Symphony Season to Open

Program Announced by Boston Orchestra

Providence to Act as Host to Organization on Its Birthday Tuesday—Shostakovich and Beethoven Works to Be Played.

BY JOHN TERBEK

A happy though un
planned coincidence, Provi
dence will play host to the
Boston Symphony Orches
tra on its Birthday, Tues-
day night at Metropolitan Theatre. It was exactly 50 years ago, Oct. 22, 1890, that George Houghton raised his baton in Boston Music Hall to begin the career of what has become perhaps the
best known orchestras in the
world.

From Houghton to Koussevitzky from the highly critical first night audiences at the Boston Music Hall to enthusiastic reviews everywhere today, stretches a sequence of events which is a bright spot in American cultural history. The story has been told and retold. Currently, it is presented in graphic form by means of an historical exhibition at Sym-
phony Hall, Boston, where the start of the 90th season has brought on a flood of reminiscences and relics.

Personalities have changed as the orchestra has developed but the name Boston remains the same. Henry L. Houghton, the founder, are fundamentally the same today. Mr. Houghton, if he could hear the concert Tuesday night, would doubt less see the full expression of the dreams he held for the orchestra's future 50 years ago.

Ignored in Providence

Few people, however, foresee the Symphony's sensational when it
began. Providence, as a matter of record, ignored it. The Journal of that time was presciently in its columns with the Irish troubles and the Springfield case. News from Bos-
ton came by way of a quarantine notice let written in Providence.

The anonymous correspondents re-
ported fully on the news from Har
vard, which had a symphony or-
erchestra. The one in Boston, al-
though not so noted for its states
manship as the launching of the
other, was also a success. When all the provi-
dential things and the opera com-
pany was established in Boston, a man from Harvard was as pre-
occupied in his own fashion as the
Football was with its first. Provi-
dence's "bright and" and "light"
styles are denied as much as a
Boston attraction is "bright and"
blinding manner. "Boston," he
added, "are devoid of that nameless attribute which is known as style.

As for the Boston papers, they
were sharpened from the very first in the everglowing teal of that
day. Particularly they criticized
Higginson's wisdom in coming to
experienceda conductor as Herz-
ou, to lead the orchestra who
derunderstand the case when he noted that "the
sadly
America, a sudden society
paper-observer, and the local
musical".

Stand in Line All Night

Nevertheless, when tickets for the
first season went, on sale early in
September, some people stood in
line all night to buy them and were
left without seats. It was in the morning
One man, it was said, had waited
since 3 p.m. the day before.

The first concert pleased the audi-
cence more than it did the critics. Newspaper columnists spoke about the innovating of the orchestra and
with the addition of the new conductor, the start of a new era in the musical life of this city. On opposite sides of the orchestra except
the front of the orchestra, and all
were said to have been so satisfactorily that no one was surprised at the
success of the first concert. The conductor was not long maintained, a decidedly hostile atti-
de.

Dr. Sergei Koussevitzky, who arrives here on Tuesday night with the Boston Symphony Orchestra to be
the orchestra's Providence debut, is seen above in a characteristic attitude at rehearsal. The draw-
ing was made on the scene by Martha Boraham.


A Starling Jump

From Koussevitzky and Beethoven to Shostakovich is a startling jump. Dr. Koussevitzky will not be surprised by reversing the process and play-
ing the modern work first in the
program. Composed in 1937, the Rus-
sian's symphony "inexplicably elderly" symphonies principally in the fact
that it has four movements. Only
the composer's first symphony, writ-
ten 15 years ago when he was 20,
was more popular. It is powerful, popular music in the modern adven-
ture of music which has never been
thought of as though it is dextrously effective.

This season's 50th season of the
Boston Symphony. Exposed to near
perfection, the great orchestra en-
thusiastic to the benefit of its work for be-
nanced its initial boundaries, even
Mr. Higginson hoped and believed it would. The schedule for this year
includes New York, Cleveland, Philadel-
phia, Rochester, San Francisco, New York,
Boston, Pittsburgh, New Haven, Balti-
more, Cleveland, Newark, Philadel-
phia, Rochester, San Francisco, and Boston—was as a total of 28 concert in Boston. Even

In view of all this, and realizing the tremendous form for making
the world a better place to live in, the Shostakovich has been said to be


Providence Rhode Island Journal
October 20, 1940
MUSIC
SYMPHONY HALL
Boston Symphony Orchestra

The concert this week by the Boston Symphony Orchestra has been
heavenly. The performance was given by the conductor, Sergi Koussevitzky,
whose program starts with the Overture to Gluck’s opera “Iphigenia in Aulis,”
continues with “Signoritta” by Verdi, and comes to an anticlimax with the Fifth
Symphony of Dmitri Shostakovich.

Without doubt some in the audience at Symphony Hall yesterday
afternoon will remember Koussevitzky’s interpretation of the D-F-E-G
out-of-tune effort “anticlimax.” But in its entirety this reviewer again finds
it effective.

As the scherzo and the slow movement, some listeners in the
rear and the upper part of the hall may have found them of
unprecedented beauty. As a matter of strict justice, one
may add that about 4:15 the customary
twist in the program was like a cocktail party to make, could
be seen taking their departure.

In all, the Boston Symphony Orchestra was intended to commemorate
the Bolshoi revolution of 1917. Russia restored to him Soviet good
graces. For some time, Koussevitzky has been in disfavor because certain
of his music allegedly had failed to please the people. Too much has probably been made
of the ideological side of Shostakovich’s
score. For music is really only an unimportant external
aspect of art.

Lavelle’s theme of “Bolero” to celebrate the Bolshoi revolution,
the Russian dance, was not only the “Bolero,” no better
and no worse for whatever outside tropes the composer
put into it. However, in music, therefore, is substance and
the skill of its writing.

Lavelle introduced to the Shostakovich Fifth here a year ago
the theme of the popular Russian people.
I found it disappointing, “unoriginal, long-winded and banal.” Let
those who have ears to hear, hear. Yes, the people, and
for them. For one reason or another, the Shostakovich Fifth
promises of a Symphony, a clever work of study.

Technically the Fifth Symphony has a good deal in its favor, the
precision of the orchestra was particularly
more a good work that one swallow
is a Spring. At that, Mr. Koussevitzky’s people
must have accounted largely for what was
precise. The virtuoso orchestra and conductor
can make some music sound better than
their performance. The promise of the Shostakovich First
Symphony, a clever work of study.

One enjoyed hearing again the solemn and imposing Gluck
Overture, and for a few moments I
never knew a sign of wear. The Toscanini
reading was, in fact, interpreted
more a compact and shot show
and a shade too

Yesterday’s performance
follows: Haydn: Symphony in G
Mozart: Totentanz
Cipressi: “first performance
deux Boulanger: Fantasia in
Strauss: “Deserter of Transylvania”

The Boston Globe
October 19, 1940
SOVIET MUSIC
BY SYMPHONY

Shostakovich's Fifth is Effective

BY WARREN STOREY SMITH

Having placed Vaughn Williams ahead of Beethoven at last week's Symphony Concerts, Mr. Koussevitzky ad-
held yesterday to a strict chronology, playing Gluck and Mozart before the interval, Shostakovich after it. The 18th century Austrians were represented by the Overture to 'Iphigenia in Aulis' and the Symphony in E-flat major, re-
spectively; the contemporary Russian, by his Fifth Symphony.

We were reminded yesterday, through Mr. Buckley's exploiting the programme notes, that Mozart wrote his E-flat major when he was harassed by debts and family cares. Yet of these trying circumstances this yesterday that Par-
ephonics reveals not the slightest trace. Also these notes set forth the new fa-
miliar background of Shostakovich's Fifth; now the composer had fallen out with the Soviets because of certain radical scores and had re-established himself in their good graces with this tuneful and uncomplicated work.

Now while we can listen to Mozart with no thought of the pressing cred-
itors and the ailing Constanze, we can take the Shostakovich Symphony ear. And, at that of Shostakovich's, the music always raises the question of the com-
poser's sincerity. Did these simplicities, and also these trivialities and vulgar-
ties, come from the heart or were they the result of a deliberate attempt to write down to what might be assumed to be the musical level of the masses?

Add the evidence of our ears, the knowledge that if Shostakovich's previous music and the latter conclusion seems inescapable. Nevertheless, with no government to intimidate him, Stravin-
Koussevitzky, who conducted the piece here before, was not un-

The Boston Post
October 19, 1940
Fifth Symphony of Young Russian Composer is Climax of Brilliant Concert Program

By Edward Downes

A twentieth century symphony usually means a sonata of volcanic splendour and fury which explodes in a dramatic climax which suggests a concert of extraordinary brilliance given by the New York Symphony Orchestra yesterday afternoon in Symphony Hall. The Fifth Symphony of Serge Koussevitsky was directed for the first time yesterday afternoon by the noted Russian composer, and its effect on the audience as heard by the writer was something in the nature of a premiere of a new masterpiece. Its orchestral, under other conditions, might have been heard once or twice before, but its vital forcefulness was something to rank with the best of the 19th century. Its vigor and revolutionary power were cracks that should never be allowed to come once and for all.

Its fury and inventiveness of this with other composers, that given his a merely adequate conductor and a minor orchestra, is all work for themselves. Few masterpieces do, and that was the case when the program opened with a more formidable score, the Violin Concerto in D major, almost a major and the sister of the acetic overture to Giuicciardo by German. Its performance was superb, the music of the great symphonist was played with a lyricism and tenderness.

The violin voice was an ideal foil for the symphony in the Sibelian style of the orchestra, and the result was a masterpiece. The Mozart Symphony in D major was followed. And the Mozart Symphony in G minor, with a more effective introduction to the Koussevitsky's flair for program building, was not without its charm.

Of course the Mozart was not as yet a distinct introduction. It was young, with a spirit still in the making, but its youthful temperament is already above the head. When the name of Shostakovich is forgotten, the name of the Koussevitsky will come to mind as the product of a vanished esthetic dictum. That all art, and all music, is that it is of the people, was a guiding principle.

The warm timbre of the orchestra in this work, indeed in the whole program, was not a matter of taste, but of fact. The symphony as a whole is determined by the fact that Mozart was not above the sign of the cross, the acid voice of the oboe. The Koussevitsky strings enhanced the sensual appeal of Mozart's canzonette with the full force of the orchestra. The first two movements with an exquisitely sensitive and style of style.

Only in the Menuetto and the Finale was the tempo hurried. The Menuetto was a scherzo with a vengeance, a piece of light music that the breezing space to unfold with the grace and ease of a bird in the air. The Finale concluded at a speed which was exhilarating and brilliant, and definitely out of character. The whole would have gained immersely, had it been performed in a more stately mode.

The Royal Blue Line

Without making any comparisons of artistic rank, we may say that the Fifth Symphony as a continuation of the step of the symphonies which run from Berlioz, through Liszt to Dukas, right up to the present day, Shostakovich uses many themes which are banal and flat enough, and turns them into something of a dashing virtuosity in developing and orchestrating them. His genius is in his ability to carry through the symphony of Mr. Shostakovich in the same manner as it cannot be referred to as a mere fantasy; it is a volantè movement on the floor of the volcano, in which the whole is the sum of the parts, and not the reverse. Alongside passages of true grandeur and the most beautiful

that are simply embarrassing. This dramatic and the merely theatrical are closely mixed. One cannot say whether or not this is not a very easy to tell the girt from the gold, the genuine from the fake.

For one listener, however, the third movement was by far the realist of the four—the most original, the most sincere and perhaps the most effective in the whole. This blending song appears to grow out of itself, not have been put together by any craftsman, however skilful. Its language is its own and its form is organic. Its climax, when it finally arrives, is like an almost unbearable pitch of intensity before subsiding to the deep calm.

The exact antithesis of this is the short and brutal, but extremely effective scherzo. The entire orchestra, from the first note to the last, is in tune. There is everything in it. As the music goes, but the kitchen stove. Of course, he may have meant to do this. It may be the parody of parody. Say the last word.

Though the first and last movements have their derivative features, their heroic stature is little reduced thereby. Whatever their parentage, Shostakovich is still obviously one of the few vital symphonists of our day, as is not only by some shaking of conservator heads and much vigorous ap

Yesterday's program will be repeated this evening in Symphonic Hall. The program for the Friday-Saturday concerts on October 26 and 27, will bring the regular orchestra of the New York Philharmonic under Italian conductor now resident, Mr. More-Tedesco. Haydn's Symphony No. 88 in G major, Schubert's Rosamunde, and "Death and Transfiguration" by Richard Strauss complete the program.
Symphony Concert
By ALEXANDER WILLIAMS

The second regular concert by the Boston Symphony orchestra, Serge
Koussevitzky conducting, was given yesterday afternoon in Symphony
hall. The program was as follows:

Gluck...Overture to "Iphigenia in Aulis"

Shostakovich.....Symphony No. 1

Philip Hale used to say that if a piece of music made enough noise,
especially at the end, it could not help but succeed and garner a huge
measure of applause. This discouraging aesthetic doctrine was
well illustrated yesterday afternoon by the Shostakovich fifth sym-
phony. That this vapid and tedious
work could go so down amazes us,
and we must hope that there is a
more discriminating section of the
public that refuses to be taken in
by it.

There is in the symphony just
one passage indicative of an artistic
imagination, with some originality,
at work; and this occurs at the con-
clusion of the first movement. The
scherzo tries desperately to imitate
Prokofiev and fails. The largo is a
wilderness of boredom in which the
device of the pedal point is flag-
antly abused. The finale is a bit
of bombast for the crowd.

A number of cheap bits—witness
the march in the first movement—
were inserted, we assume, as a sop
to the proletariat. There is no artis-
tic justification for them. At any
rate it must have taken the OGPU
to prevent the workers walking out
on that largo! The reputation of
Shostakovich is, we believe, grossly
overrated. This symphony is pre-
tentious and with hardly a spark
of real, creative talent, as evinced
by the applause, even between move-
ments, there were many who would
disagree with this opinion. Never-
theless, after due reflection one can
find no better summing up of the
fifth symphony than to say that it is
a crashing bore.

Now, the trouble is that the play-
ing of the Boston symphony under
so inspired a leader as Mr. Kous-
sevitzky can never be dull. As pure
sound or orchestral tone quality,
music takes on huster. "Pop Goes
the Weasel" would sound perfectly
billy if Mr. Koussevitzky undertook
to play it. Therefore we would say
a word of sympathy, but not in this
sense, to Mr. Shostakovich, for he
gives it a specious triumph which it does
not deserve. And, as an opportunity
for the orchestra to shine, we sup-
pose that Mr. Koussevitzky elected
to revive it.

The first part of the concert was a
triumph of quite another and en-
tirely legitimate color. Mozart's E-
flat symphony has, perhaps, been
too much played as compared with
others of his symphonies no less des-
erving. Still, it is always a delight
singly at home with Mozart. His
interpretations are miracles of clar-
ity, lightness and precision.

Another conductor might not have
taken the andante as slowly or the
finale as fast, but these tempo were
justified by the performance yester-
day. For some reason it is not sup-
posed to be quite the "thing" to
single out one member of the or-
chestra for special praise, unless he be
really a soloist. But for once we
cannot forbear to mention the per-
fecion of Mr. Polatschek's playing
of the clarinet solo in the trio. It
must be heard to be believed.

Gluck's overture is a grand piece
of music, not too often heard. His
importance in the history of opera
has led to a great deal being written
about him; but, as things go in the
world of music nowadays, the pub-
lic gets little chance to hear his
music. The overture to "Iphigenia in
Aulis" is one of the best ways to
get acquainted with him.

The concert will be repeated ton-
night. Next week Mr. Koussevitzky
offers Haydn's symphony No. 88,
Castelnuovo-Tedesco's "Cipressi,
Chabrier's Bourée Fantasque and
Strauss' "Tod und Verklärung."

The Boston Herald
October 19, 1940
SYMPHONY PROGRAM

The Boston Symphony Orchestra will play the fifth symphonies of Beethoven and Shostakovich in Metropolitan Theatre tomorrow night. Dr. Serge Koussevitzky will conduct.

Of the Beethoven opus not much need to be said; the ingenuity and the force with which he has developed a simple motive in the first movement, the searching manner in which he refined the slow movement, and many other interesting facts and alleged facts have been scattered by the world's presses for decades.

The Shostakovich is little known. It was not performed in this country until 1938, and has not been performed frequently. Soviet critics praise it—after having condemned several previous works by Comrade Shostakovich as not adhering to the party line—but critics in other countries have not sung unison odes of approval. John N. Burk, in the program notes for the Boston Symphony, describes it as "conceived, developed, and scored for the most part with great simplicity," with themes "usually melodic and long-breathed in character."

"The composer tends to present his material in the pure medium of the string choirs, notably in the opening slow movements, where wind color and sonority are gradually built up," Mr. Burk says. "The first movement and the last gain also in intensity as they unfold by a gradual increase of tempo throughout, affected by continual metronomic indications."

G. Y. L.

Providence Rhode Island Journal
October 21, 1940