

2024–2025 | 125th Season
Marian Anderson Hall

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Friday, March 28, at 2:00

Saturday, March 29, at 8:00

Nathalie Stutzmann Conductor

Edgar Moreau Cello

Mazzoli *Orpheus Undone*

Part I: Behold the Machine (O Death)—

Part II: We of Violence, We Endure

First Philadelphia Orchestra performances

Schumann Cello Concerto in A minor, Op. 129

I. Nicht zu schnell—

II. Langsam—

III. Sehr lebhaft

Intermission

Shostakovich Symphony No. 5 in D minor, Op. 47

I. Moderato—Allegro non troppo

II. Allegretto

III. Largo

IV. Allegro non troppo

This program runs approximately two hours.

Philadelphia Orchestra concerts are broadcast on WRTI 90.1 FM on Sunday afternoons at 1 PM and are repeated on Monday evenings at 7 PM on WRTI HD 2. Visit www.wrti.org to listen live or for more details.



The Philadelphia Orchestra

The world-renowned Philadelphia Orchestra strives to share the transformative power of music with the widest possible audience, and to create joy, connection, and excitement through music in the Philadelphia region, across the country, and around the world. Through innovative programming, robust education initiatives, a commitment to its diverse communities, and the embrace of digital outreach, the ensemble is creating an expansive and inclusive future for classical music and furthering the place of the arts in an open and democratic society. In June 2021 the Orchestra and its home, the Kimmel Center, united. Today, The Philadelphia Orchestra and Ensemble Arts brings the greatest performances and most impactful education and community programs to audiences in Philadelphia and beyond.

Yannick Nézet-Séguin is now in his 13th season with The Philadelphia Orchestra, serving as music and artistic director. His connection to the ensemble's musicians has been praised by both concertgoers and critics, and he is embraced by the musicians of the Orchestra, audiences, and the community. In addition to expanding the repertoire by embracing an ever-growing and diverse group of today's composers, Yannick and the Orchestra are committed to performing and recording the works of previously overlooked composers.

Your Philadelphia Orchestra takes great pride in its hometown, performing for the people of Philadelphia year-round, at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, around the community, over the airwaves, and online. The Kimmel Center has been the ensemble's home since 2001, and in 2024 Verizon

Hall at the Kimmel Center was officially rededicated as Marian Anderson Hall in honor of the legendary contralto, civil rights icon, and Philadelphian. The Orchestra's award-winning education and community initiatives engage over 50,000 students, families, and community members of all ages through programs such as PlayINs; side-by-sides; PopUP concerts; Our City, Your Orchestra Live; the free annual Martin Luther King, Jr., Tribute Concert; School Concerts; sensory-friendly concerts; open rehearsals; the School Ensemble Program; All-City Orchestra Fellowships; and residency work in Philadelphia and abroad.

Through concerts, tours, residencies, and recordings, the Orchestra is a global ambassador and one of our nation's greatest exports. It performs annually at Carnegie Hall, the Mann Center, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, and the Bravo! Vail Music Festival. The Orchestra also has a rich touring history, having first performed outside Philadelphia in its earliest days. In 1973 it was the first American orchestra to perform in the People's Republic of China, launching a now-five-decade commitment of people-to-people exchange.

Under Yannick's leadership, the Orchestra returned to recording with 14 celebrated releases on the Deutsche Grammophon label, including the GRAMMY® Award-winning *Florence Price Symphonies Nos. 1 & 3*. The Orchestra also reaches thousands of radio listeners with weekly broadcasts on WRTI-FM and SiriusXM. For more information, please visit www.philorch.org.

Conductor



Nathalie Stutzmann is the music director of the Atlanta Symphony and the second woman in history to lead a major American orchestra. She made her Philadelphia Orchestra conducting debut in 2016 with Handel's *Messiah* and her subscription conducting debut in 2019; she served as principal guest conductor of the Orchestra from 2021 to 2024. She made her Bayreuth debut at the 2023 Festival with Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, performances that resulted in her being named "Best Conductor" at the 2024 Oper! Awards.

She returned in 2024 for a revival of the production and returns in 2026 to mark the 150th anniversary of the Festival, conducting a new production of Wagner's *Rienzi* in addition to a revival of *Tannhäuser*. She made her Metropolitan Opera debut in 2023.

Ms. Stutzmann's 2024–25 season with the Atlanta Symphony features key pillars of the Romantic repertoire including Bruckner's Symphony No. 4, Mahler's Symphony No. 1, and Strauss's *An Alpine Symphony* alongside a complete Beethoven symphony cycle and the *Missa solemnis*. Highlights of the current season include debuts with the Czech Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony, the Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich, and her conducting debut at the Musikverein with the Vienna Symphony. Her season also includes returns to the New York Philharmonic with two programs as its featured artist, the Munich Philharmonic, and the Orchestre de Paris, and a return to La Monnaie in Brussels to conduct Bizet's *Carmen*. She has signed an exclusive recording contract with Warner Classics/Erato. Her first symphonic recording for the label, Dvořák's Symphony No. 9 ("From the New World") and the "American" Suite with the Atlanta Symphony, was released in September 2024. She was awarded the 2023 Opus Klassik "Concerto Recording of the Year" for the Glière and Mosolov harp concertos with Xavier de Maistre and the WDR Symphony (Sony Classical). In 2022 she released the complete Beethoven piano concertos recorded with Haochen Zhang and The Philadelphia Orchestra (BIS).

Ms. Stutzmann began her studies at a very young age in piano, bassoon, and cello, and studied conducting with the legendary Finnish teacher Jorma Panula. Also one of today's most esteemed contraltos, she has made more than 80 recordings and received the most prestigious awards. She made her Philadelphia Orchestra performing debut in 1997. Recognized for her significant contribution to the arts, she was named Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur, France's highest honor, and Commandeur dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French government.



Born in 1994, cellist **Edgar Moreau** is a winner of the 2009 Rostropovich Cello Competition, the 2011 International Tchaikovsky Competition, and the 2014 Young Concert Artist Award. He began his studies with Philippe Muller at the Paris Conservatory and continued at the Kronberg Academy under the guidance of Frans Helmerson. At the age of 11 he made his debut with the Teatro Regio Orchestra in Turin, playing Dvořák's Cello Concerto. He regularly appears at the most prestigious concert venues and festivals,

performing with world-renowned orchestras such as the London, Atlanta, Seattle, Swedish Radio, and Montreal symphonies; the Munich, Israel, New York, Los Angeles, and La Scala philharmonies; the Mahler Chamber Orchestra; London's Philharmonia; and the Orchestre National de France. He made his Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 2019.

In addition to these current performances, highlights of Mr. Moreau's 2024–25 season include concerts with the Vienna, Yomiuri Nippon, Bournemouth, Atlanta, and Jerusalem symphonies; the Orchestre National de France; the George Enescu Philharmonic; the Orquesta de Valencia; and the Athens State Orchestra, working with conductors such as Andrés Orozco-Estrada, Julian Rachlin, Joseph Swensen, and Pascal Rophé. Especially passionate about chamber music, Mr. Moreau regularly collaborates with artists such as pianists Martha Argerich, Khatia Buniatishvili, Daniil Trifonov, András Schiff, Sergey Babayan, Alexei Volodin, Bertrand Chamayou, and David Kadouch; cellist Yo-Yo Ma; violinists Renaud Capuçon, Lisa Batiashvili, and Julian Rachlin; and flutist Emmanuel Pahud. He also performs with his sister, violinist Raphaëlle, and brothers violinist David and pianist Jérémie. As an exclusive Erato artist, Mr. Moreau released his debut album, *Play*, in 2014 with pianist Pierre-Yves Hodique. Other recordings include *Giovincello* with Il Pomo d'Oro and Riccardo Minasi, which won an ECHO Classic Award in 2016; a family album, *A Family Affair*, featuring works by Korngold and Dvořák; and *Transmission*, an album celebrating Jewish heritage and musical tradition through works by Bruch, Bloch, Korngold, and Ravel. His latest release, *Rococo* for Warner Classics, features Tchaikovsky's Rococo Variations with the Lucerne Symphony and Michael Sanderling.

Mr. Moreau was awarded two Victoires de la Musique Classique, the "French Grammy," in 2013 and 2015. He was named an ECHO Rising Star in 2017. He plays a David Tecchler cello from 1711. His bow was made by Dominique Peccate. In September 2023 he was appointed cello professor at the Paris Conservatory.

Framing the Program

Parallel Events

1850	Music
Schumann	Wagner
Cello Concerto	<i>Lohengrin</i>
	Literature
	Hawthorne
	<i>The Scarlet Letter</i>
	Art
	Corot
	<i>Une Matinée</i>
	History
	California
	becomes a state
1937	Music
Shostakovich	Orff
Symphony	<i>Carmina burana</i>
No. 5	Literature
	Steinbeck
	<i>Of Mice and Men</i>
	Art
	Picasso
	<i>Guernica</i>
	History
	Japan invades
	China

For centuries composers have been inspired by the classic myth of Orpheus. Through the power of his music-making, he enters the underworld to bring back his beloved Eurydice, who died of a snakebite on their wedding day. The American composer Missy Mazzoli joins this illustrious tradition with her dazzling *Orpheus Undone*.

Robert Schumann composed his Cello Concerto in a blaze of white heat during the fall of 1850, four years before he attempted suicide and lost his sanity. This late composition nonetheless shows him at the height of his creative powers and writing the first important solo concerto for the instrument in many decades. He forges an unusually close partnership between the soloist and the full ensemble, allowing instrumental colors to blend and complement one another.

Dmitri Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony was a key work in the composer's career. Shostakovich had emerged rapidly in his 20s as the great genius and hope of Soviet music, but in 1936 he was brutally attacked in the official Communist press, which put both his private and professional life in serious peril. He withheld the premiere of his Fourth Symphony for more than a quarter century and wrote the magnificent Fifth Symphony, which helped to restore his reputation at home while achieving classic status abroad.

The Philadelphia Orchestra is the only orchestra in the world with three weekly broadcasts on SiriusXM's *Symphony Hall*, Channel 76, on Mondays at 7 PM, Thursdays at 12 AM, and Saturdays at 4 PM.

The Music

Orpheus Undone

Missy Mazzoli

Born in Lansdale, Pennsylvania, October 27, 1980

Now living in Brooklyn, New York



It is hardly surprising that for centuries composers have found themselves drawn to the classical myth of Orpheus. Through the power of music-making, he is able to move heaven and earth (and enter the underworld), persuading gods and taming furies to his wishes and needs. What Orpheus wanted most was to bring back to life his beloved Eurydice, who died of a snakebite on their wedding day. The story inspired the first operas, written in Italy around 1600, most notably Claudio Monteverdi's *Orfeo*. Dozens of other

compositions followed, including by Gluck, Haydn, Liszt, Offenbach, and Philip Glass.

The American composer and performer Missy Mazzoli joined this illustrious tradition in 2019 with her ballet *Orpheus Alive*, created with Robert Binet for the National Ballet of Canada. Soon afterward she recast fragments of the ballet for *Orpheus Undone*, which opens the concert today.

That Mazzoli based her longest and largest orchestral work to date on a stage piece is also not surprising as she has received particular attention in this regard. Her first three operas, collaborations with librettist Royce Vavrek, were the multimedia *Song from the Uproar: The Lives and Deaths of Isabelle Eberhardt* (2012); *Breaking the Waves* (2016), based on Lars von Trier's film; and *Proving Up* (2018) from a story by Karen Russell. The big opera event last fall was the American premiere of *The Listeners*, a co-commission from Opera Philadelphia. The Metropolitan Opera will premiere *Lincoln in the Bardo*, based on George Saunders's novel, in 2026. Mazzoli has also composed theater and dance pieces as well as for films, documentaries, and TV, including for the hit *Mozart in the Jungle*.

An Eclectic Range Mazzoli's music escapes easy classification, which is why her compositions are heard not only in concert halls and opera houses, but also at pop music festivals and in rock clubs. Despite the eclecticism of her compositions, activities, and collaborations, Mazzoli's training is firmly in the classical tradition of notated music. Born in Lansdale, Pennsylvania, in 1980, she studied at Boston University, the Yale School of Music, and the Royal Conservatory of the Hague, counting among her teachers such figures as David Lang, Louis Andriessen, Martin Bresnick, Aaron Jay Kernis, and John Harbison. She now in turn trains a new generation: She's taught at the Mannes School of Music and is currently on the composition faculty of the Bard College Conservatory of Music. In 2016 she co-founded the Luna Composition Lab, a program

for young women and gender non-conforming people around the ages of 12 to 19.

Mazzoli's catalogue of compositions includes a wide range of chamber, orchestral, and theatrical works. Her orchestral music is performed by leading international ensembles, including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, with which she was Mead Composer-in-Residence (2019–21), and which in 2022 premiered *Orpheus Undone*, delayed twice because of the pandemic. Her works are championed by prominent soloists and chamber groups, including Emanuel Ax, Maya Beiser, Jennifer Koh, the Kronos Quartet, eighth blackbird, and JACK Quartet. Mazzoli herself performs on keyboard with Victoire, an all-female electro-acoustic band she started and that has recorded two acclaimed albums. She has garnered a long list of distinguished fellowships and awards, including a 2019 GRAMMY nomination.

An Unusual Take on an Ancient Tale Most musical tellings of the Orpheus and Eurydice story unfold as a linear narrative relating to courtship, wedding, death, and reunion, from which the ending can be either tragic or happy. Mazzoli takes a quite different turn in her 16-minute piece. She describes it as a

freeze frame of a single instant in Orpheus' life, in the immediate aftermath of his wife, Eurydice's death. I have used the Orpheus myth, explored ad nauseam by artists over the centuries, as a way to explore the ways traumatic events disrupt the linearity and unity of our experience of time. The audience catches Orpheus in a moment of eternal present in which past and future have no meaning beyond endless repetition, just as we repeatedly experience the trauma of his story in opera, paintings, and theater. Through these two linked movements (titles drawn from Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus*) the listener feels Orpheus's sense of timelessness and alienation, for a moment joining him in what Nietzsche called the "hourglass of existence, turning over and over."

Mazzoli remarked in an interview that her goal "was to play with this idea of things moving at different speeds, which in my experience is something that happens in moments of great shock or trauma. You know, things feel like they're moving either very fast, or very slow and sometimes both at the same time. The whole piece plays with tempo in that way in that there are a lot of different tempi going on at the same time, and it's emotionally a piece about that moment."

A Closer Look The *New Yorker* recently hailed Mazzoli as "a once-in-a-generation magician of the orchestra" and this magic permeates *Orpheus Undone*, which unfolds in two unequal parts. The longer first one, **Behold the Machine (O Death)**, captures the moment Eurydice dies. It begins with the clocklike ticking of a wood block. Snappy loud chords quickly come and go as flowing woodwinds, and eventually other instruments, join in. The music brilliantly morphs from exciting to mysterious to beautifully lyrical as Mazzoli uses various "extended techniques," asking instruments to play in unusual ways to startling effect.

The short second part, **We of Violence, We Endure**, follows without pause. It relates

“the moment that Orpheus decides to follow his lover into the underworld.” It calls upon piano, harp, and glockenspiel as anchors. Strings soar to new heights before the piece fades out with cellos to end. This telling of the lovers’ tale does not end happily, but with pain.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

Christopher H. Gibbs is James H. Ottaway Jr. Professor of Music at Bard College and has been the program annotator for The Philadelphia Orchestra since 2000. He is the author of several books on Schubert and Liszt, and the co-author, with Richard Taruskin, of The Oxford History of Western Music, College Edition.

Mazzoli composed Orpheus Undone in 2019.

These are the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the work.

The score calls for two flutes (II doubling piccolo), two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons (II doubling contrabassoon), four horns, two trumpets, two trombones, bass trombone, tuba, percussion (bass drum, brake drum, chime, glockenspiel, snare drum, suspended cymbal, tam-tam, tom-tom, triangle, vibraphone, waterphone, wood block), harp, piano, and strings.

Performance time is approximately 16 minutes.

The Music

Cello Concerto

Robert Schumann

Born in Zwickau, Saxony, June 8, 1810

Died in Endenich (near Bonn), July 29, 1856



On September 2, 1850, Robert Schumann, with his sizeable family in tow, arrived in Düsseldorf, ready to assume his new duties as municipal music director. Although he had little time for composition during his first month or so in the capital of the Prussian Rhine Province, according to an entry in his household account books he began sketching a *Conzertstück* (concert piece) for cello during the second week of October. Proceeding with his customary alacrity, Schumann completed the sketch and an orchestrated draft

of the work—now dubbed a “concerto”—in less than two weeks.

An Enigmatic Work This bare-bones account of the genesis of Schumann’s Cello Concerto belies the fact that to this day it remains one of his most enigmatic works. Why, without definite prospects for a performance, did Schumann compose a concerto for cello at just this time? Although he had written effectively for the instrument at earlier points in his career, these efforts had been on a rather limited scale. Perhaps he wanted to provide cellists with a vehicle for their talents that was more musically substantive than the attractive but slight fare served up by figures such as the cellist-composer Bernhard Romberg. Needless to say, Schumann’s Concerto makes considerable technical demands on the soloist, although virtuosic display is everywhere subservient to musical integrity. Perhaps for this reason the Concerto seems to have had few takers, even after it was published in 1854. Indeed, it was only in the first part of the 20th century that the piece assumed a firm place in the cello repertory, owing in no small part to the passionate advocacy of Pablo Casals.

Of all of Schumann’s accompaniments, that of the Cello Concerto is surely one of his most transparent—and colorful, due largely to its emphasis on the ethereal sonority of the upper woodwinds. In a sense, the word “accompaniment” does not accurately describe the orchestral part, even though it appears explicitly in the title of the first edition: *Concert für Violoncell mit Begleitung des Orchesters*. While Schumann was careful to leave the solo cello ample sonorous space for the unfurling of its broad melodic lines, soloist and orchestra often relate to one another as equal partners in an ongoing dialogue. Clara Schumann, in some ways her husband’s sharpest critic, was captivated by the “finely interwoven textures” of the Concerto, a description that speaks eloquently to the contrapuntal combination of motifs in the first movement’s central section

and to the high-spirited repartee between cello and orchestra in the finale. Handled throughout with a light touch, these displays of Schumann's compositional skill alternate with passages conceived in the simplest of textures. For instance, the soloist presents the heartfelt main theme of the slow movement over a softly strummed, guitar-like accompaniment, suggestive of a love song or serenade.

Lingering over Beautiful Moments Schumann's original designation of the Cello Concerto as a *Conzertstück* calls up associations with a piece he had completed just a few years before, the *Conzertstück* in F for four horns and orchestra, Op. 86. As different as these pieces may be in scoring and character, they are remarkably alike in color—with the orchestral winds assuming a prominent role in both works—and in conception. Both are highly compact creations, cast in three-movement designs bound into a unity by deft transitions and a subtle use of motivic recall. The Cello Concerto is a first cousin to the earlier and ever-popular Piano Concerto, Op. 54, as well, sharing its overall key scheme and its tendency toward increased continuity among movements. Schumann may also have turned for a model to the continuous design of the Violin Concerto by his friend and colleague Felix Mendelssohn.

A Closer Look In Schumann's Cello Concerto, the most crucial element in the thematic argument is the very opening idea: a brief introductory gesture in the winds, whose plangent but graceful melodic ascent is punctuated by pizzicato chords in the strings. This gesture and its derivatives appear in a multitude of guises in all three movements and in the recitative-like transitions between them, though Schumann refrains from pressing the point too hard. Indeed, he often introduces these allusions as wispy afterthoughts or understated asides, thus lending them the quality of half-remembered snippets of melody. Perhaps the most evocative—and poetically suggestive—of these reminiscences comes in the bridge passage between the first and second movements, where Schumann's mysterious harmonization of the motto calls to mind his setting of the line “Im farb'gen Abglanz haben wir das Leben” (Life resides in many-hued reflection) from the fourth of his *Scenes from Goethe's Faust*. Similarly, when the soloist makes one last fleeting allusion to the expressive melody of the slow movement before launching into the finale, he seems to be “speaking”—without words, of course—much as Faust does in the moments before his death: “Verweile doch, du bist so schön” (Linger a while, you are so beautiful).

While the Concerto is, without question, one of Schumann's most deeply expressive works, never does it descend to the level of self-indulgent bathos. Schumann could be an enthusiastic dreamer—and we hear more than a little of this dreaminess in the first two movements of the Cello Concerto—but he was much else besides. The venerable British critic Donald Francis Tovey put it well, commenting on Schumann's fondness for “digging you in the ribs and illustrating grave realities with some crack-jaw quadruple rhyme.” This predilection emerges time and again in the finale, where Schumann often takes pleasure in undermining his own pretensions to seriousness. From this perspective, the most extraordinary passage is surely the accompanied cadenza near the end of the movement. Initially the music strikes a rather solemn tone, taking off with a brooding

recitative that emanates from the darkest reaches of the cello's register. But with a switch to the major key, Schumann knits together a number of loose thematic threads and brings his Concerto to a close with an infectious outpouring of unbridled humor.

—John Daverio

John Daverio was a violinist, scholar, teacher, and author and was on the faculty of Boston University for many years. He won the 1987 Alfred Einstein Award of the American Musicological Society. He was the author of numerous articles and books, including Robert Schumann: Herald of a New Poetic Age.

Schumann's Cello Concerto was composed in 1850.

The first complete Philadelphia Orchestra performance of the piece was on February 14, 1921, in Wilmington; Michel Penha was the soloist and Leopold Stokowski was the conductor. The second movement alone had been performed on November 6, 1911, also in Wilmington, but with cellist Herman Sandby and conductor Carl Pohlig. The most recent subscription performances of the work were in February 2018, with Alisa Weilerstein and Christoph Eschenbach. Other cellists who have performed the work here include Gregor Piatigorsky, Lorne Munroe, Jacqueline du Pré, Lynn Harrell, Paul Tortelier, and Yo-Yo Ma.

Schumann scored the Concerto for solo cello; pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, and trumpets; timpani; and strings.

The Cello Concerto runs approximately 25 minutes in performance.

The Music

Symphony No. 5

Dmitri Shostakovich

Born in St. Petersburg, September 25, 1906

Died in Moscow, August 9, 1975



The life and career of Dmitri Shostakovich were in a perilous state when he began writing his Fifth Symphony in April 1937. The 30-year-old composer had recently experienced a precipitous fall from the acclaim he had enjoyed throughout his 20s, ever since he burst on the musical scene at age 19 with his brash and brilliant First Symphony. That work won him overnight fame and extended his renown far beyond the Soviet Union. Bruno Walter, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Arturo Toscanini, and other leading conductors championed the

Symphony and Leopold Stokowski gave its American premiere with The Philadelphia Orchestra in 1928. Shostakovich's Second Symphony followed the next year and was entitled "To October—A Symphonic Dedication." It included a chorus praising Lenin and the Revolution, and the Third Symphony, "The First of May," also employed a chorus to make a political statement. Despite their ideological baggage, his musical innovations continued.

A Fall from Grace Shostakovich had also received considerable attention for his contributions to the screen and stage, including film scores, ballets, incidental music, and two full-scale operas: *The Nose* and *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. The latter enjoyed particular popular and critical success in the Soviet Union and abroad after its premiere in January 1934, so much so that a new production was presented at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow two years later.

And that is when the serious troubles began that changed the course of Shostakovich's life. Stalin attended *Lady Macbeth* on January 26, 1936, and left before the end of the performance. A few days later an article titled "Muddle Instead of Music" appeared in *Pravda*, the official newspaper of the Communist Party. The anonymous critic wrote that the opera "is a leftist bedlam instead of human music. The inspiring quality of good music is sacrificed in favor of petty-bourgeois formalist celebration, with pretense at originality by cheap clowning. This game may end badly."

Those terrifying final words were life-threatening; this was not just a bad review that could hamper a thriving career. The article was soon followed by another in *Pravda* attacking Shostakovich's ballet *The Limpid Stream*, and then by yet another. The musical establishment, with a few brave exceptions, lined up in opposition to the composer, who was working at the time on a massive Fourth Symphony, which went into rehearsals in

December 1936. At the last moment, just before the premiere, the work was withdrawn, most likely at the insistence of the authorities. The impressive Symphony would have to wait 25 years before its unveiling in 1961. (The Philadelphians gave the American premiere in 1963.)

Shostakovich's Return Shostakovich, whose first child had just been born, was well aware of the show trials and mounting purges, as friends, family, and colleagues disappeared or were killed. He faced terrifying challenges in how to proceed after the sustained attacks on his music. He composed the first three movements of the Fifth Symphony with incredible speed—he later recounted that he wrote the Largo in just three days—although the finale slowed him down. The completion of his new symphony is usually dated July 29, 1937, but the most recent investigation for a new critical edition indicates that composition continued well into the fall.

The notable premiere took place on November 21 with the Leningrad Philharmonic under Evgeny Mravinsky, at that time a relatively unknown young conductor. In the words of Shostakovich biographer Laurel Fay: “The significance of the occasion was apparent to everyone. Shostakovich’s fate was at stake. The Fifth Symphony, a non-programmatic, four-movement work in a traditional, accessible symphonic style, its essence extrapolated in the brief program note as ‘a lengthy spiritual battle, crowned by victory,’ scored an absolute, unforgettable triumph with the listeners.”

The funereal third movement, the Largo, moved many listeners to tears. According to one account, members of the audience, one by one, began to stand during the extravagant finale. Composer Maximilian Steinberg, a former teacher of Shostakovich, wrote in his diary: “The ovation was stupendous, I don’t remember anything like it in about the last 10 years.” Yet the enormous enthusiasm from musicians and non-musicians alike—the ovations reportedly lasted nearly a half hour—could well have been viewed as a statement against the Soviet authorities’ rebukes of the composer—artistic triumphs could spell political doom. Two officials were sent to monitor subsequent performances and concluded that the audience had been selected to support the composer—a false charge made even less tenable by the fact that every performance elicited tremendous ovations.

The Importance of Art It may be difficult for contemporary audiences to appreciate how seriously art was taken in the Soviet Union. The attention and passions, the criticism and debates it evoked—dozens of articles, hours of official panels at congresses, and abundant commentary—raised the stakes for art and for artists. For his part Shostakovich remained silent at the time about the Fifth Symphony. He eventually stated that the quasi-autobiographical work was about the “suffering of man, and all-conquering optimism. I wanted to convey in the Symphony how, through a series of tragic conflicts of great inner spiritual turmoil, optimism asserts itself as a world view.”

The best-known remark about the work is often misunderstood. In connection with the Moscow premiere of the Symphony, Shostakovich noted that among all the attention it had received, one interpretation gave him “special pleasure, where it was said that the

Fifth Symphony is the practical creative response of a Soviet artist to just criticism.” This last phrase was subsequently attributed to the composer as a general subtitle for the Symphony. Yet as Fay has observed, Shostakovich never agreed with what he considered the unjust criticism of his earlier work, nor did he write the Fifth along the lines he had been told to do. Most importantly, he gave no program or title to it at any time. The work, which reportedly was one the composer thought particularly highly of in later years, went on to be one of his most popular and successful compositions and a staple of the symphonic repertory.

A Closer Look The first movement (**Moderato**) opens with the lower strings intoning a striking, jagged theme, somewhat reminiscent of the one Beethoven used in his “Great Fugue,” Op. 133. It is immediately imitated by the violins and gradually winds down to become an accompaniment to an eerie theme that floats high above in the upper reaches of the violins. The tempo eventually speeds up (**Allegro non troppo**), presenting a theme that will appear in different guises elsewhere in the Symphony, most notably transformed in the triumphant conclusion.

The brief scherzo-like **Allegretto** shows Shostakovich’s increasing interest at the time in the music of Mahler, in this case the Fourth Symphony, which also includes a grotesque violin solo. The **Largo**, the movement that so moved audiences at the first performances, projects a tragic mood of enormous intensity. The brass instruments do not play at all in the movement but return in full force to dominate the finale (**Allegro non troppo**). The “over the top” exuberance of this last movement has long been debated, beginning just after the first performances. Especially following the effect of the preceding lament, some have found the optimistic triumphalism of the ending forced and ultimately false. Perhaps it is the ambiguity still surrounding the work that partly accounts for its continued appeal and prominence.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

Shostakovich composed his Symphony No. 5 in 1937.

Leopold Stokowski led the first Philadelphia performances of the Symphony, in March 1939. Since then the Orchestra has performed the work many times at home, as well as on domestic and international tours, including performances in the Soviet Union under Eugene Ormandy in 1958. Among the other conductors to lead the piece here are István Kertész, André Previn, Riccardo Muti, Yuri Temirkanov, Maxim Shostakovich, Leonard Slatkin, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Christoph Eschenbach, and Marin Alsop. The most recent subscription performances were in March 2022, with Kensho Watanabe.

The Philadelphians have recorded the Symphony five times: in 1939 for RCA with Stokowski; in 1965 for CBS with Ormandy; in 1975 for RCA with Ormandy; in 1992 for EMI with Muti; and in 2006 with Eschenbach for Ondine.

Shostakovich scored the work for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, E-flat clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, orchestra bells, snare drum, tam-tam, triangle, xylophone), harp, piano (doubling celesta), and strings.

The Symphony runs approximately 45 minutes in performance.

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Musical Terms

Cadenza: A passage or section in a style of brilliant improvisation, usually inserted near the end of a movement or composition

Chord: The simultaneous sounding of three or more tones

Contrapuntal: See counterpoint

Conzertstück: A short concerto in one movement and free in form

Counterpoint: The combination of simultaneously sounding musical lines

Fugue: A piece of music in which a short melody is stated by one voice and then imitated by the other voices in succession, reappearing throughout the entire piece in all the voices at different places

Harmony: The combination of simultaneously sounded musical notes to produce chords and chord progressions

Minuet: A dance in triple time commonly used up to the beginning of the 19th century as the lightest movement of a symphony

Op.: Abbreviation for opus, a term used to indicate the chronological position of a composition within a composer's output. Opus numbers are not always reliable because they are often applied in the order of publication rather than composition.

Pizzicato: Plucked

Recitative: Declamatory singing, free in tempo and rhythm. Recitative has also sometimes been used to refer to parts of purely instrumental works that resemble vocal recitatives.

Scherzo: Literally "a joke." Usually the third movement of symphonies and quartets that was introduced by Beethoven to replace the minuet. The scherzo is followed by a gentler section called a trio, after which the scherzo is repeated. Its characteristics are a rapid tempo,

vigorous rhythm, and humorous contrasts. Also an instrumental piece of a light, piquant, humorous character.

Serenade: An instrumental composition written for a small ensemble and having characteristics of the suite and the sonata

Sonata: An instrumental composition in three or four extended movements contrasted in theme, tempo, and mood, usually for a solo instrument

Sonority: Resonance, tone quality

Suite: During the Baroque period, an instrumental genre consisting of several movements in the same key, some or all of which were based on the forms and styles of dance music

THE SPEED OF MUSIC (Tempo)

Allegretto: A tempo between walking speed and fast

Allegro: Bright, fast

Langsam: Slow

Largo: Broad

Lebhaft: Animated, lively

Moderato: A moderate tempo, neither fast nor slow

Schnell: Fast

TEMPO MODIFIERS

Nicht zu: Not too

Non troppo: Not too much

Sehr: Very

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