

I'd like to thank my fellow producers for all of their wonderful treatments for Shostakovich No. 8 yesterday. There were some beautiful ideas, some ideas that made the work accessible to a wider audience, many ideas that could work in tandem with each other, and indeed, a few ideas that I found truly sublime.

My ideas are of a different nature...

As soon as I received Mary's email about this little project, even before the interview and performance recordings had arrived, I began to think about what to do with this project. I immediately thought – being an interview / documentary type – that I might feature the interview and weave some of the performance through it. Then I thought: why create something I already know about, why not use this opportunity to plunge in to something creative and fun. I started spinning off about creating an interactive interface, a sort of graphic-network-vortex-force-field of time & space & ideas that you could mouse over to access and make connections between samples or samplers of interview and performance.

So my design had gone some ways before I even had any idea what it was that I was really designing about. Maybe some lesson about horses and carts here, but to be sure, I was inspired. Then the actual recording and interview appeared on my doorstep. Or even more serendipitously I returned from a morning bike ride to greet the Fedex guy as he pulled up to the curb. So I gave the interview and the performance a listen.

And as I listened and thought about how to work with the material, a phrase started to roll around in my head... "Ignite the next generation of classical music listeners... ignite the next generation of classical music listeners..."

And slowly an idea presented itself... an idea that in many ways seemed too arrogant, too blasphemous, too sad, even to think in the privacy of my own studio, to say nothing of speaking it in front of you all... but blasphemous, sad, unfortunate as it may be, I think it's the truth - and the truth, I think, is, that you cannot ignite the next generation of classical music listeners with the ideas of older and past generations. You cannot ignite a generation of 21st century classical music listeners with the art of the first half of the previous century.

To be clear, there is little doubt that Shostakovich's and Skrowaczewski's lives were filled with challenges, dangers, risks and courage that my own life will most likely never know. In fact, their lives were filled with so many things that *most* of the next generation of classical music listeners will never know. And certainly the lives of the next generation audience are filled with ideas and issues that are not central to Shostakovich's and Skrowaczewski's life and work. Somewhere downstream, somewhere after having been ignited, this may be work that our new audience will explore and relish. But I must submit to you now, that this is not the composition, not the composer, not the conductor to ignite the next generation of classical music listeners.

No doubt this puts a little impetus on me to suggest what is. Maybe it's composer Curtis Roads from Santa Barbara whose compositions feature granular and pulsar synthesis.

One might think of Roads as a west-coast composer, but in the 80's he was at MIT, and there's certainly a few interesting folks there: Maybe it's the MIT Media Lab's Joe Paradiso who designs new controllers, new interfaces and new paradigms for musical content. Maybe it's composer Tod Machover, also of the Media Lab, who's designed "hyperinstruments" for Yo-Yo Ma, Prince, the general public and children. Maybe it's the Trummerflora collective from San Diego. They're a pluralistic group of music makers. They take their name from the Trummerflora or "rubble plants" that flourish in heavily bombed urban areas. Hmm, heavily bombed urban areas... perhaps Shostakovich and Skrowaczewski and Trummerflora do have some things in common. Indeed, they do. Still, they are separated by a chasm of six decades. They are separated by the six decades with the wildest rides in art and culture and certainly science and technology in the whole history of life on earth.

When Shostakovich wrote Symphony No. 8 in 1943, we were already two decades – a mere two decades - past Edwin Hubble showing that the Milky Way was not *The* Universe, but one galaxy in the universe. Today we not only recognize *a* universe with a hundred billion galaxies in it, but we believe this inconceivably vast universe to be but one in a multiverse. When Shostakovich wrote Symphony No. 8 in 1943, Captain Kirk's five-year mission, Stanley Kubrick's *Odyssey*, Neil Armstrong's small step, and seeing "the earth as it truly is, small, and blue, and beautiful," were all a quarter of a century away. The space telescope bearing Hubble's name would not be launched for another 47 years.

When Shostakovich wrote Symphony No. 8 in 1943, Alan Turing was just beginning to think past cracking the Enigma Code and on to "Building a brain." Computers occupying the space of whole buildings while offering only pathetically limited functionality were around the corner. Steve Jobs wouldn't be born for another decade. He wouldn't be diagnosed with cancer for another six decades.

When Shostakovich wrote Symphony No. 8 in 1943, Jackson Pollock was only beginning to move beyond representational painting. Chuck Close and John Lennon were both three-years old. Andy Warhol's Factory waited two decades in the future. Damien Hirst and Matthew Barney weren't even glints in their parents eyes. And yes, Britney Spears' *mother* hadn't even been born yet.

When Shostakovich wrote Symphony No. 8 in 1943, J. Robert Oppenheimer was a man with a clear conscience. The Three Mile Island nuclear disaster lay 36 years into the future; Chernobyl 43 years.

When Shostakovich wrote Symphony No. 8 in 1943, fifteen-year-old James Watson hadn't even met Francis Crick. Obviously the human genome had not yet been sequenced, but perhaps more importantly, if you had told someone, even a leading biologist of the day, that you wanted to do so, they would have had no way of even understanding what the idea meant.

When Shostakovich wrote Symphony No. 8 in 1943, it was 24 years before Benoit Mandelbrot would publish his seminal paper, “How Long is the Coastline of Great Britain” wherein he set forth the notion of fractal geometry, a cornerstone of the complexity theory that pervades so much of contemporary composition.

When Shostakovich wrote Symphony No. 8 in 1943, Chuck Yeager had yet to break the sound barrier. It would be a decade before Roger Bannister would break the 4-minute mile. It would be another four decades before the stock market would break 2,000.

From 1943 you would have to wait another four decades before a woman would run for vice-president of the United States. The United States had, by 1943 already had an openly gay vice-president, but it would be many years before the word “gay” would have it’s present meaning. It would be another 42 years before Rock Hudson would die of Aids. It would be another quarter-century before a man from Minnesota would run for president of the United States, win the majority of the votes, but not the office.

In 1943 you couldn’t have your MTV – you’d have to wait another 38 years for that. The ten-year-old Federal Communications Commission had recently released the NTSC standard for black and white television. Videotape was more than a decade away. In only 17 years, at the Kennedy-Nixon debates, the world would, for the first time, experience “split-screen.” In 1936 there were two hundred television sets in the world; in 1996 one billion. In 1943 pocket calculators, answering machines, cordless phones, fax machines, personal computers, walkmen, iPods, the Internet, email, web pages, web cams, blogs, cell phones, pagers, PDAs and brain implants – are all not yet on anyone’s radar.

Please forgive my little history moment. Of course, there is much more that could be listed. What is important is that while the artistry of bygone generations lives on, this art is no longer enmeshed in the contemporary cultural zeitgeist. While the beauty of the work of dead composers lives on, connecting to this beauty may be a more convoluted journey for the young listener than connecting to the work of composers who share with the listener a stake in the contemporary world.

I submit to you that the history museum – although a place that you and I and myriad listeners cherish – is not a place from which to launch the next generation of classical music listeners. I submit to you that it is not enough to shout down from our cultural mountaintop “it’s great up here – y’all oughta climb up!” I believe that if we are to ignite the next generation of classical music listeners, the mountain must come to the audience. If we are to ignite the next generation of classical music listeners, the classical must be contemporary.