

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Personal motivation

After a stimulating Master's dissertation entitled *The oboe and cor anglais in the fifteen symphonies of Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)*, the complexity and intrigue behind the composer and his symphonies prompted the author into continued study. As an oboe player, it seemed a natural progression to continue the research into the rest of the woodwind section.

The author's interest in life in Russia was amplified by discussions of Shostakovich and the symphonies with oboist Sergei Burdukov, once principal oboe player of the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra. Mr Burdukov has performed many of Shostakovich's symphonies by conductors who knew Shostakovich personally, including his son Maxim Shostakovich.

The study of orchestration, instrumentation and style of the woodwind writing in the symphonies of Shostakovich is fascinating, particularly in view of the fact that he was an accomplished pianist and is known for his skill in orchestration. Very little has been written about this aspect of Shostakovich's symphonies. Combining an investigation into the composer's orchestral style with the much documented socio-political circumstances during the composer's life, one is left with a sense of utter amazement at the conditions which gave impetus to the wealth of compositions he penned. It would be very hard for any 20th century composer outside Russia to fathom the atmosphere of terror that prevailed there throughout the composer's life as well as its dire influence on artists, intelligentsia and their creative and musical output. Shostakovich's symphonies are remarkable multi-dimensional testimonies to these events, and are accepted as part of the classical canon.

Circumstances forced Shostakovich to compose in a manner so as not to provoke the authorities. This resulted in a musical language filled with ambiguity. On closer investigation, the symphonies reveal various possibilities of subjective interpretation. Wilson, in her definitive

biography on Shostakovich's life, writes that "Shostakovich's music speaks of the universal condition of man, the misery of each individual and his helplessness in the face of overwhelming odds" (Wilson 1994:234). But the symphonies are also at times lyrical and even witty. It is their paradoxical nature that enticed the author of this thesis into their study and that of the complex life of Shostakovich.

The famous Russian pianist and conductor Vladimir Ashkenazy (2000:VIII) is of the opinion that "Shostakovich was saying in music what was absolutely unthinkable to say in words, and managing, against all the odds, not only to survive but to leave for posterity great music of shattering intensity and quintessential spiritual and musical validity". He continues by saying that

*we need not infuse every note of Shostakovich's music with extra-musical connotations, but we need to understand what he endured in his life – the inhumanity, moral depravity, and hopelessness which the Soviet system inflicted – all of which he amalgamated into the spiritual context of his music (along with, need it be said, a good measure of irony and black humour).*

In the latest article on Shostakovich, Fanning concludes that Shostakovich's reputation, unlike that of many other composers, has grown steadily since his death, and that "he has become the most popular composer of serious art music in the middle years of the 20th century" (Fanning & Fay 2001:300).

It is this background that inspired the author to conduct research into the use of the woodwinds in Shostakovich's symphonies.

## **1.2 Research questions**

In the light of the previous discussion the following main research question can be formulated:

- What are the characteristics of Shostakovich's use of the woodwinds in his symphonies?

The following questions can be regarded as sub-questions:

- What are specific elements, technical and artistic, of Shostakovich's orchestration for the woodwinds?
- Is there a developmental trend in Shostakovich's use of the woodwinds in his symphonies?
- How accessible are the woodwind parts in Shostakovich's symphonies from the woodwind player's perspective?
- What is the significance and influence of the socio-political events on Shostakovich and his symphonies?

### 1.3 Aim of the study

The aim of the analysis of the Shostakovich symphonies is to find specific elements in his use of the woodwinds in an attempt to reveal aspects typical of the composer's orchestral style. Specific elements, technical and artistic, regarding orchestration and instrumentation will be closely assessed. The accessibility of the woodwind parts will also be considered from the player's perspective.

The analysis includes, as much as possible, the profound effect the socio-political events had on the composer during the creation of each symphony. In so doing the author will affirm that Shostakovich was truly one of the greatest composers of symphonic music in the 20th century whose musical achievement and influence will extend well into the 21st century.

This thesis sets out to reaffirm the views of many commentators on Shostakovich and not least those of Griffiths (1995:9), in his overview of music since 1945, when he pertinently summarises the essence of a composer's orchestration:

*A composer's orchestration is far more than just a personal stamp; it is, quite literally, the quintessence of his musical thought, expression, and artistic personality. To recognize personal traits of orchestration is to understand the musical language of the composer. And, inversely, to comprehend the creator's musical personality is to know his unique way with the orchestra.*



#### 1.4 Theoretical framework

In the light of the continuous introspection in musicology about the validity and relevance of musical analysis, the author would like to bring to the attention of the reader a few of the latest views on the subject and its implications for this thesis.

Apart from concentrating on the woodwinds in Shostakovich's symphonies, this study also focuses on the political, social, cultural and historical context. The author's personal views and interpretation of the symphonies have been brought into the study. The study of the woodwinds in Shostakovich's symphonies has been coupled with the interpretation thereof within a socio-historical perspective in an attempt to trace stylistic and orchestration traits pertinent to the composer.

Burnham (1999:216) writes that analysis (of music) contributes to the experience, and hence the aesthetic significance, of music. "Whether we analyse or criticise, poeticise or formalise, we are attempting to bring intuitive knowledge about music's imposing role in our lives into line with other kinds of knowledge, other things that are important to us." Samson's (1999:53) essay on *Analysis in Context* suggests that while analysis can no longer claim to embody the whole truth, it can claim to be a necessary component of any adequate reading of musical meaning, whether aesthetic or social. A redefinition of music theory would step beyond the identification of music structures. The focus would rather be on the "identification of musical materials, confronting the social nature of those materials and exploring the mechanisms involved in their realisation and perception". In other words, the analysis should draw context into its discussion, as well as engaging directly with issues of performance and perception.

In the author's opinion this thesis fits into the category Whittall (1999:74-75) describes as the activity of "interpretative musicology". He surmises that the tendency to view specific compositions as more than

*compendia of particular technical procedures tends inevitably to address matters of meaning, and to consider the composition in ways which associate it directly or indirectly, with the wider world of aesthetics and history. Music which belongs to a particular place, time, and*

*compositional persona should not be seriously written about as if it were separate from the world and from all the uncertainties which impinge as soon as we seek to explain cultures as well as the thought-processes of individual human beings.*

The problem is to decide how authors' concern for heteronomy should be expressed. Writers need to seek to balance narrative flow with methodological credibility. Thomas Christensen in *Music Theory Spectrum* (Volume 15, 1993, p:110), quoted by Whittall (1999:75-76), presents a widely accepted position when he declares that

*No piece is born in a vacuum. Every composition exists along a plurality of continuums: the composer's own artistic development, the historical unfolding of a given genre or style, evolving social and aesthetic forces, and so on. In my mind, any analysis that ignores such processive features needlessly impoverishes itself.*

The authors mentioned therefore reaffirm the relevance of a study in the nature of this thesis. Its focus is directed at identifying technical procedures and to address matters of meaning involved in their realisation and perception. The author has attempted to trace the unfolding of Shostakovich's orchestral style against a socio-historic background.

## 1.5 Research method

The following research method was used during the analysis of Shostakovich's symphonies. Much of the groundwork already laid in the author's MMus dissertation was expanded on.

- Together with the symphonic scores the 14 symphonies of Shostakovich in which the woodwinds are used, were listened to before and during the course of the analysis.
- Preceded by a study of each individual woodwind instrument with the help of various well-known orchestration and instrumentation manuals, as well as books specialising on each instrument, the woodwind parts of all the Shostakovich symphonic scores were isolated from the top of the orchestral score, starting with the piccolo, and carefully analysed, one aspect at a time. The analysis was always done chronologically from Symphonies No. 1 to 15.

- Relevant and interesting findings were methodically catalogued and graded in a card system under specific sections for all the instruments, for example: The piccolo: dynamic indications, register, solo material, combination of instruments, special effects and devices. The same format was followed for all the instruments.
- Once all the aspects of an instrument were analysed and catalogued the author chose the most representative examples and began to assimilate the relevant information.
- After the analysis, more information was sourced from the latest biographies and books on Soviet Russian culture and politics. Relevant historical facts were gradually incorporated into the thesis to give the reader more insight into the events surrounding the symphonies.

## 1.6 Sources and materials

The most important sources for this study were the scores and recordings of Shostakovich's 15 symphonies. Secondly, reputable orchestration and instrumentation manuals and books about each individual instrument were closely consulted. Books about 20th-century composition techniques and styles, the latest biographical works as well as valuable information from the Internet were incorporated. A variety of books about the history, politics, and cultural and social situation in Russia were consulted. The author substantiated the available texts by interviewing prominent local academics, Russian experts, and woodwind orchestral players.

### 1.6.1 Scores

During the course of this study numerous published pocket scores of the symphonies by Shostakovich were used.

Various publications of the pocket scores of the symphonies by Shostakovich consulted by the author are tainted by inaccuracies, for example the Kalmus miniature scores and scores printed by Anglo-Soviet Music Press.

The examples of scores used throughout this thesis are therefore from the authoritative New Soviet Edition of Shostakovich's Collected Works, comprising 42 volumes to date, published



between 1980 and 1985 in Moscow by the State Music Publishers. The works published in these volumes are in accordance with the last editions which appeared in the composer's lifetime; the first publications are founded on autographs or copies endorsed by the composer. The texts are collated with Shostakovich's manuscripts, proof sheets, manuscript and printed copies containing his corrections, records of his performances and other available material. All errors discovered in manuscript or printed copies are corrected without comment in these scores. The editor's notes and comments on the autograph pages, which are included at the beginning of each volume, are of interest and help.

Regarding one of Shostakovich's more contentious works, "Babi Yar", the author of this thesis found a particularly fascinating example of the disparity between the scores. "Babi Yar" is the title of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 13, as well as the title of the first movement. The symphony is written for voices and orchestra and is based on a collection of poems written by the prominent young Soviet poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko. The site Babi Yar is a ravine near Kiev, also known as "The Ravine of the Women", and was the scene of the Nazi massacre of more than 100,000 men, women and children.

There are two versions of the poems. The original unaltered version of the word text from the Russian poems by Yevtushenko used in Symphony No. 13, translated into English, is presented in Appendix B. The unaltered version was originally used in the first performance of Symphony No. 13 in 1962, to the dissatisfaction of the Soviet authorities. Yevtushenko was compelled by the authorities to make certain changes to the text. Wilson (1994:358) writes that the authorities said that Yevtushenko had distorted the historical truth, ascribing to the Jews alone the right to be victims of the war, whereas in fact at Babi Yar people of all races had been slaughtered, including Ukrainians and Russians. This was a lie; according to survivors, there were only Jews. Boris Schwarz (1983) elaborates by stating that an issue was made of four lines towards the beginning of the poem. Pressures were exerted on Yevtushenko and Shostakovich to agree to a change so that Jews were not pictured as the only victims at Babi Yar. It is said that Shostakovich was the first to yield, but since the new lines preserve the metric structure of the original lines, Shostakovich's approval was merely one of forced compliance. Even with the changes Yevtushenko's poems and Shostakovich's Symphony No. 13 still received scathing reviews and Party dissatisfaction, particularly the poem "Babi Yar" that raised a previously

unspoken issue of anti-Semitism. No further performances of the symphony were permitted until adjustments were made in the first movement.

It was especially interesting to find that the scores used for the examples in this thesis, taken from the New Soviet Edition of Shostakovich's Collected Works which contain the Russian text to the Symphony No. 13, differ vastly from the English translation of the original text in Appendix B, as well as differed from the recording by the USSR Ministry of Culture Symphony Orchestra conducted by Gennadi Rozhdestvensky (1981). The three separate sources were different. The initial variance was discovered when a Russian expert was consulted to help the author with the translation of the Russian text used in various examples throughout the thesis. The scores and the recording are clearly politically altered. The author will allude to a few of these revised passages throughout the thesis, discussing the changes made to the original and the altered texts.

Babi Yar is still a very contentious issue in Russia and the authorities persistently try to deny its existence.

### **1.6.2 Orchestration and instrumentation manuals**

There are many useful and informative orchestration and instrumentation manuals available. Adler (1982), Blatter (1980) and Del Mar (1983) were particularly useful as each has a different approach. Forsyth (1982, first edition 1914), Jacob (1982) and Piston (1994, originally published in 1955) were fairly useful although a little outdated and vague in detail. Read's *Style and Orchestration* (1979) was very relevant to the essence of this study, although it is dated. The books on orchestration and instrumentation by Rimsky-Korsakov and Berlioz were an enlightening read and the author found the basis of their principles distributed throughout most of the more modern books. The most recently published orchestration book the author obtained is by Kennan, the fourth edition printed in 1990. This edition is most useful and includes detailed information about instruments, ranges of instruments, foreign names for instruments and orchestral terms, non-orchestral instrumental groups, special devices and more.



### 1.6.3 Biographies

The author recommends readers to include *Testimony* (1979) by Solomon Volkov to their list of biographies on Shostakovich. The reader will then have the advantage to join the on-going literary furore that rages on relentlessly amongst musicologists about the validity of the biography *Testimony*. Volkov is accused of plagiarism, falsification and bad scholarship. The fierce debate has resulted in articles and books, and most recently, *Shostakovich Reconsidered* by Ho & Feofanov (1998) in which the authors systematically address and defend the accusations levelled at *Testimony* and Solomon Volkov. Their analysis is complemented by a number of essays, many of them by Shostakovich's close friends and acquaintances, and an interview with Solomon Volkov in which he explains how he worked with Shostakovich to help him write *Testimony*. The book also contains contributions from Maxim Shostakovich (the composer's son), cellist and conductor Mstislav Rostropovich, and poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko.

Wilson's *A Life Remembered* (1994) is a highly recommended and accessible biography drawn from the reminiscences and reflections of Shostakovich's contemporaries. Through personal accounts from interviews and specially commissioned articles Wilson sheds light on the composer's creative process, his working life and the influence he has had on Soviet musical life. Wilson also offers a fascinating perspective on the social and political history of Soviet Russia.

Stephen Jackson's *Dmitri Shostakovich: an essential guide to his life and works* (1997) presents a short biography in a user-friendly style. The condensed factual style presented in this book could overwhelm readers who have not read previous books on Shostakovich. The book has quite a number of inaccuracies in spelling and historical data, especially in the list of complete works.

### 1.6.4 Books on the analysis of Shostakovich's symphonies

In spite of a large variety of books and articles available on the formal analysis of Shostakovich's works, the author did not find any information on the analysis of orchestration or style of the woodwinds in Shostakovich's symphonies or other works.

Two very important books on the general analysis of the 15 symphonies by Shostakovich are *Shostakovich Symphonies* (BBC Music Guides) by Ottaway (1979) and in particular *The Music of Dmitri Shostakovich: The symphonies* by Blokker & Dearling (1979) with their descriptive analysis of the symphonies. A number of articles on the analysis of the symphonies were sourced from the Internet. Ian MacDonald gives a comprehensive subjective perspective into the symphonies in the *New Shostakovich* (1990), which makes his otherwise complex style more interesting.

### 1.6.5 The Internet

Valuable and current information is available on the Internet under the Shostakovich Society entitled DSCH ([www.shostakovich.org](http://www.shostakovich.org)). The site provides the most recent articles and interviews ranging from biographical to book reviews by reputable musicologists. The main contributor is Ian MacDonald, author of many books and articles on Shostakovich and his music. The site also includes an archive of articles published in the society's journal dating back a number of years, latest books and recordings, and information regarding the recent conferences and concerts.

The Internet sites on Shostakovich and Russian music gives one a perspective of the status and impact Shostakovich and his music made on the 20th century ([www.dtr.fr/homepage/amercer/](http://www.dtr.fr/homepage/amercer/); [www.opus147](http://www.opus147)).

### 1.6.6 Recordings

The author endeavoured in most cases to obtain Soviet recordings of the symphonies, particularly those conducted by Mravinsky, who, according to Maxim Shostakovich the composer's son, is the conductor who understood and interpreted Shostakovich and his music most authentically (Schwarz 1983:646). Alternately, the series of recordings of the symphonies by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by the Russian Vladimir Ashkenazy are recommended.

A list of the latest esteemed recordings of Shostakovich's works can be found on the Internet.

### 1.6.7 Other sources and interviews

A very valuable part of the research included interviews with prominent local musicians and academics who are regarded as specialists in their fields:

- George Pearce (flute and piccolo player for various orchestras, most recently the National Symphony Orchestra in Johannesburg) on the piccolo;
- John Hinch (earlier principal flute player of the Durban Symphony Orchestra, now senior lecturer at the University of Pretoria) on the flute;
- Sergei Burdukov (once principal oboe player of the State Radio Orchestra and the Bolshoi Theatre Orchestra in Moscow, currently principle oboe player of the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra) on the oboe and cor anglais and matters Russian;
- Herbert Klein (principal clarinet player for the National Arts Philharmonic Orchestra of Pretoria) on the clarinet family;
- Paul Rodgers (general manager of the Johannesburg Festival Orchestra and The Chamber Orchestra of South Africa, and principal bassoon player of both) on the bassoon; and
- Dr. Agata Krzchylkiewicz of the University of South Africa's Department of Russian on translations and Russian literature.

The series *Man and Music* (Morgan 1993; Ringer 1991; Samson 1991) contains a very informative background to the history of Russian music from the Baroque to Modern times.

Books on Russian politics during the 20th century can be found in abundance and are overwhelmingly complicated. The following three sources were of particular help during the research. Firstly, a book by Dziewanowsky (1989) entitled *A History of Soviet Russia* with its clear and uncomplicated style is an excellent introduction to this daunting subject. And secondly, *Russian Cultural Studies: an introduction* by Kelly & Shepherd (1998) puts into perspective the effect of politics on all aspects of the arts in Soviet Russia. Thirdly, Schwarz's *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia 1917-1982* of 1983 gives an excellent account of the turbulent ideological and political struggles of the times.



*Rethinking Music* edited by Cook & Everist (1999) is an important and recent source, discussing current musicology. Authored by various acclaimed writers of musicology, the essays reflect on a variety of issues, including analysis and sociological and ideological aspects. In spite of its stimulating content the writing style is mostly very complex and inaccessible.

A most comprehensive and compact article is available in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, second edition (2001). Written by David Fanning and Laurel Fay, the article includes an overview of Shostakovich's life and works, as well as a wide-ranging list of sources.

### 1.7 Value of the study

Shostakovich, a pianist, focused a large part of his compositional output on writing for the strings, evidenced in the fifteen string quartets, two violin concertos and two cello concertos. There are no solo pieces or concerti for the woodwinds, unlike the numerous compositions he wrote for the piano, voice and strings. It is therefore remarkable that in spite of Shostakovich's lack of solo writing for the woodwinds he orchestrates the woodwinds in the symphonies with flair and insight.

A literature review has proven that no study about orchestration and specifically the orchestration of the woodwinds in the symphonies by Shostakovich has been done. This is confirmed by *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (Fanning & Fay 2001:301-311), with its latest comprehensive list of sources on Shostakovich. The study could therefore prove to be a valuable contribution to the body of scholarly research about Shostakovich's symphonies and his orchestration of the woodwinds.

### 1.8 Organisation of the thesis

Chapter 1 provides general information about the study. Chapter 2 aims to present a wider background of the composer by providing a brief biography, a discussion of the main influences on him, and aspects of his orchestration. Chapters 3-11 form the bulk of the analysis and have been arranged in the order of the woodwinds on the orchestral score: the piccolo, the flute, the

alto flute, the oboe and cor anglais, the E-flat clarinet, the clarinets, the bass clarinet, the bassoon and the contrabassoon. Brief summaries conclude Chapters 3-11.

The chapter on the oboe and cor anglais is a synopsis and reworking of the author's Masters thesis entitled *The oboe and cor anglais in the fifteen symphonies of Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)* which was accepted at the University of Pretoria in 1994.

Chapter 12 includes the summary of conclusions drawn in this study as well as recommendations for further study.

For the convenience of the reader, the author decided to supply four Appendices. With reference to the size of the orchestra and instruments used, Appendix A presents a list of instrumentation of Shostakovich's symphonies. Symphonies No. 2, 3 and 13 include choirs and a soloist. The English translations from the Russian texts used in these three symphonies are found in Appendix B. The author refers the reader to Appendix C which includes a chronological list of Shostakovich's works arranged more or less by opus numbers (many works do not have opus numbers and have been arranged by year). This Appendix was included to show the reader the volume of works written by Shostakovich during the years in which he wrote his fifteen symphonies, and in very difficult political times. Appendix D includes a list of the music examples used in this thesis.

The thesis concludes with a list of sources consulted.

## 1.9 Delimitations of the study

- This study is confined to the analysis of the woodwinds in the symphonies of Shostakovich only. Its main point of departure is to unravel aspects of orchestration used by Shostakovich.
- It does not endeavour to address issues of form and compositional techniques.
- The study does not set out to make comparisons with other symphonic composers, as it aims at determining typical characteristics of Shostakovich's writing for woodwinds in his symphonies.

- Symphony No. 14 is not included in the analysis because it is scored without woodwinds. It is written for strings, percussion, soprano and bass voices.

### 1.10 Notes to the reader

The full score is printed in the examples to enable the reader to see each part in relation to the rest of the score. Aspects of orchestration are continually discussed and involve an overall perspective of the score. The bar numbers are written below the line on the left side. Shostakovich has indicated the orchestral instruments in abbreviated Italian in the left margin of the scores.

The author has made reference to certain technical difficulties the woodwind players in Shostakovich's symphonies have to contend with. The intention is to highlight Shostakovich's skill as an orchestrator. The question is asked whether he places realistic technical and artistic demands on the instruments and players.

Each music example will provide a metronome marking as an indication of the tempo requirements and to give the reader a wider perspective of the technical demands placed on the players. Frequent reference is made to the dynamic level in the music examples. This is to illustrate Shostakovich's detailed intention for each instrument on the score.

During the course of the thesis numerous references are made to Wilson's *A Life Remembered* (1994). This biography includes the latest and most clearly recorded data on Shostakovich's life and compositions. She succinctly provides relevant historical information throughout the biography and is lauded amongst specialist musicologists for her objective approach.

In order for the reader to have a complete overview of the woodwind section the author decided to include previous research on the oboe and cor anglais. Chapter 6 includes a synopsis and reworking of the author's Master's dissertation entitled *The use of the oboe and cor anglais in the fifteen symphonies of Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)*. This chapter will include a shortened version of the most important findings of the analysis. However, similar to the MMus,



the oboe and cor anglais will both be discussed in Chapter 6. For more details and music examples than provided in this chapter, the reader is requested to consult the MMus dissertation.

Due to the emotive effect the content of some of the symphonies have on the listener the author's subjective views will at times be expressed.

References will be dealt with in two ways:

- A reference within a single sentence, in brackets, before the full stop, refers to that sentence only.
- A reference, in brackets, at the end of a paragraph, and separate from the last sentence, indicates that the reference refers to material in the whole preceding paragraph.