

HN: Tell us about your recording of the two piano version of the 4th Symphony; how did that come about?

CS: This symphony was the first work by Shostakovich I got to know - from library records as a student. More recently Shostakovich's own two-piano version of the piece was published and Lewis Owens of the Shostakovich Society suggested a public premiere at a Fitzwilliam College Music Society concert in Cambridge in May 2006.

As always with transcriptions of this sort, I was very curious to know whether it would work musically; it is something of an act of faith. The piano is not good at some orchestral sound, for instance, long sustained string figures. There are a few moments in the transcription which don't work brilliantly but what *does* is the counterpoint; the transcription brings out the lines with clarity.

HN: What are your other current plans?

CS: In 2007 I am planning to get back to finishing my Beethoven sonata cycle, although I am not in a rush to record them. However I am keen to record op. 87.

The world probably has enough Beethoven sonatas on record but you cannot say that of Shostakovich. I have an upcoming tour of Japan - concerts and masterclasses - and a concert in Kuwait.



Andrew Paul Jackson

## DOCUMENTARY I

### The Meaning *is* the Music: A Brief Analysis of Dmitri Shostakovich's Opus 87

#### I - An Archaic Form and a Crystalline Tonal Style

In 1950, Dmitri Shostakovich was sent, along with other fellow Soviet musicians and composers, to then East Germany to take part in the bicentennial festivities honouring the great monolith of early German music, Johann Sebastian Bach. Shostakovich performed some of his own works along with a performance of Bach's Concerto for Three Harpsichords, and attended numerous public performances from Bach's musical catalogue.[1] One of the works Shostakovich was most taken with was Bach's double set of 48 preludes and fugues, *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier*. Shostakovich was so inspired that shortly after his return, in autumn of that same year; he began work on his own set of 24 preludes and fugues. The work was finished five months later.[2] Like *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier*, Shostakovich's set of 24 preludes and fugues explore the colourings and expressiveness possible through the use of all twelve chromatic pitches in their most familiar diatonic guises, major and minor. Shostakovich's set is akin more to the first book of *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier*, in that it was conceived by the composer as a single structure, with a musical arc and style that unify the work, unlike Bach's second book which comprises previously written material. Similarities aside, however, why write a set of preludes and fugues in all 24 tonal centres more than 200 years after Bach? When Bach wrote *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier*, the system of well-temperament was quite new, thus allowing Bach to demonstrate how composers could utilise all tonal centres and modulate freely from one to another, while ensuring the best sounding possible in all 24 keys.[3] But why after Arnold Schoenberg's "emancipation of dissonance," roughly 30 years prior to Shostakovich's opus 87, could such a cycle be necessary?

Speculation notwithstanding, Shostakovich left only one definitive argument - his music.

This analysis will focus exclusively on the succession of pitches and their corresponding durations contained within the given work. It will focus on six movements from the work, three preludes and three fugues respectively. The analysis will point towards proving a purely musical thesis: that Shostakovich's opus 87 displays a harmonic and compositional palette which progresses from a simple, yet extended, tonal vocabulary, climaxing in a densely chromatic style, and subsiding into an extended tonal vocabulary, reminiscent of the first, but more robustly romantic in style. Thus musically, these movements represent a conglomeration and consolidation of various compositional styles to forge one whole, filled with true musical drama and artistry.

Before beginning the initial analysis, I would like to discuss the analytical framework that will be employed in the articles to follow. The analysis of the preludes to follow will begin simply by outlining the prelude at its macro level, that is to say that the analysis will focus on the largest compositional structures possible that shape the form. Starting from this point and working down, through phrase analysis, harmonic analysis, and the like, the analysis will reach the micro level of the prelude, detailing





its motivic content and any variations employed from therein. This analysis may be more or less complex depending upon the prelude itself.

Analysis of the fugues to follow will be similar in its approach of working from the macro to micro level, but will differ to the extent that a fugue has a definitive form, or more precisely a definitive procedure. So it is necessary to define what this procedure is before going any further. Fugal procedure first and foremost begins with a theme, or subject, that is then subjected to imitative counterpoint, utilising the same theme, with possible variations, to differing tonal centres. Though

there is no definitive form, stereotypically a fugue can be divided into three sections as defined in the following by Kent Kennan:

1. an “exposition,” in which the subject is announced in imitative fashion according to a traditional pattern;
2. a freer portion, sometimes called a “development section,” which generally avoids the tonic key;
3. some reference to the subject, in the tonic key, near the end. This may be anything from a portion of the subject to a series of complete and emphatic statements, a fully-fledged “recapitulation.”[4]

This definition of the stereotypical structural events that occur in a fugue, provided by Kent Kennan, is quite detailed. There is only one aspect, however, that I will clarify. Under the first definition of structure in the “exposition” is the phrase “in imitative fashion according to a traditional pattern.” This term “traditional pattern” does leave some explanation desired, so here it is. A fugal exposition “traditionally” opens with a statement of the subject in the tonic key which is then answered by the subject transposed to the dominant, a fifth above the initial statement, followed by some episodic material, generally derived from a fragment of the subject but not always, leading to a restatement of the subject at its initial tonic degree. Using these assumptions of what a fugal procedure should look like, ternary structure and all, it can then be assessed when Shostakovich is innovating or simply following procedure, when he is being strictly studious or letting his want for musical expressivity negate traditional procedure, essential to answering the aforementioned musical thesis.

The first movement of the work to be analysed is, logically, the first prelude in C major. The prelude is comprised of 67 bars in 3/4 time and bears the tempo marking *moderato*. The music proceeds primarily in a chorale style, with all voices sounding at the same rhythmic demarcation, barring a few exceptions where the highest voice moves slightly independently of the other voices by way of unaccompanied arpeggios or other similar devices. The basic structure of the prelude reflects that of a *ritornello*, similar to a rondo form, in which the main musical section or material, referred to from here on as A, returns throughout the movement with sections of material commonly referred to as episodes in between the A material. Following the beginning A portion and the interior A, there are two separate episodic sections, which although they certainly bear a resemblance, still differ enough to be treated as independent sections. These sections will be referred to as B and C respectively. Following the C section of music the A material returns and functions as the closing of the prelude, yielding the basic structural format of ABACA.

Next, the dimensions and structures of these musical sections. The opening A section is 14 bars long, comprised of two distinct phrases, the first lasting eight bars and the second lasting six. Both of these phrases are constructed utilising only two-bar subphrases. The following B section is 20 bars long. It begins with a four-bar transitional section, followed by three consecutive four-bar phrases that are then closed by a four-bar section that functions as both closing for the B section and retransition to the first reprise of the A section. The A section then returns, with its same metric dimensions, 14 bars (8+6) comprised of the same metric couplets as before, with a re-harmonisation of the second phrase. The C section is 12 bars long and immediately succeeds the central A section. It is comprised of three phrases; a five-bar phrase, a four-bar phrase, closed out by a three-bar retransition to the A material. The final section, which is also the final reprise of the A section material, is seven bars long. This seven-bar section is constructed of two distinct phrases similar to the previous A sections but drastically shorter. The first phrase is only four bars long and the second phrase, of course, three bars. The first phrase is, like the previous A sections, constructed of two-bar subphrases. The second phrase, however, contains two subphrases that reprise a transformation of material from the C. The first and second subphrases are nearly identical, barring the fact that the second merely resolves to the cadential tonic triad adding a single bar to its length.

The harmonic language of the prelude is verily unambiguous; grounded firmly with a tonic of C, though it draws on both a major and minor tonic and its associated diatonic triads throughout the prelude. There is only one harmonic shift worth noting in the movement, at the end of bar 13. At this point there is a harmonic shift down a whole step to B-flat major. This new tonic only holds its ground for five bars, at which point the music returns to its rightful tonic of C major in bar 18.

Even though C is the prevailing tonic of the prelude, it is worth noting that the piece is filled with secondary dominants (V), supertonic (ii/ii<sup>o</sup>), subtonics (vii<sup>o</sup>) and the like, all borrowed from an array of common triads of C major and minor, including the dominant (fifth scale degree), subdominant (fourth degree), submedian (sixth degree), and the supertonic (second degree). Despite these colourful additions to extend the harmonic vocabulary of the prelude, exempting the harmonic shift in bar 13, it is unwaveringly in some kind of C, never yielding to another tonic.



Next, the micro level of the prelude, its motivic construction. When the chorale style that pervades the prelude is active, it is glaringly apparent that there is a rhythmic motive at play here. There is a distinct two-bar rhythmic pattern that comprises the chorale style, which will be referred to as the principal rhythmic motive, as follows:



This motive without variation of any sort occurs 22 times in the prelude. It occurs seven times in both the first and second A sections, for a total of 14 times. It occurs twice in the closing A section. But more impressive are the other eight times it permeates the B and C sections in an independent voice, almost losing its function of the rhythm that unifies all of the sounding voices, moving to a position of either melodic or harmonic function, except at bar 27, where it does bring back its chorale function at the end of the B section: this being a two-bar motive, it occupies the metric space of 44 bars. In the context of a work that is only 67 bars long, the principal rhythmic motive takes up 66% of the metric space allotted.

This use of a rhythmic motive is already impressive enough for the way in which it helps to unify the prelude; but there are more ways that a composer can utilise a motive than just simply repeating it verbatim. A composer can vary the motive using methods such as augmentation, diminution, deletion, fragmentation, inversion, retrograde, retrograde inversion, etc. Shostakovich was well acquainted with these forms of motivic variation and this prelude, no matter how strikingly simple it may appear, is an example of their use. Shostakovich derives three rhythmic variants from the aforementioned principal motive. The first motivic variant employs deletion:



Shostakovich merely leaves out the first note of the principal motive, or in other cases, as the first time this variant appears (bar 19), has a note from a previous bar tied over so that the first beat can not be sounded. This variant occurs four times, twice in the B section (bars 19-20 and 21-22) and twice in the C section (bars 54-55 and 56-57). The second motivic variant is derived from the principal rhythmic motive by fragmentation:



This variant, which occurs first in bar 33 with the downbeat in the left hand and the rest of the variant conversely in right, is first employed as a transitional gesture from the closing of the B section to the interior A section. It occurs in this context twice (bars 33 and 34). The variant still returns three more times after this, however: once in the C section (bar 53), and in the closing section in the two penultimate bars, which are identical harmonically and melodically (bars 65 and 66). The third variant utilises retrograde:



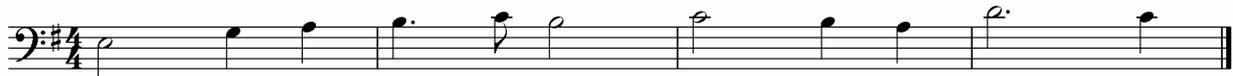
Shostakovich created this variant by merely reversing the last bar of the principal motive, or in retrograde. This motive occurs only once (bars 51-52), which is in the C section of the prelude.



The variants altogether take up 15 bars, around a tenth of the prelude. Combine that with the bars containing the principal rhythmic motive and we find that only an eighth of the prelude (eight bars) is free from the influence of the principal rhythmic motive and its subsequent variants. This level of motivic integration demonstrates just how closely unified the prelude is as a whole. This intense use of a single motive and its variants creates a base that lends the larger structures a continuity that ensures an ebb and flow that give the prelude an overall sense of ease and beauty.

Since these articles will endeavour to prove the musical thesis that the entire set of preludes and fugues creates a musical arch, the first fugue to be analysed occurs in the first third of the set of 24 preludes and fugues, like the first prelude that was just analysed. The fugue is number four in E minor: 128 bars long and in 4/4 time, it begins with an *adagio* tempo marking progressing to *più mosso* at bar 47. This fugue, like the accompanying prelude in C in this analysis, is harmonically simple, invoking in its statements of the subject a natural minor tonal vocabulary. The fugue exhibits the stereotypical elements of fugal procedure; there are clear exposition, development, and recapitulation sections, better expressed in terms of ABA. But in the development section, at the tempo change into *più mosso* (bar 47), we hear an extended episodic section. After further listening, it becomes clear that this episodic section is actually another fugue with a new subject, in B minor. This new subject also exhibits the formal structure expected: exposition, development, and recapitulation, also expressed as aba. This second fugue lends the large structural framework a new level of complexity; alphabetically expressed as ABabAa, with the primary and secondary fugue overlapping one another.

Before we examine more closely the structural elements of this fugue it is important to discuss the subjects. The primary subject that begins the fugue is as follows:



The subject is of a standard 4-bar length, and is firmly grounded in E natural minor; this harmonic implication will be discussed in greater detail later. The secondary subject, which occurs in the development section of the primary fugue, is as follows:



This secondary subject, like its counterpart, exhibits a standard 4-bar length, but is firmly grounded in the tonality of B natural minor. In contrast, the two subjects differ in their rhythmic motion, the second obviously more rhythmically active. But, to return to their similarities, both subjects exhibit the same melodic range, both spanning only a minor 7th.

The exposition of the primary fugue begins with a statement of the primary fugue at its tonic level of E minor (as it appears in the above musical example). The subject's initial statement is then answered by a statement of the subject transposed to the level of the dominant, B minor, in accordance with the pre-described "traditional pattern". After this restatement of the subject at the dominant level, also referred to as "the answer", there is an episodic section, two bars in length, derived from material from the subject's final bar and the accompaniment from the answer's final bar. Following this episode section is the expected return of the subject at its tonic level, back in E minor. Traditionally this would be the end of the exposition and we could expect some episodic material leading us to the development section, but that is not what happens. Without missing a single beat, Shostakovich gives his final statement of the subject at the end of the exposition an answer, once again at the dominant level, accompanied in identical fashion in the bass voice, barring the addition of the accumulated voices that occurred during the episode and second statement of the subject at its tonic level. This addition is wholly unexpected, but unmistakable. It is, without a doubt, an answer. Thus Shostakovich negates the "traditional pattern" expected of a fugal exposition. He upholds the pattern until what we would expect to be the end, as a kind of musical punch line.

The development section then ensues, after the unexpected second answer, with a two-bar episode modulating to prepare a statement of the subject in the key of the relative major, G major (the mediant or III in terms of the fugue's overall tonic E minor). This statement of the subject is then immediately followed by an answer in D major, the dominant of G (V/III).

Episodic material returns shifting to a statement of the subject in C major (VI), which is then immediately followed by an answer of the subject in F major (flat II). This answer is then rounded out by an episode which leads into the first statement of the secondary subject, at the *più mosso*, at its tonic level, B minor (i). This statement is then followed by the “traditional” pattern with an answer at the dominant level, F# minor (v), followed by an episode and restatement of the subject at its tonic level. But, like the exposition of the primary subject, there is a second answer at the dominant tacked to the end of what traditionally should be the final statement of the subject, in terms of the exposition. After this second answer comes an episodic section leading to the development section of the secondary subject, still within the structural boundaries of the primary subject’s development section. The statements of the subject that follow, leading to the recapitulation of the primary subject, consist of presentations of the subject at the level of D minor (iii), A minor (v/iii), C major (flat II), and G minor (vi), appearing in the same order as they are listed here.



Immediately following the episode after the statement of the secondary subject in G minor, the primary subject returns for its recapitulation (bar 88). The primary subject returns at its tonic of E minor, followed by the expected answer at the level of the dominant, B minor. Despite the return of the primary subject for its recapitulation, the secondary subject continues its development alongside the primary subject, transcending the fugue to the level of a double fugue. The statements of the secondary subject that occur along with the subject and answer statements of the primary subject occur at the level of E minor (iv in terms of the secondary subject’s tonal centre); a fragment, or partial statement, at the level of B minor (i) and a stretto (the technique by which a subject is stated before the previous subject has had time to finish) of the secondary subject in D major (III). After these dual statements of subjects and accompanying answers, there is a long episodic section for the primary subject, at which point the secondary subject has a series of two fragmented statements voiced at the tonal levels of C major (flat II) leading to the secondary subject’s recapitulation.

The recapitulation of the secondary subject opens with a veritable whirlwind of fragmented statements of the secondary subject in strettii, first in B minor (i), against two fragments in D major (III) in two separate voices, rounded out by a fragment in F major (flat II/iv), all occurring within the space of two bars. This is then followed by a two-bar episode that ushers in the return of the primary and secondary subjects running parallel with one another (bar 107), both subjects being stated in A minor (iv for the primary subject and v/iii for the secondary subject) with an accompanying stretto fragment of the secondary subject in G major (VI) as well. The subjects are then answered in the same parallel form, this time in E minor (i for the primary subject and iv for the secondary subject). These statements are followed a bar later by a double stretto of both subjects in C major (VI and flat II for either subject, respectively). There is then an episodic section leading to a singular statement of the primary subject at its dominant level, B minor (v). Following this, there are three fragmented statements of the secondary subject in stretto with one another, first in D major (III), then in F# locrian (ii/iv), and closed in D major (III). After this stretto section, comes the final statement of the subjects, a fragment of the secondary subject in E minor (iv) leading right up to the penultimate bar which prepares the Picardy third cadence that closes the entire fugue.

It is essential to discuss the tonal statements of the subjects in the detailing of the fugue’s structure, for the very basis of fugal procedure and structure rests on its tonal variation. Due to the polyphonic nature of fugue, harmony arises only from the implications of the melodic line or from the vertical interaction of the voices sounding at a single time, rarely resembling the type of analysis already undertaken with the prelude in this article. Hence it is more beneficial to discuss the interaction between the varying tonal centres of the subjects’ statements as they themselves comprise a harmonic rhythm. The harmonic rhythm of the two fugue subjects is remarkably identical, barring the fact that they exist in two differing tonal centres. Besides the fact that the harmonic progression of each subject’s exposition is identical (i-v-i-v); the tonal variations of both subjects’ development sections are almost identical. The primary subject’s developmental harmonic progression proceeds; III-V/III-VI-flat II, and the secondary subject’s development proceeds in a similar manner; iii-v/iii-flat II-vi (the rest of the secondary subject’s development harmonic progression is ignored in this analysis, being clearly subordinate to the tonal centres of the primary subject alongside which it occurs). Despite the first two chords of each progression differing in terms of the implied tonic (being voiced as either a major or minor triad) and the fact the final two chords are presented in retrograde in comparison, the similarity of the harmonic progressions of both development sections is striking. In fact, almost every initial statement of both subjects, regardless of where it appears structurally, is accompanied by an answer at some form of dominant, or the inversion of the dominant, subdominant level. For instance, in the development chord progressions listed above, though the submediant triads are designated by the Roman numerals VI or vi, purely because they were chosen to best reflect their relation to the overall tonic of their subjects, they could just as easily be listed as V/flat II purely in terms of their tonic root’s relation to the chords that proceed or follow them.





In short, the harmonic language of the fugue, barring a few exceptions in terms of stretti and a single harmonic relation in the recapitulation, can be summed up as a musical exploration of the perfect fifth and its inversion. In this way, the harmonic language of the fugue is extremely simple, with its most complex harmonic progressions simply consisting of shifts to remote medians (from B minor to D minor etc).

Now let us discuss the micro level or the motivic structure of the subjects themselves. Since the very concept of fugal procedure hinges on the concept of imitative counterpoint, it should go without saying that the form at large stems from a single, or in this case, two musical ideas. So it is in fact that all of the music within the confines of the fugue is somehow derived from the subjects and their respective accompaniments. As was mentioned before, both subjects are in the diatonic guise of natural minor. This is significant in that they lack a leading tone, or a raised seventh scale degree, which is necessary to imply a major dominant triad, a problem usually rectified by utilising either the harmonic or melodic variants of the minor scale, which both contain a raised seventh scale degree. The seventh scale degree is ignored, however; it occurs in both subjects. It is, in fact, the melodic apex of both subjects, made so partially due to the fact that at its sounding (since it is a minor seventh in relation to the tonic) it does not require a resolution up to the tonic scale degree, as would normally be the case. Peculiar as this may be, it is precisely this use of natural minor that enables Shostakovich to employ the technique of stretto so effectively. Since the subject is in natural minor, a stretto at the median (third degree) still draws on the same collection of seven pitches. Both subjects also end on pitches that imply a weak cadence, in that they arrive at neither the tonic nor the dominant pitch of their respective tonal centres. The primary subject cadences on C, its submediant and the secondary subject ends on an E, the subdominant or fourth scale degree in regards to their respective tonics. This means that the necessary modulations expected of the fugue form are left to be fulfilled by the episodic sections or the accompaniment of the subjects. Nevertheless it is in effect these weak cadential endings that render the subjects so musically fruitful. They are subjects that demand continuation; they beg to be expanded upon. It is maybe for this inherent trait that the last four utterances of both of the subjects are only fragments of the secondary subject.

Conclusion: these two movements best exemplify Shostakovich's employment of a simple yet uniquely Shostakovichian tonal style. They present his balance of traditional forms melded with simple musical modifiers to create a musical aesthetic all his own. These movements create a musical expectation for the listener, which in the analyses to follow Shostakovich will shatter and remould, fulfilling the musical drama that is the ultimate effect of the whole work and thesis of this analysis.

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*In the next two editions of the DSCH Journal*

Article II - A Shift into a Densely Chromatic Style

Introduction; analysis of prelude #14 in E-flat minor; analysis of fugue #15 in D-flat major

Article III - A Return to an Extended Tonal Style and Summation

Introduction; analysis of prelude #21 in B-flat major; analysis of fugue #24 in D minor

## Endnotes

[1] Wilson, Elizabeth. *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered*. Princeton University Press, page 248.

[2] *Ibid*, page 249.

[3] Randel, Don Michael. *The Harvard Dictionary of Music 4th Edition*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, page 968.

[4] Kennan, Kent. *Counterpoint: Based on Eighteenth-Century Practice*. 4th Edition. Prentice Hall, Page 203.