



THE MUSIC OF
Dmitri Shostakovich

The ARCO Chamber Orchestra

CONDUCTED BY

Levon Ambartsumian

Damon Denton, piano
Fred Mills, trumpet

TWO PIECES, OP. 11

- 1. Prelude 6:08
- 2. Scherzo 4:32

**CONCERTO FOR PIANO,
ORCHESTRA AND TRUMPET
OP.35**

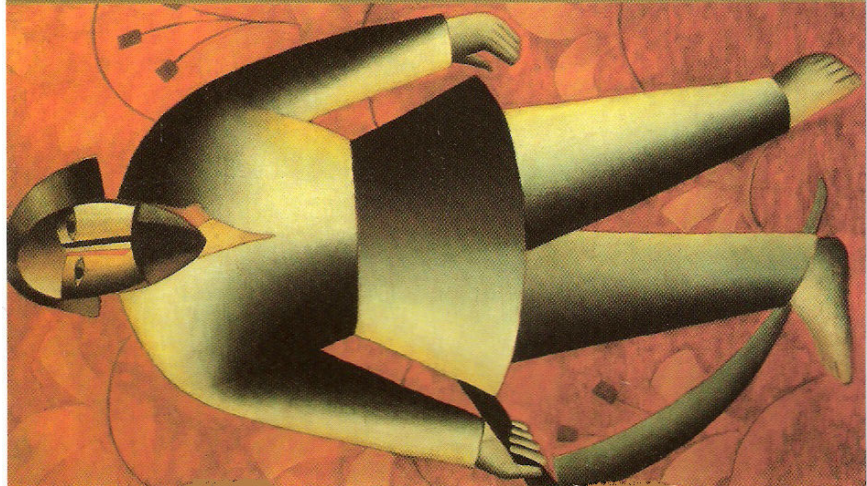
- 3. Allegro moderato 6:38
- 4. Lento 8:55
- 5. Moderato 1:54
- 6. Allegro brio 7:26

**CHAMBER SYMPHONY,
OP. 110a**

- 7. Largo 4:39
- 8. Allegro molto 3:14
- 9. Allegretto 4:29
- 10. Largo 6:33
- 11. Largo 3:41

Produced FOR CD by Jeffrey Kaufman.

Sound engineer: Douglas Moore. Editing engineer: Vladimir Kiselev. Design: Laura Gardner.
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THE MUSIC OF

**Dmitri
Shostakovich**

Prelude and Scherzo, Op. 11
Concerto for Piano,
Orchestra and Trumpet,
Op. 35

Chamber Symphony, Op. 110a

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DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975) was one of the most prominent and prolific composers of the 20th-century Russian music. Unlike his older contemporaries Prokofiev and Stravinsky, Shostakovich is alone in that his entire compositional life was spent within the confines of Soviet aesthetics. Although often at odds with the will of the state,

Shostakovich maintained his compositional integrity, at times delaying the release of works until the political atmosphere was more favorable. Twice in his lifetime, Shostakovich was subjected to intense political scrutiny: in 1936 when his internationally successful opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mzensk District* was criticized suddenly in the *Pravda*, and in 1948, when Stalin's cultural minister issued a decree denouncing a number of composers, including Shostakovich and Prokofiev. Stalin's death in 1953 instigated a gradual relaxation of artistic constraints. However, despite his early experiments in modernism, Shostakovich's tendencies remained more conservative, and he often criticized the Western avant-garde.

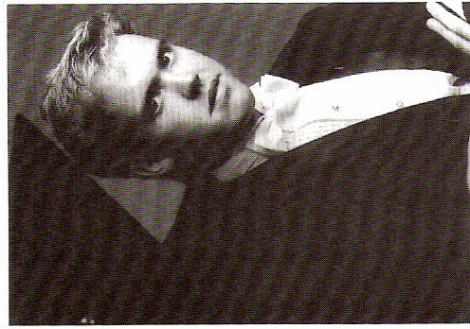
An early work, Shostakovich's *Prelude and Scherzo for Octet, Op. 11* (1924-5) was probably composed while he was still a student at the Leningrad Conservatory from which he graduated in 1925. His Symphony No. 1, Op. 10, written as a graduation assignment, met with great critical acclaim at its premiere in Leningrad in 1926. Of the previous nine opus numbers, only Op. 5 has been published. The octet, scored for double string quartet, is basically unsentimental, yet influenced by the "revolutionary romanticism" of the 1920s in Russia. The slow, brooding Prelude followed by an exuberant, exhilarating Scherzo becomes almost a trademark of his later works.

Shostakovich's *Concerto No. 1 in C minor for Piano, Trumpet and Strings, Op. 35* (1933) premiered in Leningrad in 1933 with the composer at the piano and is full of prankish humor, possibly as a challenge to the traditional Russian concerto. It begins immediately with a series of rhythmic and harmonic clashes reminiscent of Stravinsky. The solo trumpet part, while playing a more accompanimental role, consists of commentaries influenced by military calls and by jazz. Often Shostakovich quotes other pieces, including his own works, mixing genres in a totally modern way while still adhering to the confines of "socialist realism" expected during this time. In the second movement Shostakovich presents a parody of a theme from his ballet *The Golden Age* (1935), sometimes in a jazzed-up version. He includes excerpts from his opera *Christopher Columbus* (1929) and Beethoven's *Rondo a capriccio* in the

final movement.

With the composer's permission, the violist and conductor Rudolf Barshay transcribed Shostakovich's *String Quartet No. 8 in C minor, Op. 110* (1960) for chamber orchestra, which, in accordance with Shostakovich's wishes, was given the title of *Chamber Symphony*, subtitled immediately after a visit to Dresden, Germany. He was overwhelmed with emotion after learning of the complete devastation of the city, a result of Allied bombing raids in February 1945, in which 140,000 people died. Consisting of a sequence of five uninterrupted movements, the emotions range from quiet poignancy to violent, faster sections, including one depicting the actual bombings. Often described as autobiographical since the dominant theme consists of Shostakovich's musical signature D-S-C-H (D-Eb-C-B), it is at the very least an extremely personal outcry against war. He also includes quotes from many earlier works, including his Symphonies Nos. 1, 5, 8 and 10, his Piano Trio No. 2 and the revolutionary Russian song *Langtishing in Prison*. Most telling is Shostakovich's inclusion of a quote from the line "Tortured by merciless enslavement" from his opera *Lady Macbeth*.

~ Laura Tomlin



DAMON DENTON: born in Charleston, South Carolina. B.M. Peabody Conservatory of Music. M.M. The Juilliard School. Faculty assistant and student of Russian pianist, Oxana Yablonskaya. Other teachers have included Raymond Dudley, Jerome Lowenthal, Lillian Freundlich, Julian Martin, Ann Schein, and Ilana Vered. As a young artist, Mr. Denton was a winner in the Annapolis Symphony and Baltimore Symphony Young Soloists Competitions; the Peabody Concours; the Music Academy of the West Concerto Competition ("...Denton left his listeners clamoring for more ... BRILLIANT!..." *The Santa Barbara Press*); the Aspen Music Festival Concerto Competition; and many others. Most recently he was a winner at the Fourth International Piano Competition held in Pretoria, South Africa. While there, he performed a nationally televised SABC broadcast of the Prokofiev Piano Concerto No. 3 with the National Symphony of South Africa live from the State Theater: "Denton has a huge range of tone and articulation..." *The Pretoria News*. Other recent performances have included Shostakovich Concerto No. 1, Gershwin Concerto in F, and Poulenc Aubade with the Philharmonica de Queretaro in Mexico; the Bach Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 with the Macon Symphony Orchestra; solo performances at the United Nations; chamber music performances of Poulenc with the New York "Winds of New Amsterdam: at the Hartwick Music Festival; collaborative concerts accompanying members of the New York Philharmonic, London Symphony, Boston Symphony, National Symphony, Paris Opera, and the Canadian Brass. He has been an accompanist for Metropolitan Opera star, Anna Moffo. "Denton transforms the piano into a mirror of the human soul." *The Athens Daily News*.



FRED MILLS was born in Guelph, Canada. While at the Juilliard School of Music in New York studying with William Vacchiano, Fred was invited to join the Houston Symphony Orchestra in Texas as Principal Trumpet by the conductor Leopold Stokowski. In 1961, Stokowski formed the American Symphony Orchestra in New York City, and Fred was a founding member.

While living in New York City, Fred played with the Symphony of the Air, New York City Ballet Orchestra, Musica Aeterna Orchestra at the Metropolitan Museum, Marlboro Festival Orchestra, Cassals Festival Orchestra. He made recordings with Morton Gould, Robert Shaw, Igor Stravinsky, William Steinber, and Stokowski. For six years, Fred was principal trumpet with the New York City Opera Orchestra and was an active freelance New York musician. In 1968, Fred returned to Canada to play with the Orchestra of the National Ballet of Canada and was then appointed solo trumpeter with the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa. In 1972, he joined the Canadian Brass and for 24 years Fred played over 3500 concerts in Asia, Europe, and North America with the Canadian Brass. As a member of the renowned Canadians, Fred made over 40 CDs for RCA, Sony, Phillips, and BMG. During this time Fred contributed more than 50 transcriptions and arrangements to the Canadian Brass repertoire.

While with the Canadian Brass, Fred made numerous appearances on PBS, CBC, NDR, NHK, BBC and all the American Television Networks. He was a Grammy award nominee in 1992. Presently, Fred is Professor of Trumpet and Brass Chamber Music at the University of Georgia. A new CD was released in 1999 called "Mills and More" with the RENN Brass Quintet of Germany featuring Fred as soloist and arranger.



LEVON AMBARTSUMIAN was born in Moscow in 1955, and began to study violin at the age of three. He then enrolled in and graduated from the Central Music School. Five years later, Ambarsumian graduated from the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory with a special Artist Diploma, where his teachers were Felix Andrievski, Yuri Yankelevitch, Leonid Kogan and Igor Bezrodny.

In 1977 he became the First Prizewinner of Zagreb International Violin Competition headed by Henryk Szering. Two years later he was a prizewinner of the Montreal International Competition, and in 1981 he won the All-Union Violin Competition in Riga. Levon Ambarsumian was distinguished as Honored Artist of Armenia and Honored Artist of Russia in 1997.

Since 1977 Ambarsumian has performed regularly in all the main cities of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. He appeared as a soloist and recorded for radio and television with the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, Bolshoi Theater Orchestra, Kirov Opera, the Philharmonic orchestras of Budapest, Bucharest, Sofia and Peking among others.

Since 1988 he performed in the USA, Canada, Italy, France, Germany, Greece, Spain and South Korea. In 1988 Ambarsumian founded the Moscow Chamber Orchestra "ARCO" which regularly performed in Russia and now resides in Athens, Georgia, USA.

The repertoire of Mr. Ambarsumian includes the major violin pieces: concertos by Sibelius, Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev, Kachaturian, Bartok; sonatas by Bach, Schubert, Brahms, Frank, Prokofiev, Bartok, and Schnittke; concert pieces by Wieniawski, Saint-Saens, Sarasate and Tchaikovsky. He devotes himself to contemporary Russian music and has made several important world premiers.

Since 1978 Ambarsumian has taught at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory. He also

taught as Visiting Professor at Indiana University School of Music (Bloomington, Indiana). In 1995, Ambarsumian accepted the position of Franklin Professor of Violin at the University of Georgia School of Music (Athens, Georgia).

During the last two years, Ambarsumian has released several CD's including music by Wieniawski, Brahms, Mendelssohn, Vivaldi and Russian contemporary music.

THE ARCO CHAMBER ORCHESTRA was founded in 1988 by Levon Ambarsumian at the world-renowned Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory, where he served as Professor of Violin. Among its handpicked charter members were a few instructors, some of his students, and several recent graduates from the Conservatory. Almost immediately ARCO performances throughout Europe drew high critical acclaim and enthusiastic audience responses.

The orchestra continued to receive international acclaim in subsequent years, participating in a number of important festivals, including the Festival of German Music in Russia and Germany, the International George Enescu Festival in Bucharest, the Festival of Russian Music in Siberia, Moscow Stars, and Russian Winter in Moscow. The orchestra has also premiered a number of works by contemporary Russian composers and has toured widely in several countries including the United States, Canada, Italy, Spain, Germany, Romania, France and Korea.

In 1995, Mr. Ambarsumian joined the University of Georgia's School of Music as the Franklin Professor of Violin, while remaining the artistic director and conductor of ARCO. The home base of the orchestra shifted to this hemisphere, where the ensemble has now become a talented international blend of musicians.

While the ARCO Chamber Orchestra places special importance on the performance of Russian and contemporary music, the ensemble has a diverse repertoire, which includes standard chamber orchestra literature, showpieces, and world premiers. The ensemble has also released several CD's and has recorded for broadcast on both radio and television.