

## THE PICCOLO IN THE FIFTEEN SYMPHONIES OF DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

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### 1. Introduction

Dmitri Shostakovich is probably one of the most prominent composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and his symphonies are increasingly included in the repertoire of symphony orchestras around the world. The growing interest in this composer is evidenced in the remarkable number of books and articles published since his death (Bartlett 2000, Brown 2004, Fay 2004, MacDonald 2006). The intense ongoing literary debate<sup>i</sup> sparked by the autobiography *Testimony* by Solomon Volkov (1979) spans political, social, historical and contextual validity. Listening to Shostakovich's symphonies reveals an intensity of tone and timbre and a dichotomy of humour and seriousness that demands closer scrutiny.

One of the salient features of the symphonies is the composer's skill in orchestration, which for 20<sup>th</sup> century norms, is quite conventional. Orchestral players attest to the accessibility of the parts and the balanced distribution of solo material. To date, analyses of Shostakovich's symphonies have focused mostly on the historical, theoretical or contextual.

Of all the instruments scored in the symphonies, the piccolo is undeniably a key element in Shostakovich's unique orchestral sound and its significant presence in *tutti* and solo passages plays a major role in the definition of the orchestral tapestry. The purpose of the article is to take a close look at Shostakovich's instrumentation of the piccolo to see how he uses it throughout the symphonies and to determine what factors contribute to its strategic importance. It is quite evident that the prominence and flair of Shostakovich's use of this auxiliary instrument throughout the symphonies is quite remarkable. Shostakovich scores the piccolo in all the symphonies (except No. 14 where no wind instruments are used) and specifically two piccolos in Symphonies No. 4 and 8. The piccolo is usually used as an extension of the pitch range of the flute. However, Shostakovich not only exploits the instrument's auxiliary capacity but also treats the piccolo as an autonomous personality.

Qualities peculiar to his style as well as general aspects are examined through a score analysis of the symphonies under the headings: register, dynamic indication, allocation of solo passages, instrument combination and special effects. The article does not include a harmonic and thematic analysis and does not allude to formal and structural aspects of the symphonies.

Ian MacDonald<sup>ii</sup> (n.d.) argues that “since no music can be divorced from human context which gave birth to it, it follows that understanding the context in which Shostakovich composed is directly relevant to the performance and audition of his compositions”. I have tried, where possible, to maintain a historical contextual approach to some of the music examples discussed.

## 2. Register

Shostakovich does not make much use the piccolo's low register. However, of the few passages where the low register is used, Shostakovich shows meticulous skill in instrumentation by making sure the piccolo's feeble timbre in this register is heard.

An example of Shostakovich's use of the piccolo's low register, in spite of its weak qualities, is found in the first movement of Symphony No. 5 (see example 1). The piccolo has been given a brief solo beginning in the low register with a *pianissimo* dynamic indication. The significance of this example illustrates Shostakovich's careful treatment of the timbre of the piccolo's low register by overlapping the solo between the flute and piccolo in unison in bars 304-305. The texture at this point is very transparent. Strings provide a muted accompaniment while two trumpets and timpani reinforce the ascending interval of a fourth, which is prominent in the string part.

Example 1: Symphony No. 5, first movement, bars 300-308

Another example where Shostakovich specifically scores the piccolo's low register with assiduousness is in the first movement of Symphony No. 7 (see example 2). This time the timbre combinations are limited to strings only, without mutes. The piccolo and first violins have a brief solo conversation from bars 121-124, both scored with a *pianissimo* dynamic level. The

significant moment is the upbeat (d2) to the piccolo solo on the last beat of m. 119 that is scored without accompaniment. Firstly, the lowest note of the piccolo's range might not have been heard had it been scored together with string accompaniment, and secondly, the upbeat affirms the piccolo's melody as somewhat more important than the secondary melody played by the strings.

Example 2: Symphony No. 7, first movement, bars 111-126

The most pertinent feature of the overall timbre of the *tutti* sections in the symphonies is the penetrating quality of the piccolo scored in its high register. Shostakovich uses this defining attribute of the piccolo a lot. Most of the passages scored for the piccolo's high register is coupled with very loud dynamic indications. The piccolo then serves as reinforcement of the upper partials of a woodwind ensemble, or is used to create the "piercing edge" to *tutti* sections, also usually with very loud dynamic indications. According to Piston (1994:143) the piccolo is "unsurpassed in penetrating power" and suggests that the highest octave should therefore be used sparingly. Shostakovich has used this aspect of the piccolo's high register to define *tutti* passages time and again throughout the symphonies. The result creates a sense of definition and clarity to the weight of a full score and also creates a characteristic atmosphere of tension, especially coupled with a repeated motive, note or rhythm.

An example of sustained notes in the "earsplitting" high register with the dynamic indication of *fffp crescendo* is found in the first movement of Symphony No. 4<sup>iii</sup> (see example 3). There are two piccolos scored for this symphony. This particular example emphasises the piccolo's ability to shine at the pinnacle of the harmonic stack against the sheer force of the intense *tutti*. It is also a typical example of Shostakovich using the *tutti* orchestra, with the piccolo in its extreme high register in piercing dynamic levels.

Example 3: Symphony No. 4, first movement, bars 752-761

### **3. Allocation of solo material to the piccolo**

It is quite evident when considering the sheer number of piccolo solos found throughout the symphonies, that Shostakovich's use of the piccolo exceeds the role of a mere auxiliary

instrument. An exciting selection of brilliant *scherzando* type passages and delicate solos could be chosen for this section.

Jan Gippo (1996:32), piccolo performer, co-editor of the journal *Flute Talk* and regular author of the articles “Let’s Talk Picc”, writes that the wind parts of Shostakovich’s works are “virtuostic” and the symphonies “concerto-like”. Furthermore, Gippo initiated a survey about piccolo solos whereby leading piccolo players in the USA were asked their opinion on piccolo solos in the symphonic repertoire. The participants were asked to comment on solos in the following categories:

- most beautiful
- most challenging
- most treacherous
- most fun.

The survey revealed a remarkable interest in Shostakovich’s symphonies in all the categories.

In the “most beautiful” category, piccolo performers voted solos from Shostakovich’s Symphonies No. 6, 7, 8 and 10. In the “most challenging” category the overwhelming choice was Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 4. Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 15 was mentioned because of the first movement section, which combines the piccolo with two flutes in unison, as well as the Symphonies No. 6 and 10. According to piccolo players the “most treacherous” category involves solos or passages whose difficulties are such that perfection cannot be guaranteed even when practiced well at home. In these cases, circumstances during actual performance determine everything. Mahler’s Symphony No. 10 received significant votes along with Shostakovich’s Symphonies No. 6, 8, 9, and 11.

Bearing in mind the sombre quality of most of the symphonies it is surprising that Shostakovich was given most votes in the “most fun” category. Three players stated that anything Shostakovich wrote is most fun because he had a “wonderful understanding of the colour and flurry of the piccolo as well as its ability to play beautiful mournful melodies and create the perfect mood”. In order of preference Symphony No. 9 received most votes followed by Symphonies No. 7 and 8, and then 5 and 6. (Gippo 1996:33.)

Shostakovich's writing of solo passages for the piccolo became more flamboyant and challenging from Symphony No. 5. This is reflected in the examples of solos mentioned by piccolo players (Gippo 1996:33). This change in orchestration is not only limited to the piccolo.

Symphony No. 6 (completed in 1939) deserves much attention with regard to solo writing for the entire woodwind section, but particularly for the piccolo. According to Wilson (1994:128) audiences were expecting a symphony along the lines of the Fifth, but were "in for a surprise". The three-movement symphony did not follow the traditional symphonic layout. There is the long and static first movement, written in a "spirit of introspection", followed by a "demonic energy in the *Scherzo* and an almost flippant hilarity in the *Finale*". Wilson also states that Shostakovich was "getting on with what he wanted" in the Symphony No. 6, particularly because it has a strong tendency toward ensemble writing, unheard of in the preceding four symphonies, because he was increasingly drawn to chamber music<sup>iv</sup>.

The piccolo solos throughout Symphony No. 6 are not only beautiful and charming but are also enhanced by innovative instrument, timbre and *tessitura* combinations. An example of this is heard in the delicately mournful solo for the piccolo in the introspective first movement (Largo) of Symphony No. 6 (see example 4). MacDonald (2006:170) writes that the most striking thing about the first movement is its plainness. "Teetering on long pedal points, it hardly moves, employing only pallid colours and restricting its discourse to a brooding game of patience with its germinal cells." The piccolo has a prominent *piano* solo with frugal *pianissimo* accompaniment for maximum effect from the contrabassoon, second violins and double bass from bars 44-47. The accompaniment becomes even more transparent as the piccolo solo takes on a descending line from bars 46-51 with mostly the harp and second violins as support.

Example 4: Symphony No. 6, first movement, bars 41-53

In the Scherzo-like second movement of Symphony No. 6 (See example 5) there is a dialogue of timbres between the piccolo solo, harp, strings and clarinets. The passage begins with a *staccato piano* flute solo in m. 203 that seamlessly connects to the piccolo solo from m. 204, with harmonic support from the harp and strings, joined by the clarinets in m. 206. Shostakovich

makes use of a wide representation of registers and unusual combination of instruments as the accompaniment changes colour with the high strings being replaced by *pianissimo* clarinet broken chords in m. 206, a pedal point from the tuba, cellos and double basses, and sustained chords from the harp. Shostakovich draws attention to this passage by emphatically underlying the highest note of the piccolo solo's phrase, the E-flat in m. 206, with the droning addition in octave unison in the low register of the tuba, harp, cello and double bass from bars 206-211. In this instance the piccolo E-flat and the tuba E-flat span six octaves. According to piccolo players the challenge in examples like this one, where the piccolo takes over a melody from the flute (and even more so if the joint note is a direct unison), is to attempt to blend the piccolo's timbre and dynamic as much as possible with that of the flute.

Example 5: Symphony No. 6, second movement, bars 198-215

Possibly one of the most difficult, lengthy and enjoyable piccolo solos in the repertoire is found in the second movement of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 8<sup>v</sup> (see example 6). Blokker & Dearling (1979:99) state that this *Allegretto* movement "displays Shostakovich's best biting, acid-etched orchestration, and it is very Russian in feeling". In my opinion Blokker and Dearling undermine the character of the Symphony No. 8 (1943) which is by far the darkest, most tragic sounding of the symphonies. Wilson (1993:172) shares this sentiment and describes Symphony No. 8 as a Requiem with its "tragic canvas".

In this excerpt the piccolo player is faced not only with technical challenges, but articulation and intonation difficulties as well. This specific piccolo solo, also referred to in an article on "note releases" by Walfrid Kujala (1995:15), encompasses almost 80 bars during which the stage is shared on two brief occasions with the E-flat clarinet. The beginning of the phrase, initiated by the flute in m. 64 and passed on to the piccolo via an elision in m. 65 is yet another instance of Shostakovich's meticulous orchestration. The accompaniment to the solo throughout is sparse with an *ostinato*-like detached contribution from the strings from bars 67-95, after which the string accompaniment becomes even thinner with *pizzicato* accompaniment from only the violas and cellos (bars 102-110). Adding extra timbre of the *staccato* string part, Shostakovich includes muted *staccato* chords by the three trumpets from bars 81-101. A pedal point on the tuba from bars 81-85, taken over by the four horns from bars 87-96, lends support to the harmonic

foundation. Prominent melodic intervention from the bassoon and contrabassoon in octave unison (bars 78-81 and bars 85-86) introduces an interesting conversation, utilizing vastly different registers and tone colours, with the piccolo; every now and then the E-flat clarinet (bars 90-96 and bars 106-108) contributes a new voice with similar material. On this particular solo Norman Lebrecht reports<sup>vi</sup> on Kurt Sanderling's<sup>vii</sup> rehearsal with the Los Angeles Philharmonic of Shostakovich's symphony No. 8: "At one point, Sanderling tells the orchestra that the piccolo solo in the second movement of Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony represents a young army officer who has been given an unexpected weekend pass and goes whistling away down the road. A bassoon solo is a puffed-up party apparatchik swaggering off on his first trip abroad."

Example 6: Symphony No. 8, second movement, bars 60-111

Another of the more challenging solos is the tranquil ending of the second movement of Symphony No. 9 (See example 7). As the tempo slows to *Adagio* the piccolo utters the final statement of the opening melody, supported by muted strings and *pianissimo* muted chords from three French horns. The challenge of this solo lies in the sustained F-sharp (bars 294-303), which closes the last 10 bars of this movement. Breath control, stable intonation and stamina are requirements for the successful execution of this taxing solo.

Example 7: Symphony No. 9, second movement, bars 286-303

Symphony No. 15 (1971) is renowned for its sparse orchestration and chamber-like sonorities. In fact, the full orchestra is only used in 31 bars during the course of the work (Blokker & Dearling 1979:151). A predilection for the variety and timbres of mostly small percussion instruments - such as the triangle, castanets, soprano tom-tom, wood block, whip, cymbals, gong, xylophone, chimes, vibraphone and celesta - results in a number of innovative timbre combinations with the rest of the conservative *tutti*, consisting of the usual strings, piccolo, two each of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons and trumpets, four horns, three trombones and tuba.

There are a few remarkable similarities between Symphony No. 1 and Symphony No. 15. Amongst others, they both have a 'seemingly' light character as a result of their melodic content as well as their orchestration. Apart from the enlarged percussion department, the scoring

requirement is, in fact, smaller by one trumpet than that of Symphony No. 1 (1925). A comparison of the two scores elucidates the vast world of experience assimilated during the intervening 45 years. Comparing Shostakovich's writing of solo material for the piccolo and the rest of the woodwinds reveals the composer's development evidenced in his finely tuned sense of virtuoso writing and characteristic use of each instrument in Symphony No. 15. Blokker & Dearling (1979:151) conclude that this experience is shown graphically in the way the composer has paired down his requirements and maximised the potential of each instrument. That the first and final symphony have some similarities in style and instrument numbers creates a balance of structure to the symphonies. It is as though Shostakovich not only creates balance in style but that the first symphony is filled with a sense of birth of a promising career, and that the final symphony can be interpreted to be preoccupied with death. Kurt Sanderling, having conducted this symphony more than eighty times around the world<sup>viii</sup>, said the following of Symphony No. 15: "I think there is no other work of his as radically horrible and cruel as the Fifteenth Symphony. It's a horrific work about loneliness and death".

Symphony No. 15 is full of characteristic solos for the piccolo, but the solo (see example 8) which is indeed challenging, also belonging to the "most treacherous" category (Gippo 1996:26), is the following one in the first movement in which the piccolo shares an octave unison *staccato* passage at high speed (crotchet = M.M. 120) with two flutes. The *subito piano* piccolo and flute solo passage is introduced by a *fortissimo* triplet rhythm by the tom-tom in bars 438-439. An unveiling effect is achieved as the instruments and timbres grow in number with the inclusion, one by one, of the side drum in m. 444; oboe m. 445; xylophone m. 447; cellos m. 448; clarinet and bassoon m. 451; and muted trumpets m. 454. At this tempo it is virtually impossible to perfect intonation between piccolo and flute.

Example 8: Symphony No. 15, first movement, bars 438-458

#### **4. Articulation**

Articulation, like register and timbre, can create a variety of effects and textures between various instrument types. From the outset Shostakovich clearly distinguishes a uniform articulation method for the woodwinds. Conventional articulation markings have been used throughout the

symphonies. The piccolo has not been treated in any way differently to the other woodwinds with regard to articulation. It is not possible to speculate whether Shostakovich used more *legato* or *staccato* articulation for the piccolo in certain symphonies as these variables are directly subject to the character and programmatic content of the symphony. For example, predominant use is made of *non-legato* articulation for the *tutti* in Symphony No. 7 (*Leningrad*) where the atmosphere simulates marching German troops (Fay 2004, MacDonald 1990, Wilson 1994).

Conversely, it is easier to draw conclusions about Shostakovich's use of articulation markings for the piccolo with regard to solo passages. He shows particular insight into the idiomatic characteristics and idiosyncrasies of the instrument by using articulation indications effectively in an effort to bring across a musical idea with maximum effect. Much has been left to the discretion of the performer to blend articulation variables.

Articulation markings for piccolo solos throughout the fifteen symphonies vary between languid *legato* passages to quaint and cheeky *staccato* ones. Example 9, from the second movement of Symphony No. 6 displays a very exposed crisp *staccato* solo in a *fortissimo* dynamic level. Characteristic and very effective descending and ascending demisemiquaver *legato* scale passages (bars 407, 409, 410) are interspersed throughout the solo. As has also been pointed out by Kujala (1995:17), this solo demands the closest attention to clean articulation.

Example-9: Symphony No. 6, second movement, bars 396-419

The synthesis of articulation, dynamic indication and combination of instruments is effectively achieved in the following excerpt from the third movement of Symphony No. 6 (See example 10). An informal atmosphere is created by the octave unison combination of *piano staccato* grace notes from the piccolo, E-flat clarinet and clarinet against an oscillating harmony in *pizzicato* from the strings. This tongue-in-cheek effect created by the piccolo playing grace notes has already been used liberally throughout Symphony No. 4. At this point the grace note together with the *pizzicato* string accompaniment reminds one of Rossini, particularly the *Thieving Magpie* overture. MacDonald (2006 : 171) writes that the scene of the third movement seems "circus-like, the relentless merriment kicking vulgarity imported about equally from Broadway and the Folies Bergeres – is Mahlerian in its enthusiastic embrace of traditionally unsymphonic

material”. In the second movement of Symphony No. 6 Shostakovich uses the humorous sounding character of staccato piccolo to relieve the tension from the serious opening movement. The atmosphere throughout this movement is light and transparent.

Yet the mood belies the simmering bleakness of the times. MacDonald (1990:141) writes that Shostakovich recalls this period as “difficult and mean, unbelievably mean and hard ... every day brought more bad news ... I was so lonely and afraid...”. The last two movements of Symphony No. 6 give the listener a respite against the heaviness of previous symphonies, a moment of escapism.

Example 10: Symphony No. 6, third movement, bars 55-68

## 5. Special effects and devices

Of all the contemporary technical effects available to the flute family such as mutes, keyslaps, timbral trills, air tones, multiphonics and microtones, Shostakovich only briefly makes use in his symphonies of flutter tonguing (*frullato*) for the piccolo.

Flutter tonguing for the piccolo is only used in Symphony No. 4. Shostakovich indicates this effect on his score as *frull.*, an abbreviation for *frullato*, the Italian term for flutter tonguing. Considering the grandiose scale of the Symphony No. 4 it is not surprising that Shostakovich chose this symphony to experiment with the *frullato* technique for the piccolo and flutes. The ingenuity of See example 11 is clear, especially in the light of the level of virtuosity required to play rolled “r’s” in a *piano* dynamic level described by Blatter (1980:74). Two pairs of piccolos and flutes create a sinister pedal point of octave unison *frullato* notes in a *pianissimo* dynamic level as a backdrop to an octave unison cello and double bass melody. The high winds are layered in such a way that the piccolo is always combined with a flute in a kind of relay, similar to circular breathing. One could assume that Shostakovich was trying to create a continuous undisturbed *frullato* effect.

Shostakovich uses the typical orchestration technique of subtly overlapping the end of a phrase with a unison note at the beginning of the next passage in the following example, as is seen in the piccolo and flute in each bar from bars 855-881. By scoring a quaver B-flat in the first

piccolo part in m. 855 the second piccolo and first flute have a small boost in their attempt to produce a clear, clean attack for the *pianissimo frullato* notes. Every subsequent bar is scored with a quaver alternating between piccolo and flute, which in itself creates an interesting effect given the individual qualities of the two instruments. The passage significantly ends in harmonic dissonance with all the instruments playing a quaver in m. 881. The effect of rolling “r’s” is discreetly handed over to the timpani from m. 882, as Shostakovich once again cunningly exploits every resource of the orchestral range.

Example 11: Symphony No. 4, first movement, bars 850-892

Shostakovich engages an atypical variety of special effects and unusual instrument combinations close the second movement of Symphony No. 4 (See example 12). The piccolo has an opportunity to use double tonguing in m. 401 followed by a *frull.* note in octave unison with the first flute in a *pianissimo* dynamic level. The piccolo and flute are purposely placed at the close amidst a poignant ensemble of percussion, harp and strings.

There has been much speculation about the closing of the second movement of Symphony No. 4. Maxim Shostakovich (MacDonald 1998:2) makes the unusual suggestion that his father envisaged the onset of war in Symphony No. 4 and the percussion at the end of the second movement is intended to show “the passage of time... a clock or heartbeat”. Gennadi Roshdestvensky<sup>ix</sup> offers an alternative view: “For me, and I think for Shostakovich, the association is prisoners tapping out messages to one another on the hot-water pipes in jail.” The movement ends with an eerie atmosphere, conducive to the probability of both the interpretations of Maxim Shostakovich and Roshdestvensky.

Shostakovich has only used the *frullato* effect in two symphonies, twice in Symphony No. 4 for piccolos and flutes, and twice in the second movement of Symphony No. 8, which is scored for four and then three flutes. One can therefore conclude that Shostakovich strategically used the *frullato* effect in these two symphonies that clearly have a war-centred programme.

Example 12: Symphony No. 4, second movement, bars 399-403

## 6. Piccolo in combination with other woodwind instruments

The choice of combining timbres can be compared to an artist using a variety of shades and hues to best emphasise an impression through his own unique taste and style. Limited only to a varied degree by the technical limitations of the instruments, Shostakovich typically uses novel combinations of instruments to colour his orchestral canvas. No doubt these instrument combinations often reveal an intended programme. The piccolo, with its not too subtle timbre, is included in an array of colourful and unusual timbre combinations.

In *tutti* writing the piccolo is used in many varied roles. Its shrill high register is used as the tip of the harmonic stack, to give clarity to a passage, harmony or cadence, and to contain and define thickly orchestrated sections. In many instances the piccolo is merely used in its traditional way to add to and blend the homogenous timbre of woodwinds by doubling, in its middle to low register, in unison with the flutes.

Predictably, Symphony No. 1 is conservative in piccolo combinations, with mostly unexposed unison and octave unison passages with flute or flute and clarinet. From Symphony No. 2 the piccolo is frequently scored in its very high register, which adds an extra dimension of range in the *tutti* sections. It seems as though a tendency has been established where the piccolo makes its mark in the colour of the ensemble as the outliner of full *tutti* sections in its very high register, usually in *fortissimo* dynamic levels. The effect of using the piccolo in the *tutti* to outline a harmony is increasingly more focused throughout the symphonies into smaller combinations of instruments, yet still emphasising extreme registers and striking timbres. This is evident in the number of times Shostakovich combines the piccolo with the contrabassoon, double bass or cellos in often very thin textures and at varied dynamic levels.

From Symphony No. 2 Shostakovich explores more combination possibilities with the piccolo by using it with other woodwinds as well as strings in octave unison. For example, the piccolo and clarinet are scored together for the first time in a duet.

The unusual effect of timbres in the combination of piccolo and E-flat clarinet is regularly used, with prominent passages in Symphony No. 4. Many challenging duets for piccolo and E-flat clarinet are scored throughout the rest of the symphonies.

The combination of piccolo and voice<sup>x</sup> is used very conservatively with only one instance in Symphony No. 3 where the high woodwinds double, in octave unison, a recitative-like passage with sopranos and tenors.

A typical characteristic of Shostakovich's style is combining light and dark timbres, as well as high and low registers. This is clearly seen in the recurring combination of piccolo and lower double reeds, more specifically bassoon and contrabassoon, with examples found as early as Symphony No. 3. In this instance the piccolo and bassoon share an octave unison passage for four bars. The third movement of Symphony No. 4 includes a solo with piccolo, contrabassoon and double bass. Later in the same movement the piccolo and contrabassoon are combined as accompaniment to an exposed bassoon solo. The next similar encounter is found in the first movement of Symphony No. 6 already discussed (see see example 4) where the combination of contrabassoon, strings and harp accompanies a piccolo solo.

A distinctive example of Shostakovich's use of contrasting tone colours can be found in the second movement of Symphony No. 4 (see example 15). The light and dark timbres as well as high and low registers of the piccolos and bassoons are juxtaposed in an imitative conversation in fifths in bars 165 and 167 against an oscillating two-note octave unison accompaniment from the clarinets. Before the brief encounter between the piccolo and bassoon, the flutes and bassoons were involved in a similar dialogue of which the remnants can be seen in bars 163-164. The initial melodic material from the bassoons and piccolos make way for a ferocious *forte* melodic entry in octave unison by the bassoons, contrabassoon, cellos and double basses in m. 170.

Example 13: Symphony No. 4, second movement, bars 163-175

The combination of piccolo and percussion presents endless possibilities and opportunities for exploiting the potentially cheerful characteristic qualities of the instruments' timbres. It is probably not surprising that Shostakovich is frugal with the inclusion of lighter moments in the mostly very serious nature of the symphonies, which also explains the scant examples of the combination of piccolo and percussion. Nevertheless, a few bright moments using this

combination are found in some symphonies, particularly Symphony No. 15 (see example 16) which has a rich percussion component throughout and a few animated conversations between the piccolo and tom-tom.

Its four movements feature solos for nearly every instrument in the orchestra and contains many quotations from various composers, as far afield as Rossini and Sibelius. The apparent lightheartedness of the symphony brings the listener to question Shostakovich's intentions – is he being sincerely witty and cheerful, or is this Shostakovich at his satirical best?

Example 14: Symphony No. 15, first movement, bars 161-165

## 7. Conclusion

The piccolo has a very prominent part in the symphonies and is quite clearly one of Shostakovich's favoured auxiliary instruments. It is treated with a wide variety of solos to exhibit its maximum lyrical and technical capacity. The piccolo is scored in all the symphonies (with the exception of Symphony No. 14 which has no woodwinds) and two piccolos are employed in Symphonies No. 4 and 8.

The solo and *tutti* sections require stamina and strength from the players, as well as a fine ear for tricky intonation difficulties with often very exposed solos and very novel combinations. The composer uses the technique of juxtaposing piccolo melodies with flute melodies creating the seamless effect of a continuous melody and an extended range. The piccolo's range is exploited mostly in its very high register and in extreme dynamic levels: shrill *fortissimo* piccolo parts scored in the very high register can be regarded as a distinct trademark of the composer's style. The effect of the use of the extreme high register in *tutti* passages contributes to an atmosphere of nervous tension. Shostakovich does not make an exception for the piccolo as far as articulation is concerned and is uniform in indicating articulation for the whole woodwind section. An abundance of very provocative and challenging piccolo solos abound throughout the symphonies, creating an ample platform for exploiting the exhibitionistic qualities of the instrument and its player. Shostakovich is, however, conservative when using special effects and devices for the piccolo, choosing only to experiment with *frullato* in Symphony No. 4.

The instrument combination preferred most in exposed textures is the piccolo with the E-flat clarinet, and the piccolo with bassoon and contrabassoon. The piccolo is fairly traditionally employed as part of the woodwind section or to double in unison or octave unison with the flutes. Less significant combinations include piccolo with strings, piccolo with brass, piccolo with percussion and piccolo with voice.

Shostakovich's use of the piccolo's reveals a skilful use of the instrument's intrinsic timbral qualities. By scoring the piccolo in its extreme register contributes to the atmosphere of tension. Melodious solo parts reveal its lyrical qualities, whereas interesting instrument combination suggest and create an atmosphere of humour.

The piccolo is an integral part in Shostakovich's realisation of the symphonies. Its voice is distinctly heard. It is treated with respect and given ample opportunity at solo material that displays a multitude of voices and characters.

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> See Music under Soviet Rule: Chronology of the Debate. [www.siue.edu](http://www.siue.edu).

<sup>ii</sup> Ian MacDonald in *Universal because Specific: Arguments for a contextual approach*. [www.siue.edu](http://www.siue.edu)

<sup>iii</sup> Symphony No. 4 is scored on a grandiose scale. It has to be borne in mind that during the rehearsals in 1935 Shostakovich was "coerced" by the authorities into withdrawing the première of Symphony No. 4. It was performed for the first time in 1962.

<sup>iv</sup> Shostakovich composed, by far, more chamber music than for any other genre, which inevitably influence his style of orchestration.

<sup>v</sup> The second movement of Symphony No. 8 also includes prominent solos for two piccolos, bassoon, contrabassoon and E-flat clarinet.

<sup>vi</sup> Lebrecht in *Kurt Sanderling. Looking back on Shostakovich: I*. [www.siue.edu](http://www.siue.edu)

<sup>vii</sup> Kurt Sanderling is the oldest living conductor to have worked with Shostakovich in Russia. The first time he conducted Shostakovich was when he was approached by the authorities to conduct Symphony No. 5 in 1949. *Kurt Sanderling. Looking back on Shostakovich: II*. [www.siue.edu](http://www.siue.edu)

<sup>viii</sup> *Kurt Sanderling. Looking back on Shostakovich: II*. [www.siue.edu](http://www.siue.edu)

<sup>ix</sup> Roshdestvensky, during Shostakovich's lifetime he held positions of chief conductor at the Bolshoi Theatre, the Moscow Radio Orchestra and Moscow Chamber Theatre.

<sup>x</sup> Shostakovich uses voices in 5 symphonies.

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50 44 Moderato ♩ = 42 45 solo

Picc. *I solo* *pp* *morendo*

Fl. *p* *I. II a2*

Tr-be *pp*

Timp. *pp*

Archi *con sord.* *pp* *300 pp*

Picc. *ppp*

Fl. *I. II a2*

Tr-be *pp*

Timp. *pp*

Arpe *p*

V-no solo *con sord.*

V-ni I *altri con sord.* *pp* *gliss.*

V-ni II *con sord.* *pp* *gliss.*

V-le *gliss.*

V-o.

C-b. *305*

8245

Example 1: Symphony No. 5, first movement, mm. 300-308

The image displays a musical score for the first movement of Symphony No. 7, measures 111-126. The score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 111-121) features a Piccolo (Picc.) and Flute (Fl.) part. The Piccolo part begins with a *poco riten.* marking and a box containing the number 14, followed by a *solo* marking and a return to *a tempo*. The Flute part is marked *I* and *pp*. The string section (Archi) is marked *pp* and *unis.*. The second system (measures 121-126) features a Piccolo part marked *unis.* and *pp*, and a string section marked *pp* and *unis.*. The number 15 is boxed above the Piccolo part in the second system. The number 9373 is printed at the bottom of the page.

Example 2: Symphony No. 7, first movement, mm. 111-126

752

10778

Example 3: Symphony No. 4, first movement, mm. 752-761

8

Picc. *pp* solo

Cl. b. *dim.*

Fag. *a2 dim.* *pp*

C-fag. *p dim.* *pp*

Cor. I, II *mf* *p*

Archi *f espress.* *dim.* *pp*

41 *dim.* *pp*

Picc. *pp*

C-fag. *pp*

V-niII *pizz.*

C-b. *pp*

44 *pp*

9

Picc.

C-fag.

Arpa *p non arpeggiato*

V-niII *47*

9 245

Example 4: Symphony No. 6, first movement, mm. 41-53

Pico.

Arpa

Archi

*pp* *cresc.* *pp* *cresc.* *pp* *cresc.* *p espress.* *cresc.*

*v* *a* *p* *b* *v*

50

Fl. *p*

Arpa

Archi *pp*

198

54

Picc. *solo* *p*

Fl. I *pp*

Cl. I *pp*

Tuba *pp*

Arpa *pp*

Archi *pp*

204

9245

Example 5: Symphony No. 6, second movement, mm. 198-215

Picc. I  
Cl. II  
Cl. III  
Cor. *I solo*  
Tr-ni  
e Tuba *mp*  
Arpa  
Archi

210

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score, page 210. It features six staves. The Piccolo (Picc.) staff has a single melodic line. The Clarinet (Cl.) section consists of three staves (I, II, III) with a rhythmic accompaniment. The Horn (Cor.) staff has a melodic line marked 'I solo' and 'mp'. The Trumpets and Tuba (Tr-ni e Tuba) staff has a rhythmic accompaniment. The Arpa (Arpa) staff has a rhythmic accompaniment. The Archi (Archi) section consists of four staves with a rhythmic accompaniment. The score is written in a common time signature and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamics.

Fl. *poco accel.* *a2* *f*  
 Tr-be *I. II* *pp*  
 Cor. *a2*  
 Trni  
 Tuba *p*  
 Timp.  
 V-al I  
 V-al II  
 V-lo  
 V-o  
 C-b. *pizz.* *p* *arco*  
 60

53  $\text{♩} = 144$   
 Pico *I solo* *p* *f*  
 Fl. *a2* *p*  
 Tr-be *I. II* *morendo*  
 Archl *p* *pp*  
 65

Example 6: Symphony No. 8, second movement, mm. 60-111

Picc. *I* *sf* *sf* *sf*

V-ni I

V-ni II

V-le 70

Picc. *I* *sf* *sf* *sf* 54

Fag. *I* *p*

C fag. *p*

V-ni I

V-ni II

V-le 75

Picc. *I* *p* *sf* *sf*

Fag. *I* *sf* *sf*

C fag. *sf* *sf*

Tr-be *con sord.* *mf*

Tuba *mf* *mp*

V-ni I

V-ni II

V-le 80

I [55]

Picc. *mf*

Fag. *mf*

C-fag. *mf*

Tr-be

Cor. *a2*

Tuba *p*

V-ni I

V-ni II

V-la *85*

Picc. *mf*

Cl. picc. *p* *mf* *mf*

Tr-be *a2*

Cor. *a2*

V-ni I

V-ni II

V-la *90*

56

Picc. *p sf*

Cl. piccolo *sf*

Fag. *p sf*

C-fag. *p sf*

Tr-be

Cor. *a2*

V-ni I

V-ni II

V-le *95*

57

Picc. *I sf*

Fag. *I sf*

C-fag. *sf*

Tr-be

V-ni I

V-ni II

V-le *pizz.*

V-o. *pizz.*

*99*

Picc. I  
*sf*  
*sf*  
*sf*  
Cl. picc. *p*  
V-le  
V-o. 103

Picc. I 58  
*sf*  
*p*  
Fl. *p*  
Cl. picc. *p*  
Cl. (in A) *p*  
Fag. *p* *sf* *p*  
C-fag. *p*

V-ni I pizz. *p*  
V-ni II pizz. *p*  
V-le pizz. *p*  
V-o. 108

*solo* **Adagio**

Picc. *con sord.*

Cor. III *pp con sord.*

Arch. *p*

286 *p*

Picc. *morendo*

Arch. *pp*

296 *pp*

Example 7: Symphony No. 9, second movement, mm. 286-303

47

Picc.

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

T-tom

T-ro

Archi

438

The musical score is written for a full orchestra. The woodwind section includes Piccolo, Flute, Oboe, and Clarinet. The percussion section includes Tom-tom and Snare drum. The string section is labeled 'Archi' and consists of Violins, Violas, Cellos, and Double Basses. The score is in 2/4 time and features complex rhythmic patterns and dynamics. The number '47' is written in a box above the Piccolo staff. The number '438' is written at the bottom left of the page.

Example 8: Symphony No. 15, first movement, mm. 438-458

443

48

Picc.

Fl.

Ob.

T-tom

T-ro

*p* 3

447

Picc.

Fl.

Ob.

T-tom

T-ro

C-111

Sil.

*p* 3

49

Picc.

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Fag.

Tr-be

T-tom

T-ro

C-111

Sil.

*mf*

*p*

con sord.

50

Picc.

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Fag.

Cor.

Tr-be

Tr-nl e Tuba

Timp.

T-tom

T-ro

C-III

Sll.

50

Arch.

455

9856

72 solo

Pico.

Cl. b.

Archi

396

Pico.

Archi

402

Example-9: Symphony No. 6, second movement, mm. 396-419

Picc.

408

This musical system features a Piccolo part on a single staff and an Archi (strings) section on four staves. The Piccolo part begins with a melodic line that includes a trill and is followed by a series of sixteenth-note passages. The strings provide a rhythmic accompaniment with a steady sixteenth-note pattern. A double bar line is present at the end of the system.

Picc.

73

413

*p*

*p*

This musical system continues the Piccolo and Archi parts. The Piccolo part features a melodic line with a trill and sixteenth-note passages. The strings continue with their rhythmic accompaniment. A box containing the number '73' is located above the Piccolo staff. The system concludes with a double bar line and a dynamic marking of *p* (piano) in both the Piccolo and Archi staves.

88 打 打 打 打

Picc. *I* *p*

Fl.

Cl. picc. *I* *p*

Cl. *I* *p*

Cl. b.

Archi *pizz.*

55

---

89

Picc.

Cl. picc. *I*

Cl. *I*

Cl. b.

Archi *arco* *f dim.* *v v v* *(p)* *arco* *(p)* *arco* *(p)* *arco* *(p)*

62 *(p)*

Example 10: Symphony No. 6, third movement, mm. 55-68

88

Picc. I *frull.* *pp* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* II *frull.* *pp* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.*

Fl. I *frull.* *pp* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* II *frull.* *pp* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.*

C-III *p* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.*

Archi *(pp)* *pizz.* *mp* *morendo* *arco* *p* *arco* *p*

850

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Picc. I *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* II *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.*

Fl. I *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* II *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.*

Archi *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.* *b<sub>2</sub>.*

859

10778

Example 11: Symphony No. 4, first movement, mm. 850-892

89

Picc. I *b<sub>2</sub>*. II *b<sub>2</sub>*. *b<sub>2</sub>*. *b<sub>2</sub>*. *b<sub>2</sub>*. *b<sub>2</sub>*. *b<sub>2</sub>*. *b<sub>2</sub>*. *b<sub>2</sub>*. *b<sub>2</sub>*.

Fl. I *b<sub>2</sub>*. II *b<sub>2</sub>*. *b<sub>2</sub>*. *b<sub>2</sub>*. *b<sub>2</sub>*. *b<sub>2</sub>*. *b<sub>2</sub>*. *b<sub>2</sub>*. *b<sub>2</sub>*. *b<sub>2</sub>*.

C-fag. *pp*

Tube I

div. *pp* *ten.* *un.*

div. arco *p* *un.*

div. arco *ten.* *un.*

Archi *pp* *p* *p* *p* *p* *p* *p* *p* *p* *p*

870

90

Picc. I *b<sub>2</sub>*. II *b<sub>2</sub>*.

Fl. I *b<sub>2</sub>*. II *b<sub>2</sub>*.

C-fag.

Tr-be con sord. *mp* *mf* *mf* *f* III con sord. *f* *ff*

Tr-ni I-II con sord. *f* *ff*

Tube con sord. *mp* *mf* *mf* *f* *f* *ff*

Timp. II *pp* *p* *p* *mp* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mf* *f*

Archi

881

The image shows a page of a musical score for the second movement of Symphony No. 4, measures 399-403. The score is arranged in a multi-staff format. The instruments and their parts are as follows:

- Picc.** (Piccolo): A single staff with a treble clef. It has a rest for the first three measures and then plays a melodic line starting in measure 4, marked *frull.* (trill).
- Fl.** (Flute): A single staff with a treble clef. It has a rest for the first three measures and then plays a melodic line starting in measure 4, marked *pp.* (pianissimo) and *frull.* (trill).
- Cast.** (Castanets): A single staff with a treble clef. It plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes throughout the measures.
- Legno** (Woodwinds): A single staff with a treble clef. It plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes throughout the measures.
- T-ro** (Trombones): A single staff with a bass clef. It plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes throughout the measures.
- Sil.** (Snare Drum): A single staff with a treble clef. It has a rest for the first three measures and then plays a rhythmic pattern starting in measure 4, marked *p* (piano).
- Arpe** (Arpeggiated Bass): A grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The bass line has a rest for the first three measures and then plays a rhythmic pattern starting in measure 4, marked *a2* (second octave).
- Archi** (Archi - Strings): A grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The upper strings play a melodic line with a tremolo effect, and the lower strings play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

The score is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The page number 399 is located at the bottom left of the score.

Example 12: Symphony No. 4, second movement, mm. 399-403

The image shows a page of a musical score for the second movement of Symphony No. 4, measures 163-175. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with multiple staves for each instrument family. The instruments listed on the left are: Picc., Fl., Ob., Cl. picc., Cl., Cl. b., Fag., C-fag., Tr-be, Cor., Tr-ni, Tube, Timp., and Archi. The Piccolo part features a melodic line starting at measure 163 with a *mf* dynamic, moving to *oresso.* by measure 165. The Clarinet in B-flat part has a *mf* dynamic marking at measure 164. The Bassoon part includes the instruction "I. II soli" at measure 163. The score is written in a key signature of one flat and a 3/4 time signature. The page number "163" is printed at the bottom left of the score.

Example 13: Symphony No. 4, second movement, mm. 163-175

Picc. *ff*

Fl. *ff*

Ob. *ff* *a2*

Cl.picc.

Cl. *ff* *a2*

Cl.b.

Fag. *ff*

C-fag. *ff*

Tr-be *(con sord.) a2*

Cor. *f a2*

Tr-ni

Tube

Timp.

Archi

169

*ff*

*ff*

Example 14: Symphony No. 15, first movement, mm. 161-165

17

Picc. *f* *ff*

T-tom *p*

C-111

S11.

161