

Set 4. Dmitri Shostakovich

The Composer's Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soviet composer, pianist (1906 – 1975) • <u>Born</u>: St. Petersburg; <u>died</u>: Moscow • <u>Education</u>: Piano lessons at 9, 1919 - 1925 the Petrograd Conservatory (at 13) • 1943: moved to Moscow • <u>Career</u>: 1937 – 1941 the Leningrad Conservatory Professor of composition, 1945 a concert pianist and composer, 1960 – 1968 the Chairman of the Union of Composers in the Russian Socialist Federative Republic • Performed all over Russia, Europe, the USA
Essential Pieces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symphonies: <i>The 1st, The 2nd, The 5th, The 7th Symphony</i> (that was performed in besieged Leningrad is the most famous wartime contribution), <i>the 8th 'Stalingrad Symphony', The 10th, The 13th, The 15th</i> (melodic and retrospective in nature) • Chamber Music: <i>Second Piano Trio, The 4th String Quartet, The 8th String Quartet</i> • Operas: <i>The Nose, Lady MacBeth of Mtsenks</i> • Ballets: <i>The Limpid Stream, Katerina Izmailova</i> • Concerts: <i>Violin Concerto No.1, Waltz No.2 (Russian Waltz)</i> • Song cycles: <i>From Jewish Folk Poetry</i> • Overtures: <i>Festive Overture, opus 96</i> (played at Summer Olympics in 1980 and 2004)
Music Style	<p>Shostakovich's music is distinctively characterized by sharp contrasts, elements of the grotesque, and ambivalent tonality; it was also heavily influenced by the Neo-Classical style pioneered by Igor Stravinsky, and (especially in his symphonies) by Neoclassicism and the late Romanticism of Gustav Mahler. It is frequently quite Classical in structure, yet not in a strict sense. It is also highly Romantic in its way of delving deep into emotions, yet it uses frivolity or sarcasm. The extreme use of parody and irony can be quite striking and modern. Shostakovich's music represents something of a synthesis of elements from different musical periods. Shostakovich succeeded in forging a musical language of colossal emotional power.</p> <p>Shostakovich's music shows the influence of many composers he admired: Bach, Beethoven, Mahler, Berg, Mussorgsky, Prokofiev, as well as Russian church and folk music. His Avant-Garde style had a deliberate technique to allow him to create patterns of contrast, repetition, exaggeration that gave his music large-scale structure.</p>
Cultural Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 20-th century Soviet composer in the tradition of Tchaikovsky, influenced by Stravinsky and Mahler among others. Yet the music is his own, not theirs. • Shostakovich wrote some of the most powerful – and cryptic – music of the 20th century, the wealth of his musical legacy is beyond doubt. • The music of Shostakovich has never been more widely played or more consistently popular than it is today. <p>National and international awards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 Soviet awards, including Lenin Prize (1958 – for the Symphony No. 11 "The Year 1905") • United Kingdom: Gold Medal of the Royal Philharmonic Society (1966) • Academy Award for Best Scoring of a Musical based on Musorgsky's <i>Khovanshchina</i> (1959)