
Performance practice is a term familiar to serious musicians. For the performer, this means assimilating and applying all the education and training that has been pursued in a course of study. Performance practice entails many aspects such as development of the craft of performing on the instrument, comprehensive knowledge of pertinent literature, score study and listening to recordings, study of instruments of the period, notation and articulation practices of the time, and issues of tempo and dynamics.

The orchestral literature of Eastern Europe, especially Germany and Russia, from the mid-nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century provides some of the most significant and musically challenging parts for the tuba. The works of Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Prokofiev, and Dmitri Shostakovich, along with their orchestral contemporaries, represents a significant portion of this literature. This study examines a seminal work in the orchestral genre from each of these three Russian composers. The role of the tuba in each work is discussed. Excerpts of the tuba part are examined in terms of performance issues such as range, rhythm, phrasing, and scoring. Comparisons and contrasts are drawn as to how each composer used the tuba and the effectiveness of the utilization.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Performance practice is a term familiar to serious musicians. As the study of music as an art form is pursued, the term is heard in workshops, master classes, lessons, and even classes in the curriculum with the specific goal in mind of developing good performance practice. For the performer, this means assimilating and applying all their education and training. Performance practice entails many aspects. A primary responsibility is, of course, to develop the craft of performing on the instrument to the highest level. In addition, an informed approach to the performance of each work is adopted. To this end, the player must acquire a comprehensive knowledge of pertinent literature. Thorough familiarity with the life and music of the composers is required. The performer must be able to put the work in historical context as to the instruments used and any articulation, tempo, notation, or scoring issues of the period. Study of the score and listening to recordings are essential elements of the process. Add in sensitivity to the ensemble and the conductor, and performance experience, and it all goes toward producing an accurate and effective performance.

The orchestral literature of Eastern Europe, especially Germany and Russia, from the mid-nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century provides some of the most significant and musically challenging parts for the tuba. The works of Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Prokofiev, and Dmitri Shostakovich, along with their orchestral contemporaries, represents a significant portion of this literature. This study will examine a seminal work in the orchestral genre from each of these three Russian composers. The role of the tuba in each work will be discussed. Excerpts of the tuba part will be examined in terms of performance issues such as range, rhythm, phrasing, and scoring. Comparisons and contrasts will be drawn as to how each composer used the tuba and the effectiveness of the utilization.
The tuba as we know it today is a relatively recent addition to the orchestra in the size, shape, and the way it is used. The earliest form of the instrument was called the serpent for obvious reasons. It was composed of wood, with six open holes and a metal crook into which was inserted a cup-shaped mouthpiece of ivory, bone, or metal. The first known appearances are around 1600 with the primary purpose of supporting the low voice of the plainchant in French church choirs. Capable of producing great volume, it had notorious intonation problems due to the incredible flexibility of pitch. Despite this, the instrument was included in several early orchestral scores. George Friderich Handel apparently had it in the original score for the *Music for Royal Fireworks* (1749), but there is strong evidence that he deleted its use soon after hearing rehearsals.¹ Felix Mendelssohn made use of several versions of low brass instruments in his scores. His use of the serpent is notable in the choral movement of the “Reformation” symphony (1832) and in his *St. Paul oratorio* (1836). Hector Berlioz scored for the serpent in the “Dies irae” of *Symphonie Fantastique* (1830), but felt its hideous tone was appropriate only as a satirical comment aimed at the church.² Even Richard Wagner had the serpent in two early operas, *Das Liebesmahl der Apostel* (1839) and *Rienzi* (1840), but, like Berlioz, he later revised the instrument out of these scores.

Other early forms of bass brass instruments included basshorns, Russian bassoons, cimbassos, and ophicleides. The ophicleide was a large keyed bugle that appeared in the early nineteenth century and allowed for better intonation and flexibility than the serpent. It was especially popular in English bands as part of a family of keyed bugles. It was an upright, V-shaped instrument made of metal that retained the metal crook or bocal into which the cup-shaped mouthpiece was inserted. As with the serpent,

there were a number of versions of this instrument. All the side holes were covered with keys, varying in number from nine to twelve.

Widely used in Western Europe, the ophicleide began to take the place of the serpent. Berlioz included it in the score for *Symphonie Fantastique* and *The Damnation of Faust* (1846) and preferred its tone to that of the serpent. Mendelssohn again made use of a bass brass instrument when he scored for the ophicleide in the oratorio *Elijah* (1846) and the overture to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1827).³ Gioacchino Rossini scored for the instrument below the trombones, although Verdi soon replaced the ophicleide with the cimbasso. The ophicleide remained the bass brass instrument of choice until approximately the middle of the nineteenth century.

With the advent of valves and valve systems, the contemporary tuba began to take shape. Wieprecht and Moritz patented the first bass tuba in Berlin in 1835. It was an upright, conical brass instrument with five valves and pitched in F. The design provided for a more homogeneous timbre with the trombones and horns. By the mid-1840s the bass tuba was becoming the instrument of choice in German orchestras. Johannes Brahms scored for it in *Symphony No. 2* (1877) and the *German Requiem* (1868). Wagner began to consistently score for the tuba, beginning with *Der Fliegende Höllander* (1842). Berlioz visited Germany about the same time and immediately became enamored with the new bass tuba. Upon his return, he revised much of his work replacing the ophicleides with tubas. Tubists are hugely indebted to Wagner for advancing the use of the instrument in orchestral writing. A bass tuba or contrabass tuba is present in all of his major *musik dramen*. He utilized the instrument in a variety of ways heretofore unexplored. The tuba was used for harmonic and rhythmic emphasis in combination with a variety of instruments – sometimes trombones, or horns, at other

times with low winds or low strings. It offered significant weight and color in tutti sections of great drama. And it was also used to double melodic or thematic elements.

The influence of Wagner cannot be understated. The subsequent orchestral tradition, especially in Eastern Europe, consistently utilized the tuba to some extent. It is as a continuation of this tradition that Russian orchestras and composers of the early twentieth century included the tuba in their major works.

A major figure in Russia in the late nineteenth century was Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov. A member of the powerful Balakirev Circle, he became an instructor at the prestigious St. Petersburg Conservatory, bridging those two divergent perspectives. Renowned as an orchestrator, it was in St. Petersburg that he was a mentor to, among many others, both Stravinsky and Prokofiev. Although his influence on them can be debated, it is well documented that Stravinsky was an ardent admirer, and there had to have been some influence on Prokofiev, though he audaciously disagreed with the master while still a student. Shostakovich studied with Rimsky-Korsakov’s son-in-law and, as a student at the Conservatory, was most certainly familiar with his legacy.

Rimsky-Korsakov was not particularly innovative in his use of the tuba. He stated in his Principles of Orchestration that the tuba was “Thick and rough in quality... but valuable for the strength and beauty of its low notes. Like the double bass and double bassoon, the tuba is eminently useful for doubling, an octave lower, the bass of the group to which it belongs.” He lists the usable range of the tuba as only two octaves, from FF to f. The rather narrow view of possibilities for the instrument is not as diverse as that of Wagner, nor does it foreshadow the ways in which his protégés and successors would use the tuba.

Stravinsky, Prokofiev, and Shostakovich, all sons of a proud Russian musical tradition, would follow their individual paths to fame at a time when the world around

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them was in upheaval and crisis. Yet their creative spirits would endure and they would provide us with some of the most memorable music ever written. The same individuality manifested in their compositions is evident in their approach to orchestration and the use of the tuba. Each would put his stamp on the orchestral world and while doing so, on the tuba's role in the orchestra.
CHAPTER 2
IGOR STRAVINSKY
THE RITE OF SPRING

Igor Stravinsky was born near St. Petersburg in June of 1882 and died in New York on April 6, 1971. He is undoubtedly one of the most widely performed and influential composers of the twentieth century. His multi-faceted career traverses every major trend of the century’s music. The early ballets exhibited a neo-nationalist bent, while the later works during World War I were more experimental. The years 1920-1951 produced neo-classic works and his study of old music culminated in his highly personal interpretation of serial method in his final years. Though born in Russia, he later gained French and American citizenship, and this mobile aspect of his existence and its influences is reflected in his work. However, he never lost contact with his Russian origins and, even though the material was not always perceptibly Russian or Slavonic, a continuity of thought and technique existed.

Stravinsky was born into some affluence, at least in Russian terms. His mother was the daughter of a high-ranking official and his father was widely renowned as the finest operatic bass-baritone of his generation. Music was an integral part of young Igor’s life and he was well acquainted with the music of Mozart, Meyerbeer, Rossini, Gounod, and, of course, Wagner. In addition, due to the fame of his father, for whom many parts were specifically composed, he personally knew Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, and Mussorgsky, as well as famous Russian music journalists and conductors. Like many young Russians, Stravinsky started studies in law, but his real love was music, and in 1901 he started lessons in harmony and counterpoint with a student of Rimsky-Korsakov’s. This led to studies with the master himself, which he continued, though sometimes informally, until Rimsky-Korsakov’s death in June of 1908. Though his tutor’s death devastated him, by this time he was being noticed in St. Petersburg musical circles. Some of this notice was not favorable as the young composer was beginning to
dabble in the octatonic scale and its possibilities for harmony and color, developments that alarmed some traditionalists. But he was hailed by others as a fresh and cheerful musical thinker who was setting himself apart from other young composers.

It was about this time that Stravinsky was noticed by the influential impresario Serge Diaghilev. Diaghilev had asked Stravinsky to do some orchestrations for him in the summer of 1909. The ballet element of Diaghilev’s season in Paris was in trouble. He needed something fresh and novel. He commissioned the young composer to set music to an exotic Russian fairy tale, The Firebird. The startling success of this first of a long line of Diaghilev ballet commissions launched Stravinsky’s spectacular career. Overnight, he became a household name and was befriended by Parisian intellectual and academic spheres. Firebird was quickly followed by another rousing success, Petrouchka, and a star was born. His next work would make him an icon.

The origins of the idea for The Rite of Spring is one of many aspects of this great work that has been scrutinized and researched by countless scholars over the years. Stravinsky himself claimed in his later years that “The idea of Le Sacre du Printemps came to me while I was still composing The Firebird. I had dreamed a scene of pagan ritual in which a chosen sacrificial virgin danced herself to death. This vision was not accompanied by concrete musical ideas, however....”\(^5\) There are at least four conflicting versions of the genesis in earlier documentation from the composer himself. This much is for certain, the ballet was a result of a collaboration between Stravinsky and Nikolai Roerich, Russia’s leading expert in folk art and ancient ritual. The “story,” as it were, stems from Slavonic folklore and depicts an ancient ritual in which a maiden is chosen from the tribe to sacrifice herself through dance to ensure the coming of spring. From June of 1910 through the beginning of 1913, plans for the music, libretto, staging, and choreography continued. Stravinsky started work on the music at his home in Ustilug in

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Russian Volhynia and completed it at Clarens, Switzerland in November of 1912. Due to delays in scheduling from other composing obligations, the first performance did not take place until May 29, 1913 in the Théâtre Des Champs-Elysées with Pierre Monteux conducting and Maria Piltz as the Chosen One.

The uproar the first performance caused is well documented. Interestingly, it was staged as a ballet very few times after its premiere, receiving five more performances in Paris and a few in London. Within a year, Stravinsky had arranged it as a concert piece, which was received with great acclaim, and it is in this genre that we know it best. It is perhaps one of the most dissected works of music in history, because it shook up the musical universe on so many levels. In *The Rite*, Stravinsky took an idea of dissonance from Schoenberg and others, and an idea of the dissonant musical cell from Debussy, and infused these ideas with an explosive rhythmic and sonorous energy. The violent subject matter of *The Rite* lent itself well to this technique, but later works with no such subject matter (such as *The Wedding* and *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*) utilized the principle even more boldly. So much has been written about the work and it deserves the attention it has garnered. For the purpose of this study, suffice it to say two of the remarkable innovations that pertain to the use of the tuba are the use of folksong and rhythm.

The use of folksong in *The Rite* is an often contentious subject among music historians. The only folksong Stravinsky would consistently admit to using is the opening bassoon solo. However, research, and the discovery of the sketchbook for *The Rite*, has shown that folksong elements exist throughout. Some were adapted from published collections, while others were cleverly fabricated by Stravinsky in the image of Russian folk music. *The Rite* does not treat melody broadly, but uses source melodies as raw

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material, exploiting them for minute figures to use as patterns or ostinatos, or to develop
rhythmic motives.

Rhythm is undeniably a significant element of The Rite. It is safe to say that
Stravinsky reintroduced the idea of rhythm as material in this work. Many of the primary
ideas seem to have come into being as rhythmic essences. In his sketchbook for The
Rite, Stravinsky wrote himself this memorandum: “Music exists if there is rhythm, as life
exists if there is a pulse.” The primacy of syncopation and the dislocation of the beat
by the irregularity of accent and meter are legacies of this work that are still part of the
contemporary canon. Metric disorder reigns in some movements, and then when meter
and pulse become stable, accents and articulations cause dislocation. It all contributes
to an unending sense of movement. Again, the milieu and the subject matter seem to
lend themselves to this method, but he consistently adopted some form of this
technique in later works.

And so, without immersing this study in the many fascinating avenues that the
Rite of Spring presents, selected excerpts from the tuba part will be discussed in terms
of performance practice.

The tuba part in The Rite is clearly different from the other two works chosen in
several respects. One is the range of the part. As The Rite was written for the Ballet
Russes in Paris, it was probably composed with the smaller French C tuba in mind. This is a six-valved instrument pitched in C - one step above the modern euphonium.
This accounts for the high tessitura of this part as well as many Berlioz orchestral parts
and the “Bydlo” solo in Ravel’s orchestration of Pictures at an Exhibition. The range of
the part in The Rite is from E to g flat. Modern professional tubists perform much of the
part on F tuba, also using the CC tuba, especially in sections near the end. In addition,

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9 Walsh, Music of Stravinsky, 44.
11 Bevan, The Tuba Family, 336.
Stravinsky scored for two tubas, another French predilection. This is one of the few major orchestral works that utilize two tubas and presents its own particular set of performance practice issues.

Almost every entrance for the tuba in The Rite is soloistic. It contains difficult intervals and rhythms, and it is imperative to have sensitivity to the ensemble. The first excerpt to be examined is at rehearsal #33. The first and second tubas are alternating two measure figures. According to Stravinsky scholar Peter Hill, this is one of Stravinsky’s manufactured folksong fragments. Hill believes that the figure is related to the “family tree” of folk-like tunes used in the work, derived either from a minor tetrachord or from using fourths and seconds. The figure is first heard in the first violin at the end of the Introduction. At rehearsal #14 the English horn sounds the figure and it recurs throughout The Augurs of Spring and Dance of the Adolescents. As the tubas play the figure at #33, they should be sensitive to the articulation and length of the notes as they were previously played. It is very important for the two tubas to match each other so as to sound as one. There is a lot of rhythmic activity at this point and accuracy is paramount. The figure continues in the alternating two-measure pattern to the end of the movement (Figure 2.1).\textsuperscript{12}

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure2.png}
\caption{Figure 2.1}
\end{figure}

At rehearsal #41 of *The Ritual of Abduction*, a very important one-measure figure appears in both tuba parts. The marking indicates it to be played up an octave from where it is written. The tubas are the only ones playing this (against the strings), and the figure is picked up by the trombones and then trumpets and leads into a new section (Figure 2.2).\(^{13}\)

![Figure 2.2](image)

In the *Spring Rounds* movement, from rehearsal #53 to #54, the two tubas are scored in fifths. It is important that intonation is accurate, and that one tuba does not overshadow the other. Stravinsky is massing harmonies here, and the dissonance of the first inversion, dominant seventh chords is dependent on accurate intonation. The part is also providing an essential rhythmic element. The meter changes frequently and the strong downbeats help keep the momentum and excitement building to the *Vivo* at #54.

The next movement, *Ritual of the Rival Tribes*, begins at rehearsal #57 and splits the two tuba parts. The second part plays a rhythmic figure with the trombones, a figure that also sets up the tonality. The first tuba is clearly solo here, although the timpani plays the same figure, except in eighth notes. The first tuba is playing major sevenths, c to b, and they are marked tenuto and marcatissimo. It is an exposed passage and a main melodic and rhythmic element. The player must be extremely accurate and confident. The rhythm is again very important as meter and pulse are made to sound

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irregular (Figure 2.3). At six measures after #58, the second tuba has a descending quarter note triplet figure with the horns. According to Abe Torchinsky, tubist for many years with the Philadelphia Orchestra, most conductors dictate this figure with a ritardando. It leads into a reprise of the first tuba solo, though now the figure is interrupted by a 3/2 measure. Three measures after rehearsal #59, the first tuba is again solo.

![Figure 2.3](image)

The section starting at #64 to #71 is a significant one. Hill believes that this section demonstrates Stravinsky’s ability to combine octatonic collections with other elements – diatonic, modal or dissonant. The alternating G natural and F# in the tuba parts plays a key role in his thesis, as the listener “hears” the F# as the upbeat to the G#-A#-C#-A# quarter notes forming the lower minor tetrachord of an octatonic scale. This occurs under a melodic line thickened with thirds, supporting Hill’s case for the combination of elements. The two tubas play in unison here and may use alternating breaths to provide an even and continuous flow. The section starts at a mezzo-forte dynamic and builds to fortissimo, and with both tubas playing there is no need to overblow so the notes crack. Interestingly, at #64 there are two “tenor tubas in B flat” scored on the staff just above the tubas playing the same passage. No mention can be

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14 Stravinsky, The Rite, 49.  
15 Torchinsky, Repertoire, Vol. 10, iv.  
16 Hill, Stravinsky, 48.
found of the use of euphoniums for these parts. At the beginning of the orchestral score is an indication for the instrumentation with translates as “8 horns (7th and 8th also tenor tubas in B flat)”. So this line of the score is played by the horns. There is evidence that these parts have been played by Wagner tuben. Throughout this entire section, there is rhythmic instability by use of syncopated accents, primarily in the percussion. At rehearsal #70, by now in the movement Procession of the Sage, the rhythm of the tuba parts remains the same, but Stravinsky begins to change meters. It sounds as if it continues in the same meter, but in fact the pattern repeats in less than three measures rather than the previous four measures. The pattern does not fall on the downbeat again until #71, where there is a fermata on the rest for the entire orchestra, bringing the movement to a sudden halt (Figure 2.4).

![Figure 2.4](image-url)

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17 Bevan, The Tuba Family, 336.
18 Torchinsky, Repertoire, Vol. 10, 8.
Scoring with the “tenor tuba” occurs again at #78 in *The Dance of the Earth*. Six measures from the end, the first six horns and the eighth horn are playing written horn parts, and there is a part written for first tenor tuba – playing the same passage as the second tuba. This six measure section is written so that there are always two instruments playing the ascending scale even when the first tuba has the triplet figure in the last two measures. Apparently Stravinsky wanted to maintain balance in this ascending line, but it is curious that he used the first tenor tuba and not the second. Both the first and second tuba players must be aware of balance with the first tenor tuba. The tubas are also playing here with the cellos, the bass clarinet, and the bassoons. The low winds are marked as slurred, and the cellos are playing quarter note trills, while the tubas are marked tenuto. The players must be careful to execute the articulations exactly as marked for maximum effect. This ends the first part of *The Rite*.

In the second part of *The Rite*, called *The Sacrifice*, at one measure after rehearsal #112, both tubas are playing in unison. The extremely high tessitura of this part makes it particularly problematic. Torchinsky recommends a procedure that he has used to some success. That is that the first tuba player plays the high g flats, and the second player plays the f in the staff.\(^{19}\) It is much more difficult to go back and forth between these two notes than to simply zero in on the high pitch and repeat it. However, one must be sensitive to the conductor’s wishes, and if it is required, the part must be played as written. The tubas, playing in rhythm with the horns and trumpets, are again an essential part of Stravinsky’s metrical manipulation as the meter is ever shifting throughout this section (Figure 2.5).\(^ {20}\)

\(^{19}\) Torchinsky, *Repertoire, Vol. 10*, iv.

\(^{20}\) Stravinsky, *The Rite*, 98.
Intonation between the two tubas requires the players’ attention at #161 in the movement *The Sacrificial Dance (The Chosen One)*. The parts are scored an octave and a third apart, though the third is constantly changing from minor to major and back. Ensemble is of utmost importance here as there is a tremendous amount of rhythmic complexity occurring and the metrical instability continues. The ascending line of both tuba parts again has octatonic implications.

From here to the end, rhythmic clarity and accuracy is at the top of the list of the players’ priorities. From #186 to #189 the two tubas do not play the same rhythms. The first tuba plays a rhythmic pattern with the trombones, while the second tuba plays a pattern with the contrabassoons and double basses (Figure 2.6). According to Hill, this part of the piece is perhaps the height of Stravinsky’s manipulation and use of rhythmic “cells.” The repetition and variation of these cells, with “hiccups” or interruptions, causes the music to build to the end when all the forces (melodic and rhythmic, bass and treble) meet at #201 in a final climax. To this end, it is necessary that the players know the work cold and count very carefully. This is one of the sections in this piece

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21 Stravinsky, *The Rite*, 146.
22 Hill, *Stravinsky*, 57.
where use of the CC tuba on the second tuba part helps to hold things together rhythmically.

The Rite of Spring undoubtedly is one of the classic masterpieces of twentieth century orchestral literature. It descended like a bomb and its impact has been far-reaching. Stravinsky seemed to bridge two eras in this work as he combined Russian folk elements, use of dissonance in terms of sonority and instrumental color, and remarkable utilization of rhythm to produce a work that has piqued interest and study from its scandalous debut in 1913 to the present. Professional tuba players need to acquaint themselves with the intricacy and performance issues that this work presents.

Figure 2.6
CHAPTER 3

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

SYMPHONY NO. 5 IN D MAJOR, OP. 47

Though Prokofiev precedes Shostakovich in the succession of Russian composers, Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5 predates the similarly numbered work by Prokofiev by approximately seven years, so the Shostakovich work will be discussed first.

Dmitri (Dmitrevich) Shostakovich was born in September of 1906 in what was then St. Petersburg into a family of comparative comfort for the time. He died on August 9, 1975, and was by then hailed as perhaps the greatest Russian/Soviet composer of all time. He has been called the greatest symphonist of the twentieth century, though his output includes string quartets, concertos, instrumental and vocal music as well as film scores, theatre music, and three ballets. His career is remarkable in the sense that he managed to forge a musical language of colossal emotional power and significance in a climate of continual political interference and pressure. The life and work of this amazing musician has been the subject of increased scrutiny since shortly after his death due in large part to the publication of his purported memoirs in 1979 by a man named Solomon Volkov. In his book, Volkov claims that throughout his life, Shostakovich, instead of toeing the party line as is the official Soviet perspective, expressed deep-seated dissatisfaction with the Soviet regime mainly by injecting subversive elements in his music.\(^\text{23}\) The merit of these claims has polarized music historians and is the subject of extensive, sometimes very emotional debate. Although it may affect the way one views his music, it does not diminish the power and emotion of it.

Shostakovich was the second of three children, and the household was fortunate to be exposed to culture and education, including music. Young Dmitri was familiar with Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov as well as Mozart and Haydn. He was somewhat of a prodigy and early in his life displayed skills and an uncanny ear for music. He entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory at age 12 in 1919 and among his teachers was Rimsky-Korsakov’s son-in-law. Even in his earliest compositional efforts, he showed an ability to combine a degree of experimental freedom with a strong compositional discipline. His skills were soon in demand and he grew as a composer. Along the way, he rankled some critics in Russia with his open admission to the influence of Berg, Schoenberg, Hindemith, and, especially, Stravinsky. By the early 1930s, he had composed works in many genres, including theatrical, vocal, and instrumental pieces, and his music began to exhibit a new and provocative lyricism. As always, Shostakovich’s personal experiences never were far from the surface in his music.

In 1936, the politics of the time caught up to him and a potentially cataclysmic event occurred in his life. Shostakovich’s opera Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk had been playing to rave reviews for almost two years in theatres all over Russia and he had just completed a sonata for cello and was at work on the Fourth Symphony. About the same time, Stalin embarked on a vicious crackdown on political and cultural circles in the Soviet Union. Shostakovich, acknowledged by now as a leading composer, was an obvious target. An unsigned article appeared in the government-controlled newspaper Pravda, and denounced Lady Macbeth. The article stated that the opera was “confusion instead of music.” Terms such as “leftist,” and “formalist” were applied. The setting was vulgar, the music without taste, the opera was decadent. There was no doubt as to the origins and intent of the article. Many governmental, intellectual, and cultural figures that did not meet “requirements” had begun to disappear. Shostakovich’s career was on the

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precipice as many turned against him, even former colleagues and friends. He was hurt so severely by this criticism, he never composed another opera.

The *Fourth Symphony* was pulled from scheduled performances and Shostakovich knew to survive he had to find a formula for balancing his artistic conscience with requirements handed down from above, which could be as unpredictable as they were imperative. He found the solution by continuing to moderate his style in the direction of “acceptable” lyrical and heroic content, while devising a method that would still convey a powerful musical message though it may be below the surface impression. The *Fifth Symphony* did all that and more.

Shostakovich worked on the symphony between April and June of 1937. It deserves mention that his method of orchestration was different from Stravinsky, Prokofiev, and most Russian-trained composers. He composed directly to the score without first working out ideas at the piano. His ear was such that he could mentally conceive the orchestration and transfer it directly to the page. The *Fifth Symphony*, *Op. 47* was premiered on November 21, 1937 under the baton of Yevgeny Mravinsky. It was received to extraordinary public acclamation. Some colleagues who had previously admired his work were less than impressed, however. Shostakovich had consciously scaled back the dimensions and strove for clarity of design and execution more easily grasped because it plays off the familiar paradigms of the symphonic traditions of Beethoven and Mahler.\(^{25}\) It continues to be a matter of great debate as to whether the response to the symphony was an affirmation of the composers’ rehabilitation or recognition of a channel for mass grieving at the height of the Great Terror, impossible to otherwise express openly. Shostakovich by now was well versed in the ability to use politically correct jargon with ambivalence, and he approved a tag description to the title, “A Soviet artist’s practical creative reply to just criticism.”\(^{26}\) The acclaim of the work, at


least by the public and the government, revived Shostakovich’s career. Commissions resumed, his career as a teacher took on added significance, and by the time the war ensued, he had been restored to status as somewhat of a musical “hero.”

Putting aside all political subtexts and hermeneutical readings, the Fifth Symphony was a musical triumph and turning point in Shostakovich’s career especially from a compositional viewpoint. It differed from his previous compositions in the cohesiveness of the presentation. In this work, he synthesized ideas of rhythmic tension and propulsion with melodic material borne of deep musical and personal experience. It is heroic, perhaps more in terms of what the composer is saying about himself and his ability to adhere to his musical beliefs as much as it is an homage to Soviet values. Some even see it as an autobiographical work. Shostakovich himself wrote: “The theme of my symphony is the making of a man. I saw man with all his experience in the centre of the composition, which is lyrical in form from beginning to end. The Finale is the optimistic solution of the tragically tense moments of the first movement.” It is interesting that the work achieved success despite being contrary in mood and style to what the Soviet authorities wanted. They did not want tragedy, yet it is tragic. They did not want formalism, yet the work relies on sonata form and other established practices. They wanted folk music, but the symphony contains none. The Fifth Symphony was perhaps a challenge rather than an apology, despite the way the state saw it.

It remains to this day one of the most performed of Shostakovich’s fifteen symphonies. Excerpts of this work are often required at orchestra auditions for the tuba chair. As such, it is essential that the tubist familiarize himself with the music. The writing is different in many ways from that in The Rite of Spring. This part is composed for the contrabass tuba. The larger bore form of the instrument is usually pitched in BB.

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flat or CC, one octave below that of the French tuba. Soviet tradition through much of
the twentieth century was to use the BB flat contrabass tuba in symphonic scoring and
so much of the writing is below the staff and requires volume and presence not possible
on smaller tubas. In addition, the role the tuba plays in Shostakovich symphonies
harkens back more to the Rimsky-Korsakov tradition, though it is not quite as limited.
The tuba often provides harmonic and rhythmic foundation and support for broad
statements. In its use as a rhythmic element it shows some similarity with Stravinsky,
though Stravinsky thought Shostakovich’s use of pulse was “brutal” and
“monotonous.”29 In some of his later symphonies, as valve mechanisms and players
advanced, Shostakovich exploited the facility of the tuba. The Seventh and Ninth
Symphonies contain short solos for the instrument, and numbers 10 through 15 all have
significant tuba parts.

The first excerpt in the Fifth Symphony that requires attention starts at three
measures before rehearsal #30. The tuba is playing an augmented version of the
opening theme of the symphony, the ascending and descending minor sixths that
narrow to thirds and establish the tension of the first movement. The tuba is scored with
double basses and in canon with the bass trombone. Thus it requires that the player
complement the sound of the basses and yet balance the articulation and sound of the
bass trombone. Intonation is obviously very important. It is marked fortissimo so the
player can be very strong here, though there are sections later that call for even bigger
dynamics.

At four measures after #32, this theme is augmented rhythmically even further,
though pitch structure has changed. Now the tuba is playing with the trombones and
double basses and in canon with horns, then trumpets for a short time. These are huge
blocks of sound which are in fact a transformation of the initial theme, and leads to the

29 McBurney, "Whose Shostakovich?" 297.
recapitulation at #36. The tense minor sixths have become more serene octaves and the fierce dotted rhythm is smoothed by enormous augmentation. Even though it is marked *fortissimo* and accented, there is an additional indication of *espressivo*. Therefore, the approach should be one of playing a musical line – a lyrical part of the development of the theme (Figure 3.1).30

![Figure 3.1](image)

Four measures after rehearsal #38 the tuba, trombones, and low strings state the theme one more time though it now begins with a descending minor sixth. It is marked *con tutta forza* and is the last time in this movement this theme is heard with such force. Intonation is again important. The articulation for the brass differs from that of the strings. All notes in the tuba and trombone parts are marked with accents, but the low strings are marked as slurred from the B flat to the A. The player should be aware of this and should not shorten the dotted eighth note too much – it should be played as a continuous musical line to blend with the strings (Figure 3.2).31

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31 Ibid., 41.
Figure 3.2

The second movement is an *Allegretto* that is a biting, witty satire for which Shostakovich perhaps owes inspiration to Mahler’s wry humor. The tuba needs to pay strict attention to the dynamics on its entrance at four measures before #56. It is easy to get caught up in the nervous energy of this movement and overdo it at this section. The blend with the bassoons, bass trombone, and double basses is the determining factor. Eight measures later another figure requires attention to ensemble. The crescendos on E should be played with sensitivity to the ensemble (Figure 3.3). Near the end of the movement, at one measure before #73, one gets a hint of the technical facility that Shostakovich will entrust to the tuba in future symphonic works. Again, the crescendo needs to be strong but not overpowering. The movement finishes with a passage that will require crisp and sensitive but solid playing. Careful attention to articulation and note length on the staccato markings is required.

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32 Blokker, *Symphonies*, 57.
After a somewhat pensive third movement that is a study in string and wind sonorities, the dynamic *Finale* bursts forth in a massive wall of sound. The first chord requires a huge crescendo. Silent in the third movement, the brass are now given the responsibility of announcing the positive main theme. The first time this theme is heard, in the third measure, it is by trumpets and trombones. Then at rehearsal #100, the tuba joins the bass trombone, low winds, and low strings in boldly stating the theme. The playing here can be exuberant though not uncontrolled. At #104 a fragment of the theme is heard again with the same instrumentation.

There are several important episodes for the tuba in this movement, but one of the most significant begins at one measure after #111 continuing to #112. Here the tuba can play as strong as possible without, of course, cracking the tone. The player should watch the conductor carefully on the ascending eighth note figure as there may be some slowing of tempo here before returning to tempo at five measures before #112. At rehearsal #121 the tuba is asked to play whole notes tied for several measures on a low AA at a *piano* dynamic. Seven measures after #121 there are again tied whole notes on low AA, but this time it is for four measures. The tuba is the only instrument sustaining this note so there is no way to cheat on the breath. The player must tune to the timpani which is playing an eighth note ostinato figure preceding and during this passage. Also, sensitivity to horns and winds playing the theme is necessary. At #128

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34 Ibid., 10.
there are nine measures for the tuba where rhythmic accuracy is very important. This section is usually conducted one beat to the bar, so the player must be careful that each note is articulated on the proper beat. There is some strong playing required from here to the end. It is not nearly as rhythmically intricate as the part in The Rite, but the end of this work is, in its own way, just as stirring (Figure 3.4).³⁵

Many critics wondered what would have happened to Shostakovich’s musical development had he left Russia in 1935. It is a moot point, for his artistic development, training, and creative forces were geared towards his homeland. While many of the artistic elite viewed their art as secondary to the destiny of Russia, some artists strove to use art to point out areas in which the government might change. They saw this as their duty to Russia out of the same nationalistic passion. Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony was a document and a victory in this cause. Stravinsky once remarked that Soviet composers could not afford the luxury of integrity.³⁶ Men such as Shostakovich saw it not as a luxury but as a battle that should be waged at home because they believed in their country. Stravinsky, on the other hand, left Russia because his integrity would not allow him to remain. Shostakovich’s symphonies demonstrate how far his integrity allowed him to go and how far he went. The Fifth and all of his symphonic output should be required study for the professional tubist.

³⁵ Ibid., 43.
³⁶ Blokker, Symphonies, 28.
Figure 3.4
CHAPTER 4

SERGEI PROKOFIEV

SYMPHONY NO. 5 IN B FLAT MAJOR, OP. 100

One of the most enigmatic and talented composers of the twentieth century is the third member of the triumvirate of Russians discussed in this study. Sergei (Sergeyevich) Prokofiev’s catalogue lists 135 completed works that constitute a large and varied output in many different genres, including symphony, sonata, ballet, opera, art-song, string quartet, and film music. The works are stylistically diverse yet almost always recognizable as Prokofiev’s. A key feature of much of his music is the interaction of tradition and innovation. This, in fact, marks him as Russian as much as any characteristic, for it is a feature of Russian history, plainly evident in nineteenth and early twentieth century Russian musical culture best exemplified in the musical life of St. Petersburg. The St. Petersburg Conservatory, a bastion of Western musical tradition, competed with the Balakirev Circle, a group committed to cultivating nationalistic talent and innovation. And directly in the middle of this confrontation is Prokofiev. Like others of his time, he experienced the tribulation of attempting to maintain an artistic life in the face of extreme political and social upheaval and distress.

As with Stravinsky and Shostakovich, Prokofiev was born into some level of affluence in April of 1891 in the Ukraine and died on March 5, 1953 in Moscow. He had two older siblings, but they died very young, so he was essentially raised as an only child. Like Shostakovich, Prokofiev was a prodigy and, with the help of early music lessons, entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory at the urging of Glazunov at age thirteen. By the age of seventeen, he was being called the enfant terrible of Russian music with his outspoken views, his audacious criticism of Rimsky-Korsakov, and performances that reflected both talent and attitude. Called a radical “futurist” of music, Prokofiev was soon being compared with the dominant figures in Russian musical modernism – Scriabin, the recognized leader, secure in his reputation, and Stravinsky,
the homegrown prophet, honored in Paris and now gaining recognition in his own country. Stravinsky and Prokofiev would be compared by others and compete among themselves their entire creative lives. It is in terms of those same two elements, tradition and innovation, that most comparisons are made.

As a student at the conservatory, Prokofiev studied with Lyadov, Tcherepnin, and Rimsky-Korsakov. He was extremely talented as a pianist and composer, but rebellious. Like Stravinsky before him, he visited abroad and was fascinated by trends and developments outside Russian musical circles. Interestingly, he expressed skepticism upon hearing _The Rite of Spring_ on a visit to London in 1914. This visit had several consequences. Here began his long association with Diaghilev. It also became fixed in his mind that a Russian composer's success is marked by acceptance abroad. And despite his skepticism, his writing began to show the undeniable influence of Stravinsky.  

Prokofiev left Russia in 1918, soon after the October Revolution. The reasons for this are under debate, but it is likely that he was planning this for reasons of musical acceptance long before the dramatic political events of that time. He initially settled in the United States as that seemed to offer the most artistic freedom. Russian politics did not seem to be of interest to him, unless they affected his music. In 1920, he left for Paris, but continued to travel back across the Atlantic. By 1922 he settled in the Bavarian Alps to be close to his bride-to-be, and soon the Prokofievs made their home in Paris though they traveled often. The years abroad were productive years. He finished several works including ballets, operas, piano concertos #3, #4, and #5, as well as chamber and orchestral works. A common criticism of his work of this period is that

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38 Krebs, _Soviet Composers_, 140.
there were no new ideas forthcoming. Everything was simply proportional usage and assembly of musical idioms from his early years.\textsuperscript{39}

By the late 1920s the pull of his homeland became strong for Prokofiev. He and his wife visited in 1927 and again in 1929. On the latter visit, his music was ravaged by the powerful Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians (RAPM). His inclinations to return were certainly shaken, as he saw the perils of creative life in the new Soviet Union. By the time of his next visit in 1932, the RAPM had been disbanded and the reception was much warmer. Prokofiev finally moved his family to Russia in 1936. The return appears to have been negotiated with promises of continued travel. However, after several trips out of the country, the last in 1938, his travel papers were collected to do some paperwork and never returned.\textsuperscript{40} It was, of course, during this same period, that Shostakovich had come under attack from the regime. It is an interesting contrast that Prokofiev characteristically brushed off this attack as inconsequential to him, perhaps with a certain arrogance born of a sense of his “specialness,” and yet his music then took on a distinctly Soviet tinge. For example, while he was composing wildly popular and “acceptable” works such as \textit{Peter and the Wolf}, \textit{Boris Gudonov}, and \textit{Alexander Nevsky}, Shostakovich was composing deeply personal symphonies and string quartets. But history would prove that Prokofiev was not immune to the vagaries of Soviet brutality. From his return in 1936 through the war years, he would see friends arrested and murdered, he would divorce his wife and marry a Jewish woman, which was a scandal unto itself, and suffer through the privations of war along with all of the Soviet Union.

So it was in 1944 that Prokofiev turned his attention to a big new symphony, his \textit{Fifth}. Except for the \textit{First}, the “\textit{Classical}” \textit{Symphony}, his symphonic works had received a cool public response. The major criticism had been that there was too much material,

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 347.
that they consisted merely of a succession of unrelated episodes. But the *Fifth Symphony*, appropriately designated Op. 100, was epic in scale and character. Its individual movements and the symphony as a whole proceed with a strong sense of continuity and drama, building to a satisfying musical and emotional climax. Along with the *First Symphony*, it is the most performed of his seven symphonies. Prokofiev considered his work on it "very important not only for the musical material that went into it, but also because I was returning to the symphonic form after a break of sixteen years. The *Fifth Symphony* is the culmination of an entire period in my work. I conceived of it as a symphony on the greatness of the human soul." Prokofiev finally found in this work a language sufficiently accessible and optimistic, one appropriate to "Soviet reality," and yet highly individual. For this he was certainly indebted to Shostakovich, and this symphony bears some resemblance to his younger compatriot's work. Like Beethoven and Shostakovich, the *Fifth* was for Prokofiev a turning point and an affirmation. The work premiered on January 13, 1945 with the composer conducting the State Symphonic Orchestra of the U.S.S.R. in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory. It was received to great acclaim that night and remains a work many consider his best.

There is so much of substance for the tuba in this work, it is like a little concerto – almost every note is important. It uses the tuba in a much more comprehensive manner than Stravinsky ever did or Shostakovich did in his *Fifth*. In this work, the tuba is used melodically, harmonically, and rhythmically. It is used for color in various combinations with brass, winds, and strings and for sonority and breadth of sound in tutti sections. Excerpts from this work appear on nearly every orchestral audition and it is paramount that the professional tubist be intimately familiar with the work and the part. There is not

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41 Ibid., 432.
42 Ibid., 431.
time to discuss every entrance and passage, so selected excerpts have been chosen which are representative of the importance and use of the tuba.

The first movement is in sonata form and the tuba is immediately involved with the second part of the first theme at rehearsal #3. Harlow Robinson calls this a “heroic but supple theme.” The passage is scored with low strings, low winds, and second and fourth horns. Attention to phrasing is very important here. The horn and tuba parts have the slurs marked one way, the low winds another, and the low strings in yet a third marking. Every score, including the official Works published by Muzqiz in Moscow in 1947, show the slur markings in this fashion. It will take sensitivity by the tubist to ensure that the line blends with the other instruments in terms of phrasing and dynamics. It is an expressive and lyrical line and should absolutely be approached as such. This theme recurs in the tuba part on two subsequent occasions: at two measures before #4 and in the fifth measure after #19. The same slurring and blend issues apply. Torchinsky points out that in some editions of the part there are articulation and note errors. Score study and collaboration with colleagues in the orchestra helps to remedy these situations. At five measures after #3, the bass trombone and tuba provide a rather substantial V-I (BB flat – EE flat) that establishes tonality for the next statement on the theme (Figure 4.1).45

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43 Ibid., 433.
In the development there is a descending line scored with the low strings in the third bar after #11. The passage is definitely soli and, though marked piano, attention should be paid to balance and it may need to be played at a slightly louder dynamic. From one measure before rehearsal #14 through #17 the tuba is scored with brass and/or low strings. The function of the part here is essential to the development of themes and tonal areas.\textsuperscript{46} The part should be played at a solid forte dynamic level without overblowing. Intonation, rhythmic accuracy, and careful attention to articulation and note length are required (Figure 4.2).\textsuperscript{47}


\textsuperscript{47} Torchinsky, \textit{Repertoire, Vol. 8}, 43.
Rehearsal #23 starts the coda. The tuba is scored with the contrabassoon and double basses prior to the big arrival at #23. Many conductors may like to make a small break or lift before the downbeat at #23. The tubist should pay close attention so the entrance does not become an unwanted solo. This is an exciting section of the movement and though #23 is marked *forte* the tubist should not play above this
marking. At one measure after rehearsal #24, the trombones join the tuba with the same theme. Here it is marked *fortissimo* and the tuba can play very strongly (Figure 4.3).\(^{48}\)

![Image of musical notation]

**Figure 4.3**

The second movement contains a gently tongue-in-cheek martial theme and is marked *Allegro marcato*. There is not nearly as much playing for the tuba in this movement, but a couple small items deserve mention. At rehearsal #33, the tuba and bass clarinet are the only instruments playing a quarter note figure with a grace note. It is likely that conductors will ask for the grace note to be played on the long side and the quarter note with a slight tenuto articulation.\(^{49}\) The figure occurs again two measures before #34.

The *Adagio* third movement reveals Prokofiev’s debt to Shostakovich, particularly to his *Fifth Symphony*, the “model” for the Soviet symphony since its premiere.\(^{50}\) The

\(^{48}\) Ibid., 44.

\(^{49}\) Ibid., iv.

\(^{50}\) Robinson, *Prokofiev*. 433.
orchestration, with thick, expressionistic strings in the upper register, is very reminiscent of the *Largo* in Shostakovich’s *Fifth*. There are many delicate entrances for the tuba in this movement. The player should be very sensitive to the scoring. Prokofiev often uses the tuba with some combination of low strings or low winds but no other brass – a distinctive aspect of his scoring. In this sense he was exploring the coloristic possibilities of the instrument in the ensemble. In the passage beginning at one measure after #65 the tuba is scored with the trumpet, first violins, and double basses (Figure 4.4).\(^5^1\) Again, the phrasing is marked differently for strings, trumpet, and tuba. Perhaps the large amount of air required by the large BB flat contrabass tuba accounts for the difference in phrase markings. The part is marked *espressivo* for the trumpet and strings and the tubist should adopt the same approach. It is possible to play this passage in one breath, but some players may need a small intermediate breath to complete the phrase comfortably. The section starting four measures after rehearsal #70 continuing to #72 calls for some strong playing by the tuba. The descending figures at four after #70 and four before #71 lead to a significant “martial” statement at #71. This was, after all, Prokofiev’s “war” symphony, and the third movement contains a gloomy power, exemplified in this section, that is eventually relieved by the heroic high spirits of the last movement.

![Figure 4.4](image)

There is a lot of playing for the tuba in the fourth movement; a sonata rondo marked *Allegro giocoso*. Nearly every entrance is important. At rehearsal #94 the bass

clarinet, third and fourth horns, and tuba play the main thematic material (Figure 4.5). The tuba should not be afraid to take the lead here, though not to the point of obliterating the other instruments. Interestingly, phrasing is uniform here, which begs the question as to why it is not so throughout the symphony. One criticism of Prokofiev is that he did not always do his own orchestration. He was schooled in the old St. Petersburg tradition of composing at the piano and then orchestrating. It was rumored at one time that he had students do the orchestration from his piano score. Perhaps this accounts for the uneven phrase markings, though no current research was found that solidly supports these accusations. Fragments of the thematic material from #94 return in the tuba part at one measure before #98. As the excitement builds through several key changes, the player should pay close attention to tempo changes the conductor may call for as the tonality changes.

Figure 4.5

The recapitulation starts at rehearsal #101 and the figure two measures before that, though scored for timpani, cellos, and tuba, should be one where the tuba again takes the lead. At four measures before #108, the tuba should play in a strong solo manner. The part is scored with bassoons and horns, and the tuba should be equal to the horn section (Figure 4.6). Every entrance through the end of the work is of a soloistic nature for the tuba. The section between #110 and #111 is particularly important and intonation with the bass trombone and other brass should be carefully attended. At #112 the tubist needs to be very accurate rhythmically. Tuba and double bass are the only instruments playing this rhythm – an eighth note entering on the second half of the beat moving to the next beat. The entrance occurs on a different beat for each of three consecutive measures so great care should be taken in counting.

The *Fifth Symphony* of Prokofiev is truly a major work for the composer, the genre, and the tuba. Composing at a time when most twentieth century composers were turning away from the symphony, dismissing it as an exhausted form, Prokofiev was exploring its undiscovered possibilities. This is demonstrated in his use of the tuba in this work. The instrument is exploited in ways not often utilized, at least to this extent, in the literature. The writing is more soloistic than one sees in many symphonic works, and Prokofiev is creative in combining the tuba with instruments other than brass. In this work, the tuba is scored with various other sections and instruments and must tailor the performance to complement the scoring. This is perhaps Prokofiev's finest work, and one of the finest examples of composing and scoring for the orchestral tuba.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

The orchestral literature of the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century represent a large portion of the significant writing for the tuba in this genre. There are works from later in the twentieth century that are notable, but as composers have ventured into such avant-garde trends as serial techniques, twelve-tone tonality, electronic music, aleatoric music, and minimalism, the role of the tuba has often diminished. New music does contain some excellent writing for the tuba. But the approximately one hundred years from the mid-1800s to the mid-1900s produced the orchestral writing for the instrument that represents and exploits the tuba to its fullest.

A serious and professional approach to performance practice demands that the orchestral tubist become thoroughly acquainted with the literature. This entails knowledge of the composer, the time period and circumstances of composition, and the intricacies of the work and the role of the tuba. Score study to familiarize oneself with an overall idea of orchestration and voicing is beneficial. In addition, listening to recordings of different orchestras from different parts of the world with different conductors will broaden the performer’s perspective and approach.

The lineage of Eastern European composers is an important one for the study of orchestral literature. Russia is a land with a long line of artists who have made tremendous contributions to the arts. Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Prokofiev, and Dmitri Shostakovich are three giants of Russian heritage and of orchestral music. Their lives are fascinating studies as they were extremely talented men living in extremely tumultuous times. The proximity of their origin and the divergence and convergence of their creative lives are part of the fascination we have for them. All dealt with the tremendous upheaval taking place in their homeland in their own way.
Stravinsky emigrated from his homeland and his prodigious talent led him down many musical paths. His significance as a musical figure of the twentieth century cannot be overstated. A relative late-bloomer as a composer, his third acclaimed work, The Rite of Spring, vaulted him to fame and recognition unparalleled in his time. Though he never returned to Russia to live, there always seemed to be something "Russian" about his work. It was in his approach that one could sense his heritage. As his compositional style underwent many changes, he approached his art with integrity and absolute belief. His influence as an orchestrator is perhaps under-rated. He is primarily known for structural and aesthetic innovations, but he had a truly unique ear for sound combinations and the instrumentation of his catalogue is vast and varied. His use of the tuba reflects the mobility of his existence. In The Rite, he scored in a distinctly French sense by using two tubas and having the smaller French C tuba in mind. The writing is soloistic, but spatial and, like the work itself, rhythmically complex. The tuba plays important roles in Stravinsky’s use of folksong elements, octatonic combinations, and rhythmic manipulation. Any serious tuba player or musician should spend time studying this great man.

Shostakovich was also a man of colossal talent and integrity. He, too, found ways to develop and maintain his art and yet survived in a brutal and capricious social and political situation. Unlike the other two composers, he never left his homeland, and, though he was ravaged by the system and held up as an example of the power of the government, he persevered and resurrected his career to high acclaim. Was Shostakovich, starting with the Fifth Symphony, inserting subversive elements and laughing in the face of his tormenters while at the same time presenting a façade of conciliation? The debate on that issue still rages. Shostakovich’s use of the tuba was reminiscent of the more traditional functions of the Rimsky-Korsakov legacy. He scored for the larger contrabass tuba more common to orchestral literature of this period. Like Stravinsky, he used the tuba in a strongly rhythmic function, though his use of rhythm
differs from that of his older colleague. The tuba also serves a strong harmonic purpose, especially in tutti scoring. Shostakovich often employed the instrument in support of thematic material, usually scored with other brass. In his later symphonies, he expanded the use of the tuba and gave it more technical passages. His contribution to music, especially in the symphony and the string quartet, is unquestioned. Any serious student of the symphony must include Shostakovich in his studies.

Prokofiev had his own approach to reconciling his talent and career with the political and social situation of twentieth century Russia. His talent, like the other composers, was prodigious, though his desire for fame was just as great. Recognition was of great importance to him and, after seeking it outside of mother Russia, he returned hoping for a hero’s welcome. He was the only major musical figure to leave Russia as the Revolution was turning the country upside down, and then later return and stay permanently under the stifling regime of Stalinist Soviet rule. He paid a huge price, personally and artistically, for his never-ending search for recognition abroad and at home. Perhaps it was with the Fifth Symphony that he finally found the balance between artistic integrity and social acceptance for which he longed. It is a cruel irony that he died on the same day as Stalin, and so even in death he received scant notice and was completely overshadowed by political events.

In the Fifth Symphony, Prokofiev used the tuba in the most comprehensive manner of the three works in this study. Like Shostakovich, he scored for the contrabass tuba so the range is more traditional. However, Prokofiev scored the tuba in more diverse combinations, often using it with low strings or low winds without other brass. The tuba served an important rhythmic and harmonic function again, but was also employed in a thematic and lyrical role. This is some of the most creative and interesting writing for the instrument and should be required study for the tubist.
These are important and significant composers in the development of the symphonic genre. The life and works of all three deserve attention and study by professional tuba players in the pursuit of informed performance practice.
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