



Shostakovich in Leipzig

A musical celebration to mark the 50th anniversary of his death

14–20 May 2025 (ML 687)

7 days • £3,890

Lecturer: Elizabeth Wilson

Eight performances of works by Dmitri Shostakovich.

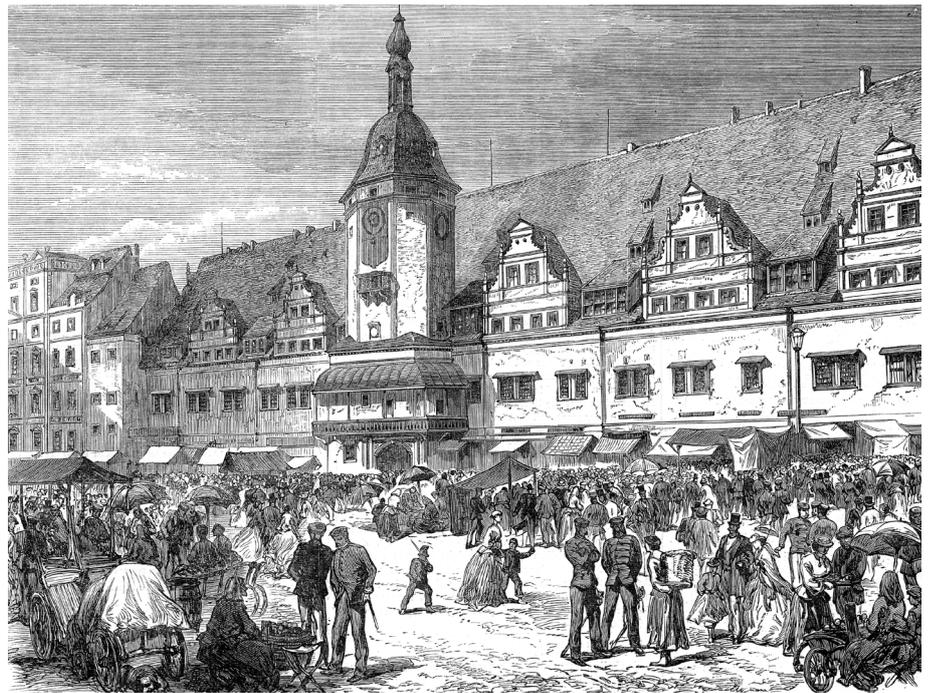
Ensembles include the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, with Andris Nelsons and soloists, including Daniil Trifonov and Baiba Skride.

Centrally-located hotel within walking distance of the venue and restaurants.

Daily talks on the music by Shostakovich biographer Elizabeth Wilson.

There are many links between the Russian Soviet era Dimitri Shostakovich, one of the 20th century's most inventive and creative composers, and the city of Leipzig. In 1950, on the bicentenary of the death of Johann Sebastian Bach, people gathered in the city from all over the world to pay homage to Germany's greatest composer, and to see his remains reinterred from their former resting place to the vault of the Church of St Thomas. Shostakovich was one of a 27-strong Soviet delegation sent to attend the celebration. The festivities were preceded by a Bach competition for various categories of performers: violinists, pianists, singers, harpsichord players and organists. Shostakovich arrived ahead of the delegation as he was appointed to the jury of the Piano competition. Here the first prize winner Tatyana Nikolayeva was presented with both volumes of Bach's Well Tempered Clavier, a work particularly dear to Shostakovich, who had learned it by heart at the age of 12. A pianist of great accomplishment, he had at one time seriously considered a career as a performer.

During the festival, the conductor Kirill Kondrashin performed Shostakovich's first Symphony, which the composer attended. But most of his time was taken up going to the ceremonies, giving a public lecture about Bach, and watching live performances, which he loved. The Leipzig experience was an inspiration to Shostakovich. In the autumn of that year he started work on his own cycle of 24 Preludes and Fugues, which he completed in early spring of 1951. When the cycle was auditioned by the Union of Composers, Shostakovich's new work was criticised for its "formalist", "anti-people" ideology. "Who are



Leipzig, Altes Rathaus wood engraving from *The Illustrated London News*, 1866.

you writing for, Comrade Shostakovich?" was the frequent rebuke. Such were the complex and uncomfortable times in Soviet culture in the final years of Stalin's reign. Yet, in spite of the efforts made to silence him, Shostakovich had the determination to keep composing. Now the city of Leipzig honours this great 20th-century composer marking his own anniversary, in one of the most comprehensive programmes to examine his works.

Beyond the concerts, guided walks and visits investigate Leipzig's heritage and the musical history of the city, which encompasses not only the Bach family but also Telemann, Robert and Clara Schumann, Mendelssohn, Wagner, Mahler and Kurt Masur. There is time to enjoy the excellent museums – the Fine Arts Museum, the radically refurbished Museum of Musical Instruments and the rejuvenated Bach Museum.

Itinerary

Day 1. Morning flight from London Heathrow to Berlin (British Airways) with onward travel to Leipzig (c. 3 hours) by private coach. Time to settle into the hotel before dinner in the hotel restaurant.

Day 2. The morning talk is followed by a walk with a local guide to introduce the layout and main buildings of Leipzig's historic centre. In the afternoon visit the Grassi Museum of Musical Instruments, one of the most important of its kind in the world. *Evening concert at the Gewandhaus with Andris Nelsons (conductor), Daniil Trifonov (piano) and the Gewandhaus Orchestra: Festive Overture, Op.96; Piano Concerto No.2 in F, Op.102; Symphony No.4 in C minor, Op.43.*

Day 3. After the daily talk, a guided tour of the excellent museum at the Bach Archive. *Early-afternoon concert at the Gewandhaus with Albrecht Winter (violin) and the Salon Orchestra Cappuccino: Stage and light music by Shostakovich. Evening concert with Andris Nelsons (conductor), Baiba Skride (violin) and the Boston Symphony Orchestra: Violin Concerto No.1 in A minor, Op.77 (revised Op.99); Symphony No.11, Op.103 'The Year 1905'.*

Day 4. The morning is free. Try Mendelssohn's Apartment or the Old Town Hall Museum. *Early-afternoon concert at the Gewandhaus with Marc Danel and Gilles Millet (violin), Vlad Bogdanas (viola), Yovan Markovitch*

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continued

(violoncello): *String Quartet No.2 in A, Op.68; Unfinished string quartet; String Quartet No.9 in E flat, Op.117*. Dinner is followed by an **evening concert** with *Andris Nelsons (conductor), Gautier Capuçon (violoncello) and the Boston Symphony Orchestra: Cello Concerto No.1 in E flat, Op.107; Symphony No.8 in C minor, Op.65*.

Day 5. Morning concert with *Andris Nelsons (conductor) and the Boston Symphony Orchestra: Symphony No.6 in B minor, Op.54; Symphony No.15 in A, Op.141*. Free afternoon, opportunity for a trip by tram to the Völkerschlachtdenkmal, a vast centennial monument to commemorate the Battle of the Nations (1813). There is also the German Museum of Books and Writing and Museum of Fine Arts. **Evening recital** with *Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider (violin) and Daniil Trifonov (piano): Piano Sonata No.1 in D, Op.12; Piano Sonata No.2 in B minor, Op.61; Unfinished violin sonata; Violin Sonata Op.134*.

Day 6. A morning walk with a specialist guide concentrates on Leipzig's musical heritage. The rest of the afternoon is free. Dinner at a famous restaurant is followed by the **final concert at the Gewandhaus** with *Anna Rakitina (conductor), Gautier Capuçon (violoncello) and the Festival Orchestra: Cello Concerto No.2, Op.126; Symphony No.5 in D minor, Op.47*.

Day 7. Drive from Leipzig to Berlin Airport and fly to London Heathrow, arriving c. 4.00pm.

Lecturer

Elizabeth Wilson was born in London, and

studied cello at the Moscow Conservatoire with Mstislav Rostropovich between 1964–1971, also becoming fluent in Russian. On her return to London she embarked on a performing, teaching and writing career. Since 1990 she has lived in Italy where she co-founded the Est-Ovest music festival and the much acclaimed Xenia International summer course for string players, both held in Piemonte. Her books include *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (1994, 2006) and musical biographies of Jacqueline du Pré and Rostropovich. She edited the first ever anthology of Shostakovich's letters, published in Italy by Saggiatore (2006). *Playing with Fire*, her biography of the legendary Russian pianist Maria Yudina, was published by Yale in 2024.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £3,890 or £3,660 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £4,340 or £4,110 without flights.

Included: top category tickets for eight concerts; flights with British Airways (Airbus A319); private coach for airport transfers; accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 4 dinners and 1 lunch (with drinks); museum admissions; tips; taxes; lecturer, tour manager and local guide.

Accommodation. Leipzig Marriott Hotel (leipzigmarriott.de): Conforming to its brand, the Marriott is a smart 4-star hotel with lots of marble, pillars, wood, brass and comfortable easy chairs. It is located on a pedestrian street just inside the north-eastern section of the ring road that runs around the city centre, and no more than 15 minutes on foot from the concert venue. Rooms are spacious, with cosy neoclassical furnishings and are equipped to a high standard. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? Walking is the only practical way of getting around the largely pedestrianised centre of Leipzig. Most walks will be less than 20 minutes.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.