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## Letters to the Editor

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From David Johnson

(Lightly-edited extracts from a personal letter to the Editor of *Tempo*)

Two things I feel like commenting on in the 'Soviet' *Tempo* 173, since I'd thought about them already.

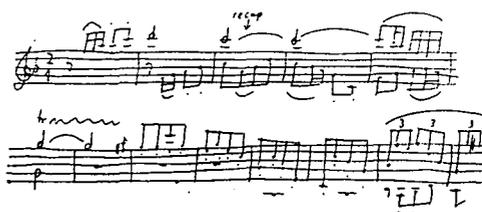
First: The popularity of Shostakovich with present-day Western audiences (p.2). What I think people are getting from the music is a lifting of a burden from the heart of the capitalist-aggressive individuality - a return to a (?religious) sense of what is common to humanity of all periods and social classes. RVW said this about Bach's music; I think this gives Shostakovich and Bach a lot in common. It doesn't help the problem you outline because (a) Shostakovich couldn't have written like this without great hardship in his life (the experience, at least on one level, of his own individuality being battered down to worthless nothingness); but on the other hand (b) insofar as Communism is valid at all as a philosophy, it must imply exactly this return. So is his music (a) a response to a God-awful personal life or (b) the perfect expression of everything Soviet Communism was (or should have been) on about? The ambiguity you mention moves right into the centre of this description...

Second point: Herschkowitz's definitions of *fest* and *locker*. This is a pure guess, but I think I discovered something similar in 1985 (while completing my Recorder Pibroch and Piano Trio). Normal analysis doesn't reach these concepts because, normally, analysis is to do with structure but not construction, ie what the thing is but not how the composer *put it there*, like what bits he wrote first. (Example - analysis normally gets it all wrong about fugues, through not considering that the most creative bit about a fugue is composing the subject!)

I think I could do a lovely *fest/locker* job on the first movement of Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony, but let me try a sample: exposition, bar 1 -



Now the recapitulation is in some respects totally strict, in other respects completely free. The freedom results from a deep dig-down into tradition, to produce something new. It's a good early 18th-century principle (especially in solo vocal music) that a pause can be used as an excuse for a cadenza. So in the recapitulation -



- the 1st violin has a completely new free solo section, as well as the new descant bits over the original theme, which is repeated as it stands.

I think the point Herschkowitz could have been getting at is that freedom and rigidity are not opposites here, they are not 'balanced' - the absolute firmness of the recapitulated material *allows* the improvised 1st fiddle part (it's perfect, but it could have been anything. Beethoven probably jotted it off in 15 seconds and got it right first time) - at the same time as the improvisation affirms the *rightness* of the exact recapitulation.

Well, when H's book is published I shall no doubt find out he was thinking of something else altogether! (PS: there's an exactly parallel cadenza for solo oboe in the same place in B's Fifth Symphony, but not as subtle as this one.)

1 Hill Square  
Edinburgh

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From Solomon Volkov

Congratulations on your excellent piece on *Rayok* in *Tempo*.

2166 Broadway  
New York, N. Y. 10024

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# John Adams

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John Adams's new opera **The Death of Klinghoffer** receives its world premiere on 19 March 1991 at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels: libretto by Alice Goodman, production by Peter Sellars, conducted by Kent Nagano.

## New Works

**Fearful Symmetries** (1988)  
for orchestra or chamber orchestra

**The Wound-Dresser** (1989)  
for baritone voice and orchestra  
or chamber orchestra

**Eros Piano** (1989)  
for piano and orchestra or  
chamber orchestra

## Transcriptions

Busoni **Berceuse élégiaque** (1989)  
arranged for chamber orchestra  
Unavailable in France, Germany and Colombia

Liszt **La lugubre gondola No. 2** (1989)  
arranged for orchestra or chamber orchestra

Liszt **Wiegenlied** (1989)  
arranged for orchestra or chamber orchestra

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# Michael Torke

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## New Works

**Slate** (1989)  
for concertante group and orchestra

**Rust** (1989)  
for piano and winds

**Mass** (1990)  
for baritone, chorus and chamber orchestra

**Bronze** (1990)  
for piano and orchestra



Photograph : Marcel Prins

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