

The ensemble was the first performer of Shostakovich's works in more than twenty countries. While the composer was still alive albums of recordings of Shostakovich's quartets of the Borodin Quartet were issued in the USSR, Germany, Japan and USA. "Accept my deep gratitude for your superb performance of my quartets", wrote the composer to the musicians on December 14, 1967. "I had a chance to hear your excellent treatment recorded on discs. I have greatly enjoyed it".

We hope that these recordings where the revelations of the great composer are presented in the inspired interpretation of the Borodin Quartet are going to be a source of joy to the listeners introduced into a vast and multidimensional world of Shostakovich's chamber music.

M. Yakubov

Translated by T. Komarda, N. Kuznetsov and F. Sofronov

The Borodin Quartet:
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Recorded in 1978 – 1983

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D. SHOSTAKOVICH



COMPLETE QUARTETS

6 CD

BORODIN QUARTET

Dmitry Shostakovich – The String Quartets

The sound of a string quartet was one of D. Shostakovich's strongest early impressions which he retained throughout his life. Often in his youth and in mature years the composer recalled those episodes: "When a quartet gathered at the neighbours' place I put my ear to the wall and listened". Put his ear to the wall and listened... That was said by the young Shostakovich back in 1927. And thirty years later, summing up his life experience, he wrote: "I vividly remember the sounds of music reaching from the neighbouring flat owned by an engineer who was a first-rate cellist and a great lover of chamber music. His place was often visited by his friends who played quartets and trios by Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Borodin and Tchaikovsky. To hear their playing better I stole into the corridor and sat there for hours... All that left an indelible imprint on my musical memory and has greatly contributed to the shaping-up of my artistic individuality".

Perhaps it was for this reason that with time the quartet became for Shostakovich a major form of expressing the most intimate thoughts and movements of his soul. A simple calculation shows that during the last decades of the composer's life he preferred the quartet to all other mediums, including symphony: from the mid-50s Shostakovich wrote ten quartets and only five symphonies; some years saw two quartets produced.

Shostakovich's quartets are a vast world without which it would be impossible to form a full impression of the composer's work. Sometimes his quartets are dismissed as a kind of supplement to his symphonies. The composer himself was sharply critical of such

a point of view: "It is a mistake to think that in chamber music the range of thoughts and feelings is smaller than in other mediums; good examples to the opposite are quartets by Beethoven, Tchaikovsky and Borodin which possess a colossal artistic force".

Indeed, Shostakovich's quartets have no less import than his symphonies, while often surpassing the latter in psychological subtlety and wealth of emotions. One realizes the distinctive features of the genre when comparing the quartets with Shostakovich's greatest symphonies written approximately at the same time with the quartets – the Seventh, Eighth, Tenth, Eleventh and Thirteenth, those huge frescoes passionately narrating of events of global magnitude and treating problems common to all mankind. The quartet's impact is different. The symphonies' subject is the people, mankind. In the quartets it is an individual. This does not mean that Shostakovich's symphonies are impersonal – the author himself often said that they were lyrical and to a certain extent autobiographical, while the development of a personality was thought by him to be a symphonic theme. However, in a symphony all the upheavals of the century are experienced by the hero together with the rest of the people, "in public", his heart beating in unison with millions of others. In contrast, the quartet's hero faces all the vicissitudes of life and his personal troubles as a separate entity – not as a loner but as an individual who can only share his feelings with those closest to him.

Quartet No.1 in C major, Op. 49

In the mid-30's Shostakovich announced not once about his plans to compose a string quartet. In 1934, after the premiere of "Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk" he particularly wrote: "I have a

large break in the sphere of chamber and concert music... The time persistently prompts me, that these genres are having a right (to exist) and must grow and flow. At the closest time I got to dedicate my creative activities namely to these genres. I just planned a Suite for bassoon and string orchestra, a quartet, a concerto for violin, a row of the vocal works, "Dance suite" for jazz-band". But most of these plans remained incomplete. Only after finishing his Fifth Symphony, Shostakovich once more called a quartet among works, which have been planned. "I wish – and I'll do it without fail – to write for our performers a row of chamber works (...), like quartet..."

The first page of the future Quartet was written on 30th of May 1938, while the whole composition was finished in the rough on 17th of July. "Working at the quartet, I was captivated by this work, and I wrote it extremely soon. Don't search for some peculiar depth here, in my first quartet", – announced Shostakovich, seeming to preserve one from the comparison with the philosophical significance of the Fifth Symphony. – It's cheerful and lyrical in its mood, and I called it "Spring". (In the printed score this title is omitted).

The first movement of the Quartet is full with softly flowing light. Its calm, appeasing main theme is similar in a way to Tchaikovsky's music ("The Prayer" ("Morning meditation") from the "Children's album", the beginning of the First String Quartet). The second theme with its intonations of a puppet waltz is colored by slight irony. In the very end of the movement a new theme – a lyrical, melody, simple and charming – arrives in the viola and violin parts; it sounds both unexpectedly and naturally.

The second movement consists of a few beautiful variations on a theme, which combines generous Russian melodiousness and regularity of the march. The third movement is an impetuous, light Scherzo. Ceaseless glimpses of visions in its edge sections is contrasted by the delightfully merry theme of the middle one, reminding us about the final theme of the first movement (initial intonations and the rhythmic pattern of the Scherzo also alludes to the melody of the romance-fantasy "Venetian Night" by Glinka. The atmosphere of the Finale of the First Quartet is sunny and serene, full of cheerful motion and graceful play.

The premiere performance of the composition by Glazunov string quartet took place on 10th of October, 1938 in Leningrad and on 16th of November the new work was presented in Moscow by the Beethoven quartet (henceforth this quartet prepared all the premiers of Shostakovich's Quartets, except for the Fifteenth).

Quartet No.2 in A major, Op.68

His Second Quartet Shostakovich dedicated to his close friend, a famous composer Vissarion Yakovlevich Shebalin (1902–1963). They got acquainted in 1924 and soon made friends, which remained for almost four decades. In the middle of 1930-s Shebalin dedicated his Third Symphony to Shostakovich. The premiere of the composition took place in February of 1944 and Shostakovich, while being in Ivanovo began working on the new Quartet, which was finished in a draft on 2 of September 1944.

The music of the Second Quartet is remarkable for its national sources, grandiosity of the outline and epic features

of its themes. It seems to reflect in a way the personality of Shebalin, who used Russian classic and folk tradition in many various ways in his own works.

Two themes, which have a definite Slavic national color, form the base of the "Overture". Courageous energy, pressure, and vitality, – all these typical signs of the folk instrumental music and popular dance – are among the brightest features of the first theme. The second one with its clear Mazurka rhythm is more lyrical as it has those penetrating and persistent notes which later achieve sharp expressiveness. The second movement totally changes the music narration adding to it some new sense and emotional aspects. At the background of the endless and impassionate accord (parts of cello, viola and second violin) arrives the Recitative of the first violin, which sounds like a human voice, full of exclamations, questions, pain and hope, lofty sorrow and faith. The bright culmination of the "Romance" leads not to the appeasement, but to sad questioning phrases of the "Recitative".

The Third movement of the Quartet – "Waltz" – captivates us with vague, elusive, swift and haunting feelings that broke free. This Waltz swirling, which sounds a bit melancholically, intricately combine pray and delight, feverish gustiness, graceful capriciousness, exaltation, energy and light momentous smile... The Finale is developing slowly as an epic narration – "Theme with variations" – counterbalancing the grandiose first movement of the Quartet and making the whole structure of the cycle harmonic and complete.

The first performance of the new Quartet (as well as of the Trio, comp. 67, written in the same year, immediately before the Second Quartet) took place on 9 of November 1944 in the

Composers' house in Moscow. On 14 of November was made the Philharmonic premiere of these two works in Leningrad and on 28 of November – in Moscow.

Quartet No.3 in F major, Op.73

Discussing the theme – which of Shostakovich's quartets are, doubtless, the very pinnacle of the world's quartet repertoire, here we must before all others, pure chronologically, call the Third one. In a such way we are needed to call enough here and the 5th, and the 8th, and the 9th, and a lot of latest ones, but namely the Third have firstly placed the quartet activities of composer on the same level with his symphonic works, putting it in the treasury of XXth century musical classic. The Third Quartet was written in the first year after the War, 1946 (it was being composed for quite a long period – since 26 of January till 2 of August), so its content is usually viewed as the echo of the war events, which makes this chamber music close to the Eighth and Ninth Symphonies.

The first movement is based upon two themes. Its main theme is vivid and graceful melody, which naturally combines naivety and capricious changeableness, careless playful smile and seriousness. The second theme, which is more melodic and calm, also includes some youth freshness, lyricism and dance intonations. The tragedy of the life breaks this merry world in the following movements. The second and third movements of the Quartet mark a dramatic change in its development: the hero faces here troubles and grief, terrible masks of reality.

The logic of the second movement is based on the comparison and interaction of the two different images. One of them embodies some energetic, but misbalanced and nervous motion. Mechanic

regularity is added by a painful curve, pressure with swirling in the same place. The second theme is an image just from the other world. Its short, staccato sounds seem to reconstitute some magic glimmer. Fragile and tender toe steps are complemented with soft sighs and child pray. In the presence of this unusual, poetic and beautiful image the unkind force becomes softer and warmer. The third movement is the concentration of aggressive forces. Unbridled, wild rhythm of this half dancing, half march-like music associates with the battle scenes of Shostakovich's symphonies (especially with the famous toccata from the Eighth symphony). Loose exultation of the destructing energy achieves its apogee in the middle episode with its obvious vulgarity and insolently grimacing theme (the viola solo).

The fourth movement is full with funeral pathos, sorrow and protest. This is one of the tops of Shostakovich's tragic lyricism. Emotional spontaneity is accompanied by bright visual images: in this requiem the choir replicas are changed with dramatic monologues of the solo-players and dull strokes of "kettle-drum" (cello pizzicato). Only at the very end the troublesome, searching intonations of the main theme of the finale are getting pure and dissolve in the transparent major chord. The life goes on, and we should live on.

The Premiere of the third Quartet, dedicated to the musicians of the Beethoven's Quartet, took place in Moscow on 16 of December 1946.

Quartet No.4 in D major, Op. 83

There is an inscription, made by Shostakovich's hand, on the first page of the Fourth Quartet's score: "It is dedicated

to Peter Vladimirovich Whilliams". A great master of thatre-decorative art, who had been a main stage decorator of the Bolshoi Theatre of the USSR, P. Williams (1902–1947) was also a talented painter, who had left a number of remarkable portraits (one of the most famous of them is Meyerchold's portrait, made in 1925). In 1944 Williams executed one more portrait: Shostakovich at the piano with a child's picture on the wall, showing a sea battle. In 1945 was carried out another beautiful pencil sketch: the portrait of the nine-year old daughter of the composer, Galya Shostakovich.

The four-movement Fourth Quartet at first sight resembles his First Quartet, written ten years earlier. Its two first movements with their moderate tempo precede the two faster ones. But the inner, intimate sense of the new Quartet was totally different. If the First one is full of festivity, love to life, "images of the childhood... light, spring mood". The reality of the Fourth Quartet reflects the consciousness of an experienced artist, it obtains some bitter, tragic notes.

Shostakovich began to work on his Fourth quartet in Moscow in the spring of 1949, but its last part was ready only by the end of the year, on 27 of December. So, the whole work continued – with some breaks – about eight months. The Premiere of the Fourth Quartet took place in Moscow in the Small Hall of Conservatory on 3 of December 1953.

Quartet No.5 in B flat major, Op.92

Some of his Quartets Shostakovich called "Quartets-Symphonies". Moreover some of these Quartets were with the author's consent arranged for Orchestra, as well as his Quintet

(the variant for piano and Chamber orchestra). To such chamber Symphonies by all means belongs the Grandiose Fifth Quartet – one of the most complicated, but at the same time most impressive composition of the XX century.

The main theme (*Allegro non troppo*) embodies an image of the terrible and soulless force. In this music natural energy goes together with automatism of the motion, irrepressible pressure – with the feeling of delayed development (this impression is made by persistent repetitions of the same tunes). It sounds as if a huge, strange and dreadful mechanism grinds, shakes and works, but does not move. The contrast to it is made by a melodious waltz tune. Its Russian lingering character is set off by a light and graceful rhythmic pattern in the high voice. Soon however this lyrical tune fades and disappears in the wild outburst of the powerful Nature. Only in the very end of the movement – when the waltz theme arrives once more – the music is getting clearer and appeased.

Andante of the Fifth Quartet is a rare sample of the sort of scenery music by Shostakovich. Its delicate coloring, hardly heard whisper of violins in the high register, rarefied sound space and suppressed singing of the stringed (the whole quartet are playing with mutes) are especially impressive in comparison with the powerful orchestral sound in the development of the first movement.

The mutes are off, and a bit cold coloring is getting brighter and warmer in the Finale of the Quartet. After the poetic concluding episode (it sounds in the very end of the Quartet) appears a new central theme of the Finale – a graceful and light waltz. We seem to realize how long we have been waiting for it

when it sounds for the first time, “like the first ray of the sun, like a bird, leaving its cage”, like one of the columnists of the time wrote. Still the dramatic images of the first movement break into it and only after a long struggle it is again a cheerful and flying waltz melody. In the fading conclusion the image of always changing world seems to dissolve.

The fifth Quartet was written in 1952 and devoted to the Quartet after Beethoven. Its Premier took place on 13 of November 1953 in the Small hall of Moscow Conservatory.

Quartet No.6 in G major, Op. 101

The composer used to joke that he had written the Sixth Quartet as present for his own birthday – fiftieth anniversary. The number of the composition – one hundred and one! – also contained an ironical allusion: more than a hundred. The main theme of the composition can be easily associated with images of the childhood and “anniversary” function. Its carefree, playful and full of spring freshness melody is very close to the children song from Shostakovich’s music to the film “Fall of Berlin”.

The image structure of this Quartet misses, for instance, abrupt contrasts, both in the movements and in the cycle as a whole, which are so typical for Shostakovich in general. The second theme of the first movement also does not present any serious contrast. The first movement is crowned with fine chords. The same chords will terminate all the rest three movements. Repeating this cadence four times, Shostakovich underlines the inside wholeness of the cycle, harmony of its proportions.

The second movement of the composition is perhaps the most lyrical Scherzo by Shostakovich. All themes of that "nocturnal Scherzo" at some moments remind us of minuet, at the others of waltz with its sort of "oriental" melodic outline, sometimes it sounds like sarabanda. "Magic charm of the night silence, lyrical landscape and lyrical responses" – such were the words of one of the reviewers of the Premier performance of the Quartet.

The third movement of the Quartet, written in the form of Passacaglia – polyphonic variations for the theme, which repeats again and again in the bass part – is also unusual. Shostakovich loved this form, when new voices were being added gradually, while the music texture was getting denser and denser, and he would use it to convey a softy sorrow and tragic pathos. Lento of the Sixth Quartet is a calm meditation. The Finale of the Quartet, based on both themes – pastoral waltz and joking polka – is dissolving in the atmosphere of the ravishing, global appeasement.

After the sixth Quartet we will never again find in Shostakovich's works so cloudless, harmonic and appeased scores. A kind of lyrical intermezzo among Shostakovich's Quartets, the Sixth Quartet reveals unusual facets of his artistic world, perhaps the most intimate ones.

This opus 101, the composer wrote "for himself" on 7th to 31th of August 1956, was first performed in his personal Evening, dedicated to his fifth anniversary, it was played on 7th of October in Leningrad and on 23th – in Moscow.

Quartet No.7 in F sharp minor, Op. 108

It's a more little of all Shostakovich's quartets. But there's said a lot - and said newly. The work went on very long – count-

ing that, like composer impetuously formed his scores. The first rough of Seventh quartet was most probably made as early as May or early June 1959.

This quartet combines laconism of statement and a wise economy of means with a special inner plenitude of the music, clarity of expression with an inconceivable fathomless polysemy, richness and multiplicity of images with an organic unity of the whole arising from one or two intonation "seeds."

Forestalling the premiere, Shostakovich said that all three parts of the composition had its own names – *Scherzo*, *Pastorale*, and *Fugue*. Afterwards the composer decided to refuse the names. They were not mentioned either in a printed program of the concert, nor in the edition of the score, but they are giving us a chance – in the very common form – to add something to our imagination.

With its light resilient rhythm, the first theme of the opening *Allegretto* reminds the main theme of the first part of *Quartet No. 3* where the music sparkled with humor and in its elegant dance pattern one could hear juvenile nonchalance unlike the theme of *Quartet No. 7* with its inquiring and plaintive inflexions, which as the theme develops (in the middle part) acquire some dramatic expression. Another theme, *Scherzo*, has an even more explicit dance rhythm played by the cello on the background of an anxious texture of the viola and second violin. The *Scherzo*, lightly shaded with anxiety is followed by a beautiful *Lento*. The chilly and enigmatic figurations of the second violin, and the mysterious glissandos of the cello and viola create an idyllic landscape on the background of which the melody of the first violin evolves in a very high key. Behind

its outward reserve and constraint there lies internal passion. On the whole, it is a rare case when Shostakovich combined a finest "water-color" landscape and psychologism. Like an obscure night shadow, the second theme, *Lento*, appears in vague basses to slightly sadden a poetic picture of *Pastorale*, which imperceptibly grows dim and fades away by its end.

A furious *Fugue* rushes in like a whirlwind as if sweeping off the sublime lyricism of *Pastorale* and the hypochondric humor of *Scherzo*. Its frantic energy and power remind of the fugato from Shostakovich's fourth symphony (on a scale of chamber genre, of course), and it is apprehended as a grandiose and truly symphonic episode. A wild outburst of fierce elements leaves no place for any serenity and hope, but in the climax of *Fugue*, on the background of coiling spirals of its vortex-like flight, all of a sudden there comes a pungently dramatic and emotional main theme of *Lento*, and then, played by all four instruments, an opening theme of *Scherzo*, also having a new, protesting and passionate sound. Such a collision of heterogeneous forces leads to a striking cathartic result. *Fugue* is suddenly cut short. Its tempestuous and wicked theme turns into a waltz with a captivatingly elusive and bizarre rhythm. The rage and protest change into complaint and entreaty. The theme of the first part naturally interlaces in the waltzing motion as if enclosing the circle of narration.

Quartet No. 7 was performed for the first time in Moscow's All-Union House of Composers on May 13, 1960, and a philharmonic premiere of the new composition took place on May 15 in Leningrad, where the quartet was played twice at the audience's request. On September 17 of the same year, *Quartet No. 7*

was performed as part of a Shostakovich's night in Moscow. The quartet is dedicated to the memory of Nina Vassilievna Shostakovich (1910–1954), the composer's first wife.

Quartet No.8 in C minor, Op. 110

It took Shostakovich three days, July 12 to 14, 1960, to write his eighth quartet. At the time, the composer was in Dresden where he worked on the score to the motion picture *Five Days – Five Nights* dedicated to one of the episodes of the end of World War II. The footage of the tragic events of the middle of the 20th century and his visits to the monstrous death camps were, in the composer's own words, a deep personal and emotional experience, and served as a motive for creating a quartet dedicated to the memory of the victims of fascism and war. However this requiem for the millions of innocent victims was also appealing to the fate of the living and his own destiny as well. In his opinion, the victims of fascism and war were not only those who fell in action and were burned in gas furnaces, but also all those generations of people whose lives were broken, warped and shortened with the horrible cataclysms of the period. The composer's daughter witnessed that on completion of the quartet he said: "I dedicated it to myself."

It explains a passionate and confessional tone of some of the pages of the piece, and an "autobiographic" nature of the quartet's thematic material, which includes Shostakovich's musical monogram (DSCH) and numerous "quotations" from his compositions, which are in the author's shaken mind arise and transform into intonations, themes and fragments of his works while he re-lives his life inseparable from his music,

which, in its turn, is imprescriptible from the people's lives and fate of the mankind.

Quartet No. 8 was the first piece when Shostakovich so extensively addressed themes from his earlier compositions. Later on, he would add reminiscences from other composers' works to his "self-quotations" (*Symphony No. 15* and *Sonata for Viola and Piano* as the most known examples). Yet it was *Quartet No. 8* where the method of using familiar themes was identified.

The music of *Quartet No. 8* is captivating thanks to its special tensity and unbroken dramatic development, its impeccable logic of alternating musical fragments, and its graphic concreteness comparable to a film footage.

The opening part is a slow *fugato* around the theme of DSCH beginning as slow lyrical and philosophic parts of Shostakovich's quartets and symphonies usually do appearing in the mid-cycle after the culmination shock as a psychological response to the experience.

The beginning of the second part sounds like a sudden intervention of brutal and merciless forces reminding of the images of the Shostakovich's "war" symphonies, especially the famous *toccata* from his Eighth. At the moment of an extreme and deterrent exertion, the theme from *Trio* (Op. 67) appears. In *Trio* itself, this theme combined features of a dance from a Jewish borough with its irony and grotesque and a tragic despair. Here, there is not a shade of humor – only a cry of unbearable pain and protest. The second passage of the theme leads to sound breaking: the music does not stop but somewhat ends like a cinematographic film and starts again as a completely new part. The main theme

of the quartet turns into a morbid little waltz which makes on reminisce of the music bands of prisoners of the concentration camps and ghettos playing to delight the ears of their torturers. This "waltz of death" is a medieval "dance of death" resurrected in an apocalyptic reality of the 20th century.

A resolute opening motif of *Cello Concerto No. 1* takes root in the music of the third part eventually breaking a suffering swirl of the waltz. The fourth part calls up almost visible images of a funeral procession. It was based on the score to the film *Young Guards* (the scene of execution of the Krasnodon heroes) and a melody of the revolutionary workers' song *You Fell Victims* used by Shostakovich in his *Symphony No. 11* as well. A resolute opening motif of *Cello Concert No. 1* takes root in the music of the third part eventually breaking a suffering swirl of the waltz. The fourth part reconstructs almost visible images of a funeral procession. It is based on the score of the film *Young Guards* (the scene of execution of the Krasnodon heroes) and melody of the revolutionary proletarian song *You Fell Victims* used by Shostakovich in his *Symphony No. 11* as well. A beautiful melody of Katherine's aria from the opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* colored by the light of the last goodbye becomes a heartfelt and quiet culmination of this part and the entire piece as well.

The concluding fifth part takes us back to mournful concentrated thoughts of the first part, but now the music has no previous reminiscent themes from earlier compositions – no strength is left for remembrances.

Shostakovich's *Quartet No. 8* is a unique phenomenon of the world quartet literature. From the earliest times, an

intimate, lyrical and privately confessing beginning had been inherent to chamber music; and in particular to the quartet genre. Suffice it to recollect such quartets as *From My Life* by Bedřich Smetana, *Intimate Voices* by Jean Sibelius, and later Beethoven's quartets, for example, No. 15 with its *Holy Song of Thanksgiving by a Convalescent*. However, Shostakovich combines confession with preaching pathos, his deeply intimate experience is inseparable from social and common for all mankind, his address to images of the national struggle and a revolutionary song, to social and historic realities transforms this fervent monologue, which unveils the soul of the artist, from a subjective psycholyrical insight into a sphere of things epic and philosophic.

The premiere of the quartet (October 2, 1960 in Leningrad and October 9 in Moscow) aroused interest of not only quartet ensembles but conductors as well who appreciated the internal orchestral virtue of the score. Shortly thereafter, the quartet had a life on the symphonic scene as *Chamber Symphony to the Victims of Fascism and War* and as *Symphoniette* for strings and kettle-drums.

Quartet No.9 in E-flat Major, Op. 117

Back in 1962, the composer told the media that he was writing a new quartet and once added that it was a "children" quartet – "it about toys and spending time in the open air" – and that he had made quite a progress with the work and it would be finished in a couple of weeks. However, the score was apparently finished neither in 1962 nor in 1963. *Quartet No. 9* only saw the light of the day in late May 1964, and Shostakovich

clearly put it that a "children" quartet had not made it, and the new score was a totally new composition.

With simple sonic images, with the most common and elementary intonations, he opens an amazing capacity of sense, richness of emotional shades and discovers their imperishable freshness and beauty. Such a combination of something simple and complex, something so familiar and unexpected is a captivating power of many of the compositions of Shostakovich's last decade, especially his latest quartets.

A five-part cycle of *Quartet No. 9* is distinguished by original dramaturgic logic. To tell the truth, there is something in common between its extreme parts – a laconic and calm first part, which plays the role of a prelude, and a quick and broadly developed finale – with *Quartet No. 1* which was composed a quartet of a century before: the same transition from tranquil contemplation to an enthusiastic action. In the meantime, three middle parts forming a sort of a smaller cycle within a bigger one contribute a dramatic spirit, irony and a tragic element to the music of the quartet – a conflicting beginning which is nowhere to find in Shostakovich's first quartet.

A tender, caressing and slightly languid melody of the violin sets the mood of a small first part. A humorous and playful theme with a dancing touch started by the cello does not break a generally idyllic coloring and, as a soft contrast, only emphasizes fascinating and tender intonations of the main theme. Although unpretentious, these two patterns enclose important seeds of further development. Imperceptible links between the themes, peculiar steps ahead and returns to already familiar themes as it happens in a live conversation with its omissions,

repetitions, hint-taking and clarification of unclear play a big role in the music of the quartet which continuously streams as if it flows from one emotional state to another. Without a break or an apparent contrast, the first part flows into the second. But now the music is full of quiet mourning and supplication, hope and hopelessness. This part of the quartet opens with a reminiscing theme from Alban Berg's opera *Wozzeck* (*Marie's Lullaby*). It sounds in a reservedly passionate timbre of the viola responded by a lighter and more emotionally open recitative of the violin. Unexpectedly, there comes an impetuous and airy scherzo, the brightest and the most spectacular part of the cycle. With amazing ingenuity, some of the wittiest timber boons, brilliant staccato passages, shimmering flageolets, trills, some palpitating, shining, fantastic colors are scattered all over its middle section. Insensibly we find ourselves in a sphere of dimmed sounds of the second *Adagio* (fourth part) where three expressive complexes confront each other in a small space: "singing" of all instruments as humble as a prayer; searching, inquiring recitatives and exclamations of the soloing violin and viola (remember their duet in the first *Adagio*); and, finally, enigmatic and sharp chords of pizzicato divided by tense, "resonant" pauses. The collision of these contrasting elements leads to the concluding outburst of energy.

Two active themes lie at the foundation of the finale. A tempestuous blast of the waltz of the first and a little ironic dancing pulsation of the other are only kindred sides of a fascinating stream of life. *Quartet No. 9* was written during May 2–28, 1964. It was premiered in Moscow on November 20 of the same year.

The quartet was dedicated to Irina Antonovna Shostakovich, the composer's wife.

Quartet No.10 in A flat major, Op. 118

There are four movements in the Tenth Quartet, like in every classical cycle, but its content is marked by great originality. Its first movement, not loud, plays the role of introduction. Swinging between the light and shadow, this music is of inner instable character and emotional duality. Like a dramatic explosion invades the second movement – *Allegretto furioso*. It's a frenzied, savage dance, where one can hear the pain as well as indomitable force, destroying all on its way. The deepest contrast appears with the beginning of *Adagio*, which is built as a chain of melodious variations on an inspired, lyrical melody, played on a 'cello. The comparison of such far standing conditions leads to a very original finale. It begins from a theme of the polka or gallop character, but firstly it sounds undecidedly, of the halved force: it looks like it reflects the melancholic light of all, what was still endured. Really, the long development of the finale is broken not once by the intonations and images of previous movements, and the shadow lied down on cheerful rhythmic outline of the main subject. Only at the very end, in the code, the subject of the first movement and of the finale is combining in the transparent, shiny counterpoint.

The Tenth Quartet is dedicated to Moisey Vainberg (1919–1996), whose music was extremely admired by Shostakovich: his opera "The Passenger" Shostakovich called "a work of genius". Vainberg dedicated him his Twelfth Symphony, and the Fourteenth Symphony is written in the memory of Shostakovich.

Quartet No.11 in F minor, Op. 122

The bitter lines one can read in the dedication of this work: "To the memory of Vasily Petrovich Shirinsky". V.P. Shirinsky was one of founders and till the end of his days an irreplaceable member of the Beethoven String quartet, where he played the second violin.

The Eleventh is one of the most chambers, intimate and lyrical quartets of Shostakovich. It is remarkable by its common character and emotional tonus, which is not loud, mutely sustained, and the way of ensemble writing – it is plain, simple and severe, sometimes seemed to be elementary, extremely laconic. Seven short movements of the quartet form a kind of suite, and not of sonata cycle. The music of the quartet is marked by the inner significance; the brief movements disturb, like the sustained speech in the memory of the friend.

The question-formed melody opens the first movement of the quartet – "Introduction". This expressive theme is played by only first violin, and it's the simple, unsophisticated way to give to listener an impression: there's no more second violin in quartet, the first is left alone... Here the material is contained, which later give the birth to the all subjects of the following movements. From the very short phrases of cello derives the theme of the light "Scherzo". There's no other one by Shostakovich: on this simple, deliberately plain theme the fugue is built. The harsh exclamations of the "Recitative" interrupt the "Scherzo". The dramatic images of pain and protest impact in music. The sharp contrast is shaped by the rushing motion of the violin (and later of the cello), which combines

the energy, jerkiness and automaticity of an exercise with the epic, exultant phrases of other instruments, where one can hear the echoes of ritual chants. The grotesque and fractured "Humoresque" allowed the traditional pieces of the same title in listener's memory. It's really full of humour, but of frightened and prickled. Maybe, it's a clock? (Shostakovich loved the clock with chimes or cuckoo). But it's a broken clock, precisely the mad, frenzied one. The cuckoo cries unceasing; and senseless bites the pendulum, the gears are turning and turning; it can firstly evoke the smile, but later the horrible feeling of the "broken time" captivate us. The sad sounds of "Elegy" are close to a funeral march. In the "Conclusion" the circle of narration brought up, the last pages of the quartet is filled by the elevated sorrow and appeasement.

Quartet No.12 in D flat major, Op. 133

The single two-movement composition among all of Shostakovich's quartets surpasses by its duration some of his multi-parted symphonies. In this drawled, generous diptych composer returns to an idea, which attract him ever in 1930s (First Quartet, Sixth Symphony). The plot of its conception is, strictly saying, not in the number of movements, but in the comparison of the slow and quietly enough motion with fast one. It symbolizes – in the most common sense – the passage from consideration to an action, or the withdrawing of the controversial conditions and the following confirmation of energy and activeness as an amount.

Firstly this idea have found its extremely clear incarnation ever in Two pieces for String Octet, – "Prelude" and "Scherzo"

(placed here on this CD set). Two movements of the Twelfth Quartet also can be considered as "Prelude" and "Scherzo", but, being compared with early works, it discover a lot in itself, and in the late Shostakovich as whole. The minutes of consideration are lacked by former nonchalance, quietness and sunshine. The color became muted and dull. The active motion is filled here not by a joy and not by a cheerful fit – it's unquiet and convulsive. But it's only the first impression. The silent, self-concentrated rest and nervous, energetic motion are not simply neighbored as two main conditions of both of movements. In the development of the second one, in the very middle of it they are bumping, interconnecting and changing each other. The meditation became active and passionate; the dim pulsation of scherzoso rhythms fills by the joyful, major shine and posses the airy lightness. Not the confirmation of one at the expense of other, but the transforming of meanings is appeared here.

The Twelfth Quartet – other "quartet-symphony" – alludes immediately to some monumental Shostakovich' symphony works of 60's and 70's. Its moderate, epic beginning we can directly compare with initial pages of Second Violin Concerto, written one year before in the key of same pitch (C sharp). The dramatic dialogue between soloing cello and funeral chords of other foretells the analogical episode from the "farewell" Fifteenth Symphony.

Shostakovich works at this score in Repino, where it has been completed in 11th of March, 1968. The quartet is dedicated to Dmitry Tsyganov, who was tied, as Shostakovich said, "by the long years of the creative and personal friendship" with

composer. Premiere performance of the work took place at the Small Hall of Moscow Conservatoire in September 14th, 1968.

Quartet No.13 in B flat minor, Op. 138

This work is dedicated by Shostakovich to Vadim Vassilievich Borisovky (1900–1972), the outstanding musician, who performed viola part in the Beethoven String Quartet during more than four decades. This dedication reflects in the score of Thirteenth Quartet directly and immediately. Large and very expressive episodes of soloing viola form the sensual pivot of the composition. The dialogues of viola and other instruments, sometimes joining in one ensemble, which is controversial to the soloist, are the determinate features of this work. The one-movement composition of the quartet uses the concentric principle. There's large agile part in its centre, and the slow episodes in the beginning and the end. When Shostakovich presented his new quartet to his colleagues, he said, that its music is of mixed elegiac and joking character. But it's neither more romance lyric of the Second quartet, nor the sun-shining humor of Scherzo from Piano Quintet. Behind the elegiac restraint one can hear the endless, insurmountable sorrow, and scherzosity surprises us with its unusual, feverish tense.

The quartet opens with viola's monologue. When the other parts join in, and, being interlaced between each other, are flowing in the drawled, smooth sounding, one can imagine the sorrowful song. The psalmodic recitation, remaining us the church ancient chants, changes it. All it miraculous, languish slow part is deeply filled by the intonations of Old Russian origin. In its moderated, nearly epical movement one could be surprised by the changes of

the emotional degrees, which achieve the dramatic heat on the edge of despair, and suddenly returns to the deeply static character, to the full immerse in itself, nearly growing numb.

In the middle section appear the short, attentive phrases of the violin on the fond of morosely "singing" basses. At first these attempts to change the theme of conversation are left unsuccessful. The long, drawled bass lines remain as they are, but the accentuated chatting soon is started. Here the viola also presents itself as a main person, nevertheless, the other parts are personified with surprising wit. Shostakovich created a picture of argument, where the joke, irritation, laugh and protesting exclamations take place, combining the different playing manners – pizzicato, trills, comparing of the far placed pitches, and the strokes of the bow along the instrument's body. The quartet ends with the recapitulation of previous material of the very beginning. More volume is given to the unison phrases, more languish presents here the flow of the musical mind, and more grief we hear in viola's monologue. But close to the end the transfiguration come. The duet of 'cello and viola reminds us the closing Adagio from Viola Sonata. The soloing viola sounds more and more high, reaching at last the peak "behind the clouds", and the music breaks up on the last crescendo tone.

The Thirteenth Quartet was completed in August, 1970 and premiered in December, 13th of the same year in Leningrad, and in December, 20th in Moscow.

Quartet No.14 in F sharp major, Op. 142

If the Thirteenth Quartet can be called "the quartet with soloing viola", we can largely determine the next one like "the

quartet with the soloing 'cello". Shostakovich dedicated it to Sergey Petrovich Shirinsky (1903–1974), the cellist of the Beethoven Quartet. Underlining his dedication, Shostakovich placed in the final of the quartet a quotation from the last act of "Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk" – Katherine's phrase on the words "Seryozha! My dear!" (Seriozha! Khoroshiy moy!).

The Fourteenth quartet is a strict three-movement composition, where the second movement forms the emotional center. Repeating of both themes from this Adagio in the end of the work attaches to the finale an importance of amount of the whole quartet. In spite of outer modesty, laconic structures and clearness of the musical web, the quartet is marked by the plenitude of the images, by the multidimensional and deep minds, what is usual for later Shostakovich's works. The first movement begins with the nonchalant 'cello theme in the character of exercise: that's the way, now the 'cellists like to train himself before performance. Only gradually, during all this movement, the inner resources of the theme open itself: it's genre-like, danceable, rhythmic and cheerful, humorous, instable... The 'cello tune is kept by other instruments, and the development led us to the expressive second theme, also performed firstly by 'cello alone. This theme sounds like virtuoso cadenza, or improvisation, and then – by the first violin – it acquires the more innermost and elusive, flexible and lyrical character. The interaction of both of images in the end of the movement become a form of charming episode, where the bending lyrical lines are growing more clear and sharp, and the material of the main theme acquires, vice versa, the smooth and fluent contours.

Second movement represents the inspired duet for violin and 'cello. The atmosphere of the final, transfigured and elevated, is only a little shaded by the scherzo-like character of a little middle part. The closing pages of the quartet represent the charming song of strings, which tells us about the bliss of one's soul, the silence and reconciliation. There's no other one among the late Shostakovich's works, where such feelings of pure and silent joy, quietness and love could be presented in the same measure.

The Fourteenth Quartet was completed in April, 23rd, 1973, first time performed in Leningrad in November, 12th of the same year, and in Moscow in November, 14th. In 1974 the quartet was marked by the State Glinka Award.

Quartet No.15 in E flat minor, Op. 144

For his last quartet Shostakovich chooses the key, which is painted in his work in the grave, inconsolable mourned tones. The meditations about mortal and immortality, about sense of human existence, about destination of an artist and eternity of spiritual values, contain the plot of the most of his latest vocal and instrumental works, – as the vocal cycles on Tsvetayeva and Michelangelo words, the 14th and 15th Symphonies, as well as Viola Sonata; here these meditation have found its brand new, absolutely unrepeatable incarnation.

The dramaturgy of this quartet is unique. It consists of six very slow parts, six silent Adagio of the same key. In spite of such apparent monotony, the music of the quartet possesses its own the captivating, hypnotic force, being percept on one breath, with assiduous tense of hearing and soul. Recalling a

long list of previous Shostakovich's works, the Fifteenth quartet with its shape itself, being presented as a pattern of genre-like pieces – "Elegy", "Serenade", "Intermezzo", "Nocturne", "Funeral march", "Epilogue" – as well as by their titles, returns us to the very first chamber work, "The Aphorisms" for piano, Op. 13, where we also can find the "Serenade", "Nocturne", "Elegy" and "Funeral march", and make us compel to comprehend the whole path of composer, the whole micro- and macrocosm of his creations.

The sounding of string quartet in this last chamber score of Shostakovich is transparent, nearly archaic and at the same time refined and sophisticated. The "musical speech" is ascetic, the colors are sustained. But then instead, each tone is important and significant, each detail impresses and fixes in one's senses in its own, peculiar way.

The severe shadow and elusive light are compared in the "Elegy": the concentrated chant, close to the old Russian liturgy (the first theme) and the melody, which is swiftly modulating along the tones of the triad, and reminding us, nearly strictly, the theme of the Fugue in A major from Op. 87, – but, like Shostakovich used to do in such reminiscences, it is exposed in a very slow motion.

In the centre of the "Serenade" we are captivate by the plastic waltz melody, first played by violin, and then by 'cello. One more short-living vision presents "Intermezzo", built as a virtuoso cadenza of the first violin: here are the reflections of Shostakovich's own violin works, and allusion to a Bach's "Chaconne"... The innermost lyrical feeling is opened in the endless flowing melody of "Nocturne"; its elevated and idyl-

lic atmosphere is disturbed – quite like by Chopin! – with the rhythm of the “Funeral march”. The themes and intonations of previous movements are changing and layering each other, dying away, combining and disappearing in the vibrant trills – in the mysteriously quivering, gleaming, toneless noise of the universe...

The Fifteenth quartet was completed in May 17th, 1974. It is performed for the first time in Leningrad Composers' House in October, 25th, and in November, 15th – in the Small Hall of Leningrad Philharmonics, being performed by The Taneyev String Quartet. The Moscow premiere took place in January, 11th, 1975 by the Beethoven String Quartet.

Quintet for Piano, Two Violins, Viola and Cello in G minor, Op. 57

The first performance of the Quintet in November, 23rd, 1940 made a great impact to the listeners, who were that night at the Small Hall of the Moscow Conservatoire, where Shostakovich himself at the piano, and the Beethoven String Quartet have premiered this work. The voice of the artist, who is free from the pathetic routine and official optimism, as well as from psychological wretch and tragic inner bifurcation, was (been) heard by his contemporaries – in the elevated and majestic “Prelude” as in the songful and witty “Fugue”, in the brilliant humor of “Scherzo” as in the elegiac and worried “Intermezzo”, and in the Schubertian, shiny “Final”. In the lightered Coda, which crowns the Quintet, is incarnated (embodied) the dream of simple human joy, of harmony between the personality and

circumstances, – a dream of all human beings, who lived in the tempest atmosphere of the end of 1930-s.

The Borodin String Quartet is by rights considered to be one of the best contemporary ensembles. Having developed an extremely varied and diverse system of performing means and devices, the Borodin Quartet can tackle any kind of music. The ensemble's repertoire is vast, embracing all the major works of the quartet literature. Classical music, naturally, occupies the central place: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schuman, Debussy, Ravel, Borodin, Tchaikovsky... However, it is works by the 20th-century composers that played a major role in the development of the ensemble as an artistic entity. The Borodin musicians premiered many works by Western authors in this country; many composers – V. Shebalin, L. Knipper, Yu. Levitin, M. Vainberg, An. Alexandrov, A. Schnittke, R. Ledenev and others – dedicated to them their quartets. In the ensemble's programs are works by Prokofiev and Myaskovsky, Bartók and Webern, Hindemith and Stravinsky.

Cooperation with Shostakovich – composer, pianist and a good friend – occupies a special place in the quartet's history. The Quartet performs not only all of his quartets but also the Octet, Trio, Quintet and a number of recently found works which were previously unknown. During their work at these compositions the musicians used the advice and guidance of the author. From 1947 they frequently performed together with Shostakovich the Piano Quintet until that memorable concert in Gorky (now Nizhni Novgorod) in 1964 which was to become the composer's last public appearance as a pianist.