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## Shostakovich's Ninth Symphony: An Analytical Exploration and Keys to Interpretation

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SHOSTAKOVICH'S NINTH SYMPHONY: AN ANALYTICAL EXPLORATION  
AND KEYS TO INTERPRETATION

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Doctor of Musical Arts

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Shostakovich's Ninth Symphony: An Analytical Exploration and Keys to Interpretation

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## ABSTRACT

In the early 1940s, Shostakovich was exposed to much more Jewish culture than the average Soviet citizen. As news of the increasing European genocide and persecution of Jewish people reached Shostakovich, he was compelled to speak for the Jewish people whose voice was repressed by the ever-growing tyranny of Stalinist Russia.

After the Soviet Union's still fresh victory over the Third Reich, Shostakovich was expected to produce a grandiose symphony to celebrate and exalt the Soviet people. With his Ninth Symphony, Shostakovich challenged the notion of praising the Soviet Union for its military victory, instead mocking the anti-Semitic martial state of Stalinist Soviet Union and using the platform of a Ninth Symphony to celebrate the Soviet Union's victory of the Great Patriotic War to be a voice for prosecuted Jewish people within the Soviet Union.

The altered E Phrygian scale, known as the *freygish* scale in Hebrew and klezmer music, is one of the most distinctive and idiomatic Jewish elements in music. If the E phrygian modal element is interpreted as 'Jewishness,' its foreignness to the heroic key of E-flat (Russia's victory), and its consistent role as a catalyst for the persistent and increasingly aggressive militaristic reaction of the secondary theme result in clear processes in the first movement. The secondary theme becomes increasingly violent throughout the *Allegro*, later reappears injured, truncated, exhausted, repeatedly interrupted and finally brings the recapitulation to an aggressive close.

The *Largo* stands as the key to interpreting the work as a whole. The strained cantorial male voice represented by the bassoon sings the mourners kaddish in reaction to strong, united military violence as the standstill ensemble is reluctantly lead into a happier dance-like finale, a *freylach* spinning out of control and into madness.

Shostakovich's Ninth was a critical mirror held up to Stalin's Russia. Much of the published analyses regarding Shostakovich's Ninth Symphony view the piece simply as a musical *bras d'honneur* to Stalin and his cronies. This symphony contains musical allusions to multiple aspects of Shostakovich's immediate life in Russia: military themes becoming increasingly aggressive, Jewish musical inflections serving as a catalyst for violent reactions, ghostly references to Tchaikovsky, and a reference to Mussorgsky's *Catacombs* movement from his *Pictures at an Exhibition* as an introduction to a lengthy and dark Jewish lament for those who have died under the tyranny of others. By understanding the cultural and sociopolitical climate in which Shostakovich worked, we can better understand his music as both a product of his time and as a subversive voice in the arts of the Soviet Union.

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## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1945 was an important year for Dmitri Shostakovich. He was expected to produce a ninth symphony that could be compared to the great ninths of the past, including those by Schubert, Bruckner, Mahler, and Beethoven in particular. Shostakovich in part added to the expectations that were placed upon him by the public and the Soviet party by suggesting his symphony should be a great celebration in honor and support of the Soviet Union during the war with Nazi Germany. When it was announced that the Soviet Union won the war, Shostakovich took a break from working on the Ninth Symphony. When it came time for the premiere, he presented a seemingly light, playful, short symphony for a small orchestra, a symphony which did not meet the Soviet Party's expectations.

Though his Ninth Symphony is categorized as the last of the war symphonies, much of the scholarship addressing this symphony labels the Ninth as a peculiarly Haydn-esque, joke-like reaction to the Communist Party's expectation of a victory symphony. The musicologist David Gow goes so far as to say Shostakovich was just "not up to composing an epic symphony."<sup>1</sup>

It is the purpose of this document to show that Shostakovich's Ninth Symphony is deeply encoded with symbolic meaning far beyond the majority of what previous scholarship has shown. Through thorough analysis of the score and documents relating to both Shostakovich scholarship and scholarship of the socio-political environment of Stalinist Soviet Union between 1936 and 1945, I hope to reveal a deeper understanding and interpretation of the piece.

Shostakovich's Ninth Symphony in E-flat major, Op. 70 was premiered in St. Petersburg on November 3, 1945, by Yevgeny Mravinsky and the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra. Along with many of his other works the Ninth Symphony was banned within a few years after its 1945

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<sup>1</sup> David Gow, "Shostakovich's 'War' Symphonies," *The Musical Times* 105 (1964): 191.

premiere. This was Shostakovich's second denunciation, after the initial 1936 denunciation through an article criticizing him for his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*.

The infamous article used very specific and carefully chosen terms and connotations for both positive and negative musical attributes of Shostakovich's opera. This attack provided the base for a canon of terms that was used repeatedly in published musical criticisms throughout the next several decades. One of the criticisms of both *Lady Macbeth* and the Ninth Symphony was of Shostakovich's unwillingness to represent the doctrine of Socialist Realism.

The term Socialist Realism was first introduced in Maxim Gorky's 1933 article "On Socialist Realism".<sup>2</sup> In 1936 Andrei Zhdanov was appointed as the secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. After his appointment he immediately began censoring Russian writers, and soon created what we refer to as the Zhdanov Doctrine, a document that required Soviet artists to exhibit the idealized picture of what many Soviet citizens believed to be the ultimately positive teleological nature of Communism.

*Pravda* served as the official newspaper of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union during all of Shostakovich's adult life. The paper was focused on indoctrinating its readership on Communist ideas and programs, while offering critical articles on cultural and scientific topics. The most widely distributed and topically general newspaper of the bulk of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *Pravda* reached most literate Soviet citizens and served as the best way to stay informed on current events.

The official definition of Soviet Realism was published in *Pravda* on May 6, 1934, as it was described in the statutes of the then newly established Union of Soviet Writers:

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<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Cooke and Anthony Pople, *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 288.

Socialist Realism, the basic method of Soviet artistic literature and literary criticism, demands truthfulness from the artist and a historically concrete portrayal of reality in its revolutionary development. Under these conditions, truthfulness and historical concreteness of artistic portrayal ought to be combined with the task of the ideological remaking and education of the working people in the spirit of socialism.<sup>3</sup>

Zhdanov's concept of Socialist Realism was a picture of Communist life that was joyful and full of purpose. If suffering or hardships were portrayed they were used as a means to an end. Soviet art, then, should represent death and sacrifice as heroic, necessary means to build the Soviet empire.

Zhdanov's explanation sets out to instill these ideas as a "basic method," demanding "truthfulness from the artist and a historically concrete portrayal of reality."<sup>4</sup> This definition also dictates that these historically accurate truths be filtered through "ideological remaking... in the spirit of socialism."<sup>5</sup> Suffering was allowed to surface neither as a personal nor as a negative experience. It was tolerated if and when displayed as a necessary and honorable means to a victorious and justified end of a Communist Utopian state. The beginning discussions about Socialist Realist art and its application through soviet politics resulted in "...four basic tenets: orientation towards the people (narodnost), ideological narrative (ideonost), class content (klassnost), and - most important of all - the role of infusing workers with the spirit of communism (partiinnost). Put simply, Socialist Realism was 'political art', and aesthetic

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<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 108.

<sup>4</sup> Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin!*, 108

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

considerations always took second place to the political message of the painting or sculpture.”<sup>6</sup>

Because of this, Socialist Realist art was not judged on aesthetics, but rather on the ability of the artist to describe Soviet life in positive, idealistic terms.

Socialist Realism was not simply propaganda, or at least it did not start out that way. The Siberian gulags and twilight kidnappings were negative effects which sprouted from the original system of belief that the Soviet Union could be independent and strong as a unified nation by purging the grotesque trends in contemporary art.<sup>7</sup> The concept of “degenerate art” as a social disease had been discussed in Europe far before the Nazi bannings and burnings of books, art and music. Since at least the 1892 publication of Max Nordau’s book *Degeneration*, the theory of society’s degradation had been linked to peoples’ imitation of art. Nordau went so far as to label the increase of what he called “fashionable society” as a condition of a systemic, social-wide disease.<sup>89</sup> The concept of Socialist Realism in art was to propagate the tenets of the Communist party, to make Soviet citizens view the everyday struggle in terms of what was good for the country. The Socialist Realist aesthetic was a means to portray history as a teleological march toward Communist triumph.

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<sup>6</sup> “Socialist Realism,” Crawford College of Art and Design, accessed October 17, <http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/history-of-art/socialist-realism.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> “Soviet Writers Congress,” accessed October 19, [https://www.marxists.org/subject/art/lit\\_crit/sovietwritercongress/](https://www.marxists.org/subject/art/lit_crit/sovietwritercongress/).

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Downes, *Music and Decadence in European Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 279.

<sup>9</sup> Max Nordau, *Entartung*, trans. George Mosse (Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 1968).

## PROBLEMS WITH SOCIALIST REALISM IN MUSIC

A conference on Soviet symphonism and the problems with Socialist Realism in the arts was held the year before the *Pravda* article attacking ‘Lady Macbeth’ was published.<sup>10</sup> The term ‘symphonism’ was most usually used when describing ambitious and serious works that engaged with life’s great psychological processes and philosophical questions. Though the method of Socialist Realism was just beginning to be applied to literary criticism, the tools to officially critique music through the political lens of the Soviet Party had not yet been developed. “The aesthetic problem of the relationship between truth and art was of paramount importance for the theorists and practitioners of the Socialist-Realist method, and it was a, if not the, big issue steering the discussions at the 1934 Writers’ Conference.”<sup>11</sup>

The attempt to fasten the Socialist Realist method to music was at first met with a sense of ridicule, possibly because of the way keynote speaker Aleksandr Ostretsov tried to define musical Socialist Realism to the Composer’s Union in February of 1935. Musicologist Pauline Fairclough discusses how the “perceived vagueness” of Socialist Realism “was recognized as a possible advantage.”<sup>12</sup> Because the Soviet Party had difficulty pinning down exactly what they considered unacceptable features in Soviet music, they turned to the ‘Lady Macbeth’ article for guidance. The list of vocabulary and concepts that defined “some acceptable and unacceptable

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<sup>10</sup> “Soviet Writers Congress,” accessed October 19, [https://www.marxists.org/subject/art/lit\\_crit/sovietwritercongress/](https://www.marxists.org/subject/art/lit_crit/sovietwritercongress/).

<sup>11</sup> Sarah Elizabeth Pickle, “The Form of Learning is the Learning of Forms: Models of Socialist Aesthetic Education in Gorky, Hacks, and Müller” (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2014), 10.

<sup>12</sup> Pauline Fairclough, “The ‘Perestroyka’ of Soviet Symphonism: Shostakovich in 1935,” *Music & Letters* Vol. 83, No. 2 (May, 2002): 261.

features of Soviet music in the 1930s” range from ambiguous to subjective, and were consequently impossible for a committee of party members to enforce (see Appendix 1).<sup>13</sup>

The intensity of language used in the article attacking Shostakovich and his music clearly express Stalin’s and the Party’s disdain for what they heard:

- “Here is music turned deliberately inside out in order that nothing will be reminiscent of classical opera, or have anything in common with symphonic music or with simple and popular musical language accessible to all.”
- “The power of good music to infect the masses has been sacrificed to a petty-bourgeois, ‘formalist’ attempt to create originality through cheap clowning. It is a game of clever ingenuity that may end very badly.”
- “He ignored the demand of Soviet culture that all coarseness and savagery be abolished from every corner of Soviet life.”
- “Our theatres have expended a great deal of energy on giving Shostakovich's opera a thorough presentation... The talented acting deserves gratitude, the wasted efforts - regret.”<sup>14</sup>

The newly developing concept of *beskonfliktnost* (“absence of conflict”) was an added step to development of the tenets of Socialist Realism. *Beskonfliktnost* embodied the idea that Soviet peoples had evolved so far that conflict could no longer be discussed in terms of good and bad, but rather between good and best. Music that did not adhere to principles of *beskonfliktnost*

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<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth Kuhn, *Shostakovich in Dialogue* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010), 8.

<sup>14</sup> “Sumbur vmeste muzyki,” *Pravda*, January 28, 1936, accessed April 9, 2015, <http://soviethistory.msu.edu/1936-2/upheaval-in-the-opera/upheaval-in-the-opera-text/chaos-instead-of-music/>.

was treated with great suspicion, and the composers of subversive music could find themselves under attack, resulting in threats, their sudden disappearance, or the banning of their work.

Indeed a meeting of critics was held at the Union of Soviet Composers in Moscow in January of 1936, specifically to discuss the recent works of Shostakovich. Some issues raised during the meeting included points addressed in the *Lady Macbeth* article:

“Are these works optimistic or pessimistic? What is the place of tragedy in Soviet works? Does he write beautiful, folk-inflected melodies? Must a fine melody be singable? What is the appropriate place for harmonic dissonance, and dramatic conflict and opposition in Soviet music? Must music be immediately accessible to listeners?”<sup>15</sup>

We see the Party struggling to identify guidelines by which to critique music, asking questions using Stalin’s rhetoric incorporating the tenets of Socialist Realism.

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<sup>15</sup> Judith Kuhn, *Shostakovich in Dialogue* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010), 61.



## SHOSTAKOVICH'S COMPOSITIONAL STYLE BEFORE 1937

You ask if I would have been different without “Party guidance”? Yes, almost certainly. No doubt the line I was pursuing when I wrote the Fourth Symphony would have been stronger and sharper in my work. I would have displayed more brilliance, used more sarcasm, I could have revealed my ideas openly instead of having to resort to camouflage: I would have written more pure music.<sup>16</sup>

The 1936 *Pravda* article criticizing Shostakovich's opera was understood by all, including the composer, to be a direct threat. It caused Shostakovich great mental anguish and he struggled with the inner conflict of deciding whether to conform for the safety of his family, friends and himself, or to continue his artistic endeavor.<sup>17</sup>

Shostakovich was sketching his *Symphony No. 4 in C minor, Opus 43* when the article was published, and had insisted that the premiere continue as scheduled. He eventually canceled the concert during the rehearsals leading up to the December 1936 debut. In response to the Party's public threat and severe criticism, Shostakovich transformed the style in which he composed, and in doing so regained favor with the Party through the composition of his *Symphony No. 5 in D minor, Op. 47*, which was premiered on November 21, 1937. The Fifth Symphony was immediately placed upon a pedestal by the Soviet party as an exemplary work demonstrating Shostakovich's personal transformation. It was an example to be followed by all other Soviet artists. This work proved to the Party that Shostakovich had undergone an ideological rehabilitation, one that some believed urged him to proclaim the symphony as “a Soviet artist's creative response to justified criticism.”<sup>18</sup> This sentence accompanies the title in the score of the symphony, and was originally published as part of an article supposedly written

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<sup>16</sup> Laurel E. Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 268.

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 338.

<sup>18</sup> Dmitri Shostakovich, *Symphony No. 5* (London: Eulenberg, 1966), 4.

by Shostakovich in the newspaper *Vechernyaya Moskva* in 1937.<sup>19</sup> The subtitle itself was enough to serve as a renunciation of his former expressionistic, progressive, formalist, anti-Soviet tendencies. In the article *Making the Collective Man in Russia*, William Henry Chamberlin explains that “...the tendency to replace man, the individual, by collective man, the product of social groups and forces, [was] one of the most important [...] currents in Soviet life.”<sup>20</sup> We see that the idea of the individual person is gone; Shostakovich becomes “a Soviet artist” instead of an independent, creative individual.

From a modern perspective Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony can be read to be laden with hidden meaning and musically referential gestures that evince suffering, sarcastic assimilation, and a repetitively violent submission to a relentlessly strong and menacing power. Socialist Realism allowed the representation of suffering only as a means to a heroic end, without negative or personally expressed implications. Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony ends heroically, repetitively, victoriously out of a journey through frequently shifting and unstable harmony, unexpected and unresolved dissonances and violent gestures. On the surface this music adheres to the tenets of Socialist Realism, consequently representing the Soviet Union. Shostakovich included a sort of Socialist Realism check-list of acceptable musical features and references: waltzes recalling Tchaikovsky, chant-like passages referencing Orthodoxy, and Russian folk song. Because these elements had such a strong Russian identity, they justified the less Socialist Realist musical features, the aggression and conflict that could potentially raise questions

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<sup>19</sup> Francis Maes, Arnold J. Pomerans and Erica Pomerans, *A History of Russian Music: From Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2002), 304.

<sup>20</sup> William Henry Chamberlin, *Making the Collective Man in Russia* (Foreign Affairs, 1932), 280.

regarding his music and his loyalty to the Soviet Republic. As long as Shostakovich satisfied the requirements laid out by the Party, he continued to receive praise by the Party as a great Soviet artist.

## PLANS FOR THE NINTH

In 1945 Shostakovich was working on a large-scale symphony that was to include a chorus, soloists, and a considerably larger orchestra than the Ninth Symphony he eventually wrote. The composer stated, “Undoubtedly like every Soviet artist, I harbor the tremulous dream of a large-scale work in which the overpowering feelings ruling us today would find expression. I think that the epigraph to all our work in the coming years will be the single word ‘Victory.’”<sup>21</sup> Dmitry Rabinovich recalls Shostakovich explaining the original plans for his Ninth Symphony: “I would like to write it for a chorus and solo singers as well as an orchestra...”<sup>22</sup> Rabinovich continues, “Some musicians even had the opportunity to listen to the beginning, powerful, victorious major music in a vigorous tempo.”<sup>23</sup> Glikman described the music as “majestic in scale, in pathos, in its breathtaking motion.”<sup>24</sup> Shostakovich himself mentioned he was having trouble with the grandiose *tutti* introduction to his Ninth “which was inducing in many the temptation to compare it with Beethoven’s Ninth.”<sup>25</sup>

In February of 1945 Shostakovich was quoted in the press: “On the threshold of approaching victory, we must honor with reverence the memory of the brave soldiers who have died, and glorify the heroes of our army for eternity.”<sup>26</sup> The expectation from both the Russian

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<sup>21</sup> Maes, *A History of Russian Music*, 308.

<sup>22</sup> D. Rabinovich, *Dmitry Shostakovich: Composer* (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1959), 96.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, 146.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

people and the Soviet Party was for nothing less than a heroic, grandiose Ninth Symphony exalting Soviet Russian progress, power and ultimately victory over the Nazis.

## RECEPTION

All Soviet composers, along with authors, filmmakers and other artists, were required to present their works to a Party board for approval before the works were officially allowed to be brought before the public. Shostakovich had performed his Ninth Symphony for Party officials in a four-hands arrangement with Sviatoslav Richter in early September, less than two months before its November premiere. Approximately two weeks later an article was published in *Trud*, next to *Pravda* the most popular newspaper of the time. The article accused Shostakovich of, "... taking a breather, a creative diversion from those great philosophical-ethical problems that formed the content of his Seventh and Eighth Symphonies..."<sup>27</sup> Still the piece was approved to open the twenty-fifth season of the Leningrad Philharmonic, alongside Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64.

The Ninth Symphony was well received by the public. The audience lauded the premiere so much that the last three movements were repeated as an encore. Even still it was criticized by the Soviet party. In *Culture and Life*, a culture-oriented Soviet newspaper, Izrail Nestiev describes Shostakovich's latest work as containing "ideological weaknesses [that do] not reflect the true spirit of the Soviet people."<sup>28</sup> He continued to attack the Ninth as a "certain respite, a facile and light incident among the considerable creations of Shostakovich, a temporary

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<sup>27</sup> Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, 147.

<sup>28</sup> Izrail Nestiev, "Shostakovich's New Symphony Called Out of Tune With Party Line," *New York Times*, October 1, 1946, accessed July 23, 2014, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9E02E1DE1F38E033A05751C0A9669D946793D6CF>.

forgetting of big serious problems for a playful and fanciful trifle... the cynical and evil grotesque, the tone of merciless joking and ridicule... the cold irony of stylization.””<sup>29</sup> Nestiev points out in no uncertain terms that Shostakovich’s Ninth is an unacceptable presentation of Socialist Realist art. In a dissertation on Socialist Realism, Sarah Elizabeth Pickle suggests that the worth of Soviet art was “measured by its truthfulness, not its artfulness.”<sup>30</sup> The symphony does not satisfy the Socialist Realist agenda, and Nestiev suggests that Shostakovich even mocks the expectations that he would produce a victory symphony.

## SHOSTAKOVICH AND JEWISH MUSIC

"Shostakovich does not merely sympathize with the Jews or pity them. He is not just solicitous or generous. He is not a generalist but a particularist. In his Eighth String Quartet,... he identifies himself as a Jew, and as a Jew who expresses his Jewishness in his music".<sup>31</sup>

The musicologist Joachim Braun has written much to discuss the importance and influence of Jewish musical elements in Shostakovich’s music. Braun has created a table of 12 works which he finds best exemplify Shostakovich’s use of the Jewish musical idiom, organized by date of composition, year of publication, date of premiere and movement(s) which contain allusions to Jewish music and/or subject matter. His table begins with Shostakovich’s edition and orchestration of V. Fleishman’s opera *Rothschild’s Violin* (composed in 1943), followed by Shostakovich’s 1944 Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano, Op. 67. The next entry in Braun’s table of

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Pickle, “The Form of Learning is the Learning of Forms,” 9.

<sup>31</sup> Timothy Jackson, *Dmitry Shostakovich: The Composer as Jew* (London: Toccata Press, 1998), 599.

Shostakovich's *Compositions with Jewish Subjects and Jewish Compositions with his Participation* is the Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 77, completed in 1948.<sup>32</sup> Braun goes so far as to categorize Shostakovich's use of Jewish elements into three periods: the first from 1934 to 1944, the second from 1948 to 1952, and the third from 1959 to 1963. The Ninth Symphony is, of course, absent from this list. This symphony is often absent from most discussions of Jewish musical elements in Shostakovich's music, including the thorough and important contributions on the subject by Esti Sheinberg and Judith Kuhn.

In the early 1940s Shostakovich taught Veniamin Fleischmann, a composition student at the Moscow Conservatory. Shostakovich also befriended Mieczyslaw Weinberg, a composer for whom Shostakovich arranged to have travel and eventually settle in Moscow. While teaching at the Moscow Conservatory in the early 1940s Shostakovich served on the committee of Moisey Beregovsky, an ethnomusicologist who traveled throughout Eastern Europe recording and notating Jewish folk music. Both Beregovsky and Joachim Braun described several features commonly found in Jewish folk and cantoral music including musicalized speech, incongruity between form and inflection, and the Phrygian and altered Phrygian scale.

It was at the beginning of the 1940s through acquaintances displaced during the Jewish diaspora as a result of the Second World War when Shostakovich was exposed to Jewish music. Beregovsky was defending his dissertation on "Jewish Instrumental Folk Music" in January of 1944, the same year Shostakovich completed his Piano Trio No. 2, Op. 67, and finished his orchestration of Veniamin Fleischmann's opera, *Rothschild's Violin*. Beregovsky's extensive

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<sup>32</sup> Joachim Braun, "The Double Meaning of Jewish Elements in Dimitri Shostakovich's Music," *The Musical Quarterly* Vol. 71, No. 1 (1985): 71.

recordings of Jewish folk and klezmer music were well catalogued, and Shostakovich had access to Beregovsky's work.<sup>3334</sup>

Shostakovich's friendship with Mieczysław Weinberg, a composer of Polish-Jewish heritage and son-in-law to Solomon Mikhoels, gave him personal access to and information about Jewish subculture in Russia. Through these channels Shostakovich was privy to an unprecedented and largely unpublicized amount of news and information regarding political plans the Nazis held for the Jews.

The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was a large organization of Russian Jews created in 1941. This organization had networks throughout Eastern and Western Europe, even eventually reaching the United States. It was on Stalin's orders that the JAFC was created with the intention of building global support for the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany. Solomon Mikhoels, Weinberg's father-in-law, ran the Moscow State Jewish Theatre and was appointed the head of the JAFC.

Stalin did not foresee the organization and development of a new identity among Soviet Jews, who maintained strong international connections after the war. According to Judith Kuhn, the organization of the Jewish community in the Soviet Union "was of immediate concern to the Soviet government, as was the Committee's inclination to act as a central sounding board for Jewish affairs."<sup>35</sup> The development of the Russian nationalistic brand of anti-Semitism,

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<sup>33</sup> Beregovsky's dissertation, now available as a book translated in English, is a wealth of music for anyone interested in exploring the roots of Jewish folk music in Eastern Europe.

<sup>34</sup> Moshe Beregovski, *Old Jewish Folk Music: The Collection and Writings of Moshe Beregovski*, ed. Mark Slobin (Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 2000).

<sup>35</sup> Kuhn, *Shostakovich in Dialogue*, 136.



*bezrodniy kosmopolit* (“rootless cosmopolitanism”) began to take shape, gaining ground during the “Great Purge” and eventually culminating in the infamous “Doctors’ plot” of 1952.<sup>36</sup>

Several Jewish musical elements became increasingly pervasive in Shostakovich’s own compositions in the early 1940s. He especially used the Phrygian and altered Phrygian scale and musicalized speech in both his chamber and orchestral music.<sup>37</sup> The Ninth uses the inflection as a catalyst for change in the narrative schema of the first movement of the work. Shostakovich uses musicalized speech in his Ninth Symphony exclusively as a threnody in the fourth movement, repeating the compositional technique he first employed in his String Quartet No. 2 in A major, op. 68.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The 1952 Doctors’ Plot was a significant development in the growing national anti-Semitism of Soviet Russia, essentially a witch hunt against any and all Jews working in any prominent fields including medicine, government, academia and the arts. Two excellent books on the subject are Yakov Rapoport’s *Doctors’ Plot of 1953* and Jonathan Brent and Vladimir Naumov’s *Stalin’s Last Crime: The Doctors’ Plot*.

<sup>37</sup> Altered Phrygian refers to the Phrygian scale with a raised third scale degree resulting in an augmented second between the second and third scale degrees. In Jewish music this is referred to as the *freygish* scale.

<sup>38</sup> The term “musicalized speech” taken from Braun’s “Shostakovich’s Song Cycle *From Jewish Folk Poetry*”.

## ANALYSIS

Joachim Braun and Moisey Beregovsky have identified several musical features associated with and used in Jewish music, including: the melodic augmented-second interval resulting from the use of the altered Phrygian scale, found in the first and fourth movements of the Ninth Symphony; descending iambic primes, found throughout the symphony; musicalized speech, used predominantly in the fourth movement; and “incongruity between form and inflection,” in the second and fifth movements.<sup>39 4041</sup>

The Ninth Symphony is both the shortest and the smallest orchestrated of Shostakovich’s symphonies, save the Third and the Fourteenth Symphonies. The smaller orchestration, overall brevity, and the inclusion of a repeat sign in the first movement all point to a reluctance to subscribe to symphonism, a concept for which Soviet critics had praised Shostakovich in his recent chamber works.

Shostakovich’s Ninth Symphony exhibits many politically acceptable features with regard to the tenets of Soviet Realism, most apparently a heroic E-flat major key signature and the consistent major-mode resolution at the end of each movement. Beneath the surface however, and by Soviet standards, the symphony contains more disturbing and less conventionally acceptable aspects: the pervasive use of Jewish musical inflections, the evasion of

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<sup>39</sup> “*Iambic prime*” was coined by Alexaneder Dolzhansky according to Joachim Braun’s article “The Double Meaning of Jewish Elements in Dimitri Shostakovich’s Music.”

<sup>40</sup> Braun, “The Double Meaning of Jewish Elements in Dimitri Shostakovich's Music,” 72.

<sup>41</sup> Kuhn, 50, 52. Kuhn’s explanation of “incongruity between form and inflection”: “Jewish instrumental music is predominantly in sad-seeming minor-inflected modes. The combination of these modes with the dance forms most typical of klezmer music creates a kind of emotional incongruity, frequently referred to as “laughter through tears.” Sometimes the incongruity becomes extreme, resulting in the juxtaposition of horror and hilarity, which, Esti Sheinberg suggested, creates a vivid sense of the grotesque.”

major modality, and martial-like motives showing persistent, aggressive, and eventually failed attempts at restatement and domination.

### *ALLEGRO* – E-FLAT MAJOR

#### EXPOSITION

Throughout the classical and romantic periods the key of E-flat major was used to represent the heroic (Beethoven's *Eroica*, *Egmont Overture* and *Emperor Concerto*, Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, Strauss' *Horn Concerto No. 1*) and it is likely that Shostakovich chose the key to bolster the grandiose and celebratory expectations of the Soviet party. The primary theme of the *Allegro* begins without introduction, outlining an E-flat major chord. Shostakovich introduces and accentuates a G-flat already in the fourth measure (Figure 1).

Figure 1 *Allegro*: Primary theme, measures 1-4

The image displays a musical score for the first four measures of the 'Allegro' movement from Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9. The score is written for piano and strings. The tempo is marked 'Allegro' with a quarter note equal to 132 beats. The key signature is E-flat major (three flats). The time signature is common time (C). The piano part begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a *marcato* articulation. The strings enter in the second measure with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The primary theme is characterized by a series of eighth notes in the piano part, starting on E-flat and moving up to G-flat in the fourth measure, which is accented. The strings provide harmonic support with sustained chords and moving lines. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and a trill (*tr*) in the piano part in the fourth measure.

Figure 1 - Reduction of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9 in E-flat Major, Op. 70, from the DSCH Publishers 2002 edition, measures 1-4

The heroic E-flat major immediately becomes duplicitous, Shostakovich shining a spotlight on the incongruity of its heroic expectation and its actual function. This major versus minor gesture of conflict resurfaces later in the development section of this movement.

E Phrygian begins to peek out of the fabric of E-flat major by the nineteenth measure, causing a one-measure time signature change from cut time to 3/2 (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Allegro: first appearance of E Phrygian, 3 measures after rehearsal 2

[Allegro  $\text{♩} = 132$ ]

oboe

cresc. flute

clarinets, violins, violas

cresc.

bassoon

Figure 2 - Reduction of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9 in E-flat Major, Op. 70, from the DSCH Publishers 2002 edition, 3 measures after rehearsal 2

This first statement of E Phrygian sets the stage for each subsequent appearance and reappearance of the E Phrygian and E altered Phrygian scales. Each statement of E Phrygian consistently acts as a catalyst for a disruptive reaction always in augmentation that triggers either metric deviation, or a violent and opposing musical gesture within the heroic and classical expectations of the music. As E Phrygian slips into the music over the three bars before rehearsal 5, the time signature in the measure before rehearsal 5 again shifts from cut time to 3/2. The

primary theme in Figure 3 reappears at rehearsal 5, its reiteration follows the second appearance of E Phrygian and becomes aggressive, marked *fortissimo* with accents played by the *tutti* strings (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Allegro: Primary theme's aggressive reaction to E Phrygian, 4 measures before rehearsal 5

**[Allegro  $\text{♩} = 132$ ]** *oboes, clarinets, strings*

*violins* *cresc.* ***ff*** *violins*

*clarinets, violas*

*bassoons, basses* *bassoons, pizz. cellos*

**5** *tr*

*tutti strings* ***ff***

Figure 3 - Reduction of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9 in E-flat Major, Op. 70, from the DSCH Publishers 2002 edition, 4 measures before rehearsal 5

As the restatement of the primary theme continues it is derailed by the third appearance and implied cadence of E Phrygian in the three measures leading to rehearsal 6. This climactic cadence of E Phrygian acts again as a catalyst for the secondary theme, ushering in the martial and simplistic exclamatory music heralded by the first trombone tonicizing the expected secondary key of a traditional sonata form with a perfect fourth F to B-flat, implying a perfect cadence in B-flat (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Allegro: Cadence on E Phrygian, 4 measures before rehearsal 6

[Allegro  $\text{♩} = 132$ ]

strings

6

Figure 4 - Reduction of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9 in E-flat Major, Op. 70, from the DSCB Publishers 2002 edition, 4 measures before rehearsal 6

The characteristics of the secondary theme point to the representation of a speaker, a solo voice that stands out above the others present. The piccolo is used to present the melodic material marked *fortissimo*, while the rest of the orchestra is marked *piano*. Though it can be problematic to ascribe musical themes or instruments to specific people, the martial characteristics and extreme high register of the secondary theme might possibly point to Stalin

himself, whose voice, according to Richard Taruskin, was considered a “tremulous, high-pitched” one.<sup>42</sup> After its two-measure introduction the secondary theme lasts seven measures before a responsorial statement from the rest of the orchestra interrupts the theme one measure before rehearsal 7. The first restatement of the secondary theme and its herald introduction begins at rehearsal 7, is interrupted again at rehearsal 9, and restates itself for the third time at rehearsal 10, ten measures before the end of the exposition. The theme continually attempts to restate itself, vying to be heard despite brief, derailing interruptions (see Appendix 3 for Figure 5).

Shostakovich’s inclusion of a repeat sign in the exposition serves two functions. It references an older, more orderly time, satisfying several aspects of the newly acquired tenets of Socialist Realism. The use of the repeat sign also delivers a subversive insult to the Soviet critics that had recently praised Shostakovich’s recent chamber music for the musical characteristic they referred to as “... ‘symphonism’ – the powerful capacity to express conflict and drama on a large scale.”<sup>43</sup> Shostakovich’s use of the repeat sign, relatively small-scale orchestration, durational brevity and playful militaristic music in the outer movements of his Ninth Symphony, especially in the celebratory wake of the Soviet Union’s victory over the Nazis, is as “un-symphonistic” as he could safely make it.

## DEVELOPMENT

The development begins with a statement of the primary theme, transformed into a heavy, plodding and rhythmically uneven force that begins in G-flat major, referencing the

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<sup>42</sup> Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 540.

<sup>43</sup> Kuhn, *Shostakovich in Dialogue*, 61.



fourth measure G-flat, revealing E-flat major as a transient key and allowing the key of G-flat to move to the forefront. The melodic contour has been inverted, the rhythmic duration of the antecedent has been augmented from quarter notes to half notes, and each half note has been marked with an accent. This antecedent of the primary theme travels through a number of keys, none tonicized enough to create a feeling of rest or arrival. The primary theme's excerpt is passed to cellos and basses as its last two statements lead us to rehearsal 14. Here the consequent of the primary theme's original statement, initially introducing the accented G-flat, is briefly sequenced.

After the horns sound the consequent of the primary theme at rehearsal 14 the time signature shifts seven measures later, two measures before rehearsal 15, to the familiar 3/2. Just as in the exposition, the deviation from cut time to 3/2 here is also synchronous with an E Phrygian presence. Unlike previous incidents, however, this one is twice as long. Its reappearance causes a violent, metrically hurried and dizzying reaction (which returns at the very end of the movement with an E Phrygian inflection) from the exclamatory antecedent of the secondary theme, aggressively stated without the military herald (see Appendix 4 for Figure 6).

Rehearsal 16 marks a long excerpt of unstable, constantly shifting meters while the thematic material, focused in the cellos and basses, exploits the major/minor juxtaposition of the opening theme, all set over an aggressive marching accompaniment. The beginning of the secondary theme interrupts the exploitation of the major/minor duality of the primary theme at rehearsal 17 in a short-lived, truncated and histrionic state.<sup>44</sup> Five measures after rehearsal 17 marks the explosive climax of the *Allegro* and coincides with the longest-lasting appearance of E Phrygian in the movement, complete with a metric reaction from cut time to 3/2 (Figure 7).

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<sup>44</sup> The first violin part here sounds remarkably like American fiddle music; part of the unwanted invasion leading to, or appearing right before, the explosive climax of the symphony/war?

Figure 7 Allegro: Climax; Longest appearance of E Phrygian, 5 measures after rehearsal 17

[Allegro  $\text{♩} = 132$ ]

*ff*

*tutti brass*

*pizz. strings*

*fff*

*ff*

Cassa

8<sup>vb</sup>

Figure 7 - Reduction of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9 in E-flat Major, Op. 70, from the DSCH Publishers 2002 edition, 5 measures after rehearsal 17

A sense of confusion permeates the next four measures leading to the recapitulation. Incomplete thematic restatements show signs of disintegration as they appear spliced and out of synchronicity with each other. Eventually the primary theme forcefully restates itself in the correct key at rehearsal 18, marking the moment of recapitulation.

## RECAPITULATION

The E-flat primary theme returns at rehearsal 18 revitalized with stronger dynamics and reinforcements of the *tutti* string section. The brass and percussion are used to accent the downbeats. The initial fourth measure G-flat has transformed from its original expression as an almost apologetic note with a decrescendo, followed by the second more confident *fortissimo* utterance without decrescendo four measures after rehearsal 5, to the final statement four measures after rehearsal 18. Now, tutti strings are given trills, previously dictated only to the

violins, and without accents, adding a crescendo through the gesture. In addition trumpets, trombones and tuba simultaneously play accented G-flats but sustain a quarter note F, echoing the eighth note in the strings (Figure 8).

The military herald that initially introduced the secondary theme interrupts the primary theme one measure before rehearsal 19. Its role as a character that introduces is unsuccessful, and persistently so as it is restated in the wrong key six times before finally completing its function as an introduction for the secondary theme. Its final reappearance, however, shows signs of exhaustion through diminuendos and truncated restatements.

Figure 8 Allegro: Transformations of primary theme's trilled G-flat

The figure displays a musical score reduction for Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9, focusing on the transformations of the primary theme's trilled G-flat. The score is organized into three measures, each representing a different point in the piece:

- 4 mm before rehearsal 1:** The top staff (treble clef) shows a trilled G-flat (G-flat with a trill line) followed by a quarter rest. The bottom staff (bass clef) shows a trilled G-flat (G-flat with a trill line) followed by a quarter rest. The label "strings" is placed below the bottom staff.
- 4 mm after rehearsal 5:** The top staff (treble clef) shows a trilled G-flat (G-flat with a trill line) followed by a quarter rest. The bottom staff (bass clef) shows a trilled G-flat (G-flat with a trill line) followed by a quarter rest.
- 4 mm after rehearsal 18:** The top staff (treble clef) shows a trilled G-flat (G-flat with a trill line) followed by a quarter rest. The bottom staff (bass clef) shows a trilled G-flat (G-flat with a trill line) followed by a quarter rest. The label "tutti strings, trumpets, trombones, tuba" is placed below the bottom staff.

The score is written in E-flat major, 4/4 time, and features a trill (tr) on the G-flat in both staves of each measure. The trill is marked with a trill line and a trill symbol (tr).

Figure 8 - Reduction of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9 in E-flat Major, Op. 70, from DSCH Publishers 2002 edition

The first statement of the herald fourth at rehearsal 19, now E-flat to A-flat (F to B-flat before), is marked *forte* instead of its initial *fortissimo*. Shorter by five measures and now marked with a decrescendo, the herald gesture exhibits signs of fatigue. The next five attempted statements of the theme are cut short, all marked with a decrescendo, running out of breath at

every restatement. Though the seventh restatement actually fulfills its purpose as an introduction to the secondary theme, the rest of the orchestra contains *descrescendi* instead of the *subito piano* that initially accompanied the secondary theme. Furthermore, the persistent E-flat to A-flat fourth that leads the secondary theme to follow, is also stated in the wrong key of A-flat. The persistent clarion of the trombone fails six times, becomes confused through metric deviation and a variety of rhythmically altered restatements, and though finally achieves its goal of introducing the secondary theme, ultimately fails by having led the theme in the wrong direction (see Appendix for Figure 9).

#### CODA

The coda is introduced by frenzied, winding staccato repetitions executing a crescendo toward the final aggressive restatement of the secondary theme. The secondary theme spins out of control through a manic and syncopated 3/4 over eight measures. The repeated pitches G-F-E further establish E Phrygian as an important musical element or agent echoing the similar foreshadowing statement in the solitary 3/4 measure three bars before rehearsal 16. Meanwhile the lower voices struggle with the final chance to establish E-flat as the victorious key before the movement comes to a close. E-flat to B-flat tonicizing gestures in the bass (I-V-I-V) are repeatedly derailed by F-flat (enharmonic 'E') and A natural. Rehearsal 27 marks the final four measures of the movement, and that arrival point includes nearly the entire force of the tutti orchestra. A final crescendo begins on a 'B', as if to tonicize E, or E Phrygian, one last time. The last three measures finally give way to a clear cadence on E-flat major (Figure 10), and the two final chords are marked with a crescendo to fortissimo,

stylistically opposite of the typical dynamically tapered phrase for the final notes of a classical period piece.

Figure 10 Allegro: Coda

[Allegro  $\text{♩} = 132$ ]

27 *tr*

*cresc.* *f cresc.*

oboes, clarinets, bassoons, strings Trombone solo

*cresc.* *f cresc.*

Figure 10 - Reduction of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9 in E-flat Major, Op. 70, from the DSCB Publishers 2002 edition, 5 measures before rehearsal 27

Shostakovich's sonata-form narrative schema of the *Allegro* contains three main musical agents: 1) The arpeggiated E-flat (heroic) primary theme with major/minor juxtaposition (saying one thing, doing another, or seeming one way, being another); 2) the military herald and ensuing high-pitched, speech-like exclamatory second theme (martial leader); 3) E Phrygian (Jewishness). The E Phrygian element appears more and more as time passes, met with ever-increasing aggression with each occurrence from the military theme. In her book, *Feminine Endings*, Susan McClary describes a musical foreignness within a given context "...as an obstacle or threat [...] that must, consequently, be purged or brought under submission for the

sake of narrative closure.”<sup>45</sup> The foreign otherness of E Phrygian within the context of Shostakovich’s Ninth Symphony is treated with the same purge-like process.

The principal conflict that occurs in this movement is not an actual unfolding conflict at all, but a mapping of progressively aggressive and violent reactions toward the growing appearance of a foreign otherness. The movement is a chronicle of the dissembling double-speak of Soviet Russia, showing an anti-Semitic program despite the victory over the Nazis. How could Shostakovich write a victory symphony when he knew Stalin was doing much the same in his own country as Hitler had? Shostakovich shared, “I feel eternal pain for those who were killed by Hitler, but I feel no less pain for those killed on Stalin’s orders. I suffer for everyone who was tortured, shot, or starved to death. There were millions of them in our country before the war with Hitler began.”<sup>46</sup>

#### *MODERATO – B MINOR*

One of Zhdanov's most significant and perhaps most observed contributions to the Soviet Party’s new requirements for Russian composers was the need to reference older Russian music. Though most composers, including Shostakovich, generally included small bits of Russian folk music, the other music a composer could safely reference, perhaps the only other music, was that of Tchaikovsky and Mussorgsky. Tchaikovsky’s musical legacy in the Soviet Union was marked mostly from his music for the theater, and his ballet music in particular. In the *Moderato* Shostakovich references Tchaikovsky’s legacy of ballet music by writing a waltz, an Austro-Germanic cultural symbol of elevated, noble society. The waltz, however, has a haunting

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<sup>45</sup> Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 16.

<sup>46</sup> Solomon Volkov, *Testimony* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 155.

character. The mixed meter and uneven phrases create a kind of hobbling effect, and the theme repeatedly fails in its attempt to complete itself with unstable phrasal structures, eventually and properly ending in the movement's parallel major.

The key of B is the dominant of E (Phrygian). As in the previous movement, the fourth measure of the *Moderato* negates the initial tonal intentions of the music, briefly altering both the key signature and the 3/4 time signature. Similarly to the first movement again the negation in the fourth measure of both the F-sharp and the C-sharp of the key signature destroys the two most significant and only accidentals of the proposed key. The dissonances of C natural and F natural are remnants of the first movement's E-Phrygian element, functioning as a catalyst to change. The reaction to E-phrygian in the *Moderato* results in metric augmentation, just as in the first movement (Figure 11).

Figure 11 *Moderato*: First four measures

28 **Moderato** ♩=208  
Clarinet solo

*p legato*

*p*  
(pizz)

Figure 11 - Reduction of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9 in E-flat Major, Op. 70, from the DSCH Publishers 2002 edition, rehearsal 28

The key change to F minor at rehearsal 35 sets up a ghostly chromatic gesture in a key a tritone away from the tonic of the movement. Shostakovich created an ominous atmosphere,

changing key signatures from B minor to F minor at rehearsal 35, marking the midway point of the movement.

The primary theme is restated in a new voice of the solo flute at rehearsal 40, this time beginning with the interval of a fifth rather than outlining the triad. Shostakovich's omission of the third, the most common marker of harmonic quality (major or minor) enables the theme to keep its minor-inflected integrity while being superimposed over major chords.<sup>47</sup> The secondary theme shifts modes from B minor to B major at rehearsal 42, the parallel tonic of the movement. In addition to the theme's chromaticism and dynamics remaining the same, the key signature, too, remains as B minor while the music maintains its parallel major modality. In addition to subversively satisfying the Socialist Realism tenet of keeping things positive (major tonality), this creates a kind of disconnect between what is trying to happen or hopes to happen, and what is actually happening, echoing the first movement's simultaneous major/minor struggle and further paralleling the double-speak of the Soviet Party.

Two measures after rehearsal 46 the flute restates the altered primary theme, outlining the fifth of a B minor chord. Rather than alternating between measures of 3/4 and 4/4 the theme takes only one detour to a 4/4 bar, repeating this as the piccolo takes up the theme to finish the movement. Rehearsal 47 sees the flute move chromatically through a descending fifth from G-sharp to C-sharp, cadencing on a C-sharp major chord and leading immediately to the F-sharp minor chord in the strings at rehearsal 48. The F-sharp minor chord seems to undermine the movement's modal shift to B major, and in fact Shostakovich never tonicizes B major with anything more than the incessant single F-sharp to B in the cellos and basses.

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<sup>47</sup> This is a very common compositional technique applied to many of Brahms' themes.



Further obfuscating the stability of B major, Shostakovich makes sure each iteration of the B major chord is subsequently followed by a hint of D dominant seventh with a suspended fourth (D-G-C-D). By lowering and re-raising the major third of the chord Shostakovich subverts the strength and function of a major-mode resolution at the end of the disturbing, unstable and dark experience of the movement, echoing the representation of the necessary suffering of a Soviet Realist life.

### PRESTO – G MAJOR

Already the G major tonality of the *Presto* gives us a false positive about this movement. Presenting a playful, major key scherzo-like middle movement to a panel of Soviet officials with the power to ban a work was a clever way to sneak in a subversive anti-war piece, a musical Trojan horse filled with enigmatic ciphers. Already in the fourth measure, as with both movements preceding, Shostakovich inserts a G minor chord; the major tonality does not hold up for very long.

As the playful sprightliness of the *Presto* continues through the movement, the repetition of the material in the strings four measures before rehearsal 66 signals trouble. Shostakovich often uses exact repetition as a signal for strife or difficulty, a type of musical trope most often succeeded by a dissolution of the current atmosphere, thematic material, harmony or trajectory of the music.<sup>48</sup> In the context of the final measures of the *Presto* in the Ninth Symphony, this dissolution manifests in a sudden slowing of momentum, a rapid disintegration of rhythmic activity, instrumentation, and range of pitch and textures. Quite literally the music alters from an almost manic playfulness met by resistance and a menacing, powerful shouting force of lower

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<sup>48</sup> Shostakovich's two most obvious uses of repetition for this reason include the ending of the Fifth Symphony, and the nod to *Bolero* in the first movement of his Seventh Symphony.

brass in unison. As the dust settles, a stunned audience (congregation) stares on in suspended disbelief.

The movement ends with several similarities to the previous movement's ending. Five measures after rehearsal 66 a D dominant seventh chord is outlined and then followed by a chromatic descent in a *caccia*-like catch-up game alternating between the E-flat to B in the first violins and cellos, and the G to F in the second bassoon, violas and basses. The arrival of the first violins and cellos on B signals the final utterance of the movement, with the B – F tritone carried through from the structural tonal scheme of the previous movement. Here it functions to set up the B-flat minor key signature of the fourth movement.

#### *LARGO* – B-FLAT MINOR

The crux of the meaning behind the entire Ninth Symphony lies in its *Largo*. Already the violence and aggression of the multi-octave diminished-scale brass introduction foreshadows ominous events. The aggressive opening culminates in an F major chord, a non-functional dominant chord emphasized with a cymbal crash. The chord is sustained long past any functional role; its significance lies in its inversion.

The main feature of this movement is the threnody of the bassoon solo. Joachim Braun referred to this recitative-like device as musicalized speech, and it is set over sustained first inversion major triads. This same musical vocabulary, a recitative-like song of lament floating over a paralyzed harmony, was earlier used by Shostakovich in the “Recitative and Romance – Adagio” of his second string quartet. There the chord underneath is a third inversion F dominant seventh chord (Figure 12).

Figure 12 Second Quartet Recitative and Romance – Adagio: Beginning

Figure 12 - Reduction of Shostakovich's String Quartet No. 2 in A Major, Op. 68, *Adagio*

The precedent of the work's neoclassical tendencies was established in the very beginning of the piece with the inclusion of a repeat sign in the exposition of the *Allegro*. Shostakovich's use of a first inversion chord here is similar in function to its role in tonal functional harmony. We know that certain triad inversions function in specific ways. Root-position triads are the most stable and function as arrival points. Second inversion triads function as cadential chords, preceding a resolution, or at least setting up the expectation of a resolution. Therefore, second inversion triads are the second-most stable triad. First inversion triads function almost exclusively as pivotal chords, inferring motion from one harmony to another. According to Carl Schachter and Edward Aldwell's *Harmony and Voice Leading*, "...where stability is needed... [a first inversion triad] is *not* a satisfactory substitute..."<sup>49</sup>

Shostakovich's use of the first inversion F major triad is removed from the realm of time, prevented from fulfilling any functional harmonic role, and also suggests an inability to move on.

<sup>49</sup> Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter, *Harmony and Voice Leading* (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1989), 98.

This inverted chord caught in the temporal suspension of the fermata removes the music from reality, affecting the musical character into a hushed, catatonic state after the initial brutally aggressive brass statement. It is the aftermath of the explosion caused by the rising aggression of the brass diminished scale, leaving the onlookers in shock and in disbelief as the section ends with the *decrescendo*.

The brass opening of the movement is another reference to older Russian music, though this time alluding to a much more specific topic. The aggressive brass introduction shares similarities to Mussorgsky's 'Catacombs' movement from his *Pictures at an Exhibition*. This could be read as Shostakovich's instrumental interpretation of the Latin *De profundis* text.

Mikhail Tushmalov, a Russian conductor and a student of Rimsky-Korsakov, was the first to complete an orchestral arrangement (initially begun by Rimsky-Korsakov) of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Shostakovich was no doubt aware of Tushmalov's orchestration of *Pictures*. Shostakovich had recently finished re-orchestrating *Boris Godunov* just a few years prior in 1940, and Tushmalov's score had been published almost 50 years before that in 1891. Shostakovich orchestrated his reference to *Catacombs* similarly to Tushmalov's Mussorgsky orchestration, from the lower brass octaves preceding the first-inversion chord, to the cymbal crash emphasizing the climactic importance of the sustained first-inversion chord (Figure 13a and 13b).

Figure 13a Mussorgsky: Catacombs – first inversion

**[Largo]**

Tushmalov's orchestration →

*ff*

*sf*

bassoons  
lower brass  
timpani  
strings

tutti  
+ cassa  
tam-tam

Figure 5 - Reduction of Tushmalov's orchestration of Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition - *Catacombs*

Figure 13b Shostakovich: First inversion

**[Largo ♩ = 84]**

*ff*

*pp*

*p*

trombones  
and tuba

+trumpets  
cymbal  
viola and bass

Figure 13b - Reduction of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9 in E-flat Major, Op. 70, *Largo* measures 6-10

The cantor-like bassoon solo is a clear reference to a *kaddish*, the Jewish mourners' prayer for those who have suffered and died under the tyranny of others. This movement may be thought of as a picture or chronicling of the reaction of the modern Russian Jewish community, the shocking brutality of a military presence, a congregation stunned into a state of disbelief,

supporting and looking on as a strained solo male voice laments for extended periods of time in between recurring attacks (Figure 14 – compare to Figure 12).

Figure 14 Largo: First bassoon solo

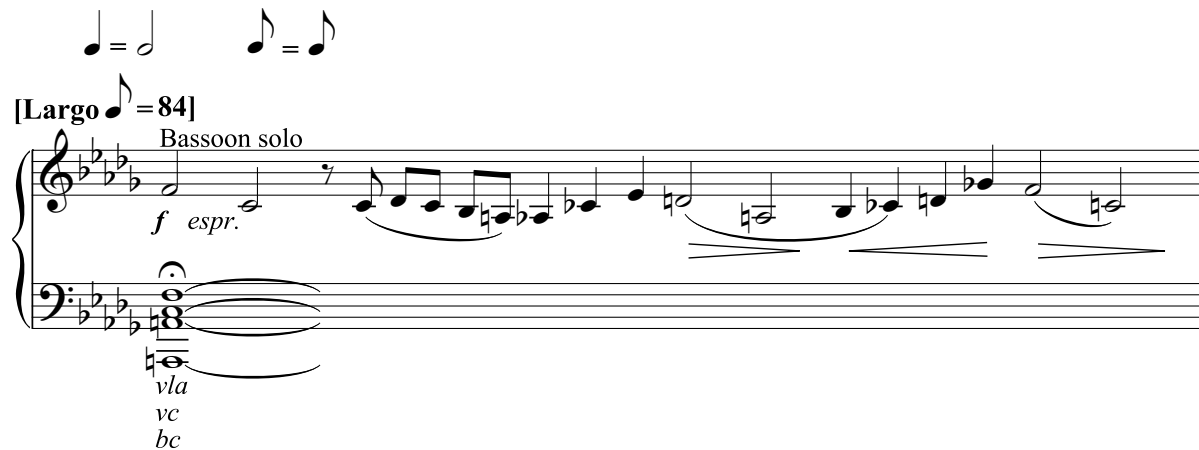


Figure 14 - Reduction of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9 in E-flat Major, Op. 70, from the DSCH Publishers 2002 edition, measure 10

The well-known authority on Russian music, musicologist Richard Taruskin comments, “When recitative appears in an instrumental context (e.g., in Beethoven’s late quartets, or Shostakovich’s) it is well understood to be an iconic convention, one that creates a sense, as Kerman puts it, of ‘direct communication’ from the author, a special ‘immediacy of address.’”<sup>50</sup> The concepts of the lyric and narrative in music fall under Jean-Jacque Nattiez’s conjecture on the semiotics of musical language. He paralleled linguistic semiotic theories in music, and, more specifically for the purposes of this document, Plato’s philosophies on contrasting diegesis and mimesis as perspectives of character in any given story. Diegesis may be explained as the telling of a story from the perspective of the narrator, and the mimesis as

<sup>50</sup> Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically*, 540.

<sup>51</sup> Joseph Kerman, *The Beethoven Quartets* (New York, 1979), 199-200.

speech, storytelling or action that is derived from another character. This immediacy of address, the bassoon recitative, is the diegesis of the entire work.

Plato's contrasting character perspectives refer to more than telling and showing. Their temporal implications are arguably even more significant, especially when used to explore meaning in a timed art. Diegesis, the bassoon soliloquy, functions as the now, the storyteller, and mimesis, the lyric, shows us scenes and glimpses from the past.<sup>52</sup> This is to say that the Largo is immediate, levity (the third movement) is passed and solemnity (the fourth movement) is now.

#### *ALLEGRETTO – E-FLAT MAJOR*

The transition from the fourth to the fifth movement references another aspect of Jewish music, the *freylachs*. The *freylachs* is the musical representation of the Jewish concept of “laughter through tears,” the basic incongruity between form and function upon which much klezmer and other Jewish folk music is based. Shostakovich felt a particular kinship with the Jewish people and identified with the culture insofar as he knew it. Through his friendships with Beregovsky and Weinberg he was privy to more Jewish musical and cultural traditions than most Russian gentiles. Shostakovich said, “It seems I comprehend what distinguishes the Jewish melos. A cheerful melody is built here on sad intonations... The ‘people’ are like a single person... Why does he sing a cheerful song? Because he is sad at heart.”<sup>53</sup>

In 1945, Shostakovich told New York Times reporter Robert Magidoff, “I like Jewish folk songs. I don’t know why exactly. Possibly it’s that I heard a great deal of Jewish folk music

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<sup>52</sup> For an insightful glimpse into the analysis of diegesis and mimesis in classical music, read Michael Klein’s “Chopin’s Fourth Ballade as Musical Narrative,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 26, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 23-56.

<sup>53</sup> Kuhn, *Shostakovich in Dialogue*, 49.

from a man named Berezovsky [sic], who collected three volumes of such music and showed them to me.”<sup>54</sup>

If we think of the previous movement’s bassoon recitative as the leader of a congregation, the strings representing the congregation itself, we can consider the transition into the finale as the solo voice leading the congregation to laugh through their tears. The only sustained notes of the solo bassoon’s melody are dissonances (A natural and C-flat) in the key of E-flat, surrounding the dominant B-flat as if avoiding an arrival on the dominant; E-flat is more of an aspiration than a presence. Though the congregation is hesitant to move on in the cheery and heroic key of E-flat, they finally attempt to join the *freylachs* at rehearsal 71. However, at rehearsal 71 the strings join the bassoon in the unexpected key of C major, instead of the key signature’s implied E-flat. The bassoon sustains C until finally giving way to the strings after they take up the theme. The bassoon resolution comes late, however, as if that voice experiences difficulty moving on with such a playful, dance-like spirit.

As the initial theme returns at rehearsal 75, a new third theme appears in C minor at rehearsal 77. A brass fanfare at rehearsal 79 opposes the character of the previous movement’s brass introduction. Here the violent military presence is shown as a celebratory and playful fanfare. At rehearsal 81 the primary theme returns as a chromatic and sinister bass voice anchored in E Phrygian with a pedal-like C in the timpani for nine measures. At rehearsal 83 the timpani plays the same figure on E for an additional nine measures. The D-sharp leading-tone anchors E as the center of this tonality, while the accidentals and change of key signature five bars after rehearsal 81 revert to C (also E Phrygian). The move to C major/E Phrygian is foreshadowed at rehearsal 80 with the reappearance of the third theme. The tonality straddles C

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<sup>54</sup> Judith Kuhn, “Writing About Shostakovich. Laughter Through Tears: Shostakovich and Jewish Music.” *DSCH Journal* 33, (July 2010): 6.



major/minor, and the theme alters its tonal emphasis by starting on the first scale degree of its new adopted tonality, opposed to the previous statement starting on the fifth scale degree at rehearsal 78. The tonal center shifts five measures later to E major for five measures before falling back to C minor at rehearsal 79.

The inaugurating trombone fourth from the first movement, now taken up by the oboe, returns during a metric alteration in the two  $\frac{3}{4}$  bars five measures after rehearsal 82. The figure of the intervallic fourth returns in the oboe five after rehearsal 84, this time as E-flat to B-flat, the proper tonicizing intervallic fourth it should have been in the recapitulation of the first movement, and again during an augmented metric alteration from  $\frac{2}{4}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$ .

The primary theme returns at rehearsal 85 as the music goes through metric alterations and tonal shifts until reaching rehearsal 88. Rehearsal 88 is a kind of a culmination in both the tonal and thematic aspects of the finale: E-flat in the violins and violas against E-natural in the bassoons, cellos and basses; the meter suddenly changing in every measure; only parts of themes now being stated. Rehearsal 89 is marked *Pochissimo animato*, as is rehearsal 90. Shostakovich now includes sixteenth notes in the violin parts, rapidly creating a sense of frenetic urgency while the rest of the orchestra sounds as though it is ready to burst, being pulled apart by half-steps moving in opposite directions.

Rehearsal 94 is the dramatic climax of the movement and an obvious arrival point for the orchestral machine that has been breaking apart as it moves at breakneck speed. The penultimate measure of rehearsal 94 includes a  $\frac{3}{4}$  measure inserted amidst the  $\frac{2}{4}$  trajectory that has preceded this moment since rehearsal 93, the marking *poco ritenuto* at the beginning of the measure, and a dramatic crescendo on the final eighth note of the bar. These elements create an enormous buildup that virtually explodes with the arrival of the downbeat at rehearsal 94,

marked *a tempo* ♩ = 108. The beginning of the movement, rehearsal 70, is marked *Allegretto* ♩ = 100.

Figure 15 Allegretto: Appearance of E Phrygian in final four measures

**Figure 15 - Reduction of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9 in E-flat Major, Op. 70, from the DSCH Publishers 2002 edition, five measures after rehearsal 102**

## CONCLUSION

Because of his friendships with several Jewish colleagues and his exposure to Jewish culture, it is clear that Shostakovich was familiar with many aspects of Jewish music. From his own remarks it is also clear that he identified with many aspects of Jewish culture. Elements such as the use of the altered Phrygian scale as a contrast to the heroic key of E-flat, the use of musicalized speech, and the use of *freylachs* point to possible interpretive ideas for the Ninth Symphony. The heroicism of E-flat major is coupled with a neoclassical nod of the repeat signs. As foreign/Jewish elements appear they cause the heroic aggressive element to take notice, to unravel bit by bit and call upon military forces to rehabilitate the music from foreignness/Jewishness back to the heroic aggressiveness.

Shostakovich challenges the notion of praising the Soviet Union for its military win, and instead mocks the anti-Semitic martial state of Stalinist Soviet Union. In direct opposition to Stalin's totalitarian violence, Shostakovich composed his Ninth Symphony as an "anti-anti-Semitic" work, a sympathetic Soviet artist's creative response, and cynical critique, to the Soviet-wide celebrations of Russia's victory in the Great Patriotic War. It was not until his Thirteenth Symphony composed nearly twenty years later in 1962, that Shostakovich revisited Jewish musical elements as integral aspects of musical mimesis in his symphonies.

## APPENDIX 1

“Unacceptable and acceptable features in Soviet literature, art and music, taken from Zhdanov’s decree and the article *Muddle Instead of Music*,” from Judith Kuhn’s *Shostakovich in Dialogue*.

Unacceptable qualities	Desirable qualities
From Andrey Zhdanov’s 1934 ‘Greeting’ to the First Congress of Soviet Writers	
A depiction of ‘objective’ reality as it is in a ‘dead, scholastic way’	A depiction of reality in its revolutionary development
Pessimism, ‘the doubt of the morrow, the eulogy of darkness’	Optimism, ‘impregnated with enthusiasm and the spirit of heroic deeds ...’
<i>From ‘Muddle instead of music’</i>	
Dissonance, cacophony, harshness	Beauty, warmth, lyricism, a clear harmonic structure
Confusion, lack of structure, musical chaos	Simplicity, comprehensibility, tunefulness, clear structure, harmonic and emotional logic
Crudity, primitiveness, vulgarity, perversion, unhealthiness, immorality, sexual explicitness	Healthiness, good moral fibre, ‘supporting the determination of the Soviet people to banish crassness and crudeness from every corner of Soviet daily life’
Fragmentation, ‘snatches of melody and embryonic musical phrases [that] appear, fade away, reappear and disappear again’	Wholeness, organic-ness
Satire, grotesquery, ‘music stood on its head, written not to echo classical opera, having nothing in common with symphonic sounds’	Simplicity, realism, healthiness, expression of genuine emotions
Incomprehensibility, lack of tuneful memorability	Simplicity, tunefulness, clear structure
Insane rhythm	Melody, warmth, lyricism, expression of real emotion
Modernism, formalism, freneticism,	A clear relationship with the classics,

resemblance to modern composers of Western Europe, or jazz

particularly such Russian composers as Musorgsky, Tchaikovsky, Glinka

Subjectivity, individualism  
A lack of connection with Russian (later Soviet) folk music

Objectivity, connection with the people  
Connection with intonations of Russian folk song

Innovation, novelty, originality for its own sake, cheaply witty devices

Connection with the classics

An appeal to aesthetes and formalists who have lost touch with good taste

An appeal to the people, simplicity, accessibility

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*Source:* Judith Kuhn, *Shostakovich in Dialogue* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010), 8.

## APPENDIX 2

Figure 5 Allegro: Secondary theme with military herald

[Allegro  $\text{♩} = 132$ ]

**6**

*ff* *pizz* *f* *p sub.*

Trombone

*ff* *p sub.*

Snare

Timp.

*8va*

(8)

The image displays a musical score for rehearsal 6 of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9. It consists of four staves: two for the piano (treble and bass clef) and two for the Trombone (treble and bass clef). The key signature is E-flat major (three flats). The piano part features a melodic line in the right hand with trills and a more rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. The Trombone part has a single melodic line with trills. The score includes dynamic markings such as *ff* (fortissimo) and trill markings (*tr*). A dashed line with the number (8) above it spans the first two measures of the piano part.

Figure 5 - Reduction of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9 in E-flat Major, Op. 70, from the DSCH Publishers 2002 edition, rehearsal 6

# APPENDIX 3

Figure 6 Allegro: Appearance of E Phrygian with metric reaction

**[Allegro  $\text{♩}=132$ ]**

*strings*

**[Allegro  $\text{♩}=132$ ]**

*bassoon, cellos, basses*

**15**

*winds, strings*

**15**

*[ legatissimo ]*

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system consists of two staves. The top staff is for strings, and the bottom staff is for bassoon, cellos, and basses. Both staves are in 3/4 time and feature a key signature of three flats (E Phrygian). The tempo is marked as Allegro with a quarter note equal to 132 beats per minute. The second system also consists of two staves. The top staff is for winds and strings, and the bottom staff is for a legatissimo section. Both staves are in 3/4 time and feature a key signature of three flats. The tempo is marked as Allegro with a quarter note equal to 132 beats per minute. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.



The image displays a musical score for Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9, measures 3 through 6. The score is written for a piano and is organized into two systems. The first system contains the upper staves (treble and alto clefs), and the second system contains the lower staves (bass and tenor clefs). The key signature is E-flat major (three flats), and the time signature is 3/4. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. A forte (*sf*) marking is present in the final measure of both systems. The score is a reduction, meaning it is a simplified version of the original orchestral work.

Figure 6 - Reduction of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9 in E-flat Major, Op. 70, from the DSCH Publishers 2002 edition, 3 measures before rehearsal 15

# APPENDIX 4

Figure 9 Allegro: Trombone fourth in role of initiator reattempted seven times, showing sign of exhaustion

**19**  
[Allegro  $\text{♩} = 132$ ]

The musical score for Figure 9, measures 19-23, is in B-flat major, 4/4 time, with a tempo of Allegro (♩ = 132). The score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 19-23) features a piano accompaniment and a Trombone part. The piano part has a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The Trombone part is in the bass clef. Dynamics include *f* (forte) and *ff* (fortissimo). The Trombone part shows a series of reattempts, with a final measure marked *ff*.

6

The musical score for Figure 9, measures 24-28, is in B-flat major, 3/2 time. The score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 24-28) features a piano accompaniment and a Trombone part. The piano part has a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The Trombone part is in the bass clef. Dynamics include *f* (forte) and *ff* (fortissimo). The Trombone part shows a series of reattempts, with a final measure marked *ff*.

2

9

20

13

16

21

Figure 9 - Reduction of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9 in E-flat Major, Op. 70, from the DSCH Publishers 2002 edition, rehearsal 19

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