Once again Erich Leinsdorf proved oleo expression. The ponderous Leinsdorf and the Boston Symphony, they were equally distributive Schumann playing in Symphony Hall for many seasons. Once again Erich Leinsdorf proved masterly mounting drive and excitement. periodic pulse of strings. fiery matter, though not because of the reading, which displayed steadily ties: clarinet against the Tonal Opulence

Compared to Eugene Mravinsky’s Khatchaturian minor modes, Shostakovitch Tenth parallels Di- tiring stance. The Tenth is a dramatic. The bold outline of his relentless heroism becomes a treatment, available on records, sweeping prc,clamations.

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Admirable Grasp

This ambitious statement exists, an orchestrator as well-known. It speaks of, confidently, as a different personality from the artistic camp follower of a recent decade.

The third movement, featuring the French and English horns over a thrumming pizzicato ac,relation to contemporary life that may speak of, confidently, as a different personality from the artistic camp follower of a Recent decade. It highlights the composer’s admir-ship throughout; the orchestration is urgently profound, and the work, ends in a brilliantly controlledilnspired

In short, this music is the equivalent of the Soviet ideal as expressed, say, in gigantic Mišlenski-influenced, paintings dealing with the visual glories of the collective farm and factory, or in beheading statues of Lenin in a flock coat. Such statement may, indeed, involve elements of technical insight. They are so divorced, nevertheless, from my relation to contemporary life that even for all their skill they appear fraudulent.

Inspiried Version

Particularly no, when gifted against an inspired version of Schumann’s Fourth, which speaks the authentic romantic accent of its age. Schumann’s insobriety as an orchestrator is well-known. It could not be detected in Mr. Leiner- dorf’s clear, graceful, flowing accen-

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Tonal Opulence

The Shostakovitch was another matter, though not because of the reading, which displayed steadily ties: clarinet against the Tonal Opulence. Compared to Eugene Mravinsky’s treatment, available on records, Mr. Leinsdorf’s ideas are more dramatic. The bold outline of his Shostakovitch Tenth parallels Di- tiring stance. The Tenth is a dramatic. The bold outline of his relentless heroism becomes a treatment, available on records, sweeping prc,clamations.

But the Symphony does not sustain itself. The opening move-ment is diffuse, the second owes much to Prokofiev and to the early Shostakovitch whom one may speak of, confidently, as a different personality from the artistic camp follower of a recent decade.

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Leinsdorf Conducts the Tenth Symphony

By Harold Rogers

Perhaps two long Shostakovich symphonies within 24 hours are a bit more than even the hardiest music lover would care to digest, yet that is what some of us were compelled to do between 8:30 Thursday night and 4 o'clock Friday afternoon. The diet was not unpalatable nor even unpleasant; it was just a lot of heavy eating with little or no dessert.

No less an orchestra than the Leningrad Philharmonic gave us the Shostakovich Eighth while paying Boston its first visit on Thursday night, and the Boston Symphony is bringing us the Tenth this weekend. One sometimes wonders by what means, diplomatic or otherwise, such interesting junctures occur in the programming of two major orchestras. Yet whether by happenstance or intention, some of us now know a lot more about Shostakovich in his more recent creative years.

If the Eighth Symphony of 1943 was a protracted searching of the composer's anguished soul, the Tenth Symphony of a decade later reveals, one gratefully discovers, an improved state of affairs. Not that there were no alarums in Erich Leinsdorf's reading of the Tenth yesterday; there were several explosions to heighten the tension and rouse the heart for battle. But the prevailing mood of the Tenth is quite different from that of the Eighth. Both, of course, are intensely personal statements by this greatest of living Soviet composers, yet the Tenth finds him considerably more optimistic, at times even reveling in something that could be called joy.

His opening Moderato establishes a lyrical longing, a mood of wondering, seeking, never finding, that is broken by a climax of shrieking havoc, after which the introspection again takes over.

The Allegro abruptly plunges into one of those militaristic action scenes for which Shostakovich is famous. Here he establishes a good trot, replete with drum rolls, cymbal crashes, trumpet fanfares. Even Mr. Leinsdorf assumed an equestrian posture.

For the Allegretto the composer gives us a slightly grotesque little waltz, restrained, economical, with lovely horn calls; yet this, too, evolves into something strong, stirring, and strident.

The final Andante opens with a pastoral melody by the oboe; then, as the tempo turns into an Allegro, the music skitters along trippingly, joyously, even with a measure of humor.

Perhaps the Boston Symphony did not bring off the Tenth with the same precision displayed by the Leningrad in the Eighth; yet the Russians have long lived with this music, while the Bostonians were playing it for the first time.

Mr. Leinsdorf opened with an unusually clear traversal of the Schumann Fourth, the clearest within memory. In part he used Gustav Mahler's arrangement, which doubtless did something to eliminate its usual muddy character; but it would seem that the clarity was due mainly to Mr. Leinsdorf's method of handling the orchestra, of displaying certain elements in the light while placing others in the shade.
Leinsdorf Triumphs
With Shostakovich

The Boston Symphony Orchestra performed a colorful program yesterday afternoon, and well received its first Shostakovich interpretation, the Fifth Symphony, in a recital by Schuman, and the Lento No. 10 by Gustav Mahler.

By CYRUS DURGIN

Erich Leinsdorf triumphed with the Symphony No. 10 by Dmitri Shostakovich in its first performance by the Boston Symphony Orchestra yesterday afternoon. One had not expected that a work from 1925, a few years, younger, warmer, more vivid in color or intense in passion from the mid-19th Century, like the D minor by Schumann.

Yet this was precisely the situation yesterday, and the dominant reason seemed to be not the essential character of either work but the nature of Leinsdorf’s conducting. Shostakovich seemed to stimulate his imagination and release his energies, Schumann, contrariwise, had the effect of containing Leinsdorf within a mood of quasi-classical austerity and moderate tempo.

Tempo cannot be identical with all conductors in the same work, though it should be approximately. There is a small margin for personal elision, altogether legitimate, and this margin found Leinsdorf at the slower end. Leinsdorf (animated) with him was really lebhaft only in the latter portion of Schumann’s finale; the same tempo marking in the first and third movements meant something much slower.

Nor was the conductor susceptible to the emotional demands of Schumann, though he was most careful to make all as clear as possible, and consistent in style. That he needed in part a thinning-out-of-doubled-notes revision made by Gustav Mahler, was of academic interest. The difference between Schuman and Mahler was not as great as one might think in the intellectu-alized reading.

But the long, involved Shostakovich No. 10, with its huge orchestra, difficult and virtuoso orchestration, aroused Leinsdorf’s powers, and the result was a truly brilliant tapestry of color and rhythm, accents and sweeping lines. And all, mind you, with a fabulous clarity of balance between the instrumental sections.

Shostakovich has been pushed low on the symphonic market for some years, at least in this country. The Seventh and Eighth Symphonies were massive, even bloated, and full of war-induced fehibilities; the Ninth was expert but lightweight.

To my mind, the Tenth restores Shostakovich to the eminence established by his Fifth and Sixth Symphonies. The avant-garde boys may sneer at its tonal harmonic style, and maintain that Shostakovich manifests dissonance not much ahead of, let us say, “Le Sacre du Printemps.”

The Morning Globe
October 20, 1962
There is no longer any doubt about it—the Boston Symphony sounds better. Particularly the upper strings are more limpid and more incisive. As a matter of fact, at one point last weekend I heard Mr. Leinsdorf the most extended crescendo I have ever heard or expect to hear. There was also a sotto voce passage that defied description. The woodwind ensemble is dreamy, the brass better proportioned. But all of these adornments have occurred as Mr. Leinsdorf has aimed at the heart of the work in hand. There is no hint of the showcase; one's attention is drawn to the essence of a composition, so much so, in fact, that this listener finds the conductor's individuality still eclipsed rather than revealed.

The admirable Virgil Thomson once wrote on what he called musical sceneism, of which there has always been plenty in New York. Mr. Leinsdorf's tight rein is not to be equated with such a quality. The BSO's new sound is still one of aspiration; so much so that a few mishaps among the chorus of horns can be taken in stride as though one's aim is just beyond one's grasp.

The Schumann Symphony No. 4 (really the second in order of composition) sent us scurrying through Mr. Burk's program notes less we lose the advantages of knowing which version of the symphony was being played. It seems Brahms, Weingartner, Mahler and others have been in the act, and Schumann, himself had second thoughts. These BSO subscribers who like to regard a work of art in the round, as it were, had an unusually interesting time sorting out their impressions of a resoundingly beautiful work, conceived as though the world was still young and performed as though it still were. An unexpected fringe benefit that accrued was that by laying Schumann's four movements end to end (as he wished) listeners were excluded with the conclusion. We were thus spared the usual paradigmatic movements—its inevitable excitation of guilty transcription and satirical complicity throughout the house. One's heart bleeds for the listener but one's artistic conscience is drawn more to the matter at hand, which after all is unhindered, uninterrupted, unharnessed attention to an eventment experience. For the most part the audience seems to see it this way. It is more attentive than formerly.

The Shostakovich tenth is another expansive piece of self-revelation. It is as though the composer were reporting a lengthy episode of his own life as he confronts his world—a world no doubt as much less malleable to his desires, less accommodating, than the world is to us. In fact the Soviet creative artist's department, via-a-vo his consumable self-expression, is all too dimly guessed at by us. This all adds interest. It also some dalliance, as a Shostakovich work unrolls itself. Is it indeed he is addressing in the first place? Is the signal getting through to us or do we lack certain emotional clues?

Possibly, while this music carries enormous entertainment validity, its true character and artistic purpose are revealed only to those who steep themselves in its performance. Mr. Leinsdorf and the BSO appear to have assimilated its musical essence. Their bold and well-paced delivery of it gives us the maximum chance of understanding it. But I am not convinced that we do, ultimately. Perhaps we have partly lost the knack of being simple. In our musical pleasures, certainly it is unusual nowadays for a composer to turn his fond inventiveness to the task of expressing romantically a deeply personal drama. But Shostakovich does so, with consummate assurance, and last weekend's performance must be hailed as a resoundingly effective one.

Leinsdorf Getting Better Sound

October 25, 1962