

Shostakovich / Stalin: A Different Type of Partnership in Film Music

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Abstract

Dmitri Shostakovich was one of the greatest 20th-century composers, although his style was »moderate« in comparison with other trends. The fact that he also composed a large amount of music for the cinema is often ignored or not given due importance. Our intention in this article is firstly to reflect on a specific stage of his musical and cinematographic career, in which, for different reasons, he was obliged to compose music for political and propagandist films in keeping with the values established by the Soviet government of the time and, in particular, films praising the figure of the »butcher-dictator« Iosif Stalin. We will try to understand and analyse these compositions from various viewpoints and, at the same time, the composer's complex and problematical relationship with Stalin. We also go beyond the title of this article in our analysis of the main aspects of other stages of his compositions for the cinema, in addition to giving a reflective analysis of the reasons why his music for the cinema has scarcely been assessed and, in relating these reasons to the position to which general musicology has relegated music for the cinema, we aim to establish a series of conclusions on the subject.

When one goes more deeply into the music of the Soviet composer Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975), it is highly probable that one initially encounters all his symphonies, which are so charismatic and nowadays legendary. Examples include his *Symphony no. 7 (»Leningrad«) in C Major, op. 60* and his *Symphony no. 4 in C Minor, op. 43*, which was known for its cutting modernism (at least within the Soviet context of the time). Then one may come across the quartets with their rhythmical severity, their nervousness, their irony, etc. One day his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District, op. 29*, will fall into our hands and we will get to know its controversial history resulting from the explicit disapproval of the upper echelons of the Soviet political authorities of the time and which, through the famous article that appeared in the *Pravda* newspaper in 1936 as part of

the history of classical music, was to make the composer's future career so fraught with problems. Next, perhaps we will listen to his violin concertos, his cello concertos, his piano concertos, etc. We could go a step further and take a closer look at the most noteworthy biographical and biographical-artistic works written about him, thus getting to know more about the nature of his creative temperament, the essence of such compositions, his relationship with family and friends, his problems with the political authorities, his complex emotional and psychological nature, the various compositional stages through which he passed as well as other aspects. However, for those of us who go on this long journey during our academic studies in musicology and in subsequent years to find the man who was and continues to be one of our favorite composers, there is something missing. What about his extensive music-cinematographic work? The fact that he also composed a large amount of music for the cinema is often ignored or not given due importance. It should certainly be pointed out that, in this respect, a change has come about over the last ten to fifteen years and that some research (see Titus 2006; Heine 2005) and publications have seen the light and filled this historiographic gap. Examples include the small book *Dmitri Shostakovich. A Life in Film* by John Riley (2005), and *Contemplating Shostakovich: Life, Music and Film* by Alexander Ivashkin and Andrew Kirkman (eds.) (2012), a very recent publication of the proceedings of two symposiums on Shostakovich's life and work held in London in 2006, which included the subject, devoting a section to contributions from Riley himself and other authors.

However, the majority of the literature on the composer, as well as some documentaries and films and references to his work in books dealing with 20th-century music only mention our subject in passing and, in our opinion, do not attach much importance to it. In addition to the frequently negative

view that musicology has of music for the cinema, of which we will speak later, this is also due to the exceptional circumstances of the life of Shostakovich himself. But let us take one thing at a time.

On reading some of the major biographical and artistic works on Shostakovich, for example by authors such as Laurel E. Fay, Krzysztof Meyer or Elizabeth Wilson, it can be observed that the life and works of the great composer cannot be understood without taking into account his complex and fearsome relationship with the dictator and »butcher« Iosif Stalin. What is more, some books have specifically concentrated on this aspect, such as that by Solomon Volkov (2005) *Shostakovich and Stalin. The Extraordinary Relationship between the Great Composer and the Brutal Dictator*, a most interesting volume that is highly recommended.¹ As is well documented, in the second half of the 1930s, during the Second World War, and in subsequent years (especially up until Stalin's death in 1953) as that political and historical concept known as the »Cold War« was coming into existence, Russian cultural life was closely controlled by the government, by Stalin himself, and by that horde of sinister personages with whom he surrounded himself, such as Andrei Zhdanov. Any art that did not focus on Social Realism, on the people, on extolling the virtues of the Communist Revolution of 1917, the figure of Lenin, or of Stalin – we are referring to the concepts of »personality cult« and »political propaganda« – could be censured. Worse still, the arrests, the executions and the notorious purges to which Soviet society of the time was subjected also affected all art forms, including cinema and music, and composers such as Shostakovich,

¹ He is also the author of *Testimony. The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich*, a work that changed the perception of Shostakovich's political life and work dramatically, and influenced innumerable performances of his music. (Anyway, the authenticity of the book is still very much disputed, as is well known).

who for years was in the sights of the higher powers to the extent that he suffered from a continuous anguish that even led him to consider suicide, and gave rise to pessimism and worrying emotions that, on more than one occasion, he reflected so well in his works for the concert halls. Stalin played with him for some years like a cat with a mouse, even taking advantage of the composer's international fame for the benefit of his own image or the war effort against Germany (as, for example, in the case of the famous *Symphony no. 7* [»Leningrad«] in *C Major* that we have already mentioned). However, after the end of the war and during the early years of the Cold War, Shostakovich crossed that thin red line that Stalin was not prepared to let anyone cross. He was placed on a black list accused of being a formalist and counter-revolutionary, which meant that most of his works would be excluded from the »official« repertoire and that his new ones would not be performed at all. Furthermore, he was dismissed from his professorships at the conservatoires² and condemned to ignominy by society.³ We will never learn all the considerations that led Stalin to spare Shostakovich and allow him to continue working, but among the most important causes was a practical reason: Shostakovich's work in the cinema. Thus, under these circumstances, with serious financial problems and a family to feed, he found, not for the first time, a refuge in the composition of soundtracks for a series of extremely bad films in which the Stalinist personality cult and political propaganda reached its peak, and in which the composer's music fell to perhaps its lowest point. Allow us to give two examples.

² In 1937 he had begun to teach composition at the Leningrad Conservatoire, which provided some financial security but interfered with his own creative work. He also taught at the Moscow Conservatoire.

³ In relation to all these issues see Fay 2000, 161–65.

In ПАДЕНИЕ БЕРЛИНА [translit. PADENIE BERLINA; THE FALL OF BERLIN] (USSR 1950, Mikhail Chiaureli), a shy steel factory worker falls in love with an idealist teacher but has difficulties approaching her. Suddenly their town is attacked by the Germans, who have invaded the Soviet Union. In the capital, Stalin plans the defence of the city and of Stalingrad. After the Soviet victory in Stalingrad, he thinks of conquering Berlin, which will happen at the end of the film. Then Stalin's plane lands in Berlin, and he is greeted by an enthusiastic crowd of soldiers and liberated slave-labourers, holding posters with his picture and waving red flags. Finally, the steel worker and the teacher recognize each other and are reunited, Stalin wishes everyone peace and happiness, the prisoners praise him in numerous languages, and symphonic-choral music of an excessively nationalist and patriotic nature can be heard. This music for the film's final scene is a clear example of this soundtrack as a whole, in which, as we have mentioned, Shostakovich, due to the circumstances, created a composition far below his capabilities and his true style.⁴

ВСТРЕЧА НА ЭЛЬБЕ [translit. VSTRECHA NA ELB'E; MEETING ON THE ELBE] (USSR 1949, Grigori Alexandrov) is set in Altenstadt, divided by the Elbe, and on the East-West German frontier, during the last days of the Second World War, with the chaos being exploited by black-marketeers and the only honest brokers being the Soviets. Despite showing the friendship of a Soviet and an American general, it is a virulent portrayal of the United States as a continuing menace. Like ПАДЕНИЕ БЕРЛИНА [translit. PADENIE BERLINA; THE FALL OF BERLIN] the same can be said in general of its

⁴ »He was forced to write it. This was an order from Stalin. Stalin understood that this was a great composer, a great name«. (A remark from Karen Khachaturian in the documentary SHOSTAKOVICH AGAINST STALIN. THE WAR SYMPHONIES [1997]. EU: Rhombus/ZDF. [1h. 04' 50"]).

music, with its lightness and trite triumphal nature, so let us consider, for example, the scene in which the two armies meet. Here, moreover, the composer uses archetypal characterizations for the situations and the characters, availing himself, among other devices, of musical quotes and loans as he often did in screen music, which, on occasion, as should be taken into account, was charged with an interesting symbolism and an original inclination towards the grotesque although which, in other cases, was much more trivial in nature. To give just a few examples, »La Marseillaise« and the can-can of *Orpheus in the Underworld* by Jacques Offenbach are quoted, among others, in НОВЫЙ ВАВИЛОН [translit. NOVYI VAVILON; NEW BABYLON] (USSR 1929, Grigori Kozintsev / Leonid Trauberg); on numerous occasions Russian folk songs and revolutionary songs can be heard; in ПОДРУГИ [translit. PODRUGI; GIRLFRIENDS] (USSR 1936, Lev Arnshtam) »The Internationale« is used; in ПЯТЬ ДНЕЙ, ПЯТЬ НОЧЕЙ [translit. PIAT' DNEI, PIAT' NOCHEI; FIVE DAYS, FIVE NIGHTS] (USSR 1961, Lev Arnshtam) the main theme from the *Finale* of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony in D Minor, op. 125 (the Ode to Joy)*; in the film in question – MEETING ON THE ELBE – the extremely well-known »Yankee Doodle«, etc.

This was not the first time that Shostakovich had to manage these creative terms in a context in which collective fear and terror lay in wait on all sides, and in which we must try to understand the situation of so many artists and intellectuals of all kinds under the Stalinist government before, during and after the war. In the late 1930s, many plays for the theatre were censored, free cinematographic production was restricted (even more), and some two million people were exiled, arrested or shot.⁵ It is therefore very

⁵ And this was just the beginning, if we bear in mind that during his leadership of the

understandable that in those years Shostakovich should compose the music for ВОЗВРАЩЕНИЕ МАКСИМА [translit. VOZVRASHCHENIE MAKSIMA; THE RETURN OF MAXIM] (USSR 1937, Grigori Kozintsev / Leonid Trauberg) so as to keep the authorities favourably disposed towards him at a time when fame was no guarantee of security, or, shortly afterwards, the music for ВЕЛИКИЙ ГРАЖДАНИН [translit. VELIKII GRAZHDANIN; THE GREAT CITIZEN] (USSR 1938, Fridrikh Ermler), which »was the most morally problematic film Shostakovich worked on, [since] it is, in essence, a justification for the purges« (Riley 2005, 39). This is not to mention others such as Зоя [translit. ZOIA; ZOYA] (USSR 1944, Lev Arnshtam), which, during the war years, at least allowed him once again to »keep up appearances« regarding the authorities, as this film was widely praised by the Soviet press and his musical contribution was likewise recognized. During these years of his career, he had to play an active part on the so-called Art Council of the Committee for Cinema Affairs: it should be remembered that Stalin's interest in the cinema went as far as becoming involved in the viewing, censoring and the »artistic advice« given on many of the films that were to finally reach society. He had a small cinema for the purpose, a room converted *ex profeso* in the Kremlin where he would watch them often in the company of some of his closest subordinates. It should be very much borne in mind, as Volkov (2005, 157) points out, that

when talking about Soviet Film we must remember Lenin's famous statement in 1922 that »of all the arts the most important for us is the cinema.« It was Stalin who

Soviet Union, Stalin ordered the deaths of an estimated thirty million people. (See the documentary SHOSTAKOVICH AGAINST STALIN. THE WAR SYMPHONIES [1997]. EU: Rhombus/ZDF. [0h. 00' 02"]).

turned the dictum into reality. Soviet film in his regime came into being as an industry, the main goal of which was not making a profit, as in the West, but the ideological upbringing of the masses. In Stalin's concept, the state became the producer. This combined the Party's propaganda needs with the dictator's personal hobby.

This type of films and their music were the perfect excuse for musicology –»official« musicology, so to speak– to ignore or at least not to examine closely a self-evident fact: Shostakovich composed the music for nearly forty films from the late 1920s until after Stalin's death, and being the latter explicitly criticized by the new government leadership –into the early years of the so-called »Thaw«, and he also composed during the 1960s and early 1970s. Moreover, a series of interesting conclusions can be drawn from his extensive musical production for the cinema, which are expounded below.

In the first place, although it is assumed in general terms that his music for the cinema is much inferior to his music for the concert hall, it must be said that there are several exceptions (some of which are outstanding) in which his music for the cinema practically maintains the same standard as his other compositions: these are films such as ГАМЛЕТ [translit. GAMLET; HAMLET] (USSR 1964, Grigori Kozintsev), НОВЫЙ ВАВИЛОН [translit. NOVYI VAVILON; NEW BABYLON] and an important part of ОДНА [translit. ODNA; ALONE] (USSR 1930–31, Grigori Kozintsev / Leonid Trauberg). Furthermore, although many of the directors with whom he worked were frankly mediocre, this was not always the case as he also worked for the renowned filmmakers Leonid Trauberg and Grigori Kozintsev. The case of НОВЫЙ ВАВИЛОН [translit. NOVYI VAVILON; NEW BABYLON] is particularly noteworthy: it was released in 1929 and represents a paradigmatic example of what Soviet art could have achieved without the

atrocious censure, interference and supervision of the Bolshevik government only a few years later. From both a cinematographic and a musical point of view it is considered a true masterpiece; for some, the last great masterpiece of the silent film era. The film deals with the 1871 Paris Commune and the events leading up to it, and follows the encounter and tragic fate of two lovers separated by the barricades of the Commune. It was directed jointly by the Trauberg/Kozintsev duo and contains moments of genuine sardonic expressiveness that deserve special mention; moreover its music, that of a young Shostakovich of but twenty-two years of age, shows many of the trademark elements of his style. This style can be appreciated in many of the passages of his symphonies or in his chamber music: irony and sarcasm, a sense of humour, a rather grotesque acidity, an obsessive nature, a marked rhythmic and sometimes martial style, a nervous angular nature, an expanded tonality, melodic »banality« understood in an intelligent manner, a sombre mood at times, etc. Moreover, he constructed a lot of the music on the principle of contrast. As Riley (2005, 11–12) points out,

after the *First Symphony* and *The Nose*, the score for *New Babylon* was Shostakovich's third major leap forward, and as so often he uses quotation and allusion extensively [...]. But in *New Babylon* the quotations are more than time savers, quick scene painters or cues for knee-jerk reactions. Already he understood that, when images and music come together, they form a »third genre.« Though each is brilliant individually, the images and music combine to reflect on each other, making it one of the highpoints of Soviet Cinema, of Shostakovich's career (and not just in Film), and of dramatic music in general. [...] *New Babylon* was one of the earliest film scores to be written by a major composer, and it is certainly the most successful. [It] crystallises many of the aims and effects of Shostakovich's music both in and out of the Cinema throughout his career.

The same could almost be said of *ОДНА* [translit. ODNA; ALONE], a 1930–31 film, albeit on a considerably smaller scale. It features a dazzling score for a huge orchestra including a banda (eight brass band instruments), a theremin – Shostakovich was one of the first composers to write for this new electronic instrument – barrel-organ, a soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, an overtone singer and choir. He scored *ОДНА* [translit. ODNA; ALONE] with a mosaic of smaller pieces that could be more easily edited, repeated or shuffled as the film progressed towards its final version. And as for *ГАМЛЕТ* [translit. GAMLET; HAMLET], filmed by Kozintsev in 1964, it is hard to understand why this music is not given more importance in the musical literature on the composer (either monographically or on the 20th century in general when his work is discussed), and it is even more surprising that musical-cinematographic literature itself scarcely mentions it.⁶ This full-length film is perhaps the best adaptation of Shakespeare’s play to the big screen ever made, and its music is a Shostakovichian monument *per se* that represents, in its linking to the images, a testimony to the creative and cooperative chemistry between both artists. The result is a film of great plastic beauty (similar in some ways to Carl Dreyer’s most inspired work) that is both interpretative and moving and is always enhanced by the scores that accompany it. To give but one example, in one of the most interesting scenes the ghost of Hamlet’s father appears to his son, two sentinels and Horatio: in the tempestuous twilight the characters are surprised by the majestic and sinister figure of the ghost silhouetted against the sky, in profile alongside the castle, the scene seeking an appropriate contrast between the astonished characters, Hamlet’s impetuosity, and the stylistic

⁶ We will comment on this subject later on as far as both this and other films are concerned.

elegance of the ghost with its long cape billowing in the wind and its imposing presence. Now the music reminds us of some of the composer's best work as it rings out with majestic grandiosity, disturbing tension, and the same elegance which the film maintains as a whole.⁷

Secondly, we believe that some of his creations for the cinema have attracted excessive criticism or are at best undervalued. This is because they are compared with his music for concert halls, but perhaps it is necessary to ask why this comparison needs to be made. If we restrict ourselves to the framework of music for the cinema, we can conclude that some of his compositions in the hands of certain cinematographic composers would not be criticized. Let us bring to mind classic American films of the 1930s and 1940s and the romantic and post-romantic elegance of names such as Max Steiner or Franz Waxman, to name but two. The major problem here may be that some of the films in which he took part are truly awful, especially the propaganda films of the early years of the Cold War but also others from the 1930s, for example ВСТРЕЧНЫЙ [translit. VSTRECHNYI; COUNTERPLAN] (USSR 1932, Sergei Yutkevich / Fridrikh Ermler) or also ДРУЗЬЯ [translit. DRUZ'IA; FRIENDS] (USSR 1938, Lev Arnshtam), the latter from the late 1930s (significantly the worst years of the Stalinist »Great Terror« purges).⁸ It can be observed that it is not only the music that affects the images, script, etc. but that the opposite is also true: in this ineffable reactive process,

⁷ For an exhaustive analysis of the soundtrack from a dramatic-narrative, structural, harmonic and aesthetic perspective, we recommend the excellent work of Heine 2012.

⁸ The first of these, by the way, served once again to maintain a satisfactory image for the government. Indeed this is a film that »had its lyrical moments, and one of its highlights is a charming, tender and perky song, ›The Morning Greets us with Coolness«, written by Shostakovich. Its catchy melody made it the first Soviet hit song to come from the movies. The whole country, from peasants to government leaders, sang [it].« (Volkov 2005, 160)

which is almost alchemistic and which represents, from the point of view of aesthetics, the complex relationship between the cinema and music, the music is heard *differently*. To move on to the following example, in which what in a classic »glamorous« American film (or in the analogous case of so many contemporary European productions that were reflected in the mirror of that cinema) could be understood as fine-music-inspired-by-Tchaikovsky-and-Rachmaninoff (in the style of Richard Addinsell's *Warsaw Concerto* of 1941), here becomes something negative, on the one hand because the film is a bad one, and, on the other, because the soundtrack is created by »the great Dmitri Shostakovich« and it is very difficult not to compare it to his other compositions outside of the field of music for the cinema. We are here referring to a couple of scenes with this same music in НЕЗАБЫВАЕМЫЙ 1919-Й [translit. NEZABYVAEMYI 1919-I GOD; THE UNFORGETTABLE YEAR 1919] (USSR 1952, Mikhail Chiaureli). This film contains all the ingredients that we have been commenting on for other productions such as ПАДЕНИЕ БЕРЛИНА [translit. PADENIE BERLINA; THE FALL OF BERLIN] or ВСТРЕЧА НА ЭЛЬБЕ [translit. VSTRECHA NA ELB'E; MEETING ON THE ELBE]: political propaganda, forced sweetness, distortion of the facts, further extolling of Bolshevik revolutionary values, of Lenin and Stalin (both of them are dramatically represented here), etc. and, this time around, a brief period in the Civil War. Concretely, the plot reconstructs Petrograd's historical Civil War days of autumn 1919, and once more, the script shows a personally attractive heroic Stalin, showing himself on the battlefield more than he ever did in reality. As for the scenes in question, the first of them deserves special attention: Stalin and a group of soldiers are marching past various Petrograd landmarks, but most notably, as Stalin passes the famous Bronze Horseman statue of Peter the Great, he pauses for a moment to create – in Riley's words (2005, 74) – a tableau: his noble profile in the

foreground with his equally visionary predecessor behind him.

On the other hand, and thirdly, what some musicology scholars seem not to take into account when criticizing music for cinema is that it should not be valued in isolation, but rather in connection with the structural syntax, narrative resources, and dramatic conception and development..., which is assumed by its association with the artistic »whole« that amounts to a film. We therefore cannot agree more with Riley (2005, 1) when he notes that

Music critics often base their purely musicological judgements on the concert suites –[suites frequently arranged and edited by the composer Levon T. Atovmyan]– rather than the music as it appears in the films, seemingly unaware that film music and concert music have different criteria, though no Opera critic ignores plot and characterisation. Meanwhile, Film critics often seem oblivious to the soundtrack.

Let us consider for example that he composed the soundtrack of ОВОД [translit. OVOD; THE GADFLY] (USSR 1955, Alexander Faintsimmer), a better film than some of the last mentioned, a period film based on the revolutionary struggle for the unification of Italy combined with a love story (although it also continues the patriotic themes of many earlier films), the music of which is profoundly romantic and lyrical with certain aristocratic features; and perhaps this was the best option to offer the appropriate and correct accompaniment that was required. This music is by the way probably his most popular and most frequently recorded score for the cinema. Furthermore and importantly, although he did not yet enjoy the margin of artistic creativity that he began to enjoy five or ten years after the

death of Stalin,⁹ the fact is that the latter had been dead for two years and, only a few months later, the new leader, Nikita Khrushchev, made the so-called »secret speech« against the figure of Stalin, a clear reflection of the winds of change. In principle, therefore, the obligatory stylistic orientation of his compositions and, even more so, the fact of his being compelled to compose music for the cinema – and his relationship with the Seventh Art continued during the following decades until the final years of his life – cannot have been so forced, and however he decided to commit himself and compose a soundtrack in a very moderate style according to this film's requirements and its characteristics.¹⁰ And the same could almost be said of ПЯТЬ ДНЕЙ, ПЯТЬ НОЧЕЙ [translit. PIAT' DNEI, PIAT' NOCHEI; FIVE DAYS, FIVE NIGHTS], shot in 1961 (this having a rather interesting musical score at certain moments).

Fourthly and finally, certain passages of his compositions for the cinema have also been neglected, if not criticized, as they flirt with a certain comic levity with elements borrowed from fanfares, the circus, sometimes military marches, etc. However, on the one hand the previous point must be taken into account, and, on the other, some of these adjectives are consubstantial to Shostakovich's work, and, if we know how to listen, we can be aware of a great composing intelligence and also know how these elements led towards the grotesque and ironic nervousness that is rather idiosyncratic of the Soviet artist.

⁹ This was clearly wider but not as much as is sometimes thought: the death of the tyrant led to major changes in the public and artistic life of the Soviet Union, but the rulers did not abandon overnight their suspicions regarding art and the social liberties that began to be demanded, although the inhuman context of the Stalinist era virtually disappeared, which is what we wish to stress.

¹⁰ For a more detailed albeit generic analysis of the music and themes of this film, see Riley 2005, 80–82.

Be that as it may, one of the main reasons for the scant attention paid to his music for the cinema was that, after his confrontation with Stalin and all that this meant creatively and emotionally, as we said at the beginning, he was obliged (in the strictest sense of the word) to participate in a series of films in the second half of the 1940s and the early 1950s. Here Shostakovich did not, in some cases, become involved creatively at his previous level, and, subsequently and importantly, when he genuinely put his faith in the possibilities of this new art that was the cinema and, owing to how it related to music, where he understood that a very wide field of technical, stylistic, aesthetic possibilities..., was opening up, both in the silent film era with his participation in *НОВЫЙ ВАВИЛОН* [translit. NOVYI VAVILON; NEW BABYLON] and to a lesser extent *ОДНА* [translit. ODNA; ALONE] (a film, by the way, completed in mid-1930 as a silent film, but with soundtrack added the next year and released in October 1931) and later, as in the late 1950s and the 1960s, there are cases in which his music, in a style much inferior to his true inclinations and written for mediocre films, was composed with an acceptable degree of involvement with the project, with the director, with teamwork, etc. This would reach its peak in *ГАМЛЕТ* [translit. GAMLET; HAMLET] and *КОРОЛЬ ЛИР* [translit. KOROL' LIR; KING LEAR] (USSR 1971, Grigori Kozintsev), in which both the films and the soundtracks as a process of collaboration of the director/composer partnership (exceptionally in this field) were of extremely high quality and very committed. As Dombrovskaja correctly writes,

in spite of the prevailing idea that Shostakovich's film music was a secondary area of his creative work, there are many elements of the films *Hamlet* and *King Lear* that demonstrate otherwise: the composer had a serious and penetrating creative attitude towards cinema, and the

music he wrote for films was just as primal and inspired as his compositions in non-applied genres. A comparison of the music of these films with instrumented non-programmatic works that appeared at the same time –the *Fourteenth Symphony* and the *Ninth, Eleventh and Thirteenth Quartets*– provides graphic evidence of this. (Dombrovskaja 2012, 141)

We are struck by the manner in which various authors who have written about Shostakovich have approached this subject. If for example we consider the well-known work by Meyer (1997), we find something that is repeated by other authors in other books or in certain documentaries: a favourable assessment of his early ventures into cinema with the soundtracks of *НОВЫЙ ВАВИЛОН* [translit. NOVYI VAVILON; NEW BABYLON], *ОДНА* [translit. ODNA; ALONE] and *ЗЛАТЫЕ ГОРЫ* [translit. ZLATYE GORY; THE GOLDEN MOUNTAINS] (USSR 1931, Sergei Yutkevich) albeit without going into detail, and almost total neglect of the remainder of his musical-cinematographic career. The music of the films of the Stalinist era therefore generates criticism and negative comments, although never about his lack of inspiration, but rather about the circumstances that led him to this level of decadence. When we come to the music of films such as *ОВОД* [translit. OVOD; THE GADFLY] we find more of the same, with no attempt made to understand what this music and cinema business is all about, with its own rules and codes. When the subject of his fervent wish for commitment with masterpieces of the cinema such as *ГАМЛЕТ* [translit. GAMLET; HAMLET] and *КОРОЛЬ ЛИР* [translit. KOROL' LIR; KING LEAR], for which he provided scores equal to some of his concert hall compositions, is brought up, the negative comments disappear (perhaps because they cannot be uttered), but these works are passed over too quickly when what they deserve is a pause for thought (such as in some of his

concert hall works) and a musical and musical-cinematographic analysis, albeit broadly speaking. But no. It seems as if devoting too many pages to the music composed for nearly forty films (which is quite a number) would mean openly acknowledging that Shostakovich was also a composer of soundtracks and sometimes (but only sometimes) clearly an involved one, and this is something that some authors seem reluctant to recognize as if this reality had to be concealed in some way, for better or for worse, although the latter is predominant.

What is more striking still is that even in the world of music for the cinema and of a large proportion of the literature that has appeared throughout the 20th century¹¹, the situation is similar: his extensive production for the cinema is not treated in greater detail. It is true that it is mentioned, with his music for НОВЫЙ ВАВИЛОН [translit. NOVYI VAVILON; NEW BABYLON] being the main reference, together with other very general and rather brief comments on other productions of the Stalinist and post-Stalinist era which, as we have mentioned, do not go into enough detail.¹² If we are to fill this historiographic gap, we need to turn to much more specialized works such as *Soviet Film Music: An Historical Survey*, by Tatiana Egorova (1997).

¹¹ This literature mainly dates from the last quarter of the 20th century and is not abundant; this is an eloquent piece of data, if there ever was one, of the scant attention that musicology has paid to the field of music and the cinema (in which new ground can still be broken).

¹² See for example Chion (1997, 61, 310), Colón Perales/Infante del Rosal/Lombardo Ortega (1997, 37, 50–51), Valls Gorina/Padrol (1990, 76, 92, 134), Prendergast (1992, 17, 34). To be fair, we must also take into account other authors such as Comuzio (1992, 569–571), who reserves a quite extensive entry for the artist in his *Colonna Sonora. Dizionario Ragionato dei Musicisti Cinematografici*. But others do not even mention him; see for instance Lack (1999), Lexmann (2006) and Burt (1994).

To begin to conclude, let us establish a final reflection. It is possible that the mediocre music (from which nevertheless several pages can be saved) that he composed for some of the films that we have mentioned which were of such poor quality (albeit of great value to scholars of art sociology and film archaeology), from the end of the Second World War to Stalin's death in 1953, in which he also had to praise the person he perhaps most hated in the world (i. e. Stalin) led him once to comment¹³ to a circle of students and friends that the only circumstance that could lead a serious composer to work for the cinema is to avoid his ruin. He went on to say that the only thing you needed to do was to follow the appropriate indications so as to adjust to the times of the sequences and so on. То ПАДЕНИЕ БЕРЛИНА [translit. PADENIE BERLINA; THE FALL OF BERLIN] and ВСТРЕЧА НА ЭЛЬБЕ [translit. VSTRECHA NA ELB'E; MEETING ON THE ELBE], among others, let us add a final example in МОЛОДАЯ ГВАРДИЯ [translit. MOLODAIA GWARDIIA; THE YOUNG GUARD] (USSR 1948, Sergei Gerasimov), a film that is far superior to the first two mentioned. We, however, once again find in it a propaganda machine that raises the values of the young partisans, who, almost like martyrs to the cause of confronting the German invader, sacrifice their lives until the advent of definitive victory. The music of Shostakovich confines itself to emphasizing the heroism of the hero, the evil of the wicked and so on, based on a lifeless symphonic style (and too romantic at times), choirs, topical characterizations, etc. In addition, the soundtrack shows the folkloric greatness of the nation.

¹³ See for instance Riley (2005, 62), Meyer (1997, 283), Fay (2000, 171), Volkov (2005, 159), in which the same anecdote is included in different terms.

Having added this last example to some of the previous ones, we wish to express a personal reflection on the *status* of music for the cinema as part of musicology. The examples taken from Shostakovich have been useful but we will also quote other names. During the five or six years that we have been dedicated to our doctoral thesis on music for the cinema, we were able to confirm from our reading, in the research that has been carried out for symposiums, etc., that in various fields of musicology, the film music has not been taken as seriously as it, in our opinion, undoubtedly deserves to be, at least during the greater part of the 20th century. In the last fifteen years or so a certain change in the situation can be appreciated, but even today it is not unusual to find dissenting voices who affirm that music for the cinema should form part of the study programmes of audiovisual faculties rather than those of musicology. Our own modest opinion (and we are not alone) is that it should be shared by both academic disciplines.

All this leads us to recall the strange love/hate relationship and the ambiguity, that is so hard to resolve, that many great composers have felt towards music for the cinema, a kind of fear of negative criticism for working for this medium, for an »inferior art«, the cinema, which for decades since its inception has been seeking a degree of acceptance and legitimacy that had often been denied it. The most commercial tendencies on both sides of the Atlantic have contributed to this a great deal, and much could be added by the recurring question of the »symbolic domination« coined by Pierre Bourdieu. Let us reflect that Arnold Schönberg considered this option during his years of North American exile, as did Manuel de Falla, but finally they declined the offers, alleging technical and aesthetic difficulties.¹⁴ Renowned artists such as André Previn do not like being

¹⁴ For information on the former consult Prendergast (1992, 47–49) and on the latter López González 2005.

reminded of those years of their careers, and we have evidence that Xavier Montsalvatge (an avant-garde and eclectic composer who is very well known in Spain, but less so internationally) directly destroyed the scores of the music he had composed for the cinema in an attempt to leave no sign of his involvement in the Seventh Art. This is not to mention the harsh words that the great Igor Stravinsky once pronounced about this type of music and its *a priori* functional nature. These are but a series of random examples reflecting this fact, but they seem to us to be most eloquent. On the other hand, one should always be grateful for the attention given to this medium by men such as Aaron Copland and for specific works by Sergei Prokofiev and Arthur Honegger, again to quote only a few outstanding names. It is also a relief that the new generations of concert hall composers are collaborating more and more with the cinema from a position of creative sincerity and respect, rather than from one of a mere unimportant commitment. Although there will always be dissenting voices, to a large extent this resolves the »inferiority complex« that dogged film music during a large part of the 20th century, despite the brilliant compositions by names such as Bernard Herrmann and Elmer Bernstein among so many others.

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