

## Prelude and Fugue in A, Op. 87 No. 7 Shostakovich

### Background information and performance circumstances

*Dimitri Shostakovich* (1906-1975) was a major Russian composer and pianist. He was an extremely important mid-20th-century symphonist, and a leading writer of string quartets. He also composed concertos, film scores, incidental music, operas, ballets, and piano music. His career was spent under the Soviet (Communist) regime, which severely restricted creative artists' freedoms. Shostakovich sometimes conformed and enjoyed official favour, but also suffered biting censure.

If you wish to read more about Shostakovich's life and career, plus bibliography, see *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London, Macmillan, 2nd edition, 2001) - available online, e.g. at some major libraries.

The *24 Preludes and Fugues for Piano*, Op. 87 were composed in 1950-1951.

- Shostakovich visited Leipzig for the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of Bach's death (1950).
- Afterwards he composed the 24 Preludes and Fugues (Opus 87), one in every key (partly in emulation of Bach's *Das Wohltemperirte Clavier* - two sets of 24 keyboard Preludes and fugues). Shostakovich also valued for its own sake the practice in contrapuntal technique involved (L.E. Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (OUP, 2000), page 177).
- Whereas Bach's Preludes and Fugues follow a chromatically-ascending key sequence (C major, C minor, C# major, C# minor, etc., ending with B minor) Shostakovich uses a circular pattern (C major, A minor, G major, E minor, etc., ending with D minor), at first adding sharps, then subtracting flats: compare Chopin's 24 Preludes (1838-1839) and Shostakovich's own 24 Preludes, Op. 34.

Op. 87 may be termed *neo-classical* because of the debt to earlier music, which involves mainly:

- The Prelude and Fugue structure (particularly use of fugue). Some Soviet critics found this objectionable, because they saw fugue as antiquated, and tainted with Western associations.
- A certain objectivity, or lack of overt expressive content, in the manner of much Baroque music rather than for example most late 19th-century music.
- In the A major Prelude the melodic and rhythmic character of the opening RH [= right hand] melody, and some of the motifs within it, recall the purposeful motion of Bach's music.

- The RH melody of bars 6-8 of the Prelude seems to resemble a line from a chorale melody.
- The Prelude has been said to recall Bach's two-part inventions (but similarities should not be exaggerated).

NB also: the Prelude is in compound quadruple (12/8) metre like the A major Prelude from Bach's second set (BWV 888): if this is deliberate 'borrowing' it does not extend to re-use of specific musical ideas. It is probably just coincidental that Shostakovich's A major Fugue is in three parts like BWV 888.

Finally, remember that Shostakovich was not attempting to write music that sounds like Bach, in the manner of a student harmonising a chorale, nor was he devising some kind of arrangement or pastiche in the manner of Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*. Especially harmonically and tonally Op. 87 (including No. 7 in A major) is characteristic of the 20th century and not of Bach.

Op. 87 was dedicated to Tatiana Nikolayeva (1924-1993), who gave the first performance in 1952. The performance on the anthology CD 2 (tracks 17 and 18) is by her, and so has special authority. It's available also on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2iyqytHD8T4&feature=related> .

Other recordings includes those by Vladimir Ashkenazy (1999) and Alexander Melnikov (2010): both are available from iTunes.

### **Performance Forces and their Handling**

The music, for solo piano, is of Grade 8 standard. Precise part-playing is required, both in the Prelude where interest is fairly evenly shared between RH (right hand) and LH (left), and in the three-part Fugue. While there is no strongly-defined expressive content, sensitive playing is required, especially as so much is very quiet (for details, see score).

Both Prelude and Fugue exploit a wider range of notes than was customary before the 19th century, but without going to extremes. In particular very low notes are avoided - part of a certain delicacy and lightness which choice of dynamics intensifies. Both movements range from E just below the bass stave to Gb (or F#) five octaves higher.

## Texture

### Prelude

The Prelude has been termed a ‘two-part invention’\* (compare those of J.S. Bach, which are in two parts throughout, and always contrapuntal with much use of imitation). Shostakovich’s piece is generally contrapuntal and much is in two parts, but strictly speaking there is no imitation, and sometimes more than two notes sound at once. The homophony in bars 21-22 is also untypical. On the other hand, Shostakovich always has two separate textural *strands*, so that there is some justification for describing the Prelude as a two-part piece.

\*([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/24\\_Preludes\\_and\\_Fugues\\_%28Shostakovich%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/24_Preludes_and_Fugues_%28Shostakovich%29))

Much of the Prelude is based on pedal notes accompanying a more active line in semiquavers and quavers. At the start, the pedal is in LH, then at bar 3 there is a change with the more active line in LH, but this time with a melody reinforced with chords in RH.

Throughout the Prelude, the main semiquaver-quaver motif (from bar 1, RH) is switched from one hand to the other, but note that the motif does not overlap with itself, and so there is no imitation as such.

Other types of texture occur as follows:

Bar 17<sup>4</sup>-18: a brief dialogue between LH and RH (not imitation - the two hands do not share the same material).

Bars 21-22: all parts move together throughout - so the texture is *chordal* or *homorhythmic* (a type of homophony). Notice the high-pitched, bell-like timbre.

Bars 23-end: LH has the semiquaver-quaver figure, while RH sounds (a bell-like) octave dominant pedal (E plus E) around a ‘melody’ that alternates between C# and B. The music gradually fades away from bar 25, with rests in LH and a *pp* dynamic.

## Fugue

Like most fugues, this is *contrapuntal* throughout. Each part consistently has a different rhythm from other(s) sounding at the same time - in other words, the parts do not move together as in chordal or homorhythmic texture. Nor is there any sense of one part having the melody *while the others together form some kind of unified 'accompaniment'* (as in non-chordal homophony).

The Fugue is in 3 parts - i.e. it has 3 simultaneous melody lines (or voices as they are sometimes described in instrumental music).

- There is no thickening of texture by addition of extra part(s).\*
- Like most fugues, this begins with a single line of melody (*monophony*).
- It builds to two parts (bar 5), and then to three (bar 11) - with successive entries of the subject.
- Subsequently, textural variety results from reduction to two parts in bars 29-50 and 70-71. Where there is a pedal point (e.g. in bars 62-69), three parts still sound, but because only two are moving, there is some reduction of activity.
- Variety also results from changes of range (e.g. all parts are high in bars 60-61 before the low dominant pedal in bar 62).

\*But we sometimes *hear* more than three notes at once. Almost all the time a single triad is arpeggiated (e.g. A major I in bars 11-14) in a *legato sempre* style, so that even the most discreet use of sustaining pedal prolongs notes previously played as new ones are sounded.

Note also:

- There is a long-lasting debate as to whether fugue is a texture or a form. The terms usually employed in describing both textural and formal features are included in this article under *Structure* below.
- Shostakovich's handling of parts/voices is freer than was customary in Bachian fugues, for example, with a fugal entry sometimes shifting from one part to another, or changing octave unexpectedly (as in bar 37, where one would expect the G# and B to be only a 3rd apart). See *Structure* below for some further details.

## Structure

### Prelude

The Prelude has five short sections, conveniently labelled A<sup>1</sup>, A<sup>2</sup>, A<sup>3</sup>, A<sup>4</sup>, and A<sup>5</sup> (all are closely related). Each is longer than its predecessor, A<sup>5</sup> showing the most marked extension and variation. References below to numbers of dotted-crotchet beats may show this particularly clearly.

It should be noted however - and this is worthy of credit - that the tonal scheme results in a *three-part structure* (bars 1-12 (A<sup>1</sup>, A<sup>2</sup> and A<sup>3</sup>) in A; 12-23<sup>1</sup> (A<sup>4</sup> and A<sup>5</sup> up to bar 23<sup>1</sup>) ambiguous/changing; 23-end in A again. For detail, see *Tonality*.

Sections A<sup>1</sup>-A<sup>5</sup> all have two main segments, usefully termed (a) and (b).

- (a) LH: pedal note  
 RH: quaver rest and four conjunct semiquavers, then continuous quaver movement (largely or wholly disjunct, except in A<sup>4</sup>) sometimes with additional conjunct semiquavers
- (b) LH: similar to RH part of (a), but usually with fewer large leaps  
 RH: a conjunct melody, thickened with two lower supporting parts, in longer notes (usually dotted crotchets)

A<sup>1</sup>: bars 1-3  
 12 dotted-crotchet beats  
 (a) 9 beats; (b) 3 beats

A<sup>2</sup>: bars 4-8<sup>1</sup>  
 17 beats  
 (a) 9 beats; (b) 8 beats

A<sup>3</sup>: bars 8<sup>2</sup>-12  
 19 beats  
 (a) 12 beats; (b) 7 beats

A<sup>4</sup>: bars 13-18<sup>3</sup>  
 23 beats  
 (a) 13 beats; (b) 10 beats

A<sup>5</sup>: bars 18<sup>4</sup>-28

36 beats - some bars in 9/8; bar 28 (largely silent) has been reckoned as three full beats

(a) 9 beats; (b) 27 beats

## Fugue

On fugues generally, read *Fugue*, §1 from *The New Grove*, if possible.

Regarding Shostakovich's A major Fugue, the following terminology is sufficient.

- **Subject:** the main melodic idea on which the Fugue is based (heard at the start).
- **Answer:** the second appearance (or *entry*) of this idea, transposed to the 5th above. The term *answer* can be used also later in a fugue for an entry that is a 5th above another adjacent entry in the same key.
- **Exposition:** the opening bars in which every part plays the main melodic idea for the first time. In our three-part Fugue this happens in the order: subject (top part), answer (middle), subject (lowest).
- **Countersubject:** a melodic idea that is regularly combined with the subject. Shostakovich uses two countersubjects (CS1 and CS2), so his fugal textures are often made up entirely of subject and countersubjects. None of these three elements is restricted to any particular part - so variety can be achieved by switching each around from part to part in *invertible counterpoint*.
- **Codetta:** a short passage in the Exposition from which the subject is absent. Use of a codetta prevents all the entries being equally spaced, which could be tiresome, especially in a fugue with four or more parts.
- **Episode:** a passage outside the Exposition from which the subject is absent (valuable in creating variety and additional interest). An episode (like a codetta) may draw on fragments from the subject or countersubjects in the interests of coherence and unity.
- **Stretto:** where two entries of the subject overlap (rather than, as usual, being placed end-to-end or separated). This demands special contrapuntal skill, and in fact can't be done at all with some fugue subjects.
- **Pedal:** a long held (or often-repeated) note, especially in the bass, over which the harmony changes - designed to underline the key. Fugues often have a dominant pedal near the end, or a tonic pedal at the end.

Note that after the Exposition, the composer has a great deal of freedom. There will be further entries of the subject, at least one in a key other than the tonic, and a final one in the tonic.

The table below shows the structure of Shostakovich's A major Fugue.

- Entries of subject, answer and two countersubjects (CS1 and CS2) are indicated in columns 2-4.
- 'Top part', 'Middle (part)' and 'Lowest' are convenient headings for these columns. These parts are not always, however, clearly differentiated in terms of range, and may be considered marginally more helpful than 'Soprano', 'Alto' and 'Bass' - Shostakovich's approach to texture and part-writing is fairly relaxed.
- A dash (-) means that a particular part is silent.
- An arrow (e.g. in 'CS2 → SUBJECT' ) indicates that there is swapping of parts (e.g. where a part begins with CS2 but finishes with the subject).
- A 'free part' has neither subject, answer, CS1 nor CS2.
- Comments on 'Key/harmony' are expanded under 'Tonality' below.

<i>Bars</i>	<i>Top part</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>Lowest</i>	<i>Key/harmony</i>
	<b>EXPOSITION</b>			
1-4	SUBJECT	-	-	A: I
5-8	CS1	ANSWER (real)	-	A: V
9-10	Codetta à 2 [i.e. in 2 parts]			A
11-14	CS2	CS1	SUBJECT	A: I
	<b>EPISODES and FURTHER ENTRIES</b>			
15-20	Episode à 3 (with sequence - bars 15-16 and 17-18)			A, ending I-V
21-24	(CS1)	SUBJECT	CS2	F#m: I (?or A:VI)
25-28	CS2 → SUBJECT	SUBJECT → CS2	CS1	C#m: I (?or A: III)
29-32	Episode à 2			A: ends V or IIIb
33-36	CS1	-	SUBJECT	A: I
37-40	ANSWER	-	CS1	A: V
41-46	Episode à 2			A (IV-I) → F

	(begins as Codetta, but with parts reversed)			
47-50	CS1 → SUBJECT	SUBJECT → CS1	-	F: I
51-54	CS2	CS1	SUBJECT	Bb: I
55-61	Episode à 3 (refers to bar 1 of subject in bars 58-61)			Bb → A (VI-IV)
62-65	SUBJECT	CS1	dominant note*	A: I over V
66-69	Episode à 3 (the lowest part continues to sustain the dominant, now with changes of harmony)			A
70-75	Stretto, plus two almost identical episodic bars (74-75) hints of SUBJECT	SUBJECT (bar 70 <sup>1</sup> )	(SUBJECT (bar 70 <sup>3</sup> ))	A: I
76-78	free part	free part	SUBJECT (abbrev.)	A: IV
79-82	SUBJECT (modified)	free part	free part	A: I
83-95	Episode à 3 (based largely on bar 1 of the subject, which is shared between the three parts)			ends with extended A: I-V-I
96-99	SUBJECT (modified)	free part	tonic note	A: I



\*Not a pedal as normally understood, for there is no change of chord above the sustained note.

## Tonality

Long before Shostakovich composed Op. 87, the ‘traditional’ form of tonality based on major and minor keys had been challenged (sometimes to destruction), along with the functional harmony based on the supremacy of chords I and V that had established and maintained it.

Shostakovich was relatively cautious, however, and we find, for example, that our set work:

- Is ‘in A’.
- Has a key signature of A major.
- Clearly begins and ends in A major (both movements).
- Often emphasises tonic and dominant notes (including pedals) and chords.

But Shostakovich:

- Generally avoids straightforward cadence patterns of the kinds relied upon to establish tonality in the 18th and 19th centuries.
- Has areas of ‘tonal ambiguity’ - i.e. where it is not entirely clear what key the music is in.
- Has some modulations that are very abrupt or bold in pre-20th-century terms.

## Prelude

See the general observation about the tonal shape of the Prelude above (under ‘Structure’). Here is the detail:

A <sup>1</sup> ;	<p><b>A major</b> - entirely diatonic - underpinned by tonic pedal and with several bars 1-3</p> <p>A major chords (simultaneous or arpeggiated)</p>
A <sup>2</sup> ; 4-8 <sup>1</sup>	<p><b>A major</b> - diatonic apart from a chromatic lower auxiliary note D#. The F# pedal can be thought of as the bass of A major VI.</p> <p><i>But there is ambiguity: especially up to</i></p>

	<p>bar 5<sup>1</sup> the music might be in <b>F# minor</b> (after this, use of E naturals rather than E#s could weaken this impression). Moreover, a long F# does sound like a tonic pedal - if only because submediant pedals are rare.</p>
A <sup>3</sup> ; 8 <sup>2</sup> -12 <sup>4</sup>	<p><b>A major</b>, with E (dominant) pedal - everything diatonic up to 9<sup>4</sup>. Then we slip sequentially through <b>C major</b> (10<sup>1-2</sup>) and <b>Bb major</b> (10<sup>3-4</sup>), with Db as an upper auxiliary note). Bars 11-12: diatonic <b>A major</b>.</p>
A <sup>4</sup> ; 13-18 <sup>3</sup>	<p>Begins with C# pedal, probably V in <b>F# (minor)</b> under an extremely chromatic RH part. Bars 16<sup>2</sup>-18<sup>3</sup>: <b>A major</b> at first? Then, as B natural in the top part gives way to Bb at 17<sup>1</sup>, into <b>F major</b> (with chromatic G#s).</p>
A <sup>5</sup> ; 18 <sup>4</sup> -28	<p>Bars 19-20: Eb pedal - dominant in <b>Ab major</b> at first, then tonality is <b>ambiguous</b> (?via Gb major to Db). Bars 21-22: <b>Ambiguous</b>. Reiterated major 3rds (Db-F) may suggest Db major. (Or does Cb-Gb chord imply Gb major, with Db-F as V?) Bars 23-28: Sudden and surprising E naturals at 23<sup>1</sup> are dominants for the following completely diatonic <b>A major</b>.</p>

## Fugue

The repeated prolongation of major triads without any non-chord notes at all is extremely unusual. *Tonal ambiguity can result: does the extended sounding of a single chord necessarily establish that chord as a new key?*

In a nutshell, the tonal scheme is: a good deal of A major to start with; some excursions to sharp, then flat keys; then more A major, but some areas of tonal ambiguity (uncertainty).

*Italicised remarks provide possible alternative explanations, for discussion.*

Bars 1-4 (Subject)	A major chord - clearly key is <b>A major</b> , given title of piece and key signature.
Bars 5-8 (Answer)	E major chord - when the answer is heard, a fugue often emphasises the dominant chord rather than the dominant key. Accordingly, bars 5-8 probably represent <b>A major V</b> , <i>but there is ambiguity. The notes heard are just E, G# and B: all belong to E major (I) as well as to A major (V).</i>
Bars 9-10 (Codetta)	D naturals are heard for the first time, with <b>A major IV-I-IV-I</b> .
Bars 11-14 (Subject)	<b>A major</b> chord and key.
Bars 15-20 (Episode)	<b>A major</b> - entirely diatonic. Ends with I and V.
Bars 21-24 (Subject)	<b>F# minor</b> chord = <b>F# minor (I)</b> . <i>Or do we hear it as A major (VI)?</i>
Bars 25-28 (Subject)	<b>C# minor</b> chord = <b>C# minor (I)</b> . <i>Or do we hear it as A major (III) - or even as F# minor (V) with unsharpened 3rd from the 'natural minor' scale?</i>
Bars 29-32 (Episode)	<b>F# (natural) minor</b> without E# or D#. <i>If we considered the preceding two passages to be still in A major, this is probably A major too, based on the</i>

	<i>(minor) secondary triads II, III and VI.</i>
Bars 33-36 (Subject)	<b>A major</b> chord and key.
Bars 37-40 (Answer)	E major chord. ( <b>A major V</b> : see bars 5-8.)
Bars 41-42 (Episode)	<b>A major</b> : IV-I-IV-I. Compare codetta (bars 9-10) but with parts exchanged.
Bars 43-46 (Episode)	Bar 43 <sup>1</sup> begins with C natural (the first note in the Fugue that is outside the A major scale). Heard over A and E, this suggests A minor, but then regular introduction of F naturals and Bbs as well signals <b>F major</b> .
Bars 47-50 (Subject)	F major chord. Especially after bars 43-46, this must be <b>F major</b> tonality.
Bars 51-54 (Subject)	<b>Bb major</b> .
Bars 55-61 (Episode)	<b>Bb major</b> until bar 60 (entirely diatonic). Bar 61 leaps into F# minor, chord I (beats 2-4) serving as a pivot back to...
Bars 62-65 (Subject)	... <b>A major</b> chord underpinned by long dominant note E in bass.
Bars 66-69 (Episode)	Bass E continues, but at first with <b>some tonal ambiguity</b> . Shostakovich alternates C naturals and G naturals (hinting at C major), C sharps and G sharps (= A major chord I <sub>c</sub> and V).
Bars 70-82 (Stretto and other entries of Subject)	<b>A major</b> (emphasis on D chord in 76-78).
Bars 83-88	<b>Tonality ambiguous</b> - a final 'unstable'

(Episode)	passage - <b>then</b> the concluding confirmation of <b>A major</b> . Note in particular the juxtaposition of F# major, F# minor and D major chords over F# pedal (86-88).
Bars 89-99 (Episode and final entry)	<b>A major</b> (entirely diatonic). Ends with four bars of A I after harmony based around chords I and V but without anything resembling a traditional perfect cadence.

## Harmony

### Fugue

The Fugue deserves attention first because it is so unusual harmonically:

- Unadorned triads are used throughout - there are no non-triadic notes (not even passing notes), and therefore no dissonance. (This should have pleased those Soviet critics who deplored the amount of dissonance in some fugues from the 24!)
- The *harmonic rhythm* (rate of chord change) is often very slow - the subject lasts for four bars and is always built on a single triad - so we frequently hear the same triad for 5 seconds at a time, given the metronome marking of  $\text{minim} = 92$ .

In three-part sections, the harmony is usually clear and sonorous. In particular:

- When a new chord begins, the bass may sound the root at the start (as in bars 11, 21 and 51 - but not 25) before moving freely between all three notes of the chord. *NB: Each new bass note does not make a new chord (i.e. bars 11-14 are just A major I, not A major I, Ic, I, Ib, etc.).*
- Shostakovich makes it very clear if a chord is major or minor. There are rarely 'bare' fifths or 'bare' octaves (i.e. the third of the chord is present almost all the time). In bars 11-14, for example, there are only four bare fifths (with 2 roots plus one fifth, or one root plus two fifths, none lasting more than a quaver). There are no bare octaves (e.g. chords with just three roots).

In two-part sections a full chord can never be sounded all at once. Shostakovich *implies* full chords by:

- Moving freely between all three notes of the chord in both parts (sometimes deliberately outlining complete triads as at bar 5<sup>1</sup>).
- Ensuring that the third of the chord is never absent for long.

It follows that he does not dwell on intervals which are less decisive harmonically (octaves, 5ths and 4ths). There are unusually many of these in the *stretto* of bars 70-71, partly because *stretto* won't work without them!

The slow harmonic rhythm for subject entries would become wearisome without the relief provided in the codetta and episodes. In particular, note the first episode (bars 15-20):

- At first, chords change every half bar, with repetitions to avoid too much sudden activity. In bars 15-16 we hear V-IV-V- IV, and in bars 17-18 (in sequence) III-II-III-II.
- Finally (bar 20) has a comparatively excited I-V-I-V alternation (chords changing each crotchet).

Harmonic contrast is achieved not just in terms of harmonic rhythm. The codetta, for example, has two IV-I progressions (not weighty enough to be plagal cadences): the D naturals and F sharps of IV supply the two notes of the A major scale not previously heard. The first episode pointedly introduces the first minor chords, partly perhaps to prepare for the long F# minor chord of the entry at bar 21.

From bar 62 onwards there are many long held notes in the bass. The final four-bar A is not strictly a pedal at first - there is no change of harmony, just a long A major chord. The eight-bar E (bars 62-69) can be termed a (dominant) pedal because there is some harmonic change (bars 66-67).

## Prelude

Compared with the Fugue, we find:

- Dissonance
  - Some dissonances are of traditional kinds - e.g. the semiquaver lower auxiliary note G# in bar 1, and the passing note B two notes later); similarly the bass F# at the start of bar 6 is suspended from bar 5 and resolves part way through beat 2 (under G#-C#-E).

- Other dissonances are less familiar, but many show continuing regard for the *principles* of traditional part-writing. The G# and C# (with D natural) at the start of bar 7 are ‘prepared’ in bar 6 and resolved by step at bar 7<sup>2</sup> - but it is uncertain how we would describe the *chords* of bars 6<sup>4</sup>-7<sup>1</sup> in traditional terms.
- All long held notes are genuine pedals, with changes of harmony.
- Harmonic rhythm is variable. Note how effective is the cessation of activity in bar 21 in highlighting an important tonal and harmonic moment.

Examination of two other passages shows further similarities between Shostakovich’s method and earlier harmonic practice:

1. Bars 1<sup>2</sup>-2<sup>1</sup>:

- The first and last beats use A major I.
- The first and third notes of each intervening three-note group belong to A major V<sup>7</sup> - pre-20th-century composers often alternated chords I and V<sup>7</sup> over a tonic pedal.

2. Bars 23-28:

- Have an inverted dominant pedal (in octaves) in the RH.
- Are built on A major I and V, but without keeping to traditional cadence formations
- RH (on its own) implies (from bar 23<sup>2</sup>) I-V-I; I-V-I; V-I; V-I.
- LH is embellished with various non-chord notes, some of which result in rather ambiguous harmony (e.g. the quavers D-E-F# at the ends of bars 24, 25 and 26 suggest chord IV - against the dominant harmony of RH - unless the D and E are to be heard as harmony notes (V<sup>7</sup>), the F# as an auxiliary note).

## Melody

### Prelude

There are two distinct melodic elements:

- The ‘semiquaver-quaver’ idea (RH, bar 1), with:
  - Four semiquavers and the stepwise shape A-G#-A-B.
  - A succession of quavers: most intervals are leaps (ranging from 3rds to a 9th and a 10th).
- The ‘dotted-crotchet’ idea (RH, bar 3), which is stepwise and somewhat reminiscent of a chorale.

The semiquaver-quaver idea is subject to considerable variation. For example:

- Twice (bars 8 and 13) it begins with a straight stepwise ascent instead of the usual descent-plus-ascent.
- Especially in A<sup>2</sup> and A<sup>3</sup>, stepwise semiquavers are introduced after a group of nine or more quavers - in bar 10 as part of a (not quite exact) melodic sequence.
- Quaver patterns vary considerably. A feature of A<sup>2</sup> and A<sup>3</sup> is a descending triad shape linked to stepwise semiquavers.

*For discussion:*

*It could be claimed that*

- *The E-F#-E dotted crotchets in bar 3 are an inversion of the three opening semiquavers (A-G#-A) with sixfold(!) rhythmic augmentation. However, simple stepwise-rise-plus-return and stepwise-fall-plus return patterns might be considered too commonplace for it is to be valid or necessary to conclude that every appearance of one or other of them is 'derived' from bar 1.*
- *Most three-quaver groups in A<sup>4</sup> (RH) are twofold augmentations by inversion of the three opening semiquavers in bar 1. Or is the semitonal movement built largely from repetitions and sequences of a three-note descending figure beginning off the beat (first heard as A-G#-G natural)?*

## Fugue

In the Fugue *almost all melodic intervals are leaps* (remarkable, but inevitable if you prolong single chords without any non-chord notes). Stepwise movement can occur only at changes of chord (as between bars 15 and 16).

There are some straightforward triadic and arpeggio shapes - most notably the rising arpeggios in bars 1 and 4 of the subject. Bars 1 and 4 are worked quite intensively in the second half of the Fugue.\*

\*In bars 58-61 four successive statements of bar 1 sound somewhat stretto-like, but they serve principally to lead up to the restatement of the whole subject in A major at bar 62. In bar 87 the familiar (rising) arpeggio shape is inverted.

When arpeggiating chords Shostakovich avoids intervals larger than an octave, and is sparing with octaves (too many large leaps are unmanageable on the piano). He



particularly favours 3rds, 4ths and 6ths (sonorous when heard harmonically), and almost entirely avoids 5ths.

Ascending and descending melodic movement are carefully balanced: see the music examples below, which also demonstrate the value of repetition (straight and with inversion) in providing coherence and convincing shape.

**SUBJECT (bars 1–4)**



**COUNTERSUBJECT 1 (bars 5–8)**



**COUNTERSUBJECT 2 (bars 11–14)**



## Rhythm and metre

### Prelude

The Prelude is in compound quadruple metre (12/8) except for bars 22 and 25-28, which are in compound triple (9/8). 9/8 metre is actually latent almost from the start: for example, the dotted-crotchet melody (consisting first of *three* notes) appears after nine (3 x 3) beats.

The Prelude is based largely on deliberate opposition of rhythms made up of semiquavers and quavers (which are rapid at crotchet = 76) and extended pedal notes and melodies in continuous dotted crotchets. Each rhythm is simple in itself, and syncopation is not a feature except briefly towards the end of section A<sup>4</sup>. The most original moment is the rhythmically static climax of bars 21-22.

### Fugue

The metre is ‘cut common’ throughout, with two minims in a bar. The subject is rhythmically varied, with a mixture of dotted-crotchet-plus-quaver pairs, crotchets, and quavers in twos and fours, and without syncopation. CS 1 is very

different, being designed to provide, together with the subject, continuous quaver movement. It involves syncopation, with crotchet tied to quaver starting on each second and fourth crotchet of the first three bars (see music example above). CS 2 begins with a syncopated minim but is otherwise unsyncopated; it relies in its second and third bars on repeated use of dotted-crotchet-plus-quaver pairs starting at the beginnings of bars and on the third crotchet.

On the face of it, the Fugue may seem a little unadventurous rhythmically - after the entry of countersubject 1, a note sounds on virtually every quaver, there are no notes shorter than quavers, and scarcely any rests except where a part is silent for several bars. But a certain calm uniformity, appears to be the composer's aim.