

CHAPTER 6

DYNAMIC ASPECTS

6.1 Dynamic indications

It has to be admitted that the oboe, like other reed instruments, has a comparatively limited expressive range. The most important characteristic in this range is dynamic control (Goossens & Roxborough 1980:81-82).

Shostakovich's use of dynamic indications for the oboe and cor anglais range between *pp* and *ffff*. In all the Symphonies the *f - ffff* dynamic indication accompanied by expressive indications like *marcato* and *espressivo* is used much more often than the *p - mp* dynamic level. The *piano* dynamic level is used mainly for lyrical solo passages and phrases with exposed textures. In many instances there are as few as two or three *piano* phrases as opposed to an entire movement of *ff* dynamic levels. Bearing in mind the limited dynamic range of the oboe and cor anglais it is questionable whether the dynamic level exceeding *fff* is practical, especially in the high register. It can therefore be concluded that the hard, dry quality of the high register and excessive dynamic indications required of the oboe and cor anglais form the predominant timbre Shostakovich calls for in his symphonies.

The following is an example from the first movement of Symphony No. 7 of an excerpt in a *piano* dynamic level in which the first oboe and first bassoon share a passage in which imitation is the main feature (Ex. 6-1). The oboe and bassoon are accompanied by the cellos and double basses with their repetitive ostinato *pizzicato* figure, and the snare-drum with a rhythmic figure in which semiquavers predominate. The oboe solo lies mostly in the middle register although m. 220 poses a challenging repeated middle C which should be carefully articulated as it could result in an unwanted accent, owing to the difficulty in playing *piano* in the lower register. The reason for the inclusion of this example is that it is one of the very few lengthy examples where the oboe's dynamic level remains constantly *piano*.

Example 6-1: Symphony No. 7, first movement, mm. 214-248

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with five staves: Oboe (Ob.), Bassoon (Fag.), Trombone (T-ro), Violoncello (V-c.), and Contrabass (C-b.).

- System 1 (Measures 214-218):** The Oboe and Bassoon parts begin with a melodic line marked with a first fingering (I) and a dynamic of *p*. The Trombone part features a rhythmic pattern of sixteenth notes, marked *pp*. The Violoncello and Contrabass parts provide a harmonic accompaniment, with the Contrabass part starting at measure 214.
- System 2 (Measures 219-223):** The Oboe and Bassoon parts continue their melodic lines, with the Bassoon part marked with a first fingering (I) and a dynamic of *p*. The Trombone part maintains its rhythmic pattern. The Violoncello and Contrabass parts continue their accompaniment, with the Contrabass part starting at measure 219.
- System 3 (Measures 224-228):** The Oboe and Bassoon parts conclude their melodic phrases, with the Bassoon part marked with a first fingering (I). The Trombone part continues its rhythmic pattern. The Violoncello and Contrabass parts continue their accompaniment, with the Contrabass part starting at measure 224.



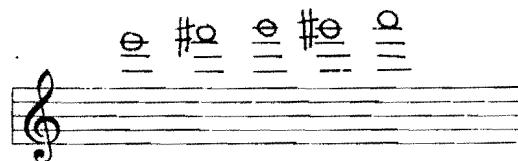
The image displays three systems of musical notation for a woodwind and string ensemble. Each system includes staves for Oboe (Ob.), Bassoon (Fag.), Trombone (T-ro), Violoncello (V-c.), and Contrabass (C-b.).

- System 1:** Measures 234 to 238. The Oboe and Bassoon parts feature melodic lines with first fingerings indicated by a '1' above notes. The Trombone part consists of a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Violoncello and Contrabass parts provide a harmonic accompaniment.
- System 2:** Measures 239 to 243. A measure rest of 27 measures is indicated in a box above the Oboe staff. The Oboe and Bassoon parts continue their melodic development. The Trombone part maintains its rhythmic pattern. The Violoncello and Contrabass parts continue their accompaniment.
- System 3:** Measures 244 to 248. The Oboe and Bassoon parts conclude their melodic phrases. The Trombone part continues its rhythmic pattern. The Violoncello and Contrabass parts conclude their accompaniment.

6.2 Piano passages in the high register

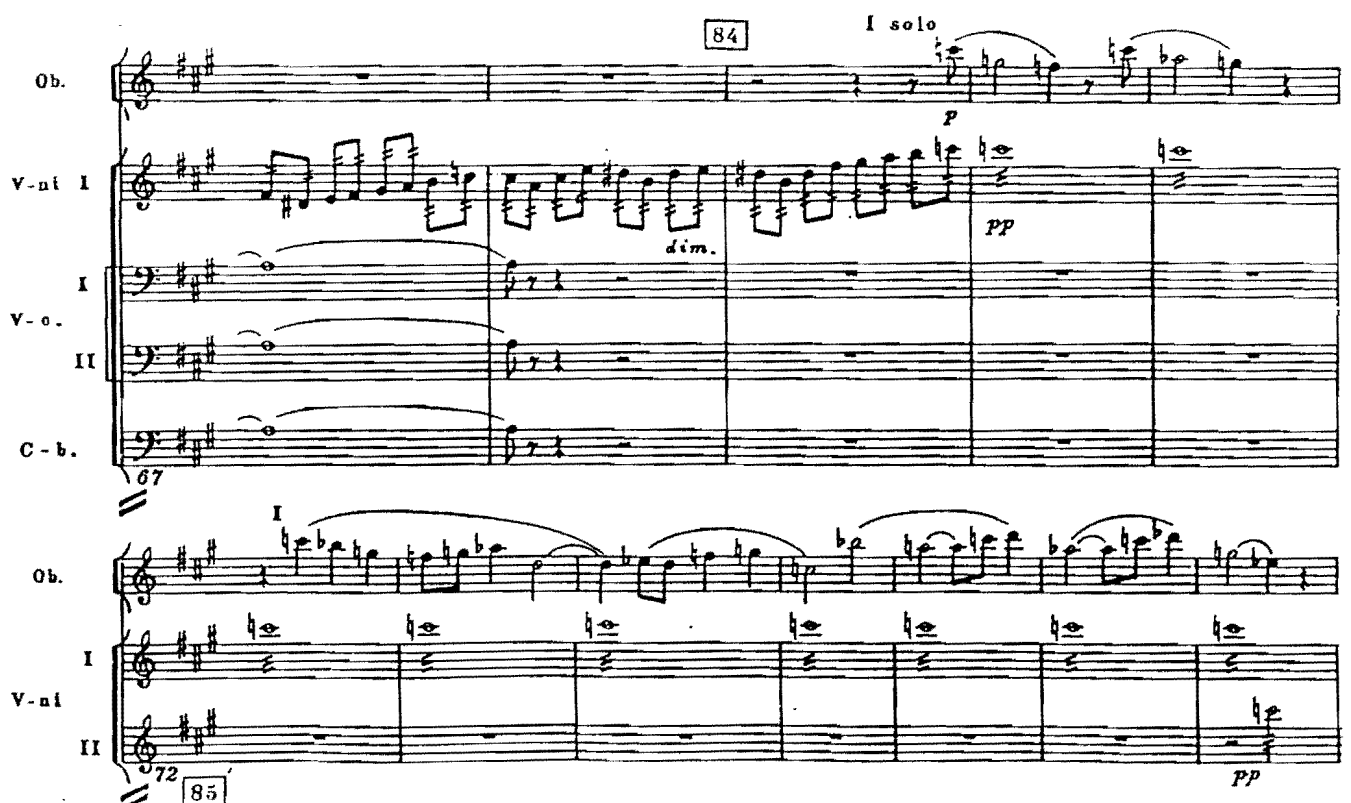
Upwards from A above the staff the oboe tone gradually becomes thinner, and above D begins to sound less like an oboe. These high tones do not possess the warmth of the range below A, but they are useful for adding brilliance to the woodwinds. Of the higher notes, G-sharp and A are impractical (see Ex. 6-2). They are insecure of production and lack quality. F-sharp and G-natural are not often used but are more playable. (Piston 1982:152-153.) Fortunately Shostakovich seldom uses the notes F and F-sharp above the staff and never the notes higher than G.

Example 6-2: The high notes of the oboe and cor anglais



Symphony No. 5 contains an example of a beautiful *piano* solo for the oboe in the high register. Bearing in mind the "hard, dry" character of the high register (Korsakov 1964:19), Shostakovich nevertheless manages to create a meditative emotional atmosphere with the theme on solo oboe supported by tremolo first violins on a C pedal.

Example 6-3: Symphony No 5, third movement, mm. 67-78



In the opening *Allegretto* of Symphony No. 15, known for its "teasing, witty, relaxed" character (Ottoway 1978:64), Shostakovich uses the high register of the oboes (doubling in unison) in a fast staccato passage in a complicated rhythmic texture. In m. 443 the two flutes doubled by the piccolo one octave higher begin with a semiquaver figure, followed by the oboes playing triplets in m. 445. The clarinets and bassoons follow with a quintuplet figure in m. 451. From m. 448 the oboe part becomes progressively higher and reaches an F-natural above the staff in m. 454 and m. 455. The staccato articulation makes it considerably easier to play the high notes.

Example 6-4: Symphony No. 15, first movement, mm. 443-458



The musical score for Example 6-4, Symphony No. 15, first movement, mm. 443-458, is presented in two systems. The first system (mm. 443-447) includes Piccolo (Picc.), Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Tom-tom (T-tom), and Trombone (T-ro). The second system (mm. 447-458) includes Piccolo (Picc.), Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Tom-tom (T-tom), Trombone (T-ro), Clarinet in B-flat (C-lll), and Saxophone in B-flat (Sll.). The music features a complex rhythmic texture with semiquaver figures, triplets, and quintuplets. The oboe part is notably high, reaching above the staff in later measures. Dynamics include piano (p) and piano fortissimo (p3).



49

Picc. *p*

Fl. *a2*

Ob. *a2*

Cl. *a2* *p*

Fag. *a2* *p*

Tr-be

T-tom

T-ro

5

5

5

5

5

5

oon sord. *mf*

451

454

50

Picc.

Fl. *a2*

Ob. *a2*

Cl. *a2*

Fag. *a2*

Cor. *oon sord. mf*

Tr-be *oon sord. mf*

Tr-nl
e
Tuba *oon sord. mf*

Timp. *secco P*

T-tom

T-ro

C-III

Sll. *455*

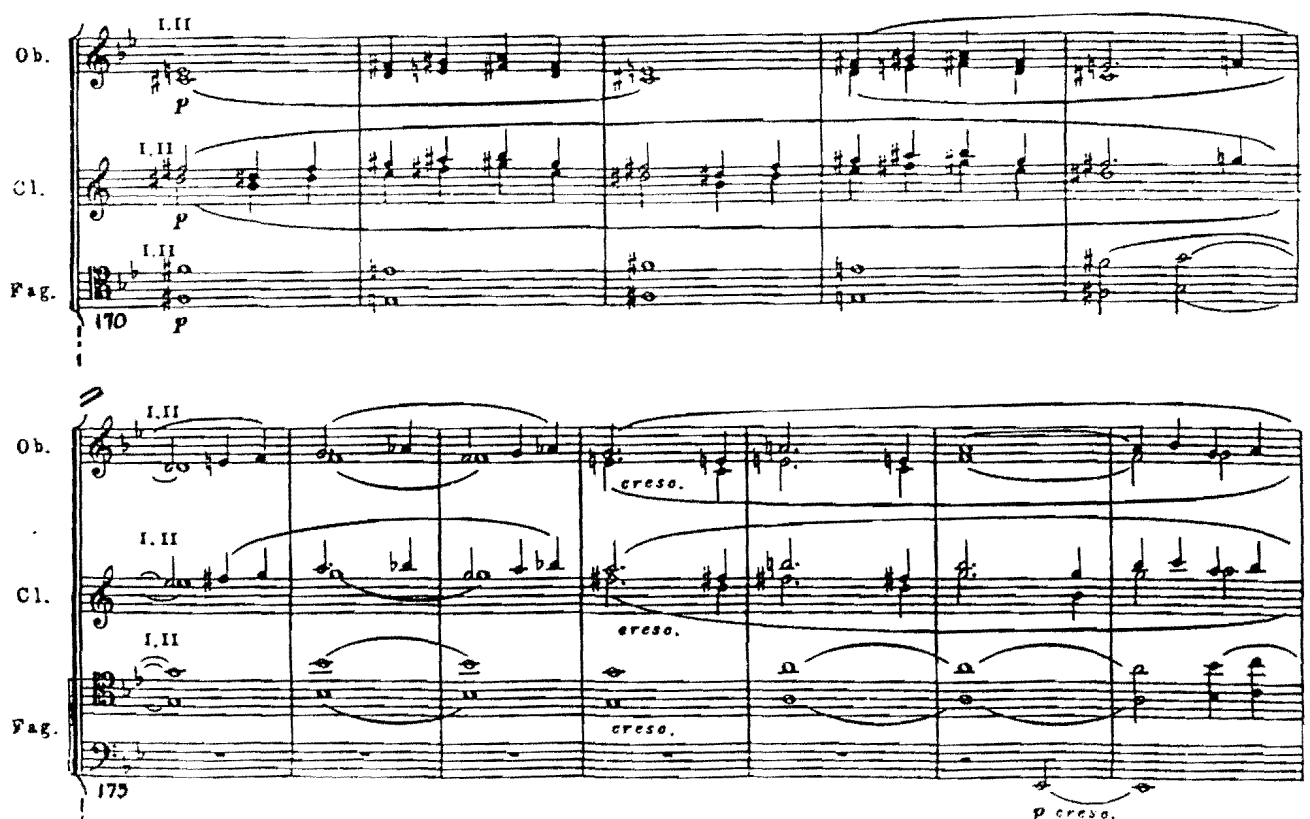
6.3 *Piano* passages in the low register

The oboe's very quality of penetrating expressiveness can also be a mixed blessing, especially, for instance, in the low register which is very hard to control at a soft dynamic level (Del Mar 1983:171). This causes difficulties when trying to match the soft ensemble of other woodwinds. In direct contrast to the flute the oboe increases in intensity in the lower fifth of its range. Here it is the problem of the oboist to subdue the natural tendency to loudness and even coarseness. The low B-flat is seldom found in scores. It cannot be attacked softly, and it is more appropriate for music of a robust character (Piston 1982:152). The cor anglais, however, in its lower fifth or sixth is richly beautiful, with tremendous expressive carrying power (Adler 1982:174).

There are very few examples of oboe passages in the low register in the 15 symphonies.

The following is an example found in the first movement of Symphony No. 12 of a passage written for the oboes in the lower register. The second oboe has the difficult task of articulating a C-sharp below the staff at a *piano* dynamic level in mm. 170, 172 and 174. Fortunately this passage is not too exposed, as the oboes, clarinets and violins have unison material.

Example 6-5: Symphony No. 12, first movement, mm. 170-181



The musical score for Example 6-5 consists of two systems of staves. The first system covers measures 170 to 174, and the second system covers measures 175 to 181. Each system includes staves for Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), and Bassoon (Fag.). The oboe part is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes first and second endings (I, II). The clarinet and bassoon parts also feature first and second endings. The score includes dynamic markings such as *cresc.* and *p cresc.* indicating a gradual increase in volume.

Example 6-6 below is taken from the first movement of Symphony No. 4 in which the third oboe has the daunting task in m. 348 of a very exposed *piano espressivo* entry in the low register. The tempo at this point is fairly slow and the first and second oboes and two harps are providing a chordal accompaniment to a solo *staccato* melody by the piccolo in mm. 347-349 which is taken over by the first flute in m. 350. Note the solo of repeated notes scored for the first flute from mm. 351-356. (This passage is similar to a passage with repeated notes for the cor anglais mentioned in Chapter 5, Ex. 5-14.)

Example 6-6: Symphony No. 4, first movement, mm. 347-360



The musical score consists of two systems. The first system covers measures 347 to 349. The Piccolo part (m. 347) features a staccato melody of repeated notes. The Flute part (m. 349) takes over this melody. The Oboe part (m. 348) has a solo entry in the low register, marked *p* and *espress.*. The Clarinet in B-flat part (m. 348) provides a chordal accompaniment. The Harp I and Harp II parts (m. 348) provide a chordal accompaniment. The second system covers measures 350 to 353. The Flute part (m. 350) has a solo of repeated notes. The Oboe part (m. 350) provides a chordal accompaniment. The Violin I part (m. 350) provides a chordal accompaniment. The score includes various performance instructions such as *p*, *espress.*, *pp*, *con sord.*, and *div.*.

6.4 *Forte* passages in the high register

More frequent examples of *forte* passages in the high register are found scored for oboes than for cor anglais. The most prominent examples can be found in the following symphonies: 2:141-147, 227-228; 3:526-533, 886-890; 4:1:388-392, 914-915, 919-921; 4:3:345-350; 7:4:323-324 (Symphony No. 7 contains the most examples of passages for the cor anglais in the high register); 8:2:159-166; 8:4:1-3 (this movement begins with *fff* for oboe and cor anglais on C and E-flat above the staff); 11:2:703-724.

Below (Ex. 6-7) is an example from the fourth movement (*Allegro non troppo*) of Symphony No. 7 in which the cor anglais has a *ff* passage in the high register. Shostakovich's intention in this instance must have been a specific timbre, as the cor anglais loses its beautiful tone and volume in the high register. The cor anglais' sounding pitch is a perfect fifth lower than written and it is therefore reinforcing the second oboe in unison.

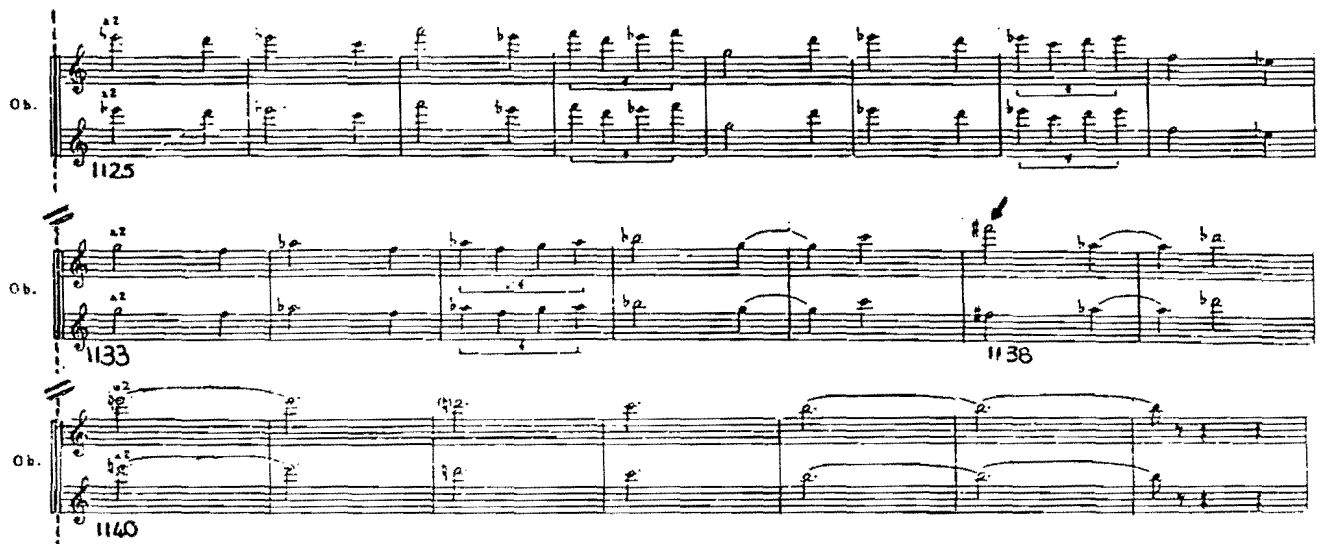
Example 6-7: Symphony No. 7, fourth movement, mm. 324-330



The image displays a page of a musical score for the fourth movement of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 7, measures 324-330. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with multiple staves. The instruments listed on the left are Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Cor Anglais (C.ingl.), Clarinet in E-flat (Cl. picc.), Clarinet in B-flat (Cl. b.), Bassoon (Fag.), Contrabassoon (C.fag.), Horn (Cor.), Timpani (Timp.), and Strings (Archl.). The Cor Anglais part is highlighted with a red line, showing a high register passage marked *ff*. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The page number 324 is visible at the bottom left.

The following is a lengthy example from the third movement of Symphony No. 4 of a *fff* passage in the high register with a very dense texture (Ex. 6-8). The entire woodwind section plays in unison. All four oboes double in unison except for the very difficult F-sharp above the staff in m. 1138 when the third and fourth oboes double an octave lower. The tempo indication is *Allegro*.

Example 6-8: Symphony No. 4, fourth movement, mm. 1125-1146



The following example (Ex. 6-9) with high notes from Symphony No. 8 includes a challenging *fff* passage for two oboes and cor anglais. This example contains a melodic line with larger interval leaps than the previous example as well as a variety of articulation: *legato* (166-170.3), *staccato* (170.4-172.2) and *non legato* (172.4-174.3). The difficulty in this example lies especially in the high G-flat scored in mm. 166 and 179 for the oboes, and the recurring high F-natural for the cor anglais in mm. 166, 177 and 178.



Example 6-9: Symphony No. 8, second movement, mm. 166-179

The image displays a musical score for the second movement of Symphony No. 8, measures 166 to 179. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with the following parts from top to bottom: Piccolo (Picc.), Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet in G (C.ingl.), Clarinet in E-flat (Cl. picc.), Clarinet in B-flat (Cl.), Bassoon (Fag.), and Contrabass (C. fac.).

Measure 166 is marked with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The tempo is initially *riten.* (ritardando), indicated by a box containing the number 65. It then returns to *a tempo*. The dynamic markings are *fff* (fortissimo) for the woodwinds and strings, and *mf* (mezzo-forte) for the bassoon and contrabass. The woodwinds play complex, multi-measure passages, often with slurs and accents. The strings provide a rhythmic and harmonic foundation with sustained notes and some movement.

Measure 173 is marked with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The tempo remains *a tempo*. The dynamics continue to be *fff* for the woodwinds and strings, and *mf* for the bassoon and contrabass. The woodwinds play complex, multi-measure passages, often with slurs and accents. The strings provide a rhythmic and harmonic foundation with sustained notes and some movement.

Measure 179 is the final measure of the excerpt, marked with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The tempo remains *a tempo*. The dynamics continue to be *fff* for the woodwinds and strings, and *mf* for the bassoon and contrabass. The woodwinds play complex, multi-measure passages, often with slurs and accents. The strings provide a rhythmic and harmonic foundation with sustained notes and some movement.

6.5 *Forte* passages in the low register

There are no significant examples of *forte* passages in the low register in the early symphonies. Symphony No. 5 contains only two instances in the third and fourth movements. In the opening theme of Symphony No. 6 the cor anglais has a low B-natural (the lowest note possible) at a *f espressivo* dynamic level in unison with the clarinets, bassoons, violas and cellos. Symphony No. 7 presents the most examples of loud passages in the low register for both oboes and cor anglais.

The following excerpt taken from the third movement (*Adagio*) of Symphony No. 7 includes a *ff* passage in mm. 338-348 for cor anglais in the low register. The passage is not very exposed as the low woodwinds and strings have similar material.

Example 6-10: Symphony No. 7, third movement, mm. 338-351



The musical score for Example 6-10, Symphony No. 7, third movement, mm. 338-351, is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 338 to 345, and the second system covers measures 345 to 351. The woodwind parts are as follows:

- Cor Anglais (C.ingl.):** Treble clef, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Dynamic marking: *sempre ff*.
- Clarinet (Cl.):** Treble clef, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Dynamic marking: *sempre ff*.
- Piccolo (picc.):** Treble clef, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Dynamic marking: *sempre ff*.
- Bass Clarinet (Cl.b.):** Bass clef, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Dynamic marking: *sempre ff*.
- Bassoon (Fag.):** Bass clef, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Dynamic marking: *sempre ff*.
- Contrabass (C. b.s.):** Bass clef, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Dynamic marking: *sempre ff*.

The second system (mm. 345-351) shows the following woodwind parts:

- Piccolo (picc.):** Treble clef, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Dynamic marking: *ff espress.*
- Flute (Fl.):** Treble clef, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Dynamic marking: *ff espress.*
- Oboe (Ob.):** Treble clef, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Dynamic marking: *ff espress.*
- Cor Anglais (C.ingl.):** Treble clef, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Dynamic marking: *ff espress.*
- Clarinet (Cl.):** Treble clef, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Dynamic marking: *ff espress.*
- Piccolo (picc.):** Treble clef, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Dynamic marking: *ff espress.*
- Clarinet (Cl.):** Treble clef, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Dynamic marking: *ff espress.*
- Bass Clarinet (Cl.b.):** Bass clef, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Dynamic marking: *ff espress.*

Symphony No. 8 presents another challenging passage for the oboes in their low register. The compromising repeated notes middle C and D-flat in m. 180 and the dotted rhythm in m. 181 for the oboes in their low register are made considerably easier because of the *ff* dynamic indication, the unison doubling with the cor anglais, and the rhythmic support of the strings. The bass clarinet, bassoons and contrabassoon, after having had melodic and rhythmic imitation in mm. 180 and 182, have opposing rhythmic and melodic material to the oboes and cor anglais in m. 181, creating an interesting canvas of rhythmic imitation and timbre.

Example 6-11: Symphony No. 8, first movement, mm. 179-182



The image displays a musical score for measures 179 and 182 of the first movement of Symphony No. 8. The score is arranged in two systems of staves. The first system includes Oboe (Ob.), Cor Anglais (C.ingl.), Bass Clarinet (Cl. b.), Bassoon (Fag.), and Contrabassoon (C.fag.). The second system includes Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Cor Anglais (C.ingl.), Clarinet in C (Cl. picc.), Clarinet in B-flat (Cl.), and Bass Clarinet (Cl. b.).

Measure 179 begins with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The Oboe and Cor Anglais parts feature a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *ff* and a first fingering (a2) indicated above the notes. The Bass Clarinet, Bassoon, and Contrabassoon parts play a rhythmic accompaniment, also marked *ff*. The Flute part is silent in this measure.

Measure 180 shows the Oboe and Cor Anglais continuing their melodic line, with the Oboe part marked *ff* and *tenuto*. The Bass Clarinet, Bassoon, and Contrabassoon parts continue their rhythmic accompaniment, marked *ff*. The Flute part is silent.

Measure 181 features a complex rhythmic texture. The Oboe and Cor Anglais play a melodic line with a dotted rhythm, marked *ff* and *tenuto*. The Bass Clarinet, Bassoon, and Contrabassoon parts play a contrasting rhythmic pattern, marked *ff*. The Flute part is silent.

Measure 182 concludes the passage. The Oboe and Cor Anglais play a melodic line with a dotted rhythm, marked *ff* and *tenuto*. The Bass Clarinet, Bassoon, and Contrabassoon parts play a rhythmic accompaniment, marked *ff*. The Flute part is silent.

The second movement of Symphony No. 10 contains the following well articulated passage for three oboes doubling in unison at a *ff* dynamic level which includes a B-flat below the staff (the oboe's lowest note) in mm. 219 and 224.

Example 6-12: Symphony No. 10, second movement, mm. 210-225



The image displays two pages of a musical score for the second movement of Symphony No. 10, measures 210-225. The score is arranged in a system with seven staves: Piccolo (Picc.), Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet in Piccolo (Cl. picc.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Fag.), and Contrabassoon (C.fag.).

The first page (top) covers measures 210 to 224. A rehearsal mark '87' is placed above the Piccolo staff at measure 219. The Oboe part features a prominent melodic line with a B-flat note below the staff in measures 219 and 224. Dynamics include *ff* and *ff* *espress.*. The second page (bottom) covers measures 218 to 224. A rehearsal mark '88' is placed above the Piccolo staff at measure 218. The Oboe part continues with the melodic line, with arrows pointing to the B-flat notes in measures 219 and 224. Dynamics include *ff* and *ff* *espress.*. The measure numbers 210, 218, and 224 are indicated at the bottom of their respective staves.

6.6 Accents

Staccato and accents are better suited to the oboe than to the flute. Accents for the oboe and cor anglais are also suitable in the lower range but can sound "rather rough". (Piston 1982:420.)

Shostakovich makes extensive use of accents throughout the symphonies, with the exception of Symphonies No. 2 and 3. The most frequently used accent is the following indication: >. It is notable that Shostakovich uses this accent mostly at a *forte* dynamic level and very seldom in *piano* passages. Very often the indication *fff* *espressivo* is used in combination with accents. The following symphonies contain examples of phrases in excess of eight bars in which accents are used at a *forte* dynamic level for virtually each note: Nos. 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, and 15.

The following example from the first movement of Symphony No. 4 (Ex. 6-13) provides a colourful palette of rhythm enhanced by accents which are indicated on each note. Here the oboes and cor anglais have an accented syncopated rhythm in the high register. The dynamic indication is *fortissimo*. The violas and cellos provide rhythmic contrast with accents on each crotchet beat.

Example 6-13: Symphony No. 4, first movement, mm. 159-162



Shostakovich creates a tangibly tense atmosphere in the first movement of Symphony No. 7 (also known as the war symphony, “Leningrad”) by scoring accents for the entire orchestra. Notice the characteristic *fff espressivo molto* indication in m. 497 for the high woodwinds, and also the crescendo marking in mm. 498 and 499.

Example 6-14: Symphony No. 7, first movement, mm. 496-500



The musical score for Example 6-14, Symphony No. 7, first movement, mm. 496-500, is presented in a multi-staff format. The score includes parts for the following instruments: Piccolo, Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet in G (Cl. in G), Clarinet in Bb (Cl. in Bb), Bassoon (Fag.), Contrabassoon (C-fag.), Cor Anglais (Cor.), Trumpet (Tr-bc), Trombone (Tr-bc), Trumpet and Tuba (Tr-nl e Tuba), Timpani (Timp), Percussion (P-ttl), Cymbals (Cassa), Triangle (T-lam), Snare Drum (Tr-bc), Bass Drum (Cor.), and Arches (Archi). The score is marked "Moderato d. ass." and features dynamic markings such as "fff espressivo molto" and "ff pesante". The score is divided into two systems, with the first system ending at measure 499 and the second system starting at measure 500. The score is marked with a box containing the number 52.



The following extract from the *Allegro* (second movement) of Symphony No. 11, “January 9”, presents a fine example of the use of accents in 5/8 and 3/4 time. Shostakovich creates a two-part texture by scoring similar material for the high woodwinds and horns and alternately different material for the bassoons and strings in mm. 340-376.

Example 6-15: Symphony No. 11, second movement, mm. 340-380

The musical score is presented in three systems, separated by double bar lines with repeat signs. The first system (mm. 340-347) includes parts for Piccolo (Picc.), Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet in G (C.ingl.), Clarinet in Bb (Cl.), Bassoon (Fag.), and Contrabassoon (C.fag.). The second system (mm. 347-354) includes parts for Oboe (Ob.) and Clarinet in G (C.ingl.). The third system (mm. 354-380) includes parts for Oboe (Ob.) and Clarinet in G (C.ingl.). The score features complex rhythmic patterns with many accents and slurs, and a box containing the number 53 above the Piccolo part in the first system.



360

Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
C.ingl.

ff

ff

ff

ff

55

368

Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
C.ingl.

ff espress.

ff espress.

ff espress.

ff espress.

374

Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
C.ingl.
Cl.
Fag.
C-fag.

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff