



Old Tallinn, today

The capital city of Estonia is replete with reminders of latter-day episodes in its troubled history; stark, grey, imposing Soviet edifices clash with the anonymous architecture of post-independence enterprise; the stucco-clad elegance of the opera and concert halls overshadow the cowering wooden structured dwellings of the 19th century they postdate. Old Tallinn, a must for Baltic history hunters, lies smugly aside and aloof within its protective walls that now house elegant restaurants and surreptitious souvenir shops.

Music has inevitably played a significant part in Estonia's cultural history, neighbouring Russia exercising its considerable influence, St Petersburg itself being a mere 400 kilometres away.

Whilst the name of Roman Matsov may be familiar to the majority of Estonia's 21st century intelligentsia, it is unlikely to cause even a ripple in the waters of Western musicological consciousness. However this status quo has evolved quite recently with the appearance of headlines such as:

'Saving Shostakovich'

'Shostakovich Treasure Trove Seeks a New Home'

'Gulag Collection – Rare music that was scorched by the Stalinist era is in need of cultural asylum'.

Estonian Roman Matsov was born in 1917, had early ambitions as a soloist but ultimately became a renowned conductor, notably of the Estonian Radio Symphony Orchestra. A virulent supporter of Shostakovich's music, he ensured first performances outside Moscow and Leningrad of many of Shostakovich's works, additionally arranging to have 'safety' recordings of these performances preserved in the face of ideological and economical reasons for their removal or destruction.



Oil painting of Roman Matsov

He also befriended pianist Yudina, heavily indicted by the Soviet authorities for her overt criticism of the Stalinist regime and her support of various persecuted artists under it. These stances led to Matsov being blacklisted by Soviet authorities; his available recordings were limited to concert performances only and opportunities to travel abroad were disallowed.

Back in post-Soviet Estonia, and those worldwide headlines. Recently members of the *DSCH Journal* and the UK Shostakovich Society visited the campaigner behind the headlines, Roman Matsov's son, Mark.



Mark Matsov, 2005

Although his professional and family life is now in Moscow, this apartment remains his spiritual home, as his constant and passionate references to past times here demonstrated. But times are hard – rents in flourishing Tallinn are soaring and Mark fears that the upkeep on the flat will exceed his family's means. Hence the appeals.

But what exactly is preserved here, beyond cherished memories of round-the-table discussions involving his father, Yudina, Shostakovich, Oistrakh, Richter and other musical icons of previous generations?

Scores, many of them, contain Roman Matsov's notes to performances of his core repertoire, the focal point inevitably being that of Shostakovich. Aside technical annotations, surprisingly frank comments are occasionally to be found in the columns or between the bar lines of scores, are scribbled on slips of paper tucked away within the score or, in certain cases, hidden away

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Roman Matsov, Yudina and Shostakovich; a project in peril

in unsuspected hideaways such as standard Russian literature, in everyday ledgers, diaries and so on. We noted one such set of remarks, in a score of the Ninth Symphony clearly used by Matsov for his initial performances of the work in Tallinn, and (according to son Mark) resulting directly from discussions with the composer:

*Humiliated in the blood of the Evil
Bolshevik Empire...*

*It is in no way trouble-free,
because Shostakovich describes
here the era in which we live...*

*Distant, worried, even fierce,
grinding teeth for those humiliated
and martyred*

Clearly other scores should be examined and guidelines, in some cases possibly relayed directly from composer to conductor, extracted for study.

Many of the books and scores that line the shelves are dedicated to Matsov in Shostakovich's handwriting. Many letters from Shostakovich to Matsov Snr. have survived, although the originals are being held elsewhere for safe keeping, copies of varying quality being kept here. Some of the aforementioned off-air recordings are stored in boxes under a grand piano and will require urgent action before the fragile tapes' condition begins to deteriorate. Matsov Jnr. has himself begun the awesome task of collecting, digitalising and annotating the myriad sources, but this is clearly a disproportionate task for one man.

Weight has been added to the campaign with the intervention, among



A section of the Matsov Archive in Tallinn

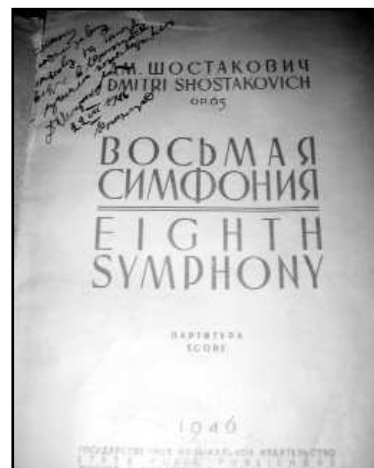
others, of Yevgeny Pasternak, son of the Nobel prize-winner Boris Pasternak and author of his father's biography. In an 'Open Letter' published in October 2004 he calls for the creation of a "Unique museum known as *Museum of Banned Music of the Twentieth Century*". The letter ends with the plea, with specific references to the Matsov crisis: "Given the suffering involved in attaining freedom, it would be a crime against humanity to permit thousands of treasures of the worlds of music, culture and history to fall into oblivion."

Mark Matsov's own inventory would have the Museum containing 50,000 items at the outset including 4,500 scores, 1,500 unpublished records and tapes, 15,000 documents such as letters, photographs, posters, diaries and so on.

Estimates of funds required are (i) \$20,000 in annual rent to maintain the Matsov apartment intact and in good condition (ii) \$5,000 per annum to run a Foundation of the 'International Fund of Artistic Liberty and the Freedom of Music' (iii) \$20,000 to restore and transfer to digital supports the 3000 hours of sound recordings and 1000 hours of video recordings held currently in storage (iv) \$40,000

per annum in archivists' salaries and (v) to set up a dedicated multimedia web site entitled 'The Liberation of Music' - \$55,000 one-off plus \$4,000 annual costs.

Certain benefactors have already come forward with contributions but as we go to print no definitive solution is in view. The *Journal* will follow this story in future editions; for further information please contact Lewis Owens, President of the UK Shostakovich Society (see page 27).



Inscription by Shostakovich to Roman Matsov, 1946

