

incorrect tempi. Dmitri Dmitriyevich got angry and stopped me, and showed me the required tempo. Soon he caught on to my tactic and started to give me some hints himself.

'The tempi were soon fixed with metronome markings and transferred into the score. They were reproduced in the printed edition. But now, when I check them with recordings of performances, I realize that in many cases the metronome indications in the Fifth Symphony have proved to be incorrect, and the long life of this symphony has in itself brought about essential changes to the tempi that we marked down at the time.'

These reflections on tempi markings suggest that flexibility regarding such matters remains valid and we will see later how varied this might be in practice.

There can be no doubt that Shostakovich reflected very deeply on what might constitute a Soviet symphony and was strongly aware of his need to comply with the main strictures of 'Socialist Realism' as applied to music. Shostakovich wrote himself about his Fifth Symphony:

'My latest work may be called a lyrical-heroic symphony. Its basic ideas are the sufferings of man, and optimism. I wanted to convey optimism asserting itself as a world outlook through a series of tragic conflicts in a great inner, mental struggle.'

'During a discussion at the Leningrad section of the Composers' Union, some of my colleagues called my Fifth Symphony an autobiographical work. On the whole, I consider this a fair appraisal. In my opinion, there are biographical elements in any work of art. Every work should bear the stamp of a living person, its author, and it is a poor and tedious work whose creator is invisible.' (*Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 12th January 1938)

Later in the same year he wrote about his initial struggles when working with the conductor Mravinsky in preparation for the first performance and his account does tie in with Mravinsky's reflections quoted earlier. Shostakovich appreciated the conductor's almost pedantic approach in the end, saying 'thanks to his extreme thoroughness, Yevgeny Mravinsky presented my Fifth Symphony precisely as I wanted. I am very grateful to him for this.'

Shostakovich remained highly anxious right up until the first performance of the Fifth in Leningrad on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1937 and a second performance at a special meeting of Communist Party activists. Fortunately for Shostakovich the Symphony was a great public success in Leningrad with over 45 minutes of loud applause at the end and critics were similarly positive in their response. And so, this meant successful rehabilitation for the composer.

Thus the story remained the same for the next 40 years, as witnessed by the Hugh Ottoway's *BBC Music Guide to the Shostakovich Symphonies* published in 1978. Views about the Fifth Symphony changed dramatically with the publication of Solomon Volkov's *Testimony* in 1979. The authenticity of these alleged memoirs has long been contested and there is no doubt that the methodology for much of Volkov's work is dubious. However, people who were close to Shostakovich, including his great friend the cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, have vouched for the truth behind many of the views expressed.

According to Solomon Volkov's *Testimony* Shostakovich reportedly said:

'I discovered to my astonishment that the man who considers himself its greatest interpreter [Mravinsky] does not understand my music. He says that I wanted to write exultant finales for my Fifth and Seventh Symphonies but I couldn't manage it. It never occurred to this