

9-18-2006

## Faculty Recital: Mozart/Shostakovich II

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Deborah Montgomery-Cove

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### Recommended Citation

Larsen, Linda; Montgomery-Cove, Deborah; Waterbury, Susan; Simkin, Elizabeth; and Dimaras, Charis, "Faculty Recital: Mozart/Shostakovich II" (2006). *All Concert & Recital Programs*. 1245.  
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ITHACA COLLEGE

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

FACULTY RECITAL

MOZART/SHOSTAKOVICH II

An evening of chamber music celebrating  
the 250th birth anniversary of  
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)  
and the 100th birth anniversary of  
Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Linda Larson, soprano - guest artist\*  
Deborah Montgomery-Cove, soprano  
Susan Waterbury, violin  
Elizabeth Simkin, cello  
Charis Dimaras, piano

Hockett Family Recital Hall  
Monday, September 18, 2006  
7:00 p.m.

ITHACA

## PROGRAM

2 Ariette

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
(1756-1791)

Oiseaux, si tous les ans, K307 (1778, Ferrand)  
Dans un bois solitaire et sombre, K308 (1778, de la Motte)

"Vorrei spiegarli, oh Dio!", K418 (1783, Anfossi)

Sonata for Cello and Piano in d minor,  
Op. 40 (1934)

Dmitri Shostakovich  
(1906-1975)

Allegro non troppo  
Allegro  
Largo  
Allegro

### INTERMISSION

Sonata for Violin and Piano  
in B-flat Major, K454 (1784)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Largo – Allegro  
Andante  
Allegretto

Suite of Romances for Soprano and Piano Trio, Dmitri Shostakovich  
Op. 127 (1967, Blok)\*

Song of Ophelia  
Gamayun, the Bird of Prophecy  
We Were Together  
The City Sleeps  
The Storm  
Secret Signs  
Music

One final evening, which will also feature instrumental chamber works of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Dmitri Shostakovich, will take place at the Hockett Family Recital Hall on Monday, September 25 at 7:00 p.m.

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## Program Notes

### Mozart and Shostakovich II

The pairing of Mozart and Shostakovich, born 150 years apart, is more natural than one might initially suspect. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (27 January 1756–5 September 1791), the seventh and last child born to Leopold Mozart and his wife Maria Anna, is the most famous musical prodigy in history. Beginning in 1763, he was received, feted, and honored by the royal families in Europe for ten years. Music historian Charles Burney (1726-1814) described Mozart as possessing “premature and almost supernatural talents” (Deutsch, 140). Mozart’s father was his teacher and impresario; he used every opportunity to turn the labors of his child into a source of wealth and status for his family. Mozart was so prone to illness as a child that Daines Barrington’s 28 September 1769 report to the Secretary of the Royal Society in London about Mozart’s abilities closed with “it may be hoped that little Mozart may possibly attain to the same advanced years as Handel, contrary to the common observation that such *ingenia praecocia* are generally shortlived” (Deutsch, 100).

Dmitry Dmitriyevich Shostakovich (12/25 September 1906–9 August 1975) was the second of three children born to Dmitry Boleslavovich and Sofiya Kokoulin. In pre-Revolutionary years, the young Dmitry Dmitriyevich grew up in comparatively privileged surroundings. As a youngster, he showed some interest in music but no desire to learn it. His mother, who had studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatoire, insisted he had to learn piano. She began giving him piano lessons in the summer of 1915, but she “did not conclude . . . that her son was a musical genius or a child prodigy. . . . [However,] she was surprised how easily he learned and memorized his pieces” (Wilson, 10). At about the same time he started to compose. In 1918, Dmitry Dmitriyevich began to study with his mother’s former teacher, Alexandra Rozanova, in preparation to enter the Petrograd/Leningrad Conservatoire, which he did in 1919 when he was thirteen.

Unlike Mozart, Shostakovich knew deprivation as a youth. The sudden death of his father in 1922 was a disaster for the family, and they struggled to survive hunger and cold. To earn some money for them, he played piano for silent movies in a movie theater. Like Mozart, Shostakovich was a fragile child, and in the spring of 1923 he was diagnosed with TB of the bronchial and lymph glands. To pay for his surgery and recovery in Crimera, his mother sold one of their pianos.

It has been recorded that as a child Mozart was able to notate Allegri’s *Miserere* after a single hearing at the Vatican. After attending a performance of Rimsky-Korsakov’s *The Tale of Tsar Saltan* in 1915, Shostakovich “recited and sang correctly most of the opera” (Wilson, 10).

Mozart returned to Salzburg in 1773, because his days as a child prodigy were over. However, Mozart was unhappy with life in Salzburg, and the final break came on 8 June 1781: He was released from Salzburg service “with a kick on my arse . . . by order of our worthy Prince Archbishop” (Anderson, 741). Shostakovich graduated as a pianist in 1923, but he was so unhappy at the Conservatoire when he was excluded from the post graduate piano course, ostensibly because of “his youth

and immaturity," he applied to and was accepted at the Moscow Conservatoire, but he did not matriculate because of his mother's worry over his poor health.

To complete his composition requirements at the Conservatoire, Shostakovich had to compose a symphony. He wrote most of it between December 1924 and February 1925. The First Symphony's premiere on 12 May 1926 by the Leningrad Philharmonic was a resounding success, catapulting the nineteen-year-old composer to international fame. Bruno Walter performed the symphony in Berlin on 5 May 1927, and Leopold Stokowski gave the American premiere with the Philadelphia Orchestra in November 1928.

Mozart, a famous keyboard player by the age of fifteen, had one dream: to be a composer of opera. Shostakovich, on the other hand, "aspired to Rachmaninov's double role of virtuoso pianist and composer" (Wilson, pp. 44-45). He entered the Chopin Competition in 1927 in Warsaw. When he was one of eight finalists but not a prizewinner, he gradually relinquished his ambitions to be a concert pianist.

Mozart's first opera, *La finta semplice*, KV 51/46a (1768), an opera buffa, was a failure. After calling for numerous revisions following the first rehearsal, the impresario Giuseppe Affligio canceled the production. Shostakovich's first opera, *Nos*, op. 15 (1927-8), was lampooned by critics as "an attempt to negate opera as a musical form." The radical proletarians opposed it and they managed to have it removed from the stage.

Mozart, contrary to legend, used sketches and drafts. In the relatively few sketches that remain, most are simple notations of usable ideas. Mstislav Rostropovich contends that once Shostakovich conceived a composition, he generally "never made any sketches for his compositions. He held the whole preparatory process in his head. Then he sat down at his desk, and without ever touching the piano, he simply wrote the complete work from beginning to end. He wrote so fast that the urgency of the compositional process is tangibly evident in his uneven and jerky handwriting" (Wilson, 396).

Mozart pursued the main genres of secular and sacred music: masses, litanies, church sonatas, symphonies, concertos, chamber music, sonatas, divertimentos, serenades, dances, vocal ensembles, operas, lieder, and concert arias. Shostakovich pursued only secular music: operas, ballets, symphonies, concertos, chamber music, choral works, songs, sonatas, and film scores.

### W. A. Mozart. Two French Songs

"Oiseaux, si tous les ans," KV 307/284d (text by Antoine Ferrand), and "Dans un bois solitaire," KV 308/295b (text by Antoine Houdart de la Motte), were composed during the winter of 1777/1778 in Mannheim where Mozart stayed while he was enroute to Paris in search of a court post, because "writing opera is now my one burning ambition" (Anderson, 468). Both songs were written for Elisabeth Augusta Wendling (1752-1794), daughter of Johann Baptist Wendling (1723-1797), a flautist and composer in the Mannheim Orchestra who organized the commission that resulted in Mozart's Mannheim flute works KV 285, KV 285a, KV 313-15/285c-e. The words for "Dans un bois solitaire" were given to Mozart by Elizabeth Augusta Wendling, who sang the arietta "incomparably well. At [the] Wendlings it is sung every day for they are absolutely crazy about it." He sent the

arietta to his father (Anderson, 468) seeking his comment, but did not receive any. The songs are through composed (the fifth stanza of “Dans un bois solitaire” has a partial return of the melody of the first stanza) and the piano follows every turn of the vocal line with a commentary.

#### **W. A. Mozart. “Vorrei spiegarvi, oh Dio, KV 418”**

“Vorrei spiegarvi, oh Dio,” KV 418 was one of two arias composed in 1783 for the soprano Aloysia Weber Lang, Mozart’s sister-in-law, as replacement arias in Pasquale Anfossi’s (1727–97) opera buffa *Il curioso indiscreto*. A “Notice” in the libretto stated that the interpolations were necessary because Anfossi’s arias were “written for someone else, and not . . . suited to the eminent abilities of Mme Lang. . . This is herewith made known to all, in order that honour should be done to whom it is due, without in any way doing harm to the fame of the already sufficiently well-known Neapolitan” (Deutsch, 217). Mozart wrote to his father on 2 July 1783 that Anfossi’s opera, premiered on 30 June 1783, “failed completely with the exception of my two arias, the second of which, a bravura, had to be repeated” (Anderson, 854).

The aria opens with an *Adagio* followed by an *Allegro* in which Clorinda urges her lover to find happiness with Emilia. With its two and one-half octave range (B3–E6), chromatic lines, and leap from B3 to E6 for the final melisma, this aria is a brilliant *tour de force* for soprano.

#### **D. D. Shostakovich. Sonata for Cello and Piano, op. 40**

The cello sonata was written during August & September 1934 and completed on 19 September, just before Dmitry Dmitriyevich’s twenty-eighth birthday. It is dedicated to the cellist Victor Kubatsky (1891–1971), founder of the Stradivarius Quartet and formerly the principal cellist of the Bolshoi Theater Orchestra. Kubatsky and Shostakovich premiered the sonata on 25 December 1934 in Leningrad. The sonata, published in 1935 in Leningrad, “received a hostile reception. People didn’t understand it and were somewhat disappointed” (Wilson, 104), but gradually it attracted adherents. Ironically, Shostakovich and Kubatsky were in Arkhangel’sk for a performance when Dmitry Dmitriyevich read the defamatory unsigned article “Muddle Instead of Music” in *Pravda*, the Communist Party newspaper, which described his opera *Lady MacBeth* as “musical chaos.” After having played to full houses for two years, what had been a jewel of the Soviet stage was summarily banned. “Shostakovich was now a marked man, in every sense of the word” (Taruskin, 366).

The first movement, *Allegro non troppo*, is cast in sonata form. The exposition presents two lyrical themes, the first in d and the second in b. The exposition closes with an ostinato that permeates the development. The recapitulation omits the primary theme, but P returns in the coda; the movement closes with the ostinato material. The second movement is a lively waltz in which there is the constant reiteration of the motive, which is treated with the ironic humor that permeated Shostakovich’s music during the first decade of his creative career. The Largo, an elegiac aria, begins and ends with *con sordino* cello. The fourth movement, a rondo with dazzling virtuosic outbursts, has a gradual diminuendo to

the closing cadence, and then ends abruptly with an outburst that is akin to a slap in the face; it is a wonderful example of Shostakovich's satire that "arose out of a play of incongruities." (Taruskin, 365).

#### **W. A. Mozart. Sonata for Piano and Violin, KV 454**

Mozart was a gifted violinist and was featured as a violin soloist numerous times. After a performance of his Divertimento in B $\flat$ , KV 287/271h for 2 horns and strings in Munich, he wrote to his father (6 October 1777): "I played as though I were the greatest fiddler in all Europe" (Anderson, 300). Despite his virtuosity, his performances of the solo repertoire diminished, possibly because, as Solomon speculates, "string instruments offered fewer possibilities for improvisation" (102).

1784 was a prolific year for Mozart. He completed a symphonic movement in G, KV 444/425a; 6 Minuets for Orchestra, KV 444/425ai; 2 Minuets with Contradances, KV 463/448c; five Piano Concertos (nos. 15–19), the "Hunt" Quartet, KV 458; the Piano Quintet in E $\flat$ , KV 452; the Oboe Quintet, KV 452; and the Sonata for Piano & Violin in B $\flat$ , KV 454. Generally considered one of Mozart's finest sonatas for violin and piano, it was written for the famous Italian violin virtuosa Regina Strinasacchi (1764–1839), whom Mozart praised in a 24 April 1784 letter to his father as "a very good violinist. She has a great deal of taste and feeling in her playing" (Anderson, 875). Mozart and Strinasacchi premiered the Sonata in B $\flat$  on 29 April 1784 in Vienna at the Kärntnertor Theater. Mozart was late in finishing the three-movement sonata, so not only was it performed without a rehearsal, but Mozart "is said to have played the piano part from memory, using a kind of shorthand notation on the autograph" (Landon, 119). Now, over two hundred years later, Landon reports that when the autograph (in the hands of a collector) was studied, "it became clear that the violin part had been written first, . . . and the piano part squeezed in later" (120). The sonata was published in a subscription edition by Christopher Torricella in Vienna in August 1784 in a collection entitled *Trois Sonates dédiées à Son Excellence Madame La Comtesse Terese de Kobenzl*, op. 7. The other two sonatas in the collection are piano sonatas: KV 284/205b in D, and KV 333/315c in B $\flat$ .

The first movement is a sonata form with a majestic Largo introduction (rare in chamber music). The presentation of P is a bit unusual: Mozart fuses the consequent phrase with the transition to S. Texturally, the sonata has a new-found freedom: there is more balance between the violin and the piano with some material shared between the violin and piano, other material presented in a dialogue fashion, and other material presented equally. The equal treatment of the voices continues in the Andante (marked Adagio originally by Mozart), which is in the subdominant. The finale is a seven-part rondo in which each return of the rondo theme furnishes delightful surprises. The "B" sections are dominated by 2:3 rhythms. The final statement of the rondo theme is eliminated in favor of a coda permeated by motives from the rondo theme. In this unusually extended finale, both instruments achieve parity.

### D. D. Shostakovich. *Seven Romances on Poems by Blok*, op. 127

The *Seven Romances on Poems by Blok* for Soprano, Violin, Cello, and Piano, op. 127, was written at the behest of Mstislav Rostropovich for vocalizes that he and his wife, soprano Galina Vishnevskaya, could perform together. After Shostakovich had completed the work, he told Rostropovich: "I wanted to satisfy your request—I found some suitable text to set. And I wrote the first song as you wanted, "Ophelia's Song," for voice and cello. But then I started the second song with a whacking great pizzicato on the cello and I realized that I didn't have sufficient instruments to continue, so I added the violin and piano" (as quoted by Wilson, 395–6). The verses selected by Shostakovich were taken from Alexander Blok's early poetry and were those that Shostakovich felt made the greatest impression on him for their musicality and lyrical feel. He wrote the songs after suffering a heart attack while playing a concert in Leningrad in May 1966. He intended the instrumental parts for David Oistrakh, Rostropovich, and himself, but he was still convalescing when the premiere was given on 23 October 1967 in Moscow. Moisei (Metak) Weinberg (Vainberg) played the piano. "In what was labeled the cultural 'event' of the season . . . Shostakovich's vocal-instrumental suite scored a commanding triumph. By popular demand, it had to be repeated in its entirety" (Fay, 255–6).

The songs use every permutation of the instruments with the voice; the full ensemble is reserved for the final song. The simplicity in "Ophelia's Song" conjures the bereft Ophelia keening for the dead Hamlet. "Ganayun," which opens with forte raves in the piano, declaims the barbaric invasion. The bird (voice) is heard in slow and measured notes above the austere piano. The violin, mentioned in the text of "We Were Together," begins and ends this song. The idyll of the nostalgic lines of passion past is reflected in the ethereal writing for the violin. The marriage of music and verse in "The City Sleeps" is one of the most affective portraits with the voice poised above the ostinato cello and piano. The last three songs are all *attacca*. In the savage storm, the virtuoso violin evokes "the pelting of this pitiless storm" (*King Lear*, act 3, sc. 4). An unaccompanied cello, whose melodic line recurs when the violin enters, while the voice makes use of isolated twelve-tone rows, introduces "Secret Signs." In "Music," the longest song in the cycle, the piano begins and concludes it with the perfect fourth motive, and the violin and cello reprise the opening vocal line in the postlude, which is one of Shostakovich's most beautiful. Shostakovich's continuing illness following his heart attack undoubtedly contributed to his reflections on time, love, and mortality in this vocal-instrumental suite.

Mary I. Arlin

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Soprano **Linda Larson** has sung leading roles throughout the country, with companies including New York City Opera National Company, Opera Illinois, Syracuse Opera, Tri-Cities Opera, Indianapolis Opera, and Opera Memphis. Recognized for her dramatic interpretations of new American music, she sang Eve in John Eaton's opera *Youth* at New York City's Symphony Space in June 2006. She sang Robert X. Rodriguez' "Song of Songs" at the 2005 Bowdoin International Music Festival and premiered music of David Mullikin at the 2005 Chintimini Chamber Music Festival. She has also performed with Ensemble X, New Music Collective, and Voices of Change.

Dr. Larson sang *Cantata* at Symphony Space's Wall-to-Wall Stravinsky Festival in March 2006; other recent concert engagements include *Messiah*, Dvorak *Stabat Mater* and Beethoven *Missa Solemnis*. Central New York audiences know her from her performances with Cayuga Chamber Orchestra, Syracuse Symphony, Finger Lakes Chamber Ensemble and the CRS Barn Studio. Dr. Larson is a member of the voice faculty at New York University, and makes her home in Ithaca with her husband Bill Pelto.