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## A Reconsideration of the American Reception of Shostakovich: Annotated Bibliography

## **A Reconsideration of the American Reception of Shostakovich Annotated Bibliography**

Bahorik, Hanna. "Shostakovich and the Memoirs." *Musical Offerings* 10, no. 1 (2019): 39-52.

The aforementioned journal article calls into question the accuracy and legitimacy of Solomon Volkov's book on Shostakovich, in which Solomon describes the composer as a Soviet dissident and oppressed musical genius who sought to express his political thoughts in secret through his music. In spite of Bahorik's acknowledgement of the potential discrepancies between Volkov's *Testimony* and the actual accounts of his life and beliefs that Shostakovich might have relayed to Volkov towards the end of his life, the author assumes that it is more likely than not accurate that Shostakovich was a political dissident in hiding. She further discusses Irina Shostakovich's many comments denouncing Volkov's *Testimony*, and concludes that further research must be undertaken before too much more time passes as memories fade quickly.

Cassell, Holly K. "Looking Through a Different Lens, Beyond Censorship: The American Reception of *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*." Masters thesis, University of North Texas, 2017. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Holly Cassell's thesis explores first the Soviet reception and subsequent censorship of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth* opera, and then further discusses the nearly 50 year gap in performances (and as such, reception history) from the first American premiere in 1935 to the revival of the opera in San Francisco in 1981. Cassell notes that while Shostakovich is frequently analyzed and interpreted through his symphonic works, the interest reviving the opera could have been for political reasons as a means to promote the (correct) belief that the Soviet Union frequently censored artists in political context rather than a musicological context. Cassell also references Shostakovich scholar Terry Kelfstad's research regarding the work, and notes that American reception in the 1930's was rather harsh because of sexual scenes, but those were largely ignored in the 1980's as the discussion surrounding the opera turned much more towards the political undertones and censorship.

*Dmitry Shostakovich: A Man of Many Faces*. Directed by Moritz Reiner. Telmondis, 2015.  
[http://du.idm.oclc.org/login?Url=?  
url=https://searchproquest.com.du.idm.oclc.org/docview/1881859759?accountid=14608](http://du.idm.oclc.org/login?Url=?url=https://searchproquest.com.du.idm.oclc.org/docview/1881859759?accountid=14608)

In this examination of Shostakovich's life and musical creations, commentators suggest that Shostakovich's insistence on fast rhythms, technically challenging passages, and repetitive figures were in fact reflections of his own anger and struggles with suppression. However, further discussion in the film suggests that Shostakovich's music was never

supposed to be in response to any specific political figure (such as Stalin), but rather just further expressions of his personal unrest.

Fairclough, Pauline. "The 'Old Shostakovich': Reception in the British Press," *Music & Letters* 88, no. 2 (May 2007): 266-296.

This recent article examines how Shostakovich's reception in Great Britain evolved first from defending the belief that music and politics remain separate, but how the passage of time would lead British listeners to revolt against Shostakovich as Stalin's policies and the larger effects of the Soviet Union and revolution would be understood. After the Second World War, British citizens were hesitant to accept politically motivated music, and would turn their backs on the Soviet composer who would go on to compose many politically motivated symphonies.

Klefstad, Terry Wait. "The Reception in America of Dmitri Shostakovich, 1928-1946." PhD diss., University of Texas, Austin, 2003. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Dr. Klefstad's incredibly valuable dissertation discusses, as all the sources have, the political shunning and rehabilitation of Shostakovich's political and social image in the 1930's following that famous *Pravda* article, but specifically focuses on American's less-than-stellar reception to the composer's more obvious politically inspired music. When it became known that Shostakovich was part of and subject to the Soviet Composer's Union and had to properly combine musical and political ideology, American interest in his music began to wane. Klefstad later points out that following the Volkov *Testimony* in the 1980's, an opening was created that allowed for the reexamination of Shostakovich's music during another politically unstable era between the two countries.

Lesser, Wendy. *Music for Silenced Voices: Shostakovich and His Fifteen Quartets*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.

In Lesser's book, she asserts that Shostakovich was able to more honestly explore his musical muses in his quartets rather than his symphonies because the Soviet government saw the string quartet as a lesser form of musical creation than the symphony and didn't focus on looking deep into this music. She cites the composer's insistence on staying away from the operatic form as well, due to the negative reception and subsequent social fallout from *Lady Macbeth*. In his string quartets, we can find a more honest interpretation of the composer's feelings.

Maccurtain, Lawrence P. "Rhapsody in Red: Shostakovich and American Wartime Perceptions of the Soviet Union." *Patterns of Prejudice* 47, no. 4-5 (2013): 359-378.

Maccurtain's article touches on the change in perception of the Soviet Union by Americans in general after the Soviet Union allied themselves with Nazi Germany in 1939, and how the perception of any Soviet composer aligning themselves with the Soviet government would be viewed negatively by an American audience. However, during the time of the Second World War, the author notes that Shostakovich's ability to create music that speaks to a wide audience (in this case an international audience) while conveying tones of victory and achievement were indeed a unifying force that bolstered his image and reception in both nations.

Makanowitzky, Barbara. "Music to Serve the State." *The Russian Review* 24, no. 3 (July 1965): 266-277.

This article first tackles the controversial Soviet belief that purpose of music itself was provide inspiration for the people to follow the policies set forth by the State—in other words, that music must align with the politics of the government in power and to create music contrary to this would go against the will of the people. Makanowitzky also discusses a 1948 All-Union Composers meeting in which several Soviet composers were censured for composing "formalist" works, and specifically notes how Prokofiev handled government criticism of his work in an apologetic way.

Mishra, Michael. "Soviet Musical Criticism and Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony." Doctor of Arts Diss., University of Northern Colorado, 1997. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Shostakovich premiered his Fifth Symphony in 1937, shortly after the frequently discussed *Pravda* article denouncing his opera *Lady Macbeth*, to great acclaim by audiences and the Soviet government alike. Mishra compares this reception to the similarly positive reception (from the government, at least) to the composer's Cello Sonata, and analyzes the form and important characteristics of the Fifth Symphony to show how he diverged from earlier thematic and formal compositional practices from pieces that had recently been criticized.

Schmelz, Peter J. "Shostakovich' Fights the Cold War: Reflections from Great to Small." *Journal of Musicological Research* 34, no. 2 (Spring 2015): 91-140.

With first an examination of the cover art on records of various recordings of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony, Schmelz analyzes how Soviet-influenced art was used as a means to push a specific narrative during the 1970's and 1980's during, and especially after the late 1950's tour to the Soviet Union by the New York Philharmonic. The article goes a step further than images (including a thorough discussion on Soviet and American branding and propaganda), and he suggests that Shostakovich's music

might have been one of the few cultural exchanges between Americans and Soviets that was effective in establishing communication, one way or another.

Volkov, Solomon Moiseevič. *Shostakovich and Stalin: The Extraordinary Relationship Between the Great Composer and the Brutal Dictator*. Translated by Antonina W. Bouis. New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2004.

This highly controversial and politically charged book essentially reignited the musicological and social interrogation of Shostakovich's political leanings and affinity towards the Soviet Union. Solomon had numerous sit-downs with the composer in the last few years of his life and claim that Shostakovich's quotes in his book are accurate, though many quotations are disputed, especially by the composer's wife, Irina. While *Testimony* provides the basis for the resurgence of American interest in Shostakovich in the 1980's, the creation of the book itself must be analyzed as a potential political football used as a means to turn sentiment in the American and Soviet general public.

Wilson, Miranda Clare. "Shostakovich's Cello Sonata: Its Genesis Related to Socialist Realism." DMA diss., University of Texas, Austin, 2005. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

In this doctoral dissertation, Dr. Wilson first mentions the political conditions during which Shostakovich began composing his cello sonatas, which happen to be right around the time of his public fall from grace following the negative review of *Lady MacBeth* in *Pravda*, the Soviet Union's political news publication. Wilson suggests that the cello sonata didn't receive the same negative reception as his other works in the 1930's because it is simpler in form and more prominently displayed "Socialist Realism," in this case being emotional pain and turmoil followed by triumphant victory.