

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

An analysis of Shostakovich's oboe and cor anglais parts in the 15 symphonies reveals the composer's knowledge and understanding of the instruments' technical and lyrical capabilities and limitations. Shostakovich's orchestration of the oboe and cor anglais can be seen as conservative. There are certain characteristics in his orchestration which can be regarded as typical of his style.

9.1 Tonguing and articulation

There are several opportunities in the symphonies where the oboist can use double or triple tonguing instead of single tonguing. Shostakovich does not require the oboist to use flutter tonguing.

Shostakovich specifies the articulation very clearly. There are more legato ascending passages than descending ones. Most semiquaver figures are articulated legato. Scale passages are characteristic of Shostakovich's writing and there are chromatic semiquaver ascending and/or descending passages with legato articulation found in every symphony. With the exception of solo passages, Shostakovich does not write long legato phrases, the average length of a legato figure being two to three bars.

Staccato articulated passages are seldom found in the early symphonies, for example, Symphony No. 3 has no staccato passages for the oboe and cor anglais. The later symphonies contain more staccato solos for the oboe and cor anglais. From Symphony No. 8 Shostakovich begins to add more wit and character to solo passages.

Contrary to his use of staccato more toward the later symphonies, Shostakovich makes more use of non legato articulation in the early symphonies and less toward the later ones. Most repeated notes or motives are articulated non legato.

9.2 Melodic aspects

Shostakovich's knowledge and understanding of the oboe and cor anglais are clearly reflected in the allocation of solo material throughout his 15 symphonies, although the oboe and cor anglais are clearly not favourite instruments. The composer exploits the instruments' technical and lyrical capabilities by combining solos written in the comfortable middle register with a wide range of dynamic indications. Oboe and cor anglais solos are often supported by the characteristic tremolo string accompaniment, sustained strings or low woodwinds.

Repeated notes, often scored for the oboe and cor anglais, are a very typical characteristic and can be seen as synonymous with Shostakovich's nervous and energetic style. The oboe and cor anglais are often involved in very lengthy and taxing passages of repeated notes at extreme dynamic levels.

Trills are an important part of Shostakovich's melodic style and many instances of trills are scored for the oboe and cor anglais. Shostakovich nevertheless proves himself as a sensitive orchestrator as there are no instances of difficult trills for the oboe or cor anglais in the symphonies, nor are there cases of tremolo writing.

9.3 Dynamic aspects

Shostakovich's dynamic indications for the oboe and cor anglais range between the absolute extremes. The hard, dry quality of the oboe and cor anglais in their high register with dynamic indications ranging between *ppp* - *ffff* often results in a brazen sound. This is a recurrent timbre Shostakovich calls for in his symphonies. *Forte* passages in the high register are less frequent for the cor anglais than the oboe. Extensive use of accents is made throughout the symphonies, mostly accompanied by the markings *espressivo*, even at *ffff* dynamic levels.

Shostakovich makes use of muted passages for the third and fourth oboes and cor anglais for reasons of dynamic variety and altered tone-quality.

9.4 Rhythmic aspects

Rhythm and energy are synonymous with Shostakovich's style. The only outstanding rhythmic aspect is a few instances of polyrhythm allocated to the oboes and cor anglais in densely textured tutti sections.

9.5 Combination of instruments

Unison tutti can be regarded as a characteristic typical of Shostakovich's style.

The combination of oboe and strings doubling in unison is used extensively. The following is a common unison combination: flute, oboe and clarinet. The oboe is also frequently doubled in unison with the E-flat clarinet and/or one or more of the other clarinets in solo passages. Shostakovich seldom combines the oboe and cor anglais with the brass although more frequent use is made of combining the oboes and/or cor anglais with the horns.

Shostakovich makes use of the chorus in Symphony No. 2, 3, 13 and 14. There is, however, very little significant doubling of choral parts with the oboe and cor anglais.

9.6 Final word

Shostakovich's use of the oboe and cor anglais in the fifteen symphonies displays consistent qualities of sensitivity and imaginative scoring. The analysis of Shostakovich's writing for the oboe and cor anglais reveals the accessibility of the symphonies from a performer's point of view. The symphonies are, however, a test of endurance in many instances. This study has proved the composer as a sympathetic orchestrator for the oboe and cor anglais in the 15 symphonies and confirms Shostakovich as one of the greatest symphonic composers of the 20th century.