

More Notes on Basic Repertoire: from 'Music and Politics'

Music and Politics:: Haydn and Shostakovich::

1] Franz Joseph HAYDN (1732-1809)

Haydn was an Austrian composer. He was born in a small village, the son of a wheelwright, and was much influenced by the folk-music of the local Croatian peasantry. Later, when he became a musician and composer, he became the musical director for a Hungarian prince named *Prince Esterhazy*. This is very famous in music history because Haydn worked in this prince's *court* for many years. He conducted and composed a great deal of music for the Esterhazy court orchestra. He was able to experiment and try many combinations of instruments. Haydn is remembered as a great experimenter and inventor of musical forms. In fact, he is often referred to as the '*father of the symphony*' because he took the earlier string music and made it bigger, added instruments, put together the winds, brass and strings into one orchestra and invented the symphonic forms which Mozart used and Beethoven used and turned into even bigger pieces. Haydn's career took longer to develop than Mozart's, but he was much more famous in his lifetime. Haydn was incredibly successful and well-loved all throughout Europe and beyond. Particularly successful were his trips to London. In the 'London Symphonies', twelve symphonies which he composed for the people and court of London, uses a type of composition technique which is called 'organic composition' -- where a small bit of material acts, like the seed of a tree, to inspire the whole symphony. This is similar in concept to the 'nuclear melody' of the Balinese example (gamelon) and was used and developed by Beethoven in his famous fifth symphony. Composer's today still owe Haydn a debt of gratitude and use this technique in composing music, even if that 'seed of material' is very different than Haydn's *musical language*.

Haydn was the senior member of the 'classical period' composers, along with Mozart and Beethoven. He was Mozart's great friend and teacher. He is sometimes called, affectionately, Papa Haydn, because of his influence and friendship with many young composers, especially Mozart, and his invention of the *then* modern symphonic form. The CLASSICAL PERIOD (1770-1827) is after the Baroque period and before the Romantic period, which Beethoven started later. It is important to remember that, while his music may sound very familiar to us now, at the time of his life it was very innovative and modern.

Haydn lived to a great age for that time (77 years) and composed over 104 symphonies,

eighty-four string quartets, 125 string trios, more than twenty operas, as well as oratorios, concertos, sonatas, keyboard works and songs.

2] **Dmitri Shostakovich** (1906-1975)

Shostakovich was a Russian composer. He lived his entire life within the Soviet system. While many of his friends chose to leave Russia when the repressive Stalin regime took over Soviet life in the 1950's, Shostakovich chose to stay. He couldn't imagine life away from his native country and chose to stay and fight for the artistic and intellectual freedom of his people. He is considered a political hero by many, doing battle with those who would repress thought and freedom. His music was often censured, he was often in trouble with the government system and was told how and what to compose.

Joseph Stalin, who was a dictator on the level of Hitler, if not worse, and who killed millions of Russian people often for purely political reasons, took over the artistic media of Russia as a first step to his consolidation of political power. He, in fact, personally censured and okayed all movies, and much music and books. **Shostakovich's** music often, therefore, has many 'hidden' jokes on the government. He took pleasure in composing music which sounded like what they wanted him to write, yet held musical comments and secret messages which his friends and people outside Russia recognized as calls to creative freedom or parodies of Soviet officials.

Sometimes Shostakovich's music is dark and brooding and expresses deep sadness. At other times, his music is very powerful and bright. Our musical example is an early piece (1926) which he composed before Stalin took over his country and before World War II. It was sufficiently after World War I and the Russian revolution (1917) to be relatively free of strife and harsh events. Also, in terms of Shostakovich's personal life, it was a relatively happy time. He composed this music, in fact, when he was *19 years old!* He was an incredible brilliant person, lived a very meaningful life and his contribution to the history of human thought and spirit will live on through his music.

This musical excerpt is the second movement of this, his first symphony. In it you can hear exciting Russian dance music, a quieter sort of lullaby, a return to the wild dance, and hints of militaristic music in the background which can be heard as both remembering past events such as the Revolution of 1917 and presaging the war to come. Also, near the end, an instrument imitates the sounds of church bells chiming in the distance -- three strikes of the gong which are repeated lower and more distant. Listen for this and tell which instrument does this. We think of his historical period as being the **First-Half of Twentieth-Century**, which follows the Romantic

and Post-Romantic periods. The twentieth-century is divided into two by W.W.II.