



Gluzman Plays Tchaikovsky

Tonight we hear that most popular of all violin concertos: Tchaikovsky's! After intermission, there's another Russian work, but of an entirely different ilk: Shostakovich's Symphony No. 12, his homage to Lenin. Menachem Wiesenberg's *Jerusalem* opens the program.

MENACHEM WIESENBERG

Born 5 August 1950; Tel Aviv, Israel

Jerusalem, for symphony orchestra

Composed: 1996

First performance: 1996; Jerusalem, Israel

Last MSO performance: MSO premiere

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (3rd doubling English horn), 3 clarinets (3rd doubling bass clarinet), 3 bassoons (3rd doubling contrabassoon), timpani, percussion (xylophone, marimba, vibraphone, chimes, snare drum, bass drum, tam tam, suspended cymbals), harp, celeste, string

Approximate duration: 14 minutes

Composer, arranger, pianist, and educator Menachem Wiesenberg is one of Israel's most versatile and acclaimed musicians. His symphonic overture *Jerusalem* was commissioned by the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, and its conductor David Shalon, to mark the city's 3000th anniversary. On his website, the composer writes:

The point of departure of my work is based on the various names by which the city has been throughout history: Yeru-salem (its name in antiquity), through Yerushalaim; Aelia Capitolina, Jerusalem and El-Kuds. Each appellation has its own internal rhythm and the means of development in my work rest upon the rhythmic motifs which those rhythms dictate. I have tried to give expression in my work to my own complex feelings for the city and convey my impressions of the earthly city of today — its vitality, its multi-layered texture (be it historic, cultural or religious); beset by conflicts, blistering, exploding yet over hopeful. Though it is at the heart of relentless and uncompromising feuds, it remains the object of loving yearning of many the world over.

Recommended recording: David Shalon, Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra (available on the composer's website, www.mwm.co.il/Music/107)

PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Born 7 May 1840; Kamsko-Votkinsk, Russia
 Died 6 November 1893; St. Petersburg, Russia

Concerto in D major for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 35

Composed: 1878
First performance: 4 December 1881; Vienna, Austria
Last MSO performance: June 2014; Gilbert Varga, conductor;
 Karen Gomyo, violin
Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns,
 2 trumpets, timpani, strings
Approximate duration: 33 minutes

Tchaikovsky composed his violin concerto in the spring of 1878. He was in Switzerland at the time, drawing inspiration from beautiful Lake Geneva and recuperating from the psychological after-effects of a disastrous marriage to — and subsequent separation from — his pupil Antonina Miliukova.

Tchaikovsky penned the work for the Hungarian-born violinist Leopold Auer. He was crushed when Auer declared the work “unplayable,” but found its champion in the 30-year-old Russian violinist Adolph Brodsky. Brodsky worked on the concerto “in a fit of frenzy” and gave the first performance in Vienna in 1881.

The first movement offers the soloist ample opportunity for display, both in the shaping of finely drawn *cantabile* phrases and in virtuosic technique. It features legato passages of great beauty, as well as fast passagework, high-note trills, the use of harmonics, and chords that require as many as four notes. The Canzonetta (literally, “little song”) is just that: a quiet, tuneful dialogue between the muted solo violin and the orchestra, set in the contrasting key of G minor. The frenetic energy of the finale seems almost unrelenting. Tchaikovsky indicated that the movement should be played “fast” and “vivacious.” It is with that caution-to-the-wind spirit that this much-loved concerto reaches its exciting conclusion.

Recommended recording: Jascha Heifetz; Fritz Reiner, Chicago Symphony Orchestra (RCA Red Seal) U

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

Born 25 September 1906; St. Petersburg, Russia
 Died 9 August 1975; Moscow, Russia

Symphony No. 12 in D Minor, Opus 112 “The Year 1917”

Composed: 1961
First performance: 1 October 1961; Leningrad (St. Petersburg), Russia
Last MSO performance: MSO premiere
Instrumentation: 3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), 3 oboes, 3 clarinets,
 3 bassoons (3rd doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns,
 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass
 drum, cymbals, snare drum, tam tam, triangle), strings
Approximate duration: 39 minutes

Dmitri Shostakovich joined the Communist Party in 1960, First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev having urged members of the Russian intelligentsia to do just that. Shostakovich, as the Soviet Union’s most celebrated living composer, had thus been under great pressure to join. It was not a capitulation he was pleased with, and marked for him the lowest point in his life, far removed from the excitement he had felt as a ten-year-old boy, witnessing Lenin’s arrival at St. Petersburg’s Finland Railway Station in April 1917.

As early as the late 1930s, Shostakovich had intended to compose a symphonic or choral work in honor of Lenin. "One thing is clear," he stated. "The effort to embody the mighty image of the greatest man of our most complex epoch will demand the exertion of all creative resources." His opportunity came when he was commissioned to write a symphony to celebrate the 22nd Communist Party Congress in 1961. Subtitled "The Year 1917," Shostakovich's Symphony No. 12 memorializes the year the Russian Revolution took place — more specifically, the October events when the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, came to power. The composer dedicated the work "to the memory of Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin."

In his Op. 112, Shostakovich the prolific writer of film music is at the forefront. Set in four connected movements, each with a descriptive title, the D minor symphony is strongly programmatic. It marks the composer's attempt to portray in music the portentous events from 44 years earlier.

Revolutionary Petrograd. A sense of unease and restlessness hangs over the people of Petrograd (the name of St. Petersburg from 1914-1924). They rise up against the weak government that has replaced Czar Nicholas II. A lyrical theme then expresses their desire for new leadership; the melody slowly builds to *fff*. Bassoons begin the development section, a rough-and-tumble street battle that culminates in a loud crash from the gong. The strings bring back the lyrical theme and, following a brass chorale, the movement ends quietly and solemnly.

Razliv. Razliv was the name of Lenin's country home outside St. Petersburg, where he occasionally retreated to make plans and to follow events as they unfolded. The horns are prominent in this melancholy music, as are woodwind soloists, especially flute, clarinet, and bassoon. Following a doleful trombone solo, pizzicato cellos and basses form a bridge to the third movement.

Aurora. The scherzo's title refers to the cruiser Aurora. From the Neva River, at 9:40 p.m. on 25 October 1917, the Aurora fired the blank cannon shot that signaled the start of the assault on the Winter Palace. Thus the October Revolution began. Near the end of the movement, a crescendo leads to a violent outburst of percussion, depicting the attack.

The Dawn of Humanity. Battle music soon becomes victory music as the horns sound forth a theme from one of Shostakovich's earlier aborted works, "Funeral March for Victims of the Revolution," a sly reference that only his nearest and dearest would have been aware of. The finale is chock-full of reprises of themes from the preceding movements, now melded into a great song of rejoicing, as the Soviet people look forward to life under the guidance of Lenin. At the Symphony's powerful, passionate conclusion, the whole orchestra roars triumphantly in D major, with cymbals crashing and drums pounding.

Recommended recording: Evgeny Mravinsky, Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra (Erato/ Warner) 

Program notes by J. Mark Baker.