

Symphony No. 13, Op. 113, “Babi Yar”

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

Program Notes by Jeffrey Baxter

English translation of Russian poetry by Sergey Samoilov

Composed: 1962. First performance: December 18, 1962, Moscow Conservatory; Kiril Kondrashin conducting. Performing forces: bass solo; unison male chorus; two flutes, piccolo, three oboes, English horn, three clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, three bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, two harps (or more, on a single part), piano, celesta, and strings. These are the first ASO performances.

Shostakovich’s fifteen symphonies may in time prove to be the twentieth century’s most valuable contribution to the genre, a form established two centuries earlier with Haydn. However, compared with his symphonic output, Shostakovich’s strictly choral works are scarce. Apart from the choral finales in his Second and Third Symphonies, and the several folk and revolutionary song arrangements in his film scores, there remains the 1948 oratorio, *The Song of the Forests* (Op. 81), the propagandistic cantata, *The Sun Shines Over Our Motherland* (Op. 90) and two settings of the poetry of Yevgeny Yevtushenko: the Symphony No. 13 (Op. 113) and the cantata, *The Execution of Stepan Razin* (Op. 119).

Shostakovich “found his voice” in the non-vocal (and in Stalinist times, less problematic) form of the symphony. The 1948 Soviet decree calling for “beauty and refinement in music . . . with explicitly political texts suitable for propaganda exploitation” caused the composition of Op. 81 and 90, but with the somewhat more liberal political climate of the 1960s, Shostakovich was willing to take a risk. He was inspired by the work of a young risk-taker, the poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko (born 1933).

Yevtushenko skyrocketed to fame with the 1961 publication of his *Babi Yar*, a poem decrying anti-Semitism in Russia. The title refers to a ravine near Kiev where thousands of Jews were murdered by Nazis occupying the area during the war. *Babi Yar* suggested that anti-Semitism was still very much a part of contemporary Russia. Yevtushenko’s patriotism was called into question just days after the poem’s publication. It appears that although the “Leader and Teacher” (Stalin) was dead, many of his best-trained students were alive and well.

Shostakovich could easily identify with this dedicated, talented young poet suffering the agonies of functioning under attack. Their collaborations proved artistically fruitful, but were not without their share of repercussions. Galina Vishnevskaya (noted Bolshoi soprano and close friend of Shostakovich) vividly describes in her autobiography the attempts of the Central Committee to sabotage the world premiere of the Thirteenth Symphony.

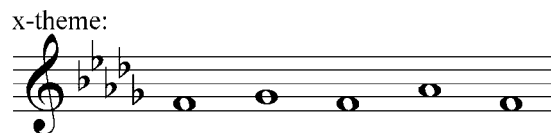
After the Symphony’s 1962 premiere, Yevtushenko was pressured to change eight lines in *Babi Yar* to include mention of those of other nationalities (Russians and Ukrainians) who were slaughtered with the Jews. These revisions, interestingly enough, were not demanded in 1961 after the poem’s initial publication, but after the collaboration with the elder composer — a testament to the explosive power of Shostakovich’s music.

Two other factors helped shape the creation of the Thirteenth Symphony: the belated world premieres of some of the composer’s neglected earlier works (namely, the song-cycle *From Jewish Folk Poetry*) and a renewed interest on the part of the composer in the vocal works of Modest Mussorgsky (resulting in influential re-orchestrations of *Boris Godunov*, *Khovanshchina* and *Songs and Dances of Death*).

The influence of the life and works of the 19th-century composer on Shostakovich cannot be over-emphasized. Indeed, if the Shostakovich *Memoirs* are forever to be contested, the chapter on Mussorgsky rings undeniably true. For Shostakovich, he was “an entire academy . . . of human relations, politics and art.”

Mussorgsky’s innovation of making “the people” the protagonists of *Boris Godunov* and *Khovanshchina* was carried over into Shostakovich’s creation of the Thirteen Symphony. Both composers expressed immense compassion and pity for, as the Idiot in *Boris* describes, the “Russian people, hungry people!”

Although the composer disclaimed any thematic relationships between the five poems that constitute the Symphony’s five movements, the musical unity he gave them certainly implies it. Employing three simple musical themes, he constructed many motivic “cross-references” that raise questions and suggest varied meanings not to be found in a mere reading of the separate poems. Writer Hugh Ottaway notes the existence of a musical motto (x-theme) that generates much of the material found in the symphony:



Shostakovich must have been attracted by the skillful use of this motto by Mussorgsky in Act I, scene ii of *Boris Godunov*.

The most obvious Mussorgskian influence, however, is in the symphony’s “Babi Yar” Leitmotiv theme:



which is closely akin to the theme used in Boris’s Act II aria, “Ah, I am suffocating.” Something of the weight of a guilty conscience (Boris’s) has been transferred from the opera to this Symphony.

The third theme (y-theme), which also has roots in *Boris*, occurs less frequently, but at a few significant moments:



The musical fabric of the whole work is generated from variation, transformation, segmentation and quotation of the x, y and “Babi Yar” Leitmotiv themes. The “Babi Yar” theme is almost never sung, but played, while the x-theme provides much of the vocal music.

I. Babij Yar (Babi Yar)

The form of this movement may be one of the most satisfying of the composer's constructions. Eschewing traditional sonata-allegro form, Shostakovich speaks with a straightforward musical utterance inspired by the poem's directness. His three-part musical structure delineates the poem's distinct, almost cinematic, timelines:

- A. Babi Yar (present time)
- B. Episodes in past-time (Egypt, Christ, Dreyfus, Byelostock)
- A. Babi Yar (present time)
- C. Episode in past-time (Anne Frank)
- A. Babi Yar (present time)

The "Babi Yar" theme is heard in the first measure, played by muted trumpets and horns in an *Adagio* tempo in B-flat minor. It is announced by an imposing, tolling bell — another significant Mussorgskian borrowing. Bells figure prominently in this Symphony and in *Boris Godunov*, especially in the scene in Pimen's cell. Shostakovich could well have been describing this Symphony when he described this scene in *Boris*: "When the bell tolls, it's a reminder that there are powers mightier than man, that you can't escape the judgement of history."

A change of tempo and key is effected to depict the grisly Byelostock pogrom episode. Woodwinds snarl an inverted form of the "Babi Yar" theme over a lively Jewish dance. (Shostakovich's ability to create such vivid crowd scenes indicates, again, his debt to Mussorgsky.)

The listener is brought back to Babi Yar by the composer's return to the opening B-flat-minor music. This time, the "Babi Yar" theme is played by muted strings and celesta.

Without warning (as in the poem), the scene changes to the Anne Frank episode. Anne is depicted by the bass solo, accompanied by celesta. The approaching enemy is characterized by low strings, bassoons and bass drum in an unrelenting march (built on the x-theme, and underpinned by a menacing pedal-point on B-natural). A dialogue ensues between the two characters, the orchestra being the textless enemy "breaking down the door." The enemy, of course, succeeds and carries out the "Great Plan" to some of the most gruesome music ever composed: It consists of a variation of the opening bass-line in parallel seconds over the x-theme. It builds to the emotional and structural climax of the movement — a return to the opening B-flat-minor music played *fortissimo* with flourishes in the upper strings and woodwinds. As this music winds down, the y-theme is heard in the lower strings and brass, followed by the x-theme in the trumpets and horns.

A short coda brings the movement to a chilling, dramatic close. It is here that the eight lines of Yevtushenko's State-required revisions occurred (most contemporary performances dispense with these revisions). They are considerably weaker, but do not diminish the overall impact of the poem.

*Nad Bab'im Yarom pamyatnikov net.
Krutoj obryv, kak gruboe nadgrob'e.
Mne strashno.
Mne segodnya stol'ko let,
kak samomu evrejskomu narodu.*

There are no monuments over Babi Yar.
The steep ravine is like a coarse gravestone.
I am frightened.
I feel myself today as old
as the Jewish people itself.

*Mne kazhetsya seichas — ya iudej.
Vot ya bredu po drevnemu Egiptu.
A vot ya, na kreste raspyatyj, gibnu,
i do sikh por na mne — sledy gvozdej.
Mne kazhetsya, chto Dreyfus — eto ya.
Meshchanstvo —
 moj donoschik i sud'ya.
Ya za reshetkoj, ya popal v kol'tso.
Zatravlennyj, oplevannyj, obolgannyj.
I damochki s bryussel'skimi oborkami,
vizzha, zontami tychut mne v litso.*

*Mne kazhetsya —
 ya mal'chik v Belostoke.
Krov' l'etsya, rastekayas' po polam.
Beschinstvuyut vozhdj traktirnoj stojki
i pakhnut vodkoj s lukom popolam.
Ya, sapogom otbroshennyj, bessilen.
Naprasno ya pogromshchikov molyu.
Pod gogot:
 "Bej zhidov, spasaj Rossiyu!"
Labaznik izbivaet mat' moyu.*

*O, russkij moj narod! Ya znayu —
ty po sushchnosti internatsionalen.
No chasto te, ch'i ruki nechisty,
tvoim chistejshim imenem bryatsali.
Ya znayu dobrotu moej zemli.
Kak podlo, chto i zhilochkoj ne drognuv,
antisemity pyshno narekli
sebya: "Soyuzom russkogo naroda"!*

*Mne kazhetsya —
ya — eto Anna Frank,
prozrachnaya, kak vetochka v aprele.
I ya lyublyu.
I mne ne nado fraz.
Mne nado, chtob drug v druga my smotreli.
Kak malo možhno videt', obonyat'!
Nel'z'ya nam list'ev
i nel'z'ya nam neba.
No možhno ochen' mnogo —
eto nez'no
drug druga v temnoj komnate obnyat'.*

— "Syuda idut!"

It seems to me right now — I am a Jew.
Here, I am wandering over ancient Egypt.
And here, crucified, I am perishing,
and the nail marks are still on my body.
It seems to me that Dreyfus is myself.
Narrow-minded vulgarity
 is my informer and my judge.
I am behind bars, I am encircled.
Hounded, spat on, slandered.
And dainty ladies with Brussels lace flounces,
squeal and poke their umbrellas into my face.

It seems to me,
 I am a boy in Byelostok.
Blood is flowing, spreading over the floor.
Bar-counter barons commit outrages
and smell of vodka and onion half-and-half.
Being kicked aside by a boot, I am helpless.
In vain I am begging the pogrom bullies.
While they guffaw:
 "Beat the kikes, save Russia!"
A shopkeeper beats up my mother.

O, my Russian people! I know
that you are essentially internationalist.
But often those, whose hands are unclean,
have brandished your cleanest name.
I know the goodness of my land.
How vile it is that, without turning a hair,
anti-Semites have pompously named
themselves: "The Union of Russian People"!

It seems to me —
I am Anna Frank,
transparent, as a tree shoot in April.
And I am in love.
And I have no need of phrases.
I need that we gaze into each other.
How little it is possible to see, to smell!
We are denied the leaves,
and we are denied the sky.
Yet a lot is possible —
that is, to tenderly
embrace each other in a dark room.

— "They are coming!"

— "Ne bojsya.
Eto guly samoj vesny,
Ona syuda idet.
Idi ko mne.
Daj mne skoree guby."
— "Lomayut dver!"
— "Net. Eto ledokhod . . ."

*Nad Bab'im Yarom shelest dikikh trav.
Derev'ya smotryat grozno, po-sudejski.
Vse molcha zdes' krichit,
i, shapku snyav,
ya chuvstvuyu, kak medlenno sedeyu.
I sam ya,
kak sploshnoj i bezzvuchnyj krik,
nad tysyachami tysyach pogrebennykh.
Ya kazhdyj zdes' rasstrelyannyj starik.
Ya kazhdyj zdes' rasstrelyannyj rebenok.
Nishto vo mne pro eto ne zabudet!*

*"Internatsional" pust' progremit,
kogda naveki pokhoronen budet
poslednij na zemle antisemit.
Evrejskoj krovi net v krovi moej.
No nenavisten zloboj zaskoruzloj
ya vsem antisemitam, kak evrej.
I potomu —
ya nastoyashchij russkij!*

— "Don't be afraid.
Those are the dins of Spring itself.
That is coming here.
Come to me.
Give me your lips quickly."
— "They are breaking down the door!"
— "No. It is the ice breaking . . ."

Wild grasses rustle over Babi Yar.
The trees watch menacingly, as the judges do.
Everything silently cries here aloud,
and, having taken off my cap,
I feel how I am slowly turning gray.
And I myself
am as an uninterrupted and soundless cry,
above the thousands of thousands buried.
I am each old man shot dead here.
I am each child shot dead here.
Nothing in me will forget about this!

"The International" — let it thunder,
when the last anti-Semite on the earth
is buried forever.
There is no Jewish blood in my blood.
But I am hated with callous rancor
by all anti-Semites, like a Jew.
And that is why —
I am a true Russian.

II. Yumor (Humor)

The second movement takes on the role of a *Scherzo*, the weighty statement of *Babi Yar* movement being followed by the seemingly light-hearted C-major *Humor*. There are, however, many motivic parallels between the two movements. When the soloist and chorus sing of putting Humor to death, Shostakovich interpolates the B-flat-minor music of the "Babi Yar" theme chirped by flute and clarinet. One significant self-quote is in this movement: the composer's own Op. 62, a setting of the Robert Burns poem, *Macpherson's Farewell*. It is a dance before the gallows, a ideological dance Shostakovich knew well from personal experience.

The *Rondo*-like form of this movement "reads" like the poem itself, the composer adroitly skipping in and out of keys, meters and sections like the hero who skirts one near-miss after another in his best *Till Eulenspiegel* manner.

*Tsari, koroli, imperatory,
vlastiteli vsej zemli,
komandovali paradami,*

Czars, kings, emperors,
potentates of all lands on the earth,
commanded parades,

no yumorom — ne mogli.

*V dvortsy imenitykh osob,
vse dni vozlezhashchikh vykholenno,
yavlyalsya brodyaga — Ezop,
i nishchimi oni vyglyadeli.*

*V domakh, gde khanzha nasledil
svoimi nogami shchuplymi,
vsyu poshlost' Khodzha Nasreddin
sshibal, kak shakhmaty, shutkami!*

*Khoteli yumor kupit',
da tol'ko ego ne kupish'!
Khoteli yumor ubit',
a yumor pokazyval kukish!*

*Borot'sya s nim — delo trudnoe.
Kaznili ego bez kontsa.
Ego golova otrublennaya
torchala na pike strel'tsa.*

*No lish' skomorosh'i dudochki
svoj nachinali skaz,
on zvonko krichal: "Ya tutochki!"
i likho puskalsya v plyas.*

*V potrepannom kutsem pal'tishke,
ponuryas' i vrode kayas',
prestupnikom politicheskim
on, pojmannyj, shel na kazn'.*

*Vsem vidom pokornost' vykazyval,
gotov k nezemnomu zhit'yu,
kak vdrug iz pal'tishka
vyskal'zyval,
rukoyu makhali — tyu-tyu!*

*Yumor pryatali v kamery,
no cherta s dva udalos'.
Reshetki i steny kamennye
on prokhodil naskvoz'.*

*Otkashlivayas' prostuzhenno,
kak ryadovoj boets,
shagal on chastushkoj-prostushkoj
s vintovkoj na Zimnij dvorets.*

but were unable to command humor.

In the palaces of eminent persons,
who every day reclined in luxury,
there turned up a vagabond — Aesop,
and they looked like beggars.

In houses where a hypocrite
left dirty footprints with his puny legs,
Hajji Nasreddin was overturning
all banality, like chessmen, with his jokes.

They wanted to buy off humor,
but he just could not be bought!
They wanted to kill humor,
but humor was cocking a snook!

To fight humor — it's a difficult task.
They executed him ceaselessly.
His chopped off head
stuck out on a medieval soldier's pike.

But as soon as the pipes of a clown
started their tale,
he cried out loudly: "Here I am, Ha, Ha!"
and jauntily started to dance.

In his threadbare, skimpy overcoat,
downcast and as if repenting,
as a political criminal,
he went, caught, to his execution.

By all his appearance he displayed submission,
being ready for the afterworld life,
when suddenly he wriggled
out of the overcoat,
waved his hand and — Hey, bye-bye!

They concealed humor in prison cells,
but, no way in hell, it did not work that way.
The bars and stone walls
he passed freely through.

Coughing because of a cold,
as a rank-and-file soldier,
he marched like a simple ditty
with a rifle, to attack the Winter Palace.

*Privyk on ko vzglyadam sumrachnym,
no eto emu ne vredit,
i sam na sebya s yumorom
yumor poroj glyadit.*

He is used to dour looks,
but this does not hurt him,
and humor looks at himself with humor
from time to time.

*On vechen. On, lovok i yurok,
projdet cherez vse, cherez vsekh.
Itak — da slavitsya yumor.
On — muzhestvennyj chelovek.*

He is eternal. He is smart and nimble,
he will pass through everything and everyone.
Thus — all honor to humor.
He is a courageous man.

III. V magazine (In the Store)

The form of the third movement is that of strophic variations. It is the only movement that does not employ the tolling bell. This setting also represents the most remote key (E minor) from the Symphony's tonic (B-flat). The fifteen-measure introduction of cellos and basses (based on the x-theme) depicts the desolate atmosphere of the bitter-cold outdoor market. This introductory music bears a marked resemblance to the opening measures of *Boris Godunov*. Castanets and wood-blocks depict the clanking together of milk-cans and pots and pans. *Glissandi* in the strings evoke a ghostly imitation of the sighs of the exhausted women. More and more instruments are added until the point where the chorus sings (x-theme inverted, triple-*forte*) of the shame of cheating these women. The "Babi Yar" theme is heard in the highest strings and woodwinds, as if passing judgement, while a harsh pedal point in the bass recalls the Anne Frank episode of Movement I and foreshadows the next movement (which follows without pause).

*Kto v platke, a kto v platochke,
kak na podvig, kak na trud,
v magazin poodinochke
molcha zhenshchiny idut.*

Some with large, and some with small scarfs,
as though for a major feat, as though for work,
into the store one by one
the women are going silently.

*O, bidonov ikh bryatsan'e,
zvon butylok i kastryul'!
Pakhnet lukom, ogurtsami,
pakhnet sousom "Kabul."*

Oh, the rattling of their water-cans,
the clinking of bottles and pots!
There is a smell of onions, cucumbers,
there is a smell of "Kabul" sauce.

*Zyabnu, dolgo v kassu stoya,
no pokuda dvizhus' k nej,
ot dykhan'ya zhenshchin stol'kikh
v magazine vse teplej.*

I feel cold, waiting long in line for the
cashier's desk, but as I move towards it,
due to the breathing of so many women,
it becomes gradually warmer in the store.

*Oni tikho podzhidayut —
bogi dobrye sem'i,
i v rukakh oni szhimayut*

They are waiting quietly —
the good gods of their families,
and they are clenching in their hands

den'gi trudnye svoi.

their hard-earned money.

*Eto zhenshchiny Rossii.
Eto nasha chest' i sud.
I beton oni mesili,
i pakhali, i kosili...*

These are the women of Russia.
They are our honor and our judgement.
And they have mixed concrete,
and have ploughed, and have scythed . . .

*Vse oni perenosili,
vse oni perenesut!
Vse na svete im posil'no, —
stol'ko sily im dano!*

They have endured everything,
they will endure everything!
Everything in the world is within their powers,
they have been granted so much strength!

*Ikh obschityvat' postydno.
Ikh obveshivat' greshno.*

To short-change them is shameful.
To cheat them in weighing is sinful.

*I, v karman pel'meni sunuv,
ya smotryu, smushchen i tikh,
na ustalye ot sumok
ruki pravednye ikh.*

And having shoved meat-dumplings in
my pocket, I look, embarrassed and quiet,
at their righteous hands,
tired from carrying shopping bags.

IV. Strakhi (Fears)

Fears was the only poem written expressly for the composition of this Symphony. The chorus's stammering utterance of the first line, along with the G-sharp pedal-point that underpins the entire movement, suggests a fearful irony: these may be the pompous words of the new regime (Krushchev's), and perhaps fears are *not* dying in Russia. The tuba haltingly intones the first appearance of the y-theme since Movement I. When the bass solo sings of "someone informing," the first violins quietly murmur the x-theme, giving the effect of someone whispering behind one's back. At the movement's central climax, the tolling bell makes its first appearance since Movement II, joining the G-sharp pedal-point. It reminds the listener of the weighty statement of the first movement and suggests, "This is wrong! These fears should not exist!"

In the next large climactic section, where possible "new" fears are articulated, many motivic cross-references occur, recalling Movement I and suggesting an equation of the "new" fears with the "old" fears (Babi Yar). A brief postlude ensues (y-theme) and Movement V follows *attacca* (without pause).

*Umirayut v Rossii strakhi,
slovno prizraki prezhnikh let,
lish' na paperti, kak starukhi,
koe-gde eshche prosyat na khleb.*

Fears are dying in Russia,
like the ghosts of bygone years,
only at church porches, like old women,
they still beg in places for bread money.

*Ya ikh pomnyu vo vlasti i sile
pri dvore torzhestvuyushchej lzhi.
Strakhi vsyudu, kak teni, skol'zili,
pronikali vo vse etazhi.
Potikhon'ku lyudej priruchali*

I remember their having power and might
at the court of the triumphing lie.
Fears crept, like shadows, everywhere,
penetrated into every floor.
They slowly tamed people

*i na vse nalagali pechat':
gde molchat' by — krichat' priuchali,
i molchat' — gde by nado krichat'.*

*Eto stalo segodnya dalekim.
Dazhe stranno i vspomnit' teper'.
Tajnyj strakh pered ch'im-to donosom,
tajnyj strakh pered stukom v dver'.*

*Nu, a strakh govorit' s inostrantsem?
S inostrantsem — to chto, a s zhenoj?
Nu, a strakh bezotchetnyj ostat'sya
posle marshei vdvoem s tishinoj?*

*Ne boyalis' my stroit' v meteli,
ukhodit' pod snaryadami v boj,
no boyalis' poroyu smertel'no
razgovarivat' sami s soboj.
Nas ne sbili i ne rastlili,
i nedarom sejchas vo vragakh
pobedivshaya strakhi Rossiya
eshche bol'shij rozhdaet strakh.*

*Strakhi novye vizhu, svetleyut:
strakh neiskrennim
byt' so stranoj,
strakh nepravdoj unizit' idei,
chto yavlyayutsya pravdoj samoj;
strakh fanfarit' do oduren'ya,
strakh chuzhie slova povtoryat',
strakh unizit' drugikh nedover'em
i chrezmerno sebe doveryat'.*

Umirayut v Rossii strakhi.

*I kogda ya pishu eti stroki
i poroyu nevol'no speshu,
to pishu ikh v edinstvennom strakhe,
chto ne v polnuyu silu pishu.*

and put their imprint on everything:
taught to cry — when we should be silent,
and to be silent — when we had to cry.

Today all this has become remote.
It's even strange to recall now.
The secret fear of an anonymous denunciation,
the secret fear of a knock at the door.

Well, and the fear to speak with a foreigner?
With a foreigner — well, and with the wife?
And what of a subconscious fear to remain,
after marches, alone with the silence?

We were not afraid of building in blizzards,
of going into battle under shellfire,
but were mortally afraid at times
of talking to our own selves.
We were not corrupted and not led astray,
and not without reason, Russia now,
victorious over her own fears,
generates even greater fear in her enemies.

I see that new fears are dawning:
the fear of being insincere
with one's own country,
the fear of debasing with lies
ideas that are truth itself;
the fear of boasting oneself into stupor,
the fear of reiterating someone else's words,
the fear of humiliating others by mistrust
and of trusting oneself overmuch.

Fears are dying in Russia.

And while I am writing these lines
and am at times involuntarily in a hurry,
I am writing them with the single fear only,
of not writing with my whole strength.

V. Karyera (The Career)

The fifth movement marks a return to the tonic key (now major) of the symphony. It serves as a summation, bringing together many of the musical and poetic ideas found in each of the previous movements. The weightier statements having been made, the composer fashions a rather ironic, quiet ending in his unique transformation of thematic material. The poem's eight four-line stanzas clearly suggest three main sections:

- A. Galileo's career
- B. Similar careers
- C. The poet's reaction to these careers

Shostakovich grouped the stanzas accordingly and delineated them with an orchestral prelude (waltz), two interludes (waltz and a *fugato*) and a postlude (waltz). His setting is unique in that the emphasis is on the textless, orchestral music.

In the objective style of Gogol, both poet and composer avoid direct, subjective responses. Any "commentary" is done through the use of dramatic irony and, in Shostakovich's case, a masterful use of thematic cross-referencing — reading "between the lines," as Soviet artists were accustomed.

As the symphony fades away, the tolling bell reappears, sounding the very last note (dovetailing the celesta's variant of the x-theme and transforming it into a version of the "Babi Yar" Leitmotiv theme). This closing mood of struggle versus acceptance of reality is best described in counsel given by the composer to Galina Vishnevskaya and her husband, Mstislav Rostropovich:

He [Shostakovich] often told us when we erupted over yet another injustice, "Don't waste your efforts. Work, play. You're living here, in this country, and you must see everything as it really is. Don't create illusions. There's no other life. There can't be any. Just be thankful you're still allowed to breathe!"

*Tverdili pastyri, chto vreden
i nerazumen Galilej,
no, kak pokazyvaet vremya:
kto nerazumnej, tot umnej.
Uchenyj, sverstnik Galileya,
byl Galileya ne glupee.
On znal, chto vertitsya zemlya,
no u nego byla sem'ya.
I on, sadyas' s zhenoj v karety,
svershiv predatel'stvo svoe,
schital, chto delaet kar'eru,
a mezhdu tem gubil ee.
Za osoznanie planety
shel Galilej odin na risk,
i stal velikim on . . . Vot eto
ya ponimayu — kar'erist!*

*Itak, da zdravstvuet kar'era,
kogda kar'era takova,
kak u Shekspira i Pastera,
N'yutona i Tolstogo.
L'va? — L'va!
Zachem ikh gryaz'yu pokryvali?*

Priests harped on how harmful
and unwise Galileo was,
but, as time does show:
he who is more foolish, is wiser.
A scholar, a contemporary of Galileo,
was no less brainy than Galileo.
He knew that the Earth was revolving,
but he had a family.
And getting into a coach with his wife,
having accomplished his betrayal,
he believed that he was making his career,
yet he was ruining it meanwhile.
For comprehending the planet
Galileo alone was running a risk,
and he became great . . . Such a one is,
as I understand — a careerist!

Thus, long live a career,
when the career is such
as that of Shakespeare or Pasteur,
of Newton or Tolstoy.
Leo? — Leo!
Why were they smeared with mud?

*Talant — talant, kak ni klejmi.
Zabyty te, kto proklinali,
no pomnyat tekh, kogo klyali.*

*Vse te, kto rvalis' v stratosferu,
vrachi, chto gibli ot kholer, —
vot eti delali kar'eru!
Ya s ikh kar'er beru primer.*

*Ya veryu v ikh svyatuyu veru.
Ikh vera — muzhestvo moe.
Ya delayu sebe kar'eru
tem, chto ne delayu ee!*

Talent is talent, however hard you stigmatize.
Forgotten are those who execrated,
but remembered are those who were cursed.

All those who strove to reach the stratosphere,
physicians, who were dying of cholera, —
these were the ones making careers!
I take their careers as an example.

I believe in their sacred creed.
Their creed is my courage.
I am making a career for myself,
by not making it!

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