



WRITING ABOUT SHOSTAKOVICH

A Musician and his Era

Maximilian Steinberg, Teacher of Dmitri Shostakovich The Musician's Art as a Reaction to his Environment

by Leonidas Melnikas

Among the people who surrounded Dmitri Shostakovich during his formative years, Maximilian Steinberg (1883–1946) exerted an especially strong influence on his art. A favourite student of Rimsky-Korsakov and the keeper of the latter's artistic heritage, for almost four decades Steinberg was one of the leading pedagogues of the St. Petersburg-Petrograd-Leningrad Conservatory. Dmitri Shostakovich studied in his composition class from 1919 to 1925 and for some time also attended his classes in polyphony, musical form and instrumentation. Shostakovich later wrote: "I can consider myself fully a pupil of M.O. Steinberg."^[1]

SHOSTAKOVICH'S CONTROVERSIAL TEACHER

Although the artistic interaction between Shostakovich and Steinberg is well established, the nature of the interaction itself can nevertheless be assessed in various fashions. Many questions arise regarding Steinberg's true character and the role he played in forming his pupil. The answers to such questions, as a rule, reflect a fairly broad range of opinions. On the one hand, Steinberg is often described as very knowledgeable and erudite; on the other – based on these very same qualities – he is deemed to be a conservative, a traditionalist, a musician although "far from talentless," is nevertheless "hopelessly academic."^[2]

Most writing about Shostakovich tends to express a negative assessment of Maximilian Steinberg as a conservative and retrograde. However, many also note that Steinberg was a wonderful expert in his field. It is not my intent in this article to argue for or against either view. My goal is somewhat different: to try to find, in the environment in which Steinberg was formed and from which he emerged, an explanation for the controversial qualities in Steinberg's creative aspect. In other words, I would like to find in the work of this musician the connection with the cultural traditions of the city of his childhood and youth – Vilnius, known in those faraway times as 'Wilno'.

A musician's art is very often closely connected to the artistic environment in which he works, and this was especially true of Steinberg. The environmental connection fosters a system of values, determines modes of thinking and forms the key qualities of an artistic view of the world.

Of course the interaction of the artist and his environment need not be characterised by full harmony and peacefulness. Some follow settled canons and defer to the pull of the "magnetic fields" that form the socio-cultural environment. Others see their role in destroying these fields – striving to overcome their attraction through the radicalisation of activity, uncompromisingly defending their artistic positions and views, resigning themselves to unavoidable conflicts and misunderstandings.

The paradox is that both cases represent a reaction to the influence of that same environment. The artist might create either thanks to, or contrary to, his environment, but he is indivisible from it and constantly interacts with it. So it is with Steinberg, who was likewise indivisible from his origins and environment.

Steinberg as Remembered by Shostakovich

Before beginning the search for the origins of Steinberg's artistic visage, I would like briefly to recall what attracted Shostakovich to him, and what, in contrast, distanced them from each other. There are many very complimentary utterances by Shostakovich about his teacher, unambiguously attesting to the high value Shostakovich placed on his mentor and the recognition of that mentor's role in the process of his own artistic growth. Here are but a few of them.

Even before Steinberg's death, in the war years while in evacuation in Kuibyshev, Shostakovich related to Flora Litvinova:

"You cannot imagine how much I gained at the Conservatory from Professor Steinberg. He was severe, strict and demanding. At the piano we dissected the scores of the whole world of musical literature. Many students did not



like his classes, they said that he dries out everything, dissecting harmony 'down to each bone', but at that time I too liked to dissect thoroughly, what is written there and how.”[3]

In 1956, a decade after Steinberg's death, Shostakovich wrote of him, remembering his student years:

“I studied with great enthusiasm, I would say even rapturously. Everything that Steinberg taught me I took in greedily, absorbing it like a sponge, all his pointers and advice. Steinberg expertly and sensitively inculcated good taste in his students. It is to him that I am indebted for learning to value and to love good music.”[4]

In a 1962 article for a collection dedicated to the 100th anniversary of his *alma mater*, Shostakovich also did not fail to bring up his teacher:

“Studies in the class of M.O. Steinberg were very interesting. In addition to going through the academic disciplines, including composition, he greatly emphasised general musical development. In his class we played duets and analysed the form and instrumentation of the pieces played. Maximilian Osseyevich clearly and cogently explained everything that had to do with harmony, always pointed our attention to interesting places in the score in terms of harmony, spliced harmonic taste onto us, developed the ability easily and freely to play any modulation on the piano.”[5]

Shostakovich's extant utterances speak not only of Steinberg's exceptional professional competence, but also of his pedagogical gift. Musical teaching is not, of course, limited to the development of a pupil's professional skills; an even greater measure of attention is paid to the development of the pupil's individual talent. A pedagogue need not and should not “bury” his student under an avalanche of information and various professional “tricks.” On the contrary, his goal is to teach the pupil how to make the right choices and to gain self-assurance while the pupil masters new and ever greater possibilities of artistic self-expression.

Steinberg was excellent in this respect, and Shostakovich acknowledged as much when he emphasised the achievements

of his mentor. On the nature of the composer's art, he wrote:



“Self-assurance – far from simply a high opinion of oneself – is rather a quality necessary for every composer. This quality is inculcated by degree. And here, the educators of the young play a significant role. [...] I am so very grateful to my teachers, M. Steinberg and L. Nikolaev [Shostakovich's piano teacher], who sensitively, skilfully brought forth in their students, including me, this wonderful sense of certainty in one's powers.”[6]

Evidence of Shostakovich's high opinion of his teacher can be found not only in his words, but in his actions. The dedication to Maximilian Steinberg of Shostakovich's *Scherzo in F# Minor* for symphony orchestra – a piece nominated by Shostakovich as his *Opus One* – speaks of his extreme respect. This dedication is highly indicative, since (as the later research shows) Shostakovich exactly and thoughtfully chose the composition as being “worthy” of being his first opus[7].

A Changing Relationship between Teacher and Pupil

Time changes people and their views. There is nothing unusual in a gradual change in the character of the relationship between pupil and his professor, and likewise in the change in views of each other's art. Much of what Steinberg did certainly could, with the passage of time, seem traditional, outdated, and irrelevant to Shostakovich. Therefore it is not surprising, for example, to read in the commentaries of Shostakovich's close friend and long-time correspondent, Isaak Glikman, that “Dmitri Dmitriyevich had restrained feelings towards the art of his teacher, valuing him more for other qualities,”[8] or that “it pained Dmitri Dmitriyevich that in Maximilian Oseyevich – a man of great culture – there was such an adherence to the canons and rules, together with pedantry and something akin to an insular guild mentality.”[9]

Changes that accompany the passage of time are an inevitable fact of our existence. In the case of Shostakovich and Steinberg it heralded an inevitable mutual distancing and an erosion of mutual understanding. Dmitri Shostakovich and Maximilian Steinberg came from entirely different generations and emerged from principally different approaches to art. In this sense, their “artistic con-



flict” was programmed by time itself. It would indeed have been unlikely that the student prodigy remained within the scholastic framework of his teacher. Similarly, the teacher was unable to accede to the reform of the artistic traditions he held sacrosanct

and had honoured throughout his life.

Indeed, with time the “trajectories” of Steinberg and Shostakovich’s artistic activity continued to evolve and to cause a reassessment of their respective values. This was recorded in marvellous fashion in Shostakovich’s letter of 18 October 1925 to B.L. Yavorsky, describing the then ongoing discussion around Shostakovich’s piano trio:

“2 years ago, when I had just composed the trio, was a good time. I liked [the trio] very much, and savoured going through [learning] it with the musicians. Now, though, I do it without any psychic uplift. [...] I told Steinberg that the trio is bad, that I do not like it anymore. Steinberg, though, responded to me thus: ‘it is not for you to judge what of yours is good and what is bad. [You are] too young still.’”[10]

(The inevitable distance between the generations, and the concomitant misunderstandings were also wonderfully expressed by Igor Oistrakh, who, during any heated discussion with his father and teacher, would say with a certain irony: “You learned from Stolyarsky [...], whereas I – from David Oistrakh.”[11])

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The Era of Stalin (‘Chaos Instead Of Music’)

Not merely the passage of time, but also specific times and places played a significant role in Steinberg and Shostakovich’s relationship. Their fate was to live in the era of Stalin, when people were broken, their lives mangled. Shostakovich felt the brutish essence of totalitarianism in full in 1936, when *Pravda*, the mouthpiece of Stalinist propaganda, published the article ‘Chaos instead of Music,’ pouncing on his opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. This article was perceived as a rallying cry for what was to become a vilification of the composer. Isaak Glikman recalled:

“In all major cities as well as in Moscow and Leningrad, musical societies denounced not only *Lady Mac-*

beth, but along with it almost all other Shostakovich compositions [...] this was a sign of the times. It seemed that even respected people lost all elementary dignity, lost all shame. [...] it seemed that “*Chaos instead of Music*” irreparably split in two the artistic life of Dmitri Dmitriyevich. The era of his deserved fame disappeared into eternity, and now there came another, merciless era, the gloom of which would eclipse the star of his extraordinary talent.”[12]

By attacking Shostakovich upon the signal of the authorities, his colleagues were defending themselves: that is how life was. The instinct for self-preservation and a herd mentality drove people to partake *en masse* in state-inspired campaigns of this kind.

Maximilian Steinberg, though, behaved with exceptional courage and dignity. During a discussion of the *Pravda* article organised by the Leningrad Composers’ Union, intended to humble and crush Shostakovich, Steinberg declared: “The drama of Shostakovich is my personal drama, and I cannot remain untouched by my pupil’s suffering in his art.”[13] He even found some kind words for the opera so reviled by others, remaining true to himself while not afraid to express his professional opinion:

Lady Macbeth made a great impression upon me. Analyzing my impressions, I came to the conclusion that the opera works as a whole, both artistically/dramatically and musically. [...] I perceived the creation of *Lady Macbeth* as a certain, still not very broad turn towards a simpler, clearer language, and this truly gave me joy. However, when we speak of the plot, I personally did not understand why a young composer would choose for his opera a plot without any human beings, but only savages throughout.”[14]

Steinberg tried to shift the discussion from the sphere of ideology to the sphere of professional specifics, bringing to it at least some positive elements. In this he did not prevaricate, rather speaking only of what sincerely pained him in the art of his pupil.



Despite 'Chaos,' a Conservatory Post

In these difficult, fateful moments for Shostakovich, Steinberg went even further. Early in 1937 Shostakovich appealed for his help in securing a post at the Leningrad Conservatory and Steinberg quickly did everything in his power to help so that Shostakovich would at least find some firm ground beneath his feet.

On 6 January 1937, Steinberg noted in his diary: "On the 4th Mitya Shostakovich came to visit [...] Wants to teach at the conservatory, since composition isn't going [well now]. Let's see what can be done." [15] Steinberg's efforts were successful, and quickly. On 31 January he wrote again in his diary: "...came Mitya Shostak., who has been invited to teach orchestration." [16]

Shostakovich's acceptance into the Leningrad Conservatory did not merely give him a salary. In the totalitarian bureaucratic Soviet state of the time, the effect of obtaining this employment was laden with significance: prestigious teaching work in the respected and famed Leningrad Conservatory gave social status, and in the eyes of many served as a sign of Shostakovich's readmission to normal artistic life.

In an environment where Shostakovich was ostracised and publicly "branded," when his works ceased to be performed (he had been forced to withdraw his Fourth Symphony from performance, for example), Steinberg's continued friendship and assistance required considerable fortitude. It was after all a time when even the smallest demonstrations of sympathy towards the victims of persecution might be perceived by the authorities as a show of disagreement with their "general line", putting in real danger not only the sympathiser himself but also family and friends. Steinberg was not immune from this peril.

A Moral Lesson amidst the Inferno

By this time, no fair or rational person could fail to understand the criminal essence of the regime in power in Moscow. In 1935 it became legally possible to apply the death penalty to children who had reached the age of 12. By 1937, the purges ceased to be "precision-aimed" and took over the whole country, becoming massive in character and affecting hundreds of thousands of people. By then, the central authorities had broadened the scope of the purges by setting quotas of repression for every region. Individuals were no longer named as targets; rather, the authorities simply set the numbers, by region, of those to be shot or imprisoned in the labour camps. (In their perverse eagerness to please, representatives of the local agencies of repression

constantly requested the central authorities to increase these horrifying quotas.) This was the historical context of Steinberg's action in employing Shostakovich.



Dmitri Shostakovich could not but see and feel all of this thoroughly. The moral lesson given by Steinberg to his pupil must have had its sobering effect. Relegated to the past were Shostakovich's rapturous treatment of the "builders of the new world" and the feeling of condescension towards the generation of his teachers fostered by closeness to such "builders." Shostakovich now had occasion to experience in full how the moral principles of apologists for the new *nomenclatura* really worked in practice. Steinberg's deeds contrasted strongly with their behaviour; his adherence to strong values of the past suddenly and unexpectedly put into stark relief the worthlessness and criminality of the "new way of thinking" fostered by the Stalinist regime.

These events must only have strengthened Shostakovich's respect for Steinberg. The same fear, pain and horror which had swept the country now became the inseparable companions of both the life and art of the great composer. Twenty years later, Isaiah Berlin, with whom Shostakovich stayed in 1958 when he received an honorary doctorate from Oxford University, wrote:

"S.'s face will always haunt me somewhat, it is terrible to see a man of genius victimised by a regime, crushed by it into accepting his fate as something normal, terrified almost of being plunged into some other life, with all powers of indignation, resistance, protest removed like a sting from a bee, thinking that unhappiness is happiness and torture is normal life..." [17]

Steinberg and Shostakovich differed so much in so many things; nevertheless their fate turned out to be inseparable and their artistic divergences did not in the least affect their mutual respect and compassion. They remained in close contact until Steinberg's death in 1946. In any case, even if such contact had not continued, the name of Professor Maximilian Steinberg would have remained firmly embedded in the artistic biography of Dmitri Shostakovich.

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STEINBERG'S VILNIUS ORIGINS AND ENVIRONMENT

Evidence from Shostakovich himself and from people close to him allows a glimpse of the way in which the composer perceived Steinberg. This evidence, however, does not relate all there is to know about Steinberg himself and the circumstances that directed his artistic path. The key concepts here – and those qualities most often mentioned by contemporaries – include *a devotion to the past; conservatism; competence; knowledge; a preference for following traditions.*

Undoubtedly one of the most important factors in forming Steinberg's character was his Jewish origin. At the turn of the 20th century, Vilnius – the city of Steinberg's birth – was an unofficial capital of Eastern European Jews. According to an 1897 census, of the 154,532 inhabitants of Vilnius some 63,800 were Jews[18]. Jewish cultural and religious traditions therefore naturally exerted a strong influence at that time.

Conservatism and its Price

Vilnius was also the birthplace of the so-called Litvak branch, which played an important part in the religious heritage of European Jews. Rationality, authoritarianism and a fierce defence of traditions differentiated Litvaks from other European Jewry. In the 18th century they were even called *mitnagdim*, in Hebrew “those who do not agree.” Although the main meaning of this moniker came from their strict opposition to and separation from the Hasidic movement that was emerging among the Eastern European Jewry in the 18th Century, in this word we can nevertheless find a deeper semantic meaning.

Maximilian Steinberg grew up in the geographic centre of Litvak religious and cultural tradition and absorbed its values. This might partially explain the emergent tendency in his work toward academism and his strict adherence to tradition. The unswerving faithfulness to and observance and defence of deeply absorbed artistic principles – characteristic for this musician and strengthening with time – completely fit into the religious context of the Litvak testaments.

Alas, the flip side of such “loyalty” in artistic work was that Steinberg's preferences fell more and more “behind” contemporaneous artistic reality. He was aware of the phenomenon and observed the growing divergences between his creative views and those artistic tendencies emerging among his younger contemporaries. Nonetheless he did not

change his opinions. In a letter to Yazep Vitol of 26 March 1928 Steinberg wrote rather bitterly:

“Although I am far from considering myself a retrograde, and although I am always ready to accept everything that is valuable from the new, I nonetheless cannot digest so-called clean linearity, i.e. a full rejection of any vertical common sense. [...] it is left to us, students of Rimsky-Korsakov, to defend our positions vigorously, since in attacking us all methods seem to be fair game. It is understandable that in such an environment one gets little joy from teaching and sometimes one comes close to total despair.”[19]

As an aside, Steinberg's conservatism showed itself not only in his musical taste. With time, the tendency to cling to the old became second nature to him. Isaak Glikman, who sometimes accompanied Shostakovich during visits to Steinberg, wrote: “I was struck by a certain decorum, neatness, measuredness that ruled in the house of the son-in-law of Rimsky-Korsakov. The precepts of the great composer were followed as something sacred, not only in Steinberg's artistic conceptions, but, it seemed to me, in the everyday way of life of the household.”[20]

An Early Preference for Learning

Not only Steinberg's conservatism, but also his preference for deep, fundamental knowledge might be explained from the viewpoint of the values expounded in the milieu of Vilnius Jews. At its root was the same Litvak tradition which in every way rewarded “bookishness”; the interest towards in-depth study and the learning and interpretation of the texts of sacred books. “Learnedness” and a pull towards knowledge were viewed as unquestionable priorities and emerged as the reward of all forms of intellectual and creative activity.

Moreover, this tradition, common to Lithuanian Jews, was strengthened by the Steinberg family's standing. His father was a teacher and worked as an inspector of the Wilno Jewish Teachers' College. The family completely supported and encouraged education. It is unsurprising that Steinberg finished the Gymnasium in Vilnius with a gold medal and was accepted into (and subsequently graduated from) both the St. Petersburg University and the St. Petersburg Conservatory.



The arrival of Steinberg in St. Petersburg and his education in the capital's institutions of higher education is likely to have had a significant influence on the musician's values. The overarching quest for education and knowledge, so typical for Russia's Jews at the turn of the twentieth century, arose not only from age-old religious traditions, but also through concrete socio-historical conditions.

A Weapon against Discrimination

The Tsarist government's policy towards the Jewish population was extremely hostile. Jews were categorically forbidden from living and working outside the so-called "pale of settlement," where abject poverty and despair ruled due to overpopulation, the absence of elementary rights and the lack of opportunity for ambitious Jews to exercise their potential. Education seemed the only option in solving the problem, since higher education gave one the right to choose one's place of habitation (including beyond the "pale") and sphere of work. However, this path was also made extremely difficult. The access by Jews to universities was strictly limited to a minuscule percentage of total student enrolment; many legal barriers made life difficult.

The right of the St. Petersburg and Moscow Conservatories not to limit their intake of Jewish students by percentages (in contrast to universities) became one of the reasons why the profession of a musician gained such respect in Jewish circles. It offered a real chance to attain a more enlightened and financially-secure future; to feel like a free person and to escape from the pressure of the pale of settlement.

Even here, though, Jewish students suffered a great deal. In his memoirs, Leopold Auer wrote of the humiliations inflicted by the authorities on his students, some of whom later became renowned violinists[21]. He also wrote about those who ultimately became "prominent figures in sciences and arts" if they were able to overcome such man-made obstacles and to finish their education[22].

The more costly the education – the more faith and hope attached to it. Knowledge, attained at such a heavy price, gained something of sacredness, and often a person was no longer capable of doubting such knowledge.

Musicians from turn of the century Vilnius

At the turn of the century a respectful attitude towards musicians could clearly be observed in Vilnius, which boasted many wonderful, highly-educated artists. They were alumni not only of Russian conservatories; many of them received their education abroad. In Vilnius they created the nurturing environment which gave a push for the develop-

ment of so many extraordinary musical talents. An example: the renowned pianist Leopold Godowsky, who spent his childhood and youth in Vilnius. In his memoirs Godowsky emphasised that he never had "real" teachers and that he learned everything as an autodidact. All the same, he grew up in the Vilnius home of violinist Louis (Chaim) Passinok, an alumnus of the Leipzig Conservatory.



Steinberg's musical path also began in Vilnius. The musical skills he received turned out to provide a firm professional foundation. Vilnius was the source of his close connections with the traditions of the Russian musical school. The best musicians who were based and worked here from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century were alumni of the Conservatory classes of Anton Rubinstein, Carl Davydov, Leopold Auer, Joseph Joachim and Yulius Klengel (a renowned cellist and professor from Leipzig Conservatory). Having themselves received an excellent education in performing, they tended to see their art through the prism of the performer. Logically, their system of musical education was based on the learning of music through playing, or music-making. An unshakeable rule in their pedagogic approach was to inculcate the need to make music.

Music-Making as the Essence of Shostakovich's Learning

Steinberg also followed this rule. He was an excellent violinist, violist and pianist, as well as organist[23]. Until the end of his life he found joy in music-making to which he also introduced his students. He played often with Shostakovich, introducing his student in this way to the classical literature.

Possibly thanks to the hours spent with Steinberg, Shostakovich became convinced of the importance to the composer of comprehending music at the performing level. Later he would say:

"Now in Conservatory classes they listen to the set pieces. This is also very important – to listen to wonderful conductors and performers. But something is lost in comparison to playing an arrangement of a symphony on the piano and the study of the score with one's own eyes. The music you produce with your own hands and within your head and soul is incomparable with anything else." [24]





Shostakovich's words form part of his reminiscences of the lessons taught by Maximilian Steinberg.

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CONSERVATISM AS A REACTION TO CATAclysms

Steinberg was in essence always more of a keeper and continuer than an explorer or destroyer. Such, it seems, was the cast of his character, such was his internal predisposition. However, in constantly returning to the concept of his dogmatism and conservatism and in striving to determine their roots, we inevitably touch again and again upon the issues of the prevailing environment. That environment ultimately strengthened and solidified these qualities in him and made him as he was.

Steinberg lived during an eventful and complex era. Fate held many trials in store for him. Looking over his biography, it is clear how much his life matches the context of its time.

At First, a Fantastic Ascent

In her wonderful work about Stefan Zweig (1881–1942), a Steinberg contemporary, Hannah Arendt asserted that only great artistic success could serve as a means of establishing self-esteem for a Jewish intellectual, overcoming anti-Semitism, whether overt or covert. "...[S]o that a Jew is taken for an equal, he needs no less than to obtain fame"[25], wrote Arendt; "... the international society of the successful and famous turned out to be the only one where Jews were equal to all."[26] Step by step Arendt follows Zweig's efforts to establish himself on this "path", later exposing his tragedy that was to see him lose everything that had been so hard-won. Something similar could be said about the fate of Maximilian Steinberg.

Through his talent, ambition and diligence, Steinberg reached great heights even while still very young: along with good will and much expectation of future achievements, he was accepted into the ranks of the great Russian composers of the time; he married the daughter of N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov; he completed and published his teacher's epic work – *The Basics of Orchestration*[27]; and in 1914 took part in Diaghilev's 'Saisons Russes', where his ballet *Midas* was staged with the legendary Karsavina in the lead. Finally in 1915 he became a Professor of the St. Petersburg Conservatory.

The motor of his success could very well have been an

internal desire, even if not entirely conscious, to overcome an initial inequality derived from his Jewish origins and to become impervious to prevailing prejudices and meanness. However, having achieved all this, he quickly comprehended the instability and illusory nature of his seemingly unassailable position.

Having begun his career so brilliantly, he was to see everything dear to him ruined. Contemporary artistic development embarked upon a road that was unacceptable to him; the October Revolution transformed the prevailing lifestyle, destroying with it the system of old values. Even the Conservatory ceased being the safe harbour where the spirit of order, so dear to him, had formerly prevailed ("...total chaos rules here at our Conservatory,"[28] he wrote in 1924 to Ya. Vitol).

Revolution and the Possibility of Emigration

People close to Steinberg were leaving Russia. One was Jurgis Karnavicius (Yulii Karnovich), later a famous Lithuanian composer. Karnavicius was Steinberg's classmate from the Vilnius Gymnasium, later his student at the Conservatory and still later his Conservatory colleague, with whose family Steinberg shared an apartment during the years of the Civil War. Karnavicius wrote to Steinberg that "logic and instinct are forcing people to emigrate when the earth ceases to produce bread; when the desire to work with music engenders only laughter."[29]

Thoughts of leaving occasionally visited Steinberg as well. In 1921 he tried to ascertain whether it would be possible to move to Latvia, writing to Ya. Vitol, then the rector of the Riga Conservatory[30]. It is likely that the very thought of leaving Russia and starting over again must have been exceptionally painful for Steinberg – the equivalent of an admission of failure.

However, a further blow awaited him. It transpired that teaching in Riga was undertaken in the Latvian language. (Similarly, knowledge of Lithuanian was needed for pedagogic work in Kaunas, where Karnavicius moved, changing his name from Karnovich to Karnavicius in the process. A special exemption from a minister permitted Karnavicius, only for one year, to communicate with students in Russian, which is why he "was studying [the] language very intensively"[31].)

Life continued, and the outer reaches of the Russian Empire ceased to consider themselves a part of Russia. The elites reverted to their own languages and further developed their own culture. Steinberg, who had brought up a whole generation of Baltic composers, ultimately was no longer wanted there.

A Defence against Catastrophe

Steinberg sensed that he was gradually losing his hard-won positions, and this hurt him deeply. In a similar situation, as in the destruction of the model of the world built by himself for himself, Hannah Arendt saw the personal tragedy of S. Zweig.

Fate played a cruel trick upon Steinberg. As his world collapsed around him, all that was left was to “barricade” himself in, to conceal himself in the memories of his past: to stay in the world of yesterday, which had promised so much but did not keep its promises. People sometimes become prisoners of the world they themselves create, though often they themselves do not realise it. They lack the courage and willpower to reject their own creations. Steinberg’s barricaded world, though, could not contain Shostakovich’s talent.

At least Steinberg did not live to see the “campaign against cosmopolitanism, formalism and the preponderance of the foreign in culture,” which brought back to life the evil ghosts of his childhood and youth. (The height of the War notwithstanding, in August 1942, a memorandum “On selecting and putting forward cadres in art” was circulated amongst Stalin’s closest Party circle. It asserted that Soviet culture was run by “non-Russian people (mostly Jews),” and within the list of “for-

eign” musicians there flashed the name of Steinberg[32].)

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IN CONCLUSION

History retains the names and heritage only of a select few, not of all. In this there is a measure of “justified unfairness”; it could not be otherwise. Shostakovich undoubtedly belongs to the select few; Steinberg, unfortunately, does not. However, nothing passes without trace. A human being is always a mystery, especially one as colourful and talented as Steinberg. Whenever Shostakovich is mentioned, we also implicitly acknowledge the achievements of his teacher. Had Maximilian Steinberg not been as he was, perhaps Dmitri Shostakovich could have turned out differently.



*An abridged version of this paper is included in Leonidas Melnikas’ book *In the ‘Footsteps of the Musical Heritage of Lithuanian Jews’* (published in Lithuanian by Charibde, 2008, Vilnius). Private funding is currently sought to translate this book into English. Contact the Journal for more information.*



Left to Right : Igor Stravinsky, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Nadezhda Rimsky-Korsakov (daughter, married to Steinberg), Maximilian Steinberg, Katerina Stravinsky (wife of Stravinsky)





FOOTNOTES:

- [1] D. Shostakovich, *Stranitsy Vospominanii, Leningradskaya konservatoriya v vospominaniyah. 1862-1962*. Leningrad, Gosudarstvennoye muzykalnoye izdatelstvo, 1962, p. 124. [D. Shostakovich, *Pages of Remembrance, The Leningrad Conservatory in Memories. 1962-1962*. Leningrad, State Musical Publishers.]
- [2] S. Savenko, *Igor Stravinsky*. Chelyabinsk, Arkaim, 2004, p. 77.
- [3] E. Wilson, *Zhizn Shostakovicha, rasskazannaya sovremennikami*. Saint-Petersburg, Kompozitor Sankt-Peterburg, 2006, p. 196. [E. Wilson, *The Life of Shostakovich as Told by Contemporaries*.]
- [4] *D. Shostakovich o vremeni i sebe. 1926-1975*. Moscow, Sovetsky Kompozitor, 1980, p. 193. [*D. Shostakovich about time and about himself. 1926-1975*.]
- [5] D. Shostakovich, *Stranitsy Vospominanii, Leningradskaya konservatoriya v vospominaniyah. 1862-1962*, p. 123.
- [6] *Dmitry Shostakovich in Letters and Documents*. Moscow, Gosudarstvennyi tsentralnyi musei muzykalnoi kultury imeni M.I. Glinki, 2000, p. 500. [*Dmitry Shostakovich in Letters and Documents*. Moscow, the State Central Museum of Musical Culture named after M.I. Glinka.]
- [7] O. Digonskaya, "Pervyi opus Miti Shostakovicha (K probleme datirovki Scherzo op. 1)". *Shostakovich – Urtext*, Moscow, Deka-VS, 2006. [O. Digonskaya, "The First Opus of Mitya Shostakovich (On the issue of dating Scherzo Op. 1)."]
- [8] "Pisma k drugu" (*Pisma D. L. Shostakovicha k I. D. Glikmanu*). Moscow, DSCH – Saint-Petersburg, Kompozitor, 1993, p. 66. ["*Letters to a Friend*" (*Letters of D. L. Shostakovich to I. D. Glikman*).]
- [9] Id., p. 67.
- [10] *Dmitry Shostakovich in Letters and Documents*, p. 31.
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- [12] "Pisma k drugu" (*Pisma D. L. Shostakovicha k I. D. Glikmanu*), p. 316.
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A fragment of a manuscript of Shostakovich's Scherzo Opus 1 (dedicated to Steinberg); the fragment shows handwritten remarks added by Steinberg.

The manuscript itself is at the Glinka State Central Museum of Musical Culture in Moscow: folio 32, safekeeping unit 2225.