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Carlos Kalmar, *Artistic Director and Principal Conductor*

Christopher Bell, *Chorus Director*

Shostakovich Symphony No. 10

Wednesday, August 17, 2011 at 6:30 p.m.

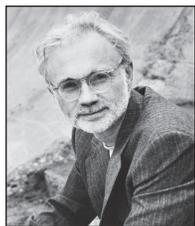
Jay Pritzker Pavilion
GRANT PARK ORCHESTRA
Carlos Kalmar, *Conductor*

ADAMS *The Chairman Dances* (Fox Trot for Orchestra)

SHOSTAKOVICH
Symphony No. 10 in E minor, Op. 93
Moderato
Allegro
Allegretto
Andante — Allegro

This program is partially underwritten by a grant from the Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation

This program is part of the city-wide Soviet Arts Experience festival



THE CHAIRMAN DANCES (FOXTROT FOR ORCHESTRA) (1985)

John Adams (born in 1947)

The *Chairman Dances* is scored for piccolo, flute, two oboes, clarinet, bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, two trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, piano and strings. The performance time is twelve minutes. The Grant Park Orchestra first performed this work on July 7, 1989, John Adams conducting.

John Adams is one of today's most acclaimed composers. Audiences have responded enthusiastically to his music, and he enjoys a success not seen by an American composer since the zenith of Aaron Copland's career: a recent survey of major orchestras conducted by the League of American Orchestras found John Adams to be the most frequently performed living American composer; he received the University of Louisville's distinguished Grawemeyer Award in 1995 for his Violin Concerto; in 1997, he was the focus of the New York Philharmonic's Composer Week, elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and named "Composer of the Year" by *Musical America Magazine*; he has been made a *Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* by the French Ministry of Culture; in 1999, Nonesuch released *The John Adams Earbox*, a critically acclaimed ten-CD collection of his work; in 2003, he received the Pulitzer Prize for *On the Transmigration of Souls*, written for the New York Philharmonic in commemoration of the first anniversary of the World Trade Center attacks, and was also recognized by New York's Lincoln Center with a two-month retrospective of his work titled "John Adams: An American Master," the most extensive festival devoted to a living composer ever mounted at Lincoln Center; from 2003 to 2007, Adams held the Richard and Barbara Debs Composer's Chair at Carnegie Hall; in 2004, he was awarded the Centennial Medal of Harvard University's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences "for contributions to society" and became the first-ever recipient of the Nemmers Prize in Music Composition, which included residencies and teaching at Northwestern University; he has been granted an honorary doctorate from Cambridge University in England, an honorary membership in Phi Beta Kappa, and the California Governor's Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Arts.

John Adams was born into a musical family in Worcester, Massachusetts, on February 15, 1947; as a boy, he lived in Woodstock, Vermont, and in New Hampshire. From his father, he learned the clarinet and went on to become an accomplished performer on that instrument, playing with the New Hampshire Philharmonic and Sarah Caldwell's Boston Opera Orchestra, and appearing as soloist in the first performances of Walter Piston's Clarinet Concerto in Boston, New York and Washington. (Adams first met Piston as a neighbor of his family in Woodstock, and received encouragement, advice and understanding from the older composer, one of this country's most respected artists.) Adams' professional focus shifted from the clarinet to composition during his undergraduate study at Harvard, where his principal teacher was Leon Kirchner.

Rather than following the expected route for a budding composer, which led through Europe, Adams chose to stay in America. In 1972, he settled in California to join the faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where his duties included directing the New Music Ensemble, leading the student orchestra, teaching composition, and administering a graduate program in analysis and history. In 1978, he became associated with the San Francisco Symphony and conductor Edo de Waart in an evaluation of that ensemble's involvement with contemporary music. Two years later he helped to institute the Symphony's "New and Unusual Music" series, which subsequently served as the model for the "Meet the Composer" program, sponsored by the Exxon Corporation, the Rockefeller Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, which placed composers-in-residence with several major American orchestras; Adams served as resident composer with the San Francisco Symphony from 1979 to 1985. He still lives in northern California.

In his compositions through the early 1990s, Adams was closely allied with the style known as "Minimalism," which utilizes repetitive melodic patterns, consonant harmonies, motoric rhythms and a deliberate striving for aural beauty. Unlike some other Minimalist music, however, which

can be static and intentionally uneventful, the best of Adams' early works (*Grand Pianola Music*, *Shaker Loops*, *Harmonium*, the brilliant *Harmonielehre*, the acclaimed operas *Nixon in China* [1987] and *The Death of Klinghoffer* [1991]) are marked by a sense of determined forward motion and inexorable formal growth, and by frequent allusions to a wide range of 20th-century idioms, both popular and serious. Adams' recent compositions incorporate more aggressive harmonic idioms and more elaborate contrapuntal textures to create an idiom he distinguishes from that of his earlier music as "more dangerous, but also more fertile, more capable of expressive depth and emotional flexibility." Among Adams' recent commissions are *On the Transmigration of Souls* (2002, New York Philharmonic, commemorating the tragedies of September 11th, winner of the 2003 Pulitzer Prize and the 2005 Grammy Award as Best Contemporary Classical Composition Recording), *My Father Knew Charles Ives* (2003, San Francisco Symphony) and *The Dharma at Big Sur* (composed for Los Angeles Philharmonic for the opening of Disney Hall in October 2003). *Dr. Atomic*, based on the life of atomic scientist Robert Oppenheimer, was premiered by the San Francisco Opera in October 2005. His most recent opera, *A Flowering Tree*, inspired by Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and based on a folk tale from southern India, was premiered in November 2006 in Vienna and released on the Nonesuch label in 2008. Adams began his tenure as Creative Chair with the Los Angeles Philharmonic with the premiere of *City Noir* on October 8, 2009.

The Chairman Dances (Foxtrot for Orchestra) is a by-product of Adams' opera *Nixon in China*, premiered in Houston in October 1987. The opera, explained Michael Steinberg in his liner notes for the recording of *The Chairman Dances* on Nonesuch, is "neither comic nor strictly historical though it contains elements of both. It is set in three days of President Nixon's visit to Beijing in February 1972, one act for each day. The single scene of the third act takes place in the Great Hall of the People, where there is yet another exhausting banquet, this one hosted by the Americans." The preface to the score gives the following description of *The Chairman Dances*: "Madame Mao, alias Jiang Ching, has gatecrashed the Presidential banquet. She is seen standing first where she is most in the way of the waiters. After a few minutes, she brings out a box of paper lanterns and hangs them around the hall, then strips down to a cheongsam, skin-tight from neck to ankle, and slit up to the hip. She signals the orchestra to play and begins to dance herself. Mao is becoming excited. He steps down from his portrait on the wall and they begin to foxtrot together. They are back in Yenan, the night is warm, they are dancing to the gramophone ..."

"Act Three, in which both reminiscing couples, the Nixons and the Maos, find themselves contrasting the vitality and optimism of youth with their present condition of age and power, is full of shadows; Jiang Ching's and Mao's foxtrot in the opera is therefore more melancholy than *The Chairman Dances*. This is, uninhibitedly, a cabaret number, an entertainment, and a funny piece; as the Chairman and the former actress turned Deputy Head of the Cultural Revolution make their long trip back through time they turn into Fred and Ginger. The chugging music we first hear is associated with Mao; the seductive swaying-hips melody — *La Valse* translated across immense distances — is Jiang Ching's. You might imagine the piano part at the end being played by Richard Nixon."

SYMPHONY NO. 10 IN E MINOR, OP. 93 (1953)

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Shostakovich's Symphony No. 10 is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, E-flat clarinet, two clarinets, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion and strings. The performance time is 57 minutes. The Grant Park Orchestra first performed this Symphony on July 9, 1986, with Christopher Lyndon Gee conducting.

The resilience of Dmitri Shostakovich was astounding. Twice during his life he was the subject of the most scathing denunciations that Soviet officialdom could muster, and he not only endured both but found in them a spark to renew his creativity. The first attack, in 1936, condemned him for writing "muddle instead of music," and stemmed from his admittedly



modernistic opera *Lady Macbeth of Mzensk*. The other censure came after the Second World War, in 1948, and it was part of a general purge of “formalistic” music by Soviet authorities. Through Andrei Zhdanov, head of the Soviet Composers’ Union and the official mouthpiece for the government, it was made known that any experimental or modern or abstract or difficult music was no longer acceptable for consumption by the Russian peoples. Only simplistic music glorifying the state, the land and the people would be performed. In other words, symphonies, operas, chamber music — any forms involving too much mental or emotional stimulation — were out; movie music, folk song settings and patriotic cantatas were in.

Shostakovich saw the iron figure of Joseph Stalin behind the condemnations of both 1936 and 1948. After the 1936 debacle, Shostakovich responded with his Fifth Symphony, and kept composing through the war years, even becoming a world figure representing the courage of the Russian people with the lightning success of his Seventh Symphony (“Leningrad”) in 1942. The 1948 censure was, however, almost more than Shostakovich could bear. He determined that he would go along with the Party prerogative for pap, and withhold all of his substantial works until the time when they would be given a fair hearing — when Stalin was dead. About the only music that Shostakovich made public between 1948 and 1953 was that for films, most of which had to do with episodes in Soviet history (*The Fall of Berlin*, *The Memorable Year 1919*) and some jingoistic vocal works (*The Sun Shines Over Our Motherland*).

With the death of Stalin on March 5, 1953 (Prokofiev died on the same day), Shostakovich and all Russia felt an oppressive burden lift. The thaw came gradually, but there did return to Soviet life a more amenable attitude toward works of art, one that allowed significant compositions again to be produced and performed. Shostakovich, whose genius had been shackled by Stalin’s repressive artistic policies, set to work almost immediately on a large, bold symphony, a composition that was to prove the greatest he had written to that time in the form — the Symphony No. 10.

It is impossible to know how long Shostakovich had been preparing ideas for the Tenth Symphony. The actual composition of the score in summer 1953 took very little time. The composer wrote almost constantly from early morning until late in the day, taking only brief breaks for meals. It may well be that Stalin’s death allowed the dam to burst that had been holding back the ideas he was storing since his Ninth Symphony appeared eight years earlier — the longest gap between any two of his symphonies. The cohesion and integrity of the Symphony speak for a composition that Shostakovich had formulated carefully in his head before committing to paper, and it seems that the work may well contain musical images that were the result both of the painful years after the 1948 denunciations and the tempered joy at the release from Stalin’s ferocious grip. Robert Layton wrote of the important place this Symphony holds in Shostakovich’s output: “Shostakovich was still in his thirties when he wrote the Ninth Symphony and the view that he had not wholly lived up to the promise of the First Symphony was prevalent.... Certainly, none of his symphonies up to this time is absolutely flawless if judged by the Olympian standards of the great symphonists, though there is no doubt that they offer ample evidence of symphonic genius. The Tenth Symphony changed this.”

The Tenth Symphony is among the greatest works of its type written during the twentieth century. Besides the technical mastery the Symphony displays, it, like all of Shostakovich’s works in this form, also seems to bear some profound underlying message, some implicit struggle between philosophical forces. When the Symphony was new, Shostakovich would give no hint as to its “meaning.” At a conference of Soviet composers in 1954, he stated, “Authors like to say of themselves, ‘I tried, I wanted to, etc.’ But I think I’ll refrain from any such remarks. It would be much more interesting for me to know what the listener thinks and to hear his remarks. One thing I will say: in this composition I wanted to portray human emotions and passions.” Asked sometime later if he would provide a written program for the Tenth Symphony, he laughed and said, “No. Let them listen and guess for themselves.”

In his purported memoirs, *Testimony*, published after his death, Shostakovich was more specific. “I couldn’t write an apotheosis to Stalin, I simply couldn’t,” he admitted. “I knew what I was in for when I wrote the Ninth [i.e., the 1948 denunciation]. But I did depict Stalin in music in my next symphony, the Tenth. I wrote it right after Stalin’s death, and no one has yet guessed what the

Symphony is about. It’s about Stalin and the Stalin years. The second part, the scherzo, is a musical portrait of Stalin, roughly speaking. Of course, there are many things in it, but that is the basis.” He vouchsafed no more than that. Knowing what we do about Shostakovich’s years of struggle under Stalin and the composer’s feeling of release at the dictator’s death, it is not hard to fill in what he left unspoken because this Symphony is ample testimony to his philosophy of music as a communicative art: “I find it incredible that an artist should wish to shut himself away from the people.... I always try to make myself as widely understood as possible; and if I don’t succeed, I consider it my own fault.” The Tenth Symphony succeeds magnificently.

The Symphony’s first movement grows through a grand arch form whose central portions carry its greatest emotional intensity. The music is built from three themes, each of which undergoes a certain amount of development upon its initial presentation. The first is a darkly brooding melody that rises from the depths of the low strings immediately at the beginning. As this sinuous theme unwinds in the cellos and basses, the other string instruments enter to provide a surrounding halo of sound. The second theme appears in the clarinet, the first entry by the winds in the movement. (The use of tone colors in this Symphony to provide both the sonorous material of the work and to aurally define its structure is masterly.) The ensuing treatment of this theme generates the movement’s first climax before this section is rounded out by the re-appearance of the solo clarinet. The third theme emerges in the breathy low register of the solo flute as a sort of diabolical waltz. These three elements — low string, clarinet and flute melodies — provide the material for the rest of the movement. Their integration and manipulation give the impression, even on first hearing, of a work of grand sweep and unimpeachable integrity, an impression that is deepened with familiarity. It is probably the greatest symphonic movement that Shostakovich ever wrote.

The menacing second movement, the musical portrait of Stalin, is, in the words of Ray Blocker, “a whirling fireball of a movement, filled with malevolent fury.” Its thunderous tread leaves little doubt of Shostakovich’s feeling about the murderous Stalin. Formally, it is cast in ternary form (A–B–A), though the propulsive turbulence of the music leaves little room for subtle structural demarcations. The shortest section of the Symphony, it is the perfect foil for the deep ruminations of the preceding movement. Indeed, after the quiet close of the first movement, its beginning seems to virtually explode into the listener’s consciousness.

The opening gesture of the third movement, three rising notes, is related in shape to the themes of the first two movements and provides a strong link in the overall unity of the Tenth Symphony. As a tag to this first theme, Shostakovich included his musical “signature” — DSCHE, the notes D–E-flat–C–B. (The note D represents his initial. In German transliteration, the composer’s name begins “Sch”: S [ess] in German notation equals E-flat, C is C, and H equals B-natural.) This “signature” and its variants are given prominence, and there is no doubt that Shostakovich saw himself as a direct participant in the mysterious program of the Symphony. The movement’s center section is dominated by an unchanging horn call which resembles the awesome riddle of existence posed by the solo trumpet in Ives’ *The Unanswered Question*. The opening section returns in a heightened presentation. The movement closes with Shostakovich’s musical signature, played haltingly by flute and piccolo, hanging in the air.

The last movement begins with an extended introduction in slow tempo, a perfect psychological buffer between the unsettled nature of the third movement and the exuberance of the finale proper. The finale is both festive and thoughtful. During its course, it recalls thematic material from earlier movements to serve as a summary of the entire work. Concerning the ending of the work, Hugh Ottaway wrote, “The impact is affirmative but provisional: anti-pessimistic rather than optimistic.”

Shostakovich left the final interpretation of the Tenth Symphony up to each listener. It is no doubt heroic, filled with struggle and a deep awareness of life’s pains. But it is also uplifting in its devotion to the human spirit and the continuity of life against the greatest obstacles. In the words of Ray Blocker, “Here is the heart of Shostakovich. In this work he opens his soul to the world, revealing its tragedy and profundity, but also its resilience and strength.”

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