



audite

SHOSTAKOVICH CELLO CONCERTOS

MARC COPPEY

Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra

LAWRENCE FOSTER

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

CELLO CONCERTO NO. I
in E-flat major, Op. 107

- I. *Allegretto* 6:09
- II. *Moderato* 11:08
- III. *Cadenza* 5:40
- IV. *Allegro con moto* 5:01

CELLO CONCERTO NO. 2
in G minor, Op. 126

- I. *Largo* 12:58
- II. *Allegretto* 4:18
- III. *Allegretto* 14:53



*I*t is not common for a great composer to dedicate two concertos to the cello. Cellists can be grateful to Shostakovich, who gave us a uniquely powerful and highly contrasted diptych.

The First Concerto is one of the most played and popular cello concertos of all time, comprising explosive rhythmical energy and ultimate virtuosity alongside heartbreaking melodies. It is also sarcastic when Shostakovich quotes a distorted version of “Souliko”, Stalin’s favourite song, opposite the “D-S-C-H[=B]”-motif dominating the piece.

The Second Concerto, less often performed, is one of Shostakovich’s greatest masterpieces, typical of his later style. It is characterized by a lyrical and often meditative spirit as much as by a contrasting strong symphonic power. The unity of its structure impresses, although it is composed of very different material including street songs, fanfares and dances, making it a total work of art.

Performing these two masterpieces by Shostakovich in the same concert is rarely done as it is a great challenge for all the musicians involved. I am thrilled to share the stage with such great artists as Lawrence Foster and the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra to perform and record these highlights of the cello repertoire and twentieth century music.

I believe that listening to these great works one after the other will shed new light on our perception of Shostakovich’s music as well as providing a deeper understanding of his world.

Marc Coppey

Lullaby and Circus Finale

Lawrence Foster is without doubt one of the conductors with the widest repertoire of music written after 1900. When one asks him, an American born in Los Angeles and of Romanian-Jewish heritage, about the opera *OEdipe* by the Romanian national composer George Enescu, for instance, it seems to him as though he has “composed” the work himself. With other composers, however – such as Dmitri Shostakovich – he identifies less closely. Although Foster believes that Shostakovich’s erstwhile defamation as a semi-official Soviet composer was ideological nonsense, he still keeps a critical distance from popular works such as the fifth and tenth symphonies – perhaps because they feel too monumental, too confessional. By contrast, Foster loves Shostakovich’s concertos: their intimacy, expressed even in their moderate instrumentation, their original instrumental colours, but also their sudden and unexpected shifts from the tragic to the comic. All these characteristics can be found in his two cello concertos, composed during the fifteen years after Stalin’s death.

For Shostakovich this was, on the one hand, a time to consolidate artistically and adjust to the cultural line of the party led by Khrushchev and Brezhnev. On the other hand, the final years of his life were dominated by illness and a musical language whose amenable, polished exterior hides highly intimate and ultimately unfathomable depths. And, similarly as with Mozart, personal calamities in Shostakovich’s life – the death of his first wife, Nina (1954), or the outbreak of a catastrophic inflammation of his spinal cord – were veiled, rather than reflected, by lighter works such as his second piano concerto or the socialist operetta, *Moscow, Cheryomushki*.

The **first cello concerto, Op. 107**, premiered in Leningrad by his friend Mstislav Rostropovich on 10 October 1959, initially also adopts the light tone of these works. A classicist stance governs not only the work’s themes, but also its small, almost chamber-like instrumentation, stipulating only a horn, timpani and a celesta alongside woodwind and strings. As the only brass representative, the solo horn liaises between the ensemble and the soloist, proving an expressive dialogue partner to the cello and highlighting formal interfaces (for instance, the recapitulation of the secondary theme in the first movement, played by just the horn and the solo cello, produces a magnificent effect). The remaining instruments tend to appear as homogenous sound groups: the strings project the sound of the solo cello, whilst the woodwind repeatedly summon military music which Shostakovich keeps satirising.

Classictist though the formal proportions of this cello concerto may seem, Shostakovich does move fascinatingly and playfully within his fixed framework. The main theme of the opening movement is developed from a tightly-knit network of changing accents into a limping march, followed by a *cantabile* secondary theme in the manner of a trio. In perfect emotional contrast to the robust tin soldier parody in the first movement, the epically expanded Moderato begins with an elegiac string theme which, as a ritornello, frames the following sections. The solo cello plays a lullaby in a high, pallid register, whilst the second couplet leads to a dance-like middle section with cosy wind accompaniment, gradually growing into an eerie tragedy. The return of the opening in *fortissimo* is followed by the lullaby theme in a deathly pale hue with cello harmonics and celesta, eventually fading away into a void.

The third movement – an extensive rhapsodic cadenza for the solo cello – not only tests the abilities of the soloist, but also condenses everything previously heard: the themes of the slow movement and the main theme of the opening movement. Flitting sound rockets lead into the finale and its folk-tinted themes – these were demanded by “social realism”, intended on the one hand to ground contemporary music in the “bedrock” and on the other to suggest political unity of the vast Soviet empire. But as so often, Shostakovich gradually takes the familiar *ad absurdum* by letting it spin out of control – a “circus finale”, as Lawrence Foster called this surprising shift, with which Shostakovich counters the cliché of the cello being the instrument of romantic sentimentality.

A present for “Slava”

There are strong indications that Shostakovich regarded his two cello concertos – which, in contrast to the two piano concertos, were written during different eras – as a unity, two realisations of the same fundamental idea. Both works are dedicated to Mstislav Rostropovich, one of the most distinct musical personalities of the twentieth century. For “Slava”, as his friends called him, was not only an exceptionally gifted musician, but also represented, with his powerful playing and his biogra-

phy, an instant of independence and nonconformity which did not shy away from conflict with the Soviet authorities. As early as 1948, when Shostakovich, as part of a Stalinist purge, was expelled from all his posts on spurious grounds, Rostropovich declared his solidarity with him by leaving the Moscow Conservatory. Twenty-six years later, at the peak of the political ice age of the Brezhnev regime, Rostropovich and his family emigrated from the Soviet Union where he was accused of showing solidarity with the writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (in 1978 he was also stripped of his citizenship). No wonder that Shostakovich held him in high esteem, not only as a great musician and friend, but also as a highly personal voice commenting on the country's political situation.

Musically the **second cello concerto, Op. 126**, of 1966 is also a counterpart to the first concerto. Even though the scoring, including percussion, xylophone and two harps (which tend to appear together, rarely as soloists), is more extensive, gaining more colours, it is once again dominated by the transparent, block-like treatment of the strings and woodwind, and even more so by the soloistic use of the solo horn which, at crucial points, is joined by a second horn. "Isn't the cadenza for two horns completely extraordinary?", asks the conductor Lawrence Foster, referring to the extended call of the horns with a drumroll at the beginning of the finale, which is as long as the two preceding movements put together. There follows a cello solo of approximately the same length and with tambourine accompaniment before a short lyrical phrase with an outmoded cadenza (which keeps reappearing throughout the movement) and a pastorally lilting theme marks the actual beginning of the complexly structured Allegretto.

Although the opening of this movement seems gesturally incisive, its significance nonetheless remains in the dark. "I have just finished my second cello concerto", the composer wrote to his erstwhile amanuensis, Isaak Glikman, in April 1966. "As there is no text and also no programme for this piece, I find it difficult to write anything about this opus." This sobering statement, however, does not negate there being several semantic levels in the concerto, but they are not easily identifiable. In the afterword of the new edition, Alexander Ivashkin points out that the poet Anna Akhmatova had died in the spring of 1966: an artist having been maltreated by the regime, she was one of the martyr figures of the Russian intelligentsia and worshipped by Shostakovich. It is certainly within the realms of possibility that he wanted to erect a secret memorial for her with this concerto, in which he once again invoked his "gods" Gustav Mahler and Modest Mussorgsky.

Indeed, the second concerto – in contrast to the first – opens with a "sighing second", an interval much used by Mussorgsky, and an elegy for the cello which could be interpreted as a lament. A new section featuring a dialogue with the horn is reminiscent of the final movement of Gustav Mahler's *Lied von der Erde*, to which Shostakovich often referred in his letters. The entry of the xylophone introduces one of the grotesque march caricatures which, in Shostakovich's œuvre, tend to portray a hostile reality. Dark beats of the bass drum herald the return of the elegy and the "Mahler theme".

The second movement is a typical Shostakovich scherzo. "There is a motif in the second movement and at the climax of the third one", the composer wrote to Glikman, "which is reminiscent of the song from Odessa, 'Bubliki for sale'. I can't explain why, but it sounds quite similar." It is conceivable that Shostakovich included the Ukrainian variant of the bagel in his concerto not so much on account of its deliciousness but due to the banality of the melody. The short movement immediately transitions into the afore-mentioned cadenza with the two horns – and for those who love associations, there is a recognisable parallel to the finale of Gustav Mahler's second symphony where humanity is summoned to the Last Judgement with a similar motif. The main motifs – the military roll call, the lyrical melody and a snappy Russian dance (Trepak) – are then constantly exchanged and varied. At the climax, goaded by the xylophone and the whip, the bubliki song returns. The turmoil subsides and leads to the elegy and the Mahler theme of the first movement – and more than that: the opening theme of the first cello concerto also appears, like an old friend. Once again the Trepak emerges, although in a variant familiar from Shostakovich's fourth symphony: as an ironically ticking clock mechanism in the percussion section. The last word, however, is given to the cello.

On 25 September 1966, the composer's sixtieth birthday, the work was premiered by its dedicatee, Mstislav Rostropovich, under the baton of Yevgeny Svetlanov at the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory.



MARC COPPEY

French cellist Marc Coppey, winner of the Bach Competition Leipzig at the age of eighteen (First Prize and Special Prize for the best interpretation of Bach), is considered one of today's leading cellists. Early on Sir Yehudi Menuhin discovered his talent and subsequently invited him to make his Moscow and Paris debuts performing together with him and Viktoria Postnikova. In 1989, Mstislav Rostropovich invited Marc Coppey to the Evian Festival and from there his solo career took off.

A frequent soloist with leading orchestras, Marc Coppey has collaborated with distinguished conductors such as Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, Alan Gilbert, Lionel Bringuier, Eliahu Inbal, Emmanuel Krivine, Yutaka Sado and Yan Pascal Tortelier, to name but a few. He has appeared in numerous recitals in Europe, North and South America and Asia in prestigious concert halls such as Wigmore Hall in London, the Schauspielhaus in Berlin, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Salle Pleyel, the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and the Philharmonie in Paris, the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory in Moscow and the Metropolitan Museum in New York. He is a regular guest at festivals including those of Radio France Montpellier, Strasbourg, Besançon, La Roque-d'Anthéron, Monte Carlo, the Nantes and Lisbon La Folle Journée, Bachfest Leipzig, Musikfest Stuttgart, Chamber Music Festival Kuhmo and the Pablo Casals Festival at Prades.

An avid chamber music player, Marc Coppey has explored and performed the cello repertoire with renowned artists, among them Maria João Pires, Stephen Kovacevich, Nicholas Angelich, Michel Béroff, Kun-Woo Paik, Peter Laul, Augustin Dumay, Viktoria Mullova, Valeriy Sokolov, Alina Pogostkina, Ilya Gringolts, János Starker, Paul Meyer, Emmanuel Pahud and the Tokyo, Takács, Pražák, Ébène and Talich Quartets. From 1995 to 2000 he was a member of the Ysaÿe Quartet.

Marc Coppey's choice of repertoire is eclectic and innovative. He frequently plays the complete Bach Suites and other well-known concert repertoire, but also works that are rarely

heard. Performing and promoting contemporary music is very important to him: he is the dedicatee of several contemporary works and he played the world premieres of the Cello Concertos by Lenot, Tanguy and Monnet as well as the French and Spanish premieres of Elliott Carter's Cello Concerto. As a tribute to Pierre Boulez, he premiered ten works for solo cello by some of today's most prominent composers at the Philharmonie de Paris in March 2015.

Marc Coppey's recordings have received critical acclaim worldwide. They include works by Beethoven, Debussy, Emmanuel, Fauré, Grieg, Strauss, Dubois, Bach, Dohnányi, Matalon and Dutilleux. Together with the Pražák Quartet, Marc Coppey has recorded the Schubert Quintet and with pianist Peter Laul the Beethoven and Brahms Cello Sonatas, Russian Cello Sonatas and a Schubert album. His audite debut recording with Haydn and C. P. E. Bach Cello Concertos (2016, aud. 97.716) raised international attention. The following recording of Bloch's Schelomo and Dvořák's Cello Concerto (2017, aud. 97.734) with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin and Kirill Karabits received several international awards and was nominated for the International Classical Music Awards (ICMA).

Arte TV broadcast his full-length live performance of the complete Bach Suites from the Chapelle de la Trinité, Lyon.

In addition to his solo career and his chamber music activities, Marc Coppey is Professor at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris and gives master classes across the globe. He is artistic director of the Colmar Chamber Music Festival as well as the Zagreb Soloists.

Marc Coppey was born in Strasbourg, France. He studied cello at the conservatory of his home town, continued at the Paris Conservatoire and at Indiana University in Bloomington, USA. Today he resides in Paris. He was made Officier des Arts et des Lettres by the French Culture Ministry in 2014.

Marc Coppey performs on a rare cello by Matteo Goffriller (Venice, 1711), the "Van Wilgenburg".

NOSPR

Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra in Katowice

The NOSPR was founded in 1935 in Warsaw by Grzegorz Fitelberg, who led the orchestra until the outbreak of the Second World War. In 1945, the orchestra was revived in Katowice by Witold Rowicki; in 1947, the post of artistic director was taken again by Grzegorz Fitelberg. After his death (1953), the orchestra was headed by several conductors including e.g. Jan Krenz, Antoni Wit, and Jacek Kaspszyk. In 2000, Joanna Wnuk-Nazarowa became General and Programme Director of the NOSPR. From 2012 to 2019 Alexander Liebreich was Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the NOSPR. In 2018, Ewa Bogusz-Moore took up the post of General and Programme Director of the NOSPR. Since September 2019, Maestro Lawrence Foster is Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the NOSPR.

In addition to the production of archive recordings for the Polish Radio, the orchestra has recorded more than 200 CDs which received numerous recognitions (e.g. Diapason d'Or, Grand Prix du Disque and International Classical Music Awards ICMA). Many guest conductors and soloists have appeared with the NOSPR all over the world. Since 2015, the NOSPR – winner of 2018 ICMA Special Award – has organized the Katowice Kultura Natura Festival, and since 2005 the Festival of World Premieres for Polish contemporary music.

The NOSPR is a member of the European Concert Hall Organisation (ECHO), the network of Europe's major concert halls.

LAWRENCE FOSTER

Lawrence Foster celebrates his eighth year as Music Director of Opéra de Marseille in the 2020/21 season, as well as his second as Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra in Katowice. Known for his exhilarating and expressive performances in a wide range of music, he enjoys a major career spanning the US, Europe and Asia. As a champion of the music of Enescu, his interpretations are renowned for their faithfulness to the score.

During his successful ten-year tenure as Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the Gulbenkian Orchestra, Lawrence Foster toured extensively with the orchestra, and their discography includes several highly acclaimed recordings, just like he has received praise also for other recordings, e.g. with the Copenhagen Philharmonic and the NDR Radiophilharmonie.

Lawrence Foster has also held music directorships with the Orquestra Simfònica de Barcelona, Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo, Houston Symphony, Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne, Orchestre et Opéra National de Montpellier and the Aspen Festival Music School. He has worked with orchestras such as Konzerthausorchester Berlin, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Luzerner Sinfonieorchester, the Copenhagen, Helsinki and Czech Philharmonic Orchestras, Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra and Filarmonica Arturo Toscanini of Parma, among others.

In addition to his appearances at the Opéra de Marseille, he has conducted in major opera houses around the world, including the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Oper Frankfurt, Opéra de Monte-Carlo, Houston Opera, Deutsche Oper, and Los Angeles Opera.

Born in Los Angeles to Romanian parents, Foster served as Artistic Director of the George Enescu Festival from 1998 to 2001. In 2003 he was decorated by the Romanian President for services to Romanian music.



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