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# Shostakovich—Symphony No. 13 (“Babi Yar”)

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## I. BABI YAR

(Adagio)

In the brief orchestral introduction the intermittent tolling of a bell against heavy, somber harmonies establishes the main tonality of B-flat minor. The voices of the chorus enter with a melancholy theme that suggests a Russian folk song.

Nad Babim Yarom pamyatnikov nyet.  
Krutoi obriv, kak gruboye nadgrobye.  
Mne strashno.  
Mne sevodnya stol'ko let,  
kak samomu yevreiskomu narodu.

Mne kazhetsya seichas—ya iudei.  
Vot ya bredu po drevnemu Yegiptu.  
I vot ya, na kreste raspyati, gibnu,  
i do sikh por na mne—sledi gvozdei.  
Mne kazhetsya, chto Dreyfus—eto ya.  
Meshchanstvo—moi donoschik i sud'ya.  
Ya za reshotkoi. Ya popal v kol'tzo,  
zatravlenni, opliovanni, obolganni;  
i damochki s bryussel'skimi oborkami,  
vizzha, zontami tychnut mne v litzo.  
Mne kazhetsya—ya mal'chik v Belostoke.

Krov liotsya, rastekayas' po polam.  
Beschinstvuyut vozhdì traktirnoi stoiki  
i pakhnut vodkoi s lukom popolam.

Ya, sapogom otbroshenni, bessilen.  
Naprasno ya pogromshchikov molyu.

Pod gogot, "Bei zhidov, spasai Rossii!"  
labaznik izbivayet mat' moyu.

O russki moi narod! Ya znayu ti  
po sushchnosti internatzionalen.  
No chasto te, ch'i ruki nechisty,  
tvoim chisteishim imenem bryatzali.  
Ya znayu dobrotu moei zemli.  
Kak podlo, chto i zhilochkoi ne drognuv,  
antisemity narekli sebya

"Soyuzom russkovo naroda!"

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

Syuda idut?

Ne boisya, eto guly samoi vesny—  
ona syuda idiot.  
Idi ko mne. Dai mne skoreye guby.

Lomayut dver'?

Nyet—eto ledokhod. . . .

### CHORUS

Above Babi Yar there are no monuments.  
The steep cliff is like a crude tombstone.  
I'm frightened.  
Today I am as old  
as the Jewish people.

### SOLO

It seems to me now that I am a Jew.  
Now I am wandering through ancient Egypt.  
And now I am on a cross, crucified, dying,  
and to this moment I show traces of the nails.  
It seems to me that Dreyfus—I am he.  
The Philistines are my informers and my judges.  
I am behind bars. I have fallen into a circle,  
poisoned, spat upon, lied about;  
and fancy ladies, dressed in Brussels lace,  
squealing, jab me in the face with their parasols.  
It seems to me I am a youth in Belostok.

### CHORUS

Blood is pouring, spilling over the floors.  
The saloon barkeeps commit their outrages  
and smell of vodka and onions, half and half.

### SOLO

Kicked aside by a boot, I am helpless.  
In vain I beg the pogromists.

### CHORUS

To the cackle, "Beat the kikes, save Russia!"  
a grain marketeer beats up my mother.

### SOLO

O my Russian people! I know that  
in essence you are international.  
But often those whose hands were unclean  
tarnished your clean name.  
I know the kindness of my land.  
How vile that, without a flicker of a vein,  
the anti-Semites proclaimed themselves

(with Chorus)

"The Union of the Russian People!"

### SOLO

It seems to me I am Anne Frank,  
transparent as a branch in April.  
And I love. And I have no need for phrases.  
But I need for us to gaze into each other.  
There is so little one can see or smell!  
We cannot have the leaves,  
and we cannot have the sky,  
but much is allowed—to embrace  
one another in a dark room.

### CHORUS

Are they coming here?

### SOLO

Don't fear, those are the roars of spring—  
it is coming here.  
Come to me. Quickly, give me your lips.

### CHORUS

Are they battering down the door?

### SOLO

No—it is the breaking up of the ice. . . .

Nad Babim Yarom shelest dikikh trav.  
Derevyà smotryat grozno, po-sudeiski.  
Vsio molcha zdes' krichit,  
i, shapku snyav,  
ya chuvstvuyu, kak medlenno sedeyu.

I sam ya, kak sploshnoi bezzvuchni krik,  
nad tysyachami tysyach pogrebionnikh.  
Ya—kazhdi zdes' rasstrelyanni starik.  
Ya—kazhdi zdes' rasstrelyanni rebionok.  
Nichto vo mne pro eto ne zabudet!

"Internatzional" pust' progremìt,  
kogda naveki pokhoronen budet  
posledni na zemle antisemit.

Yevreiskoi krovi net v krovi moei.  
No nenavisten zloboi zaskoruzloi  
ya vsem antisemitam, kak yevrei.

I potomu, ya nastoyashchi russki!

Tzari, koroli, imperatory—  
vlastiteli vseì zemli—  
komandovali paradami.  
No yumorom, no yumorom ne mogli, ne mogli.  
V dvortsy imenitnykh osob,  
vse dni vozhlezhchikh vykholenno,  
yavlyalsà brodyaga Ezop,  
i nishchimi oni vyglyadeli.

Yavlyalsà brodyaga Ezop,  
i nishchimi oni vyglyadeli.

V domakh gde khanzha nasledil  
svoimi nogami shchuplymi,  
vsyu poshlost' Khadzha Nasr-ed-Din  
sshibal kak shakhmaty shutkami!

Vsyu poshlost' Khadzha Nasr-ed-Din  
sshibal kak shakhmaty shutkami!

Khoteli yumor kupit',

da tol'ko evo ne kupish!

Khoteli yumor ubit',

a yumor pokazyval kukish!

Borotsà s nim delo trudnoe.  
Kaznili evo bez kontza.

Evo golova otrublennaya  
torchala na pike strel'tza.

### CHORUS

Above Babi Yar the rustle of wild grass.  
The trees gaze sternly, as though they are judges.  
Everything here cries out silently,  
and, having removed my cap,  
I feel how bit by bit I am turning gray.

### SOLO

And I am like a gigantic silent scream,  
above the thousands upon thousands buried.  
I am each old man who has been shot dead here.  
I am each small child who has been shot dead here.  
Nothing in me will forget about this!

### CHORUS

Let the "Internationale" thunder forth,  
when for the ages is buried  
the last anti-Semite on earth.

### SOLO

There is no Jewish blood in my blood.  
But I am hated with a bitterness  
by all anti-Semites, as if I were a Jew.

(with Chorus)

For this reason, I am a true Russian!

## II. HUMOR

(Allegretto)

### SOLO

Czars, kings, emperors—  
rulers of all the earth—  
commanded parades.  
But humor, humor they could not.  
In the palaces of the wealthy people,  
where daily they reclined at ease,  
appeared the beggar Aesop,  
and impoverished they appeared.

### CHORUS

Appeared the beggar Aesop,  
and impoverished they appeared.

### SOLO

In homes soiled by hypocrites  
with their puny feet,  
Hadji Nasr-ed-Din swept away this vulgarity  
like clearing a chessboard—with jokes!

### CHORUS

Hadji Nasr-ed-Din swept away this vulgarity  
like clearing a chessboard—with jokes!

### SOLO

They wanted to buy humor,

### CHORUS

but one cannot buy it!

### SOLO

They wanted to kill humor,

### CHORUS

but humor thumbèd his nose!

### SOLO

To battle with him is a difficult task.  
They executed him time and again.

### CHORUS

His severed head  
was hoisted upon a pike.



No lish’ skomorosh i dudochki  
svoi nachinali skaz,  
on zvonko krichal,

SOLO  
But hardly had the ceremonial pipes  
started their knell  
when in a ringing voice he cried,  
(with Chorus)  
“I am here! I am here!”  
and began to dance dashingly.

Potriopannom kutzem pal’tishke,  
ponuryas’ i slovno kayas’,  
prestupnikom politicheskim on, poimanni  
shol na kazn’.  
Vsem vidom pokornost’ vykazyval,  
gotov k nezemnomu zhit’yu,  
kak vdruk iz pal’tishka vyskal’zyval,  
rukoj makhal,

SOLO  
In a shabby, scanty overcoat,  
downcast and as if repenting,  
caught as a political prisoner,  
he was going to his execution.  
To all appearances he showed his obedience,  
he was ready for his afterlife,  
when suddenly he slipped from his overcoat,  
waved his hand,  
(with Chorus)  
and ta-ta!

Yumor pryatali v kamery,  
no chorta sdva udalos’.

SOLO  
They hid humor in cells,  
but the devil may care.

Reshotki i steny kamennye  
on prokhodil na skvoz’.  
Otkashlivayas’ prostuzhenno kak ryadovoi boetz,  
shagal on chastushkoi prostushkoi  
s vintovkoi na Zimni Dvoretz.

SOLO and CHORUS  
The iron bars and walls of stone  
he walked straight through.  
Coughing from a cold like the rank and file,  
with a popular song and a rifle  
he marched upon the Winter Palace.

Privyk on ko vzglyadam sumrachnym  
no eto emu ne vredit.  
I sam na sebya s yumorom  
yumor poroi glyadit.  
On vechen.

SOLO  
He is used to stern glances,  
but this does not bother him.  
And sometimes humor  
even looks at himself with humor.  
He is immortal.

Vechen.

CHORUS  
Immortal.

On lovok.

SOLO  
He is sly.

Lovok.

CHORUS  
Sly.

I yurok.

SOLO, then CHORUS  
And nimble.

Proidiot cherez vsio, cherez vsekh.

SOLO  
He will walk through everything, through everyone.

I tak, da slavitza yumor.  
On muzhestvenni chelovek.

SOLO and CHORUS  
And so, all glory to humor.  
He is a manly person.

III. AT THE STORE  
(Adagio)

A slow, ponderous theme, introduced by the cellos and double basses and taken up  
by the violas, suggests the shuffling of many feet as a line of shoppers gradually  
moves toward the cashier.

SOLO  
Some in shawls, some in scarves,  
as though preparing for some heroic deed or exploit,  
into the store, one by one, silently,  
the women come.

O, bidonov ikh bryatzan’e,  
zvon butylok i kastyul’,  
pakhnet lukom, ogurtzami,  
pakhnet sousom “Kabul’.”

CHORUS  
Oh, the clatter of cans,  
the clanking of bottles and saucepans,  
the smell of onions, cucumbers,  
the smell of the sauce “Kabul’.”

Zyabnu, dolgo v kassu stoya,  
no pokuda dvizhus’ k nei,  
ot dykhanya zhenshchin stol’kikh  
v magazine vsio teplei.  
Oni tikho podzhidayut,  
bogi dobrye sem’i,  
i v rukakh oni szhimayut  
den’gi trudnye svoi.

SOLO  
I’m freezing, standing so long in line for the cashier,  
but as I move closer,  
from the breathing of so many women  
it grows warmer in the store.  
They wait quietly,  
kind family-goddesses,  
and in their hands  
they clutch their hard-earned money.

Oni tikho podzhidayut,  
bogi dobrye sem’i,  
i v rukakh oni szhimayut  
den’gi trudnye svoi.

CHORUS  
They wait quietly,  
kind family-goddesses,  
and in their hands  
they clutch their hard-earned money.

Eto zhenshchiny Rossii,  
eto nasha chest’ i sud.  
I beton oni mesili,  
i pakhali, i kosili.  
Vsio oni perenosili,  
vsio oni perenesut.

SOLO  
These are the women of Russia,  
they are our honor and judgment.  
They have mixed concrete,  
and plowed and reaped.  
They endured everything,  
they will endure everything.

Vsio oni perenosili,  
vsio oni perenesut.

CHORUS  
They endured everything,  
they will endure everything.

Vsio na svete im posil’no,  
stol’ko sily im dano.

SOLO  
Everything on earth is within their power,  
so much strength has been given them.

Ikh obshchityvat’ postydno,  
ikh obveshivat’ greshno.

SOLO and CHORUS  
It is shameful to cheat them,  
it is sinful to overweigh their goods.

I, v karman pel’meni sunuv,  
ya somtryu surov i tikh,  
na ustalye ot sumok  
ruki pravednye ikh.

SOLO  
And having tucked the dumplings into my pocket,  
I gaze, stern and subdued,  
on their righteous hands,  
tired from shopping bags.

IV. FEARS  
(Largo)

A highly inventive, atmospheric tuba solo leads to a recitativelike passage for the  
basses of the chorus, sung on a reiterated low G-sharp.

CHORUS  
Fears are dying in Russia,  
like phantoms of former years,  
lingering only on church steps, like old women,  
in a few places, who beg for bread.

Y a ikh pomnyu vo vlasti i sile,  
pri dvore torzhestvuyushchei lzhi.  
Strakhi vsyudu, kak teni, skol’zili,  
pronikali vo vse etazhi.  
Potikhon’ku lyudei priruchali  
i na vsio nalagali pechat’.  
Gde molchat’ by krichat’ priuchali,  
i molchat’ gde by nado krichat’.  
Eto stalo sevodnya daliokim,  
dazhe stranno i vspomnit’ teper’.

SOLO  
I remember them in power and strength,  
at the court of triumphant falsehood.  
Fears, like shadows, slithered about everywhere,  
they penetrated every floor.  
Bit by bit they tamed the people  
and placed their seal upon everything.  
Where there should be silence, they taught shouting,  
and silence where it was necessary to shout.  
This, today, has become distant,  
it is strange even to remember now.



Taini strakh pered ch'im to donosom,  
taini strakh pered stukom v dver'.  
Nu, a strakh govorit' s inostrantzem?  
S inostrantzem to chto, a s zhenoi?  
Nu, a strakh bez otchotni ostatsa  
posle marshei vdvoiom s tishinoi?

Ne boyalis' my stroit' v meteli,  
ukhodit' pod snaryadami v boi,  
No boyalis' poroyu smertel'no  
razgovarivat' sami s soboi.  
Nas ne sbili i ne rastlili,  
i ne darom seichas vo vragakh,  
pobedivshaya strakhi Rossiya,  
eshcho bol'shii rozhdaet strakh!

Strakhi novye vizhu svetleya,  
strakh neiskrennoi byt' so strannoi,  
strakh nepravdoi unizit' idei  
chto yavlyayutsa pravdoi samoi.  
Strakh fanfarit' do oduren'ya,  
strakh chuzhie slova povtoryat',  
strakh unizit' drugikh nedover'em,  
i chrezmerno sebe doveryat'.

Umirayut v Rossii strakhi.

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

The secret fear of someone informing,  
the secret fear of a knock on the door.  
Well, wasn't it fearsome to talk to a foreigner?  
With a foreigner, or even your wife?  
And, what of the unaccountable fear of remaining  
after some march, two together in silence?

#### CHORUS

We were not afraid to build in snowstorms,  
to go into battle under fire,  
but we were deathly afraid  
to talk to ourselves.  
We were not thrown down or corrupted,  
and no wonder that now in our enemies  
Russia, having overpowered her fears,  
spreads even greater fear!

#### SOLO

New fears I see appearing,  
the fear of being insincere with one's country,  
the fear of debasing with lies ideas  
that are truths themselves.  
The fear of self-elevation to excess,  
the fear of repeating someone else's words,  
the fear of debasing others with distrust,  
and of trusting one's own self excessively.

#### CHORUS

Fears are dying in Russia.

#### SOLO

And as I write these lines,  
and at times unconsciously rush,  
I write them with the sole fear  
that I am not writing in full force.

### V. A CAREER

(Allegretto)

The tempo quickens for an orchestral introduction that precedes the  
entrance of the solo voice.

#### SOLO

The priests insisted that evil  
and unwise was Galileo.

#### CHORUS

That unwise was Galileo,  
that unwise was Galileo.

#### SOLO

But, as time shows,  
he who is unwise is more wise.

#### CHORUS

He who is unwise is more wise,  
he who is unwise is more wise.

#### SOLO

A scholar—a contemporary of Galileo—  
was no more stupid than Galileo.

Byl Galileya ne glupee,  
byl Galileya ne glupee.

On znal, chto vertitsa zemlya,  
no u nevo byla sem'ya.

No u nevo byla sem'ya,  
no u nevo byla sem'ya.

I on, sadyas' s zhenoi v karetu,  
svershiv predatel'stvo svoio,  
schital, chto delaet kar'eru,  
a mezhdru tem gubil eio.

A mezhdru tem gubil eio,  
a mezhdru tem gubil eio.

Za osoznanie planety  
shol Galilei odin na risk,  
i stal velikim on.

I stal velikim on.

Vot eto—

Ya ponimayu kar'erist!

Itak, da zdravstvuet kar'era,  
kogda kar'era takova,  
kak u Shekspira i Pastera,  
Nyutona i Tolstovo—i Tolstovo.

L'va? . . . L'va!

Zachem ikh gryazyu pokryvali?  
Talent—talant, kak ne kleimi.

Zabyty te, kto proklinali.

No pomnyat tekh, kovo klyali,  
no pomnyat tekh, kovo klyali.

Vse te, kto rvalis' v stratosferu,  
vrachi, chto gibli ot kholer—  
vot eti delali kar'eru!

Ya s ikh kar'er beru primer.

Ya veryu v ikh svyatuyu veru.  
Ikh vera muzhestvo moio.  
Ya delayu sebe kar'eru  
tem, chto ne delayu eio!

#### CHORUS

Was no more stupid than Galileo,  
was no more stupid than Galileo.

#### SOLO

He knew that the earth revolves—  
but he had a family.

#### CHORUS

But he had a family,  
but he had a family.

#### SOLO

And he, sitting with his wife in a carriage,  
having committed his betrayal,  
thought he was establishing a career,  
but actually he was destroying it.

#### CHORUS

But actually he was destroying it,  
but actually he was destroying it.

#### SOLO

To comprehend our planet  
Galileo risked alone,  
and he became great.

#### CHORUS

And he became great.

#### SOLO

Now this—

(with Chorus)

I understand as a careerist!

#### CHORUS

And so, hail to a career,  
when a career is like that of  
a Shakespeare and Pasteur,  
Newton and Tolstoy—and Tolstoy.

SOLO, then CHORUS

Leo? . . . Leo!

#### CHORUS

Why did they slander them?  
Talent is talent, no matter what.

#### SOLO

They are forgotten, those who cursed.

#### CHORUS

But those are remembered who were cursed,  
but those are remembered who were cursed.

#### SOLO

All those who reached for the stratosphere,  
the doctors, who perished from cholera—  
they were the ones who made careers!

(with Chorus)

From their careers I take my example.

#### SOLO

I believe in their sacred belief.  
Their belief is my manhood.  
I make my own career  
by not working at it!

Transliterations and translations by Igor Buketoff