groups of dancers made shifting patterns to represent the 'eternal struggle between the spiritual and material forces in Man.'⁶

³ 'Le Plus Grand Square de Paris : Celui de la butte du Chapeau-Rouge,' *L'Humanité*, 15 May 1939, 8.

⁴ Jack Anderson, *The One and Only: The Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo* (New York: Dance Horizons, 1981), 18.

⁵ Anderson, *The Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo*, 33.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 34; John Klein, *Matisse and Decoration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 88–91.



Figure 2.1. Matisse's cut-out designs for *Rouge et Noir*



Figure 2.2. Matisse pinning paper cut-outs on the Ballet Russe dancer Alicia Markova

Following the premiere of *Rouge et Noir* in Monte Carlo on 11 May 1939, the Ballet Russe performed at the Florentine Musical May in Tuscany, before arriving in Paris at the end of May 1939.⁷ The company remained there for two weeks, staging a series of Massine's original productions at the Palais de Chaillot.⁸ These were received warmly: the leading critic Boulos (Paul) Ristelhueber noted in *Vogue* how the angular choreography of *Rouge et Noir* (or *L'Étrange Farandole*, as it was titled for the Parisian productions), was performed particularly flatteringly by Alicia Markova, who created 'the most interesting role of the entire danced symphony' ('*le rôle le plus intéressant de toute la symphonie dansée*').⁹ Although the nature of the war years makes it difficult to account accurately for French musical life after this point, there do not appear to have been further performances of Shostakovich's symphonic music in France between 1940 and 1944, meaning the Ballet Russe's performances of *Rouge et Noir* in May 1939 was its last appearance at least in Paris, and probably France, until 1945.

Soviet Music in Hiding, 1940–44

By the end of 1939, neither French politicians nor the public felt optimistically about preserving peace with Germany. Hitler had broken the Munich agreement, and France had begun to resign itself to war. After the invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939, both Britain and France declared war on Germany, initiating a period the French refer to as *la drôle de guerre*, usually translated into English as 'the Phoney War.' It was so named for the chaos, disorganisation, and indecision of the French government at the time, which mobilised its soldiers with no clear directions as to how the country would proceed. By 14 June 1940, German forces had installed themselves in Paris, and the government retreated south to Bordeaux. Charles de Gaulle flew to London, where he initiated an Anglo-French union with Winston Churchill, but in Bordeaux the presidency of the Ministerial Council was given over to Philippe Pétain, the 84-year-old general officer who had been awarded Marshal of France after World War I. On the evening of his appointment, Marshal Pétain proposed an armistice that would give two thirds of the country over to German occupation. With Bordeaux now in the Occupied Zone, the government retreated further south to Vichy.

⁷ Albert Duret, 'Le Mouvement musical à l'Étranger : Monaco,' *Le Ménestrel* 101, no. 21 (May 1939): 151.

⁸ The last advertised performance took place on 12 June. See 'Programme des spectacles,' *L'Humanité*, 12 June 1939, 7.

⁹ Boulos Ristelhueber, 'Paris d'un jour à l'autre,' *Vogue* (July 1939): 58.

France was no longer a republic under the Vichy government. On 10 July 1940, an historic vote—driven by a combination of fear, panic, conservatism, xenophobia, and antisemitism—saw French deputies and senators sit together as a National Assembly and vote ‘full powers to the government of the republic under the authority and signature of Marshal Pétain, to the effect of promulgating by one or more acts a new Constitution for the French State.’¹⁰ The Vichy State was established precisely one day after the Assembly’s vote. It appeared to seek preservation of French sovereignty, but much of this was illusory: the state complied with Nazi demands, and the real power was held by the German officers stationed in Paris.¹¹

The following section of this chapter considers the ensuing period, referred to by French historians as *les années noires*, or the ‘dark years.’ Despite the inherent pessimism of this moniker, cultural historians of the Second World War consistently describe a surprising amount of musical activity in France from 1940 to 1944. Recent publications from Rachel Orzech, Yannick Simon, and Jane Fulcher indicate that Paris maintained many elements of its rich musical landscape, and musical life under the Occupation continued with relatively few radical changes.¹² Yet, it did require some reorganising. The major factors that abruptly impacted the scope of French musical activity were the numerous composers and musicians who decided to flee the country, as well as those who were either mobilised or sent to Rennes, the north-western city to which the orchestras and choirs of the Radiodiffusion nationale relocated. The range of musical sources pertaining to this period is also limited, at least compared with that of the interwar years; of the fifty-seven music periodicals active in France in 1939, only nineteen remained operational by 1941.¹³ Among the journals to cease publication during World War II were the influential *La Revue musicale*, which took a six-year hiatus from April 1940 to February 1946, and *Le Ménestrel*, which terminated in May 1940 after more than a century of activity.

In one of its final issues, *Le Ménestrel* published a report by the composer André-Clément Marot titled ‘La Musique russe en U.R.S.S.’ In stark contrast to the idyllic reports of the Soviet Union

¹⁰ Charles Sowerwine, *France since 1870: Culture, Society and the Making of the Republic* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 171–72. Of the 649 votes taken, only eighty opposed the motion. Thirty-six of these were SFIO parliamentarians, with whom Blum pleaded to vote against. All French Communists were excluded from the vote.

¹¹ Sowerwine, *France since 1870*, 177.

¹² For precise structural changes to musical life in Occupied France, see Yannick Simon, ‘La « Drôle de guerre »’ in *Composer Sous Vichy*, 9–24 (Lyon: Symétrie, 2009). Jane Fulcher explores how the state used music to forge a national identity in the World War II years in *Renegotiating French Identity: Musical Culture and Creativity in France during Vichy and the Occupation* (Oxford: OUP, 2018). Rachel Orzech explains how maintaining a lively cultural life in Paris was both a political tool for Vichy and the German occupiers, and a means for Parisians to retain some political agency under the unique circumstances. See *Claiming Wagner for France: Music and Politics in the Parisian Press, 1933–1944* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2022).

¹³ Yannick Simon, ‘French Musical Periodicals during World War II,’ *Fontes Artis Musicae* 49, no. 1–2 (2002): 68.

that appeared in Communist sources in the 1930s, it described how the USSR ‘submits to severe regulations,

which extend not only to the activity of associations, theatres, and conservatoires, but also to musical creation itself. Every musical expression must be parallel to the ‘Communist Party line,’ and its performance requires the approval of several bodies, such as the State Committee on the Arts, the Union of Soviet Composers, Communist committees of theatres, conservatoires, etc.¹⁴

Evidently, Marot’s objective with this article was to publicise the lack of creative freedom he perceived in Soviet music of the period. He emphasised this by running through a list of ten largescale Soviet works, all of which are programmatic to varying degrees in their representation of everyday Soviet life; their praise of the Kremlin; or their heroic depiction of revolutionary events. Fourth on the list was Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony, a significant inclusion, for in order to adequately explain its programmatic content and how it ‘portrays the making of the Soviet man,’¹⁵ Marot had to refer to the Soviet composer’s 1936 denunciation in *Pravda*. As demonstrated in Chapter One, the ‘Muddle Instead of Music’ affair was not discussed openly in the French press around the time it occurred, so this excerpt points towards an awareness of Shostakovich and Soviet music in general—even if it was portrayed in a negative light—that was not observed beyond the French Communist press in the previous decade. Marot also linked Shostakovich’s condemnation to the implementation of the aforementioned artistic guidelines:

Since the publication of this article in *Pravda*, no composer has dared to risk writing modern music. Yet, artistic progress cannot accommodate rules. It is no surprise that these new directives have driven musical creation in the USSR into a swift decline. The Soviet composer who, obliged to write music that is ‘proletarian and consonant to the period,’ must simplify the melodic and harmonic structure of his works, has fallen into banality, into a musical primitivism that is devoid of all artistic value.¹⁶

Marot did not necessarily lump all Soviet composers into this category; in fact, he suggested that Shostakovich, alongside Sergei Vasilenko, Nikolai Myaskovsky, and Prokofiev, had the ‘talent and technical mastery’ to overcome the apparent difficulties of composing proletarian music. However, he also wrote that ‘in the works of these masters, we feel the constant preoccupation

¹⁴ André-Clément Marot, ‘La Musique russe en U.R.S.S.,’ *Le Ménestrel* 102, nos. 10–11 (March 1940): 41.

¹⁵ Marot, ‘La Musique russe en U.R.S.S.,’ 41. ‘La *Cinquième Symphonie* de Chostakovitch peint l’établissement de la personnalité soviétique.’

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

with “not stepping outside the party line,” and not displeasing the dictator of the Kremlin.”¹⁷ That Marot’s words appeared in France’s most prestigious and longest-running music journal means that they should probably not be treated as extreme, or representative of a minority opinion. Furthermore, as *Le Ménestrel* traditionally disclosed no overt political affiliation, the fact that even it was publishing such commentary foreshadows the German influence and suppression of Soviet music that would be seen in France over the next four and a half years. Of course, specialist music publications like *Le Ménestrel* were not solely responsible for reporting on Soviet music, but in accordance with the wartime ban on organised communist activity, the French Communist-operated newspapers that had reported on and promoted Shostakovich’s music in the 1930s were not active beyond 1940. The government suspended *L’Humanité* in August 1939, and Paris’s other Communist daily *Ce Soir* ceased voluntarily in 1940.¹⁸ The Communist-funded *Le Chant du Monde* also put its publishing on hold until after the war.

During Vichy France and the German Occupation, a new weekly music journal called *L’Information musicale* filled the void left by *Le Ménestrel* and *La Revue musicale*.¹⁹ The concert guides it published in the first two years of the Occupation record no performances of Shostakovich’s music: an absence bearing similarity to the German context, where Soviet music was banned after 1941.²⁰ France did not have a similarly explicit ban, but the absence of Shostakovich and other Soviet composers can be explained by the important social role that music held in Vichy France.²¹ Despite a reduction in the scope of artistic activity, the state recognised the usefulness of music in forging a national identity and disseminating the country’s cultural prowess.²² The Vichy administration promoted no particular musical style or aesthetic, but Yannick Simon has shown how the music it favoured was quintessentially French, with celebrated works of the era tending to reinvigorate existing French-language texts, such as Paul le Flem’s *Le Rossignol de Saint-*

¹⁷ Ibid., 41–42.

¹⁸ Although it was not legally allowed to publish until August 1944, *L’Humanité* produced a number of clandestine issues between 26 October 1939 and 18 August 1944. See *L’Humanité*: Notice de périodique, *Gallica* <https://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb327877302>.

¹⁹ Robert Bernard, former editor of *La Revue musicale*, launched *L’Information musicale* (with German authorisation) on 22 November 1940. *L’Information musicale* replaced *La Revue musicale* in reputation, but its content was more like *Le Guide du concert*, with weekly issues providing details of upcoming concerts in Paris. It also favoured the music of French composers, and young composers. For further information see Simon, ‘French Musical Periodicals during World War II,’ 70–76.

²⁰ Erik Levi, ‘A Political Football: Shostakovich Reception in Germany,’ in *Shostakovich Studies*, ed. Pauline Fairclough and David Fanning (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), 290–91.

²¹ See *L’Information musicale*: programmes, commentaires, critiques from 22 November 1940–19 June 1942.

²² Jane Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity: Musical Culture and Creativity in France during Vichy and the Occupation* (Oxford: OUP, 2018), 6.

Malo (1942) (a *fantaisie lyrique* set to poetry by Jean Gandrey-Réty), and Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1902).²³

In highlighting the difficulty of classifying music produced under a state with no coherent cultural policy, Fulcher identifies two loose trends in French music of the World War II years: 'the predominance of neoclassicism (here implying traditionalism), as well as the use of French folklore.'²⁴ Although she refers here specifically to French music, it is interesting to draw a parallel to the music of Shostakovich, to whom the first criterion is arguably applicable. Fulcher's equation of the term 'neoclassicism' with traditionalism in this context appears to avoid the extended tonality, modality or atonality associated with the stylistic movement, and refers more to music's return to the balanced forms and thematic processes of the Classical era.²⁵ Such traits are certainly present in Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony; in fact, it was its use of themes—which Claude Chamfray perceived to be unoriginal—that earned it the heaviest criticism in *La Revue musicale*. The absence of Shostakovich's symphonies from concert life under Vichy France and the German Occupation can be attributed therefore to the obvious fact that they were products of the Soviet Union—not to their musical language, which would have been suitable in a period favouring traditionalism in music. But as the *drôle de guerre* inspired a shift towards a strong, national style, capable of combatting the influence of German music, it was certainly French music that dominated Parisian concert halls from 1940 to 1942.²⁶ However, a relatively strong presence was also held by nineteenth-century Russian music: taking the Orchestre national as an example, almost all of the non-French music it performed in this period was that of nineteenth-century Russian composers, the only twentieth-century exception being Stravinsky.²⁷ This pattern extends more broadly across concert life in the World War II era. *L'Information musicale* indicates that the Russian music performed in France from 1940 to at least 1942 was largely that of Borodin, Tchaikovsky, Mussorgsky, and Rimsky-Korsakov, and on the rare occasion that an orchestra programmed Stravinsky or Prokofiev, it was music from their French or Swiss years; in other words, nothing that reflected the culture of the Soviet Union as directly as a Shostakovich symphony.²⁸

²³ Simon, *Composer Sous Vichy*, 11–13. For an in-depth analysis of Debussy's revival during the Occupation, see Yannick Simon, 'Claude de France, notre Wagner. Le culture de Debussy sous l'Occupation,' *Cahiers Debussy* 30 (2006): 5–26.

²⁴ Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity*, 6.

²⁵ See Arnold Whittall, 'Neo-Classicism,' in *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com.

²⁶ Simon, *Composer Sous Vichy*, 9–24.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁸ See *L'Information musicale* from 22 November 1940–19 June 1942.

Alongside their Romantic sensibilities, the nationalist sentiment in many nineteenth-century Russian orchestral works would have made them highly compatible with musical ideals prevalent in France during World War II. Considering the six Russian composers whose names reappeared in *L'Information musicale* from 1940 to 1942—Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Tchaikovsky, Borodin, Mussorgsky, and Rimsky-Korsakov—the presence of the first three can be explained by the significant periods they spent working in Western Europe: following the success of *L'Oiseau de feu* in 1910, Stravinsky resided in Switzerland, France, and the United States; Prokofiev lived between the US, Germany, and France for almost twenty years following the October Revolution; and Tchaikovsky made more visits to Paris than any other city outside of Russia. Borodin, Mussorgsky, and Rimsky-Korsakov, on the other hand, are well-known exponents of nineteenth-century Russian nationalism, and as members of the Five were very influential on the generation of French composers that included Debussy and Ravel.²⁹ The quintessential ‘Russianness’ that the Five composers maintained in their musical output thus merits a comparison to the quintessentially French music favoured under Vichy France, like *Le Rossignol de Saint-Malo*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, and Marcel Delannoy’s *Ginevra* (1942). The national pride infused in these operas is reminiscent of the movement in Russia during the nineteenth century to adapt existing Russian texts, or creatively appropriate beloved Russian folk tales so as to establish a national school distinct from the Germanic traditions of Western Europe.³⁰ As for Soviet music, works dating from 1917 to 1940 were scarcely drawn from folklore: Soviet officials welcomed music infused with proletarian ideology, so opting to portray everyday Soviet life or glorify revolutionary events was an easier and safer choice. Thus, even without the wartime ban on the Communist groups that had previously promoted it, the ideological requirements of Soviet music would have made much of it unsuitable for performance in France during the war years. The combination of these constraints provides a satisfying explanation for the absence of Soviet music in the French musical landscape during World War II.

From Resistance to Liberation

There are many reasons to explain why the French were willing to grant Pétain complete control of the state, yet equally many others explain why the people wanted to resist the government’s collaboration with Nazi Germany. Some were opposed to the Soviet Union, some to Britain;

²⁹ See Roy Howat, ‘Russian Imprints in Debussy’s Piano Music,’ in *Rethinking Debussy*, ed. Elliott Antokoletz and Marianne Wheeldon (Oxford: OUP, 2011), 31–52.

³⁰ An example of a Russian nationalist work performed during the Occupation is Mussorgsky’s tone poem *Night on Bald Mountain*, which was drawn both from Russian literary works and folklore.

some were afraid of de Gaulle, and some thought Pétain, the former war hero, would eventually side with the Resistance and lead the French to their eminent victory.³¹ Whatever the motivation, all active resisters were hostile to the Germans. At first, resistance was enacted primarily through the distribution of flyers and clandestine newspapers, as well as hiding Jewish people and refugees, falsifying papers, and helping to smuggle them to safety. As the networks grew larger, Resistance activity began to include military action—actions that we, as Charles Sowerwine points out, ‘today would call terrorist if we were on the other side.’³² Upon Germany’s invasion of the USSR on 22 June 1941, de Gaulle formed the Comité national français, which the Soviet Union recognised as the French government in exile within two days. This new link, forged between France and the USSR, brought Communists in France out of hiding and allowed the PCF to implement an organised system of resistance.³³

In *La Vie musicale sous Vichy*, Myriam Chimènes and her contributors have shown how many figures in French musical life were active in Resistance networks. One of the earliest participants (and today one of the best known) was the conductor and Communist Party member Roger Désormière, who sat on the sponsorship committee of *Le Chant du Monde* and had conducted and recorded Shostakovich’s music during the 1930s. During World War II, Désormière remained in his post as director of the Opéra-Comique, all the while becoming heavily involved in the activities of the Front national, a resistance force organised by PCF members in May 1941.³⁴ This group was responsible for some of the period’s boldest acts of resistance: producing anti-Nazi propaganda and false identity documents, damaging German and Vichy facilities, and organising the assassination of German soldiers through its associated armed group, the Francs-Tireurs et Partisans.³⁵ Evidence of the Front national’s acts of resistance exists in *Les Lettres françaises*, a clandestine journal founded by PCF members in 1942. In typewritten and hand-illustrated issues distributed to Resisters in the zone Nord, *Les Lettres françaises* informed its readership of the atrocities committed by Nazis in the Soviet Union, ‘persecuting not only the living, but also the memories of Pushkin, Tolstoy and Rimsky-Korsakov.’³⁶ The journal also

³¹ Sowerwine, *France since 1870*, 193.

³² *Ibid.*, 194.

³³ Resistance in a less organised form had been going on clandestinely in France since October 1940, when the first mass arrests of Communists were made by Vichy and the German occupiers. See Sowerwine, *France Since 1870*, 195.

³⁴ Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity*, 66. After initially adopting the Comintern’s antiwar position, the PCF transitioned into active resistance in June 1941 after Germany invaded the Soviet Union. The resulting *Front national* was French Communist-operated, but its initial manifesto (issued in the occupied zone in July 1941) classified its membership as ‘freethinkers, well-known Catholic dignitaries, member of the Protestant church, and members of the clergy, as well as Communists.’ See André Rossi, *A Communist Party in Action: An Account of the Organization and Operations in France*, transl. Willmoore Kendall (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1970), 155.

³⁵ Rossi trans. Kendall, *A Communist Party in Action*, 155–57.

³⁶ ‘L’Équipée de Weimar,’ *Les Lettres françaises*, 1 November 1942, 2.

spoke out against antisemitism,³⁷ and after the Nazis intensified their forces in Paris in late 1942 it encouraged the public to act against the occupant, via call-to-arms statements ranging from the simple: ‘There are only two possible attitudes: betrayal or combat,’³⁸ to the explicit: ‘Destroying the forces of the enemy, sabotaging its production, opposing the enslavement of more Frenchmen in Germany, these are the tasks incumbent on French people at the present time to assure the liberation of our motherland.’³⁹ Both Désormière and *Les Lettres françaises* were involved in the dissemination and reception of Shostakovich’s music in France after World War II, which I will cover in detail in the second half of this chapter.

France was gradually liberated during the summer of 1944. Resisters took hold of the main occupied cities, and the nation’s Allied forces arrived in Paris on 24 August. Two days later, de Gaulle led his famous procession down the Champs-Élysées: a moment that unified a divided nation for the first time since the fall of the Third Republic. Following the Liberation, musical life in Paris was able to regain much of its former cosmopolitanism, and in the months and years following, a generation of composers who had spent their formative years in a restricted artistic climate would lead the way into a new, radical era of musical experimentation.⁴⁰ For comparatively conservative Soviet music, though, the post-war years were just as favourable. With French Communists forming a third of de Gaulle’s post-Liberation triparty government,⁴¹ the wartime ban on organised Communist activity was lifted, *L’Humanité* resumed its regular circulation, and the PCF became the dominant party of the French Left. Owing to a combination of factors, namely the active role of French Communists in the Resistance, and the public support of prominent intellectuals like Jean-Paul Sartre,⁴² the PCF’s membership grew from less than thirty thousand in 1939 to half a million in 1945. The party reached its peak in

³⁷ ‘Maxime Gorki et l’antisémitisme,’ *Les Lettres françaises*, 1 October 1942, 6.

³⁸ ‘La Leçon de Toulon,’ *Les Lettres françaises*, 1 December 1942, 2. ‘Il n’y a plus que deux attitudes possibles : la trahison ou la lutte.’

³⁹ *Les Lettres françaises*, 1 December 1942, 6.

⁴⁰ For an overview of post-war musical experiments in Western Europe, see David Osmond-Smith, ‘New Beginnings: The International Avant-Garde, 1945–62,’ in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Anthony Pople (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 336–63.

⁴¹ The remainder of the Free French government was made up of the Socialist Party (Section française de l’Internationale ouvrière, SFIO) and de Gaulle’s Christian Democrats (Mouvement républicain populaire, MRP). It remained in government until May 1947.

⁴² Simone de Beauvoir offers a vivid, semi-fictionalised account of Sartre’s efforts to work alongside the French Communists without joining the party in her roman à clef *Les Mandarins* (Paris: Gallimard, 1954). For a scholarly exploration of the reluctance from the French public intellectual and academic communities to direct criticism towards the USSR, see Robert Desjardins, *The Soviet Union through French Eyes, 1945–85* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1988), 12–15.

1946, with 5.5 million members.⁴³ The distribution of *L'Humanité* from 1945 to 1946 also surpassed the figures from 1937, its final pre-war glory year.⁴⁴

On an international scale, in December 1944, officials from France and the Soviet Union signed the Treaty of Alliance and Mutual Aid, which solidified the intention of both parties to work together until final victory over Germany. This pact boosted Franco-Soviet relations to an all-time high, and prompted the establishment in January 1945 of a new organisation for cultural relations, the Association France-URSS (AFU). The mission statement of the AFU—which remained in activity until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1992—was ‘to promote, in the interests of the nation and peace, mutual knowledge and friendly cooperation between the two countries’ (*Favoriser, dans l'intérêt de la nation et de la paix, la connaissance mutuelle et la coopération amicale des deux pays*). Like other international friendship societies, the AFU was part of the Soviet Union’s cultural diplomacy strategy, and although coordinated by the USSR its French presidium comprised mostly PCF and SFIO members, many of whom were important figures in artistic life, such as the composer Auric and the playwright Vildrac.⁴⁵ At the Society’s first conference on 13 and 14 January 1945, delegates and adherents heard speeches from several politicians, academics, and a union representative, as well as the film director Jean Grémillon, the writer Jean-Richard Bloch, and the conductor Roger Désormière.⁴⁶ Throughout the century, the AFU promoted Soviet culture in France by organising business and tourism visits to the USSR for French citizens, and in France, hosting Russian delegates, offering Russian language classes and screenings of Soviet cinema, and presenting showcases of Russian and Soviet art and music. Between 1945 and 1946, the AFU facilitated the premieres of Shostakovich’s Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Symphonies. The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to the performances and reception of these works, as well as the French publications on Shostakovich that emerged after the Second World War.

⁴³ David Bell and Byron Criddle, ‘The Decline of the French Communist Party,’ *British Journal of Political Science* 19, no. 4 (1989): 516.

⁴⁴ Christian Delporte, ‘L’Humanité, un siècle d’existence,’ in *L’Humanité : de Jaurès à nos jours*, ed. Christian Delporte, Claude Penetier, Jean-François Sirinelli and Serge Wolikow (Paris: Nouveau Monde Éditions, 2004), 13.

⁴⁵ Faye Bartram, ‘35mm Bridges: Cultural Relations and Film Exchange between France and the Soviet Union, 1945 to 1972’ (PhD thesis: University of Iowa, 2017), 111; ‘Liste des membres du comité directeur,’ *France-URSS : Bulletin intérieur réservé aux secrétaires des comités départementaux et locaux* 3 (February 1945): 3.

⁴⁶ Georges Martin, *France-U.R.S.S., 1945–1992: Histoire d’une grande association de connaissance, d’échanges et d’amitié* (Paris: France-Russie-CEI, 2002), 37.

Symphony No. 7, ‘Leningrad’: A Narrative of Resistance

The Seventh was the first of three new Shostakovich symphonies to premiere in Paris in the years immediately following World War II (see Table 2.1). The symphony was dedicated to Shostakovich’s home city of Leningrad, which at the time of composition (1939–41) was under siege by German and Axis forces. The first performance of the work took place in March 1942 in Kuybyshev, the provisional capital of the Soviet Union during the war. It was performed in Moscow only weeks later, and again in the wartime capital in August the same year. This latter performance remains legendary: in short, the Leningrad Radio Orchestra overcame the city’s depleted musical forces, and an ensemble of starving musicians performed Shostakovich’s symphony on 9 August 1942. Loudspeakers disseminated the performance across Leningrad and to the German troops stationed outside the city—an act that Laurel Fay has described as psychological warfare.⁴⁷ By June and July 1942, a microfilm score of Symphony No. 7 had allowed the work to be broadcast into the homes of millions of Allied listeners when Henry Wood and Arturo Toscanini led performances for the BBC in London and the NBC in New York. The ‘Leningrad’ Symphony subsequently became inescapably popular in the West, and was recognised internationally as a symbol of cultural resistance against the Nazi forces in World War II. As Jacques Le More wrote in the Resistance-affiliated journal *Gavroche* ahead of the symphony’s French premiere, ‘The “Leningrad” Symphony comes to us preceded by a reputation as a masterpiece.’⁴⁸ Organised by the AFU, this premiere took place at the Opéra de Paris on 9 May 1945. It was performed by Charles Munch and the Orchestre de la Société des concerts, whose post-war season (1944–45) chiefly celebrated French repertoire, but also featured Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven, as well as several tribute programmes to Alsace-Lorraine, the British Commandos, and the USSR.⁴⁹

Table 2.1. Performances of Shostakovich symphonies in France, 1945–49

Work	Date	Orchestra	Conductor	Venue
Symphony No. 7	9 May 1945	Orchestre de la Société des concerts	Charles Munch	Opéra de Paris
Symphony No. 7	[before 21] December 1945	Orchestre des Concerts Lamoureux	Eugène Bigot	Théâtre des Champs-Élysées

⁴⁷ Laurel Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (New York: OUP, 2000), 130–33.

⁴⁸ Jacques Le More, ‘Deux symphonies pathétiques,’ *Gavroche*, 10 May 1945, 7. ‘La *Symphonie de Leningrad* nous arrive précédée d’une réputation de chef-d’œuvre.’ Although it was published for several years after the Liberation, *Gavroche* was originally published clandestinely from 1943 by the Front patriotique de la jeunesse parisienne.

⁴⁹ D. Kern Holoman, *The Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, 1828–1967* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2004), 459.

Symphony No. 8	[before 3] March 1946	Orchestre national de la Radiodiffusion française	Roger Désormière	Opéra de Paris
Symphony No. 9	21 March 1946	Orchestre national de France	Manuel Rosenthal	Théâtre des Champs-Élysées
Symphony No. 5	16 July 1946	Orchestre national de France	Vladimir Goschmann	Théâtre des Champs-Élysées
Symphony No. 6	[late] December 1946	Orchestre Colonne	Charles Bruck	Unknown

As the first live performance of a Shostakovich symphony in Paris in almost seven years, the premiere of the Seventh generated both excitement and intrigue from the French public. Henri Sauguet, one of the most important composer/critics in 1930s and '40s Paris, captured this sense in the socialist journal *La Bataille*: 'We were waiting with keen curiosity to hear this work from a musician better known in France for the glory that surrounds his name in his own country, rather than from his works, which have been performed here only rarely.'⁵⁰ Similarly, Le More described the performance—and that of Miaskovsky's Stalin Prize-winning Symphony in F minor, programmed a few days earlier—as a 'successful initiative,' in that the two composers were then 'more or less unknown in France.'⁵¹ Despite the uncommonness of Shostakovich's symphonies in Paris leading up to this premiere, the press was prolific in its coverage of the Seventh Symphony's conception and extra-musical content, which was also detailed in the programme provided at the concert.⁵² As a result, its French reception was informed by a keen awareness of the work and a sense of empathy towards the composer: Clearly, these were very different circumstances to those surrounding the Fifth Symphony in 1938, the last Shostakovich symphony to premiere before a French audience.

As Shostakovich did not attach any explicit extra-musical meaning to his First Symphony, and neither of his earlier surtitled symphonies (Nos. 2 and 3) were performed in France before the war, the premiere of the 'Leningrad' was the first occasion on which a Shostakovich symphony had premiered in Paris to an audience willing and able to draw upon the extra-musical narrative that places the work into context. These circumstances had a profound effect on the responses it elicited from French critics. In *Les Lettres françaises* (the former journal of the *Front national*, which became a PCF-funded publication after World War II), another leading composer/critic, Alexis

⁵⁰ Henri Sauguet, 'La 7^e Symphonie de Chostakovitch,' *La Bataille*, 10 May 1945.

⁵¹ Le More, 'Deux symphonies pathétiques,' 7. 'Cette initiative heureuse—Chostakovitch et Miaskovski sont à peu près inconnus en France.'

⁵² See Armand Pierhal, 'La Musique : Chostakovitch, Barraud, Poulenc,' *La Nef* 7 (June 1945): 151.

Roland-Manuel, described the symphony as ‘not an epic,’ but ‘a personal diary ... from this diary we learn more about the heroism, selflessness and loyalty of Russian hearts and souls than even the most gleaming historical account (*tableau d’histoire*).’⁵³ He also appointed the piece with seemingly human characteristics: ‘the music speaks to us in a tone of constant moderation and restraint, with the liberated confidence of a one-on-one conversation.’⁵⁴ This reading of the Seventh Symphony (as possessing human characteristics) is one that recurs throughout its initial press reception. In *Le Monde*, René Dumesnil began his assessment by stating that, on account of the symphony’s ‘vast proportions ... one becomes lost in its developments, the organisation of which escapes us because of their very length.’⁵⁵ However, he ended the same review by describing the finale as ‘heroic,’ and the overall work as ‘conscientious, headstrong and assiduous’: three adjectives typically ascribed to sentient beings rather than musical works.⁵⁶

It was most often when encountering minor difficulties in listening to the work that French critics focused on the symphony’s lifelike qualities and emotional impact, so as to still present the experience of listening to it as rather profound. In his review for *La Nouvelle Équipe française* (*La Nef*), the poet and art critic Raphaël Miranda (1897–1976)—who wrote under the anagram pseudonym Armand Pierhal—mentioned the ‘vulgarity’ of some of its themes, but conceded that, as Shostakovich

does not care whether he is vulgar or not, original or not, concerned only with going his own way! ... and because he is not paralysed by the fear of slipping into vulgarity, he does not fall into it. On the contrary, his inspiration seems to remain, on the whole, of a great nobility. It is, without a doubt, a spirit that soars (*une âme qui vibre haut*).⁵⁷

Sauguet’s assessment in *La Bataille* acknowledged the symphony’s unusual length and repetitiveness; however, he did not frame these traits as detrimental to the work overall:

What is initially most striking upon hearing the symphony is that it is full of life ...
Despite its length ... we feel neither tiredness nor boredom. The four movements unfold without pointless repetition and without the composer running out of steam.

⁵³ Alexis Roland-Manuel, ‘La Septième Symphonie de Chostakovitch,’ *Les Lettres françaises*, 12 May 1945, 5.

⁵⁴ Roland-Manuel, ‘La Septième Symphonie de Chostakovitch,’ 5. ‘La musique nous parle d’un ton presque constamment modéré, retenu, qui est celui de la libre confiance, de l’entretien d’homme à homme.’

⁵⁵ René Dumesnil, ‘Deux symphonies russes,’ *Le Monde*, 8 May 1945. ‘C’est un monument de si vastes proportions ... on se perd dans ses développements, dont l’ordonnance échappe en raison même de leur longueur.’

⁵⁶ Dumesnil, ‘Deux symphonies russes.’ ‘Un decrescendo sur un mouvement rapide le relie au finale, de caractère héroïque ... Cet ouvrage consciencieux, volontaire et appliqué, a été conduit en perfection par M. Charles Münch.’

⁵⁷ Pierhal, ‘Chostakovitch, Barraud, Poulenc,’ 151. *La Nef* was another journal with Resistance origins, first published in Alger in 1943 by the writers Lucie Faure and Robert Aron.

Shostakovich is never short of ideas, even if they are not particularly creative or beautiful. But the life that drives them is so intense, so authentic, and so profoundly musical that we feel as if we are being swept away by the current of a river.⁵⁸

The composer, critic, and pianist Jean Wiéner synthesised similar opinions in his review. Overlooking some structural issues, Wiéner chose to focus on the emotive aspects of the work as a whole:

Its proportions are gigantic, and its subject matter is so powerful that not for a moment—not even during the very long developments we sometimes encounter, and despite a bias, in some places, towards a dark, even stubbornly dark orchestration—do we experience boredom, because everything here is consistently simple and direct. Undoubtedly, the first movement is the richest; I found it admirable from start to finish. But in each movement there is the same sense of constant grandeur without pomposity, a way of expression that is so true, so human, that we feel completely drawn in from the opening measures.⁵⁹

Like Wiéner, the musicologist and music critic Claude Rostand also took issue with some structural and thematic aspects of the Seventh Symphony. However, he had a harder time ignoring them, as revealed in his stern yet poetic review for the magazine *Carrefour*:

Here is a symphony in which, amongst a scattering of ideas from Russian folklore, we encounter themes of a rare vulgarity that seem to lag behind the harmony classes of every conservatoire in the world. Here is a symphony in which astoundingly basic and clichéd melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic material is used with the most aggressive insensibility and superb shamelessness, without Shostakovich's writing seeming narrow-minded or self-assured. To top it all off, here is a symphony in four movements that lasts an hour and ten minutes!⁶⁰

In spite of these criticisms, the emotive subject matter of the symphony allowed Rostand to enjoy it, seemingly against his will:

And yet! Here is a symphony in which we are not bored for a minute, which already renders it successful, but from which we are also left dazzled and shaken. We know that

⁵⁸ Sauguet, 'La 7^e Symphonie de Chostakovitch.'

⁵⁹ Jean Wiéner, 'Chostakovitch à l'Opéra,' 11 May 1945 (Fonds Montpensier, BnF, Département de la musique, 2 rue de Louvois, 75002 Paris, France).

⁶⁰ Claude Rostand, 'Chostakovitch, ou du pire au meilleure,' *Carrefour*, 1945 (Fonds Montpensier, BnF).

it evokes the fighting spirit of the Russian people under siege, which is neither an original theme nor one of particularly sophisticated thought. However, the music contains nothing emulative, descriptive or picturesque. Rather, it is evocative, or powerfully suggestive, from the horrifically purple-tinged palette of skies filled with bombs to the most optimistic elation, full of confidence and radiance.⁶¹

These excerpts testify to the importance of background and context when evaluating music bearing close witness to turbulent political events. Aesthetically, the Seventh Symphony has much in common with the Fifth; in fact, the same musical structures that displeased critics at the Fifth Symphony's French premiere (its excessively large scale and repetition of thematic material) are not only present, but stretched to new heights in the Seventh (a typical performance lasts seventy-five minutes, and the twenty-two bar 'invasion theme' is repeated twelve times in the first movement). Yet, the reception of the Seventh is noticeably warmer than that of the Fifth, as even the critics with little respect for the symphony's musical configurations still felt drawn in by Shostakovich's heroic, extra-musical storyline. The narrative of Hitler's army laying siege to Leningrad would have been painfully relatable for music critics and their audiences in a Paris only recently liberated from Nazi Occupation; as such, they were able to focus on the meaning they perceived in the notes and formal construction of the piece—a phenomenon not seen in the reception of Symphony No. 5.

The French premiere of the Seventh Symphony also prompted critics to draw parallels between Shostakovich and other composers more well known in France. This was certainly not revolutionary in 1945: French critics had compared Shostakovich's use of gesture and forms to Beethoven, Mahler, and Tchaikovsky in the 1930s, and there was a specific reference to Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* (1880) in Le More's description of Symphony No. 7's aesthetic. But the Seventh was the first Shostakovich symphony to elicit comparisons to French composers, seemingly because of its perceived lack of 'Russianness'.⁶² Sauguet observed 'highly disparate' subject matter in the Seventh Symphony's musical language, which he likened not only to composers from Russia and Germany, but also from France: 'Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev are the only Russian traces we can find. We may also think of Mahler and even Bruckner; yet, it is nevertheless to Berlioz that we can most strongly connect the composer of the Leningrad

⁶¹ Rostand, 'Chostakovitch, ou du pire au meilleure.'

⁶² For those in the West to consider the music of Russian composers 'not Russian enough' was not a new phenomenon; see Richard Taruskin, 'The Symphony Goes (Inter)National,' in *The Oxford History of Western Music: Music in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: OUP, 2005).

Symphony.⁶³ As the author of the famously programmatic *Symphonie fantastique* (1830), it is unsurprising that Berlioz should come to mind in relation to the ‘Leningrad’ Symphony, a work with substantial extra-musical content delivered in its surtitle, themes and instrumentation (and in fact, Annegret Fauser has shown how Parisian critics had held up Berlioz as a supposed model for Russian programme music from their first encounters at the 1889 Exhibition).⁶⁴ Sauguet was also not the only contemporary critic to compare Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 7 to Berlioz; two days before the premiere, *Garroche* dedicated an entire column to Le More’s parallels between the symphony’s wartime conception, and that of Berlioz’s Prix de Rome-winning cantata *Sardanapale*, composed during the *Trois glorieuses* of the French Revolution.⁶⁵

Like Sauguet, Roland-Manuel also perceived a lack of identifiably Russian content in Shostakovich’s Seventh Symphony: ‘Any listener hoping to find sumptuous depth, seductive colours, treasures of form and Slavic artistic style—or any other inflection typical of Russian music—would be sorely disappointed.’⁶⁶ In addition to finding Shostakovich’s musical language more reminiscent of Berlioz and Beethoven, Roland-Manuel drew a further parallel to Ravel’s *Boléro* (1928)—a work not renowned for innovation in structure or development—in critique of the structural flaws he perceives in the first movement:

Here and there, the insistence of long unison phrases—which evoke the precedents of Hector Berlioz and the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven—attests to the high ambition of Shostakovich to conquer the highest summit of melody, without any help from harmony or counterpoint. It must be said that [Shostakovich] does not build enough momentum to avoid getting lost in academic pathos—an inheritance from his teacher and professor Maximilian Steinberg. This is mostly discernible in the first movement, which is spoiled by an absurd episode that, for French listeners, evokes insuperably Ravel’s famous *Boléro*.⁶⁷

This comparison was not unique to Rostand’s review; Dumesnil made the same observation in *Le Monde* (though perhaps with less deprecation). He described in the first movement ‘a central episode on a stubborn rhythm, marked by the snare drum as in Ravel’s *Boléro*, which similarly

⁶³ Sauguet, ‘La 7^e Symphonie de Chostakovitch.’

⁶⁴ Annegret Fauser, *Musical Encounters at the 1889 Paris Worlds’ Fair* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005), 44–45. A further similarity can be seen in the Seventh Symphony’s unusual length of melodic phrases: this was a musical feature developed in Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique* and throughout the nineteenth century. See Hugh Macdonald, ‘Berlioz, (Louis-) Hector’ in *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com.

⁶⁵ Jacques Le More, ‘De Berlioz à Chostakovitch,’ *Garroche*, 3 May 1945, 6.

⁶⁶ Roland-Manuel, ‘La Septième Symphonie de Chostakovitch.’

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

culminates in a crescendo whose violence subsides for the coda, where, after a moment of respite, it reappears once more.⁶⁸ And as we know from Christopher Gibbs's work, many of these parallels to Ravel, Berlioz, Tchaikovsky, and Beethoven were also drawn by American critics when the symphony was first heard across the US several years earlier.⁶⁹ But Rostand went a step further than looking for parallels in rhythm, instrumentation, structure or themes, and likened Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony to the music of Olivier Messiaen. For Rostand, the way in which his listening experience was enhanced by Shostakovich's integration of extra-musical content was reminiscent of Messiaen's use of religious themes:

Despite the primitive means at play, the [Seventh Symphony] has unexpected passages, and this, I believe, is due to the sentiments that profoundly animate Shostakovich's music. If faith and a certain mystical sense allow Messiaen to reach the highest mountaintops, a similar mechanism is in place here, only it is based on a compelling, warlike dynamism that gives way to an undeniable authenticity.⁷⁰

Only seven months after its French premiere, the 'Leningrad' Symphony was again performed in Paris, this time in a Russian concert given by the Orchestre des Concerts Lamoureux. Along with the Société des Concerts, and the Colonne and Pasdeloup orchestras, by 1945 the Lamoureux orchestra had seemingly reclaimed the central position it had held in Parisian concert life prior to the war.⁷¹ In addition to Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony, the orchestra's December 1945 concert featured Prokofiev's *Overture russe*, and unspecified religious songs performed by the choir of the local Russian Orthodox Church. In attendance was Raymond Charpentier, former musical director of the Comédie-Française, and a former editor of both *La Revue française* and *Comœdia*.⁷² His take on the emotional scope of the Seventh Symphony is in complete disaccord with the work's initial coverage:

It would be useless to conceal the fact that we did not experience every emotion we expected to during this performance. Constructed according to a neoclassical aesthetic, and with tinges of Slavic colours that are perhaps a little faded, this work has some

⁶⁸ Dumesnil, 'Deux symphonies russes.'

⁶⁹ Christopher H. Gibbs, "'The Phenomenon of the Seventh': A Documentary Essay on Shostakovich's 'War' Symphony," in *Shostakovich and His World*, ed. Laurel Fay (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 59–113.

⁷⁰ Rostand, 'Chostakovitch, ou du pire au meilleure.'

⁷¹ Holoman, *The Société des Concerts du Conservatoire*, 460.

⁷² Catherine Steinegger, *La Musique à la Comédie-Française de 1921 à 1964* (Brussels: Éditions Mardaga, 2005), 128–29; Jane F. Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France, 1914–1940* (New York: OUP, 2005), 372.

impressive moments. Too often though, it is tempered by a discipline and discretion that is undoubtedly superfluous.⁷³

Charpentier's review represents a shift in the reception of the Seventh in France after its premiere, a shift that mainly concerns the work's programmatic elements:

Almost constantly expressive and masterfully orchestrated, it is a work of nobility and pride. Large, agogic curves signify, in its author, a powerful and free spirit (*souffle*). I imagine that a composer of such means would be capable of injecting more character and depth into this moving subject. And in this work of exceptional scope, one would have wished to perceive the distressing palpitations of an unshakeable people, the bloody dam of a horrendous scourge.⁷⁴

At least for Charpentier, the Seventh Symphony did not convey the same emotional weight that other critics had felt and appreciated at the French premiere seven months prior. He wrote more succinctly about his issue with the Seventh upon reviewing the first performance of Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony in France the following year: 'Despite its professed intentions, the Seventh Symphony, surtitled "Leningrad," bears no profound mark of the hellish tragedy during which it came into being.'⁷⁵

Symphony No. 8, 'Stalingrad': An Unconvincing Narrative

As with the Seventh less than a year earlier, the AFU was to credit for sponsoring the first French performance of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 8. The premiere took place in Paris in March 1946. Désormière, recently appointed to the role of associate director of the Paris Opéra, conducted the Orchestre national de la Radiodiffusion française (RDF),⁷⁶ the state-owned enterprise which, in the second half of the 1940s and throughout the 1950s, challenged the hegemony that the four main concert associations had previously held over Parisian concert life.⁷⁷ Before the premiere, the Russian-born writer Pierre Souvtchinsky (Pyotr Suvchinsky, 1892–1985) prepared an informative spread on Soviet music that was published in *Les Lettres*

⁷³ Raymond Charpentier, 'Symphonie Leningrad de Dimitri Chestakovitch [sic],' *Arts : Beaux-Arts, littérature, spectacles*, 21 December 1945 (Fonds Montpensier, BnF).

⁷⁴ Charpentier, 'Symphonie Leningrad.'

⁷⁵ Ibid. 'La 7^e symphonie, dite « Leningrad » ne nous a pas paru, malgré ses intentions avouées, porter profondément la marque du drame infernal au milieu duquel elle avait pris naissance.'

⁷⁶ Michel Roche-Varger, 'Roger Desormières [sic] dirige la "8^e Symphonie" de Chostakovitch,' *Regards* 15, no. 32 (15 March 1946): 12.

⁷⁷ These associations were the Société des Concerts, the Concerts Colonne, the Orchestre Padeloup, and the Orchestre Lamoureux. See Holoman, *The Société des Concerts du Conservatoire*, 459–61.

françaises. It began with a summary of Boris Asafiev's recently developed theory of intonation, and ended with a listening guide to the five movements of Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony. A brief comment from Auric, the journal's regular critic post-Liberation, was inset into the centre of the article.⁷⁸ To his readers, Auric wrote 'I do not know how to express my regret for being away ... for an event of this importance,' but assured them that *notre ami* Souvtchinsky was better qualified than anyone to guide them through the work of Shostakovich. The entirety of Auric's comment is shown in Figure 2.3. Back in the main text, Souvtchinsky concluded by outlining the Eighth Symphony's affective connection to wartime events: 'This Eighth Symphony, as well as the Seventh, will remain the apex of a direct transposition of the tragic wartime saga. Without hindsight, on the spot, Shostakovich knew how to transport his human experience into exceedingly complex compositions.'⁷⁹

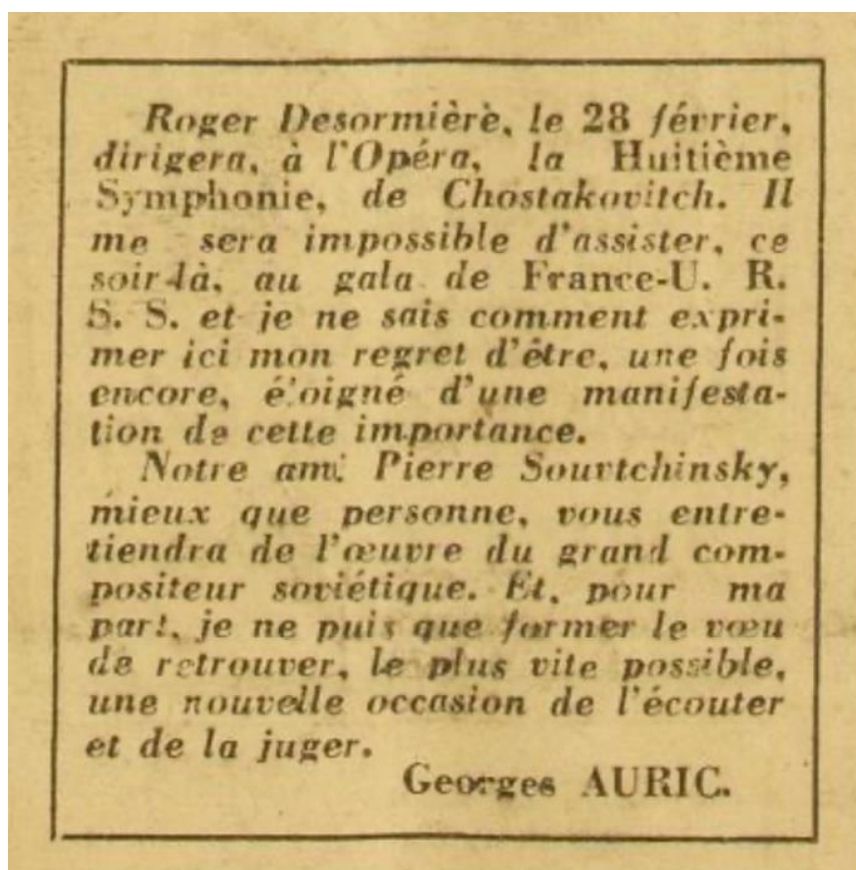


Figure 2.3. Georges Auric's contribution to Souvtchinsky's guide to Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony.
Les Lettres françaises, 22 February 1946

⁷⁸ Colin Roust, *Georges Auric: A Life in Music and Politics* (Oxford: OUP, 2020), 130.

⁷⁹ Pierre Souvtchinsky, 'La Huitième Symphonie de Chostakovitch,' *Les Lettres françaises*, 22 February 1946, 7.

In addition to the involvement of the AFU, the role of Désormière in the premiere performance gave the French Communist press political angles to highlight in its coverage. Michel Roche-Varger suggested in a full-page spread in *Regards* (shown in Figure 2.4) that ‘it was not by coincidence that the Eighth Symphony of Shostakovich was unveiled in Paris under the baton of Roger Desormière.’⁸⁰ After a brief summary of his musical achievements, Roche-Varger described how Désormière was invited to visit the USSR in 1935, ‘where he became friendly with numerous Soviet composers’ (Reinhold Glière, Alexander Mosolov, Anatoly Alexandrov, and Myaskovsky are all cited).⁸¹ The second half of the article focused on the music of Shostakovich; specifically, his three wartime symphonies. After quoting a French translation of Shostakovich’s own description of the events portrayed in the ‘Leningrad,’ the author provides his own analysis of the Eighth Symphony and the meaning he perceived therein:

The Eighth Symphony, the ‘Stalingrad’ Symphony, is also, as its title suggests, a symphonic tragedy. At the conclusion of ... the dramatic conflict, a symbolic respite leads the audience into a vision in which, aside from the relief given by the twists and turns of battle, the ruins of a destroyed city arise, the groaning and crying of humans can be heard, and the rhythm of virility is broken, all as if it were engendered by reality.⁸²

⁸⁰ Roche-Varger, ‘Roger Desormières dirige la “8^e Symphonie”’, 12. ‘Ce n’est pas par hasard que la 8^e *Symphonie* de Chostakovitch a été révélée à Paris, sous la baguette de Roger Desormières [sic].’

⁸¹ Ibid. ‘Il s’y lie avec de nombreux compositeurs soviétiques.’

⁸² Ibid.



Le jour du gala de France-U.R.S.S., il neigeait à Paris comme à Moscou.



ROGER DESORMIÈRES dirige la "8^e Symphonie" de CHOSTAKOVITCH

C E n'est pas par hasard que la 8^e Symphonie de Chostakovitch a été révélée à Paris, sous la baguette de Roger Desormières.

Roger Desormières, par ailleurs directeur adjoint de l'Académie nationale de musique et de danse et directeur du ballet, est, en dépit de son jeune âge, un chef d'orchestre de renommée mondiale.

Il fit ses études au Conservatoire de Paris, classe de flûte chez Xavier Leroux, classe d'harmonie chez Vincent d'Indy, puis, à la démobilisation, devint l'élève de Charles-Marie Widor et de Charles Gounod.

En 1920, après avoir obtenu le prix Blumenthal, il quitta le Conservatoire, attiré aux jeunes mouvements (groupe des Six) par Honegger et Darius Milhaud.

En 1925, après avoir connu les ballets suédois de Jean Borlin, Diaghileff l'invita à conduire ses ballets russes. A Paris même, il dirigea le grand orchestre symphonique, l'orchestre philharmonique de Paris, celui des concerts Colonne, Pasdeloup, etc.

Roger Desormières est alors invité, en 1935, à un voyage en U. R. S. S. Il s'y lie avec de nombreux compositeurs soviétiques : Glière, Mossolov, l'auteur de *Fonderies d'acier* ; Miaskovsky, professeur de Prokofiev et père de vingt symphonies ; enfin, Alexandroff, auteur de l'hymne soviétique.

Desormières vient de donner à Paris la 8^e Symphonie de Chostakovitch, dans un gala organisé par France-U.R.S.S.

Ce musicien russe est déjà l'auteur de neuf symphonies, deux opéras, deux ballets, vingt-quatre préludes, un concerto, des quintettes, quatuors et trios, ainsi que d'une importante production de musique de films.

A travers l'effroyable épreuve endurée par l'Union soviétique, il a su trouver l'inspiration nécessaire à trois symphonies.

Durant l'automne 1941, dans Léninegrad assiégée, Chostakovitch écrivit la *Septième héroïque*. Voici le commentaire littéraire que l'auteur a donné à son œuvre :

« La 7^e Symphonie est une composition inspirée par les événements terribles de 1941. Elle se compose de quatre parties. La première raconte comment, dans notre belle et paisible existence, fit irruption une force terrible : la guerre. Je ne me suis pas posé le problème de représenter d'une façon naturaliste les faits de la guerre (résonnement des avions, bruits des tanks, tirs, des canons). Je n'ai pas composé une musique dite de bataille, j'ai voulu exprimer l'essence d'événements formidables. »

La 8^e symphonie, *Symphonie de Stalingrad*, est également, comme son titre le suggère, une tragédie symphonique. La force des conflits dramatiques à l'issue desquels pointe l'éclaircie symbolique entraîne l'auditeur dans une vision où, en dehors du relief donné aux péripéties sauvages des combats, se dressent les ruines de la cité détruite, s'entendent les gémissements et les pleurs humains, éclate le rythme de la virilité, tels qu'ils furent engendrés par la réalité.

Une neuvième symphonie entreprise par le compositeur doit, vraisemblablement, après un résumé narratif des souffrances et des efforts fournis par le pays, s'adapter, dans un mouvement d'ampleur, à la lumière dont s'empare le final de la huitième et se terminer par l'hymne grandiose de la victoire.

Michel ROCHE-VARGER.



Roger Desormières dirige une répétition de la huitième symphonie « Stalingrad »
En haut à gauche : le grand compositeur soviétique Chostakovitch.

(Photos Willy Kover)

Figure 2.4. A promotional article for the Parisian premiere of Symphony No. 8 in *Regards*.
‘On the day of the France-URSS gala, it was raining in Paris and Moscow’

Shostakovich completed his Eighth Symphony in September 1943, eight months after Germany and its allies lost control of the former city of Stalingrad. Whereas the ‘Leningrad’ Symphony portrayed real-life events, Shostakovich described his Eighth Symphony as expressing ‘my thoughts and experiences, my elevated creative state, which could not help but be influenced by the joyful news connected with the victories of the Red Army.’⁸³ Thus, the composer did not intend the symphony to explicitly depict a battle in the way that Roche-Varger interpreted. At most, it is programmatic in the vague, socialist realist sense; according to Shostakovich, the symphony’s ‘philosophical conception’ could be summed up in three words: ‘Life is beautiful. Everything that is dark and gloomy will rot away, vanish, and the beautiful will triumph.’⁸⁴ The Eighth Symphony’s reception was lukewarm at its premiere in the Soviet Union, mostly because it failed to uphold the impossibly high standard of popularity set by the Seventh two years earlier. As Fay explains, ‘Even its most fervent admirers admitted that the Eighth was a challenging work, lacking the instantaneous popular appeal of the Seventh.’⁸⁵ Moreover, although critics and officials perceived the length of the work and the difficulty of its musical language as representative of the suffering brought on by the war, in September 1943 this was a war not yet won. Again, to quote Fay:

At a time when the presentiment of impending victory over the Nazis was becoming palpable in the Soviet Union, Shostakovich’s failure to limn the psychological climate—to provide an optimistic, even triumphant finale—was a letdown to those inclined to read the symphony, like its predecessor, as an authentic wartime documentary.⁸⁶

Presumably to justify its insufficiently optimistic nature, the state gave the Eighth Symphony its surtitle of ‘Stalingrad’ after the premiere, in memory of the Soviet lives lost in battle. Thus, even though it was not appointed by the composer himself, this extra-musical label was influential in shaping the work’s reception in France, as indicated by Roche-Varger’s interpretation in *Regards*. Yet not all critics dwelled upon the symphony’s specific surtitle. In *Les Étoiles*, another Resistance-affiliated journal that had a short life after the Liberation, the prominent writer Henry Malherbe focused on his impression of the work’s universal appeal:

Under the painful weight of his memories, [Shostakovich] constrained himself to a noble simplicity of lines, to an ardent sobriety of colours, to a strict use of well-known formulas. He went only to the essentials. His music ... does not even have a distinct

⁸³ Shostakovich quoted in Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, 136.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 138.

Russian character. It is of all times and for all people. ... In its particular resonance, [it] speaks to the soul of everyone.⁸⁷

More compliments for the Eighth Symphony came from Dumensil, who actually found it preferable to Shostakovich's (generally more popular) Seventh:

The Eighth, recently given at the Opéra, is scarcely shorter [than the Seventh]; it lasts nearly an hour, and yet, next to its predecessor, it seems much less sprawling (*étendue*). Admittedly, the developments could have been tightened up without losing anything (on the contrary); but it is interesting from one end to the other, and it even rises quite high at times.⁸⁸

Dumesnil made no mention of the symphony's programmatic surtitle, and instead treated the work as an expression of Shostakovich's impending greatness:

Such a work ... is a favourable testament to this powerful and fruitful musician. If Shostakovich manages to focus even more, we can expect from him works that will place him at the first rate. The composer who conceived the adagio of the first movement; the scherzo and the passacaglia that we have just heard; and who orchestrated—mercilessly for the trombones, but with what success!—a certain episode of the third part; this one carries within him the qualities that make the masters.⁸⁹

Not all critics tasked with reviewing the Eighth Symphony received it warmly, however. Charpentier began his coverage in *Arts* with a promising tone, capturing the ambiance surrounding the premiere:

Performed here on numerous occasions, and disseminated most recently by the Radiodiffusion française from Brussels, the final echoes of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 7 could still be heard when the Association France-URSS invited us to the premiere of the Eighth Symphony of the same composer, under the brilliant and intelligent musical direction of Roger Désormière. These two works have more or less the same characteristics, and their attributes are identical: an irreproachably distinctive style of

⁸⁷ Henry Malherbe, 'La Musique : d'un art qui parle à l'âme de tous,' *Les Étoiles*, 19 March 1946, 8. *Les Étoiles* was published clandestinely in the *zone Sud* by the Comité national des écrivains, an offshoot of the PCF-led Front national des écrivains (founded in 1941).

⁸⁸ René Dumesnil, 'Les Concerts,' *Le Monde*, 19 March 1946.

⁸⁹ Dumesnil, 'Les Concerts.'

easy, flexible writing, and a sumptuous, often ingenious orchestration that does not entirely impede the clarity.⁹⁰

However, Charpentier noticed in the Eighth Symphony the same issues as in the Seventh. In his opinion, the masterful orchestration that Shostakovich displayed in the Eighth did not make up for what the work lacked in descriptive substance: ‘In our opinion, and despite the contrary opinion of our Soviet colleagues, the Eighth Symphony—written in 1943, no doubt in one sitting—does not constitute the valuable testimony we were expecting from the protagonist of this poignant tragedy.’⁹¹ The journalist and *homme de lettres* Jean Réande was also not convinced by Shostakovich’s use of a programme. Though he admitted that ‘it is difficult to decide after only one listening,’ his somewhat ambivalent initial assessment of the Eighth Symphony identified both strengths and weaknesses, such as the strength of emotion in the fourth movement, but also that the work was ‘uneven, even chaotic’ overall, and more aggressive than emotionally moving.⁹² He also felt that the endeavour would have been more successful with the inclusion of a choir. Réande was more decided in his criticism after having had some time to reflect; following the premiere of the Ninth (only weeks after that of the Eighth), he declared that ‘Programmatic music rarely has our approval due to the many failures it causes, and if the Seventh Symphony (“Leningrad”) was rather disappointing in this regard, the Eighth Symphony (“Stalingrad”) was equally far from success.’⁹³

In the PCF daily *Ce Soir*, which resumed its circulation after the Liberation, the composer and former *résistante* Elsa Barraine took a different approach to reviewing Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 8. Making next to no comment on the performance itself, she instead took the opportunity to lament the way in which Parisian critics had, in her eyes, responded to Shostakovich’s symphonies thus far:

What is the use of saying in detail here all that I felt at the performance of this extraordinary symphony? It would have to be replayed; Soviet music would have to be broadcast much more widely in France ... Unfortunately, these works are known in France only among a relatively restricted and relatively educated public, and God knows that this public and its critics generally do not spare current Soviet music their reticence,

⁹⁰ Charpentier, ‘La 8^e Symphonie de Chostakovitch,’ 1946 (Fonds Montpensier, BnF).

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Jean Réande, ‘La Musique : Debussy avait raison,’ *Gavroche*, 14 March 1946, 6. ‘Inégale, chaotique même, elle malmène plus qu’elle ne bouleverse.’

⁹³ Jean Réande, ‘Il y a loin de la coupe aux lèvres,’ *Gavroche*, 18 April 1946, 6.

their astonishment, and their disappointment ... In Shostakovich, we criticise an abuse of excessive forms, a barbarism of language, and the simplicity of means and effects used. The French concert public does not neglect any occasion to emphasise the defects of purely musical aesthetic of Shostakovich, and passes more willingly over his pure boldness of thought, the beauty of his solid constructions, the magnificent breath and breadth of his austere phrases and their strength.⁹⁴

Barraine then explained to her readers what it is that she believes Shostakovich truly stands for, and why this may not translate for a French audience:

Shostakovich is not fixed upon any problem other than to convey, with strength and conviction, the feelings and emotions that he has experienced before the great patriotic events of the history of the USSR. His music is destined to be heard by millions of workers in the city and countryside. We claim that his art is made of easy options, but it is actually towards rigour, seriousness, dryness and nobility of form that he directs his music.⁹⁵

This, Barraine contends, is the crux of why the French public continually missed the point of Shostakovich's music: the fact that it 'expects from this young Russian a refinement of thought, an assurance of hand,' yet 'does not understand that young Russian musicians have the desire to return to a conception of art that may be simplistic in appearance, but that is indeed strong.'⁹⁶

She elaborated:

For my part, it does not matter that Shostakovich does not have a language as rich, as shimmering as that of his time. It is what he expresses that interests me, and that is truly new. It is a form of boldness and courage, as well as saying without shrewdness what one wants to say. Moreover, if he troubled himself with detail and fixated upon aesthetic problems with every note, he could not tackle the extraordinary epics that he wants to recount to us. The suffering of his people, the scale of his struggles, the enthusiasm, joy, and self-sacrifice in battle cannot be adapted to *chichis* and complications. All that he wants to make us seize, we seize it, all throughout his symphonies. His goal is therefore

⁹⁴ Elsa Barraine, 'Spectacles de Paris – La Musique : La Symphonie de Stalingrad de Chostakovitch,' *Ce Soir*, 3 & 4 March 1946, 2.

⁹⁵ Barraine, 'La Symphonie de Stalingrad de Chostakovitch,' 2.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

achieved. It is to want to be taken in. It is to share the emotion that forms the basis of his work.⁹⁷

It is clear from this piece that Barraine's understanding of socialist realist art is at a higher level than the majority of the French concert-going public, even in this post-war period. As well as being involved actively in the Resistance, she had been a member of the PCF since 1938, and had written for the French Communist press since the end of 1944. The above article also appeared in the midst of her three-year term as music director of *Le Chant du Monde*.⁹⁸ Yet, Barraine's fixation on the storyline and emotive content in Shostakovich's wartime symphonies is fascinating in that it indicates how, even among international listeners who were committed to enjoying this music on account of their political beliefs, an awareness of the narratives within was still the most crucial factor in appreciating it.

To summarise the initial French reception of the Eighth Symphony, general approval was directed towards the orchestration and emotional magnitude showcased within the work, but, somewhat ironically, its biggest pitfall was the misleadingly specific surtitle that the Soviet state had devised originally to improve public opinion. Also worth noting is how many of these reviews, including those published in the Communist press, presented the Eighth Symphony as akin to the Seventh in both style and programmatic content. The contrast here to the relatively cool reception of the Eighth in the Soviet Union—which has been attributed to how far its musical language and perceived mood was from the Seventh—once again speaks to the importance of the extra-musical narrative in determining the reception of Shostakovich's symphonies in Paris.

Symphony No. 9, 'Victory': A Misleading Narrative

In early 1945, the Nazi forces were on the verge of total defeat. By April, the Soviet Union's Red Army had advanced into Germany, and on the last day of the month it was announced that Hitler had committed suicide after retreating four months earlier to his *Führerbunker* in Berlin. While the Soviet Union edged towards its imminent victory, Shostakovich began working on a ninth symphony that would commemorate the end of the Second World War. After abandoning it for some months, he completed it in August 1945. Due to the nature of the Victory Day

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Françoise Andrieux and James R. Briscoe, 'Elsa Barraine,' in *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com.

events after which it was composed, the symphony shocked audiences and officials alike at its Leningrad premiere in November, for its length and tenor hardly seemed appropriate for the conclusion of Shostakovich's wartime trilogy. As Fay writes,

The five-movement symphony lasting barely twenty-five minutes bore no resemblance whatsoever to the monumental symphonic apotheosis everyone had been expecting. Lacking a chorus, lacking a program, lacking all pretensions to gravity and majesty (also lacking a big tutti opening), it was almost the antithesis of expectations.⁹⁹

Despite the difference in character compared to his previous two symphonies, the Ninth received a generally warm initial reception in the Soviet Union (although, it failed to win the Stalin Prize for which it was nominated the following year, and alongside the Eighth Symphony it would also become a target in 1948 during Zhdanov's enquiry into formalism in Soviet music).¹⁰⁰ In France, Shostakovich was now famous enough for this premiere to be newsworthy, at least to those with an interest in Soviet politics; in a special 'Homage to the USSR' issue of *Regards* in November 1945, a short column summarising the newest symphony of 'the greatest living composer of the Soviet Union' described how it was performed in a ceremony dedicated to the glory of the Red Army; how its five movements depict the 'joy of the people of the USSR at the moment of total victory'; and how it will soon be featured in the repertoires of America, Britain, and Czechoslovakia.¹⁰¹ Shostakovich's Ninth Symphony was also reported on at the time of its world premiere by *Nouvelles soviétiques*, whose unnamed correspondent had heard the work in a four-hand piano arrangement given by the composer and Sviatoslav Richter for musicians and cultural officials before the official performance:

In the Ninth Symphony, there are no triumphant marches, nor any victory fanfares crowning a grandiose apotheosis. But there is a profoundly human and living sensation of the joy and happiness of the victors, who reaffirmed peace on earth, drove out the darkness of fascism, and proclaimed to all the triumph and glory of light.¹⁰²

On 21 March 1946, not long after the French premiere of the Eighth Symphony, the French public heard Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9 for the first time in an all-Russian programme performed by the Orchestre national de l'RDF and its principal conductor and director, Manuel

⁹⁹ Shostakovich quoted in Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, 146.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 148, 155–58.

¹⁰¹ 'La Neuvième Symphonie de Chostakovitch : Un salut à la victoire,' *Regards* 14, no. 20 (1 November 1945): 12. 'Le plus grand compositeur vivant de l'Union Soviétique ... les cinq mouvements reflètent la joie des peuples de l'U.R.S.S. au moment de la victoire totale.'

¹⁰² 'La 9^e Symphonie de Chostakovitch,' *Nouvelles soviétiques*, 3 November 1945.

Rosenthal. Throughout the orchestra's previous season (1944–45), Rosenthal had developed a reputation for programming music that had been banned in France during the German Occupation, later recalling that: 'It was crazy to think that the public had been deprived for so long of so much admirable music, and that is why it was necessary to restore, very quickly, the predilection for such music among the public that was awaiting it.'¹⁰³ Presenting music by Shostakovich alongside that of Stravinsky in early 1946 appears to have been a continuation of these efforts. In *Gavroche*, Réande was particularly approving, not only of Rosenthal's programming choices and performance on the evening, but of the relative speed with which the Ninth Symphony had made it to France (only four months had elapsed since the work's premiere in Leningrad):

We haven't waited long for the premiere of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9 in France. For this, we have Manuel Rosenthal and the Orchestre national to thank. We were pleased to see Rosenthal in such fine form this evening ... Programming Stravinsky and Shostakovich alongside one another was an audacious yet inspired decision.¹⁰⁴

Rostand was complimentary on the same point: 'I say as usual, and I believe that it can never be repeated enough: the initiatives, the efforts of Mr Rosenthal in this field are of exceptional interest, of an uncommon boldness, of an almost exclusive rarity.'¹⁰⁵ But in terms of the symphony's reception, the same issues that arose in the commentary on Shostakovich's Seventh and Eighth Symphonies were also prevalent in that of the Ninth. Most pertinent, once again, was the issue of the surtitle. In the case of the Ninth Symphony, however, the specifics of how it earned the unofficial title 'Victory' are somewhat unclear. Appointed by neither the composer nor the state, the spread of this title was probably the work of the Soviet press, which—even after Shostakovich had abandoned his initial sketches—likely continued to propagate his (unfulfilled) promise that the symphony would depict the heroic Soviet victory over Nazi Germany. Regardless of how the Ninth came to be colloquially referred to as the 'Victory' symphony, by the time it was performed in France, critics were under the impression that its heroic surtitle had been devised by Shostakovich himself: 'Thanks to the somewhat daft propaganda produced in favour of the production of this great artist—propaganda that does not exactly increase his stature,' Rostand wrote, 'we know that the Ninth Symphony completes a

¹⁰³ Manuel Rosenthal quoted (in an English translation) in Leslie A. Sprout, 'From the Postwar to the Cold War: Protesting Stravinsky in Postwar France,' in *The Musical Legacy of Wartime France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 151.

¹⁰⁴ Jean Réande, 'Il y a loin de la coupe aux lèvres,' *Gavroche*, 1946, 6 (Fonds Montpensier, BnF).

¹⁰⁵ Claude Rostand, 'Musique : La Neuvième Symphonie de Chostakovitch,' *Carrefour*, 4 April 1946, 7.

triptych glorifying the struggle ... the victory ... and the peace of the Soviet nation.¹⁰⁶ And according to Réande, ‘To give a surtitle like “Victory” establishes a real “commitment” that could easily be thrown back in the author’s face if he does not deliver.’ The verdict of both critics was the same. Rostand declared the following: ‘I tried to say ... how convincing to me the intense, poignant, earth-shattering illustrations of this struggle and this victory appeared. To my very great regret, it does not seem possible to display as much enthusiasm for the work that we are presented with today.’¹⁰⁷ Likewise, Réande thought that, when compared with the Seventh and Eighth Symphonies, the Ninth ‘does not constitute a better testimony. And if you ask us, this is where the tragedy lies. There’s many a slip ‘twixt the cup and the lip...’¹⁰⁸ The musicologist and critic Marc Pincherle agreed that the symphony failed to meet the expectation set by its programmatic title, especially in the final movement: ‘The finale of the Ninth, dedicated to ‘Victory,’ makes us think of a merry procession of bohemians searching for a Muscovite Robinson Crusoe, rather than the profound joy of a people faced with the miracle of a return to normal life, after years of unspeakable hardship.’¹⁰⁹

Even Roland-Manuel, who had touted the effectiveness of Shostakovich’s programme in the ‘Leningrad’ Symphony the previous year, voiced general dissatisfaction with Shostakovich’s recent programmatic symphonies:

For the unforewarned listener, a fundamentally musical reaction to Shostakovich’s latest symphonies—which have recently made their way to us—would be like convulsing from electric shock. No matter what we think of the music, it is undoubtedly the work of a true symphonist; that is to say, it is first and foremost a living, breathing organisation of time. The music is valuable in itself, regardless of what it is supposed to express. Indeed, what it is *supposed* to express. These symphonies play out as if the titles they carry or the subject matter they propose were fabricated. This is the case, particularly with the 39-year-old composer’s Ninth Symphony.¹¹⁰

Although Roland-Manuel grouped Shostakovich’s wartime symphonies together in this extract, his review, alongside those of other critics, did not compare Shostakovich’s Ninth Symphony to

¹⁰⁶ Rostand, ‘La Neuvième Symphonie de Chostakovitch,’ 7.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Réande, ‘Il y a loin de la coupe aux lèvres,’ 6.

¹⁰⁹ Marc Pincherle, ‘La musique : In memoriam Granados—La IX^e Symphonie de Chostakovitch,’ *Les Nouvelles littéraires, artistiques et scientifiques*, 28 March 1946, 6.

¹¹⁰ Alexis Roland-Manuel, ‘La Neuvième Symphonie de Chostakovitch,’ *Les Lettres françaises*, 1946 (Fonds Montpensier, BnF); also published in *Combat*, 24 March 1946, 2.

his Seventh in the same way that the Eighth was compared to the Seventh only weeks earlier. In fact, Roland-Manuel articulated the aspects of structure and mood that he felt differentiated the Ninth from the more successful Seventh:

The Ninth Symphony of Shostakovich is called ‘Victory,’ even though, in many places, the pace of the work and its accentuations seem to contradict its title; but, let us not hold forth on that, as the creator is the sole judge of his intentions. Alas, the music. It is clearly very different from that of the Seventh Symphony, which was called ‘Stalingrad’ [sic]. It is music that yields comfortably to the requirements of academic conformity. The tone is pleasant and calm, even light-hearted at times, and the orchestral soundscape is picturesque. Drollery is not excluded, but it is somewhat forced and lacking in humour.¹¹¹

Unlike many of his colleagues, *Le Monde*’s resident critic Dumesnil was less bothered by the programmatic content of the Ninth Symphony than its perceived lack of originality:

The echo of military parades, and the burst of joy of a people finally delivered from a long nightmare enliven the allegro, followed by a meditation imbued with a dignified melancholy; next comes a scherzo full of turbulent gaiety, then a chorale entrusted to the brass and solo bassoon, which is linked to an allegretto and a final presto. And all of this, which is well done, well written, and which contains good things (the slow movement and the chorale, for example), is too often, however, lacking in originality. We find nothing of what we like in Russian music, and these pages, which could be signed with the name of any Western musician, could have been written fifty years ago.¹¹²

Rostand too noted allusions to Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky, and Prokofiev in his review, though these comments were framed as compliments rather than criticisms. Clearly, Dumesnil’s stance relates less to issues concerning the symphony’s programmatic title (which, as in his review of the Eighth, he did not address), and more to his dislike of conventions in Soviet music at that moment: a dislike he apparently developed in the two weeks that had elapsed since his encouraging review of Shostakovich’s previous symphony was published in the same newspaper! Yet, what is most likely at play here is a feeling of over-saturation brought on by the Russian-heavy programming of post-war Paris, as Dumesnil also extended criticism to the Stravinsky works in the same programme (*Renard* (1916) and *Mavra* (1922))—‘if they no longer

¹¹¹ Roland-Manuel, ‘La Neuvième Symphonie de Chostakovitch.’

¹¹² René Dumesnil, ‘Les Concerts,’ *Le Monde*, 2 April 1946.

surprise, continue to disappoint, especially *Mavra*’); and to Stravinsky more broadly (who ‘seems to be trying to confuse, if not disappoint, those who are trying to follow him’).¹¹³

Overall, there seems to have been accord among many French critics that, unlike the Seventh Symphony, the Ninth could not be considered a truly expressive work on account of its academic musical language. Still, not everyone felt that the piece was entirely lacking in quality. Pincherle, for instance, considered it an effective showcase of Shostakovich’s compositional talents, in spite of its adherence to Soviet academic formalism:

One cannot judge a hyper-dogmatic work of some importance after only hearing it once. Nevertheless, Shostakovich’s Ninth Symphony, which was performed by the Orchestre national on Thursday for the first time in Paris, confirms the same impressions that his recent compositions have given me. It is the work of a composer with many gifts, primarily in the field of melodic invention and orchestral colour.¹¹⁴

Furthermore, Pincherle perceived a great deal of emotional weight in the work, an experience he felt he had shared with the audience on the night:

On the contrary, the initial Allegro is written solidly (*fermement écrit*), and the bassoon solo in the slow movement is imbued with a level of emotion that found a spontaneous echo in the audience. Manuel Rosenthal directed this symphony with great vitality, without damaging the precision that remains its principal quality.¹¹⁵

In contrast to those that focused on its conservatism and form, other responses to the Ninth Symphony recall the initial French reception of Symphony No. 7 in 1945, where expansive musical structures, perceived at the time as excessive and outdated, were forgiven in favour of the symphony’s emotional impact. ‘What is perhaps most surprising about the work of Shostakovich,’ Réande wrote, ‘is the emotion that springs suddenly from certain bars, and which embraces you deep within yourself. This makes you forget the long developments, which resemble composition exercises more than expressive phrases.’¹¹⁶ If we extend this comparison even further, back to the premiere of the Fifth in 1938, it is interesting to note how critical responses to Shostakovich’s symphonies after World War II reflect the greater awareness that the public held of the circumstances in the Soviet Union, particularly how these circumstances

¹¹³ Dumesnil, ‘Les Concerts.’

¹¹⁴ Pincherle, ‘La Musique,’ 6.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Réande, ‘Il y a loin de la coupe aux lèvres,’ 6.

impacted upon the lives of composers and artists. As the coverage presented above indicates, by the late 1940s critics in France were either more aware of, or more comfortable discussing, the campaign against ‘formalism’ in the Soviet Union compared with a decade earlier. Yet, this same coverage also shows that French critics found no fewer issues in the Ninth than in Shostakovich’s Fifth, Seventh and Eighth symphonies—their commentary on such issues was simply presented in a more forgiving manner.

Political Influences on Post-War Reception

A significant factor to consider in the reception of Shostakovich’s symphonies in 1946—and one that might explain how the programmatic element of the Seventh Symphony was received more poorly in 1946 than 1945—is how the public perception of the Soviet Union had shifted since the months immediately following the Liberation. In 1945, French Communism was one of the most popular political forces in France, but the strength and influence of the PCF weakened in the second half of the 1940s. De Gaulle, who had united the politically divided Resistance, resigned in early 1946, and by June the provisional government was facing leadership challenges from an anti-Communist alliance of radical and conservative parties. Under the logic I have employed previously—that an alignment with the PCF prompted critics to praise Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony, regardless of what they thought of the music—the less sympathetic response to the Seventh Symphony after its second performance in France could be a result of the diminishing appeal of communism in 1946.

This idea is supported by the political affiliations of authors and journals that praised Shostakovich’s Seventh Symphony at the time of its French premiere. Unlike in 1938, when wholly positive reviews of the Fifth Symphony appeared only in French Communist publications, the nature of the three-party government made political affiliations in post-war France more fluid.¹¹⁷ Aside from Dumesnil’s in *Le Monde*, most of the Symphony No. 7 reviews from 1945 reflect some relevant bias, some more explicitly than others: one was written by Wiéner, a PCF member from 1938 until his death, and also one of first French musicians (alongside Milhaud) to visit the USSR as a guest of the state.¹¹⁸ Another (Roland-Manuel’s) appeared in an overtly Communist journal (*Les Lettres françaises*), whereas *La Nef*, which published

¹¹⁷ The government in June 1938 was also a three-party alliance (Communists, Socialists, and radicals); however, the Popular Front had no Communist ministers in its cabinet, and had been riddled with dysfunction since June 1937. By the end of September 1938, the radical faction had seized control of the party, forcing the socialists out and denouncing the communists as warmongers. The party dissolved shortly thereafter. See Sowerwine, *France Since 1870*, 181–82.

¹¹⁸ David Drew, ‘Wiéner, Jean,’ in *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com.

Pierhal's review, was directed by Lucie Faure (1908–1977) and Robert Aron (1898–1975), affiliates of the provisional government of de Gaulle's Free France. Sauguet and Rostand had no obvious attachments; however, the journals that published their articles (*La Bataille* and *Carrefour*) were respectively associated with the French Socialist and Christian-Democrat (Gaullist) parties, the remaining two thirds of France's post-war governing alliance. Put simply, more avenues for communist-sympathising (but not necessarily French Communist) activity existed in 1945 than in the interwar period, which may have led to more critics feeling partial to a musical representation of heroic Soviet resistance.

The influence of the French Resistance network not only in the reception of Shostakovich's symphonies, but in the organisation of the performances themselves, is another notable aspect of this series of post-war premieres. Désormière, who conducted the premiere of the Eighth Symphony, maintained an involvement with the PCF throughout his life, and played a key role in rallying the musicians of the Resistance, even forming the Front national des musiciens (FNM) in 1941 alongside his fellow Communist Barraine.¹¹⁹ One of the first people the pair recruited to join the FNM was Roland-Manuel, who reviewed Shostakovich's symphonies in 1945 and '46 for *Les Lettres françaises*. Two further recruits to the FNM were Charles Munch and Manuel Rosenthal, who conducted the French premieres of the Seventh and Ninth Symphonies in 1945 and '46 respectively. Within the context of this study, it is significant that the first two of these three post-war premieres were sponsored by France's society for cultural friendship with the Soviet Union, and the third (the Ninth) was selected by Rosenthal. The French Communist and Franco-Soviet links here make it clear that these concerts were conceived and carried out primarily within Communist circles, and if we consider that these circles were, at this time, at their widest and most influential point of the century, a connection emerges between wartime Resistance activity, the spread of Communism in post-war France, and the increased programming and performance of Shostakovich's music. We can therefore conclude that, in the years immediately following World War II, Shostakovich's music in France retained the French Communist resonances it first attained in the 1930s.

In opposition to this circle of French Communists and musical friends of the Soviet Union, those who remained hostile to the USSR would likely not have appreciated the propagation of Shostakovich's symphonies in Paris after the war. Exemplary of this perspective was Boris de

¹¹⁹ Guy Krivopissko and Daniel Virieux, 'Musiciens : Une profession en résistance ?,' *La Vie musicale sous Vichy*, ed. Myriam Chimènes (Paris: Éditions Complexe, 2001), 338.

Schloezer, the writer, translator, and music scholar who had moved to Paris in the first wave of Russian emigration. Unlike many diaspora intellectuals, who by the 1940s had moved back to the USSR or to North America, de Schloezer remained in Paris until his death in 1969.¹²⁰ In April 1946 he wrote in *Temps présent*, a short-lived Catholic weekly journal: ‘Not that we are asking to become better acquainted with Soviet music, but why this insistence of offering us only Shostakovich? Is he the sole Russian composer of his generation today?’¹²¹ De Schloezer’s dissatisfaction with Soviet music, as opposed to Russian music, was further expressed in an essay published in the literary journal *Fontaine* the following month: he mentioned the three recently premiered symphonies, albeit in passing, as evidence for ‘*des confusions, des contradictions*’ that prevail in the minds of the people when Russian composers makes no use of folk song in their music.¹²² (Such observations are reminiscent of Annegret Fauser’s discussion of new Russian music at the Exposition Universelle, where use of folk song, as well as programmatic content, was crucial in ensuring a positive French reception of the works being performed.)¹²³ But in 1946, outside of the press some would no doubt have shared this targeted dislike of Soviet music—other former members of the 1920s and ’30s émigré community, perhaps—but de Schloezer’s is the only commentary I have found that articulates it in print so clearly. Yet these views on Shostakovich were not only informed by de Schloezer’s status as an anti-Soviet émigré. It is also important to consider his musical tastes and preferences, and as both an early biographer of Stravinsky and someone who would later champion the musical philosophy of Boulez (who made high-profile criticisms of Shostakovich’s music later in the century), it is not surprising that he was offended by the construction of a Shostakovich symphony.¹²⁴ Thus, the scarcity of reviews like de Schloezer’s, combined with the relatively narrow readerships of the publications in which these two were published,¹²⁵ makes it reasonable to treat his comments as, at most, reflective of any Russian émigrés who remained in Paris, and who remained opposed to the Soviet Union even after its defeat of Germany—they are certainly too biased for a reception study to treat as representative of a wider French public.

¹²⁰ Elena Dubinets considers how the first wave of Russian emigration (sparked by the dissolution of the Tsarist empire), as well as the waves that followed it, affected musical production in ‘Defining Diaspora through Culture,’ in *Russian Music since 1917: Reappraisal and Rediscovery*, ed. Marina Frolova-Walker and Patrick Zuk (Oxford: OUP/Proceedings of the British Academy, 2017), 330–55.

¹²¹ Boris de Schloezer, ‘Russes et Français,’ *Temps présent*, 12 April 1946.

¹²² Boris de Schloezer, ‘Chroniques : La Musique,’ *Fontaine : Revue mensuelle de la poésie et des lettres françaises* 52 (1946): 830.

¹²³ Fauser, *Musical Encounters*, 43–45.

¹²⁴ Edward Campbell, *Boulez, Music and Philosophy* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), 17. The positioning of Shostakovich vis-à-vis twelve-tone serialism is addressed in Chapter Three.

¹²⁵ See Martine Sevegrand, *Temps présent : Une aventure chrétienne (1937–1992). Un hebdomadaire (1937–1947)* (Paris: Éditions du Temps présent, 2007).

Post-War Revivals: Symphonies Nos. 5 and 6

In addition to the three newly unveiled symphonies, the post-war years in France saw the first repeat performance of a Shostakovich symphony (the Fifth), as well as the delayed premiere of the Sixth. The first of these two performances took place in July 1946, when the expatriate conductor Vladimir Golschmann returned to his home city to perform with the Orchestre national and soloist Roland Charmy at the Salle des Champs-Élysées. On the programme was Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5 alongside Glazunov's Violin Concerto, op. 82 (1904). In the press coverage, Rostand, now describing Shostakovich as '*le musicien soviétique numéro 1*,' seemed to enjoy the Fifth Symphony more than those of the wartime trilogy: he listed Shostakovich's best known works as the Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Symphonies, and wrote that they 'together make more than three good hours of bad music, but of authentic emotion.'¹²⁶ In fact, Rostand spent only a few lines mentioning Golschmann, and instead dedicated his lengthy piece in *Carrefour* to movement-by-movement descriptions of the sentiments conveyed in the Fifth Symphony, as well as an introductory explanation of its historical context and French performance history:

It is almost a premiere in France, seeing as this work was performed only once long ago, passing by largely unnoticed, which is a great pity. Composed in 1937, the Fifth Symphony, op. 47 was brought out indisputably in the official Soviet aesthetic. We know that in 1936 Dmitri Shostakovich had been 'urged' not to show so much enthusiasm 'for the extreme modernism of Western music.'¹²⁷

Rostand concluded his review by describing where the Fifth Symphony sits in the history of Soviet art, a description that articulated further his thoughts on the cultural policy of the Soviet Union: 'Despite the entirely gratuitous constraints that a regime that interferes with that which does not concern it has placed upon him, and which he has accepted, [the symphony] is of an extraordinary nature, of an incomparable temperament.'¹²⁸ Given the absence of any such rhetoric in the Fifth Symphony's initial French reception, the fact that this information is provided at all is significant in the context of this study, for it confirms that Shostakovich's wartime symphonies not only introduced Shostakovich to a wider French public, but, amongst those who were already aware of his music, they generated greater awareness of the composer himself and the circumstances he had worked under since the 1930s. Nevertheless, these

¹²⁶ Claude Rostand, 'Musique : La Symphonie « dirigée » de Chostakovitch,' *Carrefour*, 18 July 1946, 9. 'Les VII^e, VIII^e et IX^e Symphonies qui font ensemble plus de trois bonnes heures de mauvaise musique, mais d'authentique émotion.'

¹²⁷ Rostand, 'La Symphonie « dirigée » de Chostakovitch,' 9.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

circumstances were not universally acknowledged. Another review, from the literary critic Hélène Tuzet, followed the pattern seen in the Fifth Symphony's initial reception in Chapter One, and did not acknowledge the details regarding the work's conception. Thus, Tuzet did not appear to appreciate the angle from which Shostakovich approached the composition of his Fifth Symphony:

The work, more Germanic than Russian, expresses a copiously rich but barbaric temperament ... Beside the supremely civilised Mozart, to whom we listened earlier, Shostakovich is the Neanderthal man ... This pre-war work does not yet reveal the captivating humanity of the post-Leningrad musician.¹²⁹

Yet, Tuzet also listed an incorrect year of composition for the work, and made no mention of it being heard in France previously, so in this case it is likely that Shostakovich had only recently made it onto her radar—no doubt on account of the heightened presence of the wartime symphonies. As for Rostand's review, its analysis has much in common with the critic's commentary on the Seventh Symphony, but it is marginally more favourable—almost as if he was gradually being won over by Shostakovich's aesthetic. As is nearly always the case with Shostakovich's symphonies, he declared, he was left practically gasping for air after listening to the Fifth (*'on sort assez pantelant'*); and, much like his experience with the music of the 'Leningrad' Symphony, even though he described it as 'sombre,' 'poor,' 'ominous,' and 'emaciated'—even going so far as to call it 'hunger strike music' (*'cette musique sombre, pauvre, menaçante, étique, cette musique de grève de la faim'*)—Rostand conceded that it was nonetheless *'superbe,'* and carried both grandeur and pathos.¹³⁰ Again, as in his review of Symphony No. 7, Rostand indicated that his dislike for the conventional writing at play was not enough to detract from the emotion he experienced during the performance: 'With melodic ideas of a conformism of which Théodore Dubois would have had no desire to be guilty, Shostakovich, in spite of everything, moves us greatly' (*'nous donne la grande secousse'*).¹³¹ In a review for *L'Humanité*, Wiéner agreed that the symphony's emotional impact redeemed any faults that one might have perceived in the music: 'What is striking in this music, and what makes it invaluable for me, is its human side. As learned and hard as his writing is sometimes, Shostakovich has the genius of human cadences, of rhythm that carries. He truly is the musician for the masses, the musician of our time.'¹³²

¹²⁹ Hélène Tuzet, 'Derniers Concerts à Paris : Wladimir Golschmann,' *La France : Politique, scientifique et littéraire*, 6 September 1946, 6.

¹³⁰ Rostand, 'La Symphonie « dirigée » de Chostakovitch,' 9. 'De grandeur et de pathétique.'

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Jean Wiéner, 'Musique,' *L'Humanité*, 17 July 1946, 5.

Five months after this repeat performance of the Fifth Symphony, and now nine months since a new Shostakovich symphony had been heard in France, Symphony No. 6 had its belated French premiere when the American conductor Charles Bruch led the Orchestre Colonne in December 1946. It was programmed alongside *Edina* (1946), a symphonic poem by Marcel Landowski, and Brahms's Violin Concerto in D Major, op. 77 (1878) performed by the French-born virtuoso Devy Erlih. Continuing the about-face on Shostakovich's symphonies made clear in his review of the Ninth, Dumesnil perceived in the Sixth Symphony 'the same qualities and the same flaws as in the recent works of the Soviet composer: breadth and ardour, but also an excess of developments, and repetition to the point of weariness.'¹³³ Rostand felt differently; 'Here as elsewhere,' he conceded, 'weakness, vulgarity, triviality of melodic ideas and of inspiration itself' are present, but he concluded that

it does not seem possible to me to not be seduced by so much fantasy and vigour, rhythmic ingenuity, and orchestral skill, and especially by so much vital impulse and dynamism, even when these things manifest themselves in the simple but frenetic gaiety, the conventional but hallucinating pathos, whose almost miraculous secrets Shostakovich holds.¹³⁴

In fact, of the symphonies Rostand had hitherto reviewed, the Sixth garnered his highest approval. Noting that the composer had decided to abandon the idea of a programme, and instead produced 'pure' music, '*sans support historique ni politique*,' and in comparison to the three that came after it (which he described as 'rather loose frescoes'), Rostand declared Symphony No. 6 to be 'more concise and more intense in every way ... less primitive, more refined, more skilful, and how much more subtle.'¹³⁵

If the three premieres of wartime symphonies and two performances of earlier symphonies all contributed to a greater awareness of Shostakovich's music in post-war France, it is only natural that the public would want to learn more about the figure behind the music. The era in which the French press began to report regularly on Shostakovich 'the man' is documented in the following chapter, but perhaps the earliest example of this accessible style of celebrity reporting came in June 1946, with the publication of Georges Bernand's 'exclusive' interview with Shostakovich in *L'Humanité* (shown in Figure 2.5). In addition to reporting on the expected topics of his music and professional life, this article is different to earlier instances of

¹³³ René Dumesnil, 'Les Concerts,' *Le Monde*, 31 December 1946.

¹³⁴ Claude Rostand, 'Musique : La 6^e Symphonie de Chostakovitch,' *Carrefour*, 2 January 1947, 9.

¹³⁵ Rostand, 'La 6^e Symphonie de Chostakovitch,' 9.

Shostakovich being quoted in the French press in that it contains mentions of his personality (notably the way in which he apparently comes alive with enthusiasm when discussing his music), as well as descriptions of his wife (who is 'kind and blonde,' well-spoken while acting as his translator, is the mother of his two children, and so on).¹³⁶ Shostakovich also revealed to the journalist his favourite composers: Mussorgsky, Stravinsky, Honegger, Hindemith, Ravel, and Debussy. Building on the increased amount of Shostakovich symphonies being performed in Paris after the war, this list of eminent Russian, French, and contemporary composers, all well known in France at the time, would have helped to further situate and contextualise Shostakovich's aesthetic and musical preferences for *L'Humanité's* readership. The composer also noted in this interview how he would certainly love to visit France in the near future. In short, even if this article's contents are not particularly illuminating in an intellectual sense, the fact that it was published in 1946 further exemplifies the French public's heightened exposure to, and interest in, Shostakovich in the post-war years.

¹³⁶ George Bernand, 'Une interview exclusive du grand compositeur soviétique : Dmitri Chostakovitch,' *L'Humanité*, 4 June 1946, 4.

**Une interview exclusive du
grand compositeur soviétique**

Dmitri CHOSTAKOVITCH

Dmitri Chostakovitch, l'auteur de la « Symphonie Stalingrad », vient d'illuminer de son intelligence et de son talent le Festival international de musique de Prague qui rassemblait les critiques et les compositeurs les plus éminents du monde entier. C'est à cette occasion que Georges BERNAND, critique musical de « la Voix Ouvrière » de Genève a pu recueillir l'interview destinée exclusivement aux lecteurs de l'Humanité,

LE jeune maître soviétique dont le cinéma et la presse ont popularisé la silhouette a bien, vu de près, la simplicité et le maintien modeste, presque timide, de ses photos.

Mais parlez-lui musique, aussitôt vous le verrez sortir de sa réserve, vous verrez ses yeux bleus s'illuminer et toute sa personne vibrer d'enthousiasme. Tout traducteur devient alors superflu !

Questionné sur la meilleure manière d'interpréter ses œuvres, il répond avec des gestes et des interjections empruntés à la terminologie musicale : « Fortissimo ! » « Semplice ! », etc., et sous sa volubilité transparait l'ardeur de l'artiste véritable, créateur d'harmonies et de rythmes.

Sa femme, aimable et blonde, qui s'exprime fort bien en français, lui sert d'interprète et de secrétaire, ce qui n'est certes pas une sinécure, surtout qu'elle est, de plus, mère de deux enfants. C'est elle qui traduit l'interview à laquelle Chostakovitch se prête avec une charmante bonne grâce.

Nous lui avons demandé quel est le compositeur russe qu'il préfère. C'est, répond-il sans hésitation, Moussorgsky.

Parmi les compositeurs contemporains, ses préférences vont à Stravinsky, pour lequel il éprouve une grande admiration, à Honegger et Hindemith, et parmi les modernes Français, à Ravel et à Debussy.

Il aimerait venir jouer en France et le fera certainement dans un avenir pas trop éloigné. Mais ses multiples occupations comme compositeur, exécutant et professeur, ainsi que les fêtes du 30^e anniversaire de la Révolution l'empêchent d'y songer pour l'instant.

Chostakovitch est très discret sur ses nouvelles compositions. Il ne désire pas en parler avant qu'elles soient publiées. Nous n'insistons donc pas.



Figure 2.5. *L'Humanité's* 'exclusive' interview with Shostakovich in 1946

Shostakovich in Print, 1945–46

In addition to his increased presence in French concert halls and in the press, Shostakovich's popularity in post-war France flourished in the publishing sphere. Beyond the two performances of Symphony No. 7, 1945 was a significant year for the composer's French reception history in

that it saw the publication of Marguerite Sahlberg-Vatchnadzé's *Chostakovitch*, the first French-language monograph to take him as its subject.¹³⁷ The book is essentially a résumé of Shostakovich's career, with descriptions of his hitherto completed works. That it extends only up to the Eighth Symphony indicates that Sahlberg-Vatchnadzé completed the text during the war and had it published after the Liberation. Apart from the composer's biography, the book largely comprises observations on the structure and emotional impact of Shostakovich's most famous works, and features enthusiastic commentary on his reputation both in and outside of the Soviet Union: 'Paris is getting to know the famous Soviet composer and is submitting to the charm of his works, the most recent of which are appearing more often in Parisian concert programmes.'¹³⁸ Despite the generalist nature of such statements, it is nonetheless significant to see this information presented in print, to a Parisian audience, with such unrelenting optimism. That the timing of this book's release tied in with the increased programming of Shostakovich's music in post-Liberation Paris would have contributed to the increasing awareness and popularity of Shostakovich's music in France.

Within a year of Sahlberg-Vatchnadzé's, another monograph (also titled *Chostakovitch*) was made available to French readers (see Figure 2.6). Ivan Martynov (1908–2005), a Russian musicologist and friend of Shostakovich, completed his text in 1942, and it was first published in the Soviet Union three years later; a year after that, Éditions du Chêne published the book in a French translation by Michel-Rostislav Hofmann (1915–1975).¹³⁹ Throughout Hofmann's translation of Martynov's text, Shostakovich's music is subjected to many wordy, sentimental readings; for example, in the chapter 'Le Triomphe du génie,' which recounts the inception of the Fifth Symphony: 'The composer approaches his theme without the slightest frivolity, with the seriousness of a creator who seeks image-symbols, melody-signs, capable of reflecting all human complexity' (*'Le musicien aborde son thème sans la moindre frivolité, avec la gravité du créateur qui cherche des images-symboles, des mélodies-signes, capable de refléter toute l'humaine complexité'*).¹⁴⁰ Martynov also presented several dedicated socialist realist readings of Shostakovich's career trajectory; again in

¹³⁷ Little information is available on Sahlberg-Vatchnadzé beyond the fact that she wrote this book. In *Paris-Soir* there is one mention of a 1943 performance she gave of piano works by Chopin, Fauré, and Scriabin (see P.B., 'La Musique: Concerts et recitals,' *Paris-Soir*, 5 February 1943, 2); and the monograph credits Paul-Marie Masson as a contributing author, suggesting she was in Paris in the early 1940s to complete her doctorate under Masson's supervision.

¹³⁸ Sahlberg-Vatchnadzé, *Chostakovitch*, 17. 'C'est une des œuvres la plus caractéristique du talent de notre jeune compositeur.'

¹³⁹ Ivan Martynov, *Chostakovitch*, trans. Rostislav Hofmann (Paris: Éditions du Chêne, 1946). Hofmann was a Franco-Russian musicologist notable for his translations from Russian into French.

¹⁴⁰ Martynov, *Chostakovitch*, 79. N.B. I have translated from Hofmann's French rather than present the same excerpt from T. Gural'sky's 1947 English translation, as the same passages do not correspond as closely as they would need for me to present them as equivalents (presumably due to necessary artistic licenses taken by both translators).

relation to the Fifth Symphony, he suggested that the composer's stylistic evolution in this work was a result of maturity, a search for the highest possible art form, rather than the result of any human or political intervention.¹⁴¹

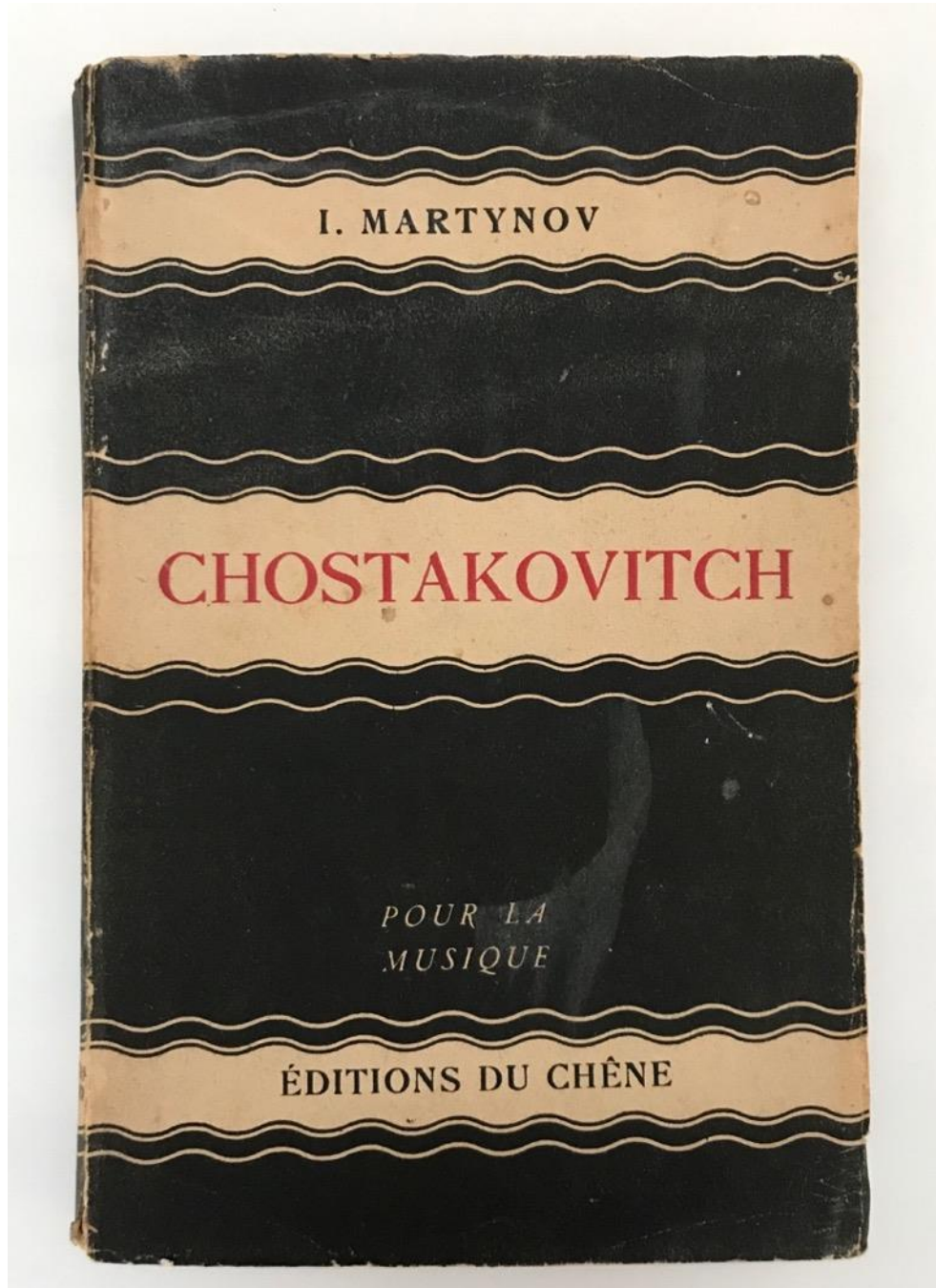


Figure 2.6. The cover of Ivan Martynov's *Chostakovitch*

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 77. Of course, Martynov could not realistically have written frankly of Shostakovich's public denunciation, given that Soviet musicologists, in addition to composers, also faced censorship by the Composers Union; see Olga Manulkina's account of the 1949 'musicologist's affair' in "Foreign" versus "Russian"; in *Russian Music since 1917*, 221–43.

Martynov's monograph is perhaps of less significance to this study than Sahlberg-Vatchnadzé's, since it was not originally written in French, and does not represent views on Shostakovich from the perspective of someone residing in France, but it nonetheless adds further weight to the claim that the post-war years represent a tipping point in France regarding the awareness and popularity of Shostakovich and Soviet music more broadly. Dumesnil, who had followed the trajectory of Shostakovich's symphonies in this era, was complimentary about this resource being made available to French readers, yet he was also blunt about its lack of critical engagement:

Since the Liberation, the Soviet musician has taken an important place on the programmes of our concerts. It was good that we were informed about him, about his works, about the evolution of his ideas. Informed? Yes, without a doubt—but that is its shortcoming—Martynov's book is more of a vindication than a true critical study.¹⁴²

Despite this caveat, he was still grateful for its publication, concluding that 'Martynov's book gives us, in any case, the desire to know the works of Shostakovich which have not yet appeared in the programme of our concerts.'¹⁴³

Martynov's book is also significant for it allowed one French composer in particular to become better acquainted with Shostakovich: Charles Koechlin, who prepared an 'Étude sur Chostakovitch' for the second volume of Souvtchinsky's *Musique russe*.¹⁴⁴ This set featured essays by French composers and musicologists on a number of topics in Russian and Soviet music, some of which focused on specific contemporary composers, including Prokofiev, Scriabin, Shostakovich, and Stravinsky. The volume was not published until 1953, but the Shostakovich essay was written and signed in 1947, and the editor specifically notes that no updates were made to the body of Koechlin's text after it was finalised. Koechlin based the biography and parts of his analysis on Martynov's book, as he stated that many of Shostakovich's works were not accessible in Paris in 1947, 'and the ones we do know, it is imperfectly.'¹⁴⁵ However, his views on the role of Shostakovich's music are unique to the French context, as they are filtered through a similar French Communist lens as the one observed in Barraine's review of the Eighth Symphony a year prior. Upon describing the *Lady Macbeth* affair, Koechlin admitted that he had

¹⁴² René Dumesnil, 'Chostakovitch, par I. Martinov,' *Mercure de France* 1003 (March 1947): 530.

¹⁴³ Dumesnil, 'Chostakovitch, par I. Martinov,' 530.

¹⁴⁴ *Musique russe : Études réunies*, tome II, ed. Pierre Souvtchinsky (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1953). Philippe Cathé discusses the many long-form articles on music prepared by Koechlin after the First World War in 'Charles Koechlin: The Figure of the Expert,' in *Music Criticism in France, 1918–1939: Authority, Advocacy, Legacy*, ed. Barbara L. Kelly and Christopher Moore (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018), 63–90.

¹⁴⁵ Charles Koechlin, 'Étude sur Chostakovitch,' in *Musique russe : Études réunies*, tome II, ed. Pierre Souvtchinsky (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1953), 277. 'Et celles même que nous connaissons, c'est imparfaitement.'

not seen the score himself, and it was therefore difficult to ‘estimate to what extent the severe reproaches made to Shostakovich by the Soviet leaders are deserved’; however, he gave these authorities the benefit of the doubt in his descriptive justification and explanation of the composer’s role in Soviet society:

The musician in the Soviet regime is, and *must be*, closer to the Society than here [in France]. This is why we can explain that *Pravda* (and first Stalin, we suppose), thinking above all of the union between the People and the music of Shostakovich, addressed these admonitions to him. It is certain that this close alliance of the artist with society does not always favour genius, but sometimes facile banality ... To us French, freedom and individualism are dear above all. But freedom presupposes a certain isolation, and as soon as we are part of a party, as soon as we walk shoulder to shoulder, as soon as our soul is penetrated by something of the *soul of the crowd*, we subconsciously undergo the influence of this crowd, and we find ourselves less free, with a personality that is often less deep, and *less beautiful*. However, it is obvious that a Russian musician of today cannot have the independence acquired in the Ivory Tower: incidentally, he does not wish it. This suggests to us the hypothesis that the ‘conversion’ of Shostakovich after the blacklisting of *Lady Macbeth* was not the consequence of a punishment inflicted on a recalcitrant, but rather that of a ‘salutary advice,’ received willingly: a warning against which the artist did not have reason to revolt, but which he accepted, on the contrary, with a kind of fervent mysticism. This allows him, evolving in this way, to continue to translate himself without concessions that are artificial or insincere.¹⁴⁶

Clearly, Koechlin’s view of Shostakovich reflects the French composer’s idealisation of the USSR and his dedication to the communist cause. But it was also his well-documented humanism that shaped the way he heard Shostakovich’s music,¹⁴⁷ and how he chose to find meaning in it. After discussion of many of the composer’s works, Koechlin summarised that ‘the music of Shostakovich is born from emotion. The expression of feelings is at its base: through this, it opposes the theories of neoclassicism *à la* Stravinsky (I do not need to tell you which side I am on).’¹⁴⁸ This last remark is interesting, since Koechlin had welcomed Stravinsky’s neoclassicism previously, but choosing between this aesthetic and Shostakovich’s emotion led him to take sides against Stravinsky. Towards the end of the essay, Koechlin again summarised

¹⁴⁶ Koechlin, ‘Étude sur Chostakovitch,’ 281–82.

¹⁴⁷ See Philippe Cathé, Sylvie Douche, Michel Duchesneau, and Marie-Hélène Benoit-Otis, eds., *Charles Koechlin : Compositeur et humaniste* (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 2010).

¹⁴⁸ Koechlin, ‘Étude sur Chostakovitch,’ 283.

this sentiment with an evocative description of how the ‘human content’ of this music triumphs over its flaws, demonstrating a learned, French Communist, and humanist reading of Shostakovich’s music in the wake of the Second World War:

He evokes great human visions. He tells us that we must wonder, believe, and trust. Not to think ‘narrowly’. Not to close the shutters on the light, and to let in the great sun, that of *Midi* [the poem] of Leconte de Lisle. What sustains him, what elevates him, is the sense of nature—it is also the quality of feeling, where one senses so much human benevolence in spite of the mocking humour in which he sometimes indulged. His strength is to live, to be someone—to be moved by the beauty of landscapes, of trees, large fields, and starry nights. His music reflects all of this—neither abstract nor dogmatic, neither ambitiously formal, nor dry, nor meaningless. That he still has progress to make, that he must choose, that he must watch himself, that goes without saying, and we have said it—bluntly. But let us keep faith in his future.¹⁴⁹

The final publication considered in this chapter is a work of sheet music: a new edition of ‘Au-devant de la vie’ published in 1945 by Le Chant du Monde. Having resumed its activities after the Liberation, Le Chant du Monde acquired the rights to Éditions sociales internationales (ESI), the PCF publishing house established in 1927 that first made Shostakovich’s ‘Song of the Counterplan’ available in a French edition. Thus, with the takeover of ESI, Le Chant du Monde issued a new edition of its top-selling score, the cover art of which, with its joyous and revolutionary imagery, is shown in Figure 2.7. Beyond this more attractive cover, virtually no updates were made: the typesetting of the score is identical in both issues, and the lyrics to the four subsequent verses remained unchanged. The only differences are a new copyright notice, and a small note inserted next to the lyrics to the alternate verses, which advertised the corresponding 78 rpm recording made for Chant du Monde by Désormière and the Chorale populaire de Paris (see Figure 2.8).¹⁵⁰ Advertisements dating from before the war (Figure 2.9) indicate that this recording became commercially available in 1938; so, rather than making any alterations or updates, the principal motivation for reissuing the printed score was probably to mark the fact that Chant du Monde now owned rights to both the score and premiere recording of the song with which Shostakovich was originally introduced in France.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ ‘Au-devant de la vie’ originally appeared on the release: Chorale populaire de Paris/Roger Désormière, *Chœurs et orchestre sous la direction de Roger Désormière*, Le Chant du Monde 504 (10.789), 1938, 78 rpm disc. The same recording was reissued after the war and released as Le Chant du Monde 610 (PART 3.409, M3-110 161).



Figure 2.7. The cover art for Le Chant du Monde's 1945 reissue of 'Au-devant de la vie'

Enregistré sur disque
**"LE CHANT
DU MONDE"**

N° 504
CHŒURS ET ORCHESTRE
Sous la direction de
Roger DESORMIÈRE

2
La joie te réveille, ma blonde
Allons nous unir à ce chœur
Marchons vers la gloir' et le monde
Marchons au devant du bonheur.
(au refrain)

3
Et nous salu'rons la brigade
Et nous sourirons aux amis
Mettons, en commun, camarades
Nos plans, nos travaux, nos soucis
(au refrain)

4
Dans leur triomphant' allégresse
Les jeunes s'élanc'nt en chantant
Bientôt une nouvelle jeunesse
Viendra au-devant de nos rangs.
(au refrain)

5
Amis, l'univers nous envie
Nos cœurs sont plus clair que le jour
Allons au-devant de la vie
Allons au-devant de l'amour.

REFRAIN:
Debout, ma blond'! chantons au vent!
Debout, amis!
Il va vers le soleil levant
Notre pays!

Figure 2.8. Promotional commentary alongside Perret's lyrics in the 1945 edition of 'Au-devant de la vie'
(Paris: Les Éditions Le Chant du Monde, 1945)

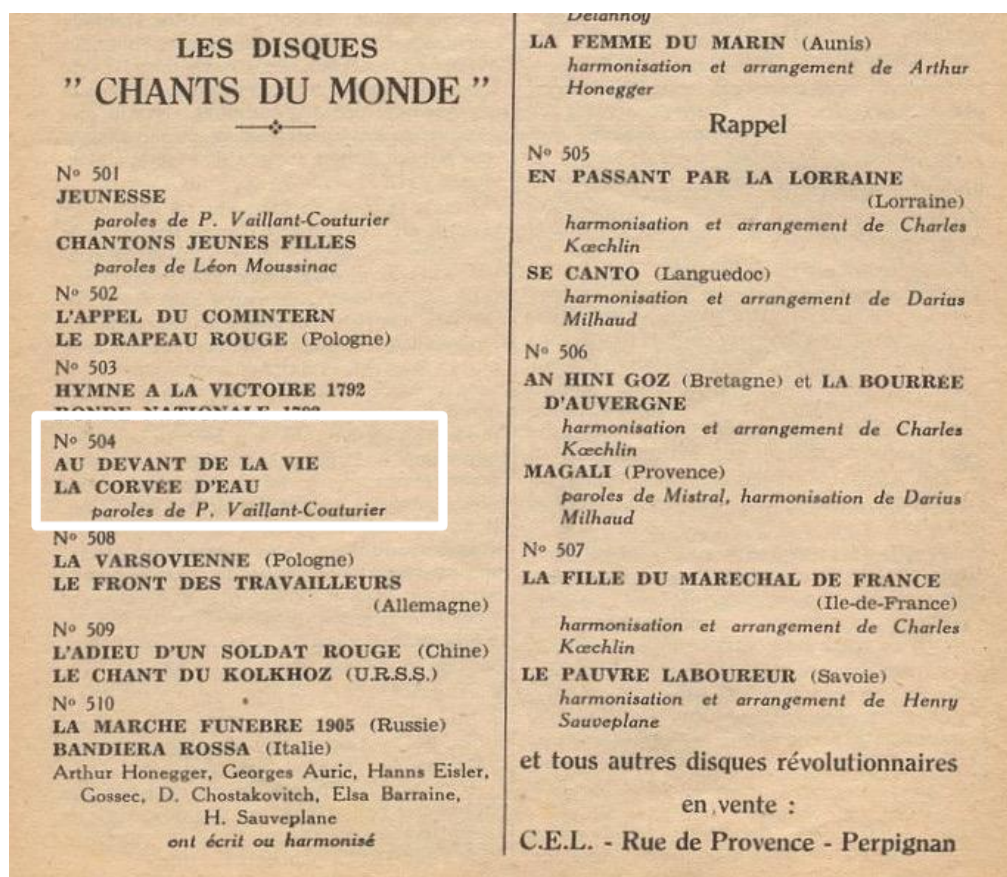


Figure 2.9. The 78 rpm recording advertised in *L'Éducateur prolétarien* 18 (June 1938): 368

With the political associations it had developed, it would have been even less appropriate to propagate Shostakovich's song during the Occupation than it was to perform his symphonies, yet its sentiment and memorable tune had evidently remained in the minds of French leftists during the war years. Even in his 'Étude sur Chostakovitch,' which summarised Shostakovich's entire oeuvre up to 1947, Koechlin wrote: 'I know of few inspirations as happy as the famous "Allons au-devant de la vie..." It is a little masterpiece.'¹⁵¹ The sheet music still sold well in 1945, six years after the collapse of the Popular Front, suggesting that, even though its rise to prominence was tied to the rise of a particular political party, the song had come to represent French leftist solidarity in a more general sense, allowing it to remain popular in leftist musical circles well beyond the interwar period.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Koechlin, 'Étude sur Chostakovitch,' 279. 'Je sais peu d'inspirations aussi heureuses que le célèbre « Allons au-devant de la vie... » C'est un petit chef d'œuvre.'

¹⁵² That *Le Chant du Monde's* archival materials are not available to the public prevent me from listing any sales figures; however, in 2018 I purchased online a well-maintained copy of the 1945 edition of 'Au-devant de la vie' for €5.00, indicating that a significant number of copies were sold.

Conclusion

With this discussion of ‘Au-devant de la vie,’ Chapter Two comes full circle; the song held great significance across the French Left in the interwar period, and was sung informally in public right up until 1939, when the government instated a ban on French Communist organisations. In between these two bookends, Chapter Two has provided an overview of the political climate of Vichy France and the German Occupation—under which Soviet music was exiled from French musical life—as well as the networks forged in the Resistance that later assisted in the propagation of Soviet music in France. In 1945, the establishment of the AFU, combined with the improved perception of French Communism and the Soviet Union, created a climate that was more amenable to the performance of Soviet music than the interwar period: four Shostakovich symphonies premiered in France between 1945 and 1946, one was given a repeat performance, and a series of publications on Shostakovich and his music started to become available to French readers. I have suggested that it was the politics of post-Liberation Paris that created more demand in France for music associated with the Soviet Union, and led the French press to respond more favourably to Shostakovich’s Seventh Symphony in 1945 than the Eighth and Ninth in 1946.

Indeed, favourable perceptions of the Soviet Union in France would continue to wane from 1946 until the end of the decade, and even more so during the impending 1950s. As we enter the subsequent decade, Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union begin to shape the artistic landscapes of their respective allies, once again impacting on the role and connotations of Shostakovich’s music in France.

Chapter Three: The Outset of the Cold War

This chapter examines Shostakovich's French reception from the early Cold War years up to 1964, the beginning of the rapprochement between France and the USSR. In this period, I will show how the anti-communist and 'East vs West' sentiments typically associated with Soviet-American Cold War relations proliferated beyond the United States, and affected how Soviet music and musicians were understood in France. This stance against communism is particularly noticeable in the opening portions of the chapter. Here, I cover both how the French press reported on Shostakovich's second denunciation, and how Nicholas Nabokov's *L'Œuvre du XX^e siècle*, an American-organised festival held in Paris in 1952, co-opted Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* to serve its political agenda. Anti-communism is also present in the content examined towards the end of the chapter, which pertains to the French media's positioning of Shostakovich against the distinctly 'Western' system of twelve-tone serialism.

In amongst these discussions, Chapter Three covers the trajectory of Shostakovich's symphonies in France from 1949 through 1963. This period saw the French premieres of Symphonies Nos. 10, 11, and 4, and discussion of Symphony Nos. 12 and 13, 'Babi Yar' after their respective Soviet premieres. Of this set, the premiere of Symphony No. 11 in 1958 was especially momentous, since it coincided with Shostakovich's first and only visit to France: an event that, as I will show, had a profound effect on the way in which the French media wrote about the composer. We saw the early signs of these changes following the premiere of the Seventh Symphony in the previous chapter, but it is within the timeline of the present one that Shostakovich reaches the status of 'public figure', a shift that results in noticeable changes in the types of media outlets that report on him and his music. Unlike in earlier decades, Shostakovich is not primarily scrutinised in French Communist publications; from the end of the 1940s he instead receives more attention in mainstream newspapers like *Le Monde*, which replaced *Le Temps* in the post-war years as the leading daily newspaper of Paris. Leading up to, during, and after his French visit, these non-Communist publications produce coverage in formats unscrutinised thus far in this thesis, namely translated interviews in the daily press, and brief, 'celebrity-spotting' style updates on his life, opinions, and movements around Europe. With this increase in mainstream press coverage also comes a decentralising of the regions in which his music is performed and discussed, and we begin to see media outlets in the provinces paying greater attention to the composer's music, something that seems to intensify even further after the composer's visit to France in 1958.

Finally, although in the timeline of this chapter Shostakovich's symphonies become extricated from the French Communist environments in which they were first introduced to France, we will see how 'Au-devant de la vie' does not undergo the same treatment. The chapter concludes with a brief examination of the left-wing, communal singing environments that still championed Shostakovich's music in the early 1960s.

The Zhdanov Decree through the Lens of the French Press

By 1948, the reception of Shostakovich and his music in France looked markedly different to the years that immediately followed World War II. In May of this year, a critic writing under the pseudonym Pangloss quoted from French newspaper coverage of the Seventh Symphony back in 1945. The critic had harsh remarks for both the Soviet state and Jean Wiéner, the author of the comments made in 1945, who was identified in the 1948 article only indirectly:

‘There are two kinds of great musicians: those who immediately touch the masses (they are very rare), and others. What delights me about Shostakovich is that he is one of those who knows how to talk to everyone. The inspiration, the objective, and the materials used come from and go back to the masses, and I am delighted that the immense talent of Shostakovich comes from the USSR. It really has meaning...’ etc., etc. There are two hundred lines in this tone; praise on praise. The article is signed by a musician who had his hour of fame, while he played, at two pianos with the *bon gros* Doucet, syncopated tunes that imitate jazz. Since then, he has fallen into communism: it was fashion in 1945, and the article I quote appeared in May of that year. Well! If our enthusiastic critic lived in Russia, he would today be on dry bread or forced labour.¹

A large part of the shift in how Shostakovich was viewed through French eyes can be attributed to the actions of Andrei Zhdanov (1896–1948), the former Central Committee secretary who directed the USSR's cultural policy from 1946 to 1948. By intervening in the production of a new Soviet opera—*The Great Friendship* (1947) by Vano Muradeli—Zhdanov initiated in 1948 the most significant disciplinary action ever taken by the Soviet government against the music profession. Kiril Tomoff provides a concise summation:

In mid-January, André Zhdanov convened a discussion of leading figures from the Soviet music world in the offices of the Central Committee. Zhdanov announced that the Central Committee found completely unacceptable a new opera ... and it wanted to

¹ Pangloss, 'Le Fa dièze capitaliste,' *Sud Ouest*, 28 May 1948, 1.

know what had gone wrong. The rest of the discussion was devoted to uncovering problems in Soviet music. Almost immediately after this meeting, the Politburo quietly passed a resolution that completely reorganized the Composers' Union leadership ... Two weeks later, the real blow fell when the Politburo issued a more far-ranging resolution that ... attacked many of the Soviet Union's best-known composers: Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Khachaturian, Shebalin, Gavriil Popov, and Miaskovskii. These leading lights were accused of 'formalism,' the slippery definition of which boiled down to a 'renunciation of the basic principles of classical music,' propagation of 'atonality, dissonance, and disharmony,' and an abandonment of melody, which in the eyes of the Central Committee resulted in 'muddled, nerve-wracking' sounds that 'turned music into cacophony.'²

Unlike its delayed response to the 1936 'Muddle Instead of Music' article, the French press was quick to cover the events of February 1948. *Le Monde* reported extensively on the story, providing two detailed accounts over the course of a week; the first reported on the so-called 'purification' of musicians, and provided a comprehensive overview of the prevailing circumstances (wherein the Union accused the six aforementioned composers of 'formalism' after they allegedly ignored its advice to move away from bourgeois influences, towards a 'realistic' Russian art). *Le Monde* summarised the Union's accusations as 'the use of dissonance and an absence of harmony'; a 'renunciation of factors such as melody'; and 'the transformation of music into cacophony,' explaining that music accused of containing such traits had come under attack for representing the 'decadence of bourgeois civilisation' present in the modern music of Europe and the US.³ It also described the Politburo's ban on future performances of *The Great Friendship*. In short, the first article was an informative and fairly accurate presentation of the facts at hand. The second came from *Le Monde*'s USSR correspondent André Pierre,⁴ who presented an even more detailed description of the attacks and the composers' responses to them, and interrogated the role that these attacks might play in determining the future of Soviet music. Unlike the report published four days earlier, though, Pierre's appears to be written by

² Kiril Tomoff, 'Brouhaha! Party Intervention and Professional Consolidation, 1948,' in *Creative Union: The Professional Organization of Soviet Composers, 1939–1953* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 123.

³ 'L'Épuration des musiciens qui ne sont pas... dans la note,' *Le Monde*, 13 February 1948.

'L'utilisation des dissonances et du manque d'harmonie ... la renonciation à des facteurs tels que la mélodie ... la transformation de la musique en cacophonie.'

⁴ André Pierre (1887–1966) was subeditor at *Le Temps* from 1933 to 1943 and diplomatic editor at *Le Monde* from 1944. In addition to his career as a journalist, he translated texts from English, Russian, and German, and taught French at the École française de Saint-Pétersbourg and the Smolny Institute in Russia. See data.bnf.fr/fr/11999500/andre_pierre.

someone less concerned with seeming politically neutral; he made light of the CCCP's (over)involvement in Soviet musical life by listing the prizes and titles awarded to its musicians, and repeating in a French translation its justification for denouncing the music of the targeted composers:

Still under the guidance (*sous l'inspiration*) of Andrei Zhdanov, who since 1946 has become the intellectual dictator of the USSR, the Central Committee of the Communist Party has abruptly called to order the most famous musicians, the artists whose merits state propaganda has never—up until this point—ceased to showcase, and whose talent the party itself has consecrated with ‘Stalin prizes’ and medals, awarding them the titles of ‘artists of the people,’ or ‘artists emeritus’ ... It has suddenly been discovered that these ‘artists of the people,’ who were praised to the skies less than three months ago on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution, have betrayed the people and given in to ‘formalist tendencies,’ which are ‘entirely foreign to the Soviet people.’ These formalist tendencies exert, it would seem, ‘a harmful influence on the studies of the young students of the conservatories of the USSR.’⁵

Pierre continued with this sceptical tone throughout; in response to his rhetorical question: ‘how did the composers Prokofiev, Shostakovich, and all the others mentioned by name react to the party’s mercurial?,’ he wrote: ‘you can easily guess; they made public apologies immediately.’ He then proceeded to recount the stories of Alexander Fadeyev and Konstantin Simonov, who at the time were working, ‘in compliance with party orders,’ on rewriting their respective novels *The Young Guard* (1946) and *Smoke of the Fatherland* (1947).⁶ Pierre finished with a sequence of provocative comments and questions that convey his dissent to Zhdanov’s policies:

We will be curious to get to know the new works inspired by ‘socialist realism’ and accessible to the popular masses ... Do we want to dry up the rich sources of Russian music, hinder freedom of creation, and bring discredit upon all artistic research? It is a question of whether the art should go to the people, or whether the people should, by means of a (necessarily slow) education regarding taste, rise gradually to the art. The Soviet regime proves to us that it is possible to be both revolutionary in politics, and reactionary in art. And it brings back to our minds Hitler’s violent diatribes against ‘degenerate art.’⁷

⁵ André Pierre, ‘La Campagne du Parti communiste russe contre les musiciens modernes,’ *Le Monde*, 17 February 1948.

⁶ Pierre, ‘La Campagne du Parti communiste.’

⁷ Ibid.

Comparing the French press's reporting on Shostakovich's second denunciation in 1948 to his first in the interwar era, three main points of difference emerge. The first is the timeliness, which—with two factually accurate reports published mere days after the fact, and more to come later—was far from the left-wing press's delayed and understated reporting on the *Lady Macbeth* affair twelve years earlier. The second is that reports on Shostakovich were no longer found primarily in *L'Humanité*, *Ce Soir* and the like: from the late 1940s onwards, one could reliably expect the mainstream press to cover important events in the lives of Shostakovich and other famous Soviet artists. Further to this second point is a third, which concerns how such reports were, by the late 1940s, informed with a better understanding of the Soviet model, and a more critical eye towards the events taking place there—at least in comparison to the reports in the French Communist press in the 1930s.

Global Perspectives

Now that I have acknowledged the relative speed and accuracy with which international news was disseminated in the interwar and post-war eras, before venturing any further it is crucial to address 'globalisation', one of the major issues to impact the post-war world. Although the precise dating and definition of globalisation is a subject of debate in the literature, Bertrand Badie labels it 'the second sequence in the post-war world after decolonization,' and lists its principal characteristics as 'inclusion, interdependence, [and] mobility.'⁸ It is not my intention to align this thesis with globalisation studies, but when making the comparison between the press reporting before and after World War II, it is important to consider how this phenomenon would have affected media coverage of the Soviet Union in France. In other words, while the differences in how the French media responded to Shostakovich's denunciations in 1936 and 1948 can, in part, be explained by increased popularity of Shostakovich in France following the success of his wartime symphonies, it also owes much to the expansion of global networks from the mid-1940s, which allowed for more timely and far-reaching reporting on international issues. This shift towards a 'globalised' world is evident even in the title of the newspaper that published the 1948 reports: that the internationalist '*Le Monde*' replaced *Le Temps* in 1944 as the most reliable news source in France is, in itself, exemplary of the increased global awareness of the post-war years. Global perspectives are also noticeable in the international ensembles that perform Shostakovich's symphonies in the coming period; for example, the first performance of a Shostakovich symphony in the timeline of this chapter was Symphony No. 5, performed in

⁸ Bertrand Badie, *Rethinking International Relations* (Northampton, Massachusetts: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2020), 32.

Paris in April 1949 when the visiting American conductor Gibson Morrissey led the orchestra of the Société des Concerts. *Le Monde's* resident music critic René Dumesnil wrote that Morrissey was 'at ease with Shostakovich's long Fifth Symphony,' interpreting the work with the same confidence as he showed in the other, German works on the programme.⁹

As for the French Communist press, coverage on Shostakovich was still appearing as regularly at the end of the decade as it was in the years immediately following World War II. Rather than in response to the Association France-URSS's patronage of the composer's music in Paris, though, it was in relation to the global campaign for world peace that was gaining momentum in early 1949—a further example of the French press's increased focus on global issues. Organised by the International Liaison Committee of Intellectuals for Peace,¹⁰ Paris hosted the World Congress of Partisans for Peace from 20 to 25 April, only weeks after the smaller-scale Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace had taken place in New York. The World Peace Congress comprised two sessions held simultaneously in two cities: Paris was the primary location, while Prague served as the meeting place for Eastern bloc delegates whose visas had been refused by the French government.¹¹ Shostakovich was supposed to represent the Soviet Union at the Paris Congress, but he was present in neither Paris nor Prague.¹² He had, however, attended the New York conference in March, allowing the French Communist press to use his remarks from New York in their coverage of the Paris assembly (see Figure 3.1). On 21 April, the second day of the Paris Congress, *Les Lettres françaises* published a French translation of the speech Shostakovich had given in New York: '*Nous devons joindre nos efforts,*' 'We must combine our efforts.' The transcript was placed beside a message of peace from the event's American sponsors (see Figure 3.2). Shostakovich's speech was also translated and published by *Les Études soviétiques*, a monthly French-language review of Soviet culture established a year prior.¹³ Despite the publicity garnered by his address, a major aspect of Shostakovich's New York visit on which

⁹ René Dumesnil, 'Henri Tomasi, Henri Duparc, Paul Bonneau, Gibson Morrissey, Mlle Ostermeyer,' *Le Monde*, 7 April 1949. 'M. Gibson Morrissey s'est montré tout aussi à l'aise dans la longue Cinquième symphonie de Chostakovitch et a traduit le russe avec la même sûreté que l'allemand.'

¹⁰ Presently known as the World Peace Council, the International Liaison Committee of Intellectuals for Peace formed in August 1948 after the inaugural World Congress of Intellectuals in Defense of Peace in Wrocław, Poland. See Laurence S. Wittner, "'Against the Warmongers': The Development of the Communist-Led Peace Movement,' in *One World or None: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement through 1953* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1993), 171–90.

¹¹ See Roman Krakovsky, 'The Peace and the War Camps: The Dichotomous Cold War Culture in Czechoslovakia,' in *Cold War Cultures: Perspectives on Eastern and Western European Societies*, ed. Annette Vowinckel, Marcus M. Payk and Thomas Lindenberger (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 217.

¹² Terry Klefsad, 'Shostakovich and the Peace Conference,' *Music and Politics* 6, no. 2 (2012): 20.

¹³ Each issue of *Les Études soviétiques* comprised a selection of Russian-language texts or speeches, translated into French. As the articles were authored by public figures residing in the Soviet Union, it was essentially a resource for French people interested in understanding Soviet life. I am therefore not treating the magazine as representative of the views of French people, even if they were sympathetic to the views expressed within.

the French press did not report was the verbal attack launched upon him by the Russian-born composer and writer, Nicolas Nabokov (1903–1978)—though, the humiliating episode was probably one that French proponents of Soviet communism would have preferred to forget.



Figure 3.1. A cover story on the Paris Peace Congress in *Les Lettres françaises*, 21 April 1949

Greetings from American Sponsors to WORLD CONGRESS FOR PEACE PARIS • APRIL 20-25, 1949

As American citizens deeply concerned with the welfare of our land and the maintenance of world peace, we send our warmest greetings to the World Peace Congress, unprecedented in its proportion and so deeply meaningful at this crucial instant in the history of mankind.

We join with millions of men and women of other lands in voicing the heartfelt and inflexible resolve that there must not be another war.

We stand firmly united in the common determination that peace must prevail in the world.

BEBERIDGE ARBOTT REV. CHARLES B. ACKLEY STELLA ADLER JOHN ALEXANDER OLIVER S. ALLEN ROBERT ALLEN KURT ANDERSON ROBERT ANTHONY DE HERBERT APFHEIMER BRIND ARON JAMES ARONSON MORDECAI BAUMAN THOMAS BELL ELMER BENDISER WALTER BENSON LEO BERNSTEIN KEVORK BERRIAN HERBERT BUREMAN BORIS BLA PROF. HENRY BLUMBERG HANS BLUMENFELD B. A. BOYD RICHARD O. BOYER JOSEPH BRAININ HOWARD BAY GEORGE BRAZILLER DOROTHY BREWSTER DR. CHARLOTTE HAWKINS BROWN LUCY BROWN DR. ALLAN M. BUTLER E. M. BUSH RICHARD BURGIN DELMOND CALLAN NORMAN CAGERS RABBI D. A. JESURUN CARDOSO JEROME CARDOSOV NICOLAI CROPOVSKY RABBI A. COHEN SHIRLEY CLARKE W. G. CLUGSTON ABRAHAM CRONBACH	HARRY GOTTLEB SHIRLEY GRAHAM WILLIAM GROPPER CHAIM GROSS ROBERT GRANTHAM MINNA B. HARKAVY PEARL M. HART HAGOP T. HATZAKOBTZIAN HERBERT HAUFRECHT JACOB C. HAWKINS EDNA WOLFF HENNER REV. CHARLES A. HILL ROSE HOBART PROF. EUGENE C. HOLMES ISA HOFF LEO HUBERMAN KIM HUNTER REV. KENNETH DE P. HUGHES W. A. HUNTON LEO HURWITZ ALFONSO IANNELLI FRANK ICHUK MINOLA INGERKOLL ADA B. JACKSON RUTH JETT ROBERT JOYCE RITA JUD ALBERT E. KAHN ROCKWELL KENT DR. J. SPENCER KENNARD STETSON KENNEDY BILLY KIEFFICH DR. JOHN A. KINGSLURY I. M. KOLTHOFF DORE KOPPELMAN PAULINE KONER ALFRED KREYMBORG LEO KATZCO S. LEV-LANDAU SONNY LAUFMAN JOHN HOWARD LAWSON RAY LEV	GEORGE WEINSTEIN SHIRLEY M. FITCHER MRS. LIONEL D. PERARA, JR. ABRAHAM POMERANTZ MARTIN POPPER WALTER RAUTENSTRAUCH CHARLES RECHT ANTON REIFINGER FRANK RIEMER BETHEL C. RYNNOLDS WALLINGFORD RIEGGER DR. HOLLAND ROBERTS RAYMOND ROBINSON O. JOHN ROGGE NORMAN ROSEN ANNETTE T. RUBINSTEIN RUTH W. RUSSELL MAUD RUSSELL GEORGE RUSSELL VICTOR SANKOFF GEORGE SANDLER PROF. MARGARET SCHLAUCH DR. ARTHUR SCHWABEL PROF. FREDERICK L. SCHUMAN EDWIN SEEVER DR. HOWARD SELIGMAN DORIS SENK ARTE SHAW EVA SIKELIANOV SAMUEL SILLAN MITCHELL SIFORD DR. MAUD SLYV AGNES SMEDLEY JESICA SMITH ELIAS L. SOLOMON JOE SOMMERS RABBI H. STEEL MRS. LAURENCE D. STEIN LEONARD STOLLER BERNARD STOLLER PAUL STRAND

...POUR LA PAIX

Nous devons joindre nos efforts

(Discours prononcé à la conférence de New-York — Mars).

par D. CHOSTAKOVITCH

NOUS sommes venus ici de tous les points du globe pour joindre nos efforts dans la lutte contre les fomentateurs d'une nouvelle guerre, une guerre qui menace les peuples de calamités sans nombre, qui menace toutes les conquêtes de la pensée et de l'action humaines : la culture, la civilisation, la science et l'art. Nous devons élever notre voix pour la défense de la paix, et il est clair pour nous tous que la lutte pour la paix est une lutte pour le progrès, pour le travail créateur, pour la démocratie, pour l'avenir de l'humanité.

Des millions de simples gens dans le monde entier prêtent l'oreille avec un double sentiment d'alarme et d'espoir aux congrès pareils à celui auquel nous assistons. Avec un sentiment d'alarme, car trop ouverte et trop agressive est l'activité du petit groupe d'ennemis du genre humain qui prépare systématiquement une nouvelle guerre. Avec un sentiment d'espoir, car c'est de nous autres intellectuels — savants, écrivains, artistes, hommes publics qu'il dépend pour une grande part que la guerre soit empêchée, les forces d'agression dénoncées et la paix défendue. Cependant, jusqu'à présent, nous avons été loin d'employer nos forces dans la mesure qui s'imposait et de faire notre devoir civique envers l'humanité, envers l'histoire.

Or, les forces dont nous disposons sont véritablement illimitées, car la majorité écrasante de l'humanité, tous ceux qui travaillent et qui créent sans distinction de sexe, d'âge, de con-

Une lutte sans merci entre deux conceptions artistiques du monde se déroule dans l'art moderne, particulièrement dans la musique. La première, la conception réaliste, est née d'une conception harmonieuse, véritable et optimiste du monde. Cette conception du monde est progressiste, elle enrichit l'humanité en valeurs spirituelles. La seconde est la conception formaliste. Nous qualifions de formaliste un art sans amour du peuple, un art qui ne se passionne que pour la forme, qui n'a le contenu, un art engendré par une conception pathologiquement faussée, pessimiste de la réalité, par le manque de foi dans les forces et les idéaux de l'homme. Cette conception du monde est réactionnaire et nihiliste, elle dénie à la musique sa fonction d'arme spirituelle de l'humanité et conduit en fait à la perdition et à la dégénérescence de la musique en tant que catégorie esthétique du beau. Dans la négation par la musique formaliste moderne des aspirations du grand public, dans son renoncement à tout aspect national, on retrouve les traits hideux d'un cosmopolitisme profondément indifférent du sort de son peuple et de toute l'humanité, on retrouve la dégénérescence et le vide d'une pseudo-culture privée de base populaire, nationale.

★

Nous appelons les musiciens progressistes du monde à rejoindre les

Figure 3.2. A portion of Shostakovich's speech in New York. *Les Lettres françaises*, 21 April 1949, 5

Shostakovich, Nabokov, and L'Œuvre du XX^e siècle in Paris

It was hardly uncommon for Russian émigrés displaced in the early twentieth century to resent the conditions that the Soviet state imposed upon its citizens, but Nabokov was one of the regime's most vocal opponents. Born into a wealthy Russian family, Nabokov had fled to the Crimea with his family following the October Revolution. He studied briefly in Germany before moving to Paris in 1923, where he completed his education at the Sorbonne and established himself as a composer and cultural figure among Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes*. Nabokov moved to the US in 1933, gaining his citizenship there six years later. Despite never officially belonging to a political party, Nabokov became active in the anti-communist American left from the beginning of the Cold War. He moved in a circle that saw Stalinism as 'the main threat to the freedom of culture,'¹⁴ and relished the swing from 'Stalinophilia' to anti-communism that he observed both in Middle America and the leftist intelligentsia during the late 1940s.¹⁵

At the conclusion of Shostakovich's public address in New York in March 1949, Nabokov announced his presence in the room by cunningly asking the Soviet composer whether he agreed with *Pravda's* recent denunciation of Paul Hindemith, Arnold Schoenberg, and Igor Stravinsky.

In his memoirs, Nabokov admitted that the question he wanted to ask Shostakovich was

simple and straightforward, but obviously embarrassing to him. I knew in advance what his reply would have to be, and I also knew that his reply would expose him as being not a free agent ... this was in my opinion the only legitimate way to expose the internal mores of Russian communism.¹⁶

Of course, Nabokov's provocation had the desired effect: after a few whispered words from his translator, Shostakovich voiced his accord with the criticism of his contemporaries. Terry Klefstad writes that as an émigré Nabokov had 'a personal interest in exposing the lack of freedom for Soviet citizens. He saw the Waldorf Conference as an opportunity to do so, and Shostakovich, whom he admired, as the ideal representative of an oppressive society.'¹⁷ In 1951, Nabokov became one of the first members of the newly established Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), a non-governmental organisation whose membership concerned itself with the perceived impartiality of Western European intellectuals and artists towards the Soviet Union,

¹⁴ Vincent Giroud, 'Music and the Cold War' in *Nicolas Nabokov: A Life in Freedom and Music* (Oxford: OUP, 2015), 212–13.

¹⁵ Nicolas Nabokov, *Bagázh: Memoirs of a Russian Cosmopolitan* (New York: Atheneum, 1975), 234.

¹⁶ Nabokov, *Bagázh*, 237.

¹⁷ Klefstad, 'Shostakovich and the Peace Conference,' 19.

and which frequently challenged intellectuals sympathetic to the USSR or the American Communist left. It would later be revealed that the organisation received funding from the CIA.

From his post as CCF secretary general, Nabokov organised various musical and artistic festivals across the US and Western Europe. The first of these, *L'Œuvre du XX^e siècle* (or 'Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century,' as it was loosely translated 'for American promotional purposes'),¹⁸ was held in Paris in 1952. The festival was the CCF's response to the recent Soviet attacks against the supposed decadence of Western art and music, and the struggle for power between the US and the USSR at this point in the century meant that Paris was the ideal location: both nations viewed France as a weak link in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO),¹⁹ owing largely to its rich history of communist activity and the Stalinist alignment of its major Communist party. Thus, the decision to hold *L'Œuvre du XX^e siècle* in France was an attempt by the CCF to assert cultural and political dominance over the Soviet Union.²⁰

Although the festival also encompassed literature and the visual arts, Nabokov's own background as a composer ensured the festival focused primarily on music. Described as 'products of free minds in a free world,' all of the Soviet works that Nabokov included in the programme had been subjected to political censorship. As Mark Carroll writes:

The inclusion of works by Soviet composers who were at best openly criticised by their own government, and at worst silenced, was intended to reinforce the Congress's view that, in contrast to the 'gradual eclipse of culture behind the iron curtain,' it was a measure of the robustness of Western society that in it all forms of expression were 'open to acceptance or rejection, praise or criticism, freely and openly.'²¹

On Saturday 24 May 1952, the orchestra of the West German *Radio im amerikanischen Sektor* performed a concert suite of *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées.²² The extracts appeared in a programme of works by Boris Blacher, Sergei Prokofiev, and Paul Hindemith (the German Blacher had been accused of writing 'degenerate' music, while the latter two were named in the 1948 denunciation of 'formalist' composers). Leading up to the

¹⁸ Henry Barraud quoted in Mark Carroll, *Music and Ideology in Cold War Europe* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), 10.

¹⁹ Representatives from the following twelve states formed the NATO alliance by signing the North Atlantic Treaty in Washington on 4 April 1949: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

²⁰ Mark Carroll writes convincingly on how this was achieved in *Music and Ideology in Cold War Europe*, 8–24.

²¹ Nicolas Nabokov quoted in Carroll, *Music and Ideology in Cold War Europe*, 8.

²² Carroll, *Music and Ideology in Cold War Europe*, 182.

festival, Nabokov bragged to the press that, in spite of the order from ‘no less a personality than Joseph Stalin himself’ that all copies of *Lady Macbeth* be recalled to Russia, ‘underground sources in Vienna’ had led him to a copy of the original.²³ For further promotion of the festival he published an article in the Congress’s French journal *Preuves*, detailing four ‘wrongs’ committed against musicians by society. Alongside various opinions on scandals surrounding Manuel de Falla’s *L’Atlantide*, Boris Asafiev’s musicological work on Stravinsky, and Bartók’s exile to the United States, Nabokov offered a standard account of the ‘misfortunes’ of *Lady Macbeth*. Interestingly, though, he did not reiterate any earlier criticisms of Shostakovich’s compositional skill in this article, instead placing unprecedented emphasis on *Lady Macbeth*’s status as ‘a work of real merit.’²⁴ Presumably, this description was intended to sway his readers to support his cause, as it would be more difficult for them to condone the suppression of a ‘great’ musical work. Unsurprisingly, the French reception of the music at L’Œuvre du XX^e siècle was lacklustre at best. French attitudes towards the 1952 performance of the opera lacked the enthusiasm of those voiced in the Communist press in the 1930s, when *Lady Macbeth* was only made available via radio broadcast. This is not to say that the opera’s place in the programme went unnoticed by French Communist commentators, simply that they were cognisant and wary of the CCF’s cultural and political agenda. Before it had even started, *L’Humanité* declared the festival ‘a parody of culture to facilitate the ideological occupation of France by the United States’;²⁵ similarly, the Communist author Jean Kanapa described how ‘The organisers have announced that they will perform works by the Soviet composers Shostakovich and Prokofiev, but only those that have been criticised by the Soviet public, and the composers themselves.’²⁶ Danielle Fosler-Lussier describes how, despite decent attendance from the French public, L’Œuvre du XX^e siècle was particularly displeasing for French intellectuals, who were the CCF’s main target in funding the festival, since Nabokov (and the Congress in general) believed in influence from intellectuals ‘trickling down’ to the public.²⁷ In addition to the festival’s selection of repertoire, and its penetrating, pro-American sentiment, the inflated ticket prices—which required attendees to be of a certain socio-economic bracket—was another unimpressive aspect for French intellectuals. In *Combat*, Guy Dumur wrote that the festival’s organisers had ‘purchased Europe.’²⁸ Thus, while music from *Lady Macbeth* was performed in Paris in 1952, the Franco-

²³ Nicolas Nabokov quoted in Carroll, *Music and Ideology in Cold War Europe*, 21.

²⁴ Nabokov quoted in Ian Wellens, *Music on the Frontline: Nicolas Nabokov’s Struggle against Communism and Middlebrow Culture* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002), 54.

²⁵ Carroll, *Music and Ideology in Cold War Europe*, 8–9.

²⁶ Jean Kanapa quoted in Carroll, *Music and Ideology in Cold War Europe*, 11–12.

²⁷ Danielle Fosler-Lussier, *Music Divided: Bartók’s Legacy in Cold War Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 91.

²⁸ Fosler-Lussier, *Bartók’s Legacy in Cold War Culture*, 92.

American culture wars that enveloped this performance did not create optimal conditions for the work to be embraced by the public.

The Thaw

An event that would lead to notable changes in the way that the French press wrote about Shostakovich and his music came the following year, after Stalin's death due to a stroke suffered at his Kuntsevo Dacha on the evening of 5 March 1953. Based on what was reported in the press, this news was particularly troubling for Communists in France: *L'Humanité* described the leader's death as a 'horrible nightmare,' and wrote on the day of his funeral four days later that the Soviet people and 'all progressive humanity were leading its great guide and educator ... down his final path.' The article's author, Jean Coin, also paid tribute to the Soviet leader by noting that 'it is because this [Soviet] life was inconceivable without him that Stalin is immortal.'²⁹

With the end of Stalin's term came the beginning of the Thaw, a period that cannot strictly be described as revolutionary, but which nonetheless saw significant changes in Soviet policy, ideology, and cultural life. Censorship eased, the Gulag was dismantled and prisoners released, and the overall image of stability and homogeneity that had been projected by the USSR under Stalin was disrupted.³⁰ Although it is difficult to put an end date on the Thaw—it is usually described as the early 1960s, or somewhere between 1957 and 1964³¹—it is inseparable from Nikita Khrushchev, who succeeded Stalin as First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Responsibility for the state's affairs was initially transferred to Stalin's immediate circle: Lavrentii Beria, Nikolai Bulganin, Lazar Kaganovich, Khrushchev, Georgii Malenkov, Anastas Mikoian, Viacheslav Molotov, and Klim Voroshilov, but within months the group had broken its agreement to rule collectively by executing Beria, who the other members feared would attempt to seize power.³² It soon became clear that the shared leadership was not a viable solution in the long term, and Khrushchev emerged victorious from the struggle for power. His famous speech 'On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences,' given in February 1956 at the Twentieth Party Congress, contributed largely to Khrushchev's success in positioning himself as

²⁹ Jean Coin, 'Obsèques grandioses – du chef, de l'ami, du frère de tous les travailleurs,' *L'Humanité*, 10 March 1953, 1. 'Un horrible cauchemar' ... 'toute l'humanité progressiste, conduit à son dernier chemin son grand guide et éducateur' ... 'C'est parce que cette vie était inconcevable sans lui que Staline est immortel.'

³⁰ Denis Koslov and Eleonory Gilburd, eds, *The Thaw: Soviet Society and Culture during the 1950s and 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 3.

³¹ Koslov and Gilburd, *The Thaw*, 59.

³² Mark Edele, 'Normalization (1944–1957),' in *The Soviet Union: A Short History* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2019), 158.

the most viable leader. In this role, Khrushchev's approach was to denounce Stalin but defend many Stalinist policies,³³ a position that signalled the first steps towards an era of de-Stalinisation and attempts for the USSR to coexist peacefully with other nations. The social, cultural, and economic reforms that these policies generated in the Soviet Union will be gradually developing in the background throughout the remaining timeline of this chapter, as well as throughout the first half of the next.

In terms of Shostakovich reception throughout the early 1950s and the first years of the Thaw, the composer was still very much associated with Stalinism in the eyes of French media outlets. Following his second denunciation, Shostakovich made his first steps towards a return to grace in the Soviet Union with *Song of the Forests* (1949), and in the wake of this cantata's premiere the French press continued to paint him as a loyal Communist; even French leftist (but not Communist) papers printed headlines like 'Repentant and convinced: Shostakovich names Stalin the father of Russian music.'³⁴ Shostakovich's music also enjoyed greater commercial distribution in France from 1951, when Le Chant du Monde began to release long-playing records (Figure 3.3 shows an advertisement for a disc featuring *Song of the Forests* and Symphony No. 5). These recordings were used regularly by the Association France-URSS in 'recorded music concerts,' which the organisation held in its Cultural Foyer located in the fifth arrondissement of Paris.³⁵ There were even two live performances of Shostakovich symphonies in Paris during 1955: firstly Symphony No. 1 in January—not performed in France since 1936—a performance for which the conductor Igor Markevitch received great critical acclaim;³⁶ and secondly Symphony No. 10, premiered in September by Dimitri Mitropoulos on tour with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. René Dumesnil wrote of the Tenth Symphony that, 'like some of its predecessors, it would have benefited from some tightening up: brevity is not the dominant quality of the composer, who since the death of Prokofiev has emerged as the head of the Russian school'; yet he was otherwise complimentary of the work, calling it 'striking' (*saisissant*), and complimenting

³³ Edele, 'Normalization (1944–1957),' 160.

³⁴ 'Repentant et convaincu : Chostakovitch fait de Staline le père de la musique russe,' *Combat*, 27 December 1949, 3. The French press reported closely on Shostakovich's *Song of the Forests*, but as this work falls outside of the parameters of this thesis its reception will not be analysed here.

³⁵ See 'Un concert Prokofieff–Chostakovitch : Samedi au foyer France-U.R.S.S.,' *Ce Soir*, 23 February 1951, 4 and 'Concert Chostakovitch à France U.R.S.S.,' *Ce Soir*, 10 March 1951, 2. In these recorded music concerts, a guest speaker would present on a chosen work and lead a discussion of it with the audience after the discs were played. The two Shostakovich programmes held in 1951 had sessions conducted by the composers Jean Prodromidès (1927–2016) and Louis Durey (1888–1979), the latter of whom remained a committed Communist after the war and was Secretary General of the Fédération musicale populaire at the time. See Frédéric Robert, 'Louis Durey,' in *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com.

³⁶ See Maurice Imbert, 'Concerts symphoniques : Igor Markewitch au pupitre de l'Orchestre national,' *L'Information financière, économique et politique*, 13 January 1955, 7.

the composer's masterful structure and orchestration.³⁷ Symphony No. 5 was also revived in 1956 for a concert 'russo-soviétique' in Bordeaux, featuring music by Shostakovich, Khachaturian and Mussorgsky. Writing in *Sud Ouest*, Jacques Lonchamp (1925–2014) described the symphony as 'full of flight, charm, [and] freshness.'³⁸

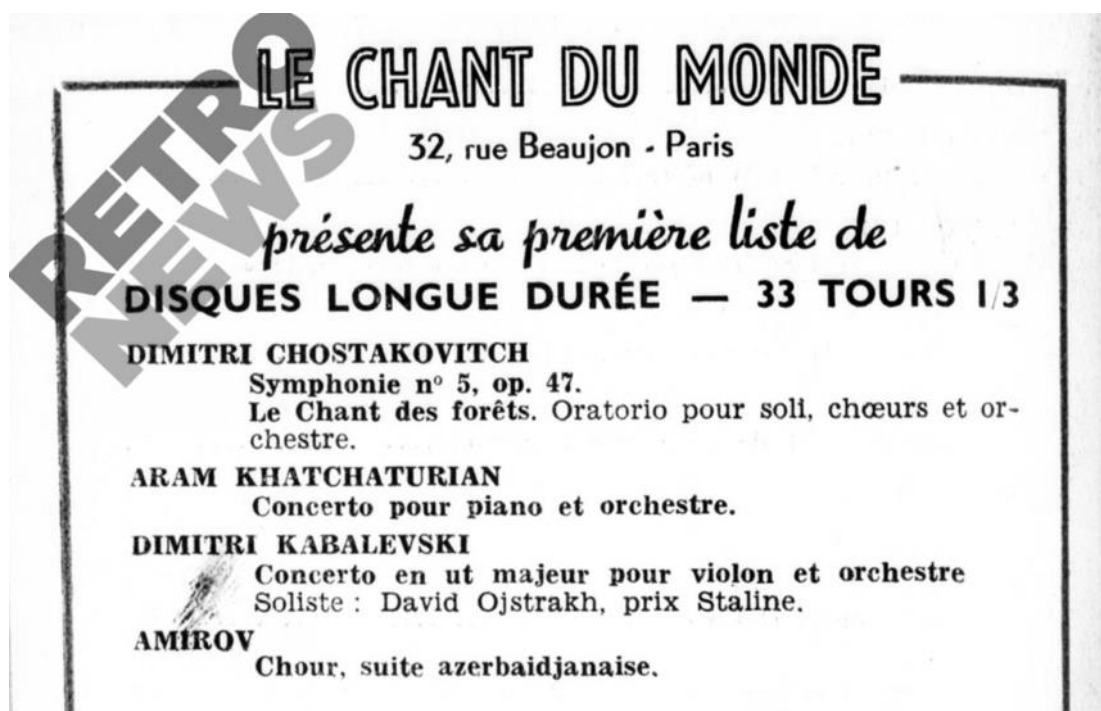


Figure 3.3. An advertisement for Le Chant du Monde's 33^{1/3} LP records of Soviet music in *La Nouvelle Critique*, 1 March 1951, 162

Still, during the 1950s and beyond, a lot of the content printed in newspapers that relates to Shostakovich is first and foremost a manifestation of Cold War politics. At times, reports in the press did demonstrate the easing censorship that came as a result of the Thaw; for example, in 1954, *Le Monde* reproduced comments that Shostakovich made after the premiere of his Symphony No. 10 in the Soviet Union, in which he revealed his admiration for the Western composers Benjamin Britten, Gian Carlo Menotti, and George Gershwin. 'We are a long way from the time when André Zhdanov fulminated against Western art and denounced "servility towards the foreigner" as a crime,' the journalist remarked; 'The new Minister of Culture, Ponomarenko, allows such remarks to be made without reacting, and in the press, formalism and

³⁷ René Dumesnil, 'Le Chœur mormon du Tabernacle, L'Orchestre philharmonique de New-York, D. Mitropoulos – Robert Casadesus, Chostakovitch,' *Le Monde*, 20 September 1955.

³⁸ Jacques Lonchamp, 'Prometteuse Ouverture de la saison symphonique avec un festival russo-soviétique,' *Sud Ouest*, 18 October 1956, 6. 'Cette musique plein d'envolée, de charme, de fraîcheur.'

cosmopolitanism are no longer sullied.³⁹ But the discussion around the relative freedom of Eastern and Western artists continued nonetheless. In 1955, *Le Monde* reproduced translated passages of an interview between Carleton Smith, the director of the National Arts Foundation in New York, and four Soviet composers, who were asked about future relations between the US and the Soviet Union. Shostakovich, Dmitry Kabalevsky, Reinhold Glière, and Tikhon Khrennikov affirmed that there had ‘never been any ideological or political restrictions on the creative activity of Soviet artists’; but, as Pierre pointed out, ‘these affirmations are not consistent with the facts and with the incidents that occurred seven years ago ... in the musical world of Moscow.’⁴⁰ The tenor of this reporting is reminiscent of Klefstad’s analysis of Shostakovich’s attendance at the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace in March 1949, where many were sceptical as to how much truth was being conveyed in the speeches delivered by Shostakovich and his interpreter.⁴¹ Probably due to a combination of all the factors at play in the period following Stalin’s death—changing cultural relations, easing censorship, greater interest in cultural freedom, and access to commercial recordings—the next symphony completed by Shostakovich would elicit interest from the French public that completely surpassed that of any of his pieces premiered before it.

Symphony No. 11 in the Parisian Press

Shostakovich made his first trip to Paris in May 1958, a visit that encompassed the French premiere of his Eleventh Symphony, public meetings with French composers, and a series of recording sessions with André Cluytens and the Orchestre de la Radiodiffusion française. Compared with French coverage of Shostakovich scrutinised thus far in this chapter (as well as much that will follow it), the overt political propaganda attached to the 1958 visit was limited. The trip was sponsored by Pathé-Marconi, a recording house with no visible French Communist or Soviet ties, and most of the discourse around it conveys seemingly earnest excitement about his upcoming concerts. In advance of the Eleventh Symphony’s Leningrad premiere in October 1957, *Le Monde* published a listening guide to the work, and wrote about how it had already received high praise from those who had heard the piano reduction.⁴² Reports of the work’s success and how it had been awarded a Lenin Prize soon followed, predominantly in the weeks

³⁹ ‘Échos : Chostakovitch fait l’éloge de Gershwin,’ *Le Monde*, 11 January 1954.

⁴⁰ André Pierre, ‘Nous avons toujours été libres affirment quatre compositeurs soviétiques : Ont-ils oublié les directives du parti en 1948 ?,’ *Le Monde*, 3 November 1955.

⁴¹ See Klefstad, ‘Shostakovich and the Peace Conference,’ 1–21.

⁴² André Pierre, ‘Une nouvelle symphonie de Dmitri Chostakovitch,’ *Le Monde*, 18 October 1957.

preceding the composer's arrival in Paris.⁴³ Receiving this award was no small event for Shostakovich; by 1957, he had regained his standing lost after the 1948 decree informally, but this symphony was the official signifier of his recuperation. After alluding publicly to a forthcoming Eleventh Symphony for more than two years, it finally premiered in Moscow on 30 October 1957, just in time to mark the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution.⁴⁴ As its subject, the work takes an explicit and heroic depiction of the Revolution; specifically, the events of 9 January 1905 (or Bloody Sunday, on which the Imperial Guard fired upon a group of unarmed workers for approaching the Winter Palace with a petition for Tsar Nicholas II). Describing the success and magnitude of the piece, Fay writes that 'the four-movement Eleventh Symphony,'

with its manifest program about the abortive Russian Revolution of 1905 graphically realized through a breathtaking symphonic canvas, scored, by contrast, a brilliant triumph for the composer. A more monumental, accessible, or effective tribute in commemoration of the fortieth anniversary could scarcely have been imagined. Such kudos as the Eleventh Symphony produced had not been heard for one of Shostakovich's works since his Seventh Symphony.⁴⁵

While Shostakovich was abroad (in Paris, in fact), the CCCP released an official document indicating the extent to which Symphony No. 11 served as his redemption. Published in *Pravda*, the statement 'corrected' the evaluations of the Soviet composers condemned in the decree of 10 February 1948: 'Gifted composers, Comrades Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Khachaturyan, Shebalin, Popov, Myaskovsky, and others, who demonstrated faulty tendencies at times in some of their works, were indiscriminately denounced as representatives of the formalist, anti-people trend.'⁴⁶ Fay notes the significance of how the 1957 document did not actually overturn the statement from 1948; in fact, it sustained that the earlier resolution had been 'correct and timely in denouncing formalist tendencies in music and had, on the whole, played a positive role in the further development of Soviet musical art.'⁴⁷ Still, that the statement was issued at all illustrates not only how well Shostakovich's Eleventh Symphony was received in the Soviet Union, but also the fact that Soviet officials were keenly aware of the important cultural propaganda opportunity

⁴³ See, for example, 'Une équipe de savants atomistes et le compositeur Chostakovitch sont parmi les lauréats du prix Lénine,' *Le Monde*, 24 April 1958.

⁴⁴ Laurel Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (New York: OUP, 2000), 199, 201.

⁴⁵ Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, 202.

⁴⁶ Extract from *Pravda* in Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, 204.

⁴⁷ Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, 204.

presented by Shostakovich's West European tour. Since Symphony No. 11 was the centrepiece of his visits to France and Italy, it was crucial for the state to express its approval.

In the French press, one of the earliest pieces of promotional material for Shostakovich's impending arrival was an extended interview published in *Le Monde*, whose Moscow correspondent reported that

the great Soviet composer Shostakovich today [9 May] departs Moscow for a trip of several weeks, which will take him firstly to Italy, then from 18 May onward to Paris, where the first performance will be given of his most recent work, the Eleventh Symphony, which recently won him the Lenin Prize.⁴⁸

The interviewer continued to give a sense both of Shostakovich's anticipation for the upcoming trip, and his public persona more broadly:

Shostakovich, who kindly received us in his office at the Union of Soviet Composers (of which he is one of the secretaries) on the eve of his departure, would first of all like to congratulate himself on what will be a particularly interesting trip for him, since he is not yet acquainted with either France or Italy. (His biggest trip to the West was to the United States in 1949.) The great musician, whose feverish shyness during public appearances is proverbial, and who always seems agitated with worry when he is not at his worktable, seldom departs from a sense of nervousness in conversation. His words are quick and few, and follow a jerky flow.⁴⁹

The first quoted passage, in which Shostakovich outlined (in a French translation) his plans for the coming visit, went as follows:

Yes, I will attend the premiere of my Eleventh Symphony. But I will perform my first and second piano concertos as well, along with some preludes and fugues, during two concerts that will likely take place on 27 and 28 May. I will also make some recordings for the Pathé-Marconi company, of which I am the guest. All of this, with the obligatory rehearsals, will take me quite some time. Still, I hope to meet the French composers that I appreciate greatly. I have only had the chance, during their visits to the USSR, to see a few of them here, including Darius Milhaud, Jean Wiéner, and the late Arthur Honegger,

⁴⁸ 'Dimitri Chostakovitch nous parle de la musique soviétique moderne,' *Le Monde*, 10 May 1958.

⁴⁹ 'Dimitri Chostakovitch nous parle.'

who is my favourite French composer. And of course, I count on visiting Paris and even a bit of the French provinces. I am very pleased about that.⁵⁰

Prior to 1958, quotations from Shostakovich that had appeared in the mainstream French press had consisted either of transcriptions of speeches, or translations of pre-existing Russian or English-language sources. The above-quoted passage in *Le Monde*, and those that follow it, are therefore significant in that they represent the first occasion in which Shostakovich's commentary had been elicited by a major French newspaper, to be made available directly to a wide French readership.⁵¹ Not all topics prompted the composer to share in great detail, however; when asked about his Eleventh Symphony, he offered little insight beyond the fact that he spent six months working on it the previous year, and that it is an '*œuvre à thème*,' whose subjects are the 'major phases' of the first Russian revolution of 1905.⁵² Yet, *Le Monde's* correspondent then moved on to question Shostakovich about broader issues: the 'originality' of modern Soviet music, and the extent to which it is still affected by the principles of socialist realism. Echoing his speech given at the Kremlin only months earlier (in which he emphasised the 'marvellous creative conditions enjoyed by Soviet musicians,' as well as 'the paternal, sensitive, and considerate guidance given them by Party and government'),⁵³ Shostakovich responded, only slightly tersely, that 'Music is an artform as expressive as all the others, and there is no reason why the principles that govern society should not find their expression in music just as in literature and painting. We are trying to get closer to the people, to speak a language that is clear and accessible to the people, who are our great and only judge. If there has been an evolution since the early days, this evolution has actually been in the sense of bringing [the people] closer to themselves, thus borrowing from sources of popular inspiration, from folklore and from popular music. But we are not bound by any abstract dogma or dried-out theory, nor by any theme, and the most diverse individualities flourish here in full freedom. I actually have the impression that certain theories which take pride of place in the West, such as dodecaphony and *musique concrète*, result, on the contrary, in the individualities being levelled out. In the Soviet Union we have a great diversity of talents and personalities, and the proof is in the incessant

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ An interview with Shostakovich had appeared in the Association France-URSS's magazine in April 1957 (in which Gilbert Morhange asked the composer about the conception of his Eleventh Symphony), but such a publication would have had a much more niche readership than *Le Monde*. See Gilbert Morhange, 'Chostakovitch : « J'achève ma 11^e Symphonie et j'attaque une opérette », ' *France-URSS* 139 (April 1957): 4–5.

⁵² 'Dimitri Chostakovitch nous parle.'

⁵³ Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, 203.

discussions that carry on between critics, composers, and musicians. But all these discussions concern ways of getting closer to the people, which is our common and fundamental goal.⁵⁴

The opinion on twelve-tone music that Shostakovich's expresses here—that the systems by which Western proponents of dodecaphony claim to be liberated are the same systems that unwittingly imprison them—is one that I wish to highlight, for it will be revisited later in this chapter as something that the French press latches onto in the years following Shostakovich's visit. For the remainder of his *Le Monde* interview, though, Shostakovich was presented with a number of specific inquiries about classical music in the USSR, including who his favourite young Soviet composers were (Aram Khachaturian's nephew, Karen; Boris Tchaikovsky, who has 'nothing to do with the composer of the *Pathétique*'; Gara Garayev; Otar Taktakishvili, and 'many others'), and whether the inaugural Tchaikovsky violin and piano competition, of which he recently presided over as chair, met his expectations ('very satisfied indeed,' he responded).⁵⁵

From Paris to the Provinces

A link can be observed between the news of Shostakovich's imminent arrival in Paris, and opportune promotion of his music outside of the French capital. Less than two weeks after *Le Monde* published its conversation with the composer, the Bordeaux daily *Sud Ouest* mentioned the 'extremely pleasant evenings' that had just taken place at the local Festival de Bordeaux, in which Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony had constituted a 'key work' (*œuvre-clé*) of the festival's symphonic programming. By encouraging music lovers to 'extend, through records, the pleasure they will have experienced at the concerts,' the purpose of this article seems to have been twofold: to function as positive publicity for the festival, and to promote LP sales for local record vendors.⁵⁶ The author describes Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony as 'the most popular' (with the minimal context here, we can presume this to mean the most popular of all his symphonies); as well as 'the most frequently recorded: four versions are currently on sale, among which we know the very fine one recorded by the Vienna Symphony Orchestra.'⁵⁷

⁵⁴ 'Dimitri Chostakovitch nous parle.'

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ 'Disques et festival,' *Sud Ouest*, 20 May 1958, 10.

⁵⁷ 'Disques et festival, 10.

Sud Ouest reported on Shostakovich again a week later, informing its local readership of the composer's arrival in Paris:

Shostakovich is in Paris with some forty kilos of luggage, as much as an international film star. He arrived, a little frightened by the onslaught of Parisian journalists, and invariably answered all their questions: 'Da, da, da'... As he does not understand any languages apart from Russian, he does not speak, except to his wife.⁵⁸

Shostakovich had in fact arrived more than a week before this article was printed; some early photographs of his outings in Paris are shown from Figures 3.4 to 3.6. The article went on to refer to Shostakovich as 'the undisputed king of Soviet music,' whose hefty luggage comprised 'scores [representing] twenty-five years of work.'⁵⁹ It also offered a sense of the atmosphere surrounding the composer's visit to Paris by reporting that, ahead of his upcoming concerts, 'music lovers are preparing to storm the Palais de Chaillot.'⁶⁰ Finally, *Sud Ouest* mentioned the repertoire listeners could expect to hear at the performances: 'He will also offer the French public, for his first trip to Paris, the premiere of his Eleventh Symphony, rather than the "Leningrad" Symphony that made him famous.'⁶¹ Though it is only made in passing, this comment indicates that it was the global popularity of the Seventh Symphony that started to raise Shostakovich to the status of a public figure in France—a figure whose movements and comments were worthy of mention in a non-specialist, daily newspaper—and he was cemented in this position by the attention he received from the Eleventh Symphony. This interest from a French region beyond Paris in 1958 foreshadows what is to come not only in the next decade, but also throughout the remainder of the twentieth century: a greater regional engagement with Soviet music, which at times surpasses that of the nation's capital.

⁵⁸ 'Un russe à Paris,' *Sud Ouest*, 27 May 1958, 8.

⁵⁹ 'Un russe à Paris,' 8. 'Ce sont des partitions que contiennent les bagages du roi incontesté de la musique soviétique... Ces partitions représentent vingt-cinq années de travail.'

⁶⁰ Ibid. 'Les mélomanes s'apprêtent à donner l'assaut au palais de Chaillot.'

⁶¹ Ibid. 'Il offrira également au public français, pour son premier voyage à Paris, la première audition de sa XI^e Symphonie, de préférence à la « Symphonie de Leningrad » qui le rendit célèbre.'

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Figure 3.4. Shostakovich and his second wife, Margarita Kainova during a night out in Paris, 22 May 1958.
Photo: Georges Menager

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Figure 3.5. Dmitri and Margarita Shostakovich enjoying an art exhibition in Paris, 21 May 1958.
Photo: Georges Menager

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Figure 3.6. Shostakovich meets Milhaud, 22 May 1958. Photo: Georges Menager

Shostakovich à Paris, 1958

From 21 to 26 May, Shostakovich worked alongside André Cluytens and the Orchestre national de la Radiodiffusion française (presently Orchestre national de France) to rehearse and record his Eleventh Symphony at the Salle Wagram in Paris.⁶² The resulting two-disc vinyl box set (whose cover can be seen in Figure 3.7) constituted the first French recording of a Shostakovich symphony. It was produced in France by Pathé-Marconi and in the United States by Angel Records (a historical classical music label founded in New York City in 1953), both subsidiaries of EMI (or Columbia Records as it was known in the 1950s and '60s). For a recording of French musicians made in the presence of the composer to be facilitated, pressed, and subsequently owned by one of the largest labels in the music industry is a further marker of the international stature that Shostakovich had achieved by this point in the century.

From the extensive photographs that document the five-day rehearsal and recording period (some of which are shown in Figures 3.8–3.11), it can be deduced that the ensemble focused on Symphony No. 11 for the first three days, with Shostakovich either watching on, or offering notes to Cluytens and the musicians of the orchestra. For the remaining days, the composer sat at the piano to rehearse and record the Concerto in C minor for Piano, Trumpet and String Orchestra, op. 35, and the Piano Concerto No. 2 in F Major, op. 102, which would also appear in the programmes of his upcoming Paris performances.

⁶² Dmitri Shostakovich, *Symphony No. 11 '1905'*, Orchestre national de la Radiodiffusion française, André Cluytens, Angel Records 3586 3S/L; Columbia (EMI)/Pathé-Marconi FCX 758 and FCXS 759; Columbia (UK) 33CX 1604 and 33CXS 1605, 1958, 2x LP discs, mono. Shostakovich's Concerto in C minor for Piano, Trumpet and String Orchestra, op. 35, and Piano Concerto No. 2 in F Major, op. 102, were recorded in the same sessions but not released with Symphony No. 11. Alongside the Three Fantastic Dances, op. 5, these two recordings appeared on a later release from His Master's Voice, another of EMI/Pathé-Marconi's classical subsidiaries. See Dmitri Shostakovich, *Concerto No. 1/Concerto No. 2/Trois Danses Fantastiques*, Orchestre national de la Radiodiffusion française, André Cluytens, La Voix de son maître 2 C 061-12114, 1972, LP disc, stereo.

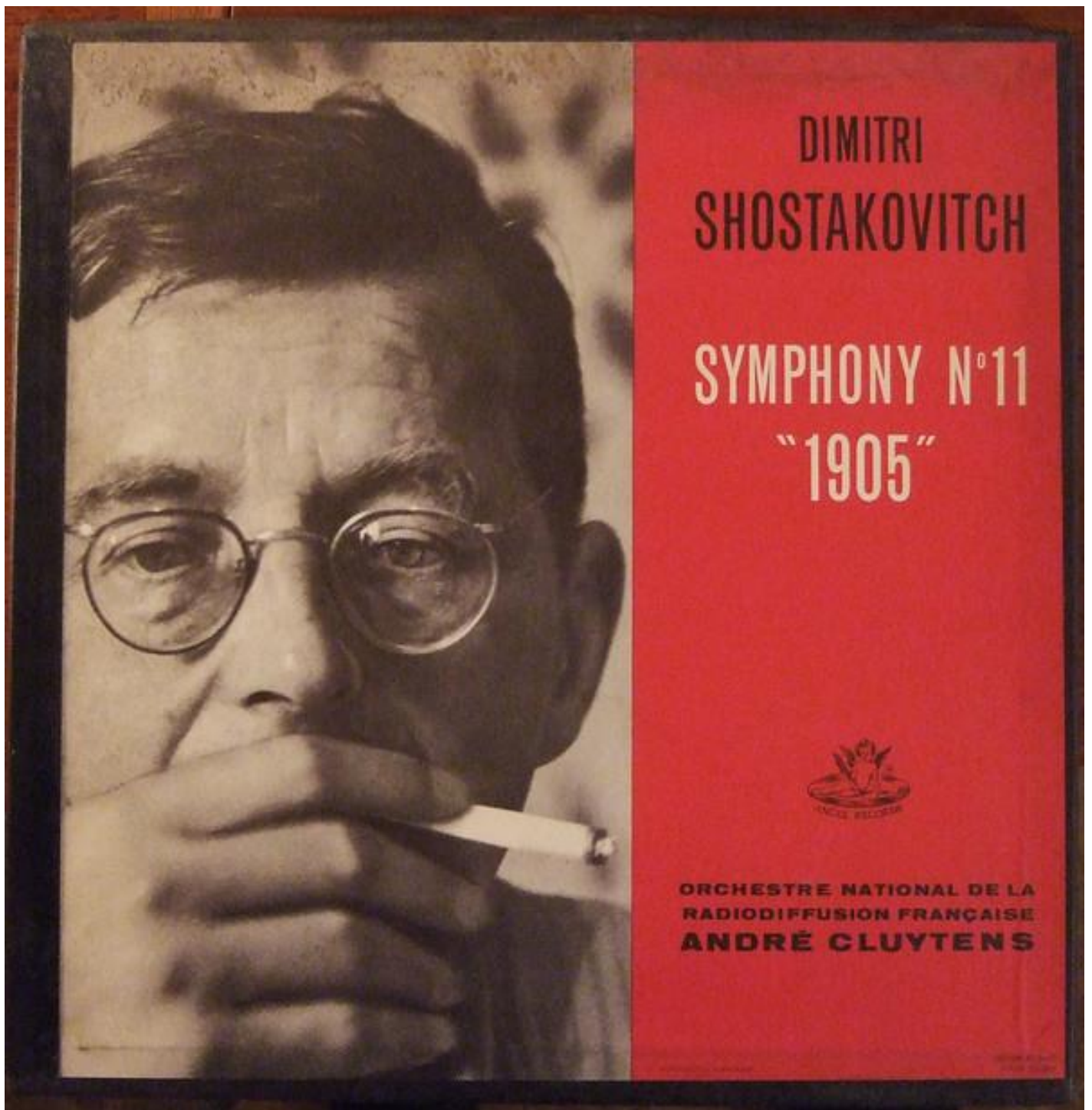


Figure 3.7. The cover of the 1958 box set recording of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 11 (French release)



Figure 3.8. Shostakovich recording with André Cluytens and the Orchestre national, May 1958.
Photo: akg-images/Louis Ingigliardi

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Figure 3.9. An anxious Shostakovich watches the Orchestre national rehearse Symphony No. 11, 21 May 1958.
Photo: Georges Menager

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Figure 3.10. Shostakovich joins the Orchestre national as soloist, 24 May 1958. Photo: Georges Menager

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Figure 3.11. Shostakovich steps up from the piano to confer with conductor André Cluytens, 25 May 1958.
Photo: Georges Menager

As predicted by the composer in his *Le Monde* interview, the two performances of Symphony No. 11 took place on Tuesday 27 and Wednesday 28 May at the Palais de Chaillot. The programme on both evenings consisted entirely of Shostakovich's own compositions, opening with a solo performance of four excerpts from the 24 Preludes and Fugues, op. 87, followed on the Tuesday by the Concerto for Piano, Trumpet and String Orchestra, and the Piano Concerto No. 2 on the Wednesday. Symphony No. 11 comprised the second half of both programmes.

Dumesnil covered the two concerts in an extended review article for *Le Monde*, which offered both a descriptive analysis of Symphony No. 11 for French listeners, as well as the critic's first impressions of the work upon its Parisian premiere.⁶³ Dumesnil's assessment was as follows:

While listening to the Eleventh Symphony in G minor, op. 103 of Dmitri Shostakovich, I had impressions similar to those left on me by the Seventh Symphony of the same composer (the 'Leningrad'), when Roger Désormière introduced it to us shortly after the Liberation: mixed impressions. We admire the evident sincerity, power, and expressive qualities of a generous work, overflowing with life, but also dense to excess, and which would have certainly gained a lot had author cut back on repetition, occasionally even on banality. The current of this torrential music sweeps up everything in its path (*charrie de tout*), and this sometimes disturbs us at the very moment in which we would have gladly surrendered to its momentum, to let it drag us in. Grandeur is not synonymous with excess; that is what bothers us most in this work.⁶⁴

While much of this lengthy review is Dumesnil finding various ways to express his ambivalent feelings towards the symphony—which essentially revolve around the strength he perceives in Shostakovich's ability to convey emotion, but a weakness in scaling this to the appropriate proportions—he was complimentary about the symphony's subject, and how it highlights Shostakovich's knack for depicting real-life events in music:

The subject chosen, the revolution of 1905—of which Pope Gapon was the hero—certainly made it possible to evoke, in a vast picture, the precursory thunderbolt of the storm that would take away the Tsarist regime twelve years later. In compliance with the requirements of all programme music, the composer wanted, according to the programme note, to 'draw, line by line, the event in its entirety, using his powerful means as a great symphonist.' Powerful means, even brilliant, one agrees; but I heard someone

⁶³ René Dumesnil, 'La XI^e « Symphonie » de Chostakovitch,' *Le Monde*, 30 May 1958.

⁶⁴ Dumesnil, 'La XI^e « Symphonie » de Chostakovitch.'

nearby me remark that, by way of the excessive emphasis given to detail in this vast fresco, such means recall rather those of Meissonier than those of Delacroix.⁶⁵

Dumesnil goes on to describe the critique made by his fellow audience member as ‘unjust’; however, the implicit praise in this defence is once again tempered by the inconsistency he perceives in the sixty-minute symphony:

The Eleventh Symphony, the ‘1905’ of Shostakovich, is not—at least not more than his Leningrad—an easel painting like the 1814 of Meissonier, although the powerful episodes sometimes neighbour pages that, not having the same stature, seem to detract from (*rapetisser*) the grandeur of others.⁶⁶

Before offering his final thoughts on the symphony as a whole, Dumesnil provides a detailed breakdown of how Shostakovich depicted the events of 1905 across the symphony’s four movements (in short: drums and trumpets in the first movement evoke the ‘heavy and dreary anxiety’ of the guard watching over the Winter Palace; the second movement’s ‘impetuous fugato’ signifies the Bloody Sunday massacre; in the third movement (a Requiem subtitled ‘Eternal Memory’), Shostakovich ‘develops the motif of a revolutionary funeral march, “Song of the Survivors”’; before bells signify the arrival of ‘the Tocsin,’ a finale in which ‘the fury of the people launches its attack on a condemned world’).⁶⁷ It is clear that Dumesnil was largely captivated by the programme of Shostakovich’s symphony, although he did take some issue with its continuous structure: ‘That the four movements of this dense (*touffue*) work unfold one after another, without interruption, only adds to the impression of oppressive length, which is accentuated here and there by a certain opacity of orchestration.’⁶⁸ However, the high quality of the performances was enough for him to consider the premiere of the Eleventh Symphony a success overall:

It benefited from the clear and remarkable execution of the Orchestre national conducted by Mr André Cluytens. We cannot say enough about the merits of such an ensemble, this assembly of artists who dedicate themselves to their task with passionate

⁶⁵ Ibid. N.B. Delacroix’s heroic scenes are best known for their colour, movement, and grandeur, rather than clarity of form, whereas Meissonier depicted sieges and other military themes with masterfully fine lines and in meticulous detail (and made a lot of money from it).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid. ‘Cette œuvre touffue enchaîne sans interruption ses quatre mouvements, ce qui contribue encore à laisser une impression de longueur oppressante, accentuée ici et là par une certaine opacité de l’orchestration.’

fervour. They led the work to a triumph, and the public included them in the long ovations given to the composer.⁶⁹

These comments probably have less to do with Shostakovich's symphony than they do with general pride in the calibre of French performers, though. The only other criticism in Dumesnil's review concerned the decision for Shostakovich to perform the solo keyboard parts of the two accompanying orchestral works: 'a questionable choice,' he wrote, 'but one that generated applause nonetheless.'⁷⁰

The Aftermath of Shostakovich's French Visit

Bordeaux's *Sud Ouest* continued its engagement with Symphony No. 11 after the Paris concerts, with an article from the Bordelaise-born but Paris based composer/critic, Gustave Samazeuilh (1877–1967). On the day the article appeared—five days after *Le Monde* published its review—the newly recorded symphony was due to be broadcast on Bordeaux radio for the first time, alongside commentary from a local artist and critic, Jean-Loup Simian. In *Sud Ouest*, the 80-year-old Samazeuilh wrote to his audience that, 'as for the Eleventh Symphony ... it is difficult to give you, in a few lines, an idea of this vast fresco, devoted to the Russian revolution of 1905'; yet, after two 'close listenings,' his evaluation was that 'the ominous sunrise of the beginning, and the striking accents of the prisoners' song, were more eloquent than the chaos of the battle.'⁷¹ Moreover, Samazeuilh declared that 'the skills in writing and instrumentation' that Shostakovich demonstrates in this 'immense production' have allowed him to 'affirm himself, since the death of Sergei Prokofiev, as the composer most representative of present-day Russia.'⁷² He also complimented Pathé-Marconi on the impressive turnaround they achieved with this recording, having prepared the discs for sale only a week after the recording process had begun:

This recording, which represents an unprecedented effort in the French phonographic industry, highlights the importance, recognised by musical circles, of the famous Soviet composer's coming to Paris. The industrial manufacturing process began on Monday 27 May at 8:30 am. On 28 May at 10:30 am, the first pressings began. By 8:30 pm that same

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 'L'auteur tenant lui-même la partie de clavier dans les deux ouvrages, choix contestable, mais qui n'entraîna pas moins les applaudissements.'

⁷¹ Gustave Samazeuilh, 'Une émission sur la XI^e Symphonie 1905 de Chostakovitch,' *Sud Ouest*, 4 June 1958, 2.

⁷² Samazeuilh, 'Une émission sur la XI^e Symphonie,' 2.

day, the first sales were taking place, during the second public performance of the Eleventh Symphony at the Palais de Chaillot.⁷³

The success of the Symphony No. 11 recording seems to have been quite far-reaching in France; it even enjoyed a public appearance in Nogent-le-Rotrou, a commune southwest of Paris. The centrepiece of the local Festival of Dramatic Art was a three-hour-long, *plein air* adaption of Victor Hugo's last novel *Ninety-Three* (1874), whose subject concerns counterrevolutionary revolts during the French Revolution. Shostakovich's Eleventh Symphony was described as the 'musical accompaniment' to the performance. Given that no musical ensemble was mentioned in this write-up (yet the creative team was), we can assume that said accompaniment was provided by way of recordings.⁷⁴

Back in Paris, Dumesnil too acknowledged the speedy turnaround of, and general *tour de force* that was, Columbia's recording of Symphony No. 11. He reflected on the symphony's Paris premiere: 'I spoke at the time about the perfection of an exemplary performance,' and mentioned how the quality of the recording reaffirmed for him the experience of the concerts: 'I believe that there are few examples of such a complete success.'⁷⁵ Dumesnil expressed further admiration for Shostakovich's symphonic writing the following year when Leonard Bernstein toured to Paris with the New York Philharmonic. Describing it as an 'indisputable success,' he reported that the gala concert was so well attended that even the vast proportions of the Palais de Chaillot were still too small to contain the crowd it attracted. To satisfy the demands of the audience, Bernstein added—with 'very good grace—the scherzo of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony, which is indeed one of the summits of the contemporary Russian school.'⁷⁶ This appears to have been the first time in over ten years that music from Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony had appeared in a public concert in Paris, so it is perhaps telling that it was repertoire chosen by a touring conductor, rather than anyone French. Dumesnil was more partial to the piece in 1959 than he was a decade earlier, though; his praise for the work was such that he felt an injustice was served by not performing it in its entirety:

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ 'Quatre-vingt-treize au Festival de Nogent-le-Rotrou,' *Le Monde*, 9 August 1958. 'La Onzième Symphonie de Chostakovitch servira d'accompagnement musical à ce spectacle.'

⁷⁵ René Dumesnil, 'De l'Espagne à la Russie : Guitare – Récitals de chant,' *Le Monde*, 13 August 1958. 'J'ai dit alors la perfection d'une exécution exemplaire ... je crois qu'il est peu d'exemples d'une réussite si complète.'

⁷⁶ René Dumesnil, 'Léonard Bernstein et le New York Philharmonic Orchestra au palais de Chaillot,' *Le Monde*, 23 September 1959.

But is to isolate it not to make it lose part of its meaning? This delightful episode constitutes, in the work as a whole, a moment of relaxation, a kind of aspiration to oblivion, to innocence, between the feeling of anguish expressed by the first movement, and the overwhelming resignation of the Largo. Anyhow, what counts here is the perfection with which the orchestra played it. This encore was, for me, the best moment of the evening.⁷⁷

Shostakovich *contre dodécaphonisme*

Despite the warm reception that Shostakovich had enjoyed during his French visit, debates around dodecaphony continued to appear sporadically in the French press towards the end of the 1950s, and Shostakovich's name was still entwined within them. At this point, it is worth taking a sidestep to acknowledge just how much the Parisian musical landscape of the late 1950s had changed since Shostakovich's music was first introduced to French audiences in the interwar period. I mentioned in Chapter Two that the end of the Second World War would give way to a new, experimental era of music composition, and it was in the 1950s that a renewed, more radical take on modernism—one that in France built on the work of composers like Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Messiaen—gained its widest following. At the head of the Parisian avant garde was the young Pierre Boulez (1925–2016), who had spent his formative years challenging, sometimes aggressively, what he saw as the rampant conservatism of the Paris Conservatoire. By the time of his graduation Boulez possessed 'a very clear awareness of the necessity for atonality,' and in the 1950s he developed an aesthetic marked by logic and highly organised conceptions of musical time, often featuring either partial or total serialisation of pitch, timbre, duration, and intensity of musical notes.⁷⁸

In 1950s France, it had not gone unnoticed that Shostakovich's musical aesthetic was quite far from the musical experiments propagated by this younger generation of composers. In his article about the French recording of Symphony No. 11, Samazeuilh had mentioned offhandedly that 'our dodecaphonists *du jour*' (here referring to Boulez's followers) must have found Shostakovich's fugues (which had accompanied the Symphony's Paris premiere) '*bien*

⁷⁷ Dumesnil, 'Léonard Bernstein et le New York Philharmonie Orchestra.'

⁷⁸ G.W. Hopkins, rev. Paul Griffiths, 'Pierre Boulez,' in *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com. I will add that I do not think Boulez's extreme use of serial devices negates the possibility of having horizontal musical lines; the melodies in pieces like *Polyphonie X* (1950–51) or *Domaines* (1968–69) are pleasant to a degree not often heard in ultra-serial works.

conformistes.⁷⁹ Building on Shostakovich's comments on twelve-tone music published by *Le Monde* in August 1958, the same paper's Moscow correspondent reported in November 1959 that dodecaphonic music, as well as electronic music and *musique concrète*, had been 'severely condemned' by Shostakovich in an interview with a Polish journalist following the Warsaw Autumn festival. The statement, published in the magazine *Sovietskaya Muzyka*, was directed mainly at young Polish composers, who Shostakovich was reportedly 'worried to see "cling to the revelations of dodecaphony, believing to see in it the future of art"'.⁸⁰ His grievances were further outlined as follows:

'I am deeply convinced that in music, as in all human activities, we must constantly look for new approaches, but it seems to me that whoever sees them in dodecaphony is seriously mistaken,' declares the composer, adding that: 'The narrow dogmatism of this system, born artificially, confines the creative imagination of composers and depersonalises them.'⁸¹

The journalist also paraphrased Shostakovich's evaluation of the electronic music and *musique concrète* performed in Warsaw as having 'nothing to do with music'; rather, it is 'at most, a matter of sounds, sometimes extremely unpleasant, completely devoid of meaning.'⁸² This 'East vs West' debate over twelve-tone music continued in the press the following year: in March 1960, *Le Monde* quoted a statement from Khachaturian that the style 'has no future,'⁸³ and in September, the French conductor, composer, and Stravinsky biographer Robert Siohan (1894–1985) wrote a curt passage for *Le Monde* that highlighted the contradictions he perceived in Shostakovich's public stance on dodecaphony:

The position defended here by the Soviet composer is not new. We find in it the well-known thesis of music for the people, a thesis noble in itself, but which can become dangerous if we confuse it with that of an easy art, accessible to all. Because not everyone is a musician. And what's more, it is by no means proven that ease is always a criterion of excellence. For that matter, by criticising dodecaphony—and the same time, late style Stravinsky—Shostakovich seems to forget that he himself formerly experimented with this new form of music. His current attitude—which we may ask ourselves if it is

⁷⁹ Samazeuilh, 'Une émission sur la XI^e Symphonie 1905 de Chostakovitch,' 2. 'De « Fugues », que nos dodécaphonistes du jour ont dû trouver bien conformistes.'

⁸⁰ 'Chostakovitch critique la musique dodécaphonique,' *Le Monde*, 17 November 1959.

⁸¹ 'Chostakovitch critique la musique dodécaphonique.'

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Claude Sarraute, '« La Musique dodécaphonique n'a aucun avenir » nous déclare Aram Khatchatourian,' *Le Monde*, 24 March 1960.

dictated entirely by concerns specific to art—is a position of refusal *vis-à-vis* this evolution of musical language that has not ceased to continue from Bach to the present day. Ultimately, it does not matter what judgement we wish to pass over dodecaphony as a system. Only the works count. The rest is nothing more than the ‘dogmatism’ that Shostakovich very rightly condemns (without, however, avoiding sacrificing himself to it).⁸⁴

While Siohan did not specify for his readers which pieces reflect Shostakovich’s early experiments in dodecaphony, his statement does make clear that there are, at this point, personal and political layers to this debate.⁸⁵ Siohan purported to want to focus only on ‘the works themselves’, but in this call to arms he subtly insulted both Shostakovich’s music and character. Furthermore, his implication that the composer’s stance is not dictated entirely by art can be read as continuing to fan the flames of ideological difference that existed between the USSR and NATO countries during the Cold War.

From Moscow to Paris: Symphonies Nos. 12, 13, and 4

To extend this thinking beyond a debate around twelve-tone serialism, at this point we are still six years away from France’s withdrawal from military participation in the NATO pact, and de Gaulle’s visit to the USSR in 1966 (the first official trip made by the leader of a Western state). Premier Khrushchev, on the other hand, made two visits to France in early 1960; after a weeklong delay due to illness, the head of the Soviet state first arrived at Orly Airport on 23 March 1960. La Radiodiffusion Télévision Française marked the occasion by preparing a series of radio and television programmes highlighting both Soviet music, and musical collaborations between French and Soviet artists. One such programme, disseminated live from Moscow, featured the final movement of Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 5, alongside Prokofiev’s *Ouverture russe*, a bass aria from Mussorgsky’s *Boris Godunov* sung by Ivan Ivanovich Petrov, Scriabin’s Piano Concerto in F-sharp minor, op. 20, and folksong performed by a local choir.⁸⁶ Khrushchev’s visit went well (see Figure 3.12), and left de Gaulle feeling more optimistic about East-West relations than he had in some time. The French president believed that Khrushchev,

⁸⁴ Robert Siohan, ‘Chostakovitch condamne la musique dodécaphonique et affirme que Stravinsky est dans l’impasse,’ *Le Monde*, 12 September 1960.

⁸⁵ Peter J. Schmelz has shown how Shostakovich first employed twelve-tone technique in 1967. See his chapter ‘Shostakovich’s “Twelve-Tone” Compositions and the Politics and Practice of Soviet Serialism,’ in *Shostakovich and His World*, ed. Laurel Fay (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 303–54.

⁸⁶ ‘Les Manifestations artistiques franco-soviétiques organisées par la R.T.F.,’ *Le Monde*, 16 March 1960.

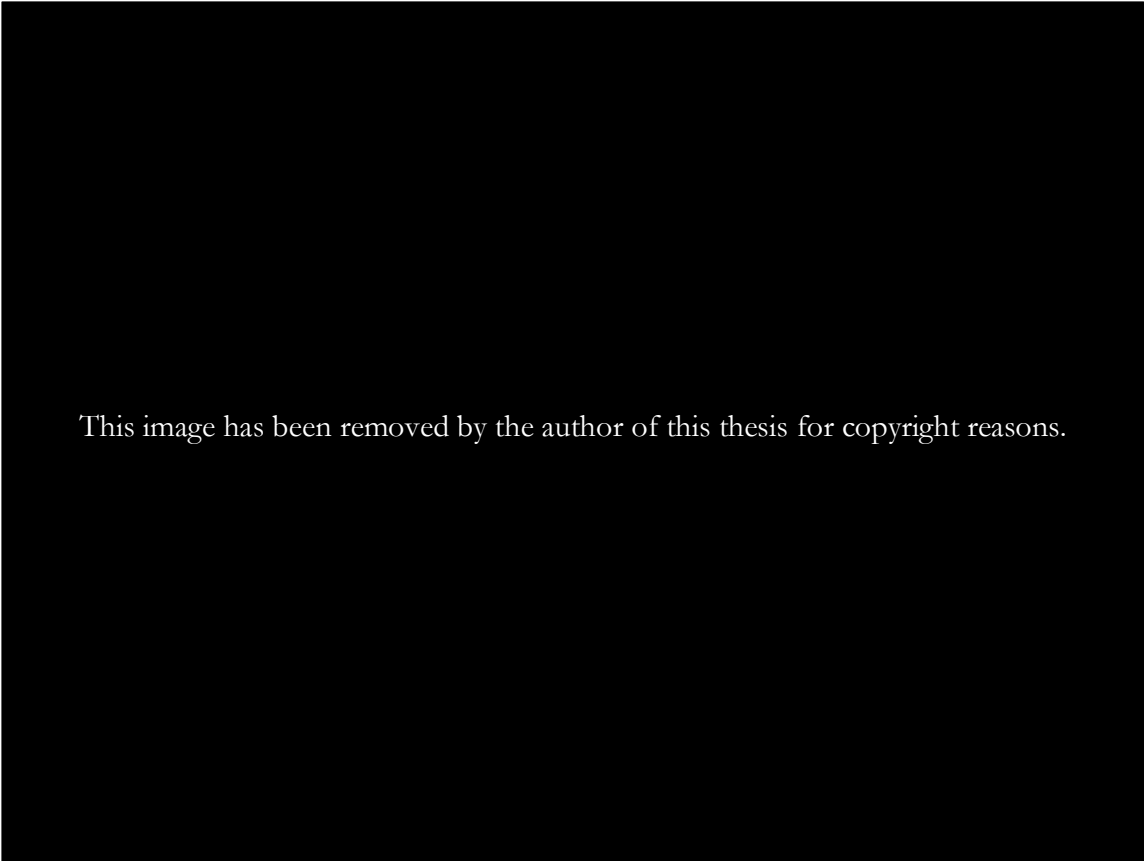
unlike Stalin, genuinely desired détente, and that progress towards this goal could realistically be made at the upcoming East-West Summit. As France had recently become the world's fourth nuclear power, on the agenda for the Paris summit were discussions between the US, the USSR, Great Britain, and France on a potential treaty banning nuclear weapon tests, and on issues pertaining to Berlin and Cuba, respective concerns of the USSR and the US.⁸⁷ But the event did not play out as de Gaulle had hoped. When Soviet missiles shot down an American U2 spy plane less than two weeks before the beginning of the summit, any hopes of easing hostilities were suddenly impossible to realise.⁸⁸ Once the leaders had arrived in Paris on 14 May 1960, Khrushchev requested an apology from Eisenhower—via a meeting with de Gaulle—as well as a termination of all U2 flights, and appropriate punishment for the officials involved directly in the 1 May incident. Khrushchev would have known that his request was unreasonable, and on 16 May he administered the summit's *coup de grâce* in the form of a ranting outburst against American aggression and deceit. He accused Eisenhower of wanting to start World War III and withdrew the president's invitation to visit the USSR.⁸⁹ Naturally, this episode increased tensions between the US and the USSR, but Khrushchev's behaviour at the summit also annoyed de Gaulle, leaving relations between the two nations unsure. Khrushchev's disillusionment with the French president soon became clear with his shift to recognise the provisional government in Algeria in August 1960, which spurred an anti-French campaign in the Soviet press throughout the second of the year, and exacerbated division between the French government and the PCF, which adopted a firm stance against colonialism (as directed by the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs).⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Benjamin Varat, 'Point of Departure: A Reassessment of Charles de Gaulle and the Paris Summit of May 1960,' *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 19, no. 1 (2008): 100–101.

⁸⁸ The events surrounding the failed Paris summit are convoluted, but in brief, though President Eisenhower persistently claimed that the U2 was a weather monitoring plane that had flown off course, Khrushchev revealed six days after the incident that the Soviets were actually holding the American pilot Gary Powers, along with some remains of his plane. This revelation initiated an embarrassing coverup attempt from the American administration, and Eisenhower finally admitted to his personal authorisation of the flight eight days after the incident. For a more detailed explanation, see Varat, 'Point of Departure,' 96–124.

⁸⁹ Varat, 'Point of Departure,' 105.

⁹⁰ Marie-Pierre Rey, 'De Gaulle, French Diplomacy, and Franco-Soviet Relations as seen from Moscow,' in *Globalizing de Gaulle: International Perspectives on French Foreign Policies, 1958–1969*, ed. Christian Nuenlist, Anna Locher and Garret Martin (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2010), 30.



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Figure 3.12. Premier Khrushchev in polite conversation with President de Gaulle at the Élysée Palace in Paris, 23 March 1960. Photo: Keystone Press/alamy stock photo

Despite the differences in approach between the two leaders, it is clear in retrospect that their exchanges throughout 1960 were in fact the timid beginnings of a Franco-Soviet rapprochement. Their relationship was hardly fruitful in terms of policy, but between 1964—when Khrushchev left office—and 1969—the year of de Gaulle’s resignation—it would develop into what Marie-Pierre Rey has described as ‘a trust unprecedented in the history of East-West relations.’⁹¹ From 1961 until this point, Shostakovich’s music featured sporadically in concert halls but regularly in the press. In October 1961, the Twelfth Symphony was unveiled in Moscow by the State Philharmonic Orchestra on the occasion of the 22nd Congress of the Soviet Communist Party; after the monumental success of the Eleventh Symphony in France, André Pierre followed the event closely for *Le Monde*. In contrast to some of his earlier reporting, Pierre did not appear overtly critical of the circumstances under which the Twelfth premiered. He instead focused on explaining the overarching themes of the symphony: that it is a ‘continuation of the Eleventh ... inspired by the revolutionary events of 1905’; that it ‘addresses the theme of the “Great

⁹¹ Rey, ‘De Gaulle, French Diplomacy, and Franco-Soviet Relations,’ 26.

October,” as they say in Moscow’; and finally that it is ‘dedicated to Lenin.’⁹² He also described the specific events illustrated in each movement, as well as how the press have treated the work thus far (that ‘all the critics who have spoken of this Twelfth Symphony agree that it is in the Classical tradition and that it recalls, in some regards, the manner of Mussorgsky,’ and that they consider it to be ‘the master work of the composer ... it will be the musical event of the year’).⁹³

Similarly, although Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 13 ‘Babi Yar’ was not performed in France soon after its world premiere, the French press kept a keen eye on its reception in the USSR, mostly because of its entanglement with Soviet antisemitism—a topic evidently of interest to the French public less than twenty years post-Liberation. The Thirteenth is another of Shostakovich’s more epic symphonies: it is an hour-long work in five movements, written for expanded orchestra, men’s chorus, and a bass soloist who renders the text of five poems by Yevgeny Yevtushenko (1932–2017). The symphony’s surtitle comes from the setting in the first movement, the famous and controversial *Babi Yar* (1961), the poem in which Yevtushenko denounced the Soviet Union’s revisionism of the Nazi massacre of over 33,000 Jewish people in Kiev in September 1941—one of the largest instances of mass murder carried out during the Holocaust—thus putting the spotlight on the antisemitism still prevalent in the USSR. Fay writes that Shostakovich ‘responded deeply to the verses, which mirrored his own aversion to anti-Semitism so closely.’⁹⁴ He completed the symphony in July and it premiered at the Moscow Conservatory on 18 December 1962. Michel Tatu (1933–2012), *Le Monde*’s Moscow correspondent from 1957 to 1964, described the premiere for French readers as a veritable high-society event that was met with an ‘unprecedented ovation’ at the conclusion, for ‘the young poet just as much as the established composer ... the first example of such a collaboration.’⁹⁵ However, Tatu also pointed out the suspiciously silent official reception of the work, explaining the connection between the first movement (in his opinion ‘the most beautiful part’) and Yevtushenko’s *Babi Yar*, which, in his words, ‘displeased in high places last year, and will likely continue, it is reported, to displease.’ He noted that ‘perhaps it is for this reason that this premiere has not yet been commented on by the press.’⁹⁶

⁹² André Pierre, ‘La Douzième Symphonie de Dmitri Chostakovitch,’ *Le Monde*, 17 October 1961.

⁹³ Pierre, ‘La Douzième Symphonie de Dmitri Chostakovitch.’

⁹⁴ Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, 228.

⁹⁵ Michel Tatu, ‘Les Orchestres de jazz, après la peinture non figurative sont également critiqués dans la presse,’ *Le Monde*, 21 December 1962. ‘Toujours est-il qu’une ovation sans précédent salua, à l’issue de ce concert, les deux auteurs, autant le jeune poète que le compositeur consacré. C’était le premier exemple d’une telle collaboration.’

⁹⁶ Tatu, ‘Les Orchestres de jazz.’

Tatu again commented on the Thirteenth Symphony a week later, this time in relation to a redacted transcript of a speech given at a meeting of CCCP intellectuals and leaders, which had taken place in Moscow the day before the symphony was scheduled to premiere. He reported that one of the redacted passages concerned Shostakovich's Thirteenth Symphony,

which, as we know, was to be performed for the first time the next day, and indeed was, but in circumstances that have already attracted attention: absence of all governmental figures (with the exception of one Vice Minister of Culture), cancellation of the television broadcast, and total silence from the press on this grand premiere.⁹⁷

This is mostly true: it is nowadays known that the party knew that stopping the premiere of the Thirteenth Symphony would be more controversial, so they allowed it to proceed, cancelling only the live broadcast. Moreover, a small number of statements on the work were published in the press, but ignoring it altogether was indeed the official tactic.⁹⁸ Still, it is worth noting the significance of the effort made by Tatu and *Le Monde* here to inform the French readership of the nuances of the situation. In the remaining 1,500 words of this piece, he analyses in detail the attacks against Yevtushenko and Shostakovich, the contradictions he perceives in the situation, and how the 'struggle for the eviction of the many Stalinist individuals who still hold senior positions in the cultural world is clearly becoming more difficult.'⁹⁹ The extent of the information provided here again testifies to the impact of expanded global networks at mid-century, and also to the importance the composer had garnered in the eyes of the French press after his visit three years earlier.

In addition to discussing specific symphonies premiering in the USSR, during the Thaw the French press continued to associate Shostakovich's name with discussions around Soviet cultural policy in a broad sense. Between a brief announcement of the 'Babi Yar' premiere and the more detailed account of its initial Soviet reception discussed above,¹⁰⁰ *Le Monde* published another article under the following headline: "We recognise the programme of the Communist Party, but not the control" declares the composer Shostakovich'; what followed was a series of uncontextualised quotes, in which Shostakovich defended himself and other Soviet artists against a comment made by the American critic Harold C. Schonberg: 'that the propaganda of political

⁹⁷ Michel Tatu, 'Le Débat sur le « modernisme » intellectuel se poursuit à Moscou,' *Le Monde*, 28 December 1962.

⁹⁸ Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, 234–35; Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 349.

⁹⁹ Michel Tatu, 'Le Débat sur le « modernisme » intellectuel.' 'La lutte pour l'éviction des nombreux éléments staliniens qui occupent encore des postes de responsables dans le monde culturel devient nettement plus difficile.'

¹⁰⁰ 'La Treizième Symphonie de Chostakovitch,' *Le Monde*, 20 December 1962.

ideas is incompatible with free creation' [the composer's paraphrase].¹⁰¹ He was also quoted as saying that Soviet artists 'regard the ideas of the Communist Party as the most progressive,' and that there are many 'young composers full of promise in the USSR today, especially Alexis Nikolayev, [Edison] Denisov, and Tatiana Sviridov.'¹⁰² As articles with this East versus West sentiment were appearing from the beginning of the Thaw, it is clear that, even though they tended to originate from American press sources, the relationship between NATO countries meant that casting doubt on the liberty of Soviet artists constituted a large part of French reporting on Shostakovich during the Cold War years.

One final Shostakovich symphony received its French premiere within the timeline of this chapter: Symphony No. 4, unveiled in Paris in October 1963, just under two years after the symphony's Moscow premiere. It is today well known that the Fourth Symphony was shelved for twenty-five years after its initially scheduled performance had been cancelled due to tensions caused by the *Lady Macbeth* affair,¹⁰³ yet this crucial element of Shostakovich's career trajectory had been absent in the early coverage of his music in France. *Le Monde* highlighted this exciting detail in its coverage of the performance:

The second concert allowed us to hear the Fourth Symphony of Shostakovich, which the composer held back for almost thirty years (from 1936 to 1961) without authorising any performances, even though rehearsals had begun ... What is certain is that Shostakovich did not have to repent for having let Kondrashin execute it in 1961, as he had it frantically applauded.¹⁰⁴

The Parisian visit of Kirill Kondrashin (1914–1981) and the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra was celebrated over two evenings in October 1963. It was reported in the press that both concerts were 'highly anticipated,' and 'highly applauded by a large and enthusiastic audience.'¹⁰⁵ The premiere of Symphony No. 4 took place in the second concert, which was covered in *Le Monde* by an unnamed critic—probably Jacques Lonchamp, who became *Le Monde*'s chief music critic in 1961. The critic was extremely impressed by the quality of the performance, describing the Moscow Philharmonic as 'excellent' and 'first rate' ('*au premier rang*'). Since Kondrashin's

¹⁰¹ « Nous reconnaissons le programme du parti communiste, mais non le contrôle », *Le Monde*, 1961. 'La propagande des idées politiques est incompatible avec la création libre.'

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ On Symphony No. 4, see Pauline Fairclough, *A Soviet Credo: Shostakovich's Fourth Symphony* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

¹⁰⁴ 'L'Orchestre philharmonique de Moscou,' *Le Monde*, 4 October 1963.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 'Deux concerts, très attendus, très applaudis par un public aussi nombreux qu'enthousiaste.'

recordings had, according to the author of this article, made him ‘as popular in France as in Russia,’ they hazarded a guess that the ensemble would soon release a recording of Symphony No. 4: ‘The success that it had in Paris leaves no doubt.’¹⁰⁶

Later the same month, a Parisian record club—the Club des Trois-Centres—marked its ten-year anniversary with a discussion and public listening of Shostakovich’s Fourth Symphony, though not as recorded by Kondrashin; rather, Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra at the work’s American premiere. Lonchampt, who attended the soirée at the Conservatoire Rachminonoff in the sixteenth arrondissement, reported that

One could not but be struck by the seriousness and attention that reigned in the small hall ... Some had recently heard it at the Champs-Élysées, under the direction of Kondrashin, but all participated in the discussion led by Pierre Vidal, expressing their opinion with much ease and freshness.¹⁰⁷

Building on the brief synopsis published earlier in October, Lonchampt here provided a more informative account of (his interpretation of) the context behind the work:

This Fourth Symphony, written in 1935 to 1936 and withdrawn by Shostakovich during the rehearsals, as much out of personal dissatisfaction as out of fear of ‘ideological’ criticism, appears, however, as profound and meaningful (*significant*) as the Fifth, Eighth or Tenth Symphonies, more disordered perhaps, but with a more irresistible *élan* through which the bubbling of youth is expressed (the composer was then only twenty-nine years old), and with a stirring creative fervour.¹⁰⁸

He proceeded to summarise, all in a positive light, the symphony’s character, structure, and rhythmic and thematic development, and ended with his assessment of the recording: that it is ‘*d’une rare splendeur*.’

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. ‘Les enregistrements faits par ce chef ont rendu son nom aussi populaire en France qu’en Russie ... Le succès qui lui a été fait à Paris ne laisse pas de doute.’ Melodiya/Angel Records subsequently released Kondrashin’s recording from the 1962 German premiere. See Dmitri Shostakovich, *Symphony No. 4*, Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, Kirill Kondrashin, Melodiya/Angel SR-40177, LP disc, mono.

¹⁰⁷ Jacques Lonchampt, ‘La Quatrième Symphonie de Chostakovitch,’ *Le Monde*, 28 Octobre 1963.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

‘Au-devant de la vie’: A Final Look

The solidification of Shostakovich’s symphonies in mainstream musical culture throughout the 1950s is particularly striking when we consider that ‘Au-devant de la vie,’ the song with which their reception was initially intertwined, followed an entirely different path. By 1960, almost thirty years after the song was written, it was still tied to French leftist politics in the same manner as in the 1930s. I suggested at the end of the previous chapter that, in its afterlife, the song came to represent French leftist solidarity in a more general sense, and this claim becomes even more convincing when we revisit it in the timeline of the present one. Of course, the nature of the circumstances under which ‘Au-devant de la vie’ was performed in France makes its presence difficult to quantify using press sources; however, it did appear in official proceedings in October 1960, during the Fédération musicale populaire’s twenty-fifth anniversary celebrations in Villeurbanne, a commune of Lyon. As reported in *L’Art musical populaire*, a highlight of these anniversary celebrations was the performance given by the Chorale populaire de Lyon, whose rendition ‘*tres applaudie*’ of ‘Au-devant de la vie’ featured alongside songs by Louis Durey, Joseph Kosma and others.¹⁰⁹ The performance of the song in this context indicates that even several decades after the Front populaire era, when Shostakovich had become a well-known figure in France and his music was acknowledged by a wide public, ‘Au-devant de la vie’ had held onto its original meaning—a symbol of left-wing solidarity and musical activity—and developed a performance history that was unique among the rest of the composer’s output.¹¹⁰ In the first chapter of this thesis, when Shostakovich was lesser known in France, I demonstrated that his symphonies were often promoted and appreciated in relation to ‘Au-devant de la vie,’ especially across the French Communist demographic; by this point in the century, though, the two streams appear to have divorced from one another: the performance history of the song now runs perpendicular to the trajectory of his symphonies, and discussion of the song no longer factors into that of *Lady Macbeth*. For this reason, the remaining chapters will not have portions devoted to ‘Au-devant de la vie’ as has been the case thus far; they will instead centre chiefly around the various French productions of *Lady Macbeth* and the continuing presence of Shostakovich’s symphonies in French concert halls.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Nouvelles du Comité régional de Lyon,’ *L’Art musical populaire* 4 [numéro spécial] (1960): 11.

¹¹⁰ It appears that the ‘Song of the Counterplan’ received a similar treatment in the USSR; Fay describes how, at a celebration on the eve of the composer’s fiftieth birthday on 24 September 1956, Shostakovich had to sit on stage in Leningrad while the song was performed in his honour by an ensemble of Young Pioneers (a Soviet youth organisation similar to the Scouts in Western countries). See Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, 198. On the Vladimir Lenin All-Union Pioneer Organisation (Vsesoyúznaya pionérskaya organizátsiya ímeni V. I. Lénina), see Lewis Siegelbaum and Andrei Sokolov, *Stalinism as a Way of Life: A Narrative in Documents* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 374–79.

Conclusion

The cases examined in this chapter show that by the mid-century, even though we do not see Shostakovich's music being programmed regularly by French ensembles, widened global networks and freer flowing exchanges between the USSR and Western nations after Stalin's death ensured that it was still reasonably present in France. Yet the symphonies occupied a different space in this period than they did during earlier decades. Even with relatively widespread distrust of the Soviet Union in the early 1960s, the presence of the symphonies in France no longer depended on French Communist organisations sponsoring French musicians: such performances could be facilitated by visiting Soviet or American ensembles, and the mainstream press could be relied upon to report news of important Shostakovich premieres that were taking place outside of France. In much of this mainstream press coverage, we have also seen a new generation of critics overturning the orthodoxies of the first two chapters, in which the reception of Shostakovich's symphonies tended to correlate with the politics of the critic or outlet in question. From mid-century, French critics seem to be working towards a consensus; however, as the French press in this period was also committed to reporting on issues relating to dodecaphony, this consensus was tinged with anti-communist influence from the US. The way in which Shostakovich's name and opinions became tied up in such debates is linked to the increased interest in Shostakovich 'the man', which, after being put in motion in France after the success of the Seventh Symphony, was solidified further with the composer's visit to France in 1958. Finally, Chapter Three has been significant within the wider context of this study for it has broadened the scope beyond Paris. This process of decentralisation will continue in the remaining chapters, as Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth*—and the various efforts to promote it in the French provinces—comes into greater focus.

Chapter Four: After the Thaw

Whereas the previous chapter demonstrated how the French reception of Shostakovich during the Cold War years was, in many ways, influenced negatively by American anti-communism, from the end of the Thaw (c. 1964) the political and social landscape in France continued to evolve into one more receptive to Soviet culture and its representatives. In 1964, the revised version of Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth* was first performed in France, and by the 1970s his symphonies were being performed in Paris on a semi-regular basis—roughly once every two years.

This chapter is structured in two main parts: the first centres around the opera, *Katerina Ismailova*, including its initial performance in the USSR, the premiere in Nice, and the issues raised by this premiere regarding programming in Paris versus the French provinces. The second half covers the reception of Shostakovich's symphonies in Paris from 1969 until the end of the 1970s. So as to closely track the evolution of mainstream reception, I will focus primarily on what was published in *Le Monde*, whose circulation figures eclipsed those of its competitors in the 1970s (after it was adopted as the official newspaper of the 1968 demonstrations).¹ *Le Monde's* international and regional French sales also increased exponentially during this decade, so it is reasonable to treat the writings of its critics as indicative of mainstream reception. Integrated with my principal topics, smaller threads in this chapter cover a new French-language book on Shostakovich, the reception of several LP recordings, as well as the press response to the composer's death in 1975.

Katerina Ismailova

Shostakovich had been considering revising his original opera from as early as 1940, four years after its final performance in the Soviet Union.² It was only after the sudden death in December 1954 of his first wife, Nina Vassilyevna Varzar—to whom the opera had originally been dedicated—that he began to make changes to the score, initially by emending the part of the high bass, Boris Timofeyevich. Although it has been common in the reception history of this

¹ For circulation figures, see Patrick Eveno, *Le Monde : Histoire d'une entreprise de presse, 1944–1995* (Paris: Le Monde-Éditions, 1996), 207–15.

² Laurel E. Fay, 'From *Lady Macbeth* to *Katerina*: Shostakovich's Versions and Revisions,' in *Shostakovich Studies*, ed. David Fanning (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), 177–78.

opera to dismiss these revisions as light and superficial,³ there were some significant musical alterations made, particularly in the first act, and particularly in the part of Boris (the lowest note in the bass's range was lifted a tritone from F-sharp to C, and the distinct angles of Boris's melodic lines were smoothed considerably). Much of *Lady Macbeth's* original text was also rewritten, with assistance from the composer's friend Isaac Glikman. Sexual allusions were removed, the references to the (female) body of Aksinya were made less derisive, and Katerina's verbal demands for Sergei's affections were either deleted or adapted. As Laurel Fay puts it:

If one can characterise the single, most significant difference between the 1932 and 1963 versions of the opera it is in the efficient elimination of the traces of Katerina's voracious carnal appetite ... ironically rendering her both a more conventional operatic heroine and one more in keeping with Shostakovich's original ideal. With this dimension removed, the raw, shocking sexual component of the opera is relegated to the euphemistic; Katerina appears relatively guileless and more obviously deserving of our compassion. The motives for her crimes seem to derive more from her rebellion against an oppressive family and social situation than from sheer, unadulterated physical lust.⁴

Shostakovich had revised the score to *Lady Macbeth* well before entering into any official discussions of a restaging.⁵ Such talk only began in Leningrad in March 1955, and after a successful audition of the revised version, the Maliy Theatre planned to feature the work in its 1955–56 season. Having not yet received official clearance to restage the opera in any version, though, in January 1956 the Maliy Theatre director insisted that Shostakovich himself take the matter to the USSR's deputy head of government Vyacheslav Molotov, who set up an 'authoritative' commission of the Ministry of Culture to assess the suitability of the new score for production. Again, Laurel Fay explains that the requisite commission, chaired by Dmitriy Kabalevsky,

was finally assembled and the audition took place at Shostakovich's Moscow apartment in March 1956. After Shostakovich played the opera, the members of the commission subjected *Lady Macbeth* to a vicious verbal lashing, reminiscent of the attacks of twenty years earlier ... The commission voted unanimously to recommend against production

³ In the Hofmann monograph examined below, no distinction is made between the two versions; the author presents a nine-page analysis of the opera referring to it only as *Katerina Ismailova*. Hofmann mentions that the original title was changed in the biography section of the book, and again in the list of works, but does not discuss the revisions. See Michel-Rostislav Hofmann, *Shostakovich* (Paris: Éditions Seghers, 1963). Later in the century, Jacques di Vanni describes *Katerina Ismailova* as a 'lightly revised' *Lady Macbeth*. See *Trente ans de musique soviétique: 1953–1983* (Paris: Actes Sud, 1987), 23.

⁴ Fay, 'From *Lady Macbeth* to *Katerina*,' 180.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 195.

of the opera in view of its serious ideological-artistic defects. The time when *Lady Macbeth* could be restaged, even in a sanitised version, had not yet arrived.⁶

After a 1958 corrective decree and several more postponements, the Composers' Union finally gave Shostakovich the green light to revise *Lady Macbeth* in 1961.⁷ With a new title and opus number—*Katerina Ismailova*, op. 114—the opera was staged at Moscow's Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Theatre in December 1962.⁸ Following the success of both the December preview and the remainder of the season (which took place in early 1963), new productions were soon staged by companies across Europe and further abroad. The Latvian Theatre of Opera and Ballet was the first to stage *Katerina Ismailova* outside of Russia (in Riga, November 1963); less than a month later, London's Covent Garden gave the opera its Western premiere. Both productions were supervised closely by the composer.⁹

Before examining the French premiere of *Katerina Ismailova* in 1964 I will present three additional points of discussion, each of which contributes to our understanding of the later reception. The first is a 1962 concert that presented excerpts from the opera in Paris; the second is the release of a monograph on Shostakovich; and the third is a review of *Katerina Ismailova* in London by the leading French critic Jacques Lonchampt. In April 1962, two years before the premiere of Shostakovich's revised opera in Nice, music from *Lady Macbeth* appeared in an Orchestral National concert in Paris. Three excerpts from the original opera were programmed alongside Igor Markevitch's Sinfonia concertante 'Lorenzo the Magnificent' (1940), Serge Nigg's 'Jérôme Bosch' Symphony (1959), and an orchestral suite based on the 1937 ballet *Les Pantins* by Tibor Harsanyi. A strong programmatic theme appears to link this selection of twentieth-century repertoire, but the anonymous reviewer for *Le Monde* (likely René Dumesnil) considered it ineffective: 'The mistake was perhaps to group together four works of a more or less descriptive character, for in this debauchery of dances, celebrations and Sabbaths, too many colours and

⁶ Ibid., 182–83.

⁷ Laurel Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (New York: OUP, 2000), 237.

⁸ That the preview performance was advertised as *The Barber of Seville* and swapped at the last minute is a story that has been somewhat dramatized. Wilson, for instance, suggests that it was billed as such 'for the sake of caution'; see Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 350. Laurel Fay points out how Shostakovich had time to send out printed invitations, raising doubt as to how last-minute this substitution actually was; see Fay, 'From *Lady Macbeth* to *Katerina*,' 184. In the French context, André Lischke has described the substitution of Rossini for Shostakovich as a 'subterfuge.' See 'L'Opéra et la censure,' in *Lady Macbeth : Livret d'Opéra* (Arles: Actes Sud Opéra, 1993), 17.

⁹ Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, 238. The 1963 production in London was directed by Edward Downes, who also translated the libretto into English. This translation would later be used in the first American performances in San Francisco and New York (1964 and 1965 respectively).

rhythms collided, neutralising each other.¹⁰ The reviewer was complimentary about Shostakovich's score though, and drew upon their familiarity with the composer's recently premiered Eleventh Symphony to contextualise the trajectory of the piece:

The three excerpts from *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, the cursed opera of Shostakovich, do not lack strength, but it is the image of a desert of love, which reaches a kind of crazy drama, when, little by little (in the second part), spectacle becomes apparition, turning from anguish to panicked terror (like in the Eleventh Symphony).¹¹

Also just prior to the French premiere of *Katerina Ismailova*, a new biography was published in France: *Dimitri Chostakovitch, l'homme et son œuvre* (1963), written by Michel-Rostislav Hofmann, the translator of Martynov's 1946 monograph. Hofmann's book (shown in Figure 4.1) was published in a similar pocket size as the earlier two monographs on Shostakovich (covered in Chapter Two), yet it is more comprehensive in scope and benefits from direct interviews between the author and composer. Roughly seventy pages are dedicated to Shostakovich's biography, another eighty discuss his works, and black and white photographs documenting the composer's career and personal life are interspersed throughout. The book concludes with a reflection on Shostakovich by fellow Soviet composer Yuri Shaporin; a list of his works as at 15 April 1963; and a discography as at 15 June 1963. Particularly relevant to this chapter is the fact that Hofmann's book included a lengthy discussion of *Katerina Ismailova*, covering the story it was based on and a description of the plot; how the composer intended his audience to feel sympathetic towards Katerina in spite of her atrocious acts and used music to humanise her; as well as the opera's 'stifling' aesthetic ('*atmosphère étouffante*'), its mixture of styles, and its reflection of the 'tragedy-satire' genre.¹² As we shall see throughout this chapter, *Katerina Ismailova* spent a reasonable amount of time in the French public eye between 1963 and '64, and Hofmann's analysis appears to have provided the press with a helpful foundation with which to understand it. The book itself received favourable comments from Dumesnil in *Le Monde*, who opened his review by stating that 'We already owe books that are among the best French publications on Russian music to Mr Michel-R. Hofmann.'¹³ The monograph was timely, according to Dumesnil, since 'we have indeed talked a lot about Shostakovich in recent months' (he refers here to the recent premieres of Symphony No. 4 and *Katerina Ismailova*). He described the book's subject as

¹⁰ 'Orchestre national : Chostakovitch, Markevitch Nigg, Harsanyi,' *Le Monde*, 24 April 1962.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Hofmann, *Chostakovitch*, 82–91.

¹³ René Dumesnil, 'Michel R. Hofmann : Dimitri Chostakovitch,' *Le Monde*, 8 January 1964. 'Nous devons déjà des ouvrages qui sont parmi les meilleures publications françaises sur la musique russe à M. Michel-R. Hofmann.'

‘a musician who currently occupies a position at the forefront of European artistic life,’ and the study itself as ‘remarkable.’¹⁴

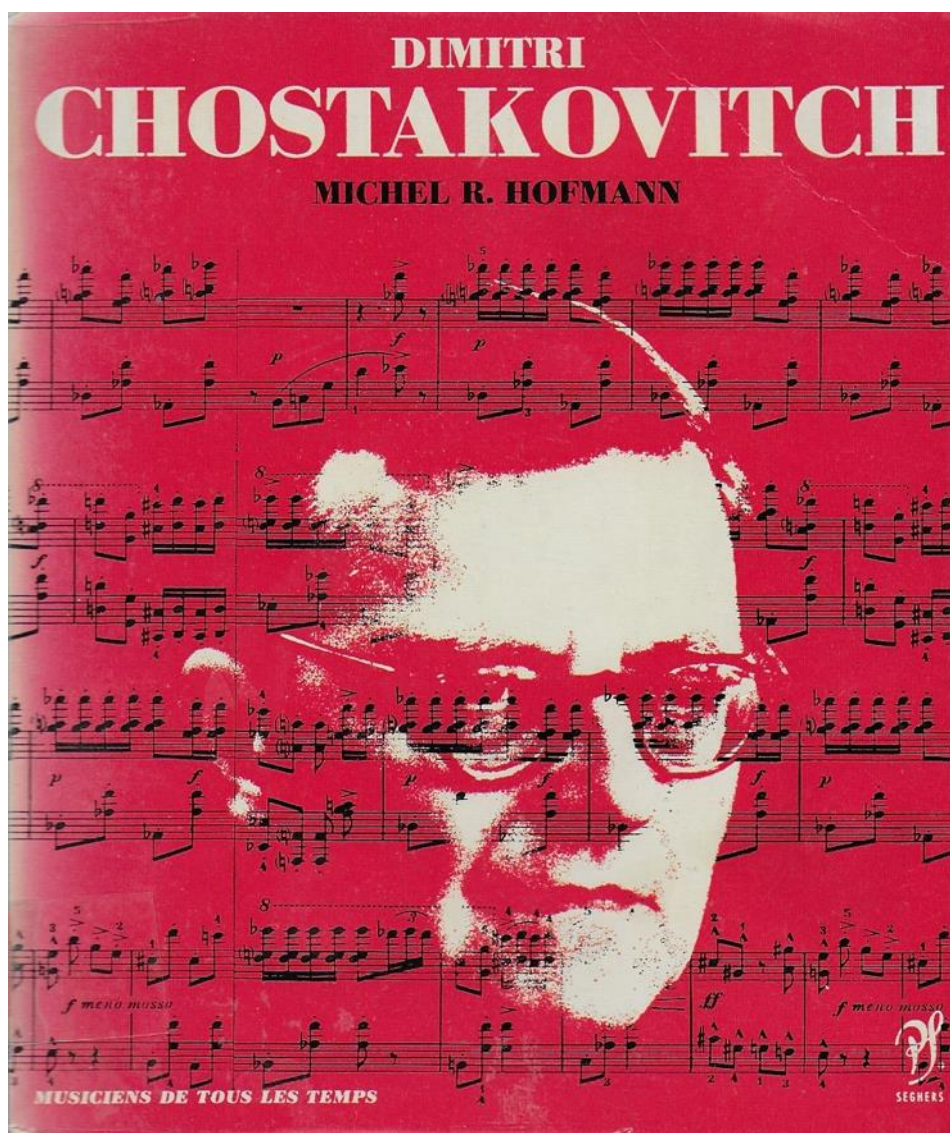


Figure 4.1. The cover of *Dimitri Chostakovitch* by M.-R. Hofmann (Paris: Éditions Seghers, 1963)

In December 1963, now only four months before the French premiere of *Katerina Ismailova*, Jacques Lonchampt travelled to London to review the Covent Garden production for *Le Monde*. Although this performance took place outside of France, Lonchampt’s review is still worth examining here on account of its scope: in addition to commenting on the production and individual performances, and how warmly these were received by the audience ‘*très élégant*’ at Covent Garden, Lonchampt provided an unprecedented amount of detail on the work itself—its

¹⁴ Ibid.

storyline, message, structure, aesthetic, and performance history—as well as an observation on the composer, who attended the performance:

An endless ovation paid tribute to Shostakovich, stiff as a board in his formal clothes, his sharp eyes hidden behind schoolboy glasses, while drawing to a close was the first Western performance of *Katerina Ismailova*, otherwise called *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, which was banned for so long by the Soviet authorities for reasons ideological as much as musical.¹⁵

Similar statements had appeared in the press with the premiere of the Fourth Symphony two months earlier, but this review, as well as the recent publication of Hofmann's biography, gave Lonchampt the opportunity and means to dissect the opera for his French readership. He summarised the storyline ('a sad heroine who kills [her] father-in-law, husband and rival before ending her life at the bottom of a lake'); described the opera in broad terms ('a work that is at heart very traditional, colourful, of an amazing writing virtuosity, and which forms an excellent spectacle, picturesque, fertile in plot twists, where the tragic, the comic and the lyric are included in equal parts'); and recounted step by step the story of work's initial success, denunciation, and later modifications and revival, 'just one week after the Thirteenth Symphony, which the press did not mention.'¹⁶ Furthermore, Lonchampt examined the portrait '*extraordinaire*' that Shostakovich had created with his title character, as well as the nature of the supporting characters, and how the music assists in these portrayals:

Shostakovich sees in [Katerina] 'a ray of light in the midst of darkness,' and in her murders, 'a revolt against the oppressive, gloomy and foul atmosphere that reigned among the gentrified merchants of the nineteenth century.' And he met the challenge of making this monster seem touching and sympathetic, by entrusting her with melodies of melancholy or tragic lyricism, which are the summits of the score. We will not forget, however, that she pushes her lover to kill her husband, not out of concern for public safety, but to claim ownership of his possessions (which, fittingly, shocked the modest Soviet leaders...). Around her is a desert of a soulless humanity, the unrest of a multitude of 'negative' characters of whom Shostakovich makes an even crueller painting, for it is almost constantly adorned with an aspect of parody: the husband, the father-in-law, the operetta-singing peasants, cowardly and servile as can be; the police officers, stupid, carried away in an absurd patrol ... and above all the lover, Sergei, with his Italian tenor

¹⁵ Jacques Lonchampt, 'Katerina Ismailova de Chostakovitch,' *Le Monde*, 7 December 1963.

¹⁶ Lonchampt, 'Katerina Ismailova de Chostakovitch.'

airs that the orchestra continuously denounces via sarcastic lines, self-importance, and hypocrisy. For the fundamental nature of this score, prodigiously skilful and of a brilliant orchestration, is to be constantly unfolding on two planes: that of external action and that of intentions, or the hidden feelings of the characters. One could say that music ceaselessly ‘judges’ the characters, probes within them (*sonde les reins et les cœurs*), and warns the listener: watch out for the traitor! This one is lying! She’s going to kill him!¹⁷

This remarkably sophisticated analysis is unlike anything hitherto published on Shostakovich’s opera in the French press. It is informed by the French texts of Martynov and Hofmann (both are cited in the review); Lonchampt specifically attributes Shostakovich’s use of music as a dramatic and expressive force to his years spent accompanying silent films on the piano, ‘as Martynov and Hofmann have clearly seen’ (*comme l’ont bien vu I. Martynov et R. Hofmann*). But in addition to his compliments, Lonchampt noted that, in fact,

the very qualities of the work also make it weak. We are far from the powerful inner unity of Berg’s operas. Despite the beautiful, too beautiful part created for Katerina, her character is drowned in a flood of images too disparate, of characters that are caricatured with too much flair to not be puppets that thin out the meaning of the work. And, at the same time, the authentic lyricism of this music, which sometimes resembles that of Mussorgsky, sometimes that of Tchaikovsky, suffers from this disparity of styles, in which the adulterated rolls of Puccini, the sarcasm of Prokofiev, and the buffoonery of Offenbach, all rub shoulders with overwhelming virtuosity—a legacy, again, of the acrobatics that the cinema imposed on the young Shostakovich.¹⁸

It is interesting that, from Lonchampt’s perspective, Shostakovich’s style in his second opera was that of a young composer—there is no sense that his musical language in this opera was his ‘true’ style, altered by the 1936 denunciation in *Pravda*. In fact, Lonchampt wrote that the fourth act was the exception to his problem with the stylistic discontinuity, because ‘this fresco announces the great, later works of Shostakovich, beyond the caricature and contorted humour.’¹⁹

Lonchampt concluded his review by mentioning that, as well as at La Scala in Milan, the opera would soon be staged in France by L’Opéra de Nice, an event to which he would pay close attention the following year.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid. ‘Cette fresque annonce les grandes œuvres ultérieures de Chostakovitch, au-delà de la caricature et de l’humour grimaçant.’

Decentralising Opera

Following the Soviet premiere of *Katerina Ismailova* in late 1963, a string of subsequent productions was scheduled and announced for opera seasons in 1964 and '65. These took place in a wide range of cities, documented in Table 4.1. One of the earliest was in Nice on the Côte d'Azur of France, whose company L'Opéra de Nice performed *Katerina Ismailova* over two evenings on 10 and 12 April 1964.²⁰ The work was sung in a French translation, again prepared by Hofmann. In *Musica*, a Parisian review of musical news, Hofmann compressed all of the drama surrounding the work's performance history into one tantalising word, describing it as what the public could see of Shostakovich's 'cursed' (*maudit*) opera, *Lady Macbeth*.²¹

Table 4.1. Productions of *Katerina Ismailova* staged outside of the Russian Soviet Republic, 1964–65²²

Year	City	Theatre	Director
1964 (January)	Zagreb	Croatian National Theatre	Milan Horwat
1964	Brno	National Theatre	František Jílek
1964 (April)	Nice	Opéra de Nice	Pierre Médecin
1964 (May)	Milan	La Scala	Nino Zansogno
1964 (May)	Naples	Teatro San Carlo	Milan Horwat
1964 (July)	The Hague (Holland Festival)	Gebouw voor Kunsten en Wetenschappen	Milan Horwat
1964 (October)	San Francisco	War Memorial Opera House	Leopold Ludwig (conductor)
1964 (November)	Los Angeles	Shrine Auditorium	Leopold Ludwig (conductor)
1965	New York	City Opera	Julius Rudel
1965 (March)	Kiev	Kiev Opera House	Konstantin Simeonov
1965	Prague	Smetana Theatre	Jaroslav Krombholc
1965	Ljubljana	Ljubljana Opera House	Milan Horwat
1965 (February)	Vienna	Wiener Staatsoper	Jaroslav Krombholc/ Serge Baudo
1965	Helsinki	Finnish National Opera House	Jussi Jalas

²⁰ 'Théâtre de l'Opéra – Recettes,' Box 3R17/10 (Archives municipales de Nice, 7 Avenue de Fabron, 06200 Nice, France).

²¹ Michel Hofmann, 'L'Opéra maudit de Chostakovitch,' *Musica : Revue d'informations et d'actualités musicales* 20 (1964): 15.

²² Information in this table has been collated from Christophe Capacci, rev. Elisabetta Soldini, *Lady Macbeth de Mzensk, Chostakovitch: Livret d'Opéra* (Paris: Éditions l'Avant-Scène, 2011), 104–10; and Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, 238–39.

1965	Florence	Teatro della Pergola	Paul Strauss
1965	Leipzig	Oper Leipzig	Václav Neumann
1965 (February)	Kazan	Opera and Ballet Theatre	Unknown
1965 (March–April)	Ruse (Bulgaria)	State Opera Ruse	Ruslan Raichev (conductor)
1965 (December)	Budapest	Hungarian State Opera House	L. Mikhailov/N. Kemarskaya

Given the historical dominance of Paris in France’s artistic and cultural landscape, as well as the longstanding prestige of its premier opera company, it may seem unusual that a comparatively small company in Nice was the first to stage Shostakovich’s opera in France. Among Russians, however, Nice—the seventh largest city in France—had been a popular holiday destination from as early as the nineteenth century. Russian officials and members of the Imperial family had regularly spent their winters there from the mid-1800s; in fact, Tsar Nicholas II felt so favourably towards the city—which had been considered a region of Italy until 1860—that at the turn of the century he decided to finance the construction of its own Russian Orthodox Cathedral. Consecrated in 1912, the monument served (and continues to serve in the present day) the population of Russians that had started to settle on the Côte d’Azur from the end of the nineteenth century.²³ By the time of *Katerina Ismailova*’s French premiere in 1964, two further waves of emigration had drawn even greater numbers of displaced Russians to the France’s south-eastern coast. This longstanding affinity between Russia and the Côte d’Azur—an affinity that continues to flourish into the twenty-first century—may have created a demand for Russian or Soviet opera in Nice that was not as strong in Paris, or any of France’s larger cities.

In addition to having a smaller resident Russian population, it may have been issues of prestige and tradition (or an unwillingness to experiment) that prevented Shostakovich’s revised opera from appearing in the French capital in the 1960s. In the month that *Katerina Ismailova* was performed in Nice, the Opéra de Paris—then under the directorship of the conservative composer Emmanuel Bondeville (1898–1987)—presented a calendar of works dating exclusively from the nineteenth century. The programming for the remainder of 1964 was much the same, with a small number of ventures into the eighteenth and long nineteenth centuries. Table 4.2 lists the operas performed in April, while Table 4.3 details the remainder of the year’s opera

²³ Nice’s Saint-Nicolas Russian Orthodox Cathedral was ruled property of the Russian Federation in 2011. At present it remains the largest Eastern Orthodox Cathedral in Western Europe. For further information on Nice’s Russian heritage, see Julian Hale, ‘Roubles and Roulette: The Russians,’ in *The French Riviera: A Cultural History* (Oxford: OUP, 2010), 83–94.

performances. As these lists include several well-known, even beloved works, and reflect Parisian affections for grand opera, bel canto, and tragedy, perhaps the distinctly modernist blend of expressionist and verismo styles in the more obscure *Katerina Ismailova* made it incompatible with what was favoured at the Opéra de Paris in 1964. At least at this mid-point of the century, the company's focus seems to have been on staging works whose success could be reasonably guaranteed: not an unreasonable strategy given its status as France's premier opera house. Its conservatism can also be understood, according to Nigel Simeone, by considering the various strikes and disputes over working conditions that had plagued the company since the Liberation, as well as its ageing infrastructure—all of which would not be resolved until the early 1970s.²⁴ It is thus less surprising that the first performance of *Katerina Ismailova*—a work that had never been staged in France, even in its initial version—would be given by a smaller company outside of the capital. Furthermore, as the Opéra de Nice's Artistic Director Ferdinand Aymé (1899–1982) had previously expressed his desire to 'not overlook today's art in any way,'²⁵ being the first to present Shostakovich's revised opera to a French audience would have given his company a point of difference from the tried and tested programming on offer in Paris at the time. The 1964–65 season in Nice purportedly aimed to 'reconcile the past and the future' (*'concilier le passé et le futur'*); in addition to *Katerina Ismailova*, it featured two contemporary operas and one lesser-known opera by Pierre-Louis Dietsch (1808–1865), alongside a more expected selection of nineteenth and early twentieth-century favourites (shown in Table 4.4).²⁶

Table 4.2. Operas performed at the Opéra de Paris in April 1964²⁷

Composer	Opera	Year composed
Hector Berlioz	<i>La Damnation de Faust</i> [légende dramatique]	1846
Charles Gounod	<i>Faust</i>	1859
Giuseppe Verdi	<i>Rigoletto</i>	1851
Richard Wagner	<i>Tannhäuser</i>	1845
Georges Bizet	<i>Carmen</i>	1875
Verdi	<i>La Traviata</i>	1853
Gaetano Donizetti	<i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>	1835

²⁴ Nigel Simeone, 'France and the Mediterranean,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera*, ed. Mervyn Cooke (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), 142–43.

²⁵ René Rousseau, 'L'Opéra de Nice, carrefour de l'audace et de la tradition' (L'Opéra de Nice season 1964–65 brochure), 9. Box 3R17/5 (Archives municipales de Nice). 'Ne négliger aucune des voies de l'art d'aujourd'hui.'

²⁶ Rousseau, 'L'Opéra de Nice, carrefour de l'audace et de la tradition.'

²⁷ 'Journal de l'Opéra,' *Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra (Paris)*, 1 January 1964, 321.

Table 4.3: Remaining operas performed at the Opéra de Paris in 1964²⁸

Composer	Opera	Year composed
Giacomo Puccini	<i>Tosca</i>	1900
Camille Saint-Saëns	<i>Samson et Delila</i>	1877
Gounod	<i>Roméo et Juliette</i>	1867
Jean-Philippe Rameau	<i>Les Indes galantes</i>	1735
Ludwig van Beethoven	<i>Fidelio</i>	1805
Vincenzo Bellini	<i>Norma</i>	1831
Verdi	<i>Don Carlos</i>	1867
Richard Strauss	<i>Salomé</i>	1905

Table 4.4: Operas performed in the Opéra de Nice 1964–65 season²⁹

Composer	Opera	Year composed/completed
Wagner	<i>Parsifal</i>	1882
Debussy	<i>Pelléas et Mélisande</i>	1898
Strauss	<i>Elektra</i>	1909
Shostakovich	<i>Katerina Ismailova</i>	1962
Emil Petrovics	<i>C'est la guerre</i>	1964
Pierre-Louis Dietsch	<i>Le Vaisseau fantôme</i>	1842
Bizet	<i>Carmen</i>	1875
Verdi	<i>Otello</i>	1887
Saint-Saëns	<i>Samson et Delila</i>	1877
Hans Werner Henze	<i>Elegy for Young Lovers</i>	1961

With this distinction emerging between opera programming in Nice and Paris in 1964, it is helpful to refer to Katharine Ellis's work on opera in the French provinces, and her recent call for music historians to investigate instances in which the French provinces displayed disagreement with, or 'evidence of the building of alternative systems of culture' to, Paris.³⁰ Up until 1964, the available press sources have indicated that the French provinces engaged less with Shostakovich's music than the capital, but since cities outside the centre led the way in

²⁸ 'Journal de l'Opéra,' 315–37. N.B. this table does not account for the ballet and symphonic concerts also performed at the Opéra de Paris (although, in 1964 none of these performances featured music by Soviet composers).

²⁹ Rousseau, 'L'Opéra de Nice, carrefour de l'audace et de la tradition.'

³⁰ Katharine Ellis, 'Taking the Provinces Seriously,' *Muzikologija* 27 (2019): 55.

programming Shostakovich's opera from this point onwards, we may choose to read the engagement in Bordeaux and Lyon in the previous chapter as foreshadowing future developments. That we shift our focus to regional centres from the 1960s also ties in with French policy on a national scale, specifically the push for decentralisation: the movement whose goal was to grant autonomy to the country's municipalities and departments, which at the time were controlled by a centralised administration. France's decentralisation laws did not pass until 1982, but the first (failed) attempt to do so in the twentieth century came in 1969, meaning the idea of a decentralised nation was starting to gain traction among the political Left around the same time as Shostakovich's opera had its first French performance, in a city seven hundred kilometres from Paris.³¹

The French Premiere of *Katerina Ismailova*

Despite its distance from the capital, the sense of opulence and grandeur one would expect at the Opéra de Paris was certainly not lacking in Nice. *Katerina Ismailova* was conducted by Jean Périssou (1924–2019), the musical director of the Opéra de Nice who had formerly worked as an assistant to Igor Markevitch. The *mise-en-scène* was conceived by Pierre Médecin, the brother of the local mayor and a member of the wealthy and influential Médecin family, which had resided in Nice since the early nineteenth century.³² Known for his interpretations of German opera, particularly Wagner and Strauss, as well as his tendency to overspend budgets,³³ Médecin's staging for the Soviet work (shown in Figure 4.2) was described by the local press as 'particularly compelling' (*particulièrement écrasant*).³⁴ The local daily *Nice Matin* described the production as an 'artistic event of the highest importance,' which 'the great Russian composer Shostakovich' had apparently promised to attend.³⁵ Unfortunately, the composer's apologies were sent from Moscow; *Nice Matin* reported the morning after the second performance that Shostakovich was bedridden with illness and unable to make the trip.³⁶

³¹ Yves Mény, 'Decentralisation in Socialist France: The Politics of Pragmatism,' *West European Politics* 7, no. 1 (1984): 65.

³² The Médecin dynasty began with Alexandre, a lawyer who was elected Mayor of Nice in 1866. The youngest of his four sons, Jean, also dedicated his life to public affairs; at the time of the *Katerina Ismailova* premiere he had held the mayor's office in Nice for thirty-two years. Jean's son Jacques subsequently succeeded him as mayor until 1990, when he resigned due to suspicion of corruption (for which he was jailed in 1993).

³³ Roger-Louis Bianchini, 'Les Médecin,' *L'Express*, 1 November 2001.

³⁴ Jean Magnet, 'La Création à Nice de « Katerina Ismailova » de Chostakovitch,' *Nice Matin*, 8 April 1964, 6.

³⁵ Magnet, 'La Création à Nice de « Katerina Ismailova », ' 6. 'Évènement artistique de toute première importance... Le grand compositeur russe Chostakovitch a d'ailleurs promis de venir assister.'

³⁶ Jean Magnet, 'L'Autre Soir, à l'Opéra de Nice, Chostakovitch, malade, n'a pas assisté à la création de « Katerina Ismailova », ' *Nice Matin*, 12 April 1964, 5.

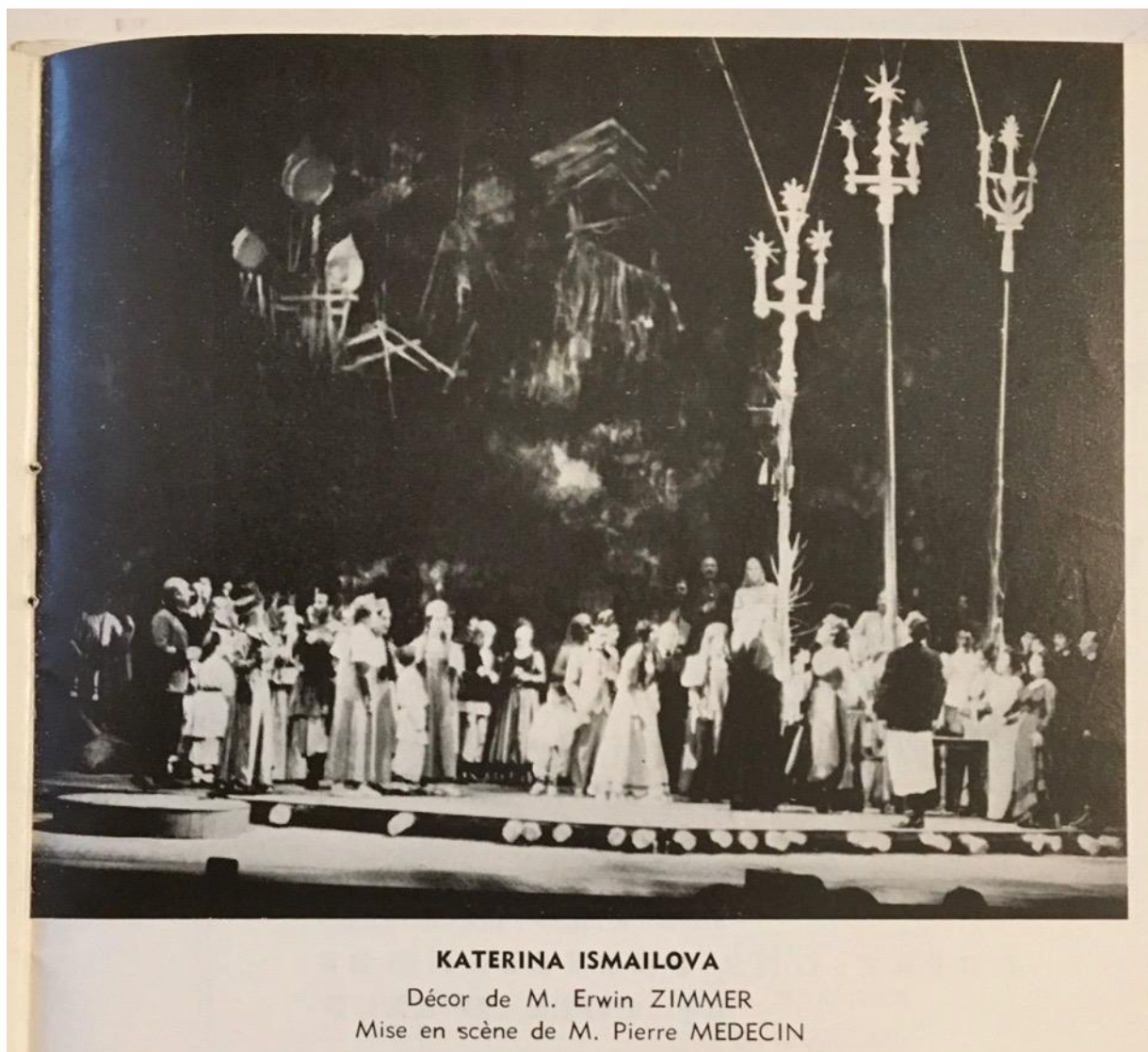


Figure 4.2. Pierre Médecin's stage design for the Nice production of *Katerina Ismailova*.
 Photo: J. Munch. Archives municipales de Nice

The local press in Nice showed great enthusiasm towards *Katerina Ismailova*, both leading up to and following the premiere. Before examining the coverage, however, it is worth noting that this is the first time in this thesis in which I will examine extended press reports of Shostakovich's music outside of Paris. As will be seen here and more so in the following chapters, the tenor of the provincial press when covering large musical events offers quite a contrast to the specialist, often *élite* style of criticism associated with Parisian concert reports.³⁷ Yet, the difference between music criticism in Paris and the provinces is complex and dependent on context, so for the purpose of this chapter I will highlight only the most crucial distinction: their respective purposes. Where musical reports in Paris were traditionally concerned with offering opinion or

³⁷ On music criticism in the French provinces, see Katharine Ellis, *French Musical Life: Local Dynamics in the Century to World War II* (Oxford: OUP, 2022), 19–20.

critique, those in the provinces—at least at this mid-century point and beyond—served primarily to promote local events and foster community engagement. For this reason, perhaps in combination with the apparent quality of the production, the reception of *Katerina Ismailova* in Nice was exceedingly positive.

Two days before the first performance, an informative article in *Nice Matin* introduced its local readership both to the opera and its history, as well as the team involved in the production. The local journalist Jean Magnet included quoted passages from Markevitch, who was spending time in his villa in Antibes. Markevitch firstly offered his thoughts on the significance of the premiere being in Nice:

‘I personally consider this to be a magnificent initiative of the Opéra de Nice ... At a time when Parisians are seriously discussing when it will be appropriate to grant decentralisation to the “provinces,” I am pleased that Nice has taken action. Why did I come here tonight? Because it interests me, because it’s a very big event in France.’³⁸

Markevitch gave the journalist a summary of the ‘Muddle Instead of Music’ affair and how the opera had been reprised by the Maliy Opera the previous year. He also spoke to the importance of the work from a Russian perspective: ‘In my opinion, this is one of three or four *grandes œuvres* of Shostakovich. The subject is wonderful. It is drawn from a novel by Leskov who, for us Russians, is a bit like Balzac for you.’³⁹ Finally, the journalist mentioned how Périssou, who was conducting the orchestra, had judged Shostakovich’s score ‘exciting and admirably orchestrated’ (*enthousiasmante et admirablement orchestrée*). In response, Markevitch referred to a comment Périssou had made to him, that it is ‘an orchestration to which we are not accustomed. The addition of brass gives a lot of power and it all sounds magnificent. It’s real opera, real theatre.’⁴⁰ By ‘we,’ it is unclear whether Périssou meant French listeners in general, or the musicians of Nice specifically who would be playing the score; but whichever was the case, this reference to what is customary in France does not seem to reflect any negative nationalist sentiment—Périssou instead seems to focus on what French people can gain from experiencing a Shostakovich opera. A tinge of national pride can perhaps be detected at the end of Magnet’s article, however, when he wrote: ‘The role of *Katerina* will be played by Erika Wien, though we

³⁸ Markevitch quoted in Magnet, ‘La Création à Nice de « *Katerina Ismailova* »,’ *Nice Matin*, 6.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid. ‘C’est, dit-il, une orchestration dont nous ne sommes pas coutumiers. L’adjonction des cuivres donne beaucoup de puissance et tout cela sonne merveilleusement. C’est du vrai opéra, du vrai théâtre.’

find in the cast the names of Julien Haas, Jean Gray, among many others.⁴¹ That the adverb ‘*cependant*’ was used after crediting Wien (1928–2019), the leading Austrian mezzo soprano, gives the impression that Magnet was assuring his readers that the cast would still feature plenty of French talent. Both Haas—the Belgian baritone who played the role of Boris—and Gray—the tenor who played Sergei—were regulars at the Opéra de Nice. The remaining lead role, Zinovy (Katerina’s husband), was played by the tenor Jean Giraudeau (1916–1995), who performed mainly at the Opéra-Comique and the Opéra de Paris.

Once again, *Le Monde* sent Lonchampt to report on and review the premiere of *Katerina Ismailova* in Nice. His first article also reproduced Markevitch’s comments, albeit in a slightly different wording to *Nice Matin* (indicating that Markevitch had probably addressed a crowd of reporters at a media call). A detail that Lonchampt expanded on in his report, though, was Markevitch’s verbal summary of why the original opera was denounced. He described the ‘acerbic criticisms that *Pravda* journalists had held for this work,’ and how

these criticisms were due to a rather unusual reason: Stalin, who attended the performance, was seated in the box right next to the brass, and as these brass instruments play an important role in the score, he came out of there uncomfortable and disgruntled, and it was of course out of the question to contradict him.⁴²

After the opening night, another review from the same local journalist appeared in *Nice Matin*. Like with his previous article, Magnet provided a summary—in short, to-the-point prose—of the work’s infamous backstory, with a little more detail this time. The journalist demonstrated his familiarity with the work (a misprint in the original title notwithstanding) by making a light-hearted reference to the storyline—Katerina’s decision to give Boris mushrooms laced with rat poison:

Shostakovich’s work *Lady Macbeth of Minsk* [sic], renamed *Katerina Ismailova* in its French version by Michel Hofmann, has known various fortunes. Initial success, stopped by a brutal ban of Stalin—something we understand very well. The real ‘purges’ of Russia were enough without adding to them theatrical ones, even under the fractional variety of rat poison in a plate of mushrooms. Since then, time has gone on. For reasons that are not to be appreciated here, Shostakovich sees himself again as the official composer of the Soviet Union. His entire body of work has been put on a pedestal (*est sur le grand*

⁴¹ Magnet, ‘La Création à Nice de « Katerina Ismailova »,’ *Nice Matin*, 6. ‘Le rôle de Katerina sera tenu par Erika Wien, cependant qu’on trouve dans la distribution les noms de Julien Haas, de Jean Gray, parmi bien des autres.’

⁴² Jacques Lonchampt, ‘« Katerina Ismailova » de Dimitri Chostakovitch à L’Opéra de Nice,’ *Le Monde*, 7 April 1964.

pavois). It deserves this. The music of *Katerina Ismailova*, wonderfully exhibited by the Nice Philharmonic Orchestra and Jean Périsson, rarely so well inspired, proves it. Especially in the beautiful interludes.⁴³

As for his review of the performance, excepting some jocular commentary on Wien's unsatisfying French diction ('This worthy singer would have done much better to sing in German'), Magnet offered the cast nothing but praise. He placed Haas at 'the forefront of a rich performance,' for he was as good an actor as he was a singer, and came across as 'perhaps the most Russian of them all.'⁴⁴ Gray received Magnet's second highest commendation, and the journalist's description of him as an 'excellent tenor on which the attention of the Opéra de Paris would do well to focus' again reveals the pride in regional achievement that coloured the reception of this production.⁴⁵ As is standard for an opera review, Magnet also listed the names of the supporting cast (Elise Kahn, Pierre Froumentry, Jacques Doucet, Paul Mouron, M.B. Val, Etienne Bernard, Victor Autran, Carlo Silverio, Francois Angeli), crediting them all as solid performers, and dedicated several lines to the success of the chorus, direction, stage design, and costumes. He concluded that the production as a whole was a success, even with the artistic license taken in the French translation and staging:

The success of Shostakovich's work, even if it evokes only from afar the spirit of the original (adapted to a regional setting) (*'transposé sur le plan paysan'*), proved to be very lively. It deserved—if only for the breadth of the means applied, the craziness of the creators—the result obtained.⁴⁶

The final section of Magnet's article covered a reception at Nice's Villa Masséna on the morning after the first performance 'in honour of the artists who participated in this premiere,' all of whom were 'thanked warmly' in an address given by the mayor, Jean Médecin.⁴⁷ Magnet ran through a list of important attendees, whose positions included a representative of Sergei Vinogradov, the USSR's Ambassador to France; the Consuls of Great Britain and San Marino; various former ministers, councillors and other parliamentarians of France; the President of the Alliance Française; a regional delegate of SACEM; Mr Calviera, the Secretary General of City

⁴³ Magnet, 'L'Autre Soir, à l'Opéra de Nice,' 5. Magnet's review was also syndicated in the (now defunct) local newspaper *Le Provençal*.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 'Excellent ténor sur lequel l'attention de l'Opéra de Paris ferait bien de se porter.'

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 'En l'honneur des artistes qui ont participé à cette création et que M. Jean Médecin, miare [sic], remercia chaleureusement dans son allocution.'

Hall; Mr Dugelay, the City Councillor and Conservator of Water and Forests; and of course, the Opéra de Nice's Director, Ferdinand Aymé, alongside the conductor, director, and selected cast members of the recent production: Périssou, Pierre Médecin, Wien, Gray and Doucet. Such an impressive guest list testifies to what a major event this was not only for the local community, but also for the country more broadly.

In *Le Monde*, however, Lonchampt was more difficult to please. He began his review by comparing the response of the local audience to what he had observed in London:

While the English audience had shown unbelievable enthusiasm for the premiere of *Katerina Ismailova* at Covent Garden, the audience *niçois*, very strongly mixed with Parisians, seemed only somewhat interested in Shostakovich's famous opera, performed for the first time in France in an excellent translation by Michel Hofmann.⁴⁸

Rather than attributing it to the particular performance, Lonchampt presented his own, cultural reasoning to explain this discrepancy:

The difference in these reactions can perhaps be explained by reasons of sensibility: the French being both logical and sentimental, the *niçois* or Parisian spectator was shocked by the blending of styles (which is the rule with Shostakovich); the apparent illogical nature of music whose elements continuously contradict themselves, where tragedy and burlesque are constantly mixed; and finally, by the very framework of an opera where all the characters are unlikeable.⁴⁹

Incidentally, Lonchampt's explanation here highlights the same problem as his review of the London production (Shostakovich's blending of styles), so rather than the French possessing a unique sense of logic and sentimentality, Lonchampt was probably projecting his own discomfort onto his fellow audience members. In fact, this review reiterates many of the comments that Lonchampt made on the storyline and aesthetic of the opera after seeing it in London, yet he did elaborate in some places. He classified the work as what he called '*l'opéra de dérision*,' and extended his analysis of the plot to acknowledge its '*perspective marxiste*,' since 'Katerina, who takes a lover, then kills her father-in-law, husband and rival, is the victim of tyrannical social structures; she alone tries to escape the hell of society of her time.'⁵⁰ Furthermore, Lonchampt emphasised the importance of the orchestra more than in his previous

⁴⁸ Jacques Lonchampt, '« Katerina Ismaïlova » de Dimitri Chostakovitch,' *Le Monde*, 16 April 1964.

⁴⁹ Lonchampt, '« Katerina Ismaïlova ».'

⁵⁰ Ibid.

commentary; he wrote that it is ‘the only true spokesman of the composer,’ and that it ‘must be listened to,

because only [the orchestra] is truly tragic, and it lends its dimension to the puppets who play their bloody game on stage. The hatred of Katerina for her stepfather, the hopeless love at first sight of the young woman for the thug who will be her lover, the whole sinister love scene, which ends with the murder of the husband, not to mention the powerful interludes, all find in the orchestra a commentary of violence and extraordinary intensity that leaves no doubt about the expressive strength of Shostakovich.⁵¹

Lonchampt again commented on the effectiveness of *Katerina Ismailova*’s assortment of styles, and even referred specifically to his review of the Covent Garden performance. He reiterated that ‘the combination (*alliage*) of these heterogeneous elements

hinders the grandeur and meaning of the drama; to be conceived and realised from a ‘dialectical’ perspective is not enough to make it a masterpiece. But in the same way as Hindemith’s *Cardillac*, for very different reasons, *Katerina Ismailova* is no less fascinating, and marks a turning point [in Shostakovich’s career].⁵²

The critic was more generous regarding details specific to the local production, stating that the ‘realisation of L’Opéra de Nice deserves strong praise: it is of a level comparable to that of Covent Garden.’⁵³ Lonchampt was especially complimentary towards Médecin’s staging, the ‘beautiful dramatic soprano tone’ of Erika Wien (although he too noted that her performance ‘lacked homogeneity’), and the skill of the entire French cast. His highest praise, however, was allotted to Périssou, who ‘superbly directed the performance, galvanising his orchestra, making even the smallest detail sparkle of this extraordinarily brilliant and complex score. Thus Nice, like Lyon, Marseille, or Mulhouse, proved to us that lyrical art in France still has excellent servitors.’⁵⁴

In 1966, a Soviet recording of *Katerina Ismailova* was made available in France on LP discs (shown in Figure 4.3) courtesy of Le Chant du Monde, which held the rights to the opera in France.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid. ‘La réalisation de l’Opéra de Nice mérite de vifs éloges : elle est d’un niveau comparable à celle de Covent Garden.’

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Dimitri Shostakovich, *Katerina Ismailova*, Solistes, Chœurs et Orchestre du Théâtre Stanislavski, Gennady Provorov, Le Chant du Monde/Melodiya LDX 78400/03, 4x LP set, mono. The rights transferred from Le Chant du Monde to Wise Music Classical in 2016; see ‘*Katerina Ismailova*, Opera in Four Acts (9 Tableaux), Op. 114 (1963),’ *Wise Music Classical*, www.wisemusicclassical.com/work/33010/Katerina-Izmailova-Opera-in-four-acts-9-tableaux--Dmitri-Shostakovich.

While the release does not appear to have received much attention in the Parisian press, it was broadcast publicly in Bordeaux (with the assistance of the Association France-URSS), in celebration of an important milestone. It was announced in the local newspaper, *Sud Ouest*, that ‘On the occasion of the sixtieth birthday of Dmitri Shostakovich, the Association France-URSS invites you to a public talk on Friday 25 March at 8:45pm, at the Faculty of Arts (Amphithéâtre Leroux).’ The paper specified that the talk would be ‘accompanied by a listening of the discs of *Katerina Ismailova*, opera in four acts by Shostakovich, composed after a novella by Leskov.’⁵⁶ This event reflects continued interest from the French provinces in Shostakovich’s music, to an extent that the occasion of the composer’s sixtieth birthday seems to have been a more significant event in Bordeaux than it was in Paris.



Figure 4.3. Le Chant du Monde’s 4x LP box set of *Katerina Ismailova*

⁵⁶ ‘Association France-U.R.S.S.,’ *Sud Ouest*, 23 March 1966, 10.

Rentrer à Paris

Before returning to musical activity in Paris, it is worth outlining the crucial changes in French government to have occurred since the years outlined in the previous chapter. In September 1962, de Gaulle had sought an amendment to the constitution that would allow the public to directly elect their president, and his first election according to this system came in 1965 at the end of his initial term as president of the Fifth Republic. De Gaulle was only narrowly re-elected over the Socialist candidate François Mitterrand. By 1968 the Parisian public had grown tired of de Gaulle's patriarchal approach to governing, and on 3 May the Sorbonne exploded with student demonstrations; these soon spread unrest to other Parisian universities and then to factory workers, who, as 22% of the population, brought the nation effectively to a standstill.⁵⁷ The public agreed that de Gaulle was out of touch with modern French society, and he was forced to resign in 1969. His replacement, Georges Pompidou, elected over left and centre rivals, had shown leadership and nerve during the May '68 crisis, and subsequently adopted a more relaxed approach to foreign policy than de Gaulle. In domestic affairs his decisions were conservative and business oriented, leading to a revival of the political Left.

Prior to the election of Pompidou, de Gaulle had made significant advances in the fostering of Franco-Soviet relations. His historic visit to the USSR, made in June and July 1966, was the first official trip by a Western head of state. Figure 4.4 shows the warm welcome he received upon arriving in Moscow in 1966. Angela Stent writes that on an international level, the visit 'enhanced de Gaulle's status,

allowing him to claim that he alone of all Western statesmen had a privileged relationship with the West's major antagonist. The visit also enhanced his prestige domestically, since at that time the French intelligentsia was largely sympathetic to the Soviet Union and critical of what they viewed as primitive American anti-communism.⁵⁸

Although relations between France and the Soviet Union began to deteriorate after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, it is still important to acknowledge the mutual consultation

⁵⁷ On May '68, see Chris Reynolds, *Memories of May '68: France's Convenient Consensus* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011); Julian Jackson, Anna-Louise Milne and James S. Williams, eds, *May 68: Rethinking France's Last Revolution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); and Julie Pagis, *May '68: Shaping Political Generations* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018).

⁵⁸ Angela Stent, *Franco-Soviet Relations from de Gaulle to Mitterrand: Report to the National Council for Soviet and East European Research* (Washington, D.C.: National Council for Soviet and East European Research, 1989), 5–6.

and cooperation that occurred under de Gaulle's leadership, as it helped to construct the framework on which future, successful relations between the two states would be built.⁵⁹

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 4.4. Muscovites welcoming de Gaulle during his visit to the USSR, 20 June 1966.
Photo: SPUTNIK/alamy stock photo

France would be led by conservative governments for the remainder of the 1970s, but crucial developments still occurred in the left wing of politics. Mitterrand managed to unite the SFIO, the PCF, and the newly formed Parti radical de gauche (PRG) in 1972, and after the unexpected death of Pompidou he declared his candidacy as representative of the united Left. Mitterrand was only just defeated by the independent Republican candidate Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who appointed the young Jacques Chirac as his Prime Minister. Chirac challenged the president on several issues, though, and was dismissed in 1976. He subsequently persuaded the divided Gaullists to join him in a new party, the Rassemblement pour la République. Mitterrand's left-wing alliance would ultimately dissolve in 1978 when the Communists withdrew their support, a sudden collapse that alienated many leftist voters and allowed the conservatives to regain control over the lower house at the next election. Still, up until 1978, the divisions in the Right

⁵⁹ Stent, *Franco-Soviet Relations from de Gaulle to Mitterrand*, 6.

strengthened and opened new prospects for the Left, which are perhaps reflected in the programming of, and responses to, Shostakovich's symphonies in Paris during the 1970s. These symphonies—which were still the archetypal cultural representation of communism from a Western perspective—were as present in Paris during the 1970s as they had been in the years immediately following World War II. The final sections of this chapter will provide an overview of their reception in this period, as well as of the press's reporting after the death of the composer in 1975.

Symphonic Resurgences: Nos. 8 and 5

In February 1969, a month after Pompidou announced his candidature for Presidency, Kondrashin returned to Paris to perform Symphony No. 8 with the touring Moscow Philharmonic. The Eighth would have been an obscure Shostakovich symphony in France at the end of the 1960s, having not been performed in Paris since its premiere in March 1946. In *Le Monde*, Lonchampt described the seemingly spectacular experience of watching Kondrashin live in concert:

With Shostakovich's Symphony (almost unknown in France), the conductor could deploy all his talent, kneading the orchestra with great gestures and obtaining, with an iron discipline, extreme integrity of melodic lines, clarity of attacks, brilliance of unusual colours; the Orchestre national, excellent that evening, paid tribute to him by joining in with the very warm applause of the public.⁶⁰

That Lonchampt considered this work 'almost unknown' to French people resulted in him providing a detailed interpretation of its structure and programmatic content:

The work is also magnificent. Written in 1943 at the height of the war (Stalingrad), it bears the mark of it and yet keeps hope alive. The initial adagio clutches the heart with an icy melody from the violins, which develops slowly to infinity (who would be capable today of writing a 'quartet' song of such scope?). Little by little, this desolate plaint changes, through harmonic lamentations and beating of drums, into a sort of air of panic, penetrated by surprising hints of fairground music, falling back, through a moving solo from the English horn, into sadness. After a scherzo that is grimacing and caricatural but carried away in tragic momentum, it is the image of war in the form of a toccata, a sort of rolling mill of bodies and hearts, perpetual movement strewn with cries

⁶⁰ Jacques Lonchampt, 'Kyrill Kondrachine et la « 8^e Symphonie » de Chostakovitch,' *Le Monde*, 1 February 1969.

of horror. The work then gathers itself in an admirable passacaglia, large and tunnelling (*souterraine*), on which very beautiful wind embroideries roll, and from which, little by little, hope will be reborn.⁶¹

When Lonchamp reviewed the Eighth Symphony upon its subsequent appearance in Paris in November 1976, he gave a more succinct account of the work, and no mention of it being unfamiliar (perhaps owing to the Kondrashin recording that had been made available in the meantime). On this occasion, the symphony was performed by the Orchestre de Paris, with guest conductor Mstislav Rostropovich. The programme was entirely Russian and Soviet, comprising Mussorgsky, Prokofiev, Rimsky-Korsakov, and Shostakovich. Despite Lonchamp (and perhaps by extension, his fellow French audience members) seeming better acquainted with the Eighth Symphony than seven-and-a-half years earlier, it is worth mentioning that the critic evaluated Rostropovich's interpretation of Mussorgsky's *Night on Bald Mountain* (he apparently adopted a tempo '*ultrarapide*')—a critique that one would only make if they were suitably familiar with the work. No such commentary was made on the symphony, so in comparison to a nineteenth-century Russian favourite, it was still relatively obscure. Lonchamp's assessment both of the work, and the conductor's performance of it, was that Rostropovich 'became one with Shostakovich's spectacular Eighth Symphony

as if he had written it himself, as if the superb Orchestre de Paris were his immense cello. In the desert moors of war, anguish and terror rises. But at the end of human distress, the first light of hope dawns, a kingdom of peace and trust, a dream of beauty so sweet that we cannot treat it with derision. An interpretation of a Herculean faith.⁶²

In another revival, Symphony No. 5 too resurfaced, this time in an Orchestre national programme guest conducted by Hans Wallat in February 1971. The symphony followed a rendition of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4 by a then 23-year-old Joseph Kalichstein. Although the musicologist and music journalist Anne Rey (1944–2012) wrote in her review for *Le Monde* that 'throughout the concert, the Orchestre national was at its best,' she also declared that, during the course of Shostakovich's symphony, 'interest sometimes waned.'⁶³ Now a thirty-

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Jacques Lonchamp, 'Vichnevskaya, Rostropovitch et l'Orchestre de Paris,' *Le Monde*, 29 November 1976.

⁶³ Anne Rey, 'Hans Wallat et Joseph Kalichstein,' *Le Monde*, 27 February 1971. 'Au cours de laquelle [la symphonie] l'intérêt venait parfois, cependant, à fléchir. Tout au long du concert, l'Orchestre national s'est montré sous son meilleur jour.'

five-year-old work, the Fifth sounded to Rey like something composed by Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev or Mahler:

An equal simplicity in the orchestral effects, obtained by the balance and the malleability of the ensemble, fortunately then blurred certain abuses of *parlando* which, in the Fifth Symphony of Shostakovich, are very reminiscent of Tchaikovsky. Contrasted and full of lifeblood in its lively episodes, military and biting in the riding passages (*chevauchées*) of the first movement, and the fanfares of the fourth, the beautiful interpretation of Hans Wallat oriented this symphony more towards Prokofiev and Mahler.⁶⁴

This critique indicates that even at the beginning of 1971, Symphony No. 5 was still not fully embraced by the Parisian critic. But Jacques Lonchamp's reviews in *Le Monde* tell another story. Given the amount of attention he had given Shostakovich in his writings since 1961, by the 1970s it would be fair to describe him as an advocate of the composer's music—probably the greatest, or at least the most consistent advocate active in the French press at the time. Symphony No. 5 reappeared yet again in December 1972—less than two years after its last performance in Paris—in an Orchestre de Paris programme guest conducted by Hiroyuki Iwaki. This performance would be the work's final one in Paris during the composer's lifetime. Prior to reviewing the concert, Lonchamp made reference to the last time Iwaki had conducted in Paris (a supposedly '*tumultueuse exécution*' of Stockhausen's *Mixtur* (1964) in 1967), and affirmed that the conductor had redeemed himself with his recent Parisian concerts, which had been 'testament to his great class.'⁶⁵ According to Lonchamp, Iwaki gave up his 'kind mask' while directing Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony, and 'electricity seem[ed] to spring from his body.'⁶⁶ Several further lines describe the conductor's emotive performance, until Lonchamp wrote that Iwaki "shapes," with an incomparable accuracy, this majestic symphony,

which transcends and carries away like chaff a thousand motifs that are often vulgar, caricatural, grandiloquent or absurd, in the image of the powerful flow of life, which rolls and erases the dust of the events until the finale, with its accents of brilliant victory in a tragic atmosphere, which is the same image, grimacing, enigmatic and fascinating, as Shostakovich.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Rey, 'Hans Wallat et Joseph Kalichstein.'

⁶⁵ Jacques Lonchamp, 'Hiroyuki Iwaki,' *Le Monde*, 26 December 1972. 'Ses récents concerts à la tête de l'Orchestre de Paris témoignent de sa grande classe.'

⁶⁶ Lonchamp, 'Hiroyuki Iwaki.' 'Iwaki abandonne ce masque aimable. L'électricité semble jaillir de son corps.'

⁶⁷ Ibid.

This reading of Symphony No. 5 as representative of the composer's own image—grimacing, fascinating and enigmatic—represents another evolution in the work's afterlife in France. Clearly, Lonchampt felt more warmly towards the symphony than his colleague Rey; yet, it is interesting that, even well before the publication of *Testimony*, he found meaning in the symphony's perplexities by relating them to the composer's personality, or at least how this had been represented to him in the media, books, and second-hand sources (Lonchampt never actually met Shostakovich, although he did have several encounters with Rostropovich from the late 1970s).⁶⁸ Such comments are probably the result of what Mark Evan Bonds calls the 'Beethoven Syndrome' (where listeners hear autobiography in composers' instrumental works), as well as Shostakovich's own tendency to entertain the idea that links between his life and works could be found—which, as Bonds writes, 'encouraged the notion that links of some kind did in fact exist, that his works could indeed be heard as an outward manifestation of his inner self, even if that "true" self was ultimately indecipherable.'⁶⁹

Lonchampt's next review of the Fifth Symphony would occur five and a half years later. This time, the work was programmed alongside the overture from *Ivan the Terrible* (1872), and performed by the Orchestre national with guest conductor Yevgeny Svetlanov, then principal conductor of the USSR State Symphony Orchestra. The performance took place in the Salle Pleyel on 12 April 1978. Lonchampt was less struck by the symphony than he was previously; on this occasion, he wrote that Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony 'appears of ice, without him [Shostakovich] seeking to warm the solitude, and of fire when he comes to exalting an optimism that is very Soviet and not always convincing, with an authority that does not tolerate doubt.'⁷⁰ But perhaps this new, more austere reading can be attributed to the conductor's interpretation; Lonchampt was struck by the mere presence of Svetlanov, which he felt 'would have already been enough to give an exceptional character to the 'Prestige de la musique' concert,

for this Soviet conductor with the face of a hard worker, jaw projected forward, conferred on the Orchestre national a sonorous depth and internal energy that are rather rare. We do not play around with music, according to Svetlanov, who imposes his conception with gestures that are simple, clean, and without reply, and still finds the time to turn around, while conducting, and direct a long glare to the ill-fated coughing spectator.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Jacques Lonchampt, *Histoire de ma vie* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2014), 87–90.

⁶⁹ Mark Evan Bonds, *The Beethoven Syndrome: Hearing Music as Autobiography* (Oxford: OUP, 2020), 187.

⁷⁰ Jacques Lonchampt, 'Comme Paganini peut-être... Gidon Kremer,' *Le Monde*, 14 April 1978.

⁷¹ Lonchampt, 'Comme Paganini peut-être.'

New Symphonies: Nos. 14 and 15

In addition to the revival of the two earlier symphonies, Symphony No. 14 in G minor, op. 135 received its Parisian premiere at the end of 1971. This was the same year that Rey remarked upon the Fifth Symphony's difficulties in maintaining interest, and the Fourteenth seems to have fared only slightly better. In *Le Monde*, Lonchampt was bothered by the lack of interest he perceived towards the composer's latest symphony in Paris, and how this contrasted with the public's treatment of his concertos:

After Brahms, Bruckner, Mahler, and Sibelius, it is Shostakovich's turn to be looked down upon by the Parisian public ... It is alright to go and hear one of his concertos when it is Oistrakh or Gendron who plays it, but the first performance in Paris of his Fourteenth Symphony—why would anyone be charitable enough to give him three quarters of an hour to listen to it? We found ourselves very few in number on Wednesday at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, huddling for warmth in the stalls, and happy that the composer had only used only a reduced string orchestra and percussion, after having feared that we would be less in number than the instrumentalists.⁷²

Lonchampt went on to build a somewhat elaborate defence of Shostakovich. He began by highlighting an important issue: 'In France, people refuse to admit that Shostakovich chose to express himself within the official system in which he grew up, and which in turn earned him praise, honours, Zhdanovian criticism, and prohibitions.'⁷³ There is undoubtedly truth to Lonchampt's statement here; Chapter Three of this thesis in particular presented numerous articles that discussed how Shostakovich's music was shaped by Soviet cultural policy, many of which implied that Shostakovich was not composing in a style in which he truly wanted to compose. Lonchampt also outlined the major events in Shostakovich's career leading up to his Fourteenth Symphony, namely how the Soviet press refused to engage with the 'Babi Yar' Symphony in 1962. But according to Lonchampt, the issues Shostakovich had faced thus far in his career were 'never a reason for him to question his musical commitment':

'I do not conceive, as far as I am concerned, of musical evolution outside of our socialist evolution,' he wrote in 1936, at the height of the turmoil. Should we therefore declare that a great character is incapable of manifesting itself through such a backwards

⁷² Jacques Lonchampt, 'La « 14^e Symphonie » de Chostakovitch,' *Le Monde*, 17 December 1971.

⁷³ Lonchampt, 'La « 14^e Symphonie » de Chostakovitch.'

language? That would be akin to blaming Solzhenitsyn for not writing like [Michel] Butor.⁷⁴

Lonchampt's support of Shostakovich was now such that he was willing to express publicly his view that the composer's belief in the socialist movement was authentic—he was not forced by the government to do anything he did not wish to do. Although we saw a similar brand of advocacy published in *L'Humanité* in earlier decades, Lonchampt's is unique in that he did not identify as a Communist, so there was little to gain from him expressing this opinion if he did not believe it to be true.⁷⁵

Returning to Symphony No. 14, however, Lonchampt explained to his readership that it premiered seven years after the 'cursed' symphony ('Babi Yar'), that it was dedicated to Benjamin Britten, and that it is similar to both Schumann's *Spring Symphony* 'in its structure as a cycle of poems,' and Britten's *War Requiem* in its 'harrowing meditation on death, close to the songs on poems by [Wilfred] Owen.'⁷⁶ He also noted that it was Shostakovich's first time using non-Russian texts, but subsequently implied that the work's profound content transcends any construction of East versus West: 'Should we detect in it a hand stretched out towards the West? But then, it is brotherhood that unites, from one end of the earth to the other, those who are going to die, and do not know what for.'⁷⁷

Lonchampt likened the sentiment of the symphony to that of Rainer Maria Rilke's poem *Schlußstück*, which provides the text of the final movement. He distilled the meaning of the poem into a statement about death standing guard over our happiness ('*La mort puissante monte la garde en plein bonheur*'),⁷⁸ and declared that 'this feeling is not new in Shostakovich';

in his work, the personal anguish of fate (the Fourth, Fifth, Eighth and Tenth Symphonies) always coexists with visions that are communal, tragic, epic, or optimistic (the Seventh, Ninth, Eleventh, Twelfth and Thirteenth). But here, he expresses himself in the open, with extreme force.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ In his memoirs, Lonchampt described his political views as broadly '*de gauche*,' but concedes that he was never overly interested in politics; it was only when he started working at *Le Monde* that he was encouraged by the editor to 'pick a side'. See Lonchampt, *Histoire de ma vie*, 78–79.

⁷⁶ Lonchampt, 'La « 14^e Symphonie » de Chostakovitch.' 'La symphonie maudite ... sa structure en cycle de poèmes ... cette méditation déchirante sur la mort proche des chants sur les poèmes d'Owen.'

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid. The text of the original poem reads: 'Der Tod ist groß. / Wir sind die Seinen / lachenden Munds. / Wenn wir uns mitten im Leben meinen / wagt er zu weinen / mitten in uns.'

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Following an in-depth account of how the work unfolds, the critic's concluding remarks show that, even though he felt that the work sometimes lacked coherence (and that the bass vocalist offered a less than technically sound performance), he allowed himself to be won over by the Fourteenth Symphony:

How could we reject the emotion that emanates from this work, in which Shostakovich grafts his lyricism closely onto the poems, occasionally at the expense of musical coherence? It reigned supreme in the very beautiful interpretation of the Orchestre national conducted by Jean Martinon, from which rose the warm, shimmering, and profound voice of Michèle Le Bris, and the beautiful but unfortunately not technically assured timbre of the bass, Boris Carmeli.⁸⁰

Similar to the case of the Thirteenth Symphony, Shostakovich's final symphony (No. 15 in A Major, op. 141) did not premiere in France near the time of its composition. Its Soviet premiere in January 1972 also does not appear to have been on the radar of French journalists. However, *Le Monde* did report on the work in 1974, when it was performed alongside Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony at the annual Bergen International Festival in Norway. Although he was charmed by the 'clearly outdated' conducting technique of Gennady Rozhdestvensky, Lonchamp was somewhat bemused by the Fifteenth Symphony, describing it as a 'very strange work.'⁸¹ One of the composer's final works, the musical language of Symphony No. 15 references Shostakovich's early style; or, as Pauline Fairclough puts it, it was the first work to convey 'a sense of the wheel coming full circle: the gaze back to his Leningrad youth.'⁸² While he may have found it unsettling, Lonchamp was at least able to identify and appreciate its array of musical references:

Writing with the speed and prolixity of a Russian novelist, Shostakovich pulls out all the stops; therefore, the course of this work is disconcerting: an annoying, fidgety allegretto in the style of the concertos or the Ninth Symphony, continuously bringing back the calvary charge of *William Tell*, a pensive and spectacular adagio that is covered by a veil of sadness; the little dark comedy of the scherzo with percussion; and the fantastic finale, which pits quotations of the funeral march from *Götterdämmerung* against a candid spring bouquet. Scattered throughout are a few twelve-tone series. But the memory persists—a haunting memory—of this unequal and splendid work.⁸³

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Jacques Lonchamp, 'Au Festival de Bergen : Météorologie et cordialité norvégiennes,' *Le Monde*, 29 May 1974. 'Une technique apparemment désuète ... une œuvre bien étrange.'

⁸² Pauline Fairclough, *Dmitry Shostakovich* (London: Reaktion Books, 2019), 168.

⁸³ Ibid.

More '70s Revivals: Symphonies Nos. 6 and 10

The 1970s in Paris saw two further revivals of Shostakovich symphonies: Symphony No. 6 in June 1974, and No. 10 in January 1975. Neither work had been performed live in Paris since their respective French premieres in 1947 and 1953, both given by touring American ensembles. The revivals were again led by a touring conductor—Yuri Temirkanov, then Principal Conductor of the Leningrad Symphony—but he worked on these occasions with two Parisian orchestras, first the Lamoureux and then the Orchestre de Paris. Temirkanov's first concert was reviewed by Anne Rey, who was evidently still not impressed by Shostakovich's music. Her comments reveal interesting views, though: that a typical Parisian concert audience is not interested in this kind of music, and the culture of listening around it is too unusual for the critic to critique as usual:

When Soviet Russia sends some of its best performers to France, when they include in the centre of their programme a cantata and an oratorio to the glory of Lenin, when music lovers give up their seats (at the Théâtre de la Ville) to an unusual, spontaneous, receptive audience, probably made up of works councils, when at last it is very clear that these works hit the mark, strike at the sensitive point, and even arouse great emotions in the ranks, it is better to give in, record the facts, and abstain from judging.⁸⁴

Nevertheless, Rey was impressed by the calibre of Temirkanov, describing him as 'a very great master despite his small size,' and remarking that 'the speed of his tempos says a lot about the virtuosity of his usual performers.'⁸⁵

When Symphony No. 10 was performed in Paris eight months later, it was Lonchampt reviewing for *Le Monde*, meaning its reception was inevitably warmer. The work was programmed on this occasion alongside Beethoven's Violin Concerto, performed by the legendary Leonid Kogan. Lonchampt agreed with Rey that Temirkanov's technique was impressive; he described the then thirty-seven-year-old conductor as 'possess[ing] the unimpeachable authority of the Soviet masters,' and noted that Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony's seemed 'made to his measure, so much so that this lyrical and highly dramatic work is an orchestral "body" of unbreakable continuity, despite its violently contrasting episodes.'⁸⁶ The remainder of the review indicates that, for Lonchampt, the Tenth Symphony was also rather unfamiliar. Instead of criticising the

⁸⁴ Anne Rey, 'Au Théâtre de la Ville : Deux œuvres à la gloire de Lénine,' *Le Monde*, 26 June 1974.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 'Très grand seigneur malgré sa petite taille'; 'La rapidité de ses tempos en disait long sur la virtuosité de ses exécutants habituels.'

⁸⁶ Jacques Lonchampt, 'Kogan, Temirkanov et la « X^e Symphonie » de Chostakovitch,' *Le Monde*, 24 January 1975.

interpretation, he put words to the sentiment of each aforementioned episode: the first movement was identified as a ‘meditation that sings from the depths, if not the abyss, at least of sadness,’ whereas the second (which is enduringly described post-*Testimony* as a portrait of Stalin) was explained as ‘puffs of haunting visions, like those images of war from which we cannot protect ourselves.’⁸⁷ His final remarks were that ‘in the third movement,

images of peace, a motionless game of calls, echoes, daydreams, mysterious resonances, penetrated by a sudden and violent celebration, all prepare the finale where springtime explodes in a mad rush, still penetrated by hints of sadness, but which gives way to elation, to joy perhaps, in a whirlwind of extreme precision. The Orchestre de Paris is equal to the best under a conductor of this calibre.’⁸⁸

Death of Shostakovich

On 9 August 1975, Shostakovich sadly gave in to his prolonged battle with illness. Although his death was primarily caused by lung cancer, *Le Monde* reported that it was due to a heart attack: the same information as had appeared in *The New York Times* (and presumably other Western outlets) the day prior.⁸⁹ The French newspaper also published an extensive tribute to the composer—a mixture of analysis and biography—crafted by none other than Jacques Lonchampt. While far too lengthy to present here in totality, this article does contain some telling remarks that are worth quoting in brief, for they once again show the critic’s defence of and sympathies towards the Soviet composer. After summarising the recent tragic news, Lonchampt wrote that Shostakovich remains a ‘great’ composer, but also a ‘misunderstood’ one, ‘perhaps no less in his country than abroad, where he is understood by way of simplistic clichés.’⁹⁰ Lonchampt then gave the composer’s biography, and commented on how his immense body of work was still presented in France ‘from a chaotic and contradictory angle,’ and consequently, ‘we still know only a small part of it, despite a rather abundant discography.’ The critic also made what would turn out to be an inaccurate prediction: that Shostakovich’s oeuvre ‘is bound to take, after the composer’s death, its true dimension, independent of the conflicts that it has gone through and that have often engendered it.’⁹¹ Nonetheless, there was a more

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, 285.

⁹⁰ Jacques Lonchampt, ‘La Mort du compositeur soviétique Dimitri Chostakovitch : L’Épopée et l’angoisse,’ *Le Monde*, 12 August 1975. ‘Dimitri Chostakovitch reste sans doute aujourd’hui un grand musicien mal compris, et non moins peut-être dans son pays qu’à l’étranger, où il est saisi à travers des clichés simplistes.’

⁹¹ Lonchampt, ‘La Mort du compositeur soviétique Dimitri Chostakovitch.’

accurate prediction about the composer's legacy made in one of the later paragraphs: 'we will learn to recognise that he was one of the great musicians of our time, of a size that is perhaps not very far from that of Tchaikovsky.'⁹² Shostakovich's death was also acknowledged outside of *Le Monde*, and indeed outside of Paris; the Bordeaux daily *Sud Ouest*, for example, prepared a tribute to the composer that celebrated the heroism of his 'Leningrad' Symphony (see Figure 4.5).



Figure 4.5. A tribute to Shostakovich from Bordeaux. *Sud Ouest*, 17 August 1975, 8

In October 1976, *Le Chant du Monde* honoured Shostakovich's death by releasing a fourteen-disc integral collection of his symphonies recorded by Kondrashin and the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra. Lonchampt described this release in *Le Monde* as 'the discographic

⁹² Ibid. 'On apprendra à reconnaître qu'il fut un des grands musiciens de notre époque, d'une taille qui n'est peut-être pas très éloignée de celle de Tchaïkovsky.'

event of this autumn, which comes to mitigate, one year after the death of the great Soviet composer, the shortcomings of concert societies in France.⁹³ The fact that no orchestra had performed Shostakovich in France in the last year had apparently not gone unnoticed.

Lonchampt also made the valid comparison between these and Mahler's symphonies, 'so long neglected,' and described the collection, comprising over ten hours of listening, as a 'veritable musical continent ... comparable to the romans-fleuves of Russian literature, with its cinematic and epic visions, its great meditations on human destiny.'⁹⁴

Since this article is the first French publication to encompass all fifteen of Shostakovich's symphonies, it seems fitting to end this chapter with Lonchampt's reflections on each one. He recommended his readers first listen to the fourteen discs in reverse order, 'starting with the masterpieces of the end that illuminate Shostakovich's complex approach and personality,' and then to listen again from the beginning, to hear the 'shining youth' of the First Symphony, and how the Second and Third 'combine a tight Western language with revolutionary unanimity.'⁹⁵ He continued:

the Fourth, teeming with life, disordered and fantastic; the Fifth, introspective, romantic; the Sixth, of an abrupt violence; the Seventh, a celebration of the siege of Leningrad; the Eighth, one of the most extraordinary, a powerful tragic masterpiece; the Ninth, a little short and superficial to celebrate the victory over Nazism with dignity; the Tenth, another purely lyrical masterpiece; the Eleventh, an Eisenstein-style film about the 1905 massacres; the Twelfth, which less convincingly evokes the October Revolution; the Thirteenth on the poems of Yevtushenko, Shostakovich's most openly critical work; the Fourteenth, a poignant meditation on death through the poems of Lorca, Apollinaire and Rilke; and the Fifteenth Symphony, mysterious, unequal, dominated by the Fate theme from the Ring.⁹⁶

⁹³ Jacques Lonchampt, 'Le Monde épique de Chostakovitch,' *Le Monde*, 28 October 1976. 'L'événement discographique de cet automne, qui vient pallier, un an après la mort du grand compositeur soviétique, la carence des sociétés de concerts en France.'

⁹⁴ Lonchampt, 'Le Monde épique de Chostakovitch.' 'Si longtemps négligées ... ce véritable continent musical ... comparable aux romans-fleuves de la littérature russe avec ses visions cinématographiques et épiques, ses grandes méditations sur la destinée humaine.'

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Lonchampt concluded with a poignant observation, which will certainly ring true in the final two decades of the century; on the subject of Shostakovich, ‘the man, who towers over the official musician from very high, has not finished growing.’⁹⁷

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on two main areas: the French premiere of *Katerina Ismailova*, and the increased presence of Shostakovich’s symphonies in Parisian concert halls. In the case of the opera, we have seen that it was not always influential Paris leading the way in cultural activity in France; this production is but one example of the provinces engaging in cultural practices independent of the capital. From the broad overview of how Shostakovich’s symphonies were received in *Le Monde* from the end of the 1960s until the end of the 1970s, two conclusions can be drawn. The first is straightforward: that Jacques Lonchampt, whose writings dominated the second half of this chapter, emerges in this period as a frequent defender of Shostakovich in the press. Tracing his criticism in *Le Monde* shows that he came to truly appreciate Shostakovich’s music in this period, and the less receptive attitudes occasionally displayed by his colleagues are offset by his consistent receptiveness towards the symphonies.

The second conclusion pertains to the agents facilitating these orchestral performances of Shostakovich’s music. Like in the previous chapter, during the 1960s and ’70s it was still primarily touring conductors who chose to perform Shostakovich symphonies in Paris; however, in this chapter there were more instances of such conductors working with French orchestras than in the 1950s and ’60s, so some progression seems to have occurred in this regard. Furthermore, that three of these conductors were touring from the Soviet Union (and that their performances were praised by *Le Monde*’s journalists) reflects improved East-West relations since the period discussed in the previous chapter. Broadly speaking, the activity covered in Chapter Four therefore represents a crucial stepping stone in how the music of Shostakovich has historically been treated in France. The attitudes towards Shostakovich’s opera and symphonies in France during the mid-1960s and ’70s effectively bridge the gap between the ‘hot and cold’ views of Soviet music seen in the previous chapter, and the high concentration of Shostakovich programming that will be showcased in the final one.

⁹⁷ Ibid. ‘L’homme, qui domine de très haut le musicien officiel, n’a pas fini de grandir.’

Chapter Five: 1989 and Its Legacy

The events in this final chapter revolve largely around a year-long Shostakovich festival in 1989, coined the ‘Année Chostakovitch’ by the French press. As this festival provides the foundation on which many ideas in the chapter are built, the sequence of events will begin in 1989 and conclude at the year 2000; however, where it is necessary for context and understanding, events from earlier in the 1980s are mentioned in passing, momentarily breaking the chronological framework I have employed thus far. Beyond discussing the events of, possible motivations behind, and reactions to, this 1989 ‘Shostakovich Year’ in France, the purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the pivotal nature of the festival in integrating or cementing many of Shostakovich’s symphonies, and his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, into the French repertoire.

First, I will provide an overview of the Shostakovich Year programme, before discussing some possible reasons why there was such intensive programming of Soviet music in France throughout 1989. I will then examine how the press responded to Shostakovich’s symphonies during this festival, initially with a focus on the Fifth Symphony, and subsequently by providing a broader overview. In the discussion of the Fifth Symphony, I also examine Solomon Volkov’s *Testimony* (1979), and argue that public awareness of this text—made possible after it was translated into French in 1980—had a noticeable impact on Shostakovich reception in the years leading up to and during this 1989 festival.

The central sections of Chapter Five are dedicated to the opera *Lady Macbeth*, which at last received its French premiere in Nancy as one of the major events in the Année Chostakovitch schedule. After examining the Nancy performances and reception, I illustrate the influence of this production on opera programming in the capital, since *Lady Macbeth* was also performed in Paris three years later, in 1992. After analysing an extensive body of press coverage generated from the 1992 Paris performances, I refer to further productions of *Lady Macbeth* both in Paris and France’s provinces for the remaining years of the century. These final cases demonstrate not only how the Année Chostakovitch pulled *Lady Macbeth* out of obscurity in France, but also how the festival’s championing of the opera in Nancy allowed it to recover and maintain the presence in regional France it had first acquired in Nice back in 1964.

Chapter Five concludes by exploring the enduring impact of the Année Chostakovitch on the reception of Shostakovich's symphonies. It identifies those that became either the most popular or the most frequently heard in French concert settings from 1990 to 2000.

1989: 'Année Chostakovitch'

By this point in the thesis, it should come as no surprise that the organising body behind the Année Chostakovitch was Le Chant du Monde, the recording house that had promoted Shostakovich's music in France since it was founded in 1938. Fifty years later, at the end of 1988, the label announced that every compact disc it released throughout the following year, as well as every concert it sponsored, would celebrate the music of Shostakovich. This extensive catalogue of CDs showcased the composer's fifteen symphonies, the operas *Le Nez* (1928) and *Katerina Ismailova*, as well as works for piano, film, voice, and chamber ensemble (see the advertisement in Figure 5.1).¹ Over fifty concert performances of Shostakovich's music were scheduled across France, and the French press published more than 150 articles on the composer and his music.² Table 5.1 lists the performances of Shostakovich's symphonies and *Lady Macbeth* in France throughout the Année Chostakovitch; for comparison, Table 5.2 displays performances in the same category in the two years prior. In addition to these concerts and CD releases, the Année Chostakovitch included a public screening of Tony Palmer's 1988 film *Testimony* (a dramatisation of the composer's life story), held in April in the auditorium of the Louvre.³ Le Cosmos, a historical French cinema operated by the Soviet embassy, offered a cycle of Soviet films with scores by Shostakovich,⁴ and Éditions Bernard Coutaz published a French translation of Detlef Gojowy's 1983 German-language monograph, *Chostakovitch*.⁵ Three Parisian libraries curated small-scale exhibitions on Shostakovich, and the Centre for Shostakovich Studies in Paris organised a conference at the Hotel Bedford, titled 'Shostakovich: A Witness of His Time.'⁶ The French musicologist Pierre Vidal gave the keynote address.

¹ The recordings of the symphonies were those made by Kirill Kondrashin and the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra between 1962 and 1973; the opera was the 1962 version previously released on LP discs.

² 'Année Chostakovitch' dossier de presse, 1989. Association Internationale 'Dimitri Chostakovitch.'

³ Tony Palmer, *Testimony: The Story of Shostakovich* (UK: Enterprise Pictures Ltd, 1988).

⁴ 'Année Chostakovitch' dossier de presse.

⁵ Detlef Gojowy, *Chostakovitch*, trans. Catherine Métais-Bürendt (Arles: Éditions Bernard Coutaz, 1988).

⁶ 'Année Chostakovitch' dossier de presse, AIDC.

CHOSTAKOVITCH AU CHANT DU MONDE

ŒUVRE EN 42 VOLUMES

TOMES 1-9: LES SYMPHONIES
TOMES 10-11: ŒUVRES POUR ORCHESTRE
TOMES 12-17: CONCERTOS
TOMES 18-23: OPÉRAS
TOMES 24-25: COMÉDIES MUSICALES
TOME 26: SUITES DE BALLET
TOMES 27-28: MUSIQUE DE THÉÂTRE
TOMES 29-30: MUSIQUE VOCALE-SYMPHONIQUE
TOMES 31-33: ROMANCES ET CHANSONS
TOME 34: ŒUVRES POUR CHŒUR
TOMES 35-38: MUSIQUE INSTRUMENTALE DE CHAMBRE
TOMES 39-40: ŒUVRES POUR PIANO
TOMES 41-42: MUSIQUE DE FILM



**L'ITINÉRAIRE DU GRAND COMPOSITEUR SOVIÉTIQUE
 AVEC SES DOUTES, SES ANGOISSES ET SES VICTOIRES.
 LA SEULE BIOGRAPHIE ACTUELLEMENT DISPONIBLE EN FRANCE.**

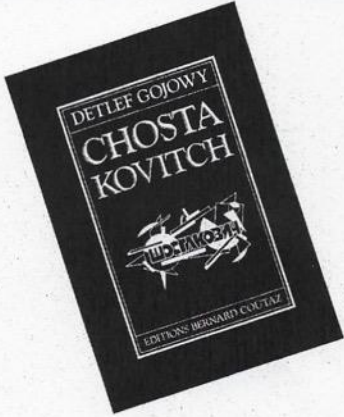


Figure 5.1. An advertisement for Le Chant du Monde's Shostakovich releases throughout 1989.
Le Monde de la musique 118 (1989): II. AIDC

Table 5.1. Performances of Shostakovich's symphonies and *Lady Macbeth* in France, 1989⁷

Date(s)	Works	Performers	Location
14 January 1989	Symphony No. 14, op. 135	Nouvel Orchestre philharmonique de Radio France (presently OPRF)/Marek Janowski with Teresa Zylis-Gara (soprano) & Nikita Storojev (bass)	Théâtre des Champs-Élysées
2 February 1989	Symphony No. 1, op. 10	Orchestre nationale de France/Rudolf Barshai	Théâtre des Champs-Élysées
11 February 1989	Symphony No. 9, op. 70	Orchestre de la Musique municipale de Bordeaux/Lucien Mora	Grand-Théâtre de Bordeaux
2 March 1989	Symphony No. 9	ONF/Barshai	Théâtre des Champs-Élysées
12–13 April 1989	Symphony No. 11, 'The Year 1905,' op. 103	Orchestre de Paris/Semyon Bychkov	Salle Pleyel
14 April 1989	Symphony No. 14	Orchestre philharmonique de Radio France/Janowski	Théâtre des Champs-Élysées
19–20 April 1989	Symphony No. 11	Orchestre philharmonique de Strasbourg/Semyon Bychkov	Palais de la musique et des congrès
4 May 1989 (Opening night of the Rencontres musicales d'Evian)	Symphony No. 6, op. 54	Curtis Institute (Philadelphia) Symphony Orchestra/Mstislav Rostropovitch	Théâtre du Casino d'Evian
6 May 1989	Symphony No. 14	Orchestre de chambre Mouvement 12/Hubert Borgel with Elena Vassilieva (soprano) & Olim Saoulaïev (bass)	Blagnac
25 May 1989	Symphony No. 9	Orchestre national de Lyon/Hiro Yoshi Wakasugi	Lyon
26, 28, 30 May & 2 June 1989	<i>Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District</i> , op. 29 (French premiere)	Orchestre symphonique et lyrique de Nancy/Jérôme Kaltenbach. Dir. Antoine Bourseiller	Opéra de Nancy et de Lorraine
2 June 1989	Symphony No. 8, op. 65	ONF/Barshai	Radio France

⁷ Table 5.2 has been collated largely from the Année Chostakovitch guide des concerts and cross-referenced with concert reviews from 1989. Some works were listed in the guide with performance details TBA; 'unknown' means I have been unable to retrieve these missing details from press sources, and therefore cannot say with certainty that these performances took place.

6–31 July 1989	Symphony No. 5, op. 47 & <i>Katerina Ismailova</i> , op. 29/114 (concert version)	Kirov Theatre Symphony Orchestra (presently Mariinsky Orchestra)/Valery Gergiev	Semaines Musicales de Tours (15th Festival)
15 September 1989	Symphony No. 8	Chicago Symphony Orchestra/Georg Solti	Salle Pleyel
19–20 October 1989	Symphony No. 6	Orchestre national de Bordeaux-Aquitaine/Jerzy Semkow	Palais des Sports, Bordeaux
29 October 1989	Symphony No. 7, 'Leningrad,' op. 60	Orchestre national de l'Opéra de Monte-Carlo	Monte-Carlo
24 November 1989	Symphony No. 4, op. 43	NOP/Janowski	Radio France
Autumn 1989	Symphony No. 9	Orchestre philharmonique de Montpellier-Languedoc-Roussillon/Cyril Diederich	Montpellier
Autumn 1989	Symphony No. 5	Orchestre philharmonique de Nice/Michael Schonwandt	Nice
Unknown	Symphony No. 3, 'The First of May,' op. 20	Orchestre national du Capitole de Toulouse/Michael Plasson	Toulouse
Autumn 1989	Symphony No. 2, 'To October,' op. 14 (French premiere)	Orchestre du Rhin-Mulhouse/Luca Pfaff	Mulhouse

Table 5.2. Performances of Shostakovich symphonies in France, 1987–88

Date	Work	Performers	Location
24 April 1987	Symphony No. 15, op. 141	Nouvel Orchestre philharmonique de Radio France/Marek Janowski	Auditorium de Radio-France
11 February 1988	Symphony No. 5, op. 48	Orchestre national de France/Rudolf Barshai	Auditorium de Radio-France
1 July–24 August 1988	Symphony No. 5	National Symphony Orchestra (US)/Mstislav Rostropovich	Perpignan, Montpellier, Marseille, Nice (Festival méditerranéen)

At the beginning of 1989, *Le Monde de la musique*, a now defunct monthly magazine published by *Le Monde* and the culture magazine *Télérama*, marked the Année Chostakovitch with a special release entitled ‘Dimitri Chostakovitch, l’homme blessé’ (the ‘wounded man’).⁸ The thirty-two-page issue, whose cover is shown in Figure 5.2, included commentary on Shostakovich’s life and music by such diverse authors as Gojowy (at the time Shostakovich’s most recent biographer); Patrick Szersnovicz (a French musicologist and media producer); the French specialist of Russian music André Lischke; the French actor and translator of Russian Antoine Vitez; Edison Denisov; Alfred Schnittke; Tatiana Nikolaeva; as well as Shostakovich’s son Maxim in interview with Szersnovicz and Grégory Thomas. The commentary was extracted largely from existing publications and interviews, but some appears to have been prepared especially: Szersnovicz wrote about his own experiences with Shostakovich’s music and analysed in detail the composer’s style with relation to specific works, mainly the symphonies and string quartets. He then provided three lists of recommendations for recordings: one ‘*Pour faire connaissance*’ (to ‘get to know’ Shostakovich), one ‘*Pour un approfondissement*’ (for an ‘in-depth study’), and another ‘*Pour les fervents et les curieux*’ (for ‘devotees and enthusiasts’). Lischke too appears to have been commissioned especially: his piece focused on the composer’s film and vocal music (cantatas, operas, music for choirs, etc.). This special release from *Le Monde de la musique* issue also included a detailed timeline of events in the composer’s life, prepared by Radio France’s Guy Erismann using existing work by Jacques di Vanni (presumably the musicologist’s 1987 book *Trente ans de musique soviétique*).⁹ Finally, it served as a non-exhaustive guide to the concerts, events, releases, and radio broadcasts scheduled throughout the Année Chostakovitch.

⁸ *Le Monde de la musique* 118 (January 1989): I–XXXII.

⁹ Jacques di Vanni, *Trente ans de musique soviétique : 1953–1983* (Paris: Actes Sud, 1987).

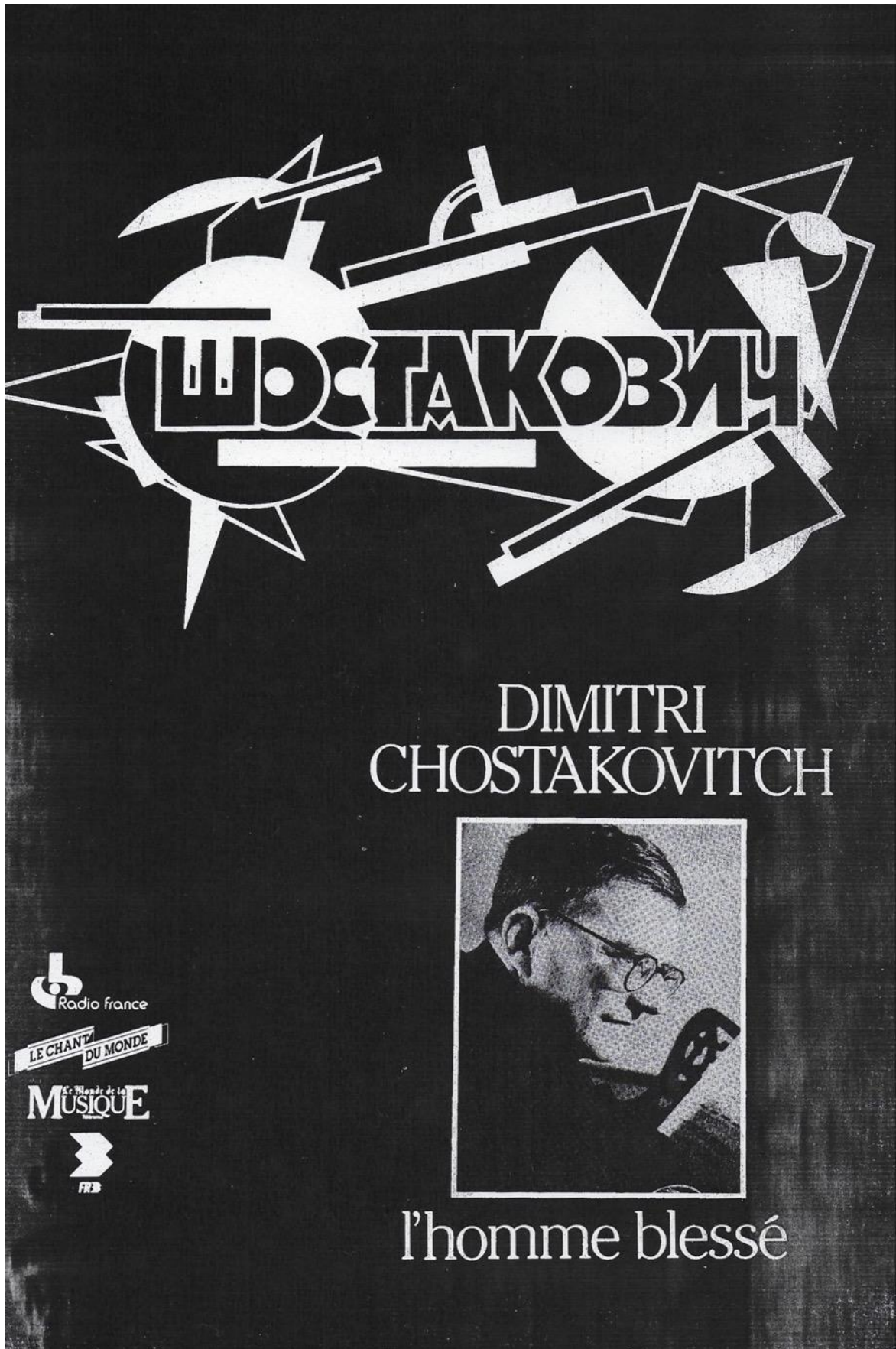


Figure 5.2. A special issue of *Le Monde de la musique*: 'Dmitri Shostakovich, the Wounded Man'. AIDC

When we consider that this year dedicated to Shostakovich's music represented no significant milestone in the composer's life, its elaborate sequence of events becomes somewhat puzzling. The year 1989 marked eighty-three years since the composer's birth, fourteen years since his death, fifty-five years since *Lady Macbeth* premiered in Leningrad, thirty-six years since the death of Stalin, and either fifty-three or forty-one years since Shostakovich's music was denounced in the Soviet Union. A humorous remark from Gérard Condé in *Le Monde* captured the peculiarity of this timing: 'there are more useless anniversaries.'¹⁰

But how, and more importantly why, did 1989 in France become the Year of Shostakovich? In the press, it was reported that Le Chant du Monde's director general Philippe Gavardin—the figure responsible for initiating the Année Chostakovitch plans—had drawn inspiration from West Germany's Duisberg Shostakovich Festival of 1984–85;¹¹ Gavardin wanted to release a series of Shostakovich recordings on the Chant du Monde label throughout 1990, and organise a season of concerts to complement them.¹² However, Radio France apparently programmed numerous concerts of Soviet music for 1989 (without any correspondence with Le Chant du Monde), which prompted Gavardin to bring his project forward so as to combine efforts with the public broadcaster.¹³ Whatever the reasoning, it is clear from surveying the relevant press material that the announcement of this festival generated a sense of confusion among journalists. *La Croix* began its article on 'L'Année Chosta' by telling its readership to 'not even look' (*ne cherchez pas*) for a milestone or for significance in the year: 'Dmitri Shostakovich was born in 1906 and died in 1975.'¹⁴ *Le Figaro* informed its readers about the festival in an article titled 'L'Année Chostakovitch: No, it's not an anniversary,'¹⁵ while the phrase: 'No commemoration, no anniversary!' opened a similar article in *La Lettre du musicien*.¹⁶ Gérard Condé wrote in *Le Monde* that 1989 in France will be the Year of Shostakovich 'without any forewarning, and in the absence of any anniversary.'¹⁷ In *Midi-Libre*, the daily newspaper of the Montpellier region, the

¹⁰ Gérard Condé, 'Une Année d'hommage à Dimitri Chostakovitch : Le Musicien de la terreur et de la pitié,' *Le Monde*, 26 January 1989, 24. 'Il y a des anniversaires plus inutiles.'

¹¹ Michèle Worms, *La Lettre du musicien*, in 'Année Chostakovitch' dossier de presse, AIDC. Erik Levi also mentions the Duisberg festival in 'A Political Football: Shostakovich Reception in Germany,' in *Shostakovich Studies*, ed. Pauline Fairclough and David Fanning (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), 297.

¹² *L'Humanité*, 22 February 1989. 'Année Chostakovitch' dossier de presse, AIDC.

¹³ 'L'Année « Chosta » : Douze mois d'hommage au plus grand compositeur russe du siècle,' *La Croix*, 6 January 1989, 21.

¹⁴ 'L'Année « Chosta », 21. 'Dimitri Chostakovitch est né en 1906 et mort en 1975.'

¹⁵ Isabelle Garnier, 'L'Année Chostakovitch : Non, ce n'est pas un anniversaire,' *Le Figaro*, 14 January 1989.

¹⁶ Worms, *La Lettre du musicien*. 'Pas de commémoration, pas d'anniversaire ! Si 1989 est une année Chostakovitch, c'est tout simplement, selon le mot du directeur de *Chant du Monde*, Philippe Gavardin, par un *hasard objectif*.'

¹⁷ Condé, 'Une Année d'hommage à Dimitri Chostakovitch,' 24. 'Sans qu'aucun signe avant-coureur ait pu le laisser prévoir, en l'absence de tout anniversaire, 1989 sera, en France, l'Année Chostakovitch.'

journalist Françoise Lacassagne noted how ‘it is exceptional to dedicate a year to a musician, however great they may be, without the pretext of a commemoration. The unexpected has become reality.’¹⁸ Franck Erikson also noted the unexplained timing in the Parisian news magazine *L’Express*, but chose to overlook it in view of the cultural benefit that would be brought on by a festival ‘*sans aucune raison de calendrier*’ (‘without any reason for scheduling’), since it was simply ‘for the sole pleasure of discovering the abundant, unknown, sometimes brilliant work of a secretive and controversial man.’¹⁹ Some articles from the Année Chostakovitch press coverage are shown in Figures 5.3 to 5.5.

C U L T U R E

*Douze mois d'hommage
au plus grand
compositeur russe du siècle*

L'ANNÉE « CHOSTA »

UNE CENTAINE DE CONCERTS, UNE ÉDITION
COMPLÈTE DE SES PARTITIONS,
DES COMPACTS : LA FRANCE MUSICALE
SE MOBILISE POUR FAIRE LE POINT
SUR DIMITRI CHOSTAKOVITCH,
L'AUTRE HÉROS DE 1989

Ne cherchez pas : Dimitri Chostakovitch est né en 1906 et mort en 1975. Il n'y avait donc aucune raison historique de consacrer l'année 1989, déjà lourde en commémorations diverses, au plus grand compositeur russe du siècle. C'est pourtant une initiative française, venue de la maison d'édition Chant du monde, qui a lancé l'opération. Son directeur général, Philippe Gaudin, grand connaisseur de « Chosta », souhaitait organiser un hommage d'importance en 1990,

zième, la Onzième, la Cinquième) en plusieurs occasions. La musique de piano et la musique de chambre seront aussi données intégralement, ce qui permettra de découvrir, autrement que par le disque, des œuvres d'un intérêt majeur. L'opéra ne sera pas oublié puisque Nancy a programmé en mai la création française de *Lady Macbeth du district de Mzensk*, chef-d'œuvre maudit du jeune Chostakovitch; Tours donnera en juillet la version remaniée et autocensurée de l'œuvre (*Katerina Izmailova*) et l'Opéra de Chambre de Moscou

(Photo Vuillet)

Figure 5.3. An announcement for ‘L’Année “Chosta”’ in *La Croix*. ‘Année Chostakovitch’ dossier de presse

¹⁸ Françoise Lacassagne, ‘1989, L’Année Chostakovitch,’ *Midi Libre*, 26 February 1989. ‘Il est exceptionnel que l’on consacre une année à un musicien, si grand soit-il, sans le prétexte d’une commémoration. L’inattendu devient réalité.’

¹⁹ Franck Erikson, *L’Express*, 3 February 1989, 95. ‘Pour le seul plaisir de découvrir l’œuvre abondante, méconnue, parfois géniale, d’un homme secret et controversé.’

1989 ? C'est l'année Chostakovitch !

Irit Chostakovitch est demeuré très méconnu pour les mélomanes. On le croyait bon communiste « sien », et son œuvre la plus populaire « Le chant des forêts », sorte de « Car-Burana » rouges, presque réaliste et très naïve. Les mélomanes ou moins militants connaissaient la Septième Symphonie, « Leningrad » (1941), écrite par les américains pendant la Guerre Mondiale. Le premier moult était perçu comme une amplification itique du « Bolero » de Ravel : un ise crescendo symbolisant la montée rris.

« L'imaginaire officielle, académique et pensante », avait de quoi détourner le ire de Chostakovitch. De plus « par », on ne le trouvait pas assez erie »...

Découverte de Chostakovitch fut lente ière. Chacun se souvient de son pre- choc Chosta ». En ce qui me con- deux rencontres furent déterminan- e tournée de l'Opéra de Chambre de u en novembre 1981, et l'achat d'un ux disque mal édité « dans un pays de

salle Pleyel, les musiciens russes révé- « Le Nez », d'après le conte humoristi- fantastique de Gogol ; une œuvre du

Pour en finir avec les anniversaires, les musiciens ont décidé que 1989, c'est l'année Chostakovitch (1906-1975)... Tout simplement parce que son œuvre s'impose, de jour en jour, avec davantage d'évidence et de nécessité. Tout de suite, applaudissons le coup d'envoi ! Avant de jouer les prolongations !

début des années 20, dans laquelle les per- cussions jouent déjà, bien avant Varèse, le rôle déterminant. Pas « moderne », Chosta- kovitch ? Le maître des avant-gardes, oui ! Jusqu'à sa mise au pas « par Staline et Jéli- nov... »

Le « méchant disque gris » rapporté par l'Est fut encore plus déterminant. Il s'agissait d'une version locale du « Huitième Qua- tuor »... Impossible de résister à cette pro- clamation tragique. D'emblée, mon image de Chostakovitch se modifia : l'ingénieur expé- rimentateur avant-gardiste n'était pas « mort artistiquement » sous Staline, il avait survécu en devenant le maître d'un langage d'appar- tence plus traditionnel, mais s'élevant à l'UNIVERSEL. Aujourd'hui encore, pour être parfaitement convaincu par Chostakovitch, je conseille d'aborder son œuvre par le « Hui- tième Quatuor », le reste s'imposera à vous ensuite, gravement, naturellement.

L'année Chostakovitch en 1989, on ne

l'attendait pas, mais elle s'impose à nous. Ne tirons pas sur le parallèle entre le bicente- naire de la Révolution et la « réhabilitation » de l'ennemi spirituel puré de Staline. Dans le numéro de janvier du « Monde de la Musi- que », Antoine Vitez a très bien dit ce qu'il fallait en dire. On se reportera à ce cahier spécial pour avoir le détail des manifesta- tions, ou en écrivant au « Chant du Monde », l'éditeur entreprenant à l'époque de ces manifestations.

Pour le moment, en dehors d'une myriade de concerts de musique de chambre, RADIO FRANCE montre l'exemple en lançant une intégrale symphonique partagée entre ses deux formations, l'Orchestre National de France (Rudolf Barshai) et l'Orchestre Phil- harmonique (Marek Janowski). L'ORCHE- TRE DE PARIS prendra le relais, avec Semyon Bychkov et Neeme Järvi, suivis en province par Michel Plasson à Toulouse, Lawrence Foster à Monte Carlo, Luca Patti à

Mulhouse, Jerzy Semkow à Bordeaux. C'est presque le championnat des ch- Chostakovitch, fidèle téléspectateur des ch- ches de football, en aurait été ravi.

Nous parlerons des productions lyssi- prochaines fois, elles devraient couv- l'année Chostakovitch.

Christophe Deshoullis

Discographie : l'intégrale des Sympho- nies de ressortit au Chant du Monde si- direction de Kirill Kondrachine : cinq ce- de deux disques compacts, accompagné catalogue des œuvres de Chostakovitch. **Chant du Monde : 23, rue Royale, Paris tél : (1) 47 42 94 18.** Le Chant du Monde va poursuivre le long de l'année la parution en CD d'une quasi-intégrale de l'œuvre, notamment les fatidiques Quatuors.

Deux éditeurs annoncent le dé- deux autres intégrales : Charles (Schott) et Erato (par Mstislav Ro- vitch).

Deux livres sont indispensables « ressentir » Chostakovitch : « L'en- ges » (propos recueillis par Solomon V- chez Albin Michel, et la biographie de de sortie aux éditions Albert Contat (di- tion Harmonia Mundi).

Figure 5.4. '1989? It's the Year of Shostakovich!' 'Année Chostakovitch' dossier de presse



Dmitri Shostakovich

Classique

1989, l'année Chostakovitch

Il est exceptionnel que l'on consacre une année à un musicien, si grand soit-il, sans le prétexte d'une commémoration. L'inattendu devient réalité. Sous la double initiative de Marek Janowski, chef de l'Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France et de la firme Le Chant du Monde, la première à avoir diffusé en France des enregistrements du compositeur russe, 1989 est l'année Chostakovitch. Plus de quatre-vingt concerts feront découvrir ou redécouvrir l'essentiel d'une œuvre considérable que Le Chant du Monde publiera en 42 volumes.

■ Chostakovitch est mort en août 1975, âgé de 69 ans. Louangé en termes bureaucratiques «lourd comme du plomb» par les digitaire de l'ère breyevienne qui avaient été les plus acharnés à dénoncer ses «ver- reurs». «Un rassemblement de corbeaux» confiait un ami du compositeur à Solomon Volkov qui publiera sous le titre Témoin- nage Les Mémoires de Dmitri Chostakovitch. «Chostakovitch savait tout cela d'avance» qui avait mis en musique un poème décrivant les funérailles «sol- nelles» de Pouchkine ou l'on ne vit, se tenant au garde-à-vous, que des «poitrines et des gueu- les de gendarmes».

Des capacités exceptionnelles

La mère de Chostakovitch lui fit commencer ses études de piano relativement tard, à 9 ans, mais deux ans après, le jeune

élève «extraordinaire» jouait Le Clavecin bien tempéré et aimait être le premier dans toutes les matières.

À la différence de nombreux artistes et intellectuels, la famille Chostakovitch resta fidèle à la Russie soviétique. L'existence et la carrière de Chosta commen- cèrent dans le deuil (du père), le deuil (la nécessité de ven- dre le piano), la maladie (dix ans de tuberculose) et se poursuiv- rent dans le travail acharné et la conscience d'être un créateur yourodivy, un «bienheureux» qui possédait le don de voir et d'en- tendre ce qui échappe aux au- tres.

Très vite, sans vouloir entrer en conflit avec les autorités, le jeune Chostakovitch choisit la voie du compositeur «yourodivy» et en pleine période de terreur, de liquidations physiques innom- brables et de «purgés» (les an- nées 1936), les deux chefs d'au- vre opératiques Le Nez (1928) et

Lady Macbeth du district de Mzensk (1932) triomphent à Lé- ningrad qui connut de féconds mais éphémères échanges avec l'art occidental, mais susciterent les lourdes staliniennes.

Inexorable tragédie

Le dialogue ambigu du «sar» et du «yourodivy» considéré comme auteur d'un «galimatias musical» défendant les valeurs hostiles au concept soviétique acquit, selon Solomon Volkov, une intensité tragique. Dans un pays où s'édifiait un autre pays, «l'archipel du Goulag», Chosta- kovitch rendu suspect par une ascendance «polonaise» com- battante, ne fut jamais arrêté mais toujours en puissance de l'être (d'où la «petite valise» qu'il tenait toujours prête...).

Un pur produit du génie, le souci d'exprimer une fraternité universelle, une œuvre monu- mentale (tous les genres repré- sentés, quinze symphonies, quinze quatuors...), une existence en butte aux foudres du pouvoir alternant avec des honneurs de circonstance consécutifs à d'hu- miliantes autocritiques, une des- tinée très vite pathétique par le conflit entre le besoin de liberté créatrice parfois désespérée et

les cinglants ukases, enfin par la mort lente après une série de cri- ses cardiaques et par l'ultime so- litude («Dans quels bras vais-je pouvoir mourir ?» confia-t-il à Rostropovitch partant pour l'Oc- cident en 1974), tels sont, à grands traits, les signes majeurs de la vie et de la carrière du Bee- thoven du 20^e siècle.

L'année Chostakovitch est inaugurée par la publication en compacts de la première version des *Quinze Symphonies*, parue il y a dix-neuf ans, celle de Kirill Kondrachine. Ce monument symphonique est aujourd'hui servi par la version de Bernard Haitink à la tête du somptueux Concertgebouw, par celle de Rostropovitch disponible hors de France, par des versions isolées dont celles de Rostropovitch (pour les 12^e et 14^e) et d'Ashke- nazy, enfin par celle de Järvi en cours de réalisation.

Si Rostropovitch demeure iné- galé pour la belle, terrible et des- espérée Quatorzième, si Haitink, Rostropovitch et Järvi le sont pour certaines autres, l'intégrale de Kondrachine, en dépit de pri- ses de son multiples, est dans son optique beethovenienne un monument inégalé (Le Chant du Monde, 10 CD, durée 10 h 36' ★★★★★/500).

LACASSAGNE

Figures 5.5. Année Chostakovitch as reported by *Midi Libre*. 'Année Chostakovitch' dossier de presse

As well as being the Year of Shostakovich, 1989 was a significant year for France and Franco-Soviet relations as it marked both the bicentennial of the French Revolution, and the restructuring of the Soviet Union. Le Chant du Monde did not acknowledge either of these milestones as a motivating factor for the Année Chostakovitch, but it was common to see the

press linking the timing of the festival to political developments at home and in Eastern Europe. Condé described it in *Le Monde* as ‘a response to the effects of perestroika, in order to stimulate exchange between the two countries,’²⁰ while another journalist, Philippe Viet, simply labelled it ‘Perestroika: The Musical’ (‘*Perestroïka*’: *La Musicale*).²¹ This conclusion—that putting on the festival had been motivated by recent improvements in Franco-Soviet relations—is entirely plausible, but it was dismissed by Gavardin in interviews with the press. When questioned as to why *Le Chant du Monde* had chosen to dedicate 1989 to a prominent Soviet composer, he dismissed the timing as ‘un *hasard objectif*’ [original emphasis], ‘an unbiased coincidence.’²² Yet, considering the firm’s internationalist title, and the fact that it was the main promoter of Soviet music in France throughout the twentieth century and received funding from the PCF, Gavardin’s response hardly seems forthcoming.

1989 was undoubtedly an opportune time to promote Soviet culture in France. In 1988, relations between France and the Soviet Union were as cordial as they had been since the end of Charles de Gaulle’s presidency. President Mitterrand was enticed by the idea of the ‘common European home’—not a new concept, but one that was reinvigorated and championed by Mikhail Gorbachev after he was made Secretary General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1985.²³ Gorbachev appealed to Mitterrand, who appreciated the Soviet leader’s ‘great, quick and supple mind. He envisions the issues in their globality.’²⁴ The French public in general seemed to share this appreciation: results from a 1988 survey conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicated that, of the citizens surveyed, only 17% considered the Soviet Union to be ‘the most aggressive country in the world,’ and people held more sympathy for Mikhail Gorbachev than Margaret Thatcher.²⁵ In November 1988, Mitterrand made his first visit to Moscow, and the Soviet leader returned the favour to France in July 1989. Ahead of this French visit, the weekly Soviet publication *Moskovskie Novosti* began to publish a French-language edition, *Les Nouvelles de Moscou*, which was sold in kiosks across the capital and major provincial cities.²⁶ Having the Moscow news (as reported by Soviet people) available in France in turn allowed the French to

²⁰ Condé, ‘Une Année d’hommage à Dimitri Chostakovitch,’ 24. ‘Une réponse aux effets de perestroïka, pour stimuler l’échange entre les deux pays.’

²¹ Philippe Viet, ‘Le Regard intérieur de Chostakovitch,’ 91. ‘Année Chostakovitch’ dossier de presse.

²² Worms, *La Lettre du musicien*. ‘Année Chostakovitch’ dossier de presse. This denial from Gavardin is quoted and paraphrased in several other articles, such as Viet, ‘Le Regard intérieur,’ 91; and Gérard Gaulière, ‘L’Année Chostakovitch,’ *La Voix du Nord*, 19 January 1989.

²³ Marie-Pierre Rey, ‘“Europe is Our Common Home”: A Study of Gorbachev’s Diplomatic Concept,’ *Cold War History* 4, no. 2 (2004): 34.

²⁴ Letter to Margaret Thatcher quoted in Rey, ‘“Europe is Our Common Home”,’ 50.

²⁵ Rey, ‘“Europe is Our Common Home”,’ 54–55.

²⁶ Philippe Rivet, ‘Les « Nouvelles de Moscou » passent à l’Ouest,’ *L’Est Républicain*, 29 May 1989, 3; ‘Traduction de l’hebdomadaire de la perestroïka : Une édition française des « Nouvelles de Moscou »,’ *Le Monde* 3 June 1989.

become informed about, and stay up to date on, ongoing issues in the Soviet Union, namely glasnost (openness), perestroika (restructuring), and the 1989 legislative elections.

The state of affairs at the beginning of 1989 in France followed a decade of crucial developments for the nation's political Left. In 1981, as head of the Common Programme (Programme commun) alliance, Mitterrand became the first left-wing candidate to be elected in the Fifth Republic; his cabinet was comprised almost entirely of Socialists, with four Communist representatives. But the 1980s also saw the Fifth Republic's first political power-share, or 'cohabitation'; following significant changes made to social, cultural, and economic policy from 1982 to '85 (an attempt to recover from the 1973 recession), French exports and the value of the franc declined while unemployment continued to rise. After the PCF withdrew its ministers from the cabinet and the controversial Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front national began to garner public support, the SFIO lost control of the lower house, leading Mitterrand to name the conservative Jacques Chirac as his Prime Minister in 1986. Chirac reverted many Socialist policies (such as privatising public companies, abolishing the solidarity tax on wealth, and introducing a contentious plan for university reform), resulting in a decline in his approval rating. Mitterrand's rating, on the other hand, recovered, and in 1988 he defeated Chirac in the presidential campaign and replaced him with another Socialist, Michel Rocard.

Thus, as well as being a favourable moment in the history of France-USSR relations, by 1989 it was the Left who held the most political influence in France. Even though Le Chant du Monde's director dismissed the alignment of this prevailing climate with the Année Chostakovitch as 'coincidental,' there was implicit acknowledgement of the role the festival would play in fostering international relations elsewhere: the French Ministry of Culture and Foreign Affairs gave the festival a public endorsement, and its opening ceremony was attended by Yakov Ryabov, the Ambassador to the Soviet Union in France.²⁷

Symphony No. 5, and the influence of Volkov's *Testimony*

Even if the motivations behind this 1989 festival were somewhat ambiguous, it undoubtedly had a positive impact on the critical reception of Shostakovich's music. Not only did French

²⁷ Condé, 'Une Année d'hommage à Dimitri Chostakovitch,' 24. 'Outre le patronage de l'État (ministère de la culture et des affaires étrangères.)' In the relevant press release material, 'Monsieur l'ambassadeur de France à Moscou' and 'Monsieur l'ambassadeur d'URSS en France' appear under the names of the Shostakovich family in the list of the festival's committee. The president d'honneur of this organising committee was the composer Yves Daniel-Lesur. The full list of organisers appears in *Le Monde de la musique* 118 (1989): XXV.

performances of the symphonies dramatically increase in concentration, their reception was warmer than it had been both throughout the previous decade and for most of the 1980s. A good example of this phenomenon is the case of the Fifth Symphony: although this work had been performed relatively frequently in Paris throughout the 1980s, it was arguably not yet part of the standard ‘canon’ performed by French orchestras, since these performances were all given by touring ensembles, conductors, or both. Table 5.3 lists fifteen performances of Shostakovich symphonies for which I have found records in the press from 1980 to 1988, seven of which were performances of Symphony No. 5.

Table 5.3. Shostakovich symphonies performed in France, 1980–88

Date	Symphony	Performers	Location
27 March 1980	Symphony No. 4	Orchestre de Paris/Kirill Kondrashin	Salle Pleyel
5 February 1981	Symphony No. 14	Orchestre de Paris/Rudolf Barshai	Théâtre des Champs-Élysées
4–8 January 1982	Symphony No. 10	Orchestre national de Bordeaux-Aquitaine/Barshai	Palais des Sports, Bordeaux
[Before 22] February 1982	Symphony No. 5	National Symphony Orchestra of Washington/Mstislav Rostropovitch	Salle Pleyel
[Before 3] May 1982	Symphony No. 5	Orchestre national de France/Yuri Temirkanov	Paris
17 February 1983	Symphony No. 1	Orchestre du Capitole de Toulouse/Lawrence Foster	Halle aux Grains, Toulouse
21–28 July 1983	Symphony No. 5	Youth Orchestra of the Festival de Perpignan/Rostropovitch	Palais des Rois de Majorque (Perpignan)
[Before 9] May 1984	Symphony No. 5	Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra/Tadaaki Otaka	Paris
23 May 1985	Symphony No. 7, ‘Leningrad’	Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra/Mariss Jansons	Palais des congrès de Paris
[Before 30] September 1985	Symphony No. 8	National Symphony Orchestra of Washington/Rostropovitch	Paris
[Before 3] October 1986	Symphony No. 5 (last minute sub. for Tchaikovsky 5)	Symphony Orchestra of the Bolshoi Theatre/Alexander Lazarev	Salle Pleyel
8 and 10 October 1986	Symphony No. 13, ‘Babi Yar’	Orchestre de Paris/Daniel Barenboim with John Tomlinson (bass)	Salle Pleyel
24 April 1987	Symphony No. 15 (French premiere)	Nouvel Orchestre philharmonique de Radio France/Marek Janowski	Auditorium de Radio-France

11 February 1988	Symphony No. 5	Orchestre national de France/Barshai	Grand Auditorium (Maison de la Radio)
1 July–24 August 1988 (Festival méditerranéen)	Symphony No. 5	National Symphony Orchestra of Washington/Rostropovitch	Perpignan, Montpellier, Marseille, Nice

Symphony No. 5 was not necessarily embraced as a concert work by the press throughout this period, however. In February 1980, Condé described ‘the famous Fifth Symphony’ in *Le Monde* as ‘one of the most popular and, at the same time, one of the least interesting of this composer’²⁸ (even if he did describe the same work as ‘an irresistible masterpiece of lyricism and orchestration’ six years later).²⁹ Comments on the work itself were actually few and far between during the 1980s, perhaps because those who wrote about it decided it was no longer necessary to introduce and explain a piece that was almost fifty years old. Instead, it was usually the touring musicians who performed the Fifth Symphony in this decade that were the focus of press coverage. Where praise for Shostakovich’s symphony was published, it tended to focus on emotional aspects, such as how in this work Shostakovich was ‘disturbed by the prohibition of *Lady Macbeth* and ... took refuge in himself,’³⁰ or how the work is ‘so impressive in its split between the anguish of the hopelessly solitary man, and his search for fusion in a great popular current.’³¹ While observations on the anguish in Shostakovich’s symphonies (not just the Fifth) had certainly appeared in the press before, they intensified in both frequency and dramatics in the 1980s, owing to the publication at the end of the previous decade of the now infamous *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich as Related to and Edited by Solomon Volkov*.³²

The truthfulness of *Testimony* was called into question by Laurel Fay as early as April 1980, and its authenticity has since been authoritatively discredited.³³ Nonetheless, as has been and continues to be the case in the anglophone sphere, particularly outside of scholarly contexts, the book has

²⁸ Gérard Condé, ‘Les Coq-à-l’âne de Chostakovitch,’ *Le Monde*, 26 February 1980. ‘La célèbre Cinquième Symphonie ... l’une des plus populaires et, en même temps, l’une des moins intéressantes de son auteur.’

²⁹ Gérard Condé, ‘L’Orchestre symphonique du Bolchoï à Pleyel : Alexandre Lazarev et Stanislas Bounine,’ *Le Monde*, 3 October 1986. ‘Un chef-d’œuvre aussi irrésistible de lyrisme et d’orchestration.’

³⁰ Jacques Lonchampt, ‘Relief visionnaire,’ *Le Monde*, 3 May 1982. ‘Chostakovitch perturbé par l’interdit porté contre *Lady Macbeth* et ... se réfugie en lui-même.’

³¹ Jacques Lonchampt, ‘L’Orchestre philharmonique de Tokyo : Le Lyrisme secret du Japon,’ *Le Monde*, 9 May 1984. ‘Si impressionnante dans son écartèlement entre l’angoisse de l’homme irrémédiablement solitaire et sa recherche d’une fusion dans un grand courant populaire.’

³² Solomon Volkov, *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich as Related to and Edited by Solomon Volkov*, trans. Antonina W. Bouis (New York: Harper & Row, 1979).

³³ For literature on the so-called ‘Shostakovich wars,’ see Laurel Fay, ‘Shostakovich Versus Volkov: Whose Testimony?,’ *Russian Review* 39, no. 4 (1980): 484–93; and Malcolm Hamrick Brown, ed., *A Shostakovich Casebook* (Bloomington: Indiana, 2004).

been highly influential in shaping French attitudes towards Shostakovich. Upon the release of the French translation in 1980,³⁴ French critics, especially Jacques Lonchampt, began to contextualise their reviews or other comments on Shostakovich's music with references to Volkov's text. Lonchampt dedicated a whole article in *Le Monde* to Shostakovich's 'memoirs', the subtitle of which was '*Le Masque arraché*,' 'the mask torn off.' Lonchampt acknowledged that the authenticity of these memoirs had been contested, but his analysis led him to treat the document as more truthful than not:

It is certainly difficult, without any document other than the French translation at our disposal, to affirm the full veracity of this work, written from 'tonnes of notes' hastily taken during meandering interviews. Nothing says that Volkov did not add some ideas or personal resentments. Yet, internal criticism provides good reasons to believe in the authenticity of these Memoirs (of which Shostakovich countersigned the typing done in Moscow before his death).³⁵

Lonchampt's justification for believing in the memoirs' authenticity was based primarily on the respective writing styles of interviewer and interviewee:

The style of Volkov's long and interesting introduction does not at all resemble his transcription of the musician's words; linear, explanatory, even lecturing, he counteracts the lively, abrupt, comical, tragic, syncopated side of Shostakovich's words, full of unexpected curves and cock-a-doodle-do, where one recognises on the contrary the hectic manner, the sharp caricatures, the wild scherzi, the sense of the brief and murderous formula of *The Nose* or *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, but also the nagging ostinati, the dramatic progressions increasingly shrouded in darkness, the sinister landscapes dripping with (*suant de*) pessimism, and the fear of his symphonies. It would seem impossible that Volkov would have identified himself so well with Shostakovich only to make him say the opposite of his thoughts on Stalin, or to ridicule the illustrious Tikhon Khrennikov, president of the Union of Composers. As such, these memoirs are presented in a raw form, which reinforces the impression of truth: no overall plan, a disconcerting journey, disjointed remarks with numerous digressions of unequal interest attached to the appearance of such or such a character; the music itself holds only a small place.³⁶

³⁴ Solomon Volkoff, *Témoignage : Les Mémoires de Dimitri Chostakovitch*, trans. André Lischke (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1980).

³⁵ Jacques Lonchampt, 'Les « Mémoires » de Chostakovitch : Le Masque arraché,' *Le Monde*, 8 April 1980.

³⁶ Lonchampt, 'Les « Mémoires » de Chostakovitch.'

Lonchampt also reasoned that distrust of the Soviet regime could explain the challenges from the West regarding the book's legitimacy:

Hence, perhaps, the disdain of some of Shostakovich's great friends recently exiled in the West, who described this book as 'a collection of anecdotes of little interest.' But perhaps they also feared to authenticate the words of the composer, thinking of his family who remained in the USSR ... no doubt the book teaches them nothing about life in Soviet artistic circles over the last fifty years.³⁷

Throughout the 1980s, an awareness of the content within *Testimony* unsurprisingly coloured the reception of Shostakovich's symphonies, and this was certainly the case throughout the Année Chostakovitch. This gradual integration of the alleged memoirs into French thinking about the composer is summarised in an article published in *Le Monde* at the beginning of 1989:

A few years ago, Shostakovich was only known to a few aficionados, and his reputation as a composer was hardly excellent. Vilified by the proponents of modernity (the very same ones who are today on the sponsorship committee of an association organising a Shostakovich Year), admired by specialists in Eastern European music, the work of Shostakovich has intrigued for its mixture of conformism, audacity, vulgarity, and despair. And then, what did his production unknown in the West look like? Little by little, the veil rose. Scores came out of the Soviet Union ... the greatest conductors directed his works ... Shostakovich himself came to supervise the recording of some of his compositions ... Finally, his 'biography' came out. This was in fact interviews that the composer had given to Simon [sic] Volkov, a young student of his entourage.

Immediately contested by the Soviets, by the composer's own son, they nonetheless showed us the distress of Shostakovich at the receiving end of directives imposed by Stalin, and the troubles that he had to endure on the part of stubborn (*butés*) officials.³⁸

Today, Shostakovich is about to take the place that Mahler occupied in the 1970s. Until then mainly disseminated by discs, his works little by little invade the concert halls. The public asks for more: *Vox populi, vox Dei*. And it's not over, seeing as a hundred concerts incorporating works by the 'Beethoven of the twentieth century' (as we have named him) will be given in France this year.³⁹

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Alain Lompech, 'Concert Chostakovitch plébiscité,' *Le Monde*, 16 January 1989, 22.

³⁹ Lompech, 'Concert Chostakovitch plébiscité,' 22.

Evidently, becoming acquainted with the version of the composer presented in Volkov's book had made the public more sympathetic towards Shostakovich. As Philippe Viet wrote, 'Shostakovich had long been the victim of a misunderstanding':

We wanted to see him only as the official composer of the USSR, dedicated to the glorification of the 'Soviet man' and his 'radiant tomorrow,' judging his production by the only works that the regime allowed to filter out. Hence Lucien Rebatet's harsh judgment of this 'high official of the semiquaver and the trombone.' In 1979, the publication of Shostakovich's memoirs, written by his friend Solomon Volkov under the title *Testimony*, called into question the simplistic image of a composer 'at the orders.' A man close to the 'dissidents' was discovered, torn between his attachment to his homeland and his desire to write music that he was well aware the regime would censor for 'cerebralism.'⁴⁰

On the other hand, the release of Detlef Gojowy's monograph complicated this revisionist treatment of the composer's music. The French translation of this text (the cover of which is shown in Figure 5.6) publicised the more nuanced view that Shostakovich was neither a dedicated functionary nor an irrepressible dissident, but 'a Russian patriot and a loyal Soviet citizen' (*'un patriote russe et un citoyen soviétique loyal'*), who 'decided to think and act as a responsible adult' (*'décidé de penser et d'agir en homme adulte et responsable'*).⁴¹ Still, this book caused nowhere near as much of a stir in the press as Volkov's, and the views presented in the latter text continued to dominate the press reception of Shostakovich 'the man', as well as interpretations of the meaning supposedly encoded within his symphonies. Maxim Shostakovich even had to address the book's portrayal of his father during his interview for the Shostakovich Year issue of *Le Monde de la musique*. In response to the question: 'Do Volkov's memoirs paint an accurate portrait of your father?', he answered: 'No! I have repeated this many times! That is a book *about* Shostakovich' [emphasis added].⁴² Within months of this interview taking place, however, *Le Monde* published an article titled 'The Truthfulness of Shostakovich's Memoirs Confirmed by His Son,' which explained how Maxim Shostakovich had retracted his statements on the book's authenticity and was now proclaiming it to be a truthful document (*'Témoignage est vrai. C'est tout à fait ainsi. C'est exact'*). The journalist cited the postscript of the new Finnish reprint of *Testimony* as the source of

⁴⁰ Viet, 'Le Regard intérieur,' 91.

⁴¹ This quotation from Gojowy's book is reproduced in 'La Plus Absurde Situation pour un compositeur,' *Le Républicain Lorrain*, 28 May 1989. 'Année Chostakovitch' dossier de presse.

⁴² 'Prénom Maxime' (interview with Maxim Shostakovich by Patrick Szersnovicz and Grégory Thomas), *Le Monde de la musique* 118 (January 1989): XV. 'Non! Je l'ai dit à plusieurs reprises. C'est un livre à propos de Chostakovitch.'

these comments, and stated how these additions had ‘put an end to an almost ten-year controversy.’⁴³ Clearly, the portrayal of Shostakovich within Volkov’s book was enticing enough that the public wanted to believe in the truthfulness more so than its illegitimacy.

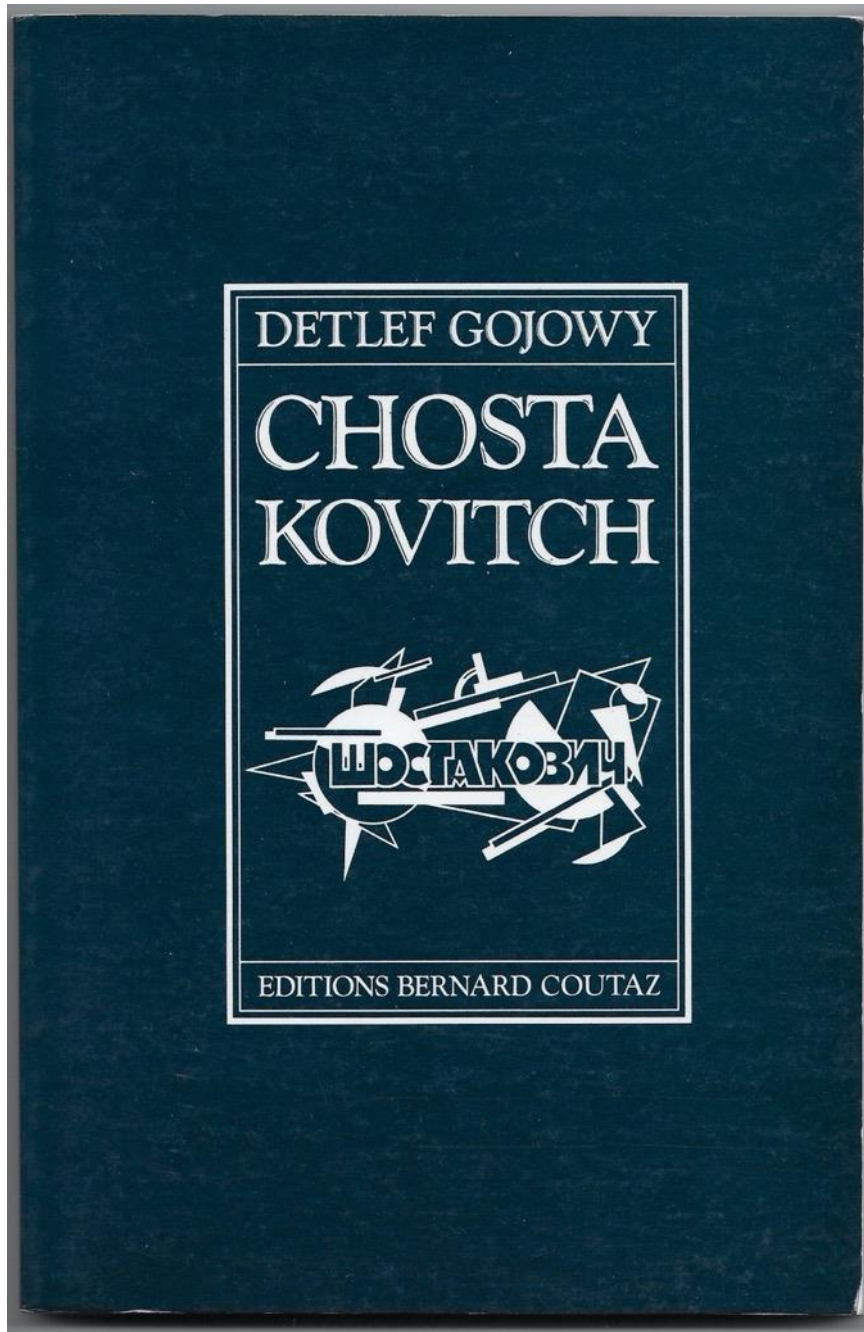


Figure 5.6. The French edition of Gojowy’s Shostakovich biography

⁴³ ‘L’authenticité des Mémoires de Chostakovitch confirmée par son fils,’ *Le Monde*, 30 May 1989.

[illegible]

Still, although other factors influenced the gradual French acceptance of the Fifth Symphony, *Testimony* appears to have been a crucial document in fostering an understanding of the work, even if this understanding was ill-informed. For some listeners, it would have added welcome

⁴⁶ For various advertisements in *Le Monde*, *L'Express*, *La Vie*, etc., see 'Année Chostakovitch' dossier de presse.

context to a work that they had previously found perplexing, or even boring. For others, Volkov's narrative may have allowed them to enjoy the symphony while remaining sceptical or resentful of the Soviet Union and/or communism more broadly (it was, after all, the 'creative answer of a Soviet artist to just criticism,' and it had entered the French consciousness with strong links to the PCF). This line of thinking is no doubt a simplification, yet it is one that appeared in the press in 1989; in May, Marseille's daily newspaper published a reflection on how the politics of the Soviet Union had historically affected perceptions of Shostakovich's music in France: 'For a long time, on the issue of composer Dmitri Shostakovich, we took one of two sides. Either we were *sovietophile*, and trustingly declared his music brilliant, or we were *sovietophobe*, and on principle, found his music unacceptable.'⁴⁷ This statement also reflects the state of affairs in 1989—the restructuring and opening up of the Soviet Union—as well as the general spirit of the *Année Chostakovitch*, which was to (re)discover, promote and learn more about a figure who had been shrouded in varying degrees of mystery since the mid-1930s.

Reception of Symphonies during the *Année Chostakovitch*

The *Année Chostakovitch* generated an enormous amount of press on the composer and his music, with commentary on the symphonies that was overwhelmingly positive. As well as stimulating new responses to the Fifth, whose reputation had historically been patchy, the festival saw symphonies that had featured in French concerts during the 1980s and earlier decades continue to fare well. Additionally, a major impact of the *Année Chostakovitch* was that it created space for a number of symphonic revivals; Symphony No. 11, for example, had been very well received at its monumental premiere in the presence of the composer back in 1958, but I have found no records in the press of it being performed in Paris since. The concert in April 1989—this time at the Salle Pleyel, almost thirty-one years later—allowed the work to uphold its standing. Lonchampt declared that there was 'orchestral richness overflowing at all desks' in the Eleventh Symphony of Shostakovich, 'where alternate livid, gloomy melodies and violent colours, taken in a whirlwind that blows like a whip and squeezes your throat for an hour.' His evaluation was that Shostakovich had produced this work like a '*grand cinéaste*' would a film, 'in which images, feelings and lyricism are as inextricably intertwined as in the *Potemkin* battleship.'⁴⁸

⁴⁷ 'Chostakovitch : Mal entendu ou malentendu ?,' *La Marseillaise*, 7 May 1989, 14.

⁴⁸ Jacques Lonchampt, 'Mozart et Chostakovitch par Bychkov : La Place du Palais d'hiver,' *Le Monde*, 17 April 1989, 10.

The Fourth Symphony too had a moment in the Parisian spotlight. Although not its first since being introduced by Kondrashin and the Moscow Philharmonic in October 1963 (the work had also been performed by the same conductor and the Orchestre de Paris in 1980),⁴⁹ the work did receive a favourable review from the *Monde* critic Anne Rey, who was notably difficult to please when it came to Soviet music. Rey prepared a lengthy account of the Parisian concert in which the Fourth Symphony appeared: Marek Janowski conducting the Nouvel Orchestre philharmonique at the Radio France auditorium. The critic admitted that she did not believe Janowski would ‘get from his orchestra, from a French orchestra, the virulence, the brilliance of detail within a gigantic (although airy) orchestra, the painful and howling expressiveness demanded by the least played of Shostakovich’s symphonies.’⁵⁰ But she was pleasantly surprised. Aside from an impressive performance by Janowski, what seemed to allow Rey to find meaning in and consequently enjoy Shostakovich’s Fourth Symphony the most was to read it as a work composed after Mahler. This comparison between the Austrian and the Soviet composer had been made in French writings on Shostakovich earlier in the century, but the fact that it featured so substantially in the *Année Chostakovitch* coverage appears to have allowed it to enter the French musical public’s collective consciousness in this year. After summarising the relevant backstory (that the symphony was withdrawn in the 1930s, premiered in 1961, and recorded by Kondrashin a year later), Rey spent the majority of her review identifying specific points of reference between Shostakovich and Mahler. She began by suggesting that Shostakovich was ‘inhabited by some Shakespearean ghost, at least for the first twenty-five minutes of his work,’ but then that he was ‘taken by a rage of transgression,

mixing, in the noise and the fury, genres and moods, finally giving birth to a frightening first movement, an unnatural marriage of irreconcilable elements: motoric ruggedness and ecstatic songs, throbbing cries of strings in unison and sweet bird songs, aggressive dissonances and calm ostinatos, ‘in vitro’ experimentation on an augmented orchestral staff: abstraction. But abstraction so radical that it seems to want to denounce, in the tradition of Mahlerian expressionism, all the conflicts, all the absurdities of humanity ... Things then calm down, and the references to Mahler become more explicit: scherzo echoes of the Second Symphony (‘Resurrection’) in Shostakovich’s *Moderato con moto* (the second movement); a funeral march and slightly syrupy waltz rhythm in the final of the Fourth of the Soviet, like the ‘in the manner of Callot’ passage and slow round of the

⁴⁹ See Jacques Lonchamp, ‘La 4^e Symphonie de Chostakovitch par Kyril Kondrachine,’ *Le Monde*, 30 March 1980.

⁵⁰ Anne Rey, ‘Janowski : L’Ascension par l’ascendant. Certains Critiques ne lui accordaient naguère que de la compétence. Tous reconnaissent aujourd’hui le charisme du patron du Philharmonique,’ *Le Monde*, 29 November 1989, 20.

First Symphony ('Titan') of the Viennese. And the timid shimmering of a celesta as in the last lied, 'Der Abschied,' of *Song of the Earth*. But Shostakovich's work, with the disparity of tone and length of its three movements (a long one, a short one, a long one divided into contrasting episodes), appears, far from Mahler this time, as a hard-won victory of reason over madness, as a cosmic fresco in which everything is said about the world, in which everything is, in the end, accomplished in an interminable and fragile unison, the fleetingly zebra-striped pianissimo of a final, 'devilish' tritone.⁵¹

Rey lastly described the 'long, almost dazed silence, before an exceptionally sincere outburst of bravos' that came at the conclusion of the piece. 'We had somewhat detached ourselves from reality to give ourselves over to this music of pure metaphysical anguish,' she wrote—surely the words of someone who had been captivated by the work in question.⁵²

Lady Macbeth in Nancy, 1989

Of all the performances of Shostakovich's music across France in 1989, however, undoubtedly the most important and widely anticipated was the French premiere of the original *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. The season took place in Nancy, France's twentieth-largest city, twenty-five years after the performances of *Katerina Ismailova* in Nice.⁵³ It was again staged by a local company: L'Opéra de Nancy et de Lorraine (presently L'Opéra national de Lorraine), housed on the Place Stanislas in Nancy in the north-eastern province of Lorraine. Compared with the local company that had presented the revised version of the opera in Nice in 1964, the company of Nancy and Lorraine was not well funded; however, it did benefit from the visionary programming of its then Artistic Director, Antoine Bourseiller (1930–2013). Having begun his career as an actor and theatre director,⁵⁴ Bourseiller only started to direct opera when he joined the Nancy company in 1982. He remained in this role until 1996. During this tenure, Bourseiller seems to have been driven by two principal desires: firstly, to create a visual setting for each

⁵¹ Rey, 'Janowski,' 20.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ This French premiere also came a decade after that of Shostakovich's first opera *The Nose*, op. 15. Funded by the Maison de la Culture de Nanterre, this production took place in Tourcoing and was performed by the Atelier lyrique du Rhin (1974–1988, presently the Comédie de l'Est) in co-production with Radio-France and France-Culture. See 'Le Nez : Notice de Spectacle,' *BnF Catalogue général*, ark.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb39472009b. The Maison de la Culture de Nanterre revived the production in 1980 for La Biennale de Nanterre. See Gérard Condé, 'Les Coq-à-l'âne de Chostakovitch,' *Le Monde*, 26 February 1980.

⁵⁴ Bourseiller had previously held directing positions at the Studio des Champs-Élysées and Théâtre Récamier in Paris, as well as the Centre dramatique national in Aix-en-Provence. On screen, he played minor roles in several nouvelle vague films, including Brigitte Bardot's partner in Jean-Luc Godard's *Masculin-Féminin* (1966), and the soldier on the park bench in Agnès Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1962).

opera that matched as closely as possible to the musical ‘essence’ of the work as he perceived it (he rarely employed the same set designer more than once); and secondly, to remind the public *nancéien* that the history of opera did not stop at the nineteenth century.⁵⁵ *Lady Macbeth* was the last instalment of a two-year cycle (1988–89) celebrating opera of the twentieth century. This season also included Benjamin Britten’s *Billy Budd* (1951), Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess* (1935), the French premiere of *King Priam* (1961) by Michael Tippett, *Francesca da Rimini* (1913) by the Italian composer Riccardo Zandonai, Janacek’s *From the House of the Dead* (1930), and the world premiere of an atonal opera *La Noche triste* (1989) by Jean Prodomidès. The centrepiece of the previous season (1987–88) was a very successful production of Berg’s *Wozzeck*.

In his introduction to *Opéra Créateur*, a 1992 book containing images and production details of Bourseiller’s work in Nancy, Yves Bourgade mentions that the director’s creative vision was inevitably constrained by budgets: by 1992, the company had imposed on him a limit of two new productions per season. These financial challenges are evident in the company’s records at the Archives municipales de Nancy,⁵⁶ as well as in surveys of the finances of provincial opera companies (those of La Réunion des Théâtres lyriques municipaux français, presently the Réunion des Opéras de France). At the end of 1989, L’Opéra de Nancy et de Lorraine ranked thirteenth out of thirteen of France’s regional theatres (meaning it had the greatest total expenditure when balanced against ticket sales and public funding), and it had also seen the second highest increase in annual budget since 1988.⁵⁷ But, as the musicologist and essayist Maryvonne de Saint-Pulgent noted in *Le Point* at the time, ‘the fact that one of the best rated theatres among opera critics, Nancy, is at the bottom of this barrel, may suggest that good management is not synonymous with artistic quality.’⁵⁸

⁵⁵ *Opéra Créateur : d’Antoine Bourseiller*, photos by Michel Leclercq, introduction by Yves Bourgade (Dole: Éditions de l’Est, 1992), 9–12.

⁵⁶ Dossier : Présentation de la saison 1989–90, Archives municipales de Nancy, 3 rue Henri Bazin, 54000 Nancy, France.

⁵⁷ Maryvonne de Saint-Pulgent, ‘Opéras de province : L’Addition des notes,’ *Le Point* 900 (1989): 25.

⁵⁸ Saint-Pulgent, ‘Opéras de province,’ 25.



Figure 5.8. An advertisement for *Lady Macbeth* in Nancy. *L'Est Républicain*, 20 May 1989

Lady Macbeth was performed in Nancy from 26 May to 2 June 1989. Bourseiller put in an immense effort to promote the opera in the local community leading up to these performances, and his many interviews with the local daily *L'Est Républicain* speak not only to his passion for Shostakovich's opera, but also to the amount of work he put into staging it. He explained to a local journalist, Paul Lebœuf (who presumably had queried the French director's strong feelings for a perceptibly Russian work), that he had decided to programme *Lady Macbeth* not because of where its composer was from or the controversy that had historically surrounded it, but because of its 'universal scope':

From the perspective that *Faust* and *Thaïs* are typically French, then yes, *Lady Macbeth* is completely Russian. Yet, its importance in the history of music allows it to be classified as a universal and timeless masterpiece. To make a comparison, we can say that *Carmen* does not belong to France.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Paul Lebœuf, « Lady Macbeth de Mzensk » à l'opéra de Lorraine : Chostakovith [sic] amoureux de la criminelle, *L'Est Républicain*, 18 May 1989.

In the same article, shown in Figure 5.9, Lebœuf recounted Bourseiller's explanation of what makes Shostakovich's score both unusual and still worth performing to an audience in France fifty-five years after its Leningrad premiere:

Lady Macbeth is a kind of proletarian opera that plays a lot on contrasts: "There is a wild, vulgar music to accompany all the characters that surround the heroine, who is treated to pure, romantic, and sensual music. It is this constant mix that caused the outrage. For in this satirical and tragic opera, Shostakovich clearly loves the criminal, and with music mocks the traditional images of housewife, police, and church."⁶⁰

« Lady Macbeth de Mzensk » à l'opéra de Lorraine : Chostakovitch amoureux de la criminelle

L'opéra de Lorraine met à l'affiche « Lady Macbeth de Mzensk » de Dimitri Chostakovitch : dernier opéra d'une dizaine qui en deux saisons a embrassé cent ans de création lyrique.

Antoine Bourseiller, directeur et metteur en scène de cet ultime ouvrage explique son choix dans la portée universelle du chef d'œuvre.

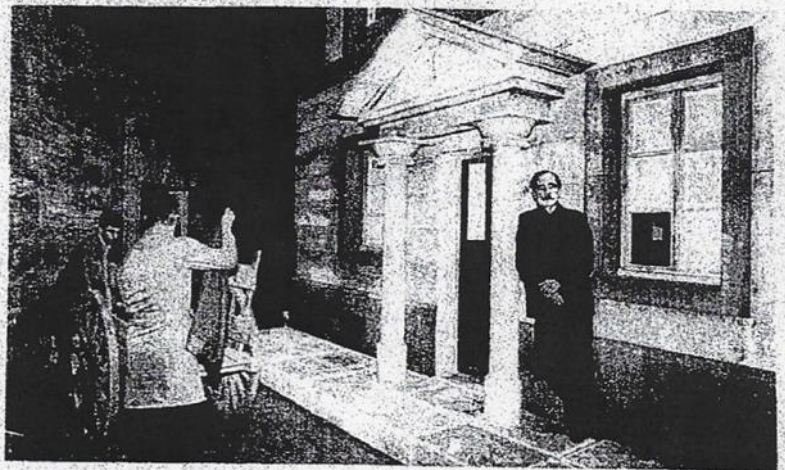
« Dans l'optique où Faust et Thais sont typiquement français, alors oui Lady Macbeth est totalement russe. Pour autant son importance dans l'histoire de la musique permet de le classer comme chef d'œuvre universel et intemporel. Pour faire un rapprochement, on peut bien dire que Carmen n'appartient pas à la France ».

Lady Macbeth de Mzensk est une sorte d'opéra prolétaire qui joue beaucoup sur les contrastes : « Il y a une musique sauvage, vulgaire pour accompagner tous les personnages qui entourent l'héroïne, laquelle a droit à de la musique pure, romantique et sen-

suelle. C'est ce mélange constant qui a provoqué l'indignation. Car dans cet opéra satirique et tragique, Chostakovitch aime visiblement la criminelle et sur le plan musical tourne en dérision les images traditionnelles de la femme au foyer, de la police et de l'Eglise ».

Avec une science unique de l'orchestration et un refus manifeste des concessions. Les parties vocales (quel rôle écrasant pour l'héroïne !) et instrumentales sont d'une grande difficulté mais jamais le compositeur ne néglige la beauté du propos : même dans les outrances, les accès de barbarie, d'explosion sonore, parce que la violence est vraie et qu'on ne saurait tricher avec.

« Pour cette première mise en scène en France, j'ai choisi de suivre à la lettre ce que voulait dire Chostakovitch. Les lectures différentes pourront venir plus tard. Je m'en tiens à une Katarina symbolique qui comme Lulu ou Manon Lescaut est poussée au



Antoine Bourseiller, metteur en scène de « Lady Macbeth de Mzensk ».

crime et accomplit celui-ci par amour ». Ajoutons que Chostakovitch propose une

dramaturgie exemplaire, parce qu'il a le sens du spectacle et du spectaculaire (pour avoir composé de nombreuses musiques de films certainement aussi).

Rigueur et dépouillement des décors : « Faire très pur et mécaniquement simple, avec de rapides changements à vue. En somme un dispositif que Jean Vilar aurait accepté. Avec pour les contrastes des

costumes (de Rosalie Varda) colorés, vivants pétillants ».

Première représentation vendredi 26 mai à 20 h 30. Avec dans le rôle-titre une étonnante Josephine Barsto. La location est ouverte place Stanislas, tous les jours (sauf dimanche et lundi) de 13 h à 19 h.

P. L.

Photo: Roger CLAUDIN.

Figure 5.9. 'Shostakovich, in Love with the Criminal.' *L'Est Républicain*, 18 May 1989

⁶⁰ Ibid.

There were also several preview articles in *L'Est Républicain* that demonstrate the local press's engagement with the Année Chostakovitch, and how *Lady Macbeth* in Nancy related to these broader celebrations across France in 1989. One such article, titled 'Lady Macbeth Resurrected,' by Bernard Moulin in the paper's 1989 Sunday supplement *L'Abonné Phrygien*, opened with the following comment: 'Dmitri Shostakovich, a composer under discussion if ever there was one, finds himself thrust suddenly into the spotlight of musical news, with 1989 having been decreed the "Shostakovich Year" without this choice being motivated by any anniversary.'⁶¹ Following a summary of the festival's major events in Paris and the provinces, Moulin announced: 'but in the immediate future, eyes will turn to Nancy for another important event: the premiere in France, fifty-five years after its first production in Leningrad, under Stalin, of the opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, undoubtedly Shostakovich's most controversial work.'⁶² The journalist then provided several columns of background on the work and its history in the twentieth century thus far. The entirety of this article is shown in Figure 5.10. Another preview article, shown in Figure 5.11, told of how this premiere forms

part of the tributes to a composer who is 'heir to Orthodox music, elements of folklore, and popular music, as well as the great classics of European music from Bach to Mahler and Berg. Revolutionary musician, humanist, defender of the oppressed and persecuted, his place in 1989 should create no dissonance during the bicentenary year of the French Revolution.'⁶³

The journalist gave no attribution for the quoted passage, but given its grandiosity, a reasonable speculation would be that it derived from a press release, likely provided by Le Chant du Monde.

⁶¹ Bernard Moulin, 'Lady Macbeth ressuscitée,' *L'Est Républicain/L'Abonné Phrygien*, 21 May 1989, 12.

⁶² Moulin, 'Lady Macbeth ressuscitée,' 12.

⁶³ *L'Est Républicain*, 23 May 1989, 9.

Lady Macbeth ressuscitée

L'ouvrage de Chostakovitch banni par la Russie stalinienne n'avait jamais été présenté en France. Création vendredi à Nancy, cinquante-cinq ans après Leningrad.

DMITRI CHOSTAKOVITCH, compositeur discuté s'il en est, se trouve brutalement propulsé sous les feux de l'actualité musicale, 1989 ayant été déclarée « année Chostakovitch » sans que ce choix fut motivé par un quelconque anniversaire (le musicien, né en 1906, est mort en 1975).

La plupart des grandes formations musicales françaises, l'Orchestre national de France, le nouvel orchestre philharmonique de Radio France, l'Ensemble orchestral de Paris, les orchestres de Toulouse, de Lyon, de Monte-Carlo participeront à l'hommage avec de nombreux ensembles étrangers comme l'Orchestre national symphonique d'URSS, les Solistes de Moscou, le New-American Chamber Orchestra et beaucoup d'autres qui viendront jouer Chostakovitch dans les salles françaises.

Avec toutes ses symphonies, ses concertos, sa musique de chambre, ses œuvres vocales et ses compositions pour piano, c'est une quasi-intégrale de l'œuvre de ce compositeur qui sera proposée au public de Pleyel, du théâtre des Champs-Élysées et des grandes villes de province.

Un drame social et une belle héroïne

L'Orchestre symphonique et lyrique de Nancy donnera même en concert, fin juin, la musique du film « *La Nouvelle Babylone* », écrite par le compositeur soviétique qui a également abordé ce genre.

Mais dans l'immédiat, les regards vont se tourner vers Nancy pour un autre événement considérable : la création en France, cinquante-cinq ans après sa première production à Leningrad, sous Staline, de l'opéra « *Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk* », l'œuvre sans doute la plus controversée de Chostakovitch. Celle, en tous cas, qui a signé sa disgrâce et qui lui a valu de subir les affres de l'indignité après avoir connu les excès d'honneur sous un régime communiste dont il s'accommodait comme toute plume bien.

L'intrigue de l'œuvre, tirée d'une nouvelle de Nikolai Leskov, a pour cadre l'univers de riches commerçants de province dans la Russie des tsars. Elle met en scène une belle héroïne issue du peuple, confrontée à la bêtise et à l'arbitraire d'un mari et d'un beau-père petits-bourgeois. Une confrontation d'où naîtra le drame.



L'intrigue : une héroïne issue du peuple confrontée à la bêtise d'un mari et d'un beau-père petits-bourgeois.

Le compositeur, qui n'aurait pu faire passer telle quelle l'œuvre de Leskov dans la Russie des Soviets, en a fait une adaptation relativement libre : tandis que pour l'auteur l'héroïne était une femme cruelle assouvie de richesse, pour le musicien, elle est devenue une jeune

femme intelligente qui étouffe dans un monde de vulgaires marchands.

En plaçant résolument son opéra sur le terrain social, Dimitri Chostakovitch, alors communiste sincère et musicien plutôt bien en cour au Kremlin, était

convaincu de s'attirer les faveurs de la critique officielle et celle d'un public de puis longtemps privé de son libre arbitre. Ce fut effectivement le cas dès la première, en janvier 1934 : sa « *Lady Macbeth* » fut saluée comme le plus grand opéra prolétarien de tous les temps et bénéficia de près de deux cents représentations à Leningrad et à Moscou avant de conquérir Prague, Ljubljana, Londres et Zurich.

Démolir par la « Pravda »

Chostakovitch nageait dans le bonheur de l'accueil enthousiaste réservé à son œuvre par ses compatriotes lorsque la « *Pravda* » décida de donner un coup d'arrêt à sa félicité : le chef d'œuvre salué depuis deux ans par toute la presse soviétique devenait subitement « un galimatias musical, une marée de sons cahotiques et discordants, de bribes de mélodie, d'embryons de phrases musicales qui s'échappent et se perdent dans le tapage, les grincements et les glissements ».

Du jour au lendemain, l'opéra porté aux nues était devenu un opéra maudit. « *Lady Macbeth* » ne répondait plus aux critères du réalisme socialiste, et Chostakovitch connut le sort des artistes plus ou moins bannis. S'il ne fut jamais vraiment persécuté, il connut des années difficiles et ne rentra vraiment en grâce qu'après la mort de Staline : il reçut le prix Lénine en 1956 et devint secrétaire de la très officielle Union des compositeurs, l'année suivante. Il dut cependant attendre 1963 pour qu'au terme de vingt-sept années de mise à l'index sa « *Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk* » revienne à l'affiche à Moscou dans une version remaniée et désormais intitulée « *Katerina Ismailova* ».

Grâce à Antoine Boursellier et à l'Opéra-Théâtre de Nancy et de Lorraine, la France va donc enfin pouvoir découvrir cette œuvre puissante, présentée ici dans sa version originale surtitrée.

C'est l'occasion pour les amateurs de Chostakovitch d'avoir la révélation d'une œuvre essentielle du musicien. Et, pour les autres, de mieux connaître l'un des compositeurs les plus importants de ce siècle.

Bernard MOULIN

● Représentations à l'Opéra de Nancy, les vendredis 26 mai, mardi 30 mai et vendredi 2 juin, à 20 h 30, et le dimanche 31 mai, à 14 h 30.

Figure 5.10. 'Lady Macbeth Revived.' *L'Abonné Phrygien*, 21 May 1989



« Lady Macbeth » de Chostakovitch : une première à l'opéra de Lorraine

La saison 88-89 de l'opéra de Nancy et de Lorraine va s'achever avec les trois représentations de « Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk » de Dmitri Chostakovitch.

Il s'agira en France d'une création, dans la mise en scène d'Antoine Boursellier, les décors de Guy-Claude François, les costumes de Rosalie Varda et les lumières de Jean-Michel Bauer.

1989 a été choisie pour être « l'année Chostakovitch » : la première représentation en France de « *Lady Macbeth* » fait partie des hommages rendus à un compositeur « héritier de la musique orthodoxe, d'éléments du folklore et de la musique populaire comme des grands classiques de la musique européenne depuis Bach jusqu'à Mahler et Berg.

Musicien révolutionnaire, humaniste, défenseur des opprimés et des humiliés, sa place en 1989 ne devrait pas créer de dissonance au cours de l'année du bicentenaire de la Révolution française.

L'histoire raconte l'aventure de Katerina, épouse malheureuse d'un riche marchand, surveillé par son beau-père pendant l'absence de son mari. Sa passion pour un ouvrier de la ferme lui fera commettre deux crimes. Au bain de Sibérie, elle entraînera dans la mort la nouvelle maîtresse de son amant. Quatre actes, neuf tableaux,

sensuels, romantiques, violents, barbares et somptueux. Le rôle-titre a été confié pour cette « première » à Joséphine Barstow, une cantatrice en pleine ascension, découverte au festival de Salzbourg en 1986, réinvitée par Karajan en 1989 pour « *Tosca* ». Voilà trois ans elle fit la tournée « historique » en URSS avec « *Tosca* » et « *Lady Macbeth* ». Prochainement elle sera à l'opéra de Houston pour chanter « *La Maréchale* ».

Jacques Trussel (le rôle de l'amant) a déjà participé à de nombreuses créations mais a

également chanté la « 9e symphonie » de Beethoven avec l'orchestre de Boston dirigé par Ozawa. Dimitri Petkov (le rôle du beau-père) a commencé sa carrière à l'opéra national de Bulgarie et est maintenant demandé par toutes les grandes scènes d'Europe. Il a enregistré « *Lady Macbeth* » sous la direction de Rostropovitch.

Représentations les vendredis 26 à 20 h 30, dimanche 28 mai à 14 h 30 et vendredi 2 juin à 20 h 30.

Location ouverte au guichet du théâtre, place Stanislas, de 13 h à 19 h (sauf dimanche et lundi).



Joséphine Barstow
une cantatrice en pleine ascension

Figure 5.11. More promotion for *Lady Macbeth* in Nancy. *L'Est Républicain*, 23 May 1989, 9

Bourseiller's efforts to stimulate media coverage in Lorraine were worthwhile. *Lady Macbeth* drew an impressive crowd not only from the local region, but also from around France and elsewhere in Europe, and both the production and the work itself were warmly received by critics across the board. In fact, in its Saturday edition, published the morning after the premiere performance, *L'Est Républicain* deemed the fact that *Lady Macbeth* was 'finally French' (Figure 5.12) equally as newsworthy as an international, cutting-edge medical story—news of the premiere shared the front page with a feature on the ground-breaking triple bypass surgery that had just been performed in Besançon. On the opera, the paper described Bourseiller's staging as '*maléfique, sulfureux et sensuel*,' and Josephine Barstow, who played Katerina, as a '*musicienne et tragédienne exceptionnelle*.'⁶⁴ In another review article published in the same newspaper the morning after the final performance (shown in Figure 5.13), the local critic Lebœuf praised Bourseiller's direction, commending how, 'with admirable intellectual dignity,' he had rendered the opera 'with a formidable evil flame, a heady, poisonous dynamic, [and] an original violence that is both naive and barbaric.'⁶⁵ He noted that Bourseiller's naturalistic staging had made the violence of the second and fifth scenes particularly impactful, reporting that these scenes—in which Sergei sexually assaults Aksinya, and Katerina and Sergei strangle Zinovy—'were not received by the audience as feigned.'⁶⁶ The international cast—three of whom had performed their roles two years earlier with the English National Opera—also received high praise. Alongside Barstow, the cast featured Jacque Trussel as Sergei, Dimiter Petkov as Boris, and Stuart Kale as Zinovy.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ « « Lady Macbeth », enfin française,' *L'Est Républicain*, 27 May 1989, 1.

⁶⁵ Paul Lebœuf, « « Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk » jusqu'au bout de la pureté,' *L'Est Républicain*, 3 June 1989.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 'Ne sont pas reçues comme feintes par des spectateurs.'

⁶⁷ The remainder of the cast included Danielle Chlostawa as Aksinya, Hélène Jossoud as Sonyetka, Jean Brun as the police sergeant, Ivan Matiakh as the shabby peasant and Olim Sadoullaiev as the priest, with Michel Fockenoy, Pascal Desaux, David Richards, Ivan Kramar, Bertrand Maon, Eric Girard, Denys Quantin and Olga Zimovetz in supporting roles.



Figure 5.12. *Lady Macbeth*, 'Finally French.' Front page of *L'Est Républicain*, 27 May 1989

« Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk » jusqu'au bout de la pureté

Fin de saison et fin du cycle de deux années consacrées à dix grands ouvrages lyriques de ce dernier siècle. Un final sulfureux et grandiose avec cette « Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk », offerte en « première française » au public nancéien par Antoine Bourseiller.

Le directeur de l'Opéra de Lorraine a tenu jusqu'à l'acharnement à la représentation de cet opéra capital dans l'histoire lyrique mondiale et dans la vie même de Dimitri Chostakovitch, compositeur amoureux fou de son héroïne. Femme forte et pure totalement puisque allant au bout de ses convictions, de sa passion amoureuse unique qui ne mérite pas la moindre concession et qui sera finalement sublimée; on pourrait dire « lavée » de toutes taches criminelles.

Antoine Bourseiller également est allé à l'extrême de sa démonstration esthétique: avec une dignité intellectuelle admirable, un souci d'identification plus que respectable. Lady Macbeth nous est ainsi rendue avec une formidable flamme maléfique, une dynamique vénéneuse entêtante, une violence originelle à la fois naïve et primitive.

Pas question en l'occurrence pour l'ensemble de la distribution de chercher à « composer » à tricher, à faire semblant. Tous, de l'héroïne à l'ivrogne se sont laissé prendre au jeu de la séduction finale, au charisme mortel et irréversible, mais joyeux parce qu'accepté avec insolence. Les violences barbares du 2^e tableau (la servante dans le tonneau) du 4^e (l'étranglement du mari)

ne sont pas reçues comme feintes par des spectateurs que les outrances ne peuvent que figer. La désespérance dernière de Katerina, son jusqu'au-boutisme sans souci de vengeance laissent aussi muets et désarmés les mélomanes qui retrouvent dans ce quatrième acte une musique profondément russe et fataliste.

Joséphine Barstow fait évidemment un triomphe dans le rôle-titre tant son abattage, sa présence dramatique, son aura de femme sont impressionnants. Elle a à sa disposition une tessiture exceptionnelle et sait de plus jouer avec toutes les couleurs d'intonation.

Jacques Trussel, son partenaire habituel, joue parfaitement le jeu linéaire et simpliste de l'amant macho avec beaucoup d'élégance vocale tandis que Dimitri Petkov campe un beau-père inquiétant musicalement très à l'aise. Stuart Kale (le mari) est sans reproche dans la fadeur voulue et les belles surprises viennent de Danyèle Chlostawa (la servante) de Jean Brun (sergent de police), Ivan Matiakh (l'ivrogne miteux) totalement impliqués et sûrs dans leurs interventions décisives.

Guy-Claude François a réalisé un décor sans lourdeur et astucieux qui laisse bien l'importance à l'humain tandis que Rosalie Varda a joliment éclairé les arrogances vestimentaires de Katerina, les exhubérances des noces, les renoncements sibériens.

L'orchestre de Jérôme Kaltenbach s'est contenté d'aller au bout de la partition en confondant évidemment véhémence et brutalité, sensualité et lourdeur, cédant aux ap-



Joséphine Barstow: une présence dramatique impressionnante.
(Photo Patrick BRUMENT)

proximations dans les interludes. Mais ces choses sont maintenant bien ordinaires. Il serait bon tout de même que le directeur de la musique, plutôt que de s'approprier systématiquement des grands ouvrages, fasse cadeau aux mélomanes nancéiens et autres de quelque grande baguette française ou internationale. D'autant que l'orchestre y trouverait une « mobilisation » supplémentaire, voudrait peut-être relever un défi.

Cela devrait d'ailleurs entrer normalement dans les options intellectuelles d'un responsable de formation soucieux d'une bonne évolution de sa phallange musicale.

Paul LEBOEUF.

Figure 5.13. The final local review of *Lady Macbeth*. *L'Est Républicain*, 3 June 1989

Lebœuf also offered high praise to Rosalie Varda (Bourseiller's daughter with the nouvelle vague pioneer Agnès Varda) and Guy-Claude François, who respectively designed the costumes and set. (Their work for this production, as well as some of the cast, can be seen in Figures 5.14 and 5.15.) It was only the musical accompaniment that the critic felt did not reach its full potential. According to his review, the local Orchestre symphonique et lyrique de Nancy, conducted by Jérôme Kaltenbach, was 'content to go to the end of the score by obviously confusing vehemence and brutality, sensuality and heaviness, yielding to approximations in the interludes.' Lebœuf suggested that it would be 'good if the musical director, instead of systematically adapting great works, would give music lovers from Nancy and elsewhere the gift of a great French or international conductor,' for he theorised that this additional challenge would motivate the musicians to play better.⁶⁸

Most of the Parisian critics who attended these performances in Nancy were highly supportive. In the one instance where a critic had something negative to say, like Lebœuf, it was only in relation to the orchestra: Jacques Doucelin declared in *Le Figaro* that the orchestra was the only 'weak point ... despite the efforts of Jérôme Kaltenbach to do justice to this highly colourful score.'⁶⁹ Otherwise, he was full of praise for the production, complimenting above all Bourseiller's staging, but also the sets, costumes, singers, and chorus. The French artist and critic Gérard Mannoni agreed with the prevailing assessment, but without any criticism of the orchestra—he thought that it performed with 'less hesitation' (*plus franchement*) than usual.⁷⁰ For Mannoni, it was difficult to understand why Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth* 'remains so marginal' in France, and his review described Bourseiller's interpretation as 'magnificent at all levels,

whether the scenic apparatus, as aesthetic as it is effective in its simplicity, the costumes, effectively marking the difference of the classes ... the lighting, which animates the action and always creates the right atmosphere, and, of course, the direction of the actors, where everyone is characterised in a manner that is acute and energetic, with just the right amount of audacity.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Lebœuf, 'Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk.'

⁶⁹ Jacques Doucelin, 'Bravo Bourseiller !,' *Le Figaro*, 29 May 1989 ('Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk,' Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra Archive, Bibliothèque nationale de France, 8 rue Scribe, 75009 Paris, France). 'Le point faible de ce théâtre, malgré les efforts de Jérôme Kaltenbach pour rendre justice à cette partition haute en couleur.'

⁷⁰ Gérard Mannoni, 'Une heureuse révélation,' *Le Quotidien de Paris*, 29 May 1989 ('Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk,' BmO).

⁷¹ Mannoni, 'Une heureuse révélation.'

Vladimir Hofmann, a French artist and Russian art specialist, was also impressed by Bourseiller's efforts in Nancy; however, he came to the defence of the Nice company's work back in the mid-1960s, stressing to his readership in *Opéra international* (a Paris-based opera journal published monthly from 1977 to 2005), that this Nancy performance was a 'premiere' only on a technicality:

Let us pay tribute to the Opéra de Nancy for this courageous premiere in France of Shostakovich's superb *Lady Macbeth*! However, we must remember that the later 'corrected' version of the work, under the title *Katerina Ismailova*, had several performances at the Opéra de Nice in the 1960s.⁷²

The ever-supportive Lonchamp had no harsh words whatsoever—not even for the orchestra. He described *Lady Macbeth* in *Le Monde* as 'a work of a truly formidable intensity, as confirmed by Antoine Bourseiller's superb performance at the Grand Théâtre de Nancy.' The leading Parisian critic here advocated not only for the music of Shostakovich, but also for the work of Bourseiller, whose success in recent years, he argued, especially in the domain of contemporary opera, 'would make him an excellent artistic director of the Bastille...' (for context, it had recently been announced that the then little-known South Korean conductor and pianist Myung-whun Chung had been appointed to this post, after Daniel Barenboim was unceremoniously stood down in January 1989—before the Opéra Bastille had even opened).⁷³ Lonchamp deemed the orchestra to be on par with the rest of the production, with which he was possibly even more impressed than the critics *nancéiens*:

Great singers, extraordinary choirs singing in Russian, prepared by Emmanuel Joël, a very brilliant orchestra, under the passionate direction of Jérôme Kaltenbach; everyone plays, with extreme vehemence and total commitment, this sinister drama, onto which Bourseiller bestows its true, epic dimension, Shakespearean at times, as the title indicates ... Bourseiller, who pushes to the extreme the realism of the action, up to these scenes of love, flogging, or murder that are as raw and terrifying on the stage as in the music, knew how to attract to Nancy, and energise, a dazzling cast. Josephine Barstow shows herself worthy of the great Vishnevskaya ... Her partners are at her level ... The costumes of

⁷² Vladimir Hofmann, 'Nancy : Lady Macbeth de Mzensk,' *Opéra international* 127 (7 August 1989): 48.

⁷³ Jacques Lonchamp, '« Lady Macbeth » à Nancy : Le Fascinant Opéra de Chostakovitch,' *Le Monde*, 2 June 1989. For a summary of the Opéra Bastille's troubled opening, see Otto Friedrich, 'Music: Second Storming of the Bastille,' *Time*, 30 January 1989, content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,956845,00.html.

Rosalie Varda, of a very understated, local colour, and the sets arranged skilfully by Guy-Claude François for the many scene changes, contribute to this great success.⁷⁴

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Figure 5.14. The Bulgarian bass Dimiter Petkov and supporting cast in costumes designed by Rosalie Varda⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Lonchampt, ‘« Lady Macbeth » à Nancy.’

⁷⁵ *Opéra Créateur*, 121.

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Figure 5.15. Josephine Barstow and Jacque Trussel on the imposing set by Guy-Claude François⁷⁶

Comparisons to opera in Paris were not only present in Lonchamp's review. Reporting for *Le Soir*, a French-language magazine based in Brussels, the French musicologist Fernand Leclercq saw Nancy's success as an opportunity to reflect on the efforts of capital: it was 'admirable work,' he wrote, 'what a small provincial theatre can do, at a time when in Paris we are still trying to get out of the paddling pool.'⁷⁷ In all likelihood, these journalists were prompted to mention the work of the Opéra de Paris in their coverage not because of a 'Paris vs the provinces' debate about who offered the best opera productions, but because Myung-whun Chung had actually attended the opening night with the directors of his new company. His presence was noticed by several journalists, who naturally began to look towards a staging of Shostakovich's second opera in the French capital.⁷⁸ But before this could eventuate, L'Opéra de Nancy et de Lorraine's

⁷⁶ Ibid., 125.

⁷⁷ Fernand Leclercq, 'Lady Macbeth à Nancy : Le « vrai » Chostakovitch,' *Le Soir*, 12 June 1989. 'Un travail admirable ; ce que peut un petit théâtre de province au moment où, à Paris, on tente toujours de sortir de la pataugeoire.'

⁷⁸ See for example André Tubeuf, 'Nancy à la point,' *Le Point* 896 (20 Nov 1989): 41; Doucelin, 'Bravo Bourseiller !'; and Mannoni, 'Une heureuse révélation.'

production of *Lady Macbeth* was revived for another season: this time in France's fourth-largest city, Toulouse, located in the southern Occitanie region.

That this opera could appear so soon in yet another regional area was thanks to a new initiative called 'Opéras de France,' launched approximately six months after *Lady Macbeth*'s French premiere. Funded by the bank Crédit local de France, this opera-pooling programme was designed so that large provincial theatres could increase their diversity in programming and reduce the significant expenses associated with creating new productions, thus 'better developing the artistic potential of each city.'⁷⁹ The participating companies were housed in Bordeaux, Lille, Nancy, Marseille, Toulouse, Nîmes, Nantes, Mulhouse, and Lyon. The Nancy production of *Lady Macbeth* was performed four times in Toulouse, from Friday 10 to Saturday 18 May 1991, in exchange for the Théâtre du Capitole's production of Charles Lecocq's *La Fille de Madame Angot* (1872).⁸⁰ It was revived again two years later, this time at the Opéra municipal de Marseille, for four performances from 11 to 20 November 1993.⁸¹

Lady Macbeth in Paris, 1992–94

In between these regional tours of the Nancy production in 1991 and 1993, two events unfolded that are very different in nature and scope, but both very important to the trajectory of this thesis: the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the creation of another staging of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth* in France. In late 1991, after the government in Moscow had lost much of its influence, and many of the Soviet Union's fifteen republics had gained independence, Secretary General Gorbachev's efforts to reform the USSR at last came to an end. Gorbachev resigned in December, and the remaining members of the Supreme Soviet voted to end the parliament. Meanwhile, in Paris, after almost a decade of building and planning, the city's new opera house, the Opéra Bastille, had recently opened its doors to the public (the opening occurred on the eve of Bastille Day in 1989). The company hosted its first opera season in March 1990. The following year, shortly after the regional production of *Lady Macbeth* had visited Toulouse, and at a time when many of the former Soviet republics had already departed the centralised Union, the

⁷⁹ 'La Lettre de la décentralisation,' 2 November 1989, dossier 591 W 73 'Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk (Chostakovitch, D.). 1988,' Opéra de Nancy et de Lorraine Archive, Archives municipales de Nancy, 3 rue Henri Bazin, 54 000 Nancy, France. 'Mieux valoriser le potentiel artistique de chaque ville.'

⁸⁰ Sabine Froment (administrative director, Opéra de Nancy et de Lorraine), letter to Robert Gouaze (Théâtre du Capitôle) dated 5 January 1990, dossier 591 W 73, Opéra de Nancy et de Lorraine Archive, Archives municipales de Nancy.

⁸¹ Contract between l'Opéra de Nancy et de Lorraine and l'Opéra de Marseille, 21 juin 1993, dossier 591 W 73, Opéra de Nancy et de Lorraine Archive, Archives municipales de Nancy.

Opéra de Paris announced that the centrepiece of its 1991–92 season would be a new staging of Shostakovich’s opera, directed by André Engel and conducted by Chung.⁸² After a delayed opening night—owing to the (very French) reason that the stage technicians had been on strike, demanding better working conditions from the theatre’s management—*Lady Macbeth* ran at the Opéra Bastille for ten performances from Tuesday 4 to Wednesday 26 February 1992. Three days after opening night, President Mitterrand signed the bilateral treaty that recognised the Russian Federation as the successor of the USSR, making France the first Western nation to form a cordial agreement with independent Russia. ‘Russia and France are friends and now say so,’ Mitterrand told the international press; ‘this treaty defines an area of broad understanding between our countries, and I believe we have worked in the interest of history.’⁸³

In Paris, the scope and spectacle of the new *Lady Macbeth* production was extravagant, not only in comparison to earlier French productions of Shostakovich’s opera, but seemingly also by international standards—a critic who visited from Pittsburgh claimed that the Opéra Bastille had given *Lady Macbeth* ‘surely its most worthy production ever.’⁸⁴ The 1992 production of *Lady Macbeth* featured sets by Nicky Rieti and lighting by André Diot (see Figure 5.16), costumes designed by Rieti and Nicole Galerne (whose work is shown in Figures 5.17 and 5.18), and even a sequence of pyrotechnics (Figure 5.19). Jacques Trussel, who performed Sergei in Nancy, reprised his role for the Paris season, as did several members of the supporting cast. The remaining principals were international guests: the American soprano Mary Jane Johnson starred as Katerina, while the Ukrainian bass Anatoli Kotscherga and the Italian tenor Paolo Barbacini performed Boris and Zinovy. The choir and orchestra were the house ensembles of the Opéra National de Paris.

⁸² *Lady Macbeth* in Paris was a co-production with La Scala, which would subsequently host the same production.

⁸³ William Drozdiak, ‘Russia, France Sign Landmark Treaty of Cooperation,’ *Washington Post*, 8 February 1992, www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1992/02/08/russia-france-sign-landmark-treaty-of-cooperation/2265c932-c8e7-4664-8c41-5dacc1758fba.

⁸⁴ Robert Croan, ‘Bastille Is a Parisian Jewel,’ *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, 6 April 1992 (‘Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk,’ BmO).



Figure 5.16. Mary Jane Johnson and Jacque Trussel on the set designed for the Opéra Bastille by Nicky Rieti with evocative lighting by André Diot. Photo: Daniel Cande/Bibliothèque nationale de France



Figure 5.17. The cast of *Lady Macbeth* at the Opéra Bastille in costumes designed by Nicky Rieti and Nicole Galerne. Photo: Daniel Cande/BnF



Figure 5.18. The supporting cast of *Lady Macbeth* at the Opéra Bastille. Photo: Daniel Cande/BnF



Figure 5.19. Pyrotechnics at the Opéra Bastille. Photo Daniel Cande/BnF

For the most part, the Parisian *Lady Macbeth* premiered to great critical acclaim. Yet, studying the reception at the new, world-class venue of the Opéra de Paris is quite a different endeavour to that of the regional companies of Nancy and Nice, since the Parisian company necessarily attracted a much larger audience, and the performances were reviewed in a much wider cross-section of publications from across the country. Furthermore, the Paris-based publications that reviewed *Lady Macbeth* at the Opéra Bastille reflect a diverse political spectrum—reviews appeared in a number of far-right publications and one satirical newspaper, for example—meaning there were avenues for the criticism of Soviet music not relevant in the provincial context. In a major city like Paris, there are also far more mainstream press outlets than in the provinces, which creates space for a more elitist style of music criticism where critics may seek out faults to demonstrate their learnedness (a phenomenon not seen in the local press of Nice and Nancy). Despite these differences, only a small minority of reviews from French critics made any negative comments on the production. In addition to the many French-language reviews it generated, the performances were reviewed by critics representing English, American, Italian, German, Spanish, Russian, Polish, and Chinese press outlets.

Pierre Vidal, the composer, organist, and musicologist who also delivered the *Année Chostakovitch* keynote, reviewed the production for the musical news journal *La Lettre du musicien*. He noted that presenting the original version of *Lady Macbeth* for judgement by the Parisian public was an event ‘awaited for so many decades that it could only arouse an immense movement of curiosity,’ and offered the following evocative description of the opening night performance:

Shostakovich devotees, lukewarm attendees (*tièdes*), and sceptics alike quickly succumbed to the dizzying spiral created by the insolent genius of twenty-five years, while at intermission, comments on the incredible fruitfulness of the score, its ruptures, and brutal transitions, were rife. After these moments of surprise, when the panting machine started up once more, it became clear that the production was one of the best, if not the best, of the Opéra Bastille since its opening. ... The orchestra conveyed, with clinical precision, the often colourful instrumental detail, the extensive dynamics of the score, its timid lyricism as well as its unhinged moments; the choir was of an admirable colour, really approaching the Russian domain. Through his simultaneously meticulous and passionate conducting, Myung-whun Chung proved to be the essential craftsman of the

success of this inordinate undertaking, and received a long ovation as such.

Shostakovich's message could not have been better conveyed.⁸⁵

Chung's performance was acclaimed almost entirely across the board, but especially in other specialist music publications. In *Le Monde de la musique*, the critic François Lafon described how the conductor worked 'in perfect harmony with the subtlety of the show ... handl[ing] wonderfully the contrasts of a score that passes ceaselessly from aridity to opulence, from realism to lyricism.'⁸⁶ Vladimir Hofmann agreed; although, his extended review in *Opéra international* complimented practically every aspect of the production. He called Chung a 'prodigious leader,' whose performance was 'of breathtaking power'; 'Shostakovich has rarely been served with such energy and brilliance, he concluded.'⁸⁷ Hofmann also described the opera itself as 'the work of a dazzling young genius,

and a surprisingly mature one at that, since it contains the seeds of many of his future compositions. Whether in sarcasm or in compassion for the painful humanity that inhabits many of his late scores, we already find in it all the characteristics of his anguished, hypersensitive language, where burlesque winks and harrowing scenes alternate in frenetic succession, striking us with a power that is truly unheard of. One remains flabbergasted before the orchestral interlude that conveys the act of love of Katerina and Sergei in the first act, and petrified in the last, when an astounding forte precedes Katerina's hallucination... This degree of emotion is found rarely on an operatic stage, and in Russian opera, only with Mussorgsky.'⁸⁸

Hofmann even described the 'sublime' final scene of *Lady Macbeth* as a 'kind of modern-day *Götterdämmerung*.'⁸⁹

Similar observations on both the music and Chung's performance were made in non-specialist publications, too; *Figaroscope*, the Parisian cultural supplement to *Le Figaro*, for instance, observed how 'the orchestra, thanks to the vigilance of Myung-whun Chung, does not miss any of the

⁸⁵ Pierre Vidal, 'Concerts : *Lady Macbeth de Mzensk* à l'Opéra-Bastille,' *La Lettre du musicien* 115 (April 1992): 35.

⁸⁶ François Lafon, 'Paris, Opéra-Bastille : « *Lady Macbeth de Mzensk* », ' *Le Monde de la musique/Télérama* 156 (March 1992) ('*Lady Macbeth de Mzensk*, BmO). 'En parfait accord avec la subtilité du spectacle, Chung manie formidablement les contrastes d'une partition qui passe sans cesse de l'aridité à l'opulence, du réalisme au lyrisme.'

⁸⁷ Vladimir Hofmann, '*Lady Macbeth de Mzensk*, ' *Opéra international : Le Magazine de l'art lyrique* (March 1992) ('*Lady Macbeth de Mzensk*, BmO). 'Myung-Whun Chung s'affirme un chef prodigieux : rarement Chostakovitch aura été servi avec autant d'énergie et de brio. Sa direction est d'une puissance à couper le souffle.'

⁸⁸ Hofmann, '*Lady Macbeth de Mzensk*.'

⁸⁹ Ibid. 'Quelque crépuscule des dieux des temps modernes.'

winks sown by the young composer.⁹⁰ In the main issue of *Figaro*, the composer Pierre Petit admitted that, ‘for [him], Shostakovich’s score suffers ... from a curious ambiguity,’ but that the Opéra Bastille’s production was ‘undoubtedly one of the most beautiful shows’ that company had offered since its opening.⁹¹ The daily *Le Parisien*’s critic described the production as ‘a hit,’ and noted that ‘rarely, at the Opéra Bastille, is a performance acclaimed so unanimously:

Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District has just received a standing ovation. Nearly three hours of dazzling—and difficult—performance obliges admiration ... The conductor ... confirms his talents as a sensitive musician by exploiting, without pomposity, all the richness and beauty of this music that is at once mischievous, ironic, tender, and sometimes grandiloquent.⁹²

The production was also reviewed in the politically independent *Paris Match*, one of the city’s most successful weekly news magazines. The reporter mentioned how Chung had been determined over the last two years to stage *Lady Macbeth* at the Opéra Bastille, and declared that ‘the triumph of the premiere proved him right ... the music, orchestration, and architecture together make a whole that is reaching perfection. It is admirable!’⁹³ In the French Protestant weekly *Réforme*, the musicologist and critic Marc Vignal felt similarly, concluding that ‘two years of preparation were necessary, but it was worth the wait.’⁹⁴ The journalist and art critic Nicole Duault, on the other hand, barely evaluated the Bastille’s production in her review for the tabloid *France-Soir*; she instead focused on the opera itself, relating its content to the recent restructuring of the Soviet Union, and its aesthetic to an earlier generation of classical composers. According to Duault, Shostakovich’s *Lady Macbeth* (the character) is like ‘the little cousin of the Shakespeare heroine,’ who, ‘by the cynicism of her crimes,

is more of a Madame Bovary, dreaming long before the time of perestroika. But it is a perestroika that occurs through the liberation of her body and the fulfillment of her sensuality. Without a doubt, desire has never been more deeply felt, explored, and magnified than by this wild and tumultuous musical ocean, a veritable suite of musical

⁹⁰ J.D. ‘Lady Macbeth de Mzensk,’ *Figaroscope*, 12 February 1992 (‘Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk,’ BmO). ‘L’orchestre grâce à la vigilance de Myung-Whun Chung ne rate aucun des clins d’œil semés par le jeune compositeur.’

⁹¹ Pierre Petit, ‘Un souffle exceptionnel,’ *Le Figaro*, 6 February 1992 (‘Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk,’ BmO). ‘Je dois avouer que la partition de Chostakovitch souffre pour moi à chaque moment d’une curieuse ambiguïté ... Sans doute l’un des plus beaux spectacles offerts par l’Opéra-Bastille depuis sa création.’

⁹² A.D. ‘« Lady Macbeth » fait un tabac à Bastille,’ *Le Parisien*, 13 February 1992 (‘Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk,’ BmO).

⁹³ ‘Lady Macbeth de Mzensk de Chostakovitch,’ *Paris Match*, 13 February 1992 (‘Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk,’ BmO). ‘Le triomphe de la première lui a donné raison ... la musique, l’orchestration, l’architecture font un tout atteignant la perfection. C’est admirable !’

⁹⁴ Marc Vignal, ‘Chostakovitch conquiert l’Opéra Bastille,’ *Réforme*, 22 February 1992 (‘Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk,’ Bibliothèque-Musée de l’Opéra Archive). ‘Deux ans de préparation ont été nécessaires, mais l’attente valait la peine.’

electroshocks that overwhelm us in stormy waves. The music of Shostakovich—with the intensity of Mahler, but shifting movement (*mouvance*) of Tchaikovsky and Mussorgsky, whose resurgences are also found—is often very narrative.⁹⁵

Duault concluded that Shostakovich's opera was a major work of the twentieth century, in the same league as *Lulu* and *Wozzeck*. Several days before opening night (presumably after a preview performance), *Lady Macbeth* was likened to another existing work in the centre-left daily *Libération*, whose critic Christian Leblé called it 'Half drama, half buffoonery'; a work that 'could claim the status of a modern-day *Don Giovanni*.'⁹⁶

In addition to the many Parisian journalists in attendance, the Bastille production of *Lady Macbeth* drew a number of critics from regional publications, who seemed to agree with the sentiment that predominated in the capital. In the regional weekly *Tout Lyon*, Philippe Andriot described the production as 'totally admirable,' and the Tours-based *Nouvelle République du Centre-Ouest* called it 'superb, arrogant, and fabulous! ... a must see.'⁹⁷ Even representatives from the more conservative publications seemed impressed, either by the quality of the production or Shostakovich's opera itself. In the far-right newspaper *Minute: La France*, an approving review from the poet and critic Jean-Pierre Tardif asked: 'how could Stalin have banned this work in 1934? ... Is this not as absurd as Goebbels banning Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Germany?'⁹⁸ Another ultra-conservative publication, the weekly magazine *Valeurs actuelles*, described the Opéra Bastille's work as '*parfait*,' and the music as 'brutal and easy, if not simple,' but noted that it 'goes straight to the heart.'⁹⁹ However, the critic, who wrote under the abbreviation J. Th., did take the opportunity to criticise the conductor, remarking that 'the violence of Shostakovich's music is suited exactly to his temperament' (Chung had inherited financial, political and logistical issues in the wake of Barenboim's dismissal from the Bastille, so this was perhaps an interpretation of his 'frazzled' public image at the time).¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Nicole Duault, 'Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk,' *France-Soir*, 6 February 1992 ('Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk,' BmO).

⁹⁶ Christian Leblé, 'Bastille : La Preuve par Chostakovitch,' *Libération*, 1 February 1992 ('Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk,' BmO). 'Mi-drame, mi-bouffonnerie, l'œuvre pourrait prétendre au statut d'un Don Giovanni moderne.'

⁹⁷ Philippe Andriot, 'Lady Macbeth de Chostakovitch,' *Tout Lyon*, 18 February 1992. 'Un spectacle admirable en tout point'; '« Lady Macbeth de Mzensk », ' *La Nouvelle République du Centre-Ouest*, 19 February 1992 ('Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk,' BmO). 'Superbe, arrogant, fabuleux ! ... À voir absolument.'

⁹⁸ Jean-Pierre Tardif, 'Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk,' *Minute La France* (26 February 1992) ('Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk,' BmO). 'Comment Staline a-t-il pu interdire cette œuvre en 1934 ? ... N'est-ce pas aussi absurde que Goebbels interdisant en Allemagne « Le songe d'une nuit d'été » de Mendelssohn ?'

⁹⁹ J. Th., 'Lady Macbeth en beauté,' *Valeurs actuelles* 2881 (February 1992): 61. 'Brutale et facile, sinon simple, va droit au cœur.'

¹⁰⁰ Th., 'Lady Macbeth en beauté,' 61. 'La violence de la musique de Chostakovitch convient exactement à son tempérament.'

For those who attended both the Nancy and Paris seasons, it would have been practically impossible not to compare the two stagings, and in the instances where this occurred, it was Bourseiller who triumphed over Engel. The writer, broadcaster, and opera specialist Alain Duault declared that the staging ‘without doubt ... does not match the strength of the music, and does not reproduce the burning tension that Antoine Bourseiller knew how to create in Nancy,’ yet he conceded that the music of this production was successful enough to make it ‘a real event,’ one that he had ‘the pleasure of greeting.’¹⁰¹ This conclusion was based largely on the work of Chung, who [Alain] Duault referred to as the ‘*génie* (genius) de la Bastille,’ for he was able to ‘mobilise his immense orchestra (some 120 musicians), and make it express, through a fantastic range of colours, the extraordinary blaze of passions in the work, spitting fire and thunder with astounding dramatic power.’¹⁰² The philosopher and music critic André Tubeuf also evaluated the Parisian *Lady Macbeth* against the productions he had seen previously, in Nancy as well as two German cities:

It is obviously the most intelligent, artistic, and accomplished show that the Bastille has offered us so far. Is it the best *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* that we have seen? Certainly not. With very modest means, Nancy brought us closer to the characters; Germany—in Mannheim as in Hamburg—thickened the air until suffocation, stirring the passions differently.¹⁰³

Although Tubeuf acknowledged that the Parisian *Lady Macbeth* allowed us to ‘finally see the scenic possibilities of the Bastille,’ he was harsh in his evaluation of Engel’s staging, declaring that the ‘aesthetic complacency ... tones down the sulphurous work.’ He saw problems in this regard from the very beginning: ‘the field of cabbage on the horizon (a sloping horizon) that opens the show, purely and simply loses poor Katerina Ismailova, herself reduced to the size of a cabbage.’¹⁰⁴ In a review titled ‘Lady Poison’ for the weekly news magazine *L’Express*, Franck Erikson agreed, stating that ‘Shostakovich wanted a satire that avoided the trap of farce and ridicule. Engel falls into this trap with a naive and redundant vision.’¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Alain Duault, ‘Une Lady terrible et belle,’ *L’Évènement du jeudi*, 20 February 1992 (‘Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk,’ BmO).

¹⁰² Duault, ‘Une Lady terrible et belle.’

¹⁰³ André Tubeuf, ‘Lady Macbeth à la Bastille,’ *Diapason* (March 1992) (‘Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk,’ BMO).

¹⁰⁴ Tubeuf, ‘Lady Macbeth à la Bastille.’

¹⁰⁵ Franck Erikson, ‘Lady Poison,’ *L’Express*, 13 February 1992 (‘Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk,’ BmO). ‘Chostakovitch souhaitait une satire évitant le piège de la farce et du ridicule. Engel y tombe à pieds joints, avec une vision naïve et redondante.’

Other than the staging, the only criticism to appear across multiple reviews concerned Trussel's performance as Sergei, a role he had delivered to acclaim in Nancy. Although it is possible that Trussel's stronger performance was the one he gave three years earlier, it is perhaps more likely that this difference in reception speaks to how the Nancy and Parisian productions were not operating on the same playing field, and critics in Paris judged the major company of their capital city more harshly than a smaller one in a province. But some of the Parisian commentators even criticised the other principals: Alain Duault called Barbacini '*un médiocre Zinoviy*,' and according to Tubeuf, Johnson as Katerina came across as a 'Minnie,' when her character should have been rendered in a way that was more natural, perhaps less contrived (*'plus Minnie que nature'*). From most other accounts, these artists delivered impressive performances, so we can assume that certain critics simply held this production to a very high standard, which is understandable when we consider the prestige held by the Opéra de Paris, and the length of time the public had waited for its new venue to open. The 1979 recording of *Lady Macbeth* added to this expectation as well, particularly for Johnson and Chung, who were inevitably compared to the great Vishnevskaya and Rostropovich.¹⁰⁶ But the general consensus was that the American soprano and the South Korean conductor held their own. As the critic and novelist Dominique Fernandez wrote,

The conductor, the orchestra and the singers had the formidable task of making us forget the unique and sublime recording of *Lady Macbeth*, with Rostropovitch at the desk, and Vishnevskaya and Gedda in the two main roles. Mission almost accomplished. Chung leads the macabre ball with a hellish dynamic, not without sometimes allowing himself slower tempi to bring out the beauty in this very complex score. The American soprano Mary Jane Johnson renders all the deleterious grandeur of the atrocious and pitiful Katerina.¹⁰⁷

His reason for saying the mission was 'almost' accomplished was that, like several of his peers, Fernandez was not impressed by the performance of Sergei: 'Only the tenor Jacques Trussel lacks the necessary aura.'

Other than these criticisms of the performance (which were definitively outweighed by positive comments on the same issues), there was only one voice, from one Jacques Leroux, that

¹⁰⁶ In France, this recording was released as: Dimitri Chostakovitch, *Lady Macbeth de Mzensk*, Galina Vishnevskaya, Nicolai Gedda, Dimiter Petkov, The Ambrosian Opera Chorus, The London Philharmonic Orchestra, Mstislav Rostropovich, Pathé Marconi (EMI) 2C167-03374/6, 1979, 3x LP discs, stereo.

¹⁰⁷ Dominique Fernandez, 'À la russe ! Le Triomphe de Chostakovitch à l'Opéra-Bastille,' *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 13 February 1992 ('Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk,' BmO).

expressed disapproval of the opera itself. However, this single dissenting opinion was neither from a specialist publication nor an accessible one with a wide readership: instead, it appeared in *Le Chirurgien-Dentiste de France*, a weekly magazine for dental surgeons in Paris. Therefore, it is perhaps unsurprising that the opinions expressed in this review sit at the periphery of the discussion. Leroux claimed that ‘Shostakovich’s music is never truly inventive, never innovative, often clumsy, [and only] sometimes impressive,’ and that, next to the character of Katerina, ‘Madame Bovary and Lady Chatterley are intellectuals!’¹⁰⁸

The appeal of the Bastille production of *Lady Macbeth* was such that it appeared in two further unusual places (though, perhaps not as unusual as the dental surgeon’s magazine). The French edition of *ELLE* magazine featured an article titled ‘Watch Out for the Mushrooms’ by Catherine Roig, a prominent French culinary author. Unsurprisingly, Roig did not offer the commentary one would typically expect from an opera review; she instead shared several humorous lines about how ‘Russians have a passion for creamed mushrooms. They are very good. They are also an ideal and, above all, radical way to get rid of a screeching mother-in-law or a troublesome husband.’ She then segued into a description of the opera, and provided details of the Paris performances: ‘*Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* uses this kind of procedure to eliminate a tyrannical father-in-law and a cumbersome husband. Shostakovich wrote violent, sensual, and sumptuous music for this diabolical story.’¹⁰⁹ Finally, a feature on *Lady Macbeth* appeared in one of Paris’s iconic satirical magazines, *Le Canard enchaîné*. ‘Luc Décygnes’ (the pen-name of Pierre Combescot) began with light-hearted commentary on the mechanics of the set, which allowed Katerina to dive beautifully into the icy lake without so much as a splash (‘*et crac dans le lac !*’).¹¹⁰ After more double entendres and idiomatic musings, Combescot concluded by demanding a white stone to mark the first great success of Bastille (‘*Vite, une pierre blanche pour marquer la première grande réussite de Bastille*’). Since ‘to mark [something] with a white stone’ in French is akin to a ‘red-letter day’ in English, Combescot here implies that it was a milestone performance, but also pokes fun at how long it took the Bastille to achieve a memorable, landmark success.

¹⁰⁸ Jacques Leroux, ‘Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk de Chostakovitch,’ *Le Chirurgien-Dentiste de France*, 9 April 1992 (‘Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk,’ BmO). ‘La musique de Chostakovitch jamais réellement inventive, jamais novatrice, souvent balourde, parfois impressionnante ... À côté d’elle, Madame Bovary et Lady Chatterley sont des intellectuelles !’

¹⁰⁹ Catherine Roig, ‘Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk : Attention aux champignons,’ *ELLE*, 3 February 1992 (‘Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk,’ BmO).

¹¹⁰ Luc Décygnes [Pierre Combescot], ‘Lady Macbeth, drôle de dame,’ *Le Canard enchaîné*, 12 February 1992 (‘Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk,’ BmO).

The success of this production was such that Deutsche Grammophon decided to preserve it on discs, creating only the second commercial recording of the original opera since Rostropovitch's version for EMI fourteen years prior. It was therefore the first one to be released on compact discs. Even though the recording was made around the time of the Paris performances in February 1992, and features Chung leading the orchestra and choirs of the Opéra Bastille, the cast—whose names are shown on the CD's cover in Figure 5.20—was entirely different. Maria Ewing performed Katerina, a role she would debut at the Metropolitan Opera in November 1994; the Danish bass Aage Haugland was Boris; Philip Langridge was Zinoviy; and Sergei was sung by the Latvian tenor Sergei Larin. The recording was made available for purchase in October 1993, and remains available in a reissued set at the time of writing.¹¹¹ Owing to the success of the debut performance and this recording, the Bastille production was revived for a second run of performances from 24 May to 7 June 1994. Unlike the recording, the principal cast for this revival was the same as in February 1992. The reception was also much the same—generally enthusiastic, but with an added element of fondness, since the work had by then come to be associated with the opening of the Bastille. As the critic Marc Laborde wrote: ‘There are productions that mark the history of a theatre ... the production of *Lady Macbeth* presented at the Opéra de la Bastille is one of them! Everything here leaves the music lover happy.’¹¹²

¹¹¹ Shostakovich, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, Deutsche Grammophon 00028943751124, 1993 [Reissue: 00028947791188, 2010], 2x compact discs.

¹¹² Marc Laborde, ‘Lady Macbeth,’ *Utmisol* (July 1994) (‘Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk,’ BmO). ‘Il est des productions qui marquent l’histoire d’un théâtre ... la production présentée à l’Opéra de la Bastille de Lady Macbeth est de celle-là ! Tout ici laisse le mélomane heureux.’



Figure 5.20. The cover of Deutsche Grammophon's *Lady Macbeth*, recorded at the Opéra Bastille

Further Productions in the Provinces

Prior to the Parisian premiere of *Lady Macbeth* in 1992, the regional productions of *Katerina Ismailova* and *Lady Macbeth* in 1964 and 1989 were unquestionably treated in the press with a high degree of enthusiasm and praise. However, it is fair to say that the exposure that Shostakovich's opera received at the Bastille took this enthusiasm and praise to an entirely different level. Furthermore, that the second ever recording of the original opera was made at the Bastille could easily have seen *Lady Macbeth* in France remain permanently in the clutches of the capital. Yet, once the activity in Paris had cooled off, the opera found a resurgence at the end of the twentieth century in two departmental regions not yet covered in this thesis: in Nantes in 1998, and in Dijon in the year 2000.

The decision to programme Shostakovich's opera in Nantes, the capital of France's Loire-Atlantique department, was made by Philippe Godefroid (b. 1954), a stage director, musicologist, and music writer (specialising in Wagner), who served as artistic director of the city's opera

company from 1990 to 2003. The Opéra de Nantes, presently titled Angers-Nantes Opéra, had at the time the second-best engagement statistics of any French opera company: the 823-seat Théâtre Graslin had occupancy rate of 92% for opera performances, second only to Paris's Bastille.¹¹³ *Lady Macbeth* was the final offering of the company's 1997–98 season, and to conduct the work, Godefroid engaged the Finnish conductor Ulf Söderblom (1930–2016). According to *Ouest-France*, it was the then 68-year-old conductor's first international opera appearance.¹¹⁴

From the way in which *Lady Macbeth* was promoted in the local press, it appears that the average French person in 1998—at least in Nantes—was less familiar with Soviet history than had been the case earlier in the century (no doubt a symptom of the USSR being at this point an idea of the past, rather than a fact of the present). Details pertaining to *Lady Macbeth* were often reported in fanciful interpretations, reminiscent of the game 'Telephone,' or 'Chinese Whispers'; for example, the first article about the opera published in the local daily *Presse Océan*—the article that announced the event to the public at large—opened with the following contextualisation:

Stalin was a coward. Having attended a performance of the work ... he was seized with terror that he too could be visited by the ghosts of his victims. The screams of fright uttered by the heroine, Katerina Ismailova, at the sight of the ghost of her father-in-law, Boris Ismailov, whom she murdered with rat poison, led the little father of the people to ban the work immediately.¹¹⁵

The journalist explained the work's history (the condemnation, the two versions, the revivals, etc.) with more accuracy. They then shared several excerpts from their interview with Godefroid, who commented first on the opera, and then explained the direction he was attempting to take with his production:

Philippe Godefroid was seduced, even subjugated, by the *élan* and abundance of this work, both in its music and the content of its libretto. 'Everything is there: irony, drama, tragedy! The music is strikingly realistic. It is a major work of the twentieth century.' For the Nantes audience today, Godefroid wanted to conceive a vision that mixes *bouffe énorme* with horrendous tragedy. 'It was fun for the conductor and the performers to take this direction,' he notes.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ A.P.D., 'À l'Opéra de Nantes, la révolution érotique de Lady Macbeth de Mzensk,' *Presse Océan*, 21 May 1998, 9.

¹¹⁴ D.M., 'Ce vendredi 5 [sic], première de « Lady Macbeth à Mzenk » [sic]. Chostakovitch, le Génie contre l'ordre,' *Ouest-France*, 5 June 1998, 17.

¹¹⁵ A.P.D., 'La Révolution érotique de Lady Macbeth de Mzensk,' 9.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

To the journalist, Godefroid also made the following comments on the conductor:

‘Ulf Söderblom, who is 70 years old, is extraordinary. He has seen everything, done everything, and always wants to be surprised ... He is young, available, curious—a role model... He has a surprising sense of humour... I think it’s a great human encounter between him and the artists. Jacques Trussel, who is Sergei, and Irina Loskutova, who is Katerina, both recognised internationally, are themselves ready for new experiences.’¹¹⁷

This last comment was probably true, especially for Trussel, who—despite receiving light criticism for his performances in Paris—had garnered a reputation by this point as ‘the’ Sergei for both French and American productions of *Lady Macbeth*. He shared with another journalist from *Ouest-France* one of the reasons he was looking forward to this particular production: it was his first opportunity to perform Sergei alongside a Katerina who was actually Russian.¹¹⁸

Leading up to the first performance, the local press of Nantes published a number of advertisements for the production, one of which can be seen in Figure 5.21. The language used in this brief piece—‘the erotic revolution of a Russian peasant’; and the reiteration of how, ‘contrary to the censor, Stalin, Philippe Godefroid was seduced, even subjugated’ by the work—captures the borderline sensationalism with which it began to be promoted at the end of the twentieth century. Also before the production opened, a club associated with the opera house, Le Club Graslin Opéra, organised a public lecture to supplement the audience’s understanding of Shostakovich’s opera. This talk was free for members either of the club or the local Wagner Society, 40 francs for a ticket, or a modest 25 francs for attendees under the age of 26.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ D.M., ‘Chostakovitch, le Génie contre l’ordre,’ 17.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

À l'Opéra de Nantes, « Lady Macbeth de Mzensk »



*Pour trois représentations à l'Opéra de Nantes, la révolution érotique
d'une paysanne russe (Photo C. Cochelin)*

Philippe Godefroid a choisi d'achever la saison 97-98 de l'Opéra de Nantes en mettant en scène dans la version originale de 1934, l'ouvrage de Chostakovitch : « Lady Macbeth de Mzensk ». À l'évidence, et au contrai-

re du censeur Staline, Philippe Godefroid a été séduit, subjugué même, par l'élan et le foisonnement de l'ouvrage tant dans sa musique que dans le contenu de son livret. Première ce soir.

Figure 5.21. An enticing advertisement for *Lady Macbeth* ahead of the opening night performance in Nantes. *Presse Océan*, 5 June 1998, 15

The three performances, starting from 5 June at 8pm, prompted *Presse Océan* to publish two in-depth reviews, both of which contained vast amounts of praise. The first, written by Jean-Luc Quéau after opening night, began with a declaration that 'Philippe Godefroid,

with intelligence and mastery, revealed a luxuriant, hilarious, and devastating masterpiece, whose music, with its widely popular calling and funambulist humour, will remain one of the greatest moments of this season. The Orchestre national des Pays de la Loire, galvanised in the Théâtre Graslin on Friday evening by the Finnish conductor Ulf

Söderblom, deserves all the praise for its dazzling presentation of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*.¹²⁰

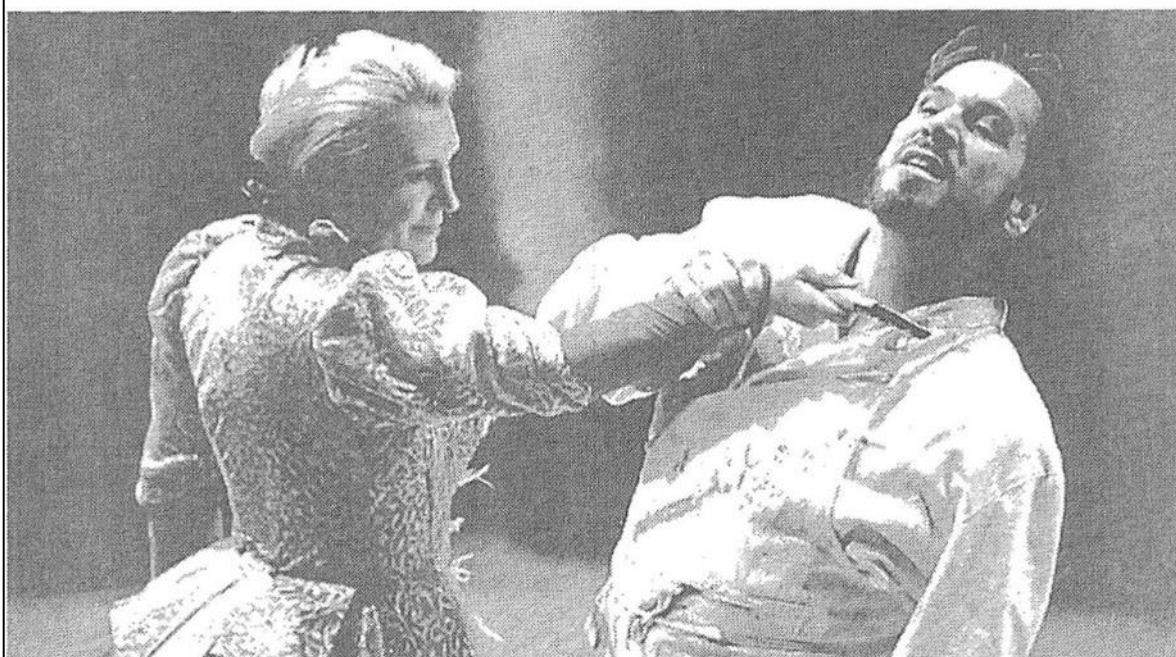
Similar comments came from a journalist with the initials A.P.D the morning of the last performance. This review, which was accompanied by the photograph of the production shown in Figure 5.22, is possibly the most glowing review that any performance of Shostakovich's music received in France throughout the century. It began as follows:

Amazing! Exuberant! Masterful! Crazy! Superb! Words almost fail to express how much Dmitri Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, directed by Philippe Godefroid, puts a magnificent end to the 97–98 season of the Opéra de Nantes. To be honest, the show takes one's breath away for a reason that goes without saying: the languages of music, libretto, and production complement each other by merging completely. The musicians of the ON-PL, conducted with absolute mastery and quiet elegance by Ulf Söderblom, express in a dazzling way the abundance of the score, which is as lyrical as it is farcical, as brilliant as it is vital. It is the breath of romantic passion marked by (*scandée par*) the rhythms of jazz; the tragedy of the heinous crime shaken up (*bousculé par*) by clownlike caricature. It is impossible not to be captivated by music as rich as it is whimsical, as realistic as it is emotionally charged.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Jean-Luc Quéau, 'Lady Macbeth de Mzensk à Graslin : Godefroid déchiffre un chef-d'œuvre,' *Presse Océan*, 8 June 1998, 14.

¹²¹ A.P.D., '« Lady Macbeth de Mzensk » de Chostakovitch : Les Éblouissants Égarements de la passion,' *Presse Océan*, 9 June 1998, 11.

**« Lady Macbeth de Mzensk » de Chostakovitch :
les éblouissants égarements de la passion**



**Le combat amoureux de Katerina (Irina Loskutova) et Sergueï (Jacques Trussel)
(photo Cyril Cochelin).**

Figure 5.22. 'Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth*: the dazzling debaucheries of passion.'
Presse Océan, 9 June 1998, 11

The vocalists also received high commendations from both critics. Quéau described Loskutova's soprano voice as 'masterful ... unusually open in the treble ... not that of a hysterical bird,' and 'sharp and clear' enough that it was never drowned out by the sound of the orchestra. He also remarked that Trussel seemed to play a 'custom-made role,' which seems fitting since he was now a veteran performer of Sergei. Finally, the critic described the British tenor Michael Preston-Roberts as a 'convincing' Zinoviy, and the voice of the leading Australian bass-baritone Daniel Sumegi, who performed Boris, as 'explosive,' like it was 'cut with granite.'¹²² The second critic agreed, stating that 'all the performers know how to settle in a sordid yet immense universe'; Loskutova gave her character a 'fatal strength'; Trussel was 'an ideal Sergei of deceitful presence and seduction'; while Sumegi, 'incarnating Boris, transports us instantly to Russia where such a low voice usually shakes the *isba*. All the rest of the cast is up to their level.'¹²³

¹²² Quéau, 'Godefroid déchiffre un chef-d'œuvre,' 14.

¹²³ A. P. D., '« Lady Macbeth de Mzensk » de Chostakovitch,' 11.

According to the critic A.P.D., the study in contrasts Godefroid had devised for the *mise-en-scène* was successful. They described how ‘the sobriety of a prison setting and ruthless light ... the traditional and the crazy ... the hot and cold, passing from sweltering to freezing’ allowed the spectators to feel the moments of passion and laughter more intensely. ‘This *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* carries us far away, plunges into the depths of our souls, upsets the senses, leaves us shattered with confusion and pleasure. Shakespeare would have loved it.’¹²⁴ And according to Quéau, Shostakovich’s music, and the conductor’s interpretation of it, were both commendable: ‘At every moment of this masterpiece by Shostakovich, it is the music, a science of writing and an absolute lyricism, that affirms the mastery of this score and text.’ He also credited Söderblom for eliciting ‘one of the best performances of the ON-NP that we have heard from the Graslin pit,’ and concluded with an attempt at a profound quip on the troubled history of Shostakovich, *Lady Macbeth*, and Soviet politics: ‘Although communism forbade Dmitri Shostakovich’s life from being a masterpiece, it could not stifle the birth of one of the great musical works of our time.’¹²⁵

The final production of *Lady Macbeth* in France within the scope of this thesis took place in the year 2000 in Dijon, the capital of France’s eastern Burgundy region. The performances, held at the Auditorium de Dijon on 21 and 22 November, are distinct from those discussed earlier, however, in that they toured out of Russia rather than being French organised. Conducted by Rostropovitch, the performances featured the Munich-based Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Bulgarian National Choir Svetoslav Obretenov. Three thousand people attended the two semi-staged performances, including Galina Vishnevskaya, and Shostakovich’s widow, Irina.

Because the opera did not comprise a full production, and because it involved a number of people close to the composer (who at this point had been deceased for a quarter century), the press focused almost exclusively on the figures who brought prestige to the performances, and how their musical prowess enhanced the realisation of the work. Rostropovitch in particular was the star of the local newspaper *Le Bien Public* in the week leading up to the performances. A local journalist Elise Vallade reported how he had envisioned the production:

Mstislav Rostropovitch loves the room of the Auditorium de Dijon. ‘For this production, I said to my friend Jean-Claude Wambst: My friend, believe me, *Lady Macbeth* is my

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

dream, to organise it, that is the best gift that you could give me. I had the idea to perform *Lady Macbeth* at the Auditorium because its acoustic is perfect, it is the best in all of Europe compared with the old opera houses; for music, it is a gift from God.¹²⁶

After the performance, the local press also explained its success in relation to the members of Shostakovich's inner circle who attended, writing: 'Galina Rostropovich, but also Irina Shostakovich, who were in the auditorium on Tuesday night, must have thought of only one thing at the end of the performance ... that Shostakovich, from way up in the sky, must have been jubilant.'¹²⁷ Regarding the interpretation, the lack of substantial staging meant there was more space to discuss the music, with *Le Bien Public's* Michel Huvet in fact commenting that the production was 'a perfect vision of breathtaking beauty ... where the music—finally—is the queen of the opera.' He described the music of the opera as 'a sound well, from which Rostropovitch [drew] magic fire. A difficult score that flows here with an overflowing intensity.'¹²⁸ He also liked how the director, Sergio Renan, used the musicians to create interest in the absence of a physical set: the orchestra was on the stage (meaning Katerina's jump with Sonyetka at the end was made into the unused orchestra pit), and in the loud orchestral moments, the brass players performed from the sides of the stage '*comme les trompettes d'Aïda*,' as well as in the hall itself.

In addition to these notes on the performance, Huvet made some exaggerated and inaccurate remarks on the work's content, similar to what was seen in the coverage of the Nantes production in 1998. He seemed to interpret *Lady Macbeth* as a kind of allegorical representation of the Soviet Union—but one that dates from mid-century or later—and thought that the lack of sets allowed this meaning to come through:

We understand that Shostakovich was respected even for his greatest allegorical audacities: a scene of the Soviet and Stalinist freeze is in fact the plot of this extraordinary opera, and Katerina's fight against the apparatchiks and KGB takes on its full meaning in such a version. The audacity of the B-flat clarinets, the cor anglais and violin solos, the almost liturgical choir, and the infernal tutti unleash all genres and all styles: *Lady Macbeth* is a cultural enormity, a libertarian flag thrown in the face of the civilised world, and, by contrast, a hymn to true love and real fraternity. Upon losing one's breath in the gloomy purity of a final F minor chord, one does not know what to

¹²⁶ Elise Vallade, 'Rencontre avec Mstislav Rostropovitch,' *Le Bien Public*, 25 November 2000.

¹²⁷ Michel Huvet, 'La Musique de Chostakovitch mise en scène,' *Le Bien Public*, 25 November 2000.

¹²⁸ Huvet, 'La Musique de Chostakovitch.'

retain most: perhaps the image, multiplied tenfold by video, of a Rostropovitch carried away by the whirlwind of an infernal dance. The very image of the madness of the twentieth century.¹²⁹

Even if the general understanding of the opera became somewhat distorted in France as the Soviet Union started to become a memory, this production and the one before it in Nantes are still highly significant, for they speak to the influence of the regional companies that (re)introduced Shostakovich's opera to a French audience—L'Opéra de Nice, and later L'Opéra de Nancy et de Lorraine—on the afterlife of *Lady Macbeth* in France. After the activity during the Année Chostakovitch, the opera not only found its place at the centre of cultural life in France, it continued to be embraced in regional areas in all corners of the country.

Reception of Shostakovich Symphonies in France, 1990–2000

Along with Shostakovich's opera, many of his symphonies remained firmly in the French concert repertoire in the wake of the Année Chostakovitch. Table 5.4 details the symphonic performances that I have found reviews of, or advertisements for, in the French press from 1990 to 2000. As can be seen in the third column, the performers in these concerts reflect a mixture of nationality and place: roughly two thirds were French, with a fairly even split between Paris-based and provincial ensembles, and these French orchestras were led mostly by guest international conductors. The remaining third were touring international groups, mainly from Russia, but also from the US and the Netherlands. I have organised this table by work, rather than chronology, to highlight the symphonies that remained most prevalent and known by the French public in the final decade of the twentieth century.

Table 5.4. Shostakovich symphonies performed in France, 1990–2000

Date	Work	Performers	Location
5 October 1990	Symphony No. 5	Orchestre de Paris/Jansug Kakhidze	Salle Pleyel
9 & 10 February 1993	Symphony No. 5	Orchestre de Paris	Paris
7, 9 & 13 June 1995	Symphony No. 5	New York Philharmonic Orchestra/Kurt Masur	Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris
29 & 30 May 1996	Symphony No. 5	Orchestre national de Bordeaux-Aquitaine/Yutaka Sado	Palais des Sports, Bordeaux

¹²⁹ Ibid.

13 October 1997	Symphony No. 5	Saint Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra/Yuri Simonov	Théâtre des Champs-Élysées
14 October 1997	Symphony No. 6	Saint Petersburg Philharmonic/Yuri Simonov	Théâtre des Champs-Élysées
8 May 1995	Symphony No. 7, 'Leningrad'	Orchestre national de France/Gennady Rozhdestvensky	Les Invalides, Paris
15 October 1997	Symphony No. 7 [possibly No. 9 – conflicting sources]	Saint Petersburg Philharmonic/Yuri Simonov	Théâtre des Champs-Élysées
23 & 24 March 1994	Symphony No. 8	ONBA/Muhai Tang	Palais des Sports, Bordeaux
26 & 30 October 1997	Symphony No. 9	ONBA/Arturo Tamayo	Palais des Sports, Bordeaux
19 & 21 October 2000	Symphony No. 9	Orchestre national de Lyon/Yakov Kreizberg	Grand Auditorium (Maison de la Radio), Paris
17 March 1993	Symphony No. 10	Orchestre philharmonique de Radio France/Gennady Rozhdestvensky	Paris
1 & 2 February 1995	Symphony No. 10	ONBA/Gerard Schwarz	Palais des Sports, Bordeaux
27 July 1998	Symphony No. 10	National Youth Orchestra of the Netherlands/Jansug Kakhidze	Cité de la Musique, Paris
6 May 1999	Symphony No. 10	Unknown	Salle de la Course, La Rochelle
27 & 28 March 1996	Symphony No. 11	ONBA/Louis Langrée	Palais des Sports, Bordeaux
30 March 1994	Symphony No. 12	Orchestre de Paris/Gunther Herbig	Salle Pleyel
6 November 1996	Symphony No. 13, 'Babi Yar'	Orchestre philharmonique & Chœurs de Radio France/Marek Janowski	Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris
[Before 9] May 1997	Symphony No. 14	Ensemble orchestral de Paris/Armin Jordan	Salle Pleyel
22 & 23 January 1992	Symphony No. 15	Orchestre de Paris/Gunther Herbig	Paris

Clearly, it is the Fifth Symphony, followed closely by the Tenth, that stands out most prominently. But the frequency with which these two pieces were performed in France at the end of the twentieth century should not surprise anyone who has regularly attended orchestral concerts in a Western country in recent decades, for these two symphonies, along with the Seventh, are typically thought of as some of the most 'political' in Shostakovich's oeuvre—an aspect that tends to excite and intrigue both musicians and members of the audience. (Of course,

each of Shostakovich's symphonies is inherently political, but the stories of the *Pravda* denunciation and the 'creative answer to just criticism'; the wartime symphony being played by the starving musicians of a besieged Leningrad; and the reading popularised by Volkov of Symphony No. 10 as a 'portrait of Stalin' seem to recur with notable frequency in non-academic discussions of Shostakovich's music.) I will therefore conclude this chapter by briefly summarising the reception of Shostakovich's symphonies in France between 1990 and 2000, with a focus on those that were programmed repeatedly. This exercise will illustrate how (most of) these works were treated in France in the wake of the Année Chostakovitch concerts, and speak to the place that Shostakovich's symphonies held in French concert life as the world prepared to enter the twenty-first century.

After the first performance of Symphony No. 5 in this time bracket—Jansug Kakhidze conducting the Orchestre de Paris in October 1990—the *Monde* veteran Anne Rey described how, on the day, Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony (which had been advertised in the season brochure) was replaced by his Fifth, 'the best known of the fifteen, and the most ambiguous.' Her description, which continued as follows, outlines the way in which this work was thought about in the 1990s, and very much resembles the kind of discourse we see around this work at orchestra concerts in the present day:

The Muscovite musician wrote it in 1937 by way of self-criticism, actively putting his feet in the shoes of Tchaikovsky to apologise for having wanted to write like Shostakovich. We can hear behind this work, which is at the same time sentimental and explosive, a lot of melancholy and violence ... The performance was therefore brilliant and heroic, very much like film music, with no ulterior motives: the 'simple and intelligible message for the Soviet listener' that Shostakovich—apparently—had wanted. A great success.¹³⁰

Symphony No. 10, whose second movement is nowadays often described in orchestral programme notes as 'depicting a portrait of Stalin,' was promoted in a similar way. In a 1994 article introducing the Orchestre national de Bordeaux-Aquitaine's upcoming season, *Sud Ouest* described the Tenth Symphony as 'probably the most grandiose [of the three Shostakovich pieces programmed that season], created shortly after Stalin's death, and about which Shostakovich said, "I wanted to paint human emotions and passions".'¹³¹ Likewise, Claude Dubillot described it in the same publication in 1999 as 'the first free work [Shostakovich]

¹³⁰ Anne Rey, 'Un Géorgien héroïque Jansug Kakhidze a dirigé pour la première fois à Paris. Et fait un triomphe dans Chostakovitch,' *Le Monde*, 8 October 1990, 9.

¹³¹ 'La Saison symphonique,' *Sud Ouest*, 21 September 1994, 1.

composed in the days following Stalin's death.¹³² Given the popularity of Symphonies Nos. 5 and 10 in this timespan, and the nature of how they were promoted, it seems logical to conclude that the symphonies by Shostakovich that remained most popular after the *Année Chostakovitch*—when the composer's entire output was so prominently in the spotlight—were the ones that serve as markers for important, scandalous, and generally memorable moments in Soviet history, especially ones involving Stalin. This reasoning also explains why Symphonies Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4, composed before Shostakovich's first denunciation, are absent from this list, and why the works written after Stalin's death were, in broad strokes, performed less frequently. On the other hand, this line of reasoning raises Symphony No. 4 as something of an anomaly, as its performance and reception histories are also tied to the 'Muddle Instead of Music' affair; yet, it does not appear to have been performed in France in the final decade of the twentieth century. An explanation for this absence may be found by looking at how many years after its composition the Fourth Symphony was first performed in Paris (and by a touring Soviet orchestra at that), so it had not had the same opportunity as the Fifth to develop a legacy of performances in France. Even during the many Shostakovich concerts organised throughout 1989, the Fourth Symphony was performed only once. It therefore appears that the work remained a relatively obscure component of Shostakovich's output in the eyes of the French for the remaining years of the century.

In addition to the Fifth and Tenth Symphonies, the Seventh and Thirteenth remained especially associated with politics in the eyes of the public. These works are also especially vast in length and scope, and are thus perhaps less practical to perform than those that are shorter and demanding of fewer musicians. In France, all of these attributes were reflected in the way in which Symphonies Nos. 7 and 13 were programmed during the final years of the century. Both were used to mark historical, and emotionally heavy socio-political events: the Seventh constituted the final concert, on 8 May, of a three-part series organised by Radio-France at the Musée de l'Armée to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II. The performances on the two previous evenings, 6 and 7 May, were of Britten's *War Requiem* (1962) and Schoenberg's cantata *A Survivor from Warsaw* (1947). *Le Monde* described the combination of these works as 'music from the most painful hours, evoking the composers detained by Nazis in the Terezin concentration camp.'¹³³ 'Babi Yar,' on the other hand, served to remember the

¹³² Claude Dubillot, 'Casadesus de Lille à son île,' *Sud Ouest*, 3 May 1999, 20. 'La 10^e Symphonie de Chostakovitch, première œuvre libre composée les jours qui suivirent la mort de Staline.'

¹³³ 'Concerts exceptionnels pour le 50^e anniversaire du 8 mai 1945,' *Le Monde*, 2 May 1995, 30. 'Musique des heures les plus douloureuses avec l'évocation des compositeurs que les nazis internèrent au camp de Terezin.'

inauguration of Paris's Holocaust Museum, then known as the Memorial of the Unknown Jewish Martyr.¹³⁴ In collaboration with the staff of the memorial, Radio-France organised for Shostakovich's Thirteenth Symphony to be performed at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées by Marek Janowski and the Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir of Radio France on 6 November 1996, marking the forty years that had passed since the memorial's inauguration. The concert took place in the presence of Yevtushenko, author of the poetry set in the symphony, which could only have added to the performance's emotional weight and sense of occasion.¹³⁵ Thus, it appears that these two monumental Shostakovich symphonies, Nos. 7 and 13, were too charged with complex historical and emotional meaning to be performed often, and in ordinary concert seasons, but they still served as important components of French cultural memory at the end of the twentieth century.

Interestingly, Symphony No. 11, which had a stronger legacy as a concert work in France, having been premiered in Paris in the presence of the composer back in 1958, does not appear to have received many French performances in the 1990s. The sole performance of this work for which I have found records, however—in Bordeaux in March 1996—was commended. These commendations centred around the conductor Louis Langrée's performance, but they also reveal a view of the Eleventh as another emotionally moving work, and one that is therefore challenging to interpret. Bertrand Roch, a journalist from *Sud Ouest*, praised Langrée for his efforts, realising this complex score of 'cruel lyricism' immediately after the 'languishing lyricism' of Max Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1:

In the Eleventh Symphony of Shostakovich, the trap is different [to the concerto]. And we can expect the worst. But the worst is the very content of the work, and the bloody event it recounts. And that, Louis Langrée understood. He does not let himself be blinded by the violent, desperate images that this vast fresco reflects. He is a scrupulous witness, and yet sometimes a little naive. The conductor manages to make bearable what is not, without ever, up until the last bars, omitting the devastating truth.¹³⁶

The task of interpreting this music, illustrative of the Revolution of 1905, was also remembered fondly by the conductor. When he returned to Bordeaux three years later, Langrée told *Sud Ouest*

¹³⁴ Presently called the Mémorial de la Shoah, and usually referred to as the Holocaust Museum in English, this memorial was inaugurated in October 1956 on rue Geoffroy-l'Asnier in the fourth arrondissement of Paris, a centre for the city's Jewish community.

¹³⁵ 'Au programme : Musique,' *La Croix*, 5 November 1996, 21.

¹³⁶ Bertrand Roch, 'Point de vue,' *Sud Ouest*, 31 March 1996, F.

that he considered directing Shostakovich's Symphony No. 11 during his last visit to be 'one of his greatest memories.'¹³⁷ It therefore emerges that, in the 1990s, there was often still a degree of occasion surrounding the performance of a Shostakovich symphony by a French orchestra; however, it was certainly not an occasion that took place as infrequently as it had done at earlier moments in the century. By the 1990s, Shostakovich's symphonies were well represented in French concerts, and while they were probably not programmed with the same regularity as many nineteenth-century symphonies, they were far from alien. Instead, the symphonies were embraced as witnesses of time and place in the former USSR; as valued successors of nineteenth-century orchestral style; and as vehicles to display the musical prowess of French musicians. Alain Lompech encapsulated all of these aspects in his review of a concert featuring Symphony No. 12 at the Salle Pleyel in 1994:

With a single block (the movements come one after another), it testifies to the formal mastery of the Soviet composer and almost quotes the 'Anitra dance' of *Peer Gynt*. Shostakovich wields the cyclical form here with a mastery all the more vain, as he sang the praises of Lenin in accordance with the wishes of the Union of Composers. The Orchestre de Paris is impeccable. Even if Shostakovich writes so well that he has the gift of making average orchestras sound like great ones, the performance of the Parisian musicians is to be welcomed. Because they rarely give the impression of being so focused, and so united, when they play at home.¹³⁸

French Impressions of Shostakovich at the End of the Twentieth Century

In this attempt to evaluate the presence of, and responses to, Shostakovich's music in France towards the end of the twentieth century, it is important to acknowledge the work of the Association Internationale 'Dmitri Shostakovich,' which was established in Paris under the patronage of Shostakovich's widow in 1995. Upset that, even after his death, her husband was still thought of in the West as an official composer of the Soviet Communist regime, Irina Shostakovich wanted to house this centre in France so as to link her husband's work to the West.¹³⁹ The centre subsequently began the work that it continues today in preserving the legacy of Shostakovich; organising events featuring his music; providing researchers with access to

¹³⁷ 'La Fascination de l'orchestre,' *Sud Ouest*, 24 March 1999, G. 'Louis Langrée considère la 11^e Symphonie de Chostakovitch, qu'il avait dirigée lors de sa première venue à Bordeaux, comme l'un de ses plus beaux souvenirs.'

¹³⁸ Alain Lompech, 'Musique : Radu Lupu et Gunther Herbig à la Salle Pleyel : Les Vertus du chant,' *Le Monde*, 1 April 1994, 15.

¹³⁹ Pablo Galonce, 'Un Centre pour Chostakovitch,' *Le Monde de la musique* 209 (April 1997).

archival material; and establishing a network for those interested in Shostakovich around the world.¹⁴⁰

These efforts to give further presence to Shostakovich's music in France and the Western world at large can also be seen in the French press at the end of the twentieth century. In 1997, Olivier Olgan [Le Guay], who today writes articles on culture for *Le Figaro*, stated in *La Tribune* that the composer had 'returned in force' after years of being 'misunderstood and often accused of political duplicity.' A factor that Le Guay credited for permitting the public to get to know the 'real' composer was the increased number of biographies published after the composer's death. He referred specifically to the one by the Polish musicologist Krzysztof Meyer, which was made available in a French edition in 1994:

Today, [Shostakovich's] sincerity bursts forth, and sweeps away the suspicions of conservatism (aesthetic) and duplicity (political) that have long weighed upon him. The proliferation of biographies, including the deeply moving one by Krzysztof Meyer from Fayard, and recordings by the greatest artists (from Chailly to Rostropovich) finally erase the myopia that reduced him to his facade of an official composer, 'hero of socialist work,' winner of the Lenin Prize and countless Stalin Prizes.¹⁴¹

Le Guay's view seems to have been informed by the political dissidence and resentment of the Soviet Union that Rostropovich was known for expressing, and he quoted the words of the cellist and conductor to convey the emotional weight of Shostakovich's symphonies for those who had lived in the USSR:

To understand this complex musical universe, we must never forget that he lived—1906 to 1975—through all the dramas of contemporary history. 'Each of his fifteen symphonies is an epoch,' Rostropovich points out, 'his symphonies are the history of our country, the history of the Soviet Union and the history of Russia, or, more precisely, their history expressed via emotions.'¹⁴²

Le Guay then made an important comment of his own on the history of these works, pointing out that it is not only symbolic for the people of the Soviet Union and Russia: the history of Shostakovich's symphonies for France also reflects changes in the nation's aesthetic preferences

¹⁴⁰ I am indebted to the staff of this centre for allowing me access to many sources presented in this chapter, particularly those relating to the Année Chostakovitch.

¹⁴¹ Olivier Olgan [Le Guay], 'Musique : Rentrée en grâce pour Chostakovitch,' *La Tribune*, 13 October 1997.

¹⁴² Olgan, 'Rentrée en grâce pour Chostakovitch.'

and culture, since the works that were neglected for aesthetic reasons at mid-century could now at last be embraced: 'But, it is also our history, finally rid of the intellectual dictatorship established by the official avant-garde of the 1950s and '60s, which banned everything that did not follow the Viennese school of Berg, Schoenberg, etc.'¹⁴³

France did not, however, reach a universal consensus that Shostakovich was indeed a 'covert dissident' by the end of the twentieth century. To emphasise this point, I will conclude by sharing portions of an informative article titled 'The Clashes of Dmitri Shostakovich with His Century,' prepared for *Le Monde* in the year 2000 by Renaud Machart, a music critic and producer at France Musique. Machart's opening statement for this piece was that, 'twenty-five years after the death of the Soviet composer, controversy is still raging over his attitude towards the regime. Submitting to pressure, he was censored, and had to self-criticise.'¹⁴⁴ He assessed Shostakovich's presence in France throughout the century fairly accurately, and even included Pierre Boulez's infamous analogy to olive oil pressings:

For the rest of the earth, or almost that, [Shostakovich] is an immense composer, universal and prolific ... Celebrated very early in the United States ... and in Great Britain, Shostakovich remained for a long time unknown in France, where a great deal of the criticism of the 1950s and '60s committed the same errors of appreciation that were fatal to Jean Sibelius, Leos Janacek, or Benjamin Britten. More recently, a book entitled *Le Quatuor à cordes au XX^e siècle* (The String Quartet in the Twentieth Century) ... overlooked the masterpiece that constitutes the fifteen quartets of Shostakovich, while Pierre Boulez sadly distinguished himself in the *Financial Times*, in the year of his seventy-fifth birthday, by referring to different pressings of olive oil to call Shostakovich the 'third pressing of Gustav Mahler.'¹⁴⁵

In informal settings in the present day, this comment from Boulez remains steadfastly attached to impressions of Shostakovich's music in France. And on reflection, we may wonder whether having a figure as polarising as Boulez at the forefront of many discussions around Shostakovich's symphonies from mid-century was one of the reasons that French commentators did not question his image as a loyal Soviet citizen until the translation of *Testimony*. Perhaps, for

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Renaud Machart, 'Les Démêlés de Dimitri Chostakovitch avec son siècle,' *Le Monde*, 17 August 2000, 21. 'Vingt-cinq ans après la mort du compositeur soviétique, la polémique fait encore rage sur son attitude envers le régime. Soumis à des pressions, il fut censuré et dut faire son autocritique.'

¹⁴⁵ Machart, 'Les Démêlés de Dimitri Chostakovitch,' 21.

Boulez and his high modernist colleagues, Shostakovich's more moderate brand of modernism was perceived as an attack on their idea of 'progress', and it was thus preferable to keep the discourse on his music divided and unnuanced. But to return to Machart, on the state in which Shostakovich's music had found itself at the end of the composer's own century, he wrote:

Shostakovich has entered the great international repertoire, but he remains the subject of an incessant polemic regarding his attitude—which is suspicious and ambivalent for some, and double and paradoxical for others—towards the Soviet regime, from the day after the Bolsheviks took power until the death of the composer, who officially joined the Communist Party in 1960.¹⁴⁶

This statement was directed to Shostakovich's music in a broad sense, but it certainly applies to the prevailing view of his symphonies in France at the end of the twentieth century, and again, it certainly resembles how they continue to be treated across many different settings in the present day.

Conclusion

From this examination of the events, sponsorship, and timing of the *Année Chostakovitch*, it appears that fostering Franco-Soviet relations was probably a motivator for why *Le Chant du Monde*, a Communist-operated music label, decided to promote Soviet music in France in such high concentration throughout 1989. Without access to archival material from the label itself, however—which does not exist, according to representatives of the company that acquired *Le Chant du Monde* after its closure—it is difficult to be certain, and it is of course possible that the festival was organised, after all, '*par un hasard objectif*.' What has been made clear by studying France's 'Shostakovich Year' and the legacy of the composer in the twentieth century thereafter, is that the concentration of Shostakovich programming in France during 1989 had a tangible impact on the number of times that many of his symphonies and his opera were programmed for the final years of the twentieth century.

The way in which the press treated the figure of Shostakovich during 1989—a figure informed by the now infamous *Testimony*—also had a largely positive impact on the way that his music was subsequently received. Again, Volkov's book is nowadays treated as unreliable by many of the Western world's leading Shostakovich specialists, but it is clear that some of its fabrications and

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

exaggerations led French commentators to approach the composer from a more sympathetic and understanding angle, which in turn led to a noticeable shift in his French reception from the 1980s to the 1990s. On this topic, it is worth highlighting that no French voices participated in the ‘Shostakovich wars’ that played out during the 1990s; so, perhaps there was less critical scrutiny of the information in *Testimony* in France than in the Anglo-American sphere, where Volkov’s work was being authoritatively discredited by Laurel Fay (even if her advocacy in the academic sphere was unfortunately not able to stop the spread of myths in programme notes, concert reviews, journalistic and orchestral marketing spaces, and novels).¹⁴⁷ In France, it is also worth highlighting how the influence of *Testimony* has endured even in some scholarly texts; for instance, André Lischke acknowledged in his entry on Shostakovich for the French-language *Guide de la musique symphonique* that these memoirs have been ‘occasionally contested’ (*parfois contestés*); however, he continued to include footnotes to the source in his *Histoire de la musique russe*, published in 2006, indicating that the book’s reputation has by no means been discredited universally in France.¹⁴⁸

The case of *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* represents an equally large, if not larger, development to French understandings of Shostakovich from 1989 to 2000. Thanks to Antoine Bourseiller’s visionary programming in Nancy during the Année Chostakovitch, this opera was pulled from obscurity in France, and entered the mainstream programming of Paris’s new and prestigious opera venue, the Opéra Bastille. Although it became a popular work in Paris, and was even recorded there in 1992, the opera maintained the regional legacy that began with the first performance of *Katerina Ismailova* in Nice and continued with the premiere of the original opera in Nancy: between 1991 and 2000, *Lady Macbeth* was present in many of France’s other departments, with performances in Toulouse, Marseille, Nantes, and Dijon.

Finally, this chapter has illustrated the enduring impact of the Année Chostakovitch by identifying the Shostakovich symphonies that were most present in French concert settings from 1990 to 2000. Those that were programmed either most frequently, or most grandiosely, seemed to reflect significant political moments in Soviet history, like the Fifth and Tenth, or the Seventh and Thirteenth. Symphonies Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4, composed before Shostakovich’s first

¹⁴⁷ Pauline Fairclough, ‘Facts, Fantasies, and Fictions: Recent Shostakovich Studies,’ *Music & Letters* 86, no. 3 (2005): 453. Julian Barnes draws inspiration from Volkov’s painting of Shostakovich in *The Noise of Time* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016). I began my doctorate in the year this novel was published, and in non-academic settings have entertained many polite conversations about its contents.

¹⁴⁸ André Lischke, ‘Dimitri Chostakovitch,’ in *Guide de la musique symphonique*, ed. François-René Tranchefort (Paris: Fayard, 1986), 174; André Lischke, *Histoire de la musique russe : Des origines à la Révolution* (Paris: Fayard, 2006).

denunciation, did not find a cemented place in the repertoire, and those written after Stalin's death tended to be performed infrequently. By the end of the century, it also appears that French commentators were able to look back at works that may have been marginalised by the 'cult of dodecaphony,' and find new value in symphonic works, like those of Shostakovich, which often went against trends popular in France at their time of composition, and therefore achieved limited recognition. After the *Année Chostakovitch*, it was common to see French critics treating Shostakovich's symphonies as worthy of listening to for a variety of reasons, including how they represent the composer's mastery of writing for orchestra; how they serve as witnesses for important socio-political events in twentieth-century history; what they may (or may not) communicate to the audience about freedom of musical expression; and how they can be read as communicating the emotionally heavy history of the USSR.

Conclusion

Based on the works considered in this thesis, the following picture emerges of Shostakovich's reception in France from 1934 to 2000. Between 1934 and 1936, his music would have been familiar to two distinct, yet somewhat overlapping sectors of the Parisian public: those who listened to opera and owned a wireless radio, and those who engaged in the French Communist and/or Front populaire movements. Although *Lady Macbeth* seemed to be appreciated by the (relatively small) sector of the public who knew it, 'Au-devant de la vie' afforded Shostakovich more notoriety in France at this time. The popularity of 'Au-devant de la vie' was such that, in advance of the French premiere of Shostakovich's First Symphony in Paris in late 1936, Shostakovich was introduced in the press as the composer of this popular song. Although this first French performance of a Shostakovich symphony did not attract great attention from critics, the Fifth, premiered eighteen months later, was promoted extensively in the press. Its broader reception in mid-1938, however, reflected the prevailing French understanding and opinions of the Soviet Union. There was no discussion of socialist realism or artistic censorship in the many reviews it generated, and other than in the Communist press—where it was praised defiantly—the Fifth Symphony was generally deemed unsatisfying for its expansive forms and unadventurous musical language.

It was only after World War II that Shostakovich's symphonies developed a strong presence in Paris, though their promotion was still largely controlled by the French Communists. The most significant events of this post-war period were the four new Shostakovich symphonies that premiered in Paris between 1945 and 1946. The Association France-URSS, the Franco-Soviet friendship society formed in 1945, played a key role in facilitating these premieres, as did several leftist musicians, namely the conductors Roger Désormière and Manuel Rosenthal, whose network was strengthened in the Resistance. In terms of the reception of these symphonies, the politics of post-Liberation Paris led the French press to respond more favourably to Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony in 1945 than to his Eighth and Ninth symphonies in 1946. The French public was also at this time in a position to learn more about who Shostakovich was beyond his music, courtesy of the two French-language monographs published on the composer in 1945 and 1946.

As the century advanced further from the Liberation and into the Cold War years, the French reception of Shostakovich was complicated by anti-communist influence from the United States,

which filtered into French press reports on dodecaphony and the freedom of Soviet artists to compose in a style that pleased them, rather than their government. Despite these reports, from the 1950s Shostakovich's music began to develop a more consistent presence in French concert programming, since performances of his symphonies did not depend on French Communist groups sponsoring French musicians as they had in earlier decades. Shostakovich visited France for the first time in 1958 as a guest of Pathé-Marconi, and this visit solidified the public's interest in him as a personality, rather than only as a composer. Beyond the concerts associated with his French visit and a small number of others, most performances of Shostakovich's symphonies in the 1950s and early '60s were given by visiting Soviet or American musicians, but the mainstream press in France could be relied upon to report news of important Shostakovich premieres taking place in the Soviet Union.

The presence of Shostakovich's music in France continued to build throughout the 1960s and '70s. In 1964, his opera *Lady Macbeth* premiered in Nice in its revised version to great local acclaim, and his symphonic music appeared in Paris in the 1970s with more regularity than in the previous two decades, owing to the number of touring conductors who performed Shostakovich symphonies with French orchestras. After the composer's death in 1975, his music took up limited space in France until it was rejuvenated by the *Année Chostakovitch* events at the end of the 1980s. The concentrated programming of, and interest shown in, Shostakovich across the nation during 1989—even if much of the discussion around him as a figure was informed by the now infamous *Testimony*—injected new vigour into the composer's legacy, and had a tangible impact on the extent to which his music was programmed in France for the remaining years of the century.

Across the different time periods covered in this thesis, a recurring theme is that Shostakovich's music had various French champions, who either promoted or consistently praised his works in the press throughout their years of activity. The composer's first and most consistent champion in twentieth-century France was the publishing house Le Chant du Monde, which sponsored the first high-profile performance of a Shostakovich symphony in Paris in 1938, and reinvigorated the composer's oeuvre across France in 1989 with the *Année Chostakovitch*, organised and co-sponsored with Radio France and French Ministry of Culture and Foreign Affairs. From Henry Sauveplane in the 1930s to Phillipe Gavardin in 1989, representatives of Le Chant du Monde touted Shostakovich's music to the press consistently, thus ensuring that it received some

attention in the public arena at times when little interest was being shown by the nation's mainstream media outlets.

Two further figures were particularly influential in shaping the legacy of Shostakovich's music in France. The French performance history of the opera *Lady Macbeth* would have looked very different at the end of the twentieth century had it not been for Antoine Bourseiller, the actor turned visionary opera director whose determination to share contemporary opera with his audience *nancéien* led him to create the commended staging of *Lady Macbeth* in May and June 1989. While only a premiere on a technicality, this production—which Bourseiller worked on and promoted locally with great passion—was more impactful on the afterlife of the work in France than the Nice production staged twenty-five years earlier, as evidenced by the number of further French performances in the decade following. Another great advocate for Shostakovich's music in France was Jacques Lonchampt, who praised Shostakovich's music as early as 1956, when he was a 31-year-old critic working for regional press outlets. After he was made lead critic at *Le Monde* in 1961, Lonchampt emerged in the French press as someone who would defend Shostakovich's music fiercely and frequently until he ceased writing for the newspaper in 1990. Lonchampt attended not only major concerts of the symphonies and opera, but smaller, intimate soirées where Shostakovich's music was played via discs. He prepared detailed reviews on French-language books on Shostakovich, and travelled both regionally in France and internationally to report on performances of *Lady Macbeth* for *Le Monde's* readers. Unlike the agents of *Le Chant du Monde*, whose promotion of Shostakovich's music was entangled with their politics, it is interesting to note that neither Bourseiller nor Lonchampt were known to be Communists. For a future research project, it would be worthwhile to trace the engagement of these figures—Lonchampt in particular—with Soviet music at large, to better understand what they appreciated about it beyond the implicit political messaging.

Another conclusion, which I began to draw at the end of Chapter Three, is that the works or groups of works examined in this thesis each follow distinct trajectories that overlap to different extents in different periods. The performance history of 'Au-devant de la vie' stands out in this study as especially distinct. Whereas the symphonies and opera were interpreted differently amongst different groups of people throughout the century, the meaning of the song remained consistent throughout its afterlife: it continued to evoke the youthful and working-class political engagement of the Front populaire movement in the 1930s. The meaning of the opera in France, on the other hand, saw many stages of evolution throughout the twentieth century. Unlike 'Au-

devant de la vie,' *Lady Macbeth* did not carry a specifically French meaning when it was broadcast from Moscow and performed in concert versions in Paris during the 1930s. It was instead viewed as uniquely Soviet, with descriptions in the press using language such as 'one of the glories of Soviet music,' or how this new Soviet opera had 'renewed' the supposedly archaic nature of the genre. In the 1950s and '60s, *Lady Macbeth* was treated in France less as a glory of Soviet music, and more of a rarity: after making a brief appearance in Paris in a concert version in 1952—when it was programmed by Nicholas Nabokov, in order to send a message of anti-communism as a part of the American-organised L'Œuvre du XX^e siècle—the opera was not performed in France until the staging of *Katerina Ismailova* in Nice in 1964. Although the language in the press around this premiere suggested that the work was still scarcely known by the French, their discussions of it nonetheless reflected a greater understanding of the Soviet state than when the opera was last discussed at length in the 1930s. (The journalists also had the help of Igor Markevitch, whose explanations of the work led to the publication of relatively nuanced commentary in the local press.) It was only when the original version of *Lady Macbeth* premiered in Nancy twenty-five years later that the French began to claim it as their own. This idea is supported by the language used in the local press in 1989—that *Lady Macbeth* was declared 'finally French,' for example—as well as by the repeated productions that followed the one in Nancy, indicating that the opera had at last been integrated into the nation's repertoire. And finally, *Lady Macbeth* came to hold a unique meaning in Paris for the final years of the century, after it was presented as the centrepiece of the first complete season of Paris's long-awaited opera venue, the Opéra Bastille, and subsequently served as a reminder of its opening.

In addition to constructing new meanings of the opera for French audiences, the productions of *Lady Macbeth* in France from 1964 also display a fascinating pattern in which the opera was embraced more in the nation's provinces than its capital. Table 6.1 lists the French cities in which Shostakovich's opera was staged from 1964 to 2000; Figure 6.1 presents these cities on a map. Given that the Opéra de Paris only staged Shostakovich's second opera after it had been performed successfully by two provincial companies, it is interesting to reflect upon the premieres of *Lady Macbeth*'s two versions in 1964 and 1989—as well as the subsequent regional productions from 1991 to 2000—in light of the movement to decentralise France that began to gain traction in the 1960s and passed as law in 1982. Like the nation's municipalities and departments, from the 1960s France's regional opera houses were clearly not looking to a centralised national power for guidance. It is also worth pointing out in these concluding remarks that Nice and Nancy, host cities of the two premieres, are both 'borderlands': Nice was

considered Italian territory until 1860, and Lorraine, which houses the city of Nancy, is the only French region to border three countries (Belgium, Luxembourg, and Germany). Parts of the historical Alsace-Lorraine region also switched between being classified as French or German territory four times between 1870 and 1944.¹⁴⁹ Katharine Ellis has written about the importance of borderlands in constructing distinct cultural identities in France's regions, a theory that may help to make sense of the strong presence held by Shostakovich's opera in the French provinces throughout the twentieth century. In 1964, *Katerina Ismailova* was performed in both Milan and Naples (however, several months after the Nice performance, so the French plans were probably made independently of the Italian production); on the other hand, before the French premiere of the original version in 1989, *Lady Macbeth* had been performed in Düsseldorf in 1959, in Mannheim in 1986, and in both Cologne and Berlin in 1988, meaning its Nancy premiere could be seen as following a pattern of programming in nearby Germany.¹⁵⁰ Interrogating the international influences on programming of Soviet opera in France's borderlands, as well as its reception, therefore emerges as yet another enticing avenue for future research that the findings from this thesis could help to support.

Table 6.1. Productions of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth* in France, 1964–2000

Version	City	Year
<i>Katerina Ismailova</i> (French premiere)	Nice	1964
<i>Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk</i> (French premiere)	Nancy	1989
<i>Lady Macbeth</i>	Toulouse	1991
<i>Lady Macbeth</i>	Paris	1992, 1994
<i>Lady Macbeth</i>	Marseille	1993
<i>Lady Macbeth</i>	Nantes	1998
<i>Lady Macbeth</i>	Dijon	2000

¹⁴⁹ Katharine Ellis, 'Taking the Provinces Seriously,' *Muzikologija* 27 (2019): 61.

¹⁵⁰ Christophe Capacci, rev. Elisabetta Soldini, *Lady Macbeth de Mzensk, Chostakovitch : Livret d'Opéra* (Paris: Éditions l'Avant-Scène, 2011), 110.



Figure 6.1. A map of France showing the cities that hosted productions of *Katerina Ismailova* or *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* from 1964 to 2000

I will conclude with some thoughts on the afterlife of Shostakovich's symphonies. When Symphony No. 1 was first performed in Paris in late 1936, it passed by almost unnoticed until Symphony No. 5 was set to premiere eighteen months later. The programming of the latter work sparked some positive discussion of Toscanini's performance of Symphony No. 1 in 1936, but, as mentioned above, the Fifth Symphony itself was largely misunderstood amongst Parisian commentators in 1938, which I have argued can be explained by the controlled nature of reporting on the USSR in France during the 1930s. As for Shostakovich's wartime symphonies, these were celebrated in Paris immediately after World War II, but there was an expiration date on this celebration, as the heroic view of the USSR and the popularity of communism in France dwindled in the years following the Liberation. In these early decades of Shostakovich reception

in Paris, it was also common to see critics discuss his symphonies in relation to well-known symphonists who had come before him. These likenesses were drawn most consistently to Tchaikovsky and Beethoven, but Symphony No. 7 in particular elicited many comparisons to Berlioz and Ravel, as well as to Mahler, Bruckner, and even Messiaen. Such discussions became less common in the following decades, indicating that in the 1930s and '40s Shostakovich's symphonic style was not yet recognisable in France as uniquely his own, and as a result often required contextualising. In further work on this area, it would be worthwhile to identify more Soviet works, perhaps across a wider range of genres, that were performed in Paris before and after World War II. Adding their press reception to the case studies of Shostakovich's symphonies that I have prepared for this thesis would build a fuller picture of early French understandings of Soviet music.

Throughout the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, it would have perhaps been a stretch to label Shostakovich's symphonies as 'popular' in France, but they did enjoy several moments in the limelight. This was especially the case in 1958, when the composer's French visit coincided with the premiere of his Eleventh Symphony. If not embraced as popular works, though, it would be fair to say that French commentators at least respected Shostakovich's symphonies for what they were (or at least what they perceived them to be): emotional, often large-scale epics, which reflected the style of symphonic music favoured in the USSR, and in many cases even retold events from its history through music. It is probably for this reason that, in the twentieth century, the French never seemed to adopt Shostakovich's symphonies in the way that they did his opera and popular song. Even from 1989, when the symphonies were viewed more sympathetically (due in part to the material publicised in *Testimony*), it was still the symphonies with programmatic content relating to political events in Soviet history up to Stalin that had the most enduring popularity. The extra-musical content that had either been coded into Shostakovich's symphonies, or projected onto them throughout the century, allowed these works to remain uniquely Soviet through the eyes of the French. From the 1930s to the end of the twentieth century, then, the symphonies served as windows of understanding through which the French could view and understand the history of the USSR—the angle from which they approached this window was just inconsistent throughout the century.

Through its survey of seven decades of the twentieth century, this thesis has interrogated a number of factors that influenced the French reception of Shostakovich, the most significant of which was the shifting dynamic between France and the Soviet Union between 1934 and 1991.

The level of praise that Shostakovich's music received from French critics tended to reflect the prevailing societal perceptions of the USSR, and at times, publishing commentary on Shostakovich's music gave French writers a space to articulate their interest in, ideas on, or concerns about the Soviet Union. This dynamic was, however, complicated by factors such as trends in the musical landscapes of the various decades covered, or biases from certain critics or publications. Furthermore, this thesis has provided a framework to trace the influence of the PCF on musical life in France during its periods of greatest influence; how the French perceived Soviet culture at the height of the Cold War; and how the history of the USSR as told by Shostakovich's music was interpreted in France after destalinisation, after the Thaw, and finally after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. That all of these ideas, as well as those outlined above, can be explored through the lens of one composer's music speaks to the enduring value and importance of Shostakovich studies in a twenty-first century context.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Original text from extended translated quotations in Chapter One

Footnote/page number	Original text
Fn 29, p. 27	‘Le nom de Chostakovitch est à peine connu à Paris, quoiqu’il se range sans doute parmi les compositeurs les plus notoires de la jeune École russe. Son opéra <i>lady Macbeth</i> , qui est actuellement l’œuvre la plus goûtée en Russie, a remporté un succès sensationnel au Métropolitain Opera, et c’est à New-York également que le maître Toscanini dirigera au cours de cette saison la première symphonie de Chostakovitch. À Paris, ce sera Arthur Rubinstein, à qui nous devons la divulgation de tant d’œuvres russes modernes, qui exécutera à son récital du 18 novembre, salle Gaveau, en première audition à Paris, treize <i>Préludes</i> et une <i>Polka</i> de ce compositeur.’
Fn 30, p. 28	‘Chostakovitch ! Tous les musiciens doivent retenir ce nom. Arthur Rubinstein a eu la bonne idée ... d’inscrire à son programme quinze préludes de ce compositeur encore inconnu en France mais déjà extrêmement populaire en U.R.S.S. La matière musicale de Chostakovitch fait songer à la fois à Darius Milhaud et Prokofieff, à Georges Auric et Béla Bartok.’
Fn 67, p. 37	‘Républicains, anarchistes, marxistes, catholiques, gens qui tout bonnement n’appartenaient à aucun parti, il y a place pour tous dans les rangs de ceux qui luttent contre l’ennemi commun : le fascisme.’
Fn 69, p. 37	‘C’est par l’exemple d’André Gide que cette vérité se trouve le [sic] mieux confirmée. En publiant son libelle de fangeuse calomnie contre l’Union soviétique, cet auteur a essayé de conserver l’apparence de la neutralité et a espéré rester dans le milieu des écrivains des « gauche ». En vain ! Son livre est immédiatement tombé dans les mains des fascistes français, et lui et son auteur sont devenus un drapeau fasciste.’
Fn 73, p. 38	‘La F.M.P., l’an dernier, nous a présenté un grand festival des chants des peuples de l’Union. Depuis lors, un certain nombre de chants soviétiques (« Les Partisans », « Au-devant de la vie », de Chostakovitch) sont devenus populaires dans toute la France. Mais on n’a jamais joué en France ni musique symphonique, ni opéra soviétiques [sic]. Certains noms de compositeurs soviétiques, célèbres en Angleterre et en Amérique, sont inconnus du public français. La F.M.P. va, dans son concert du 28 mars prochain, populariser ces noms.’
Fn 74, p. 39	‘Chostakovitch appartient à l’École de Leningrad. Il n’a pas 30 ans. Il a suivi profondément à l’influence de la technique occidentale. Il est connu en France par le chant désormais populaire, <i>Au devant de la vie</i> , tiré du film <i>Contre-plan</i> . De lui, le programme comprend deux morceaux pour orchestra et un fragment de l’opéra <i>Cathérina Ismailova</i> , joué avec succès à Londres et à New York.’
Fn 90, p. 42	‘Le plus en vue des jeunes musiciens de la Russie soviétique ... À peine âgé de 30 ans, il a déjà produit une œuvre importante dans la symphonie, la musique de chambre, le théâtre : son opéra <i>Lady Macbeth</i> , joué dans de nombreux pays, a rencontré partout un gros succès. En outre, il a écrit des chants populaires qui constituent comme un nouveau folklore.’
Fn 118, p. 49	‘Qui est ce compositeur soviétique dont Toscanini, pourtant peu friand de musique moderne, se fit l’introducteur en France ? C’est un tout jeune homme, puisqu’il a 32 ans. À cet âge, déjà, son génie s’est maintes fois affirmé. Il écrivait, à 20 ans, cette Première Symphonie que Toscanini joua à Paris, il y a quelques années et, depuis, n’a cessé de réaliser des œuvres où chacun peut reconnaître [sic] un des talents les plus remarquables de ce temps.’
Fn 119, p. 50	‘Le jeune compositeur soviétique Dimitri Chostakovitch, qui comptait déjà parmi les musiciens les plus marquants de notre époque depuis le jour où Toscanini s’était fait le parrain de sa « Première Symphonie », aura sa « Cinquième Symphonie » jouée ce soir au cours d’un concert de musiques moderne donné par le « Chant du Monde ».’
Fn 121, p. 50	‘On se souvient que Chostakovitch fut violemment critiqué dans la presse soviétique, en particulier pour son opéra « Lady Macbeth du district de Mtzensk » et pour sa « Quatrième Symphonie », œuvres jugées trop savantes et trop formalistes. Sa « Cinquième Symphonie » lui a acquis de nouveau, semble-t-il, tous les suffrages. On jugera pourquoi.’

Fn 122, p. 50	‘Le sujet en est, dit l’auteur lui-même, « le devenir de la personnalité ». C’est l’homme précisément qui se trouve au centre de la conception de cette œuvre, dont la structure est tout entière lyrique. Le final de cette « Cinquième Symphonie » résout la tension tragique des premières parties sur le plan optimiste de la joie vitale. Le mouvement musical et dramatique de sa symphonie progresse et s’accroît à travers d’éblouissants contrastes d’ombre et de lumière, contrastes obtenus par une sage économie de moyens d’expression, ce qui est le signe distinctif d’une véritable maîtrise orchestrale.’
Fn 125, p. 52	‘Sa <i>Cinquième Symphonie</i> ... se relie directement aux œuvres maîtresses de la musique de tous les temps. Elle laisse une impression de grandeur saine, pure et presque naïve ; elle est dépourvue d’arbitraire et de parti pris ; elle n’abaisse pas l’horizon ; elle ne combat pas <i>contre</i> une doctrine ou une école. Elle « vit » splendidement un destin musical auquel nous nous associons avec le joie et <i>confiance</i> —car c’est surtout cela, c’est une œuvre, c’est une musique qui nous donnent [sic] <i>confiance</i> .’
Fn 126, p. 52	‘Nous avons surtout reçu l’impression d’une musique très sincère et très fraîche. Chostakovitch n’est certes pas gâté par des réminiscences récentes. Il semble ignorer complètement ce qui s’est écrit depuis quarante ou cinquante ans ... pour ne se souvenir que de Tchaïkowski.’
Fn 130, p. 54	‘Nous voudrions surtout parler de la fin du premier morceau de sa symphonie. Pendant un long épisode, soutenu et mené de main de maître, il vous tient, il vous émeut. Il vous bouleverse ... On ne peut plus alors dénier à Chostakovitch l’étincelle du génie et tout cela efface toutes les réserves que l’on aurait pu formuler au sujet de certaines longueurs et répétitions.’
Fn 133, p. 54	‘Le compositeur soviétique ne craint pas d’utiliser les formules les plus conventionnelles ... De son style est banni tout ce qui n’est pas directement et facilement communicable aux oreilles les moins éduquées. Cependant la sincérité de son lyrisme romantique lui permet miraculeusement de ne point tomber dans la banalité.’
Fn 134, p. 55	‘Nous avouons notre déception en ce qui concerne la Cinquième Symphonie de Chostakovitch. Cette composition du musicien russe n’est qu’un assemblage de thèmes connus et à peine déguisés. Rien de nouveau dans cette symphonie. Pas un accent original. Vraiment, on attendait mieux de Chostakovitch !’
Fn 137, p. 55	‘La musique, heureusement, vaut mieux que ce texte. Elle a de grands défauts, dont le principal est de répéter parfois jusqu’à satiété, et même jusqu’à l’accablement, certains passages, ce qui produit un effet de longueur insupportable. Les développements excessifs sont toujours fastidieux ; mais quand d’un bout à l’autre d’un long ouvrage on semble piétiner au lieu d’avancer, on donne à l’auditeur le mieux disposé un ennui profond, on l’endort.’
Fn 140, p. 56	‘La cinquième symphonie de Shostakovitch comprend quatre mouvements, dont trois parfaitement négligeables. L’ <i>Allegro</i> initial, synonyme de platitude, d’ennui et de suffisance, est construit, pourrais-je dire, comme l’intérieur d’un canon, avec cette différence qu’ici le vide s’entoure d’un plomb vil au lieu du noble acier. Thèmes – si ce sont là des thèmes – indigents, banals. Orchestre laid et sans consistance. Je n’eus guère meilleure impression de la petite valse inoffensive qui suit et qui prétend remplacer le scherzo traditionnel ... Quant à la marche finale, elle est à l’avenant totalement dépourvue d’idées et d’une vulgarité auprès de laquelle l’ <i>Ouverture</i> de tout à l’heure paraîtrait suprêmement aristocratique.’
Fn 141, p. 56	‘L’ <i>Andante</i> rachètera à lui seul toutes les erreurs d’avant et d’après. Chose presque inavouable, il contient de la musique, voire une belle mélodie qui, se développant largement, atteindra à cette sorte de grandeur fruste et farouche que j’avais remarquée, précisément, dans <i>Lady Macbeth</i> , et grâce à quoi je ne dénouerai pas encore les derniers liens de la sympathie que j’avais ressentie pour ce musicien.’
Fn 142, p. 57	‘Il est triste que, sous couleur de liberté et de renouveau, on alimente le peuple russe de telles pauvretés. Cette musique de Shostakovitch ne se réclame avec les glorieux ancêtres, Moussorgski, Borodine, Rimsky, Balakirev.’

Appendix 2. Original text from extended translated quotations in Chapter Two

Footnote/Page number	Original text
Fn 14, p. 64	‘Elle est soumise à une sévère réglementation, qui s’étend non seulement à l’activité des associations, des théâtres, des conservatoires, mais à la création musicale elle-même. Toute manifestation musicale, en U.R.S.S., doit être parallèle à la « Ligne du Parti communiste » et sa réalisation nécessite l’approbation de plusieurs instances telles que : le Comité générale de l’Union en matière de l’Art, l’Union des Compositeurs soviétiques, les Cellules communistes des théâtres, des conservatoires, etc.’
Fn 16, p. 64	‘Depuis la parution de l’article de la <i>Pravda</i> , aucun compositeur n’a osé s’aventurer à écrire de la musique moderne. Or, le progrès artistique ne saurait s’accommoder de réglementations. Il n’est pas étonnant que les nouvelles directives aient conduit la création musicale en U.R.S.S. à une rapide décadence. Le compositeur soviétique, obligé d’écrire une musique « prolétaire consonante à l’époque », à simplifier la structure mélodique et harmonique de ses productions, est tombé dans la banalité, dans un primitivisme musicale dénué de toute valeur artistique.’
Fn 17, p. 65	‘La force du talent et la maîtrise technique de certains ont surmonté la difficulté dans la création même de la musique prolétarienne. Citons parmi ceux-ci : Vassilenko, Miakovski, Prokofieff, Chostakovitch. Cependant, dans les œuvres de ses maîtres, on sent la constante préoccupation de ne « pas sortir de la ligne générale » de ne pas déplaire au dictateur du Kremlin...’
Fn 36, p. 68	‘Les Nazis ont accumulé les atrocités en Union Soviétique, s’acharnant non seulement sur les vivants mais aussi sur les souvenirs de Pouchkine, de Tolstoï, de Rimsky Korsakoff.’
Fn 39, p. 69	‘Détruire les forces de l’ennemi, saboter sa production, s’opposer à l’envoi de nouveaux Français en esclavage en Allemagne, telles sont les tâches incombant aux Français à l’heure présente pour assurer la libération de la Patrie.’
Fn 50, p. 72	‘On attendait avec une vive curiosité cette œuvre d’un musicien plus connu en France par la gloire qui entoure son nom dans son pays que par ses œuvres, qui n’ont été jouées ici que peu souvent.’
Fn 53, p. 73	‘Ce n’est pas une épopée, c’est un journal intime ; mais ce journal intime nous en apprend plus sur l’héroïsme, l’abnégation et la fidélité des cœurs et des âmes russes qu’un rutilant tableau d’histoire.’
Fn 57, p. 74	‘On a parlé de la vulgarité de certains de ses thèmes ... Mais, comme on devine qu’il se moque bien d’être vulgaire ou pas, original ou pas, occupé seulement d’aller son chemin ! ... Et, parce qu’il n’est point paralysé par la peur de glisser dans la vulgarité, il n’y tombe pas. Tout au contraire, son inspiration nous paraît demeurer, dans l’ensemble, d’une grande noblesse. C’est, assurément, une âme qui vibre haut.’
Fn 58, p. 74	‘Ce qui frappe tout d’abord à l’audition de cette symphonie est la vie dont elle est emplie ... Malgré sa durée ... on n’éprouve ni lassitude, ni ennui. Ses quatre mouvements se déroulent sans qu’apparaisse chez leur auteur ni essoufflement, ni vaine répétition. Le musicien n’est jamais à court d’idées, si celles-ci ne sont pas toujours d’une grande invention ni d’une belle qualité. Mais la vie qui les anime est si intense, si authentique et toujours si profondément et uniquement musicale que l’on est emporté par elle comme par le courant d’un fleuve.’
Fn 59, p. 74	‘Ses proportions sont gigantesques, et sa matière si forte que pas un instant—même durant les très longs développements qu’on y rencontre parfois, et, malgré un parti pris, à certains endroits, d’orchestration sombre, et tenacement sombre—on ne frise l’ennui. Car tout ici est toujours simple et direct. Sans doute le premier mouvement est-il le plus riche ; pour moi, c’est un morceau admirable, d’un bout à l’autre. Mais il y a dans chacun des mouvements ce même souffle, cette constante grandeur sans emphase, cette manière d’expression si vraie, si humaine, qu’on est entièrement d’accord, dès les premières mesures.’
Fn 60, p. 74	‘Voici une symphonie où, à côté de quelques rares idées issues du folklore grand russe, on rencontre des thèmes d’une rare vulgarité et qui semblent avoir traîné dans tous les devoirs d’harmonie de tous les conservatoires du monde. Voici une symphonie où sont utilisés, avec le plus superbe sans-gêne et l’inconscience la plus agressive, tous les poncifs les plus communs d’un matériel mélodique, harmonique et rythmique du plus effarant rudimentaire, ce qui ne veut pas dire que l’écriture de Chostakovitch ne soit pas fermée ni

	assurée. Voici enfin, pour couronner l'ensemble, une symphonie en quatre mouvements qui dure une heure dix !'
Fn 61, p. 75	'Eh bien ! voici une symphonie ou non seulement on ne s'ennuie pas une minute, ce qui est déjà un succès, mais encore dont l'on sort secoué et ébloui. On sait qu'elle évoque la lutte des peuples russes et leur espoir dans l'issue finale, thème dont on ne peut pas dire qu'il soit très original, ni d'un grand raffinement de pensée. Il n'y a, dans ces pages, rien d'imitatif ni même de descriptif ou de pittoresque. Tout est en évocation, et en très puissante évocation : depuis la palette atrocement violacée des ciels de bombardements jusqu'à l'exaltation optimiste de la plus rayonnante et forte confiance.'
Fn 63, p. 76	'La matière de son langage musical est fort disparate ... Tchaïkowsky et Prokofieff sont les seules traces russes qu'on y distingue. Mais si l'on peut aussi penser à Mahler et même à Bruckner, c'est toutefois à Berlioz qu'il nous paraît qu'on puisse rattacher surtout le musicien de la Symphonie de Leningrad.'
Fn 66, p. 76	'L'auditeur qui s'attendrait à trouver ici les somptueux reliefs, les couleurs séduisantes, les trouvailles de forme et de style d'un art slavophile ou les inflexions caractéristiques de l'accent musical russe, cet auditeur serait cruellement déçu.'
Fn 67, p. 76	'Dès les premières mesures de l'Allegro initial, la musique s'établit dans un climat d'une sévérité sans complaisance. Un lyrisme austère s'y fait jour, qui se prive de l'appui des accords, du soutien de la polyphonie, de la chaleur des beaux timbres. L'orchestre y revêt l'apparence d'un ensemble de musique de chambre où domine la voix des violons. L'insistance des longues phrases à l'unisson qui évoquent ça et là les précédents d'Hector Berlioz et du Beethoven de la Neuvième Symphonie atteste la haute ambition de Chostakovitch de conquérir sans l'aide de la harmonie [sic], sans le secours du contrepoint les cimes de la pure mélodie. Il faut dire qu'il n'y parvient pas d'un premier élan, ni sans s'égarer parfois dans un pathos académique, héritage lointain de son maître et professeur Maximilian Steinberg. Cela est surtout sensible dans le premier mouvement, déparé de surcroît par un épisode saugrenu qui évoque invinciblement pour l'auditeur français le fameux Boléro de Ravel.'
Fn 68, p. 77	'Un épisode central sur un rythme obstiné, marqué par la caisse claire comme le Boléro de Ravel, et comme lui aboutissant à un crescendo dont la violence s'apaise pour la coda, où, après une accalmie, il reparaitra.'
Fn 70, p. 77	'Malgré les moyens primitifs mis en jeu, l'œuvre à des prolongements imprévus, et ceci, je pense, à cause des sentiments qui animent profondément le compositeur : si une foi et un sens mystique certain permettent à M. Messiaen de s'élever sur des cimes peu fréquentées, c'est ici un mécanisme analogue, mais, celui-là, à base d'un irrésistible dynamisme guerrier qui libère les accents d'une authenticité indiscutable.'
Fn 73, p. 78	'Il serait vain de céler [sic] que nous n'avons pas toujours ressenti, au cours de cette audition, toute l'émotion à laquelle nous nous attendions. Réalisée suivant une esthétique néo-classique et teintée de couleurs slaves un peu trop estompées, cette œuvre a, par moments, des accents assez impressionnants, mais trop souvent tempérés par une discipline et une discrétion sans doute ici tout à fait superflues.'
Fn 74, p. 78	'Presque constamment expressive et magistralement orchestrée, elle a de la noblesse et de la fierté. De grandes courbes agogiques dénotent chez son auteur un souffle puissant et libre. J'imagine qu'un compositeur qui dispose de pareils moyens eût été capable de donner à son émouvant sujet plus de caractère et de relief. Et l'on eût souhaité percevoir dans cette œuvre d'envergure exceptionnelle la douloureuse palpitation d'un peuple indomptable, digne sanglante d'un monstrueux fléau.'
Fn 79, p. 79	'Cette <i>Huitième Symphonie</i> , comme la Septième, resteront le point culminant d'une transposition directe de l'épopée tragique de la guerre. Sans recul, sur le vif, Chostakovitch a su transporter dans des constructions extrêmement complexes son expérience humaine.'
Fn 82, p. 80	'La huitième symphonie, <i>Symphonie de Stalingrad</i> , est également, comme son titre le suggère, une tragédie symphonique. La force des conflits dramatiques à l'issue desquels pointe l'éclaircie symbolique entraîne l'auditeur dans une vision où, en dehors du relief donné aux péripéties sauvages des combats, se dressent les ruines de la cité détruite, s'entendent les gémissements et les pleurs humains, éclate le rythme de la virilité, tels qu'ils furent engendrés par la réalité.'
Fn 87, p. 83	'Sous le poids douloureux de ses souvenirs, il s'est astreint à une noble simplicité de lignes, à une ardente sobriété de couleurs, à un emploi sévère de hautes formules déjà connues. Il n'est allé qu'à l'essentiel. Sa musique ... n'a pas même un caractère russe tranché. Elle est de tous les temps et pour tous les hommes ... dans sa résonance particulière, [son art] parle à l'âme de tous.'

Fn 88, p. 83	‘La huitième, récemment donnée à l’Opéra, est à peine moins longue ; elle dure près d’une heure, et cependant elle semble, auprès de sa devancière, beaucoup moins étendue. Certes, les développements auraient pu être resserrés sans qu’elle y perdît, bien au contraire ; mais elle est intéressante d’un bout à l’autre, et même elle s’élève assez haut par instants.’
Fn 89, p. 83	‘Un tel ouvrage ... témoigne en faveur de ce musicien puissant et fécond. Si Chostakovitch parvient à se concentrer plus encore, on peut attendre de lui des œuvres qui le placeront au premier rang. Le compositeur qui a conçu l’adagio du premier mouvement, le scherzo et la passacaille que nous venons d’entendre, qui a orchestré – sans pitié pour les trombones, mais avec quelle réussite ! – certain épisode de la troisième partie, celui-là porte en lui les qualités qui font les maîtres.’
Fn 90, p. 84	‘Exécutées chez nous à plusieurs reprises, et tout récemment encore à la Radiodiffusion française par relais de Bruxelles, les derniers échos de la 7 ^e symphonie de Chostakovitch n’étaient pas encore éteints que l’association France-URSS nous conviait à l’audition de la 8 ^e symphonie du même musicien, sous la brillante et intelligente direction de Roger Désormière. Ces deux œuvres présentent à peu près les mêmes caractéristiques et d’identiques qualités : un style d’une irréprochable distinction, une écriture souple et aisée, une orchestration dont la richesse et souvent l’ingéniosité, n’excluent point la clarté.’
Fn 91, p. 84	‘La 8 ^e , écrite sans doute presque d’un seul jet en 1943, ne constitue pas non plus, à notre sens, et malgré l’opinion opposée de certains de nos éminents confrères soviétiques, le précieux témoignage que nous attendions de l’un des acteurs de cette poignante tragédie.’
Fn 93, p. 84	‘La musique à programme a rarement notre agrément en raison des nombreux « échecs » dont elle est la cause, et si la 7 ^e symphonie (<i>Leningrad</i>) fut assez décevante sous ce rapport, la 8 ^e symphonie (<i>Stalingrad</i>) fut également loin d’être une réussite.’
Fn 94, p. 85	‘À quoi bon dire dans le détail ici tout ce que j’ai ressenti à l’audition de cette extraordinaire symphonie ? Il faudrait qu’elle fût rejouée, il faudrait que la musique soviétique fût diffusée beaucoup plus largement en France ... Malheureusement, ces œuvres ne sont connues en France que d’un public relativement restreint et relativement éduqué, et Dieu sait que ce public et la critique ne ménagent généralement pas à la musique soviétique actuelle leurs réticences, leur étonnement et leur déception ... À Chostakovitch, on reproche un abus des formes démesurées, un barbarisme de langage, et la simplicité des moyens et des effets employés. Le public de concert français ne néglige aucune occasion de mettre l’accent sur les défauts d’esthétique purement musicale de Chostakovitch, et passe plus volontiers sous silence sa hardiesse de pensées pure, la beauté de ses constructions solides, la souffle et l’ampleur magnifiques de ses phrases austères et leur force.’
Fn 95, p. 85	‘Chostakovitch, lui, ne se pose point de problème autre que celui de transmettre avec force et conviction les sentiments et les émotions qu’il a éprouvés devant les grands faits patriotiques de l’histoire de l’U.R.S.S. Sa musique est destinée à être entendue par des millions de travailleurs de la ville et de la campagne. On prétend que son art est fait de facilités, mais c’est justement vers la sévérité, le sérieux, l’aridité et la noblesse de formes qu’il dirige sa musique.’
Fn 96, p. 85	‘Le public français attend de ce jeune Russe un raffinement de pensée, une sûreté de main ... Il ne comprend pas que les jeunes musiciens russes aient le désir d’un retour à une conception d’art peut-être simpliste en apparence mais réellement forte.’
Fn 97, p. 86	‘Il m’importe peu, quant à moi, que Chostakovitch n’ait point un langage aussi riche, aussi chatoyant que celui de son temps. C’est ce qu’il exprime qui m’intéresse et qui est véritablement nouveau. C’est une forme d’audace et de courage [sic] aussi que dire sans feinte ce que l’on veut dire. D’ailleurs s’il se souciait du détail et se posait des problèmes esthétiques à chaque note, il ne pourrait aborder les épopées fantastiques qu’il veut nous retracer. La souffrance de son peuple, la grandeur de ses luttes, l’enthousiasme, la joie, l’abnégation dans le combat, ne sauraient s’accommoder de chichis et de complications. Tout ce qu’il veut nous faire saisir, nous le saisissons, tout au long de ses symphonies. Son but est donc atteint. Le tout est de vouloir se laisser prendre. Le tout est de partager l’émotion qui est à la base de son œuvre.’
Fn 102, p. 87	‘Dans la Neuvième Symphonie, il n’y a pas de marches triomphantes, ni de fanfares de victoires couronnant une grandiose apothéose. Mais on y trouve la sensation profondément humaine et vivante de la joie et du bonheur des vainqueurs qui ont affermi la paix sur la terre, chassé les ténèbres du fascisme et proclamé bien haut le triomphe et la gloire de la lumière.’
Fn 104, p. 88	‘Nous n’avons pas attendu longtemps la première audition de la 9 ^e symphonie de Chostakovitch. Remercions-en Manuel Rosenthal et l’Orchestre national. Manuel

	Rosenthal était ce soir-là dans ses grands jours et il nous plaît de le reconnaître. Associer Igor Strawinsky et Chostakovitch dans un même hommage ne manque pas d'audace et témoigne d'une heureuse inspiration.'
Fn 105, p. 88	'Je dis bien comme d'habitude, et je crois qu'on ne le répétera jamais assez : les initiatives, les efforts de M. Rosenthal, dans ce domaine, sont d'un intérêt exceptionnel, d'une audace peu commune, d'une rareté presque exclusive.'
Fn 106, p. 89	'Grâce à la propagande un peu bête que l'on fait en faveur de la production de ce grand artiste—propagande qui ne le grandit vraiment point—nous savons que la Neuvième Symphonie complète un triptyque glorifiant la lutte ... la victoire ... et la paix de la nation soviétique.'
Fn 107, p. 89	'J'ai tenté de dire ... combien convaincantes m'étaient apparues les illustrations ardentes, pathétiques, bouleversantes, de cette lutte et de cette victoire. À mon très grand regret, il ne me paraît pas possible d'arborer autant d'enthousiasme pour l'ouvrage que l'on nous présente aujourd'hui.'
Fn 108, p. 89	'La 9 ^e symphonie n'a fait que confirmer notre impression. Intituler « Victoire » une telle œuvre constitue un réel « engagement » qui ne peut que se retourner contre l'auteur s'il n'est pas tenu ... Quant à la 9 ^e , elle ne constitue pas un meilleur témoignage. Et c'est là le drame, selon nous. Il y a loin de la coupe aux lèvres...'
Fn 109, p. 89	'Le finale de cette <i>Neuvième</i> , dédié à la Victoire, fait songer à quelque joyeux cortège de rapins en route pour un Robinson moscovite, plutôt qu'à la joie grave d'un peuple devant le miracle du retour à la vie normale, après des années d'indicibles épreuves.'
Fn 110, p. 89	'Or, les dernières symphonies de Chostakovitch, qui sont venues jusqu'à nous, ne semblent avoir procuré à l'auditeur non prévenu, que des réactions d'ordre essentiellement musical, dort différentes des convulsions, d'électrochoc. Car, enfin, quoi qu'on pense de cette musique, elle est d'un véritable symphoniste – je veux dire qu'elle réalise d'abord et surtout une vivante et sensible organisation du temps. Elle vaut, par elle-même, indépendamment de ce qu'elle est censée d'exprimer. Il y a plus : censée d'exprimer. Il y a plus : tout s'y passe comme si le titre qu'elle porte ou l'argument qu'elle propose étaient postiches. C'est le cas, en particulier de la Neuvième Symphonie de ce compositeur de trente-neuf ans.'
Fn 111, p. 90	'La neuvième symphonie de Chostakovitch est dite : Symphonie de la Victoire, alors qu'en maint endroit l'allure de l'œuvre et son accent semblent porter un défi à son titre : mais épiloguons pas là-dessus : l'auteur est seul juge de ses intentions. Reste la musique. Elle est apparemment toute différente de celle de la Septième Symphonie, dite de Stalingrad. C'est une musique qui se plie aisément aux exigences du conformisme académique. Le ton en est aimable et détendu, voire badin. Le pittoresque orchestral y est prié. La cocasserie n'en est pas exclue – une cocasserie appuyée et sans humour.'
Fn 112, p. 90	'L'écho des défilés militaires, l'éclat de la joie d'un peuple enfin délivré d'un long cauchemar animent l'allégo, suivi d'une méditation empreinte d'une noble mélancolie ; viennent ensuite un scherzo plein de turbulente gaité, puis un choral confié aux cuivres et au basson solo, et qui s'enchaîne à un allégretto et à un presto final. Et tout cela, qui est bien fait, bien écrit, et qui contient de bonnes choses (le mouvement lent et le choral, par exemple), manque cependant trop souvent d'originalité. Nous n'y trouvons rien de ce que nous aimons dans la musique russe, et ces pages, qui pourraient être signées de n'importe quel nom de musicien occidental, auraient pu être écrites il y a cinquante ans.'
Fn 113, p. 91	'On avait joint Renard et Mavra, d'Igor Stravinsky ... qui, s'ils ne surprennent plus, continuent de décevoir, surtout Mavra. Il y aurait beaucoup à dire sur le « cas » Stravinsky, sur le tourment d'un musicien qui ... semble s'appliquer à dérouter sinon même à décevoir ceux qui s'efforcent de le suivre.'
Fn 114, p. 91	'Fut-on d'esprit hyper-dogmatique, il est bien entendu qu'on ne juge pas une œuvre de quelque importance sur une audition. Toutefois ces simples impressions sur la IX ^e Symphonie de Chostakovitch, exécutée jeudi, pour la première fois à Paris, par l'Orchestre national, confirment celles que ses récentes compositions m'avaient données. C'est d'un musicien aux dons multiples, surtout en matière d'invention mélodique et de couleur orchestrale.'
Fn 115, p. 91	'Au contraire, l'allegro initial est fermement écrit, et le solo de basson du mouvement lent est empreint d'une émotion qui a trouvé dans l'auditoire un écho tout spontané. Manuel Rosenthal a dirigé cette symphonie avec beaucoup de vie, sans dommage pour la précision qui reste sa qualité maîtresse.'
Fn 116, p. 91	'Ce qui surprend peut-être le plus dans les œuvres de Chostakovitch, c'est cette émotion qui jaillit soudain de certaines mesures et qui vous étreint jusqu'au plus profond de vous-

	même. Et vous fait oublier ces longs développements qui ressemblent beaucoup plus à des exercices de composition qu'à l'expression de messages.'
Fn 121, p. 94	'Nous ne demandons pas mieux que de connaître la musique soviétique, mais pourquoi cette insistance à nous offrir uniquement Chostakovitch ? Des compositeurs russes de sa génération serait-il aujourd'hui ?'
Fn 127, p. 95	'Il s'agit là presque d'une première audition en France, puisque cet ouvrage n'y fut exécuté qu'une seule fois jadis, y passant fort inaperçu, ce qui est grand dommage. Composée en 1937, la V ^e Symphonie opus 47 ressortit franchement à l'esthétique officielle soviétique. On sait qu'en 1936 Dimitri Chostakovitch avait été « prié » de ne plus marquer autant d'enthousiasme « pour extrême modernisme de la musique occidentale ».'
Fn 128, p. 95	'Malgré les contraintes parfaitement gratuites qu'un régime qui se mêle de ce qui ne le regarde pas lui a imposées et qu'il a acceptées, c'est d'une extraordinaire nature, d'un incomparable tempérament.'
Fn 129, p. 96	'L'œuvre, plus germanique que russe, exprime un tempérament d'une richesse foisonnante, mais barbare ... À côté du civilisé par excellence, Mozart, que nous écoutions tout à l'heure, Chostakovitch est l'homme du Néanderthal ... Cette œuvre d'avant-guerre ne révèle pas encore la prenante humanité du musicien d'après Léninegrad.'
Fn 131, p. 96	'Avec des idées mélodiques d'un conformisme dont Théodore Dubois n'eût point voulu se rendre coupable, Chostakovitch, malgré tout cela, nous donne la grande secousse.'
Fn 132, p. 97	'Ce qui frappe, dans cette musique et ce qui la rend, pour moi, inappréciable, c'est son côté humain. Si savante et dure que soit, parfois, son écriture, Chostakovitch a le génie des cadences humaines, du rythme qui porte. C'est vraiment le musicien pour les masses, le musicien de notre temps.'
Fn 133, p. 97	'On y trouve les mêmes qualités et les mêmes défauts que dans les ouvrages récents du compositeur soviétique : ampleur et fougue, mais aussi abus des développements et répétition jusqu'à la lassitude des mêmes effets.'
Fn 134, p. 97	'Ici comme ailleurs, la faiblesse, la vulgarité, la trivialité des idées mélodiques et de l'inspiration même, il ne me semble pas possible de ne pouvoir être séduit par autant de fantaisie et de vigueur, d'ingéniosité rythmique et d'adresse orchestrale, et surtout par autant d'influx vital, de dynamisme, même lorsque ceux-ci se manifestent par la gaîté facile mais frénétique, le pathétique conventionnel mais hallucinant dont Chostakovitch détient les secrets quasi miraculeux.'
Fn 135, p. 97	'Plus concise et plus dense en tout point que les trois suivantes—fresques un peu lâches—m'est apparue moins primaire, plus recherchée, plus adroite et combien plus subtile.'
Fn 142, p. 102	'Depuis la Libération, le musicien soviétique a pris une place importante sur les programmes de nos concerts. Il était bon que nous fussions renseignés sur lui, sur ses œuvres, sur l'évolution de ses idées. Renseignés ? Oui, sans doute, mais—et c'est là son défaut—le livre d'I. Martinov est plutôt une apologie qu'une véritable étude critique.'
Fn 143, p. 102	'Le livre de Martinov nous donne, en tout cas, le désir de connaître les ouvrages de Chostakovitch qui n'ont pas encore figuré au programme de nos concerts.'
Fn 146, p. 103	'Comment estimer dans quelle mesure sont mérités les reproches sévères que firent à Chostakovitch les dirigeants soviétiques ... Le musicien, dans le régime soviétique, est et forcément <i>doit être</i> plus près de la Société que chez nous. C'est pourquoi l'on peut s'expliquer que la <i>Pravda</i> (et d'abord Staline, nous supposons), songeant avant tout à l'union entre le Peuple et la musique de Chostakovitch, lui aient adressé ces remontrances ... Il est certain que cette alliance étroite de l'artiste avec la société ne favorise pas toujours le génie, mais parfois à la banalité facile ... À nous français, la liberté, l'individualisme sont chers avant tout. Mais la liberté suppose un certain isolement et dès que nous sommes d'un parti, dès que nous marchons coude à coude, Dès que pénètre en notre âme quelque chose de l' <i>âme des foules</i> , nous subissons inconsciemment l'influence de cette foule, et nous voilà moins libre, avec une personnalité souvent moins profonde, et <i>moins belle</i> . Or, il est évident qu'un musicien russe d'aujourd'hui ne peut avoir l'indépendance acquise dans la Tour d'ivoire : d'ailleurs il ne la souhaite pas. Cela nous suggère l'hypothèse que la « conversion » de Chostakovitch après la mise à l'index de <i>Lady Macbeth</i> ne fut point la conséquence d'une punition infligée à un récalcitrant, mis plutôt celle d'un « conseil salutaire » reçu volontiers : avertissement contre quoi l'artiste n'eut pas lieu de se révolter mais qu'il accepta sans doute, au contraire, avec une sorte de fervent mysticisme. Ce qui lui permet, évoluant de la sorte, de continuer à se traduire <i>lui-même</i> et sans concessions artificielles, non sincères.'

Fn 148, p. 103	'On conclura : la musique de Chostakovitch naît de l'émotion. L'expression des sentiments est à sa base : par là, elle s'oppose aux théories du néo-classicisme à la Strawinsky (je n'ai pas besoin de vous dire de quel côté je suis).'
Fn 149, p. 104	'Il évoque des grandes visions humaines. Il nous dit qu'il faut s'émerveiller, croire, avoir confiance. Ne pas « penser étroit ». Ne pas fermer les volets sur la lumière et laisser entrer le grand soleil, celui du <i>Midi</i> de Leconte de Lisle. Ce qui le soutient, ce qui l'élève, c'est le sens de la nature – c'est aussi la qualité du sentiment, où l'on devine tant de bienveillance humaine en dépit de l'humour railleur auquel parfois il s'est livré. Sa force, c'est de vivre, d'être quelqu'un, – de s'émouvoir à la beauté des paysages, des arbres, des grands champs, et des nuits d'étoiles. Sa musique reflète tout cela – ni abstraite ni dogmatique, ni ambitieusement formelle, ni sèche, ou vide de signification. Qu'il ait encore des progrès à faire, qu'il lui faille choisir, se surveiller, cela va de soi, et nous l'avons dit – sans ménagement. Mais gardons confiance en son avenir.'

Appendix 3. Original text from extended translated quotations in Chapter Three

Footnote/Page number	Original text
Fn 1, p. 110	‘« Il y a deux sortes des grands musiciens : ce qui touche immédiatement les masses (ils sont très rares) et les autres. Ce qui me ravit chez Chostakovitch, c’est qu’il est de ceux qui savent parler à tout le monde. L’inspiration, le but et les matériaux employés viennent de la masse et y retournent, je me réjouis, que le talent immense de Chostakovitch nous vienne de l’URSS. Ça a vraiment une signification... » etc., etc. Il y en a deux cent lignes sur ce ton ; éloges sur éloges. L’article est signé d’un musicien qui eut son heure de célébrité, alors qu’il jouait à deux pianos, avec le bon gros Doucet, des airs syncopés qui imitent le jazz. Depuis lors, il a donné dans le communisme : c’était la mode en 1945, et l’article que je cite a paru en mai de cette année-là. Eh bien ! notre enthousiaste critique, s’il habitait la Russie, serait aujourd’hui au pain sec ou au travail forcé.’
Fn 5, p. 112	‘Toujours sous l’inspiration d’André Jdanov, qui est devenu depuis 1946 le dictateur spirituel de l’U.R.S.S., le comité central du parti communiste vient de rappeler brutalement à l’ordre les musiciens les plus célèbres, les artistes dont la propagande officielle n’avait cessé jusqu’ici de vanter les mérites et dont le parti lui-même avait consacré le talent en leur distribuant des « prix Staline » et des décorations, en leur décernant les titres d’« artistes du peuple » ou d’« artistes émérites ». On découvre soudain que ces « artistes du peuple », portés aux nues il y a moins de trois mois à l’occasion du trentième anniversaire de la révolution bolcheviste, ont trahi le peuple et sacrifié à la « tendance formaliste » qui est « totalement étrangère au peuple soviétique ». Cette tendance formaliste exerce, paraît-il, « une influence néfaste sur les études des jeunes élèves des conservatoires de l’U.R.S.S. ».’
Fn 6, p. 112	‘Comment les compositeurs Prokofiev, Chostakovitch et tous les autres nommément visés ont-ils réagi à la mercuriale du parti ? Vous le devinez sans peine. Ils ont fait aussitôt amende honorable comme les écrivains ... conformément aux directives du parti.’
Fn 7, p. 112	‘On sera curieux de connaître les œuvres nouvelles inspirées par le « réalisme socialiste » et accessibles aux masses populaires ... Veut-on tarir les sources si riches de la musique russe, entraver la liberté de la création et jeter le discrédit sur toutes les recherches artistiques ? Il s’agit de savoir si l’art doit aller au peuple ou si le peuple doit, par une éducation du goût forcément lente, s’élever peu à peu vers l’art. Le régime des Soviets nous prouve que l’on peut être à la fois révolutionnaire en politique et réactionnaire en art. Et il nous remet en mémoire les violentes diatribes de Hitler contre l’art « dégénéré ».’
Fn 37, p. 121	‘Peut-être aurait-elle gagné—comme quelques-unes de ses devancières—à être resserrée : la concision n’est pas la qualité dominante du musicien, qui depuis la mort de Prokofiev apparaît comme le chef de l’école russe.’
Fn 39, p. 122	‘Nous sommes loin de l’époque où André Jdanov fulminait contre l’art occidental et dénonçait comme un crime la « servilité à l’égard de l’étranger » ... Le nouveau ministre de la culture, Ponomarenko, laisse tenir de pareils propos sans réagir, et dans la presse on ne flétrit plus le formalisme, le cosmopolitisme...’
Fn 40, p. 122	‘Les quatre affirmèrent qu’il n’y avait jamais eu de restrictions idéologiques ou politiques sur l’activité créatrice des artistes soviétiques ... Ces affirmations ne concordent pas avec les faits et avec les incidents qui se produisirent il y a sept ans ... dans le monde musical de Moscou.’
Fn 48, p. 124	‘Moscou, 9 mai. Le grand compositeur soviétique Chostakovitch quitte aujourd’hui Moscou pour un voyage de plusieurs semaines qui le conduira d’abord en Italie, puis à partir du 18 mai, à Paris, où sera jouée pour la première fois en France son œuvre la plus récente, la Onzième Symphonie, qui lui a récemment valu le prix Lénine.’
Fn 49, p. 124	‘Chostakovitch [sic], qui a bien voulu nous recevoir à la veille de son départ à son bureau de l’Union des compositeurs soviétiques (dont il est l’un des secrétaires) tient d’abord à se féliciter de ce voyage particulièrement intéressant pour lui puisqu’il ne connaît encore ni la France ni l’Italie. (Son plus grand voyage à l’Ouest a été celui aux États-Unis en 1949.) Le grand musicien, dont les fébriles timidités lors de ses apparitions publiques sont proverbiales et qui semble toujours agité par quelque souci lorsqu’il n’est pas à sa table de travail, se départ rarement d’une certaine nervosité dans la conversation. Il parle vite et peu, sur un débit saccadé.’
Fn 50, p. 125	‘Oui, j’assisterai à la première de ma [sic] Onzième Symphonie. Mais je jouerai également moi-même au piano mes premier et deuxième concertos pour piano, ainsi que quelques

	préludes et fugues, au cours de deux concerts, qui auront lieu sans doute les 27 et 28 mai. Je ferai aussi quelques enregistrements pour la maison Pathé-Marconi, dont je suis l'invité. Tout cela, avec les répétitions indispensables, me prendra beaucoup de temps. Mais j'espère rencontrer cependant les compositeurs français que j'apprécie hautement. Je n'ai eu l'occasion de voir ici, au cours de leurs voyages en U.R.S.S., que quelques-uns d'entre eux dont Darius Milhaud, Jean Wiéner et feu Arthur Honegger, qui est mon compositeur français préféré. Et, naturellement, je compte visiter Paris et même un peu la province française. Ce dont je me réjouis.'
Fn 52, p. 125	'C'est une œuvre à thème puisque le sujet en est la première révolution russe de 1905, dont les grandes phases y sont retracées. J'y ai travaillé environ six mois au cours du printemps et de l'été 1957.'
Fn 54, p. 126	'La musique est un art aussi expressif que tous les autres, et il n'y a pas de raison pour que les principes qui régissent la société ne trouvent pas leur expression en musique tout comme dans la littérature et la peinture. Nous essayons de nous rapprocher du peuple, de parler une langue claire, accessible au peuple, qui est notre grand et seul juge. S'il y a eu évolution depuis les débuts, cette évolution a été justement dans le sens d'un plus grand rapprochement avec lui, donc l'emprunt aux sources d'inspiration populaire, au folklore et à la musique populaire. Mais nous ne sommes liés par aucun dogme abstrait ni aucune théorie desséchée, par aucun thème, et les individualités les plus diverses s'épanouissent ici en pleine liberté. J'ai justement l'impression que certaines théories en honneur en Occident, telles que dodécaphonie et musique concrète, aboutissent, au contraire, à niveler les individualités. Il y a chez nous une grande diversité de talents et de personnalités, et la preuve en est dans les incessantes discussions qui se poursuivent entre critiques, compositeurs et musiciens. Mais toutes ces discussions portent sur les voies du rapprochement avec le peuple, qui est notre but commun et fondamental.'
Fn 55, p. 126	'Parmi les jeunes compositeurs soviétiques qui me semblent les plus doués, je citerai Karién Katchatourian (parent d'Aram Katchatourian), Boris Tchaïkovsky, qui, lui, n'a rien à voir avec l'auteur de la Pathétique ; Karaev, le musicien géorgien Taktakichvili, et beaucoup d'autres aux talents très divers... Nous sommes effectivement très satisfaits.'
Fn 56, p. 126	'Les soirées extrêmement agréables au Festival de Bordeaux ne manqueront pas d'inciter les mélomanes à prolonger à travers des disques le plaisir qu'ils auront pris aux concerts... La 5 ^e symphonie, de Chostakovitch. (Œuvre-clé des programmes symphoniques du Festival.'
Fn 57, p. 126	'La 5 ^e symphonie de Chostakovitch est la plus populaire. C'est aussi la plus souvent enregistrée : quatre versions sont actuellement en vente, parmi lesquelles nous connaissons celle très valable enregistrée par l'orchestre symphonique de Vienne.'
Fn 58, p. 127	'Chostakovitch est à Paris avec ses quarante kilos de bagages, autant qu'une vedette internationale du cinéma. Il est arrivé, un peu effaré par l'assaut des journalistes parisiens, et a répondu invariablement à toutes les questions « Da, da, da ». Comme il ne comprend aucune langue en dehors du russe, il ne parle pas, sinon à sa femme.'
Fn 64, p. 134	'J'ai ressenti en écoutant la XI ^e Symphonie en sol mineur, opus 103, de Dimitri Chostakovitch... des impressions semblables à celles que me laissa la VII ^e Symphonie du même auteur (Leningrad), lorsque Roger Désormière nous la fit connaître peu après la libération, impressions mélangées : on admire l'évidente sincérité, la puissance, les qualités expressives d'un ouvrage généreux, débordant de vie, mais touffu à l'excès, et qui aurait certainement beaucoup gagné si l'auteur l'avait allégé en étant des redites et quelquefois même des banalités. Le courant de cette musique torrentielle charrie de tout, et cela gêne parfois au moment même que l'on aurait plaisir à s'abandonner à son élan, à se laisser entraîner. La grandeur n'est pas synonyme de démesure, et c'est ce qui nous gêne le plus dans cet ouvrage.'
Fn 65, p. 135	'Le sujet choisi, la révolution de 1905, dont le pape Gapone fut le héros, permettait certes d'évoquer dans un vaste tableau le premier coup de tonnerre précurseur d'un orage qui allait douze ans plus tard emporter le régime tsariste. Le musicien s'est conformé aux exigences de toute musique à programme, et il a voulu, dit la notice, « dessiner trait à trait l'événement dans son ensemble, avec ses moyens puissants de grand symphoniste ». Moyens puissants, éclatants même, on en convient ; mais j'entendais auprès de moi quelqu'un faire cette remarque que ces moyens rappelaient, par l'excès de relief donné aux détails dans cette vaste fresque plutôt ceux de Meissonier que ceux de Delacroix.'
Fn 66, p. 135	'Critique injuste, la XI ^e Symphonie, le 1905 de Chostakovitch, pas plus que son Leningrad, n'est un tableau de chevalet comme le 1814 de Meissonier, bien que les puissants épisodes

	voisinent parfois avec des pages qui, n'ayant pas la même envergure, semblent, rapetisser la grandeur des autres.'
Fn 67, p. 135	'La symphonie est coupée en quatre parties, selon le plan classique, à cette différence que le sujet ne comporte pas d'épisode léger traité en scherzo. Dans le premier mouvement, qui a pour titre la Place du Palais, le roulement des tambours, les sonneries des trompettes, évoquent la garde veillant sur le Palais d'Hiver et succèdent à quelques mesures créant une atmosphère de pesante et morne anxiété, une sorte de mélodie, de prière, dont le thème—simple rencontre—n'est pas sans analogie avec celui de la Geôle de Reading de Jacques Ibert, au moins par son rythme et par ses retours obsédants. Puis la flûte fait entendre au loin un air authentiquement composé dans les prisons par les révolutionnaires détenus : « Écoute ! ». Enchaîné à ce premier mouvement, le second épisode, le 9 janvier, rappelle ce « dimanche sanglant » où la troupe ouvrit le feu sur un cortège d'ouvriers conduit par le pape Gapone débouchant devant le Palais d'Hiver pour remettre une supplique au tsar. Déjà Chostakovitch avait traité ce sujet dans un chœur dont il a utilisé la mélodie en combinant ce thème et en le développant avec une intensité visant à créer par sa violence un effet de terreur. Le point culminant de l'ouvrage est, dans son réalisme sauvage, cette fusillade, construite sur un fugato impétueux. Les motifs de l'introduction réapparaissent, et le chant mélancolique des prisonniers va céder la place à un pizzicato des basses, ouvrant le troisième épisode, intitulé Requiem. Il développe le motif d'une marche funèbre révolutionnaire : Chant des survivants. Chant lugubre, plein de lourdes menaces, qui s'achève au son du tocsin, annonçant le quatrième épisode, un finale dans lequel la fureur populaire « donne l'assaut à un monde condamné ».'
Fn 69, p. 136	'Elle a bénéficié de la lucide et remarquable exécution de l'Orchestre national dirigé par M. André Cluytens. On ne dira jamais assez les mérites d'un tel ensemble, de cette réunion d'artistes se donnant avec une ardeur passionnée à leur tâche. Ils ont conduit l'ouvrage au triomphe, et le public les a associés aux longues ovations faites à l'auteur.'
Fn 71, p. 136	'Quant à la « Onzième Symphonie » ... il est difficile de vous donner, en quelques lignes, une idée de cette vaste fresque, consacrée à la révolution russe de 1905. Après deux auditions attentives, il m'a semblé que le lever du Jour menaçant du début et le chant des prisonniers, d'un accent frappant, étaient plus éloquents que le tumulte de la bataille.'
Fn 72, p. 136	'Ici comme dans d'autres témoignages de sa vaste production, Dimitri Chostakovitch par son adresse d'écriture et d'instrumentation, s'affirme depuis la mort de Serge Prokofieff comme le compositeur le plus représentatif de la Russie actuelle.'
Fn 73, p. 137	'Cet enregistrement, qui représente un effort sans précédent dans l'industrie phonographique française, souligne toute l'importance accordée par les milieux musicaux à la venue à Paris du célèbre compositeur soviétique. Le processus industriel de fabrication a commencé le lundi 27 mai à 8h30. Le 28 mai à 10h30, débutaient les premiers pressages. Ce même jour, à 20h30, les premières ventes avaient lieu, lors de la deuxième audition publique de la XI ^e symphonie, au Palais de Chaillot.'
Fn 76, p. 137	'Ce fut donc un incontestable succès puisque tous ces gens assemblés ne songèrent plus à partir et qu'il fallut ajouter au programme—ce que M. Leonard Bernstein fit de fort bonne grâce—le scherzo de la V ^e Symphonie de Chostakovitch, qui est bien un des sommets de l'école russe contemporaine.'
Fn 77, p. 138	'Mais l'isoler n'est-ce point lui faire perdre une part de sa signification ? Cette page exquise est dans l'ensemble de l'œuvre un instant de détente, une sorte d'aspiration à l'oubli, à l'innocence, entre le sentiment d'angoisse exprimé par le premier mouvement et la résignation accablée que traduit le largo. N'importe, ce qui compte ici c'est la perfection avec laquelle l'orchestre le joua. Ce bis hors programme fut pour moi le meilleur moment de la soirée.'
Fn 80, p. 139	'Moscou, 16 novembre (A.F.P.). La musique dodécaphonique ainsi que la musique « concrète et électronique » sont sévèrement condamnées par le compositeur Dmitri Chostakovitch, qui s'inquiète de voir certains compositeurs polonais, en particulier parmi les jeunes, « s'accrocher aux révélations de la dodécaphonie en croyant voir en elle l'avenir de l'art musical ».'
Fn 81, p. 139	'« Je suis profondément convaincu qu'en musique comme en toutes activités humaines il faut constamment rechercher des voies nouvelles, mais il me semble que celui qui les voit dans la dodécaphonie se trompe lourdement », déclare le compositeur, qui ajoute : « Le dogmatisme étroit de ce système, né artificiellement, enferme l'imagination créatrice des compositeurs et les dépersonnalise ».'

Fn 82, p. 139	‘La musique « concrète et électronique » présentée sous ce titre au festival de Varsovie n’a rien à voir avec la musique, estime Chostakovitch, qui précise : « Il s’agit tout au plus de sons, parfois extrêmement désagréables, complètement dénués de sens ».’
Fn 84, p. 140	‘La position défendue ici par le compositeur soviétique n’est pas nouvelle. Nous y retrouvons la thèse bien connue de la musique pour le peuple, thèse noble en soi, mais qui peut devenir dangereuse si on la confond avec celle d’un art facile mis à la portée de tous. Car tout le monde n’est pas musicien. Et de plus il n’est nullement prouvé que la facilité soit toujours un critère d’excellence. D’ailleurs en critiquant le dodécaphonisme—et du même coup le Stravinsky dernière manière—Chostakovitch semble oublier qu’il a lui-même jadis donné des gages à cette nouvelle forme de musique. Son attitude actuelle—dont on pourrait se demander si elle est entièrement dictée par des préoccupations propres à l’art—est une position de refus vis-à-vis de cette évolution du langage musical qui n’a cessé de se poursuivre depuis Bach jusqu’à nos jours. Peu importe en définitive le jugement que l’on veut porter sur le dodécaphonisme en tant que système. Seules comptent les œuvres. Le reste n’est rien d’autre que ce « dogmatisme » que Chostakovitch condamne fort justement sans toutefois éviter d’y sacrifier lui-même.’
Fn 92, p. 143	‘Cette Douzième Symphonie paraît comme la suite de la Onzième, oui avait été inspirée par les événements révolutionnaires de 1905. Elle aborde le thème du « Grand Octobre », comme on dit à Moscou, et elle est dédiée à Lénine.’
Fn 93, p. 143	‘Tous les critiques qui ont parlé de cette Douzième Symphonie s’accordent pour dire qu’elle est de tradition classique et qu’elle rappelle à certains égards la manière de Moussorgski’; ‘La presse considère qu’il s’agit de l’œuvre maîtresse du compositeur et qu’elle sera l’événement musical de l’année.’
Fn 96, p. 143	‘La plus belle partie a été inspirée par le fameux poème contre l’antisémitisme, Baby-Yar, qui, on s’en souvient, avait déplu en haut lieu l’an dernier, et continuerait d’ailleurs, rapporte-t-on, de déplaire. Peut-être est-ce pour cette raison que cette première n’a pas encore été commentée par la presse.’
Fn 97, p. 144	‘La Treizième Symphonie de Chostakovitch, qui, on le sait, devait être jouée pour la première fois le lendemain, et le fut effectivement, mais dans des circonstances qui avaient déjà attiré l’attention : absence de toutes personnalités gouvernementales (à l’exception d’un vice-ministre de la culture), annulation de la retransmission du concert à la télévision, silence total de la presse sur cette grande première.’
Fn 102, p. 145	‘« Tout ce qu’écrit ce critique, a-t-il ajouté, est inexact parce qu’il est mal informé » ... « Nous considérons les idées du parti communiste comme les plus progressistes » ... M. Chostakovitch a affirmé ensuite qu’il y avait actuellement en U.R.S.S. des jeunes compositeurs pleins d’avenir, notamment Alexis Nicolaïev, Denissov et Tatiana Sviridov.’
Fn 104, p. 145	‘Le second concert permettait d’entendre la Quatrième Symphonie de Chostakovitch, que l’auteur retint une trentaine d’années (de 1936 à 1961) sans en autoriser l’exécution, alors que les répétitions avaient commencé ... Le certain c’est que Chostakovitch n’eut pas à se repentir d’avoir en 1961 laissé Kondrachine l’exécuter, car il la fit applaudir frénétiquement.’
Fn 107, p. 146	‘On ne pouvait pas ne pas être frappé par le sérieux et l’attention qui régnaient dans la petite salle ... Certains l’avaient récemment entendue aux Champs-Élysées, sous la direction de Kondrachine, mais tous participèrent à la discussion dirigée par Pierre Vidal, exprimant leur opinion avec beaucoup de simplicité et de fraîcheur.’
Fn 108, p. 146	‘Cette Quatrième Symphonie, écrite en 1935–1936, et retirée par Chostakovitch pendant les répétitions, autant par insatisfaction personnelle que par crainte des critiques « idéologiques », apparaît cependant aussi profonde et significative que les Cinquième, Huitième ou Dixième Symphonies, plus désordonnée peut-être, mais avec un élan plus irrésistible où s’expriment le bouillonnement de la jeunesse (le compositeur n’a alors que vingt-neuf ans) et une émouvante ferveur créatrice.’

Appendix 4. Original text from extended translated quotations in Chapter Four

Footnote/Page Number	Original text
Fn 10, p. 152	'L'erreur fut peut-être de grouper quatre œuvres à caractère plus ou moins descriptif, car, dans cette débauche de danses, de fêtes et de sabbats, trop de couleurs et de rythmes se heurtaient en se neutralisant.'
Fn 11, p. 152	'Les trois pièces extraites de <i>Lady Macbeth de Mzensk</i> , l'opéra maudit de Chostakovitch ne manquent pas de force, mais c'est l'image d'un désert de l'amour, qui atteint à une sorte de dramatisme fou, lorsque, peu à peu, (dans la deuxième partie), le spectacle devient vision, tourne de l'angoisse à la terreur panique (comme dans la XI ^e Symphonie).'
Fn 14, p. 153	'On a en effet beaucoup parlé de Chostakovitch ces derniers mois ... Un musicien qui occupe à l'heure présente une situation de premier plan dans la vie artistique européenne ... Cette brève étude est remarquable.'
Fn 15, p. 154	'Des acclamations sans fin ont salué Chostakovitch, raide dans son habit comme un échassier, ses yeux aigus dissimulés derrière des lunettes de collégien, tandis que s'achevait la première représentation dans le monde occidental de Katerina Ismailova, autrement dit Lady Macbeth du district de Mzensk, qui fut si longtemps interdite par les autorités soviétiques pour des raisons tant idéologiques que musicales.'
Fn 16, p. 154	'Cette triste héroïne qui tue beau-père, mari et rivale avant de finir sa vie au fond d'un lac ... un ouvrage au fond très traditionnel, coloré, d'une étonnante virtuosité d'écriture et qui forme un excellent « spectacle », pittoresque, fertile en rebondissements, où le tragique, le comique et le lyrique entrent à parts égales ... Une semaine à peine après la création de la « Treizième symphonie », sur des poèmes d'Evtouchenko que la presse avait passés sous silence.'
Fn 17, p. 155	'Chostakovitch voit en elle « un rayon de lumière au milieu des ténèbres », et dans ses meurtres « une révolte contre l'atmosphère pesante, sombre et nauséabonde qui régnait chez les marchands embourgeoisés du dix-neuvième siècle ». Et il tiendra la gageure de nous rendre ce monstre touchant et sympathique, en lui confiant des airs d'un lyrisme mélancolique ou tragique, qui sont les sommets de la partition. On n'oubliera pas, cependant, qu'elle pousse son amant à tuer son mari, non par un souci de salubrité publique, mais pour s'approprier ses biens (ce qui a justement choqué les pudiques dirigeants soviétiques...). Autour d'elle c'est le désert d'une humanité sans âme, l'agitation d'une multitude de personnages « négatifs », dont Chostakovitch fait une peinture d'autant plus cruelle qu'elle revêt presque constamment un aspect parodique : le mari, le beau-père, les paysans d'opérette, veules et serviles à souhait ; les policiers, stupides, emportés dans une ronde absurde ... et surtout l'amant, Sergèi, avec ses airs de ténor italien dont l'orchestre dénonce sans cesse, par des traits sarcastiques, la suffisance et la duplicité. Car le caractère essentiel de cette partition prodigieusement habile, d'une orchestration étincelante, est de se dérouler constamment sur deux plans : celui de l'action extérieure et celui des intentions, des sentiments cachés des personnages ; on pourrait dire que sans cesse la musique « juge » les personnages, sonde les reins et les cœurs, et avertit l'auditeur : attention au traître ! celui-ci ment ! elle va le tuer !'
Fn 18, p. 155	'Pourtant, les qualités mêmes de l'œuvre en font aussi les faiblesses. Nous sommes loin de la puissante unité intérieure des opéras de Berg. Malgré la part belle, faite à Katerina, son personnage est noyé dans un flot d'images trop disparates, de personnages caricaturés avec trop de verve pour ne pas être des fantoches qui amincissent la signification de l'ouvrage. Et, parallèlement, le lyrisme authentique de cette musique, qui l'apparente tantôt à celle de Moussorgsky, tantôt à celle de Tchaïkovsky, souffre de cette disparité de styles où se côtoient, avec une virtuosité étourdissante, les roulades frelatées d'un Puccini, les sarcasmes d'un Prokofiev et les bouffonneries d'un Offenbach, héritage, là aussi, des acrobaties que le cinéma imposait au jeune Chostakovitch.'
Fn 38, p. 162	'Je considère personnellement que c'est une magnifique initiative de l'Opéra de Nice ... Au moment où les Parisiens discutent gravement du moment où il conviendra d'octroyer la décentralisation à la « province », je suis heureux que Nice ait pris les devants. Pourquoi je suis venu ce soir ? Parce que ça m'intéresse, parce que c'est un très grand évènement en France.'
Fn 39, p. 162	'À mon avis, c'est l'une des trois ou quatre grandes œuvres de Chostakovitch. Le sujet est merveilleux. Il est tiré d'un roman de Leskov qui, pour nous autres Russes, est un peu comme Balzac pour vous.'

Fn 42, p. 163	‘Des critiques acerbes que réservèrent les journalistes de la Pravda à cet ouvrage, que ces critiques étaient dues à une raison assez peu banale : Staline, qui assistait à la représentation, était assis dans la loge juste à côté des cuivres, et comme ces cuivres jouent un rôle important dans la partition, il sortit de là très incommodé et mécontent, et il était bien sûr hors de question de le contredire.’
Fn 43, p. 164	‘L’œuvre de Chostakovitch « Lady Macbeth de Minsk [sic] », rebaptisée Katerina Ismaïlova dans sa version française de Michel Hofmann, a connu des fortunes diverses. Succès initial, stoppé par une brutale interdiction de Staline, que l’on comprend fort bien. Il suffisait des « purges » réelles de la Russie d’alors sans y ajouter celles de théâtre, même sous les espèces fragmentaires de la mort aux rats dans un plat de champignons. Depuis, le temps a marché. Pour des raisons que nous n’avons point à apprécier ici, Chostakovitch se voit à nouveau sacré compositeur officiel de l’Union soviétique. Son œuvre entière est sur le grand pavois. Elle le mérite. La musique de « Katerina Ismaïlova » merveilleusement exposée par l’orchestre philharmonique de Nice et Jean Périson, rarement aussi bien inspirés, le prouve. Surtout dans des interludes d’une grande beauté.’
Fn 44, p. 164	‘Cette cantatrice de valeur aurait somme toute mieux fait de chanter en allemand’ ; ‘Au premier rang d’une interprétation abondante, nous placerons Julien Haas ... Le plus russe de tous peut-être.’
Fn 46, p. 164	‘Le succès de l’œuvre de Chostakovitch, même si elle évoque de loin seulement l’esprit de l’original, transposé sur le plan paysan, s’est révélé fort vif. Il était mérité, ne serait-ce que par l’ampleur des moyens mis en œuvre, la fol des artisans de l’affaire, le résultat obtenu.’
Fn 48, p. 165	‘Alors que le public anglais avait marqué un enthousiasme délirant pour la première, à Covent Garden, de <i>Katerina Ismaïlova</i> , le public niçois, très fortement mélangé de Parisiens, n’a paru que médiocrement intéressé par le célèbre opéra de Chostakovitch donné pour la première fois en France dans une excellente traduction de Michel Hofmann.’
Fn 49, p. 165	‘La différence de ces réactions s’explique peut-être par des raisons de sensibilité : le Français étant à la fois cartésien et sentimental, le spectateur niçois ou parisien a été choqué par le mélange des styles (qui est la règle chez Chostakovitch), l’illogisme apparent d’une musique dont les éléments sans cesse se contredisent, où le tragique et le burlesque sont constamment mêlés, enfin la trame même d’une œuvre où tous les personnages sont antipathiques.’
Fn 50, p. 165	‘Katerina, qui prend un amant, puis tue son beau-père, son mari et sa rivale, est la victime de structures sociales tyranniques ; elle seule tente d’échapper à l’enfer de la société de son temps.’
Fn 51, p. 166	‘Le seul véritable porte-parole du compositeur, l’orchestre. C’est lui qu’il faut écouter, car seul il est réellement tragique et donne sa dimension aux marionnettes qui jouent sur scène leur jeu sanglant. La haine de Katerina pour son beau-père, le coup de foudre désespéré de la jeune femme pour le voyou qui sera son amant, toute la sinistre scène d’amour qui s’achève par le meurtre du mari, sans parler des puissants interludes, trouvent dans l’orchestre un commentaire d’une violence et d’une intensité extraordinaire qui ne permettent pas de douter de la force expressive de Chostakovitch.’
Fn 52, p. 166	‘J’ai déjà dit que l’alliage de ces éléments hétérogènes nuisait à la grandeur et à la signification expressive du drame ; d’être conçu et réalisé dans une optique « dialectique » ne suffit pas à en faire un chef-d’œuvre. Mais au même titre que le <i>Cardillac</i> d’Hindemith, pour des raisons fort différentes, <i>Katerina Ismaïlova</i> n’en est pas moins fascinant et marque une date.’
Fn 54, p. 166	‘Un beau timbre de soprano dramatique qui manque un peu d’homogénéité ... qui a superbement dirigé la représentation, galvanisant son orchestre, faisant étinceler dans ses moindres détails cette partition extraordinairement brillante et complexe. Ainsi Nice, comme Lyon, Marseille ou Mulhouse, nous a prouvé que l’art lyrique a toujours en France d’excellents serveurs.’
Fn 56, p. 166	‘A l’occasion du soixantième anniversaire de Dimitri Chostakovitch, l’Association France-U.R.S.S. vous invite à une causerie, le vendredi 25 mars, à 20 h 45, à la Faculté des lettres (amphithéâtre Leroux), causerie accompagnée d’audition de disques sur : « Katerina Ismaïlova », opéra en quatre actes de D. Chostakovitch, d’après une nouvelle de Leskov.’
Fn 60, p. 170	‘Avec la Symphonie de Chostakovitch (à peu près inconnue en France), le chef pouvait déployer tout son talent, pétrissant l’orchestre à grands gestes, obtenant, avec une discipline de fer, une extrême rectitude des dessins mélodiques, une netteté des attaques, un éclat des couleurs rares ; l’Orchestre national, excellent ce soir-là, lui rendit hommage en mêlant ses applaudissements à ceux, très chaleureux, du public.’

Fn 61, p. 171	L'œuvre est d'ailleurs magnifique. Écrite en 1943 au plus fort de la guerre (Stalingrad), elle en porte la marque et vit cependant d'espoir. L'adagio initial serre le cœur avec cette mélodie glacée des violons qui se développe lentement à l'infini (qui serait aujourd'hui capable d'écrire ce chant de « quatuor » d'une telle portée ?). Peu à peu, cette plainte désolée se change, à travers les déplorations de l'harmonie et les battements des tambours, en une sorte de vent de panique, traversé d'étonnants relents de musique de foire, pour retomber, par un émouvant solo de cor anglais, dans la tristesse. Après un scherzo grimaçant et caricatural, mais emporté dans un mouvement tragique, c'est l'image de la guerre sous forme d'une toccata, sorte de laminoir des corps et des cœurs, mouvement perpétuel que parsèment les cris d'horreur. Puis l'œuvre se recueille en une admirable passacaille, large et souterraine, sur laquelle s'enroulent de très belles broderies des bois, et d'où peu à peu l'espérance va renaître.'
Fn 62, p. 171	Rostropovitch fait corps avec la grandiose Huitième Symphonie de Chostakovitch, comme s'il l'avait lui-même écrite, comme si le superbe Orchestre de Paris était son immense violoncelle. Dans les landes désertiques de la guerre montent l'angoisse, l'épouvante. Mais au terme de la détresse humaine, l'aube de l'espoir se lève, un royaume de paix et de confiance, un rêve d'une beauté si suave qu'on ne saurait le traiter en dérision. Une interprétation d'une foi herculéenne.'
Fn 64, p. 172	Une égale simplicité dans les effets orchestraux, obtenus par l'équilibre et la plasticité des ensembles, estompait ensuite heureusement certains abus de « parlando » qui, dans la Cinquième Symphonie de Chostakovitch, rappellent beaucoup Tchaïkovski. Contrastée et pleine de sève dans ses épisodes vifs, militaire et cinglante dans les chevauchées du premier mouvement et les fanfares du quatrième, la belle interprétation de Hans Wallat orientait plutôt vers Prokofiev et Mahler cette symphonie.'
Fn 67, p. 172	Il « profile » avec une incomparable justesse cette majestueuse symphonie qui transcende et emporte comme fétus de paille mille motifs souvent vulgaires, caricaturaux, grandiloquents ou absurdes, à l'image du puissant flot de la vie qui roule et efface la poussière des événements, jusqu'au finale avec ses accents de victoire brillant dans une atmosphère tragique, qui est l'image même, grimaçante, énigmatique et fascinante, de Chostakovitch.'
Fn 70, p. 173	Quant à la 5^e Symphonie de Chostakovitch, elle apparaît de glace, sans qu'il cherche à en réchauffer la solitude, et de feu lorsqu'il s'agit d'exalter un optimisme bien soviétique, pas toujours convaincant, avec une autorité qui ne souffre pas le doute.'
Fn 71, p. 173	La présence d'Evgueni Svetlanov aurait déjà suffi à donner un caractère exceptionnel au concert de « Prestige de la Musique » ... Car ce chef soviétique au visage de rude travailleur, mâchoire projetée en avant, a conféré à l'Orchestre national un relief sonore et une énergie intérieure assez rares. On ne badine pas avec la musique selon Svetlanov, qui impose sa conception par des gestes simples, nets et sans réplique, et trouve encore le loisir de se retourner en dirigeant pour foudroyer longuement le malheureux spectateur qui tousse.'
Fn 72, p. 174	Après Brahms, Bruckner, Mahler et Sibelius, Chostakovitch est à son tour méprisé par le public parisien ... Passe encore d'aller entendre un de ses concertos quand c'est Oïstrakh ou Gendron qui le joue, mais la première audition, à Paris, de sa Quatorzième Symphonie, pourquoi lui ferait-on l'aumône de trois quarts d'heure pour l'écouter ? Nous nous sommes retrouvés bien peu nombreux mercredi au Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, frileusement agglomérés au parterre, et heureux que le compositeur n'ait utilisé qu'un orchestre à cordes réduit et la percussion, après avoir craint de nous compter moins nombreux que les instrumentistes.'
Fn 73, p. 174	On refuse d'admettre en France que Chostakovitch ait choisi de s'exprimer à l'intérieur du système officiel où il a grandi et qui lui a valu tour à tour éloges, honneurs, critiques jdanoviennes et interdictions.'
Fn 74, p. 175	Jamais ce ne fut pour lui une raison de remettre en cause son engagement musical : « Je ne conçois pas, en ce qui me concerne, d'évolution musicale en dehors de notre évolution socialiste », écrivait-il en 1936, au plus fort de la tourmente. Faut-il décréter pour autant qu'une grande nature est incapable de se manifester à travers un langage aussi retardataire ? Ce serait reprocher à Soljénitsyne de ne pas écrire comme Butor.'
Fn 77, p. 175	Faut-il y déceler une main tendue vers l'Occident ? Mais alors c'est la fraternité qui unit, d'un bout à l'autre de la terre, ceux qui vont mourir et qui ne savent pourquoi.'
Fn 79, p. 175	Ce sentiment n'est pas nouveau chez Chostakovitch ; dans son œuvre, toujours l'angoisse personnelle du destin (Quatrième, Cinquième, Huitième, Dixième Symphonies) coexiste avec les visions communautaires, tragiques, épiques ou optimistes (Septième, Neuvième,

	Onzième, Douzième, Treizième Symphonies). Mais il s'exprime ici à découvert avec une force extrême.'
Fn 80, p. 176	'Comment récuserait-on l'émotion qui émane de cette œuvre où Chostakovitch greffe étroitement son lyrisme sur les poèmes, aux dépens parfois de la cohérence musicale ? Elle régnait en souveraine dans la très belle interprétation de l'Orchestre national dirigé par Jean Martinon, d'où s'élevaient la voix chaude, miroitante et profonde de Michèle Le Bris et le beau timbre, malheureusement [sic] peu assuré techniquement, de la basse Boris Carmeli.'
Fn 83, p. 176	'Écrivant avec la rapidité et la prolixité d'un romancier russe, Chostakovitch fait flèche de tout bois; aussi le parcours de cette œuvre est-il déconcertant : un allegretto, agaçant et gigotant à la manière des concertos ou de la 9 ^e Symphonie, ramenant sans cesse la charge de cavalerie de Guillaume Tell, un adagio pensif et grandiose que couvre un voile de tristesse, la petite comédie grinçante du scherzo avec la percussion, et ce final fantastique qui oppose à des citations de la marche funèbre du Crépuscule des dieux un bouquet de printemps candide. Éparses, quelques séries de douze sons. Mais le souvenir persiste, obsédant, de cette œuvre inégale et splendide.'
Fn 84, p. 177	'Lorsque la Russie soviétique délègue en France quelques-uns de ses meilleurs interprètes, lorsque ceux-ci inscrivent au centre de leur programme une cantate et un oratorio à la gloire de Lénine, lorsque les mélomanes laissent place (au Théâtre de la Ville) à un public inhabituel, spontané, réceptif, probablement composé de comités d'entreprise, lorsque enfin il est bien évident que ces œuvres font mouche, frappent au point sensible, suscitent même dans les rangs de grandes émotions, mieux vaut s'incliner, enregistrer les faits, s'abstenir de juger.'
Fn 86, p. 177	'[Il] possède l'autorité sans réplique des maîtres soviétiques ... La Dixième Symphonie ... semble faite à sa mesure, tant cette œuvre lyrique et très dramatique est un « corps » orchestral d'une continuité indéchirable malgré des épisodes violemment contrastés.'
Fn 87, p. 178	'Une méditation qui chante du fond sinon de l'abîme du moins de la tristesse, avec par bouffées des visions obsédantes comme ces images de guerre dont on ne peut se défendre.'
Fn 88, p. 178	'Dans le troisième mouvement, des images de paix, tout un jeu immobile d'appels, d'échos, de rêveries, de résonances mystérieuses, traversées par une fête soudaine et déchaînée, préparent le finale où le printemps explose en une course folle, encore traversée de relents tragiques, mais qui cède à l'exaltation, à la joie peut-être, dans un tourbillon d'une extrême précision. L'Orchestre de Paris s'égale aux meilleurs sous la direction d'un chef de cette envergure.'
Fn 91, p. 178	'L'œuvre immense de Chostakovitch se présente encore à nous sous un aspect chaotique et contradictoire, d'autant que nous n'en connaissons encore qu'une faible partie, malgré une discographie assez abondante. Elle devrait prendre, après la mort du compositeur, sa vraie dimension, indépendante des conflits qu'elle a traversés et qui l'ont souvent engendrée.'
Fn 95, p. 180	'En commençant par les chefs-d'œuvre de la fin qui éclairent la démarche et la personnalité complexes de Chostakovitch ... d'une étincelante jeunesse ... essais pour combiner un langage serré à l'occidentale avec l'unanimité révolutionnaire.'
Fn 96, p. 180	'La Quatrième, bouillonnante de vie, désordonnée et fantastique; la Cinquième, introspective, romantique; la Sixième, d'une violence abrupte; la Septième, célébration du siège de Leningrad; la Huitième, une des plus extraordinaires, puissant chef-d'œuvre tragique; la Neuvième, un peu courte et superficielle pour fêter dignement la victoire sur le nazisme; la Dixième, autre chef-d'œuvre purement lyrique; la Onzième, film à la manière d'Eisenstein sur les massacres de 1905; la Douzième, qui évoque de façon moins convaincante la révolution d'octobre; la Treizième sur des poèmes d'Evtouchenko, l'œuvre la plus ouvertement critique de Chostakovitch; la Quatorzième, poignante méditation sur la mort à travers des poèmes de Lorca, Apollinaire et Rilke, et la Quinzième Symphonie, mystérieuse, inégale, dominée par le thème du Destin de la Tétralogie.'

Appendix 5. Original text from extended translated quotations in Chapter Five

Footnote/Page Number	Original text
Fn 35, p. 196	‘Il est certes difficile, sans disposer d’aucun autre document que la traduction française, d’affirmer l’entière véracité de cet ouvrage, rédigé à partir de « tas de notes » prises hâtivement au cours d’entretiens à bâtons rompus. Rien ne dit que Volkov n’y a pas ajouté quelques idées ou rancœurs personnelles. Pourtant, la critique interne fournit de bonnes raisons de croire à l’authenticité de ces Mémoires (dont Chostakovitch a contresigné les dactylographies réalisées à Moscou avant sa mort).’
Fn 36, p. 196	‘Le style de la longue et intéressante introduction de Volkov ne ressemble en rien à sa transcription des propos du musicien ; linéaire, explicatif, voire moralisant, il s’oppose au côté vif, abrupt, cocasse, tragique, syncopé, plein de courbes imprévues et de coq-à-l’âne des paroles de Chostakovitch, où l’on reconnaît au contraire la manière trépidante, les caricatures acérées, les scherzi débridés, le sens de la formule brève et assassine du Nez ou de Lady Macbeth de Mzensk, mais aussi les ostinati lancinants, les progressions dramatiques de plus en plus enveloppées de ténèbres, les paysages sinistres suant de pessimisme et de peur de ses symphonies. Il paraîtrait impossible que Volkov ne se soit si bien identifié à Chostakovitch que pour lui faire dire le contraire de sa pensée sur Staline ou ridiculiser l’illustre Tikhon Khrennikov, président de l’Union des compositeurs. Tels quels, ces Mémoires se présentent sous une forme brute, qui renforce l’impression de vérité ; pas de plan d’ensemble, un trajet déconcertant, des propos décousus, avec de nombreuses digressions d’intérêt inégal, rattachées à l’apparition de tel ou tel personnage ; et la musique elle-même n’y tient qu’une place somme toute réduite.’
Fn 37, p. 197	‘D’où peut-être le dédain de certains grands amis de Chostakovitch exilés récemment en Occident, qui ont qualifié ce livre de « ramassis d’anecdotes sans grand intérêt ». Mais peut-être aussi ont-ils craint d’authentifier les propos du compositeur, en pensant à la famille de celui-ci restée en U.R.S.S. ... sans doute, enfin, le livre ne leur apprend-il rien sur la vie dans les milieux artistiques soviétiques depuis cinquante ans.’
Fn 38, p. 197	‘Il y a quelques années, Chostakovitch n’était connu que de quelques aficionados, et sa réputation de compositeur pas vraiment excellente. Vilipendée par les tenants de la modernité (ceux-là mêmes qui figurent aujourd’hui au comité de parrainage d’une association organisatrice d’une Année Chostakovitch), admirée par les spécialistes de la musique des pays de l’Est, l’œuvre de Chostakovitch intriguait par son mélange de conformisme, d’audaces, de vulgarité affichée, de désespoir. Et puis, à quoi ressemblait sa production inconnue à l’Ouest ? Peu à peu, le voile s’est levé. Des partitions sont sorties d’Union soviétique ... les plus grands chefs d’orchestre ont dirigé ses œuvres ... Chostakovitch lui-même est venu superviser l’enregistrement de quelques-unes de ses compositions ... Enfin, sa « biographie » est sortie. Il s’agissait en fait d’entretiens que le compositeur avait accordés à Simon Volkov, jeune étudiant de son entourage. Immédiatement contestés par les Soviétiques, par le fils même du compositeur, ils nous ont cependant montré la détresse de Chostakovitch en butte aux directives imposées par Staline et les tracasseries qu’il devait subir de la part de fonctionnaires butés.’
Fn 39, p. 197	‘Aujourd’hui, Chostakovitch est en passe de prendre la place qu’occupait Mahler pendant les années 70. Jusque-là essentiellement diffusées par le disque, ses œuvres envahissent peu à peu les salles de concert. Le public en redemande : Vox populi, vox Dei. Et ce n’est pas fini. Puisqu’une centaine de concerts comprenant des œuvres du « Beethoven du vingtième siècle » (on l’a ainsi surnommé) seront donnés cette année en France.’
Fn 40, p. 198	‘Chostakovitch a été longtemps victime d’un malentendu : on n’a voulu voir en lui que le compositeur officiel de l’URSS, voué à la glorification de l’« homme soviétique » et ses « lendemains radieux », en jugeant sa production d’après les seules œuvres que le régime laissait filtrer. D’où le jugement sévère porté par Lucien Rebatet sur ce « haut fonctionnaire de la double croche et du trombone ». En 1979, la publication des Mémoires de Chostakovitch, rédigés par son ami Solomon Volkov, sous le titre « Témoignage », remet en question l’image simpliste d’un compositeur « aux ordres ». On découvre un homme proche des « dissidents », déchiré entre son attachement à sa patrie et son désir d’écrire une musique dont il savait bien que le régime la censurerait pour « cérébralisme ».’
Fn 47, p. 201	‘Pendant longtemps, face au compositeur Dimitri Chostakovitch, deux positions étaient de mise. Ou bien on était <i>sovietophile</i> et, de confiance, on déclarait que sa musique était géniale. Ou bien, on était <i>sovietophobe</i> et, par principe, on trouvait sa musique inacceptable.’

Fn 48, p. 201	‘Cette richesse orchestrale débordant à tous les pupitres ... où alternent mélodies livides, lugubres et couleurs violentes, prises dans un tourbillon qui cingle comme une cravache et vous serre la gorge une heure durant ... Chostakovitch a traité en ‘grand cinéaste’ cette œuvre où images, sentiments et lyrisme sont aussi inextricablement mêlés que dans le Cuirassé Potemkine.’
Fn 50, p. 202	‘On ne croyait pas vraiment que Marek Janowski obtiendrait de son orchestre, d’un orchestre français, la virulence, la fulgurance du détail au sein d’un effectif gigantesque (bien qu’aéré), la douloureuse et hurlante expressivité exigée par la moins jouée des symphonies de Chostakovitch.’
Fn 51, p. 203	‘Habité, au moins pendant les vingt-cinq premières minutes de son œuvre, par quelque fantôme shakespearien. Pris d’une rage de la transgression, mêlant dans le bruit et la fureur les genres et les humeurs, accouchant finalement d’un premier mouvement effrayant, mariage contre-nature d’éléments inconciliables : rugosités motoriques et chants extatiques, cris lancinants des cordes à l’unisson et doux chants d’oiseau, dissonances agressives et ostinatos apaisés, expérimentation « in vitro » sur un effectif orchestral démultiplié : abstraction. Mais abstraction si radicale qu’elle semble vouloir dénoncer, dans la lignée de l’expressionnisme mahlérien, tous les conflits, toutes les absurdités de l’humanité ... Les choses se calment ensuite et les références à Mahler se font plus explicites : échos de scherzo de la Deuxième Symphonie, ‘Résurrection,’ dans le Moderato con moto (deuxième mouvement) de Chostakovitch ; marche funèbre, et rythme de valse légèrement sirupeux, dans le final de la Quatrième du Soviétique, comme dans l’épisode ‘à la manière de Callot,’ et la ronde lente de la Première Symphonie, ‘Titan,’ du Viennois. Et le miroitement timide d’un célesta comme dans le dernier lied, <i>Abschied</i> , du Chant de la terre. Mais l’œuvre de Chostakovitch, dans la disparité de ton et de durée de ses trois mouvements (un long, un bref, un long divisé en épisodes contrastés), apparaît, bien loin de Mahler cette fois, comme une victoire de la raison difficilement gagnée sur la folie, comme une fresque cosmique où tout est dit sur le monde, où tout, finalement, s’accomplit dans un interminable et fragile unisson, fugitivement zébré pianissimo d’une ultime et « diabolique » quarte augmentée.’
Fn 52, p. 203	‘Un long silence presque hébété à suivi, avant un déchaînement de bravos exceptionnellement sincères ... On avait quelque peu décollé de la réalité pour se livrer corps et biens à cette musique de pure angoisse métaphysique.’
Fn 58, p. 204	‘Le fait que le « culot » de ce palmarès soit Nancy, l’un des théâtres les mieux notés par la critique lyrique, peut faire penser que bonne gestion rime mal avec qualité artistique.’
Fn 59, p. 205	‘Antoine Bourseiller explique son choix dans la portée universelle du chef d’œuvre. « Dans l’optique où Faust et Thaïs sont typiquement français, alors oui Lady Macbeth est totalement russe. Pourtant son importance dans l’histoire de la musique permet de le classer comme chef d’œuvre universel et intemporel. Pour faire un rapprochement, on peut bien dire que Carmen n’appartient pas à la France ».’
Fn 60, p. 206	‘Lady Macbeth de Mzensk est une sorte d’opéra prolétarien qui joue beaucoup sur les contrastes : « Il y a une musique sauvage, vulgaire pour accompagner tous les personnages qui entoure l’héroïne, laquelle a droit à de la musique pure, romantique et sensuelle. C’est ce mélange constant qui a provoqué l’indignation. Car dans cette opéra satirique et tragique, Chostakovitch aime visiblement la criminelle et sur le plan musical tourne en dérision les images traditionnelles de la femme au foyer, de la police et de l’Église ».’
Fn 61, p. 207	‘Dmitri Chostakovitch, compositeur discuté s’il en est, se trouve brutalement propulsé sous les feux de l’actualité musicale, 1989 ayant été déclarée « année Chostakovitch » sans que ce choix fut motivé par un quelconque anniversaire.’
Fn 62, p. 207	‘Mais dans l’immédiat, les regards vont se tourner vers Nancy pour un autre événement considérable : la création en France, cinquante-cinq ans après sa première production à Leningrad, sous Staline, de l’opéra « Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk », l’œuvre sans doute la plus controversée de Chostakovitch.’
Fn 63, p. 207	‘Fait partie des hommages rendus à un compositeur « héritier de la musique orthodoxe, d’éléments du folklore et de la musique populaire comme des grands classiques de la musique européenne depuis Bach jusqu’à Mahler et Berg. Musicien révolutionnaire, humaniste, défenseur des opprimés et des humiliés, sa place en 1989 ne devrait pas créer de dissonance au cours de l’année du bicentenaire de la Révolution française ».’
Fn 65, p. 209	‘Avec une dignité intellectuelle admirable ... Lady Macbeth nous est ainsi rendue avec une formidable flamme maléfique, une dynamique vénéneuse entêtante, une violence originelle à la fois naïve et primitive.’

Fn 68, p. 211	‘L’orchestre de Jérôme Kaltenbach s’est contenté d’aller au bout de la partition en confondant évidemment véhémence et brutalité, sensualité et lourdeur, cédant aux approximations dans les interludes ... Il serait bon tout de même que le directeur de la musique, plutôt que de s’approprier systématiquement des grands ouvrages, fasse cadeau aux mélomanes nancéiens et autres de quelque grande baguette française ou internationale.’
Fn 71, p. 211	‘On comprend mal pourquoi il est resté chez nous si marginal ... Le travail est magnifique à tous les niveaux, qu’il s’agisse du dispositif scénique aussi esthétique qu’efficace dans sa simplicité, des costumes marquant bien la différence des classes ... des éclairages qui animent l’action et crée des climats toujours exacts et, bien sûr, de la direction d’acteurs ou chacun est caractérisé de manière aiguë, vigoureuse, avec juste ce qu’il faut d’audace.’
Fn 72, p. 212	‘Rendons hommage à l’Opéra de Nancy pour cette première courageuse en France de la superbe <i>Lady Macbeth</i> de Chostakovitch ! En rappelant toutefois que la version postérieurement « corrigée » de l’ouvrage, sous le titre de <i>Katerina Izmailova</i> , connu quelques représentations à l’Opéra de Nice dans les années soixante.’
Fn 73, p. 212	‘Une œuvre d’une intensité vraiment formidable, comme l’a confirmé le superbe spectacle d’Antoine Bourseiller au Grand Théâtre de Nancy, où il a multiplié, ces dernières années, avec de nombreux opéras modernes, des réussites qui feraient de lui un excellent directeur artistique de la Bastille...’
Fn 74, p. 213	‘De grands chanteurs, des chœurs extraordinaires chantant en russe, préparés par Emmanuel Joël, un orchestre très brillant, sous la direction passionnée de Jérôme Kaltenbach ; tout le monde joue avec une véhémence extrême, un engagement total, ce drame sinistre, auquel Bourseiller confère sa véritable dimension épique, shakespearienne parfois, comme l’indique le titre ... Bourseiller, qui pousse à l’extrême le réalisme de l’action, jusqu’à ces scènes d’amour, de flagellation ou de meurtre aussi crues et terrifiantes sur le plateau que dans la musique, a su attirer à Nancy et dynamiser une distribution éblouissante. Joséphine Barstow se montre digne de la grande Vichnevskaia ... Ses partenaires sont à sa mesure ... Les costumes de Rosalie Varda, d’une couleur locale très sobre, et les décors habilement agencés par Guy-Claude François pour les nombreux changements de tableaux, contribuent à cette grande réussite.’
Fn 85, p. 220	‘Livré au jugement d’un public parisien, l’événement était attendu depuis tant de décennies qu’il ne pouvait que susciter un immense mouvement de curiosité. Les admirateurs de Chostakovitch comme les tièdes et les sceptiques succombèrent rapidement à l’engrenage vertigineux de l’insolent génie de vingt-cinq ans, tandis qu’à l’entracte, les commentaires sur l’incroyable fertilité de la partition, ses ruptures et transitions brutales, allaient bon train. Ces instants de surprise passés, lorsque la machine haletante reprit sa source, il devint évident que la production s’imposait comme l’une des meilleures, sinon la meilleure, de l’Opéra Bastille depuis son ouverture. ... L’orchestre traduisait avec une précision de clinicien le détail instrumental souvent truculent, la dynamique étendue de la partition, son lyrisme farouche comme ses moments déboussolés ; d’une admirable couleur, les chœurs s’approchaient réellement du domaine russe. Par sa direction à la fois méticuleuse et passionnée, Myung-whun Chung se révéla l’artisan essentiel du succès d’une entreprise démesurée, et fut longuement ovationné comme tel. On ne pouvait mieux faire passer le message de Chostakovitch.’
Fn 88, p. 220	‘L’œuvre d’un jeune génie fulgurant, et une œuvre étonnamment mûre puisqu’elle contient en germe beaucoup de ses compositions futures. Que ce soit dans le sarcasme ou dans la compassion envers l’humanité douloureuse qui habite nombre de ses partitions de la fin, on y trouve déjà toutes les caractéristiques de son langage angoissé à la fleur de peau, où les clins d’œil burlesques alternent avec les scènes déchirantes en une succession frénétique et nous heurtent avec une puissance proprement inouïe. On reste pantois devant l’interlude orchestral qui traduit l’acte d’amour de Katerina et de Sergueï au premier acte, et pétrifié au dernier, alors qu’un formidable forte précède l’hallucinante plainte de Katerina... Ce degré d’émotion se rencontre rarement sur une scène d’opéra et dans l’opéra russe, uniquement chez Moussorgski.’
Fn 92, p. 221	‘Rarement, à l’Opéra Bastille, une représentation fait autant l’unanimité : « Lady Macbeth de Mzensk » vient d’y être ovationnée. Près de trois heures de spectacle éblouissant – et difficile – forcent l’admiration ... Le chef Myung-Whun Chung confirme ses talents de musicien sensible en exploitant sans emphase toutes les richesses et beautés d’une musique à la fois espiègle, ironique, tendre et parfois grandiloquente.’
Fn 95, p. 221	‘Cette « Lady Macbeth », petite cousine de l’héroïne de Shakespeare par le cynisme de ses crimes, est plutôt une Madame Bovary rêvant bien avant l’heure de perestroïka. Mais un

	perestroïka qui passe par la libération de son corps et l'assouvissement de sa sensualité. Jamais sans doute le désir n'a été aussi senti, exploré, magnifié que par cet océan musical tumultueux et trépidant, véritable suite d'électrochocs sonores qui nous submerge de flots tempétueux. La musique de Chostakovitch, avec l'intensité de Mahler, mais dans la mouvance de Tchaïkovski et Moussorgski dont on retrouve d'ailleurs certaines résurgences, est souvent très narrative. ... Une œuvre majeure du XX ^e siècle, au même titre que « Lulu » ou « Wozzeck ».
Fn 101, p. 223	'Sans doute, la mise en scène ... n'atteint-elle pas la force de la musique et ne retrouve-t-elle pas cette tension brûlante qu'Antoine Bourseiller avait su lui imprimer à Nancy. Pourtant, la réussite musicale, le souffle qui la soulève, font de cette production un véritable événement qu'on a plaisir à saluer.'
Fn 102, p. 223	'Myung-whun Chung, qui a su mobiliser son immense orchestre (quelque 120 musiciens) et lui faire exprimer à travers une fantastique gamme de couleurs l'extraordinaire embrasement de passions de l'œuvre, crachant le feu et le tonnerre avec une puissance dramatique renversante.'
Fn 103, p. 223	'C'est évidemment le spectacle le plus intelligent, artiste, abouti que la Bastille nous ait jusqu'ici offert. Est-ce la meilleure Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk qu'on ait vue ? Assurément pas. Avec de bien modestes moyens, Nancy nous mettait plus près des personnages ; l'Allemagne, à Mannheim comme à Hambourg, épaississait l'air jusqu'à l'étouffement attisait les passions autrement.'
Fn 104, p. 223	'Ici, on voit enfin les possibilités scéniques de la Bastille ... Mais la complaisance esthétique, ... édulcore une œuvre sulfureuse ... le champ de choux à l'horizon (un horizon en pente) qui ouvre le spectacle perd purement et simplement la pauvre Katerina Ismaïlova, elle-même réduite à la taille d'un chou.'
Fn 107, p. 224	'Le chef, l'orchestre et les chanteurs avaient la redoutable tâche de faire oublier l'unique et sublime enregistrement de « Lady Macbeth », avec Rostropovitch au pupitre, et Vichnevskaja et Gedda dans les deux principaux rôles. Mission presque accomplie. Chung mène le bal macabre avec une dynamique d'enfer, non sans se permettre parfois des tempi plus lents pour faire ressortir une beauté dans cette partition si complexe. La soprano américaine Mary Jane Johnson rend toute la grandeur délétère de l'atroce et pitoyable Katerina. Seul le ténor Jacques Trussel manque de l'aura nécessaire.'
Fn 109, p. 225	'Les Russes ont la passion des champignons à la crème. C'est très bon. C'est aussi un moyen idéal et, surtout, radical pour se débarrasser d'une belle-mère criarde ou d'un mari gênant... La « Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk » emploie ce genre de procédé pour éliminer un beau-père tyrannique et un époux encombrant. Chostakovitch a écrit une musique violente, sensuelle et somptueuse pour cette histoire de diaboliques.'
Fn 115, p. 228	'Staline était un couard. Ayant assisté à une représentation de l'ouvrage ... il fut pris de terreur à l'idée qu'il pourrait être lui-aussi visité par les fantômes de ses victimes. Les cris d'effroi poussés par l'héroïne Katerina Ismaïlova au spectacle du spectre de son beau-père Boris Ismaïlov qu'elle a empoisonné avec de la mort aux rats, ont conduit le petit père du peuple à interdire l'œuvre aussitôt.'
Fn 116, p. 228	'Philippe Godefroid a été séduit, subjugué même par l'élan et le foisonnement de l'ouvrage tant dans sa musique que dans le contenu de son livret. « Tout s'y trouve, l'ironie, le drame, la tragédie ! La musique est foudroyante de réalisme. C'est un ouvrage majeur du XX ^e siècle ... Pour le public nantais aujourd'hui, Philippe Godefroid a voulu imaginer une vision mixte entre la bouffe énorme et la dramatique épouvantable. « Ça amusait bien le chef et les interprètes de prendre cette direction, » constate-t-il.'
Fn 117, p. 229	'« Ulf Söderblom, qui a 70 ans, est extraordinaire. Il a tout vu, tout fait et a toujours envie d'être surpris ... Il est jeune, disponible, curieux, idéal... Il possède un humour renversant... Je crois que c'est une grande rencontre humaine entre les artistes et lui-même. Jacques Trussel, qui est Sergueï, et Irina Loskutova qui est Katerina, tout reconnu internationalement, sont eux-mêmes prêts à des expériences nouvelles ».'
Fn 120, p. 231	'Philippe Godefroid, avec intelligence et maestria, a révélé un chef-d'œuvre luxuriant, cocasse et dévastateur dont la musique, à vocation largement populaire et d'un humour funambulesque, restera l'un des grands moments de cette saison. L'Orchestre national des Pays de la Loire, galvanisé vendredi soir à Graslin, par le chef finlandais Ulf Söderblom, mérite tous les éloges pour son éblouissante présentation dans Lady Macbeth de Mzensk de Chostakovitch.'
Fn 121, p. 231	'Étonnant ! Délirant ! Magistral ! Fou ! Superbe ! Les mots manqueraient presque pour dire combien le Lady Macbeth de Mzensk de Dimitri Chostakovitch mis en scène par Philippe Godefroid met un point final magnifique à la saison 97/98 de l'Opéra de Nantes. Pour

	tout dire, le spectacle coupe le souffle pour une raison qui va de soi : les langages de la musique, du livret et de la mise en scène se complètent en fusionnant totalement. Les musiciens de l'ONPL conduits avec une absolue maîtrise et une élégance tranquille par Ulf Söderblom, expriment d'éblouissante manière le foisonnement de la partition aussi lyrique que farcesque, brillant que vitale. C'est le souffle de la passion amoureuse scandée par les rythmes du jazz, le tragique du crime odieux bousculé par le clownesque de la caricature. Impossible de ne pas être captivé sans cesse par une musique aussi riche que fantaisiste, réaliste que chargée d'émotion.'
Fn 122, p. 232	'Sa magistrale voix de soprano, ouverte comme rarement dans les aigus, n'est pas celle d'un oiseau hystérique. Tranchant et clair, son timbre offre une formidable ouverture que les puissants fortissimos de l'orchestre jamais non couvert' ; 'un rôle taillé sur mesure' ; 'convaincant' ; une basse explosive taillée dans le granit.'
Fn 123, p. 232	'Tous les interprètes savent s'installer dans un univers sordide et pourtant immense ... une force fatale ... un Sergueï idéal de présence et de séduction fourbe, tandis que Daniel Sumegi incarnant Boris, transporte instantanément dans cette Russie où une telle voix de basse se fait ordinairement trembler les isbas. Tout le reste de la distribution est à leur hauteur.'
Fn 124, p. 233	'La sobriété d'un décor carcéral et de lumière impitoyables ... le traditionnel et le loufoque ... le chaud et le froid, passe du torride au glaçant, fait vibrer la passion et éclater les rires. Ce Lady Macbeth de Mzensk emporte au loin, plonge dans les tréfonds de l'âme, bouleverse les sens, laisse anéanti de trouble et de plaisir. Shakespeare aimerait.'
Fn 125, p. 233	'Mais à chaque moment de ce chef-d'œuvre de Chostakovitch, c'est la musique, d'une science d'écriture et d'un lyrisme absolu, qui affirme la maestria de cette partition et du texte. La direction musicale d'Ulf Söderblom arrache l'une des meilleures interprétations de l'ON-NP que nous ayons entendu dans cette fosse de Graslin ... Si le communisme a interdit que la vie de Dimitri Chostakovitch fut un chef-d'œuvre, il n'a pu étouffer la naissance d'une des grandes musiques de notre temps.'
Fn 126, p. 234	'Mstislav Rostropovitch aime la salle de l'Auditorium de Dijon : « Pour cette représentation, j'ai dit à mon ami Jean-Claude Wambst : Mon ami, crois moi, Lady Macbeth, c'est mon rêve, l'organiser, c'est le meilleur cadeau que tu puisses me donner. J'avais l'idée de représenter Lady Macbeth à l'Auditorium parce que son acoustique est idéale, c'est la meilleure de toute l'Europe en comparaison avec les salles d'opéra anciennes, pour la musique c'est un cadeau de Dieu ».'
Fn 127, p. 234	'Galina Rostropovitch, mais aussi Iréna Chostakovitch, qui étaient dans la salle mardi soir à l'Auditorium, ont dû penser une seule chose à l'issue de la représentation ... que Chostakovitch, du haut de son ciel, avait dû jubiler.'
Fn 128, p. 234	'C'est une vision parfaite, d'une époustouflante beauté ... où la musique – enfin – est reine de l'opéra ... Ce puits sonore dont Rostropovitch tire le feu magique. Une partition difficile qui coule ici avec une intensité débordante.'
Fn 129, p. 235	'On a compris que Chostakovitch a été respecté jusque dans ses audaces les plus allégoriques : c'est un tableau du gel soviétique et stalinien qui est en fait la trame de cet opéra hors du commun, et le combat de Katerina contre les apparatchiks et kgébiistes prend tout son sens dans une telle version. Les audaces des clarinettes si bémol, les solos de cor anglais et de violon, les chœurs quasiment liturgiques et les tutti infernaux déchaînent tous les genres et tous les styles : Lady Macbeth est une énormité culturelle, un drapeau libertaire jeté à la face du monde policé et a contrario un hymne à l'amour vrai et à la fraternité réelle. On ne sait plus, quand on perd le souffle dans la blancheur sépulcrale d'un accord final de fa mineur, ce que l'on doit retenir le plus : peut-être cette image, décuplée par la vidéo, d'un Rostropovitch emporté par le tourbillon d'une danse infernale. L'image même de la folie du XX^e siècle.'
Fn 130, p. 237	'La plus connue des quinze, et la plus ambiguë : le musicien moscovite la composa en 1937 en guise d'autocritique, et mit avec application ses pas dans les pas de Tchaïkovski pour s'excuser d'avoir voulu écrire du Chostakovitch. On peut entendre derrière cette œuvre tour à tour sentimentale et pétaradante beaucoup de mélancolie et de violence ... L'exécution fut donc brillante, héroïque, très « musique de film », sans arrière-pensées : le « message intelligible et simple pour l'auditeur soviétique » que souhaitait – apparemment – Chostakovitch. Gros succès.'
Fn 131, p. 237	'Enfin la 10^e Symphonie, sans doute la plus grandiose, créée peu après la mort de Staline, et à propos de laquelle Chostakovitch dira : « J'ai voulu peindre les émotions et les passions humaines ».'

Fn 136, p. 239	‘Se confronter, lors d’une même soirée, au lyrisme langoureux du Concerto no. 1 pour violon de Max Bruch puis à celui, cruel, de la Symphonie no. 11 « 1905 » de Dimitri Chostakovitch n’est pas une mince affaire ... Dans la onzième symphonie de Chostakovitch, le piège est autre. Et l’on peut s’attendre au pire. Mais le pire c’est le contenu même d’une œuvre et de l’événement sanglant qu’elle relate. Et cela, Louis Langrée l’a compris. Il ne se laisse pas aveugler par les images violentes, désespérées que renvoie cette vaste fresque. Il est un témoin scrupuleux et cependant parfois un peu naïf. Le chef d’orchestre arrive à rendre supportable ce qui ne l’est pas, sans jamais, jusqu’aux dernières mesures, en omettre la bouleversante vérité.’
Fn 138, p. 240	‘D’un seul bloc (les mouvements s’enchaînent), elle témoigne de la maîtrise formelle du compositeur soviétique et cite presque « la danse d’Anitra » de Peer Gynt. Chostakovitch y manie la forme cyclique avec une maîtrise d’autant plus vaine qu’il y chante les louanges de Lénine conformément aux vœux de l’Union des compositeurs. ... L’Orchestre de Paris est impeccable. Même si Chostakovitch écrit si bien qu’il a le don de faire sonner les orchestres moyens comme des grands, la performance des musiciens parisiens est à saluer absolument. Car ils donnent rarement l’impression d’être si concentrés et si unis lorsqu’ils jouent chez eux.’
Fn 141, p. 241	‘Incompris et souvent accusé de duplicité politique, Chostakovitch revient en force ... Sa sincérité éclate aujourd’hui et balaye les soupçons de conservatisme (esthétique) et de duplicité (politique) qui ont longtemps pesé sur elle. La multiplication des biographies dont celle – bouleversante – de Krzysztof Meyer chez Fayard, et des enregistrements par les plus grands artistes (de Chailly à Rostropovitch) efface enfin la myopie qui le réduisait à sa façade de compositeur officiel, « héros du travail socialiste », lauréat du Prix Lénine et d’innombrables Prix Staline.’
Fn 142, p. 241	‘Pour comprendre cet univers musical complexe, il ne faut jamais oublier qu’il a vécu – 1906–1975 – tous les drames de l’histoire contemporaine. « Chacune de ses quinze symphonies est une époque, souligne Rostropovitch, ses symphonies sont l’histoire de notre pays, l’histoire de l’Union soviétique et l’histoire de la Russie, ou plus précisément leur histoire exprimée sur le plan émotif ».’
Fn 143, p. 242	‘Mais c’est aussi notre histoire enfin débarrassée de la dictature intellectuelle établie par l’avant-garde officielle des années 50–60 qui bannissait tout ce qui ne suivait pas l’école de Vienne, les Berg, Schönberg, etc.’
Fn 145, p. 242	‘Pour le reste de la terre, ou presque, c’est un immense compositeur, universel et prolifique ... Très tôt fêté aux États-Unis ... et en Grande-Bretagne, Chostakovitch est resté longtemps méconnu en France, où une bonne part de la critique des années 50 et 60 commet à son égard les mêmes fautes d’appréciation fatales à Jean Sibelius, Leos Janacek ou Benjamin Britten. Plus récemment, un livre intitulé Le Quatuor à cordes au XXe siècle ... faisait l’impasse sur le chef-d’œuvre que constituent les quinze quatuors de Chostakovitch, tandis que Pierre Boulez s’illustrait tristement, l’année de ses soixante-quinze ans, dans le Financial Times, en évoquant les différentes pressions d’huile d’olive pour traiter Chostakovitch de « troisième pression de Gustav Mahler ».’
Fn 146, p. 243	‘Chostakovitch est entré dans le grand répertoire international, mais il demeure pourtant l’objet d’une polémique incessante au sujet de son attitude suspecte et ambivalente pour certains, double et paradoxale pour d’autres, envers le régime soviétique, du lendemain de la prise de pouvoir par les bolcheviks jusqu’à la mort du compositeur, rallié officiellement depuis 1960 au Parti communiste.’