

who ignores them — or regards them in purist fashion as matters of 'extra-musical' interest — is closing his mind to an important aspect of the music's meaning and form.'

These statements provide an interesting contrast with the second of last autumn's Reith Lectures, in which Denis Donoghue argued that the image of the artist and what moves him has displaced the work of art itself . . .

'Critics who want to escape from the mysteriousness of the work try to replace it by the intention they ascribe to the artist . . . the work of art now persists chiefly as an indication of an intention; it is as an embodied intention that it can best be studied.'

Professor Donoghue was of course offering this as the 'Western' experience of the relationship between the arts and society being vitiated by market forces. In the case of Shostakovich, forces other than those of the market were in operation; but that he shouldered a burden which has ultimately to be borne by all is made clear in the above-mentioned essay and in those by Robert Stradling and Bernard Stevens. This paradox of the private versus public figure, of music done 'to order' and music subject to official censure and condemnation — while characterising Shostakovich's career in the particular conditions of Soviet society (something which, as Robert Stradling shows, is not to be imputed simply to 'Stalinism' as such) — is also a pointer to the destiny of serious artists everywhere.

The paradox is at the core of the music, and we cannot hope to unravel it without confronting the man himself and his era; thus, in Shostakovich, perhaps more compellingly than in any other contemporary artist, we are drawn down into history: history inscribed on the texture of all he wrote. This we learn from the three essays referred to, from the moving testimony to the string quartets written by two members of the Fitzwilliam Quartet (the ensemble who worked closely with the composer), and from Ronald Stevenson's typically acrid, witty discussion of the piano music.

But the book, refreshingly, is by no means single-track: while all the contributors clearly share a deep admiration for their subject, their themes and approaches vary considerably. Shostakovich's attitude to the use of words in music is gone into at some length, as is the vexed question of the operas. Robert Dearling's essay includes much vital information on the genesis of certain of the symphonies; his attempt, however, to deal with the first twelve of them in a mere thirty-four pages results in a sort of 'anthropomorphic' narrative that does less than justice to his material. Since the

SHOSTAKOVICH: THE MAN AND HIS MUSIC

Christopher Norris (editor)

Lawrence and Wishart, 1982; hbk £12.50
ISBN 85315 502 X

In the central essay of this notable collection, the editor advances the thesis that the history of Shostakovich's time and of the personal and political pressures he experienced are to be taken together with his music — that such knowledge is essential to an informed reading of his art:

'His struggles to attain a workable socialised aesthetic, and moreover to square it with a sensitive musical conscience, are a matter of public record . . . More important, the music itself bears witness to the crises of commitment, the ideological conflicts and the often self-alienated character of Shostakovich's life-in-music.'

This view is urged in passionate but well-tempered advocacy of a composer who is undoubtedly one of the foremost of our century and whose music, attracting a steadily wider audience, has for years been the subject of critical and sometimes vituperative debate . . .

'Shostakovich's sufferings of artistic conscience are 'there' in his music, and the critic

symphonies are — at least, in this country — the best-known part of the composer's output, it might have been more helpful if he had concentrated upon a significant half-dozen, in greater critical detail and with not quite such colourful commentary. We each have our vision of the music: other people's prose pictures tend only to obtrude.

The book as a whole is a major, comprehensive contribution to the study of a major composer. And indeed, looking again over these writings it is as if one is actually hearing the music — actually seeing once more that rapt, preoccupied visage, peering intently through heavy spectacles into the conflict of our time.

Anthony Dorrell

BOOK NOTES

Peter Kingsford's *The Hunger Marchers in Britain 1920-1940* (Lawrence & Wishart £12.50) is the most comprehensive study of the marches now available. The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham has added another collection of articles to its already impressive list: *The Empire Strikes Back* (Hutchinson £5.95) examines racism in contemporary Britain. *Women's Welfare Women's Rights* (Jane Lewis, Croom Helm £15.95) is a very useful collection of articles on a wide range of state benefits and includes American material. Roy Medvedev's biography of *Khrushchev* (Blackwell £9.50) is now available and well worth reading. *Patriarchal Relations* (RKP £4.95) by

Ros Coward is an interesting study of the development of patriarchy in a variety of intellectual disciplines. *Against the Clock* (A. Grant, Pluto £4.95) is the latest workers Handbook looking at work study and pay incentive schemes. Anthony Barnett's *Iron Britannia* (Alison & Busby £3.95) is an exhaustive analysis of the origins of the Falklands war. Doreen Massey and Richard Meegan's *The Anatomy of Job Loss* (Methuen £4.95) is an excellent account of rationalisation and other mechanisms of employment decline. Finally *State Intervention in Industry* (Spokesman £3.95) is now available in a second edition and remains an important study of Labour economic policies.

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