AB: And “this” week....(X)

AB: Helen Huang is the soloist the Piano Concerto No. 2 by Dmitri Shostakovich.

This is Alec Baldwin welcoming you to a broadcast that will also feature a pair of the composer’s symphonies: No. 6 and No. 14. Leonard Bernstein and Kurt Masur will conduct...The New York Philharmonic This Week.

AB: During a public address in 1939, Shostakovich said of the first work on our program that he hoped to, “convey in it the moods of spring, joy, and youth.”
AB: That may be where he ended up, but the original plan was much more ambitious. Even just one year earlier, the composer stated that his Sixth symphony would be a monumental composition for soloists, chorus and orchestra. The piece was to be based on Mayakovsky’s ode to Lenin. When the declamatory nature of the poem proved too difficult to set, Shostakovich tried to incorporate other literature about Lenin into this new symphony, but to no avail. Perhaps this absence of a nonmusical source of inspiration explains the rather elusive tone of the piece. But what it may lack in narrative is more than made up for with imaginative musical language that is generally freer and more open than his other work of the same era.

It is said that Shostakovich wanted to write a symphony as different as possible from his Fifth--but without taking any risks. And at that he was quite successful.

The Sixth Symphony was given its world premiere in Leningrad on November 21, 1939. Less than a year later, Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra would make the first recording of the piece.
AB: We’re going to hear a recording that was made 13 years later for Columbia Records. This is the Symphony No.6 in b-minor by Dmitri Shostakovich. Leonard Bernstein conducts...the New York Philharmonic.

(MUSIC)

AB: Symphony No. 6 by Dmitri Shostakovich. The New York Philharmonic was conducted by Leonard Bernstein. The recording was made for Columbia on October 14, 1963 but wasn’t released until six years later.

(SLIGHT PAUSE)

AB: Now if you thought the ending of that symphony was uncharacteristically bright and exuberant for Shostakovich...well, as they say, ...then you ain’t heard nuthin’ yet!

The next music on our broadcast was written for the composer’s son, Maxim, as a 19\textsuperscript{th} birthday present. In fact, Maxim premiered the piece during his graduation exercises at the Moscow Conservatory.
Because this concerto is so easy on the ears there is a tendency to dismiss it as “unimportant.” Even the composer himself said that it had “no redeeming artistic merits.” And yet he performed this piece often and even made a recording of it:

(MUSIC EXAMPLE)

So did his son, Maxim:

(MUSIC EXAMPLE)

And so did his grandson, Dmitri (with Maxim conducting):

(MUSIC EXAMPLE)

Leonard Bernstein used it as a solo vehicle too:

(MUSIC EXAMPLE)

And Yefim Bronfman performed it for the film, Fantasia, 2000. We’ll skip playing an excerpt from that one. (Feel free to e-mail us at radio@nyphil.org if you’d like to know why.)

The concerto has also made the “top 20” in Classic FM’s annual poll of the most popular pieces in classical music.
AB: Does it have the emotional depth of Shostakovich’s 8th Symphony? Or the political punch of the 13th? No, it sure doesn’t. But listening to it is as about as pleasant a way to spend 20 minutes as I can think of. So let’s do that right now. Helen Huang is the soloist in the Piano Concerto No. 2 by Dmitri Shostakovich. Kurt Masur conducts...The New York Philharmonic.

(MUSIC)

AB: Piano Concerto No. 2 by Dmitri Shostakovich. The New York Philharmonic was conducted by Kurt Masur and the soloist was Helen Huang.

Our broadcast takes a more serious turn in the second half when we present Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 14. I’m Alec Baldwin and you’re listening to The New York Philharmonic This Week.

(ID)

AB: Shostakovich wrote to Isaac Glikman of the third and final work on our program, “Everything that I have written until now over these long years has been a preparation for this work.”
AB: The year was 1969 and he was referring to what would eventually be designated as his Symphony No. 14.

Scored for ten percussion instruments, a small string orchestra, and two solo singers, this piece is really a symphony in name-only. It’s thought that the composer settled on titling it this way to emphasize the unity of the work musically and philosophically.

The piece is largely modeled after Mussorgsky’s cycle, the *Songs & Dances of Death*, which Shostakovich orchestrated in 1962.

Shostakovich felt Mussorgsky, who was famously lazy, shortchanged the subject matter. And so while the *Songs & Dances of Death* comprise just four songs, Shostakovich’s 14th Symphony sets 11 poems by Lorca, Apollinaire, Rilke and Küchelbecker (the only Russian represented.) These range widely in expression, from the macabre to the dramatic…and many have an intimate, inward-facing quality.
The score is dedicated to Benjamin Britten, who conducted the UK premiere of the piece in 1970. Shostakovich makes no attempt to console the listener and that resulted in some criticism of the symphony—both at home and in the West. Yet this absence of redemption or transcendence rings authentic for both the period and for the composer. It’s not a piece that everyone will like, but it is a piece that most everyone will find profound and powerful.

And now we hear the Symphony No.14 by Dmitri Shostakovich. Teresa Kubiak and Isser Bushkin are the soloists. Leonard Bernstein conducts...the New York Philharmonic.

(MUSIC)

Symphony No. 14 by Dmitri Shostakovich. The New York Philharmonic was conducted by Leonard Bernstein. As soloists, we heard soprano Teresa Kubiak and bass Isser Bushkin. The recording was made in 1976 for CBS and it was also released to Amberson Video in 1982.
PROMO:

Phillipe Entremont is the soloist in Bartok’s Third Piano Concerto on our next Philharmonic broadcast.

This is Alec Baldwin. Please join me for a program that will also feature Tchaikovsky’s Pathetique Symphony as well as a vintage recording of Old California by William Grant Still. Pierre Monteaux, Leonard Bernstein and Alan Gilbert will conduct...The New York Philharmonic This Week.