DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH AND 1-5-6-5
THE HISTORY OF A MOTIVE 1950–1967

BY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis unveils a prominent and recurring motive in Shostakovich’s music, 1-5-6-5, which has remained undetected by Soviet-music scholarship for over half a century. The motive apparently originates in the composer’s Twenty-Four Preludes and Fugues, Op. 87 and does not appear after Seven Romances on Verses by A. Blok, Op. 127. To date, the only documented recurring motive is the composer’s name-cipher, D-Es-C-H. This widely known cipher has generated so much interest that dozens of composers have written pieces in homage to the motive and Shostakovich specialists have latched onto the cipher, often indiscriminately, as a means to explain the composer’s deeply philosophic music. The name-cipher motive has been attributed to about a dozen of Shostakovich’s works; however, my research validates only four of these attributions, and two of the four are intentional parodies of the motive. By contrast, the 1-5-6-5 motive can be found in nine works between the years 1950-1967, and the occurrences from the 1960s show, through musical metaphors, an increasingly disturbed Shostakovich.

The first two chapters discuss 1-5-6-5 within the ambit of music theory. Chapter One describes the origins of 1-5-6-5 in the Twenty-Four Preludes and Fugues, Op. 87 and
discusses the notion of 1-5-6-5 as a narrative cyclic element. Chapter Two describes the other eight pieces between the years 1951-1967 that allude to the 1-5-6-5 motive. The last two chapters discuss 1-5-6-5’s contemporaneous counterpart D-Es-C-H and the potential meanings of 1-5-6-5 in the later works that allude to it. Chapter Three discusses the apparently simultaneous, or near simultaneous origins of 1-5-6-5 and D-Es-C-H, narrowing the name-cipher’s conception to two possible timeframes, the first in 1951 coinciding with the Twenty-Four Preludes and Fugues, and the second corresponding to the composition of the third movement of the Tenth Symphony. To show the relative scarcity of D-Es-C-H in comparison to 1-5-6-5, each major attribution to the name-cipher is scrutinized. Additionally, some cipher conspiracy theories are also analyzed to give the reader an idea of the sensationalist name-cipher “sightings.” Chapter Four discusses the composer’s musical purpose behind the recurring motive and its many allusions, which hint to suicide, mortality, and hopelessness.
INTRODUCTION

I still remember the day that I discovered Shostakovich’s allusion to the Preludes and Fugues in the Blok cycle. I was listening to an audio CD of the Blok cycle, and as the last movement came to a close, I heard a faintly familiar gesture in the bass register of the piano. As a pianist, I can sometimes pick out individual notes by their timbre, even though I do not have perfect pitch. My mind whispered to me “A-D-D-A,” and immediately I recalled the last bar of the Fugue cycle. It took me by complete surprise. I had planned a concert of music by Shostakovich, and by coincidence, some movements from both cycles were on the program. I briefly investigated the allusion, and in my initial research uncovered the 1-5-6-5 motive; though, at the time I did not realize how widespread the motive really was. After a preliminary survey of the historical literature on Shostakovich’s use of motives, I found that, to my surprise, the 1-5-6-5 motive not discussed, but no one even seemed to have picked up on the Preludes and Fugues allusion in the Blok cycle. Eventually, I came to surmise that the two were such radically different pieces that no one had known to look. After all, I had only come upon the connection by accident.
Though I recognized the allusion to the Fugue cycle, I was not then aware that what I had heard at the end of the Blok cycle was actually a quotation. It would not be until several months later when I was sitting in my home-stay’s apartment in St. Petersburg at an upright piano with the score to the Preludes and Fugues, playing through various movements, that I saw the source of allusion in the closing bars of the E♭ major Prelude. I hurriedly retrieved my score to the Blok cycle, which I had also brought along to St. Petersburg. Upon verifying that it was indeed a quotation, the meaning of those closing bars of the Blok cycle that had baffled me for months was now in reach, and though I did not exactly understand the exact literal references, something seemed very unsettling about the allusion. I also understood why it took so long to find the quotation, and why others had not noticed it: Who would think to look for a quotation at the end of a piece?

I pondered for quite a while: “Am I the only one who knows?” In this moment, I felt a very special connection to the composer. How could it have been missed for over half a century? Surprises like these were just the beginning. A little while later, I was able to acquire a first edition score to the Tenth Symphony. When I opened to the fourth movement and saw the introduction in the woodwinds that transforms the 1-5-6-5 motive into the material for the movement’s first sonata theme, I realized that this motive manifested a much greater scope than I had previously considered. Over the next few months, I tracked down as many scores between the years 1950-1967 to look for the motive. At first I was hesitant to look at the music he had written for film, thinking that Shostakovich would only use this motive in his “serious” music. I could not have been more
wrong. When I attended the Shostakovich Centenary Conference in 2006 at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, a lecturer played a clip of the music Shostakovich wrote for the suicide of Ophelia in the film Hamlet. I nearly jumped out of my seat when I heard the 1-5-6-5 motive cued precisely with the visual of the camera panning across the waters to show Ophelia’s submerged body.

I have tracked down the motive to the best of my abilities and analyzed its occurrences in detail. This thesis is an “unfinishable” project. Alan George, original member of the Fitzwilliam String Quartet, once remarked (and I paraphrase), “someone should really write a book on all the recurring motives in Shostakovich’s music.” Yet, I suspect that even if volumes were filled on these motives, we would still not be any closer to appreciating the music of Shostakovich. The composer was always very adamant that the music speak for itself. Thus, I am charged with a two-faced task. For one, I hope to show that these allusions exist, yet at the same time, I hope not to create an artificial paradigm in which the music is reduced to literal or “programmed” meanings.

In the broadest sense, every one of Shostakovich’s musical gestures can be thought of belonging to a group of similar gestures from his musical language. 1-5-6-5 is on the fringe in that it is a very accessible and overt motive, yet it always functions subordinately to the music. Most of the allusions in Shostakovich’s music are musical gestures that Shostakovich constantly manipulate and juxtapose, like rhyming words in poetry.

Analysis of Shostakovich’s music needs more scholarly attention than it has received. Currently there are only two reliable biographies of Shostakovich: Wilson’s series of
interviews, and Fay’s rigorous study of archived documents relating to the composer. Theoretical treatments of his music are still scant, and there are more vantage points from which to consider his music than willing theorists.

Chapters One and Two are expository catalogues of 1-5-6-5. Very little time is spent analyzing individual movements, as this is beyond the scope of the current research. Chapter One defines 1-5-6-5 and shows with dozens of examples how the motive acts as a narrative cyclic element in the Preludes and Fugues. A secondary cyclic element, which I am calling the “Quartal Character,” is also defined in this chapter. Chapter Two examines instances of 1-5-6-5 in works between the years of 1950-1967—the apparent lifespan of the motive.

Chapters Three and Four are musicological. Chapter Three sets aside 1-5-6-5 to examine its cousin motive D-Es-C-H. Though the two are not directly related, they have much in common. D-Es-C-H has garnered more attention than any other individual element in Shostakovich’s music, and this chapter addresses the “DSCH” hype and seeks to demystify the motive and define the true scope of its existence in Shostakovich’s work. Chapter Four speculates on the internal forces that caused Shostakovich to repeatedly allude and transform 1-5-6-5. It also discusses the motive’s apparent symbolic link to suicide.

All translations, music examples, and illustrations are my own unless otherwise noted. Due to the high volume of music examples in Chapters One and Two, they are located at the end of their respective chapters. Chapter One is best read with the score to Twenty-Four Preludes and Fugues in hand.
CHAPTER ONE

OPUS 87 AND 1-5-6-5

Shostakovich’s eighty-seventh opus, Twenty-Four Preludes and Fugues, is a peculiar work. As a series of individual prelude-fugue sets, the work has two goals: to revive the fugue tradition established by Bach’s Well-Tempered Clavier, and, to refresh the Russian polyphonic style. Yet, when the whole work is viewed in its entirety, there appears to be a narrative and “cyclic” subtext, contradicting the notion that it is merely a set of preludes and fugues in every key. Though Shostakovich rarely performed the entire work in concert, and never recorded the whole work, a preponderance of evidence suggests that the work is in fact a “cyclic” cycle. This chapter discusses two unifying motives with regard to the cyclic nature of the Preludes and Fugues: the intervallic motive 1-5-6-5 and the “quartal character.”

During the composer’s career, Shostakovich now and then brought back the Baroque relic in small forms. We find fugues in his Twenty-Four Preludes, Op. 34 and the Piano Quintet, Op. 57. There were exercises that he did as a student at the conservatory or on his own, but these academic works seldom amounted to more than keeping his counterpoint sharp. In any case, until Shostakovich heard Tatiana Nikolayeva’s
performances of the Well-Tempered Clavier during the First International Bach
Competition in July 1950, he had probably not considered a large-scale fugue cycle.

Shostakovich, inspired from these events, composed a prelude and fugue in
C major, which eventually became the first set in the cycle. At first, he was only planning a
small collection of fugues. He churned them out quickly—a prelude or fugue every few
days—and showed each of them to Nikolyaeva as he finished them. (See Appendix A for the
dates of each movement.) After writing a few sets he decided to finish the cycle: twenty-
four preludes and fugues in every key, just like Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier*.¹

Contrary to the key ordering of Bach’s cycle, which progresses in semitones with
parallel minors, Shostakovich uses a circle of fifths with relative minors in between (i.e., C
major, A minor, G major, E minor, etc.). He had already made use of this key order in
Twenty-Four Preludes, Op. 34, which borrowed the concept from Chopin’s *Preludes*.
Shostakovich composed Twenty-Four Preludes and Fugues in order from 10 October 1950
to 25 February 1951.

Appendix B is devoted to an outline of the basic properties of 1-5-6-5, and
highlights some of the traits of the motive that helped me to consistently identify it, even in
situations in which its presence is ambiguous. This appendix also serves to summarize the
many paths of Shostakovich’s “web of allusions” through examples of each kind of
transformation. Due to the many dimensions of transformation exploited within the
composer’s language, the development of this motive is by no means linear or sequential.
Additionally, since 1-5-6-5 contains intervals that are common in diatonic music, following the many paths of transformation is something of a forensic investigation. My method is to follow similarities between juxtaposed elements, and when there are enough similarities that the chance of them coinciding is too small, I consider the elements to be part of a transforming process. Shostakovich creates this web of allusions through subtle changes in melodic and rhythmic character, which the present chapter will attempt to unravel chronologically.

This chapter investigates the origins of the unifying motive 1-5-6-5 in Preludes and Fugues Nos. 1-4, the motive’s progressive transformations in Nos. 5-10, various realizations of the motive in Nos. 11-17, the introduction and definition of a secondary unifying motive that contains quartal elements in Nos. 18-23, and the amalgamation of these two unifying motives in No. 24. When it is relevant, I analyze the motive’s surroundings, but a detailed analysis of each individual movement is beyond the scope of this research. The examples presented here range from absolutely concrete allusions to more obscure references, which Shostakovich may or may not have had in mind. The following is an expository catalogue of 1-5-6-5, which may be used to verify the unifying motive’s existence.

**Origins: Prelude and Fugue Nos. 1-4**

Example I-1 (p. 25) shows the beginning of Fugue No. 1 in C major. The subject from mm. 0-8 consists of four gestures, each two full bars in length. In the first gesture, the
unifying motive timidly approaches with its first two notes, C and G, before fully appearing in the second gesture, C-G-A-G, or 1-5-6-5 in diatonic intervals. Whereas the first and second gestures ascend in altitude, the third and fourth gestures descend. Compared to the forthcoming fugues, Fugue No. 1 is hesitant and tonally static. The entire fugue never breaches the key of C major; there are no accidentals and each answer is modal. The composer iterates through every mode, including the dissonant Locrian.

Prelude and Fugue No. 2 in A minor immediately recall the Baroque period. The prelude is a run of sixteenth-notes, and the fugue subject could be mistaken for one of Bach’s were it not for the major-seventh between the C and the B. The unifying motive is conspicuously absent, which suggests that Shostakovich had not yet decided to use 1-5-6-5 outside of Fugue No. 1 in C major.

In Prelude No. 3 in G major we have a hint of the motive’s intervals in Example I-2 (p. 25)—a fortunate coincidence, but not the grand entrance we might expect. The placement and key are particularly interesting: a fortissimo octavo of seven measures crashes into a thick C major chord and the notes G-G-G-Á-G-G-G appear, which seem to recall the subject of the C major fugue in Example I-1. The subject to Fugue No. 3 also contains no musical material related to 1-5-6-5, but its quick gliss-like seven-note scale displays Shostakovich’s remarkable ingenuity in balancing his contrapuntal and textural forces.

Though 1-5-6-5 seems to be of little cyclic importance in the first three preludes and fugues, Prelude and Fugue No. 4 in E minor suddenly defines Shostakovich’s cyclic
objective. The Prelude opens with a gesture similar to the one in the opening to Prelude No. 3 (compare Example I-2, Example I-3 on pp. 25-27)—E′-B-B-B-C′-B-B-B. Though the eighth-note gesture in the preceding prelude seemed unrelated, Shostakovich takes the opportunity to allude to the gesture and officially introduce the motive.

Fugue No. 4 is an enormous double fugue. Both subjects allude to 1-5-6-5 (Example I-4 A and B, p. 27). The first subject outlines the motive in E minor—E-(G)-(A)-B-C-B. The second subject begins in the dominant key of B minor with the unadulterated motive—B-F♯-G-F♯. The two subjects are a double act: a discreet allusion to the contour of 1-5-6-5 followed by a stepped-up gesture of much higher intensity (and faster tempo) that brings the motive into focus for the listener. Not surprisingly, Shostakovich attaches a small coda to the end of the E minor fugue, featuring the motive by itself, and without either of the subjects. Indubitably, the fourth prelude and fugue contain the first deliberate statements of 1-5-6-5.

**Transformation: Prelude and Fugue Nos. 5-10**

Prelude and Fugue No. 4 characterized 1-5-6-5 through three distinct appearances. In its germinal form the motive is a gesture of four notes. It has one primary rhythmic stress, and any preceding notes function as an anacrusis. The motive is usually found at the beginning of a phrase or, in the case of a fugue, the subject. The motive comprises two distinct intervals: a larger and a smaller (i.e. the fifth and the second) and their composite (the sixth). Among the four notes are three distinct pitches, repeating one of the four but
never consecutively. These properties constitute a general rubric that can be used to identify other instances of the motive, even if it undergoes musical transformations.

The fugues from the Shostakovich cycle are particularly curious compared with the fugues from Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier*. All of Shostakovich’s fugues answer subjects at the perfect fifth initially, just as his predecessors would have done. However, all of the techniques his predecessors used to generate “interest” in the fugal subjects are conspicuously absent; retrograde, inversion, augmentation, and diminution simply do not exist in any of the fugues’ answers. Disheartening though it may seem, this apparent deficiency actually signifies a diversion. Shostakovich was neither ignorant nor dogmatic in refraining from these techniques. In fact, he uses them in abundance—with the motive 1-5-6-5.

In a Bach fugue, the “cyclic” element is the subject, and he transformed his subjects through the techniques listed above. Shostakovich on the other hand, convinced that he can “cyclize” the whole set, uses the 1-5-6-5 motive as the cyclic element of the entire work. As we will see, by placing the motive in the subject of a fugue, he ensures that the motive will saturate the fugue. Additionally, since Shostakovich abides by strict contrapuntal rules and variety therefore comes at a premium, he uses the vast space of the preludes to stretch and expand upon the motive. Moreover, he applies Bach’s subject transformations to the intervals of the 1-5-6-5 motive (i.e. 5-6-5-1 is the retrograde, 1-4-5-4 is a “diminution,” etc.).
Fugue No. 5 (Example I-5, p. 28) immediately begins with the motive’s notes out of order: A-A-A-A | D-D-BA-BA (5-1-6-5). Mm. 3 anticipates the return to A at mm. 4 in the weak beat of the two-note slurs, making it clear he wants the listener to hear the intervals of the second, fifth, and sixth.

Fugue No. 6 (Example I-6, p. 28) “augments” the motive over the middleground of several measures. The first three measures center around B. The gesture of two ascending seconds and a falling fifth is repeated twice, leading to F♯. In this case the 5 is below the 1—vertical inversion. The subject stalls at the dotted-half note, and picks up again after a brief rest, quadrupling the rhythmic tempo, but keeping the same gesture of ascending seconds, this time embellishing around the G and the F♯ respectively, completing the allusion to 1-5-6-5 and finishing the subject.

Prelude No. 7 (Example I-7, p. 28) also employs a kind of 1-5-6-5 augmentation. When the eighth and sixteenth notes are removed from this example, we are left with a prolonged A of over two measures and three dotted-quarter triads, whose top notes are E, F♯, E, respectively. The following fugue contains no apparent references to 1-5-6-5. Shostakovich had something else in mind—a subject composed of a melodic arpeggio in A major.

Prelude and Fugue No. 8 introduce two transformation techniques: retrograde with respect to note order and diminution with respect to the intervals. Six measures into the prelude an accompanying figure containing the motive is found for eight measures in a stern commitment to F♯ minor (Example I-8, p. 29). The rest of the prelude stretches the
contour to fit other harmonies by modifying the intervals. Understandably, the likeness to the Alberti bass may draw skepticism, but it will become clear in Prelude No. 17 (discussed later), that the transformation is not a coincidence; Shostakovich has no reservations about relegating the motive to secondary roles such as accompaniments.

The subject in Fugue No. 8 is especially fascinating. Its phrase structure takes on a ternary form, A-A-B-A. The A gesture consists of two measures, and the B gesture consists of three smaller one-measure gestures following the form a-a-a'. The A gesture contains the motive in retrograde using diminution. Here the “large interval” is only a minor third. Like the subject in Fugue No. 1 in C major (Example I-1, p. 25), it is approached from its first two notes. The recursive nature of the gesture—that the latter half states the motive through embellishments, while simultaneously completing the motive in the gesture as a whole—might remind one of mathematical fractals.

Prelude No. 9 is strangely strophic. Each “verse” consists of two phrases. The verses are delineated by a full bar rest, and each begins with the same gesture spanning a measure plus a note, which incidentally outlines the 1-5-6-5 motive. Metaphorically, the motive acts like a seed. Every time the phrase-pair is reborn, it yields a unique musical “tree,” which on the whole appears like the others, but in its intricacies reveals a harmonic and melodic individuality. The only thing that remains the same—apart from the changes of key—are the opening gestures, which all outline 1-5-6-5. The subtlety here is astonishing and precise—the gesture containing the motive is not touched; yet after the motive is sounded (after the first note of the following measure) the melody proceeds in a new direction.
Moreover, Shostakovich uses this form specifically to contradict it. The third to last verse contains a mangled iteration of the gesture. It forces the perfect fifth into the space of a minor third, just as in Fugue No. 8 (Example I-9, p. 29) except without using retrograde. He uses this to prepare for the dominant in B major, which occurs in the second to last variant, ultimately leading back to E major in the final verse.

Though several allusions have already been made to the retrograde, a pure 5-6-5-1 does not occur until Prelude and Fugue No. 10 in C# major. The prelude anticipates the forthcoming fugue’s subject with five iterations of 1-5-6-5 in the retrograde using four sixteenths each. These set the fugue into motion. Though *attacca* is specified for all of the prelude-fugue pairs in Opus 87, it is especially odd in this example that the prelude’s rhythmic features are immediately lost in the fugue. It is in this sense remarkably similar to the dissolution of rhythm in Fugue No. 6 (Example I-6, p. 28), except in reverse.

Prelude No. 10 is in 4/4 while the fugue is in 3/4. The prelude highlights 5-6-5-1 four sixteenths in succession with the stress on the first note (Example I-10, p. 30). The fugue uses a swing rhythm with quadrupled rhythmic values and moves the stress to the third note, using the first two as its anacrusis (Example I-11, p. 30). The non-real answer adds to the list of idiosyncrasies, disfiguring the literal quotation of 5-6-5-1 by moving the first note down a second to the C# to defer the dissonance between the D and the bass C# until mm. 7. All of these aesthetic choices show that Shostakovich negotiates the literalness of the motive, balancing form and function.
REALIZATION: PRELUDE AND FUGUE NOS. 11-17

Shostakovich transforms the 1-5-6-5 motive using the same techniques Bach used on fugue subjects but with added flexibility. His transformations are not necessarily geometrical; rather, he sculpts the motive into each music circumstance. This also presents several difficulties in defining when the motive is the motive. Few of its observed properties can be taken strictly for granted. Its most distinct feature is the interval of the second. Thus far, all of the examples here have contained the second; however, the larger interval—usually the perfect fifth—is sometimes variable. Since these are common intervals in diatonic compositions, there is a fine line between certainty and speculation.

Still, the motive is never used in isolation. There are always features of its surroundings that promote it to a significant existence, even if marginal or subliminal. Take for example, Prelude No. 8 (Example I-8, p. 29). The motive appears to be nothing more than a modified Alberti bass, and it is probably not even the first time Shostakovich has used those notes in his career; however, he pauses on it for eight whole measures—the longest fixation on any single gesture in the prelude. In this respect 1-5-6-5 allusions are often like faint stars; you will find them if you were looking to begin with, but they exist nonetheless. How Shostakovich realizes 1-5-6-5 is just as important as its transformations.

Prelude and Fugue No. 11 are a bizarre pair. The prelude (Example I-12, p. 31) uses the motive-as-seed form found in Prelude No. 9, but without the underlying strophic scheme. The motive initiates the B theme of the prelude just like it initiates the strophic verses in Prelude No. 9. The first measure always contains the gesture 56-56-5-1, and the
rest of what follows is variable. The B theme occurs five times in the movement. The motive plays the secondary role in the prelude, and oddly enough it will do the same in the fugue.

Fugue No. 11 (Example I-13, p. 31) does not make use of the motive in the subject, but it does have a countersubject containing a gesture remarkably similar to the motive as found in the prelude. Most of the fugues in Op. 87 do not have strict countersubjects. Just like the prelude, Shostakovich uses consecutive-note pairs to build the gesture. Mm. 10 contains 56-51-51 in the right hand, but it seems to be more of a lopsided allusion since the 56 is so weak on its own. After developing the gesture for three measures, mm. 14 contains a balanced 15-15-65-65. Moreover, mm. 14 is the last measure containing the countersubject’s definition. Shostakovich has thus inverted the motive’s placement within the fugue subject. Instead of departing from the motive at the beginning of the subject, he arrives at 1-5-6-5 at the very end of the countersubject, some fourteen measures into the piece.

Prelude and Fugue No. 12 are a tight unit. The prelude, a passacaglia, runs more or less into the fugue. At the fugue’s onset, its rhythmic values are strictly quarter and half note. After forty-eight measures (Example I-14, p. 32), the dynamic level suddenly quiets from fortissimo to pianissimo. This coincides with the introduction of new rhythmic values, most notably the eighth-note. Soon after, the opening gesture of the fugue is introduced using developments in rhythm to make the allusion. This gesture is repeated several times canonically like the underlying basso-ostinato. The prelude is quiet, only reaching a mezzo-
forte, followed by a drop back down to pianissimo. The last notes of the prelude set up the fugue by anticipating the contour and rhythm of the fugue’s opening gesture.

Fugue No. 12 (Example I-15, p. 32) contains a retrograde motive with an inverted crest: 6-5-6-1. After its initial statement, the first half of the gesture is extended with an additional anacrusis and extra altitude before retreating to the subject’s signature 6-1 (G♯, B). Again, using the same technique of elaboration found in the first, Shostakovich extends the gesture once more before the answer begins.

Prelude and Fugue No. 13 (Example I-18 and Example I-19, pp. 33-34) seem to take place out of time. The prelude is imaginatively programmatic. The fugue is intensely contrapuntal, the only fugue in the cycle to exhibit five voices. The prelude too, though homophonic, is deliberately written for five voices: one melodic soprano voice plus four harmonizing voices in the chords below. Even in the absence of any of the five voices, the rests are still notated in the score.

The prelude uses elements from the motive’s outskirts. Example I-18 (p. 33) shows the beginning of the prelude. In mm. 1 and 4, we see leaps by large intervals (perfect fifths and major sixths) and falls of seconds. Using the idea of the large and small intervals from the 1-5-6-5 motive, he focuses the melody into three-note gestures starting at mm. 7-9. Shostakovich then takes the gestures from these beginnings and develops them into a song. The prelude is deliberately tangible, setting up arguably the most beautiful and contrapuntal fugue of the cycle.
Writing a five-voice fugue is a formidable task. The choice of subject is extremely crucial to the success of the counterpoint. With this in mind, Shostakovich writes a subject that spans a perfect fourth from F♯ to B, the smallest span of any fugue subject in the cycle (Example I-19, p. 34). Lacking the latitude normally afforded in choice of subject, he still manages to use the motive, though he changes the large interval from a fifth into a major third. The G♯ is a passing tone G♯ that leaves us with the contour F♯, A♯, B, A♯, or 1-3-4-3. This is no coincidence. With little to differentiate the significance of individual notes in this subject, their individual rhythmic values and placement define the pecking order. The G♯ occurring on all of the weak beats could be interpreted as an embellishment. The dotted half note has the longest rhythmic value, suggesting that it is the focal point, and not the preceding B, even though the B has a higher altitude. This fugue is the first to have a subject that uses the motive in isolation. Taking advantage of the most special moment in the cycle, the five-voice fugue, he intersects the best of counterpoint with the contour of the motive.

Fugue No. 14 in E♭ minor (Example I-20, p. 34) begins with the same intervals as the subject in Fugue No. 5 in D major (Example I-5, p. 28). The notes appear out of order—5-1-6-5. This return to the beginnings of the cycle indicates that Shostakovich is essentially finished with the motive’s development, and is returning to its roots. Indeed, the next three fugues are marked not by the transformation of the motive, but by their placement—how they are realized.

The subject in Fugue No. 15 in D♭ major (Example I-21, p. 34) displays an enormous amount of energy. It begins with a chromatic wedge—an atonal wrecking ball of
quarter notes, yet in the middle of the wedge, the motive appears as B♭-F-G♭-F in a dotted rhythm that emphasizes the second note. He repeats the motive, but the B♭ becomes double-flatted, which furthers the chromatic wedge. Still, the interval remains a fifth even though it is augmented.

The subject in Fugue No. 16 is weightless (Example I-22, p. 35). It hangs on a note for a few beats and then in a flurry, as though taken by the wind, goes elsewhere. It is the programmatic answer to the prelude of Fugue in F♯ major (Example I-19, p. 34). However, when the motion stills, the motive is stated twice with a shifting stress. This interruption is very similar to the one found in the wedge of the D♭ major fugue (Example I-21, p. 34), and in fact, the pitches are the same except for the augmentation in the former.

Prelude and Fugue No. 17 in A♭ major both start with 1-5-6-5. In the prelude it serves as the neutral state of the accompaniment (Example I-23, p. 35). That is, the major seconds are always present, but the tonic note changes depending on the needs of the surrounding harmony. In the fugue, the motive begins a lively melody.

In Prelude and Fugue Nos. 4-17, Shostakovich manages to include 1-5-6-5 at least once per set. Taking the motive through transformation after transformation, there is little to say about each realization except that motive exists, and that for Shostakovich these manifestations are not subliminal, but quite the opposite: deliberate and overt. The composer uses the power of association to work the listener into an insatiable world of paradox. Moreover, Shostakovich could not be more explicit: the motive is not
quantifiable. 1-5-6-5 is a single “medium-continuum,” not a collection of individual allusions.

THE QUARTAL CHARACTER: PRELUDE AND FUGUES NO. 18-23

Nearing the end of the epic, it is easy to imagine that Shostakovich might involve the motive more and more, bringing it to a triumphant conclusion. Indeed, since the motive’s beginnings as a double fugue in No. 4, he reinforces this expectation time and time again. Plotting a linear course with a progressive build, we would expect a double fugue on an even greater scale using the motive in some unprecedented way. However, the 1-5-6-5 medium-continuum is greatly disturbed between Nos. 18-23 by an influx of quartal melodic language that floods the thematic fabric and threatens the tertian harmony that 1-5-6-5 depends on. The introduction of this “quartal character” puts the motive in sharp relief, and the two become opposing forces; however, they are not each other’s thematic equals. The new quartal language is a transcendental layer on top of the existing fugal texture, and though quartal melodies come to the foreground, the harmonic framework of the music is still tertian.

Arriving at set No. 18 in F minor, the prelude (Example I-25, p. 37) is immediately taken by the gesture of ascending and descending thirds in the right-hand melody. In the first measure, we have F-C-D♭-C, which again outlines 1-5-6-5, but due to the rhythm, we hear distinctly the F falling to the D♭. In the second measure we hear the C to the E♭, and in the fourth, the G to the B♭. The accompaniment, too, is only a spare minor third—F and
Shostakovich is often as careful to keep track of the number of voices in his preludes as he is in his fugues. The Prelude in F\# Major No. 13, though homophonic, was written entirely in five voices, thereby anticipating the five-voice fugue. In the same way, Prelude No. 18 contains a natural progression from three voices to four, which lays the foundation for the four-voice fugue to follow. Mm. 1-13 are written in three voices, and mm. 14-21 may contain four notes at any moment, but the rests indicate that the middle two notes are considered one voice. At mm. 22 the tempo is reduced by a quarter (from 88 to 66 quarter-notes per minute, “Adagio”). This is the only measure to contain four independent voices, with five simultaneous notes occurring by the end of the measure. A small series of triads—D major, G major, D major (without D), G major—overlaps tertian and quartal qualities using triadic harmony with quartal movement. Mm. 23-46 elapse with only three independent voices, and the number of simultaneous notes drops to two in a transition measure (mm. 27) which ultimately leads to a reprise of the opening in two voices with three simultaneous notes and the original tempo (mm. 88, “Moderato con primo”). This opening theme is taken down a different path, leading to a similar texture of a very low voice pitted against three higher voices, which we saw in the Adagio section (mm. 22-27); however, the texture is evened out by the end of mm. 47 and the number of independent voices increases to four. Whether we consider the number of simultaneous sounding notes
or the number of independently written voices, we are still left with a very definitive progression from things of three to things of four.  

The quartal character is apparent from the beginning of Fugue No. 18 (Example I-26, p. 37). The subject contains two halves with contrasting melodies. The downbeats of mm. 1-3 ascend in perfect fourths. The second half of the subject is symmetrical with respect to the quarter note beat (i.e. C-F-Eb-F-(F)-Eb-F-C), entering and exiting by fourth: C to F and F to C. At the end of the fugue, the subject reappears in the tenor line in truncated form, sounding this “symmetrical” half through to the final bar. Toward the end of the fugue, mm. 108 to 118, Shostakovich capitalizes on the ascending fourths from the first part of his subject by stringing together four answers in a circle of fourths, letting no opportunity go unrealized. However, the movement is not a quartal manifesto; the first measure of the subject (i.e. mm. 1) contains an arpeggiated triad; between the first and second halves (i.e. mm. 4) is a “break” of a downwards minor third; and, the fugue ends in the same harmonic cadence as the prelude: Ab major to F major, a third relation.

Prelude No. 19 represents the pivotal point in the cycle. It begins with a forte chorale moving in dotted half and dotted quarter notes—a duple meter in 3/4. The chorale cadences with a magnificent 5-6-5-1 (Example I-27 A, p. 38)—the retrograde of 1-5-6-5—in the tenor line resolving to double Eb octaves. A second theme, just piano, articulated in staccato quarter notes pervades the treble, one octave higher than the beginning of the first theme, yet Shostakovich deliberately ties over the Eb octave in the bass as a pedal tone. Twice he restates the octave to keep the sound from dying away. The second theme begins
on the upbeat to mm. 17. Since he articulates the same notes on the first and second beats, the initial gesture has an underlying rhythm of half-quarter. This initial gesture is two measures (six quarter notes, the first of which is an anacrusis). After repeating the gesture, he suddenly interrupts with a passage of duple dotted-quarters; however, unlike the chorale that opens the prelude, it uses quarters, creating a hemiola. The second theme slowly drifts downward, as if headed towards an abyss. After a grand pause, Shostakovich restarts the chorale with the same chord from mm. 1, but expands the core material from the first instance into a longer and more developed refrain. The final cadence beginning at mm. 65 again brings out 5-6-5-1 in the tenor line (Example I-27 B, p. 38), this time in dotted half notes instead of dotted quarters leading to an even broader and more definitive E♭ major chord. After the caesura, the second theme again takes over leading not to another chorale, but to a short four measure reminder of the dotted-quarter rhythm from the first theme. Instead of harmony, the left and right hands imitate each other in octave transpositions. The second theme repeats soon after, curiously leading to 1-5-6-5 in mm. 103-15 immediately after the soprano and alto lines give up the sustained minor third, D and F. At the same time the octave in the bass retires its upper note, leaving only the lowest F on the keyboard. Here 1-5-6-5 marks the arrival of the movement’s thinnest texture: one sustained note in the lowest register of the keyboard with the articulated staccato notes of the second theme just an octave above. After it settles to the lowest E♭ octave on the keyboard, 1-5-6-5 makes a final appearance in the retrograde in mm. 113-116, B-C♯-B-E, possibly hinting toward a voicing in which the soprano yields to the E in the bass and alto lines in mm. 116.
The second theme returns one last time with the melody in the depths of the bass. At mm. 127 (Example I-28, p. 38), the cradle of the quartal character rocks in the abyss, E♭...A-D-D-A, (E♭)...A-D-D-A, (E♭)...D-D-A.

Staring into the infinite unknown, we already catch a glimpse of the last prelude and fugue that will end with A-D-D-A-D. Shostakovich foreshadows the cycle’s upcoming quartal reconciliation with this mysterious gesture. It embodies the quartal character of the cycle’s future, yet looks dreadfully back on the 1-5-6-5 motive of the cycle’s past. Is this interpretation a stretch? Quite literally! He “quartalizes” the 1-5-6-5 motive as 1-4-7-4, shaping it over E♭-A-D-A. If we think of the motive broadly as the function of two intervals, a larger and a smaller, then the contradiction comes into striking focus; the larger is the augmented fourth and the smaller the perfect fourth.

The subject in Fugue No. 19 in E♭ major contains perhaps the best example of the motive’s transformation. In the pickup to mm. 3, we have the final-note stressed C-F♭-G-F♭. The contradictions here are paramount. If we consider E♭ as the tonal center, then the F♭ is a flatted second scale degree, which only occurs in the Locrian mode. However, the G♭ can only exist in E♭ Lydian, Mixolydian, and Ionian. Even an octatonic mode does not account for all of the notes in the fugue’s subject, nor is it strictly chromatic: C, D, E♭, F♭, F♯, G♭, G. From the very first measure, the E♭ major fugue resembles a paradox of modality. Modes are extremely important to Shostakovich’s harmonic and tonal language⁴ and he exploits them constantly in the fugues.⁵ This fugue and the fugue in D♭ major contain the only subjects in the entire cycle whose pitch classes are not strictly
modal, the latter mentioned of which was a chromatic wedge. Shostakovich obfuscates the enharmonic major triad in C-Fb-G-Fb using the flatted second scale degree, which indicates, somewhat ironically, he does not want the “sound” of a major triad. Just as Shostakovich ended the prelude with an instance of 1-5-6-5 containing a larger interval just a half step wider than the smaller interval, here he does the same with the diminished fourth and the augmented second.

Prelude No. 20 in C minor (Example I-30, p. 39) contains an allusion to 1-5-6-5 in retrograde. It takes the same binary-strophic form as Prelude No. 19, that is: A, B, A’, B’, etc… Curiously at mm. 52, he backwards-develops into the motive, sounding it in quarters G-D- Eb-D-G-G8va-Ab-G, leading to a surprise reversal of the Eb as E♮—C major.

The subject to Fugue No. 20 (Example I-31, p. 40) inherits its first measure from that of the prelude—C-B♭-D-C—and follows suit beginning in the minor mode and finishing major, like the prelude. With respect to quartalism, the subject is noteworthy in that it divides nicely into two halves, each two measures long. In between the two halves is an upward skip of a fourth, the widest interval in the subject. It also follows the longest rhythmic value for any note—the C that is held for the entire measure and articulated on the upbeat to the subject’s second half.

Prelude No. 21 in B♭ major (Example I-32, p. 40) begins with a quartal ostinato in the bass which alternates: B♭ | B♭8va, C | F. Spelled in order these notes—C, F, B♭—stack in perfect fourths. If we include the G from the right hand on the beginning of second beat, then we hear G, C, F simultaneously, another quartal chord. Beginning m. 18 the composer
breaks the legato expression mark with staccato eighth notes (Example I-33, p. 40), a change of character that coincides with several allusions to 1-5-6-5 in the retrograde in the right hand’s sixteenth runs. The movement continues to alternate between these two themes, ending finally with a summary of the gesture from mm. 3.

Fugue No. 21 in B♭ major (Example I-34, p. 25) begins immediately with a quartal gesture using the notes of the trichord—B♭, F, E♭. He follows the declamation with another quartal trichord—D, G, C—and then finishes the subject using the notes of the first trichord. In total, he creates a hexachord from quartal notes. Since the perfect fourth inverts to a perfect fifth, the hexachord is indistinguishable from the major scale. This duplicity is reconciled by his melodic use of the perfect fourth.

Tertian elements return in Prelude No. 22 in G minor (Example I-35, p. 41). He foreshadows the second subject of the last fugue in the cycle with the two-note slur gestures in the right hand that arpeggiate tertian harmonies. Fugue No. 22 in G minor (Example I-36, p. 41) outlines a vertical inversion of 1-5-6-5 using the four half notes that are strewn about the subject: E♭, B♭, C, B♭. He may have even intended to highlight the battle between the third and the fourth in mm. 3-5, grounding the B♭ and C to the G in each third beat.

Prelude No. 23 in F major is a straightforward pomp-and-circumstance, though a quiet and distant one; the dynamic level hovers around piano and reaches mezzoforte only briefly before subsiding to pianissimo.

Fugue No. 23 in F major (Example I-37, p. 42) uses another quartal hexachord. This time, the first six notes spell out the hexachord. This technique parallels the
introduction of the notes in Fugue No. 21 in B♭ major, in which there are two trichords. The first constitutes a literal stack of fourths (C, F, B♭ here) and the second containing fourths displaced by octave and stacked out of order for melodic continuity (A, G, D).

**AMALGAMATION: PRELUDE AND FUGUE NO. 24**

Prelude and Fugue No. 24 are inextricably connected to each other and to the narrative history of the cycle’s twenty-three other preludes and fugues. Prelude No. 24 immediately recalls the beginning of the first prelude with the rhythm quarter...dotted-quarter...eighth. At mm. 31, Shostakovich introduces a quiet “majestic” (maestoso) theme (Example I-38, p. 43). It is characterized by a simple and lyrical melody with a lute-like accompaniment—only open fifths, thirds, and octaves to begin with. Few of the cycle’s movements contain a melody as lyrical as the majestic theme. Fugue No. 8, Fugue No. 14, and Prelude No. 16 are close but lack the elegance and succinctness of this melody.

Shostakovich reconciles the quartal character and the 1-5-6-5 motive with meditative poise. The majestic theme begins, A-D-D-A-D, a quartal melody in the guise of a dominant-tonic cadence. It continues, C-D-E-E-A-D. Together, the two phrases signify the progression: A-D-E-D, or 1-3-4-3, which outlines the shape 1-5-6-5. Again Shostakovich uses his “binary-strophic” form, reprising the opening and repeating the majestic theme in turn.

When the fugue begins, the subject is the majestic theme from the prelude. Indeed, it is the “answer” to the crisis. Beginning softly, the dynamic level recalls the 1-5-6-5
motive’s quiet opening in Fugue No. 4, and promises an enormous double-subject fugue of the same proportions (see Example I-39 and Example I-40, pp. 43-44). In the former double-fugue, Shostakovich creates two subjects which both exploit 1-5-6-5. The first uses the contour of the subject as the basis for shaping the motive (Example I-4 A, p. 27), and the second contains the motive at the beginning and is in plain view (Example I-4 B). Similarly, the first subject in Fugue No. 24 contains the motive-as-contour, and in the second he uses its more immediate form. At mm. 217, Shostakovich stratifies the first and second subjects, just as in Fugue No. 4 (Example I-4 C). Mm. 294-296 (Example I-41, p. 44) conclude the cycle with a resounding A-D-D-A-D—the quartal signature. The transformation from 1-5-6-5 to the quartal character finishes, and the cycle ends.

TWENTY-FOUR PRELUDES AND FUGUES AS CYCLE

There was a running joke between Tatiana Nikolaeva and Shostakovich:

I always asked him, “Which Preludes and Fugues would you like me to play?” And he invariably answered, “Choose whichever you please, but, come to think of it, play this one, that one and that one...” This was his answer to me for twenty-five years [until Shostakovich died], and it always made me laugh.7

Shostakovich had a grand design in mind in composing the Preludes and Fugues: an epic narrative. Through a web of allusions including 1-5-6-5 and the quartal character, Shostakovich connects each movement to the others. The final amalgamation of 1-5-6-5 and the quartal character is a result of the 23 Preludes and Fugues before occurring in
succession. Yet, though the movements flow as a single story, there is no clear “program.”

Is 1-5-6-5 “good” or “evil?” The question hardly makes sense.

The story of 1-5-6-5 does not end here. Shostakovich would refer back to the motive several times in the next 17 years of his compositional output, ending abruptly in the last movement of *Seven Romances on Poems of A. Blok*, Op. 127, 40 opuses later, with a quotation from the concluding bars of Prelude No. 19 in E♭ major. Seemingly reversing his decision on the transformation into the quartal character, Shostakovich ends Op. 127 at the point in the Preludes and Fugues where the narrative tension was the highest. How did Shostakovich arrive at these “revisionist” conclusions? What caused such tragedy to squash the majestic triumph of 1-5-6-5 that sounds at the end of the Preludes and Fugues? Regardless of how he reinterprets Opus 87 later in his life, one thing is for certain: Twenty-Four Preludes and Fugues is paradoxically both a Bach-like series of independent prelude-fugue sets and a unified cycle.
**Music Examples**

Origins: Prelude and Fugue Nos. 1-4

*Moderato (q=92)*

Example 1.1. Fugue No. 1 in C major, mm. 0-12, p. 5. C⁷, +P5, +M2, –M2, one-note anacrusis. The opening two notes in mm. 0-2 introduce the motive, summarizing the overall gesture. The elaboration of those two notes is the four-note gesture that defines the 1-5-6-5 motive.

*Moderato non troppo (q=126)*

Example 1.2. Prelude No. 3 in G major, mm. 7-11, p. 13. C⁷, +P5, +M2, –M2, two-note anacrusis. After the double-octave opening of the prelude, the motive appears in the C⁷ in the bass and the right-hand eighth notes in mm. 8.
Example 1-3. Prelude No. 4 in E minor, mm. 1-8. P5, +P5, +m2, –m2, no anacrusis. With a gesture similar to the one in P03-A, the motive appears in the first measure. The first right hand note of each next measure opposes the voice in the bass, but still idles on B and C.
Example I-4. Fugue No. 4 in E minor. (A) mm. 1-7, p. 22. Contour of first subject: E, +P5, +m2, −m2, no anacrusis. (B) mm. 48-52, p. 23. Second subject: B, +P5, +m2, −m2, three-note anacrusis. (C) mm. 89-92, p. 24. Showing both subjects occurring simultaneously.
TRANSFORMATION: PRELUDES AND FUGUES NOS. 5-10

Example I-5. Fugue No. 5 in D major, mm. 1-7, p. 28. A♯, –P5, +M6, –M2. No anacrusis. The motive appears out of order as 5-1-6-5.

Example I-6. Fugue No. 6 in B minor, mm. 1-6. B-natural, –P4, +m2, –m2. Augmentation. First B lasts from mm. 1-3, the dotted-whole note in mm. 4 adds the F♯. Mm. 5 and 6 each center around G and F♯, respectively.

Example I-7. Prelude No. 7 in A major, mm. 1-3. A-natural, –P5, +M2, –M2. One note anacrusis. In mm. 3, the right hand outlines the motive starting with an eighth-note A in the right hand, which functions as an anacrusis to the arrangement of dotted-quarter triads, the top-note of which follows the 1-5-6-5 contour. The A in the bass also helps secure the 1 of the motive.

Example I-9. Fugue No. 8 in F♯ minor, mm. 0-9. A, +M2, −M2, −m3. Two note anacrusis. Appears in retrograde with intervallic diminution using a m3 instead of a P5. The motive is approached by its first two notes, much like Fugue No. 1 in C major (F01-A), which makes for the complete gesture. The phrase is stated three times over the course of the subject.

Example I-11. Fugue No. 10 in C# minor, mm. 1-8, p. 61. G#, +m2, –m2, –P5. Two note anacrusis. The fugue subject picks up where the prelude leaves off, but uses a different rhythmic scheme.
REALIZATION: PRELUDE AND FUGUE NOS. 11-17

Dynamic indication: \textbf{P}

Allegro (\( \text{\textit{j}} = 138 \))

Example I-12. Prelude No. 11 in B major, mm. 18-25, p. 66. C, \(+m2, -m2, -P5\). No anacrusis. Retrograde. This theme, which first appears 18 measures into the prelude, occurs five times during the whole movement.

Example I-13. Fugue No. 11 in B major, mm. 8-14, p. 68. Countersubject in right hand, answer in left hand beginning mm. 8; initial subject stated from mm. 1-7 (not shown). Mm. 10 and 14 both contain the gesture in the countersubject. Mm. 10: C\#, \(+M2, -M2, -P5\); retrograde; third-note stress. Mm. 14: F\#, \(+P5, +M2, -M2\); third-note stress.
Example I-14. Prelude No. 12 in G# minor, mm. 48-51, p. 73. C#, +P5, +M2, −M2. One-note anacrusis. This instance of the motive coincides with the introduction of new rhythmic material (specifically the dotted quarter, and the eighth note), which, by the end of the prelude, develops into the opening gesture in the following fugue.

Example I-15. Fugue No. 12 in G# minor, mm. 0-4, p. 75. G#, −M2, +M2, −M6. Two-note anacrusis. Retrograde with inverted crest (6-5-6-1). The subject falls back on the eighth-note 6-1 three times, considerably extending the first half of the motive in the second and third iterations.

Example I-16. Prelude No. 12 in G# minor, mm. 48-51, p. 73. C#, +P5, +M2, −M2. One-note anacrusis. This instance of the motive coincides with the introduction of new rhythmic material (specifically the dotted quarter, and the eighth note), which, by the end of the prelude, develops into the opening gesture in the following fugue.
Example I-17. Fugue No. 12 in G♯ minor, mm. 0-4, p. 75. G♯, −M2, +M2, −M6. Two-note anacrusis. Retrograde with inverted crest (6-5-6-1). The subject falls back on the eighth-note 6-1 three times, considerably extending the first half of the motive in the second and third iterations.

Example I-18. Prelude No. 13 in F♯ major, mm. 1-9, p. 81. The use of the major second with larger intervals (P4, P5, M6) alludes to 1-5-6-5.
Example I-19. Fugue No. 13 in F♯ major, mm. 0-14, p. 84. F♯, +M3, +m2, –m2. Last note stress. The downbeats of mm. 0-4 outline 1-3-4-3 before falling back to 1 in mm. 5. The passing tone G♯ is the weakest note of them all suggesting that in performance it might be underplayed to emphasize the arch 1-3-4-3. The motive uses the minor third instead of perfect fifth as the larger interval to accommodate the small vertical span of the subject. Also, tenuto marks over a dotted rhythm of oscillating seconds in the free counterpoint allude to the seconds formed from the first three downbeats of each subject.

Example I-20. Fugue No. 14 in E♭ minor, mm. 1-13, p. 92. B♭, –P5, +M6, –m2. Notes out of order: 5-1-6-5. Similar note order in Fugue No. 5 in D major (see F05-A).

Example I-21. Fugue No. 15 in D♭ major, mm. 1-6, p. 100. B♭, +P5, +m2, –m2. One note anacrusis. The motive repeats with a double-flatted B, keeping the fifth intact, though augmented.
Example I-22. Fugue No. 16 in Bb minor, mm. 1-4, p. 108. Bb, +P5, +m2, –m2. The motive occurs twice in m.4. The first time the stress is on the last note (the eighth-note F#). The second time the stress is on the second note.

Second note stress. Similar to the accompaniment in the preceding prelude.
THE QUARTAL CHARACTER: PRELUDE AND FUGUE NOS. 18-23

Example I-25. Prelude No. 18 in F minor. (A) mm. 1-4, p. 124. F, –P4, +m2, –m2. First note stress. (B) mm. 47-50. F, +P5, +m2, –m2. Also notice the movement by thirds A♭ major to F major.

Example I-26. Fugue No. 18 in F minor. Mm. 1-8. Ascending fourths on downbeats of mm. 1-3. Mm. 4-8 are symmetric with respect to the quarter-note pulse, i.e. C-F-E♭-F-(F)-E♭-F-C.
Example I-27. Prelude No. 19 in Eb major. (A) mm. 12-14, tenor line. B♭, +M2, −M2, −P5. (B) mm. 65-69, tenor/upper alto. B♭, +M2, −M2, −P5.

Example I-28. Prelude No. 19 in Eb major. mm. 127-133. Eb-A-D-A alludes to 1-5-6-5 using the augmented fourth and the smaller perfect fourth. A-D-D-A also foreshadows the first subject of Fugue No. 24.
Example I-29. Fugue No. 19 in E♭ major. mm. 2-3 contains C-F♭-G-F♭ which alludes to 1-5-6-5 while obfuscating the underlying enharmonic major triad. This subject is antimodal, the F♭ and the G♯ contradict each other within the context of modality since there is no mode in E♭ that can accommodate the two notes.

Example I-30. Prelude No. 20 in C minor. (A) mm. 2 contains G-A♭-G-C found starting with the second triplet sixteenth in the bar. (B) mm. 52-57 allude to the motive four or five times, with an absolute reference in mm. 55-56.
Example I-31. Fugue No. 20 in C minor. Mm. 4 contains possible allusion to 1-5-6-5. The skip from C to F between mm. 2-3 contributes to the “quartal character.”

Example I-32. Prelude No. 21 in Bb major. Mm. 1-4 show quartal chords: C-F-Bb. The G in the right hand on the second beat of mm. 3 adds another fourth to the stack.

Example I-33. Prelude No. 21, mm.18-22. Several allusions to 1-5-6-5 in the retrograde can be found in the right hand here. The allusions begin at the exact moment the left hand changes from legato to staccato.
Example I-34. Fugue No. 21 in B♭ major. Quartal trichord created with F, B♭, E♭ in mm. 1-2. Mm. 3-4 introduce a second trichord D, G, C. Mm. 5-8 return to the first trichord.

Example I-35. Prelude No. 22 in G minor. Contrasting the previous fugue, all the elements here are tertian. The two-note slur gesture also anticipates the second subject of Fugue No. 24 in D minor, the last subject.

Example I-36. Fugue No. 22 in G minor. The half notes in this subject outline E♭-B♭-C-B♭, a vertical inversion of 1-5-6-5. Also the G♯ “floor” of mm. 3-5 exaggerates the procession from third to fourth to third; a tertian-quartal conflict.
Example I-37. Fugue No. 23 in F major. Mm. 1-2 form a quartal hexachord: A-D-G-C-F-Bb. Though these are merely the notes of a major scale, Shostakovich brings out the quartal element in the beginning by using perfect fourths. At the end of the subject, tertianism takes over with a falling major triad. Thus, there is a conflict between the quartal and tertian harmonies within the subject itself.
AMALGAMATION: PRELUDE AND FUGUE NO. 24

Example I-38. Prelude No. 24 in D minor. “Majestic” (maestoso) theme appears in G major mm. 32-42. The opening phrase sounds D-G-G-D-G, which is the cycle’s quartal “signature.” It first occurs in Prelude No. 19 in Eb major. The overall contour of the opening phrase is D-G-A-G (pickup: mm. 31, downbeats: mm. 32, 34, 35)

Example I-39. Fugue No. 24 in D minor. Subject. Same as majestic theme from prelude until mm. 4. Incidentally, mm. 5-6 are diagonally symmetrical and contain the leap down from D to A found earlier in the subject.
Example I-40. Fugue No. 24 in D minor. Second subject in right hand. Notice similarity to two-note slur gesture in Prelude No. 22. Also notice the skip by fourth in mm. 111, 112, 114, and the allusion to 1-5-6-5 in mm. 114-115: C-F-G-Ab-G.

Example I-41. Fugue No. 24 in D minor. Last three bars showing the “quartal signature” A-D-D-A-D.
CHAPTER TWO

1-5-6-5 AFTER OPUS 87

This chapter presents a chronology of allusions to 1-5-6-5 found in Shostakovich works between the years 1951 and 1967. This includes works, Op. 88-127, or in other words, all pieces after Twenty Four Preludes and Fugues, Op. 87, up to and including Seven Romance Verses on Poems by Alexander Blok, Op. 127, in which the motive last appears. I will present a case for the existence of 1-5-6-5 in eight of the forty works. The appearances do not always correspond to significant musical events, which is consistent with the findings in Chapter One; though the motive exists prominently, not every incidence necessitates an intellectual premise.

In particular there are four clusters of years in which Shostakovich alludes to the 1-5-6-5 motive: 1951-1953, 1959-1960, 1964-1965, and 1967. The first period is characterized by overt and repeated allusions in the Preludes and Fugues (discussed in Chapter One), the Tenth Symphony, and on a smaller scale in the film score to The Unforgettable Year 1919. An entire volume could be filled with the analysis of the Symphony; I will cull only aspects of the fourth movement that directly pertain to 1-5-6-5. The second time period involves highly emotional and personal allusions found in the Cello Concerto
No. 1, the Eighth Quartet, and the film score *Five Days–Five Nights*. The third period laconically recalls the motive in one chamber work, Seven Romances on Poems by Alexander Blok, and two more film scores, *A Year As Long As a Lifetime* and *Hamlet*. The last two time periods are most important in that the motive increasingly symbolizes mortality, a theme that will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

**1951-1953: THE TENTH SYMPHONY**

The first reuse of 1-5-6-5 appears in a film score just two opuses after the Preludes and Fugues: The Unforgettable Year 1919, Op. 89 written in 1951. Example II-1 and Example II-2 (p. 57) show how he recycles the intervals. These first “echoes” from the Preludes and Fugues show that the composer had not moved on from his 1-5-6-5 treatise, and still gravitates towards the intervals when writing melodic germ cells. The use is not exact; however, a fully deliberate allusion to 1-5-6-5 would have to wait two more years.

Shostakovich wrote the Tenth Symphony, Op. 93 of 1953 eight years after his Ninth, the longest time span between any two consecutive symphonies. Its third and fourth movements are the most interesting from the standpoint of symbolic allusions because they contain three recurring motives. The third movement of the symphony highlights two of these: D-E♭-C-H (D. Sch.) and E-La-MI-Re-A (Elmira). These correspond to the musical notes D-E♭-C-B and E-A-E-D-A, respectively. The former is Shostakovich’s musical name cipher, which will be discussed in the following chapter in great detail along with the history of the symphony. Elmira is the name of a woman with whom Shostakovich was
infatuated during the symphony’s composition. The fourth movement also juxtaposes D-Es-C-H with another motive: 1-5-6-5.

The fourth movement begins with a lengthy introduction to the first theme, similar in mood to the opening bars of the first movement: a quiet seven-measure octavo in the violoncello and contrabass sections. Then, Shostakovich introduces a solo oboe at mm. 8 (rehearsal 145), and includes the violins two measures later. The oboe line hints at the contour 1-5-6-5 via pairs of large and small intervals. For example, the oboe begins with $F^\flat-D|F^\flat-G-F^\flat—a$ major third $D-F^\flat$ and a minor second $F^\flat-G$. At rehearsal 146, he introduces the full string orchestra with timpani, but softly still.

At rehearsal 147 a solo flute makes a very conspicuous allusion to 1-5-6-5 at the end of its second phrase: $B-F^\flat-G-F^\flat-B$ (see Example II-3, p. 58). The piccolo immediately imitates the flute with $B-F^\flat-G-F^\flat-B^\flat$ in the same octave register. Both of these allusions use a three-note anacrusis, thereby stressing the final beat—Shostakovich’s usual rhythmic pattern for 1-5-6-5. Immediately after the piccolo finishes the phrase, the violoncello and bass sections resume the opening bars in octavo; however, the melody is truncated by the introduction of a bassoon solo that recalls the oboe’s introduction (rehearsal 149). At rehearsal 150, a forte oboe interrupts the bassoon and lingers just two measures before falling quiet.

The narration continues a reference to 1-5-6-5 in the flute: $G^\#-D-E_b-D$. The tension of this dialogue in the woodwinds arises from the tritone $G^\#-D$ and the minor second $D-E_b$. Again, Shostakovich uses the larger-smaller interval technique to allude to 1-5-6-5. At the
end of the second phrase, Shostakovich weaves the same contour with its own inversion in a triplet eighth-sixteenth rhythm:

\[
E_b \cdot [D-G\#-A-(G\#)] \cdot D - E_b \cdot [D) \cdot G\#-A-G\#] \cdot D
\]

The piccolo again imitates the flute in the same octave. The increased use of tritones signifies an increasing intervallic tension; the allusions are bent, using augmented fourths instead of perfect fifths. At rehearsal 151, Shostakovich introduces the last remaining member of the woodwind quintet—the clarinet.

Shostakovich now “fixes” the tritone; however, the allusion is broken again—the latter half, 6-5, is missing. The clarinet plays G♭-G♭-D♭ with a new rhythm—quarter, eighth, dotted quarter. The flute imitates the gesture with E-E-B. At rehearsal 152, the gesture is extended to 1-1-5|1-5-6-5 in the clarinet. The flute again imitates, but it deviates from the expected E-B-C♯-B and approaches the C♯ chromatically: E-B-B♯-C♯ (see Example II-4, p. 59). Finally at rehearsal 153, this gesture catapults into the first theme.

The introduction in the fourth movement serves essentially one purpose: to transform 1-5-6-5 into the material for the first theme. Shostakovich maps various transformations of the motive onto a 1-5-6-5 geography. Various points on the map represent different transformations. Moreover, the music does not progress linearly through each transformation. Some aspects come full circle. For example, the perfect fifth boldly changes to the tritone and then regresses to the original interval pattern toward the end of the introduction. Other aspects of non-linear transformation seem to be
singularities, such as the truncation-extension techniques (1-5-6-5 becomes 1-1-5, and then 1-1-5 | 1-5-6-5).

A second theme with march-like rhythms (i.e. eighth-eighth-quarter, and 8 sixteenths-4 eighths) appears at rehearsal at rehearsal 158. As the theme progresses the rhythms become more insistent and deliberately clash with the melodic first theme. At the end of exposition, Shostakovich brings the orchestra to an enormous four-note trilled unison: D-Es-C-H. The Preludes and Fugues motive dominates the exposition in the fourth movement, yet at the onset of the development, it is clear that D-Es-C-H will be used more prominently. At rehearsal 187, 31 bars into the development, the trumpets and trombone iterate his name-cipher as shown in Example II-5 (p. 59).

Thus the symphony’s fourth movement is essentially a battle between the two motives 1-5-6-5 and D-Es-C-H. The motives have two key traits in common. Both are four-note motives that stress the fourth note; and, in the symphony’s context, they both refer to freedom: 1-5-6-5 by its transforming nature, and D-Es-C-H through the absence of its transformation. The symphony does conclude with D-Es-C-H in the timpani; however, there is a tinge of irony in that the last allusion, since a fortississimo E major chord in the rhythm short-short-short-long, is divorced of the pitches D-Es-C-H (see Example II-6 p. 60). The rhythm describes both 1-5-6-5 and D-Es-C-H. Therefore, D-Es-C-H does not really “win” after all; rather, it amalgamates with 1-5-6-5, much like how 1-5-6-5 amalgamates with the “quartal character” in Prelude and Fugue No. 24.
The First Cello Concerto in E♭ major, Op. 107 (1959) begins with a four-note gesture, G-F♭-C♭-B♭, that immediately recalls the four-note gestures 1-5-6-5 and D-Es-C-H from the Tenth Symphony (see Example II-7 p. 61). One hears an E minor triad resolving to an E♭ major triad; however, this is most likely not the sound Shostakovich wants us to hear. Relative to G the F♭ produces an augmented third, and the C♭ produces a diminished fourth. The spelling of the notes is peculiar. Following typical diatonic voice leading conventions, Shostakovich had three other options: G-E-B-A♯, G-E-B-B♭, A♭-F♭-C♭-B♭. The first fails in the long run because it presumes D♯ major, which would have five sharps and two double sharps. The second choice would respell the dominant as a B♭ immediately after B♮, but respelling scale degrees is generally undesirable in terms of voice leading, except in chromatic passages. The third option would be technically correct, that is an F♭ minor triad resolving to E♭ major; however, A♭♭ is played as a G open string on the cello, so Shostakovich most likely decided against confusing the player with more flats than necessary. Despite the prevalence of a four-note stress-final gesture, Shostakovich does not give us any absolute allusions to 1-5-6-5 or to D-Es-C-H in the first movement. Yet, at the top of the second movement’s enormous climax, we find a potential allusion to the Preludes and Fugues with the double-stopped iterations of D-A-D-A-D, which seem remarkably close to the A-D-D-A-D theme of the last prelude and fugue in Op. 87 (see Example II-8, p. 61). Secondly, the repetition of the D and A is juxtaposed next to a gesture A-D-E♭-D, which follows the contour of 1-5-6-5. The allusion is certainly present,
though very little external meaning is easily derived, except that it is placed in the context of the most dramatic point in the concerto.

In 1960, Shostakovich was sent to Dresden for “inspiration” to compose the music to the film *Five Days, Five Nights*, about the allied bombing raid on Dresden in World War II. During this time he produced not only the film score, but also the Eighth String Quartet. Both of these works refer to 1-5-6-5. I will focus on the Eighth Quartet since it is one of the most well-known and accessible string quartets by a 20th century composer.

The Eighth Quartet, Op. 110 was composed in three days from 12-14 July 1960. The circumstances surrounding its creation are described in greater detail in Chapter Three. The piece is Shostakovich’s most autobiographical work. The work reminisces about music that Shostakovich either wrote or admired, in the form of quotations and allusions, such as his opera *Lady Macbeth at Mtsensk District*, Symphony No. 10, and the Second Piano Trio. David Fanning did an excellent study of these allusions in his book *Shostakovich: String Quartet No. 8*. The Eighth Quartet begins with a D-Es-C-H fugato (see Example II-9, p. 62). There is one allusion that goes unaccounted for in Fanning’s work, and that is the origin of the gesture that Shostakovich introduces in the second theme of the first movement (Example II-10, p. 62), which also closes the first movement (Example II-11, p. 63), and ends the quartet (Example II-12, p. 63). This gesture is none other than a vertical inversion of 1-5-6-5: C4|G3-G3|Ab3|G3. Again, Shostakovich juxtaposes D-Es-C-H and 1-5-6-5,
just as he did in his Tenth Symphony. Chapter Four will discuss the possible meanings of this allusion.

1964-1965: *Hamlet, A Year as Long as a Lifetime*

In 1963 Grigori Kosintsev commissioned Shostakovich to write the film score to *Hamlet*, on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s birth. The composition was completed in 1964, and became Shostakovich’s 116th opus. Though no musical themes directly reference 1-5-6-5 or D-Es-C-H, there is a frightening allusion that occurs simultaneously with the viewer seeing the dead Ophelia submerged in the waters having committed suicide. Example II-13 (p. 64) shows frame by frame how this occurs.

The film first shows Ophelia’s empty room, and Shostakovich scored the music for string orchestra and used one of the Ophelia “going mad” songs as the tune for the solo violin. After the room of Ophelia is seen in full, the film shows a lake (or possibly a river) with foliage. Ophelia’s song comes to an end, and Shostakovich approaches 1-5-6-5 using an abbreviated form 1-6-5 (A-F-E) as the camera pans to the right across the waters. The violin again reiterates the gesture, this time with all four notes, 1-5-6-5. Eerily, the stressed fourth note, 5, coincides precisely with the camera showing Ophelia. In this context, Shostakovich “tags” the music with an allusion to 1-5-6-5. The motive is completely external to the score, and has nothing to do with germ cell elements that it might derive from. Chapter Four discusses in more detail aspects of mortality associated with this particular allusion.
Shostakovich refers to 1-5-6-5 in one more film score, *A Year As Long As a Lifetime*, which is a film biography of Karl Marx. Shostakovich completed the score in 1965, and it became his 120th opus. The allusions are similar in scope to those found in *The Unforgettable Year 1919*, so I will not dwell on them here. See Example II-14 and Example II-15 on p. 65 for details.

**1967: Seven Romances on Poems by Alexander Blok**

The last piece in which Shostakovich uses 1-5-6-5 is the Blok cycle, a set of seven songs for soprano and piano trio from poems by Alexander Blok, a symbolist poet from the late 19th-early 20th century. Shostakovich wrote the opus in the hospital during his recovery from a heart attack on May 28, 1966. Chapter Four discusses the conditions in which this piece arose.

The seven songs are as follows: *Song of Ophelia, Gamayun—the Prophet Bird, We Were Together, The City Sleeps, The Storm, Secret Signs,* and *Music*. The number of movements (seven) is a result of the different combinations of the piano trio. The first three movements are for cello, piano, and violin respectively. Then the next three movements are scored for each duet: cello and piano, violin and piano, and violin and cello. The sixth movement moves *attacca* into the seventh, which adds the piano for the final piano trio.

Shostakovich chose the collection of poems at will, and it is apparent from the many references why these individual poems were selected. *The Song of Ophelia* is perhaps the most explicit, which brings to mind the Ophelia “mad songs” typically associated with
suicide. Thus, we know Shostakovich is already thinking about mortality. Curiously, the second movement, *Gamayun—The Prophet Bird*, begins with an octavo in 3/4 that starts with the quarters E-F♯-G, which is the opening to the Tenth Symphony. The sixth movement, *Secret Signs*, begins with a twelve-tone row in the violoncello, though at the end of the row we hear the intervals $5_{sva}-1-6-5$. Though Shostakovich does not exploit the row serially, it marks his first use of dodecaphony. Shostakovich would go onto explore the melodic possibilities of twelve-tone rows in the upcoming Violin Concerto No. 2, Op. 129, and the Twelfth Quartet, Op. 133. Juxtaposing the strict and algorithmic row with the allusion to the freely transformable 1-5-6-5, we are reminded of the similar juxtapositions of D-Es-C-H and 1-5-6-5 in the Tenth Symphony and the Eighth Quartet.

The last movement, *Music*, contains the most explicit allusions. Shostakovich named the piece “Music” himself as the poems were left untitled by Blok. The poem reads:

В ночи, когда уснёт тревога,
И город скроется во мгле—
О, сколько музыки у Бога,
Какие звуки на земле!

Что бури жизни, если розы
Твои цветут мне и горят!
Что человеческие слезы,
Когда румянятся закат!

Прими, Владычица вселенной,
Сквозь крови, сквозь муки, сквозь гроба—
Последней страсти кубок пенный
От недостойного раба!

At night when restlessness sleeps,
And the city hides in shadows—
Oh, how much music there is with God!
Such sounds there are on Earth!

What is life’s tempest, if your roses will
Bloom and blush for me!
What are human tears,
If the evenings will glow red!

Receive! Mistress of the Universe,
Through blood, through suffering, through death—
The foaming chalice of the final passion
From your unworthy slave.
Shostakovich begins the movement in 3/4 and it has the underlying compound meter of half-quarter. Indeed, the whole piece is written in this meter, except for a single disturbance at mm. 30 in which the pulse changes to dotted quarter notes for four measures. This *hemiola* takes place precisely at the words “Such sounds there are on earth.” Moreover, the words “such sounds” are set to exactly the intervals 1-5-6-5 in the key of E♭ major (see Example II-16, p. 66). (Notice too that the line, “Oh, how much music there is with God,” begins with an upward leap by octave, which points literally to heaven.) Could these “sounds on earth,” in fact, be the sounds of Shostakovich’s music?

Recall the prelude of the same key, Prelude No. 19 in E♭ major (see Example I-27, p. 38). Shostakovich positioned it to reign in the majestic “quartal character,” yet in terms of mood, it has the highest tension of any prelude in the cycle. It also uses the same rhythmic pattern, half-quarter, *and* it uses a dotted-quarter hemiola to interrupt the underlying compound meter. A call to the 1-5-6-5 motive in retrograde seals each of the prelude’s majestic cadences.

Thus, the “sounds on earth” allusion in last movement of the Blok cycle refers undoubtedly to Prelude No. 19. Yet, it foreshadows the most striking allusion of any described in the foregoing pages. Shostakovich ends the Blok cycle with the ending to the Prelude No. 19 in E♭ major. Compare Example II-17 and Example II-18, p. 67. There is a slight twist at the end, in terms of the articulation of A-D-D-A, but everything else is remarkably the same. More striking is that to date there is no scholarship that has pointed out this connection, nor did Shostakovich ever mention it.
In closing, I would like to briefly summarize Shostakovich’s quotation-allusion concept. He alludes to the Prelude and Fugue cycle 17 years and 40 opuses later after having used the cycle’s 1-5-6-5 unifying motive in several intermediate works from a handful of genres. He quotes from the end of the prelude, which is supposed to lead *attacca* into the following fugue; yet, this interruption of the cycle’s “magentic” transformation leads us to the dismal conclusion that Shostakovich would have preferred the fugue cycle to end midcourse. Shostakovich also adds a telling expression mark to the last measure of the Blok cycle: *morendo*, literally “dying away.” In a sense, he kills off his music, and the notion of this “musical suicide” will be become all-important when the discussion of 1-5-6-5 in its biographical context resumes in Chapter Four.
**Music Examples**

**The Unforgettable Year 1919, Op. 89 (1951, Moscow)**

Example II-1. Mov’t 2, *Romance—The Meeting of Shibaeva with Katej*, mm. 1-4, clarinet only. Accompanied by string orchestra. Shows the use of 1-5-6-5.

Example II-2. Mov’t 6, *Intermedya*, mm. 1-5. Shows use of the vertically inverted 1-5-6-5, a development of the clarinet melody shown in Example II-1.
Example II-3. Mov’t 4, *Andante-Allegro*, mm. 23-29. Shows the solo flute and piccolo alluding to 1-5-6-5 in mm. 26-29.
Example II-4. Mov’t 4, *Andante-Allegro*, mm. 58-76. First theme begins at mm. 69.

Example II-6. Mov’t 4, *Andante-Allegro*, mm. 660-662, seventh last bar from the end. Shows the four-note rhythmic figure referring both to 1-5-6-5 and D-Es-C-H simultaneously. The timpani also refers to the D-Es-C-H motive repeatedly.
**CELLO CONCERTO, OP. 107 (1959, KOMAROVO VILLAGE, GULF OF FINLAND)**

**Example II-7.** Mov’t 1, *Allegretto*, mm. 1-10, solo violoncello only. Accompanied by woodwinds. Shows the opening four-note stress-final gesture.

**Example II-8.** Mov’t 2, *Moderato*, mm. 129-137, solo violoncello only. Occurring in the middle of an enormous climax near just before the cadenza, the violoncello alludes to 1-5-6-5 and the A-D-D-A-D motive from Prelude and Fugue No. 24.
**Eighth Quartet, Op. 110 (1960, Dresden)**

Example II-9. Mov’t 1, *Largo*, mm. 0-8. Shows the fugato opening using Shostakovich’s name-cipher D-Es-C-H.

Example II-10. Mov’t 1, *Largo*, mm. 50-56. After the D-Es-C-H theme subsides, a new theme, this time hidden mostly in the Violin II, appears as a vertical inversion of 1-5-6-5.
Example II-11. Mov’t 1-2, *Largo-Allegro molto*, mm. 122-126, mm. 1-4. The 1-5-6-5 gesture closes the first movement before moving immediately into the second movement in G♯ minor. Notice the contour of the opening gesture in the second movement alludes to 1-5-6-5.

Example II-12. Mov’t 5, *Largo*, mm. 81-88. The 1-5-6-5 theme from the first movement closes the quartet’s last movement, thus forging the duality between D-E♭-C-H, which opens the quartet, and 1-5-6-5.
HAMLET, OP. 116 (1964, MOSCOW)

Example II-13. Mov’t 7 from Suite, Ophelia, mm. 1-13, solo violin only. Accompanied by string orchestra. 1-5-6-5 marks the announcement of Ophelia’s suicide. Images (A)-(E) correspond to moments in the music shown above. Harpsichord solo follows in (F)-(H).
**Example II-14.** Mov’t 3, *Intermediya*, mm. 187-191, five before rehearsal number 24. Chimes play 1-5 | 1-5-6-5 much like the origin of the motive in Fugue No. 1.

**Example II-15.** Mov’t 4, *Prochanie (Monolog) [Farewell (Monologue)]*, mm. 1-14, horn solo only. Accompanied by strings and timpani.
Example II-16. Mov’t 7, Musyka [Music], mm. 24-34. Transliterated Russian in first line, word-for-word English translation in second line. Brackets indicate English grammar constructions that do not exist in Russian. The leap of the octave, followed by a descending E♭ minor scale resonates with the words: “Oh, how much music there is with God.” The following line creates a series of allusions to 1-5-6-5 set to the words, “Such sounds there are on earth!” Parentheses around a number indicate that its vertical placement alludes to the contour of 1-5-6-5, but not the actual scale degree.
Example II-17. Mov’t 7, Musyka [Music], mm. 127-138. The ending to Blok song cycle recalls the ending to Prelude No. 19 (see next example). This particular Prelude was on the musical “fringe” of 1-5-6-5, and marks the beginning of the “Quartal Character” found toward the end of the fugue cycle. However, the conclusion of the song cycle at this dramatic moment in the fugue cycle symbolizes the highest degree of unresolved tension. See Chapter Four for a more detailed discussion of this allusion.

Example II-18. Twenty-Four Preludes and Fugues, Op. 87, Prelude No. 19, mm. 127-133. Notice the striking similarity to the example above. The ending to this prelude is essentially just rescored for piano trio. The last three notes change from D-D-A to A-D-A, which shifts the balance from D (expectation of dominant resolution), to A (“plagal” resolution).
CHAPTER THREE
D-ES-C-H, D. SCH., AND DSCH

Chapters One and Two explored in detail the root of Shostakovich’s 1-5-6-5 motive and the web of allusions he spun from it in the works composed during the seventeen-year period of 1950-1967. Taken collectively, these allusions imitate features of organic life: growth (origination, transformation, and termination); reproduction (repetition); and, adaptation to the external environment (contextualization). Through the 1-5-6-5 motive, Shostakovich created an intimate and alive “character” independent of his public persona and responsibilities. Contradicting the notion that Shostakovich was a closet dissident, he eschewed political sentimentality altogether in the creation of his musical alter-ego.

On the other hand, the first opus after the Preludes and Fugues in which he features 1-5-6-5, the Tenth Symphony, coincides with one of the most important political events of the Soviet Union: the death of Stalin. Yet, evidence suggests that Shostakovich had been thinking about the Tenth Symphony long before Stalin’s death. The fulcrum of the debate is another four-note motive, which would make its conspicuous debut in the symphony’s third movement—D-Es-C-H. These letters are the German note names D, Eb, C, B behind the composer’s initials in the same language, D. Sch. However, several scholars and music critics argue that D- Es-C-H existed long before the Tenth Symphony in transpositions or
“near misses.” The folkloric perpetuation of D-Es-C-H sightings is akin to the insatiable and bottomless sensationalism in conspiracy theories; in reality, verified occurrences are few and far between.

As Chapter Two discussed, Shostakovich used 1-5-6-5 and D-Es-C-H as opposite themes in the fourth movement of the Tenth Symphony. Scholars and music critics have either overlooked or discounted the “First Signature,” paying attention solely to the relatively few instances of the D-Es-C-H cipher. Yet during the seventeen-year period between 1950 and 1967, Shostakovich uses the 1-5-6-5 motive with startling regularity, much more like the signature that scholars and music appreciators wanted D-Es-C-H to be. In the course of discussing Shostakovich’s “First Signature”—1-5-6-5—it is appropriate to discuss its close cousin (in some respects even “evil twin”) the “Second Signature”—D-Es-C-H.

It is the subject of this chapter then to trace the symphony’s roots and interpretations, the origins of his name-cipher D-Es-C-H and the theories of its origin, and the folkloric ramifications of erroneous attributions within the ambit of music appreciation. I will begin with a broad history of ciphers, define the D-Es-C-H cipher, and discuss published attributions and claims of origin. Secondly, I will temporally link Shostakovich’s creation of the 1-5-6-5 motive with the creation of D-Es-C-H (and also the “Elmira” cipher) and lend support to both of the latter two Tenth Symphony timeframe hypotheses, arguing in whole that the cipher was created between the years of 1951 and 1953, and most likely in 1951 during the composition of his fugue cycle. Thirdly, I will analyze individual
fragments from the purveyors of the name-cipher’s “true origins” and discuss the widely
circulated Volkovian Tenth Symphony “testimony” and its drawbacks in light of the analysis
I have brought forth on 1-5-6-5. Lastly, I will investigate the proliferation of the casual (but
misleading) form “DSCH” and its implications in the way audiences and Shostakovich
appreciators perceive him, his music, and the strife he endured under Soviet oppression.

**CIPHER HISTORY**

The history of ciphers in European music is as long as the history of Western music
notation. When Guido d’Arezzo solomized the hexachord as a pedagogical tool for
directing his choir, he used the beginning syllable of each phrase in the hymn to Saint John
*Ut queant laxis* as the basis of his hexachord solfege (see

Figure III-1). The original hexachord solfege scale ascended Ut-Re-Mi-Fa-Sol-La.

Evidence suggests that, though the hymn’s text existed before Guido’s invention, he
deliberately composed the melody to *Ut queant laxis* so that each solfege syllable in the text
corresponded to a literal musical note. If this is the case, Guido simultaneously invented both solfege and the solfege cipher.

Since then a handful of composers have reverse-engineered Guido’s solomization, turning musical notes back into words. Depending on the language in which this reverse-solomization takes place, a variety of mnemonics, abbreviations, names, or other words can be devised. In English a small number of words can be represented with note names (A through G) like ‘adage’, ‘baggage’, ‘cabbage’, ‘decade’, ‘edge’, ‘facade’, or ‘gab’, not to mention the various homonyms associated with the modern seven-note solfege: “‘Do,’ a deer, a female deer, etc.”

The 16th century composer Josquin Des Prez was the first to derive musical mottos from solfege, basing them on the names of patrons, which he then used in the cantus firmus. Giosseffo Zarlino, in his 1558 theoretical treatise *Le istitutioni harmoniche*, used the phrase “soggetto cavato dalle parole” (a subject carved out of words) to describe the technique. Josquin first used *soggetto cavato* in *Missa Hercules dux Ferrariae* culling the vowels in the patron’s name: “Hercules dux Ferrariae” > E-U-E-U-E-A-I-E > Re-Ut-Re-Ut-Re-Fa > Re-Ut-Re-Ut-Re-Fa > Mi-Re = D, C, D, C, D, F, E, D (see Figure III-2).
J.S. Bach seems to have been the first composer to incorporate all the letters of a name into a single cipher: B-A-C-H. Since German note names derive from the first eight letters of the alphabet and not Italian solfège, consonants are not excluded; still, the principle of *soggetto cavato* remains the same. Bach simply wrote his last name in musical notes $\text{B-A-C-H} = B_\flat, A, C, B$. Bach makes use of his name-cipher most famously in the incomplete *Contrapunctus 18* of *The Art of the Fugue*, BWV 1080 in which it appears as the third and presumably last subject. Carl Phillip Emanuel, his son, noted on the last bar of manuscript, “In the midst of this fugue, where the name Bach is introduced in the countersubject, the composer died.”\(^{16}\) The Baroque composer’s name-cipher is an appropriate memento; hundreds of works by other composers eulogize Bach with their own renditions and arrangements of B-A-C-H.\(^{17}\)

**DEFINING D-ES-C-H**

D-ES-C-H is Shostakovich’s musical name-cipher. Through a series of simple manipulations, the composer discovered that his name could be ciphered in musical notation. Paying homage to Bach’s B-A-C-H with a four-note cipher of his own, Shostakovich even keeps two of the letters the same. The German composer, however, was fortunate to have an easily cipherable last name (see Figure III-3); “Shostakovich,” with the letters a, v, i, k, o, s, t, ch, sh, was out of the question, at least in its entirety.
It is important to compare and contrast early on the methods by which each composer arrived at their ciphers. Clearly, the choice of what to cipher is as much a matter of aesthetic choice as is the notes that are created. Bach signed his name “J. S. Bach.” Since neither the J nor the S are musical notes, he avoided ciphering anything but his last name. Shostakovich, in deciding to cipher part of his name, had less to work with. For one, Russian is a phonetic language; the names of notes derive from the Italian solfege, so each named note always contains a consonant and a vowel. Shostakovich realized that his first and last name initials Д. III. would be transcribed in German as D. Sch. Still lacking the note S in German, he resorted to the written form of the phonetic sound “Es” which when printed
in German corresponds to E♭. Mixing the available phonetic and printed ingredients, after these few minor (albeit not pretty) adjustments he brewed his musical motto D-Es-C-H.

However, when Shostakovich signed his name to show the underlying cipher on an envelope in 1974, he did not complete his name in German, and instead signed “D. Schostakovich.” The origin of the C in D-Es-C-H may have political implications. Shostakovich mixes transliteration schemes for his last name, possibly to avoid having to use a completely German transliteration in a post-World War II Soviet Union. He writes his last name using a portmanteau of transliterations, beginning with the first three letters from the German “Schostakowitsch” and finishing with the Anglicized spelling “Shostakovich” = Schostakovich. Figure III-4 on p. 73 shows the entire derivation.

The autographed envelope signed with the mystery form “D. Schostakovich” is shown in Figure III-5. Just months later, when the composer passed away his gravestone was marked with a similar etching shown in Figure III-6. The face of the gravestone contains no abbreviations, and is minimally decorated. The musical signature is written in treble clef as it appears in his autographed envelope signature except with quarter notes instead of whole notes. There is a small discrepancy in the implied rhythm: the gravestone designates a full measure, complete with a bar line, which would indicate the D had the stress. However, in practice, Shostakovich would never have used D-Es-C-H in this manner, since the first three notes always form an anacrusis. Shostakovich, in his autographed envelope, left the staff open with no other rhythmic indications.
In all instances, the B has the main rhythmic stress meaning that the preceding three notes form an anacrusis. The E♭ also has the secondary stress, resulting in a duple, never triple underlying meter. The sequence of notes D, E♭, C, B also has several special harmonic properties. The notes can belong to the harmonic minor scale, or to an octatonic scale. The notes in isolation are tonally ambiguous: sometimes the B is used as a harmonic minor leading tone to the C, and at other times, they reverse and the C becomes a supertonic in the Locrian mode. Among the possible melodic intervals in the various permutations are two minor seconds, one major second, two minor thirds, and a diminished fourth. The resulting aesthetic sound of the group’s notes played in any order is
a mode somewhere between the chromatic scale and the minor mode, which is, incidentally, a harmonic language he uses in many works in all eras of his life. Figure III-7 shows just one example of a non-cipher-related use of these notes.

Many texts call D-Es-C-H a “monogram;” however, in both its current and historical usage a “monogram” can only mean a superposition of characters that creates a new character.\textsuperscript{20} For this reason, a monogram is a kind of “cipher,” literally deriving from “zero.”\textsuperscript{21} In other words, a monogrammed character has no intrinsic meaning, and is therefore belongs to the class of ciphers. In music though, the analogy is lost since a vertical, or nearly vertical superposition of notes merely creates a chord, not a new note. “Cipher” or specifically, “name-cipher” is the most appropriate term for the D-Es-C-H motive; the notes themselves are abstract and only have significance through an arbitrary scheme of linguistic transformation.

**Allusion or Illusion?**

The means by which Shostakovich discovered his cipher and the extent to which he actively sought to use it are widely debated. Several sources have attributed the cipher to works earlier than the Symphony No. 10, Op. 93 (1953), but such attributions range from spurious to absurd. The following discussion outlines the D-Es-C-H spottings that scholars and Shostakovich appreciators attribute to the name-cipher. Figure III-8 contains a list of compositions that have been attributed in a printed source to contain D-Es-C-H. The bolded entries indicate verifiable attributions containing exactly D-Es-C-H.
The first composition to be attributed to D-Es-C-H, *Lady Macbeth at Mtsensk District*, incidentally contains the D-Es-C-H intervallic relationships, but it is off in key level, pitched a perfect fourth higher. The notes are certainly foregrounded; the soprano Katerina Izmailova sings them, but it is improbable that Shostakovich would debut his name-cipher in a transposed key.

In the next composition thought to contain D-Es-C-H, the Sixth Symphony, a very high-pitched tune occurs in a piccolo solo following two upward scale runs by the clarinet toward the end of the second movement. The melody has the D-Es-C-H tessitura;
however, the notes do not come in the right order, and the B is flatted, not to mention, the whole phrase includes an A.

The third movement of Piano Sonata No. 2 is next in line, but the C is sharped, provoking more of a chromatic sound than the very Locrian and octatonic D-Es-C-H. The order is also not quite right, as the D interrupts the C-sharp, and the D-Es-C-H relevant section constitutes only a minority of the whole phrase.

The widely published attribution spotted in the violin solo from the middle of the Scherzo of the Violin Concerto No. 1 is as unconvincing as the previous examples. Flattened out into the major mode with a D♯-E-C♯, the first three notes are a half-step too high, spelling Dis-E-Cis-H in German—not D-Es-C-H.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Nature of Attributed Allusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Symphony No. 6, Op. 54</td>
<td>D-D-D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 61</td>
<td>F♯-B-B-D-D-E♭-D-C♯-B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano Trio No. 2, Op. 67</td>
<td>Unspecified; does not exist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 77</td>
<td>D♯-E-C-B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symphony No. 10, Op. 93</td>
<td>Repeated several dozens times at pitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cello Concerto No. 1, Op. 107</td>
<td>G-F♯-C♭-B♭</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String Quartet No. 7, Op. 108</td>
<td>E♭-D-C-B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String Quartet No. 8, Op. 110</td>
<td>Repeated several dozens times at pitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface to the Complete Collection of my Works and a Brief Reflection upon this Preface, Op. 123</td>
<td>Overt literal parody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symphony No. 15, Op. 141</td>
<td>Overt literal parody</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure III-8. List of D-Es-C-H attributions. Hyphen [ - ] indicates notes that follow in shorter rhythmic succession, whereas the pipe [ | ] indicates a longer succession.
Marking what many agree to be the beginning of D-Es-C-H is its prominent arrival in the third and fourth movements of Symphony No. 10. It is repeated \textit{ad nauseum} some forty or fifty times before finally bowing out to a single chord iterated with the same four-note rhythm in the closing bars of the fourth movement. In the third movement, it weaves together with the symphony’s other cipher E-La-Mi-Re-La (“Elmira” the name of a woman he was infatuated with at the time) twelve times with the horn. In the fourth movement he juxtaposes his name-cipher with 1-5-6-5. Considering that Shostakovich discovers the Elmira name-cipher while he was writing the third movement, it would follow that Shostakovich’s use of his own name-cipher several dozen times marks its spontaneous origin. However, since the historical evidence dating the Tenth Symphony is contradictory, this evidence must be framed in the context of the symphony’s eight-year trek to completion (discussion of which will follow).

The opening to Cello Concerto No. 1 introduces a four-note theme. While any similarity to D-Es-C-H in the theme’s melodic contour is out of the question, a rhythmic allusion is possible, as the gesture is a stress-final group of four notes. However, Shostakovich was using this particular rhythmic configuration long before the Tenth Symphony (such as in the Violin Concerto No. 1 attribution). Since there are already significant allusions to the fugue cycle and 1-5-6-5 in the Cello Concerto (as discussed in Chapter Two), any underlying allusion to D-Es-C-H in particular is noncommittal, and most likely unintended.
The Seventh Quartet does contain the curious group of notes E♭, D, C, B at the end of the *Lento*, following a scale-wise descending order, but the stress is on the first-note and not the last. More likely than an allusion to D-E♭-C-H, the composer concludes the slow four-note descending motive found in the first violin part at the beginning of the movement with another variant. The movement is written in D-minor, and the notes D, E♭, C, B are hardly a stretch, considering the opening theme settles on a medley of Locrian and harmonic minor modes.

The composer’s Eight Quartet uses D-E♭-C-H as a unifying theme in the telling work dedicated “to the memory of the composer the composer of this quartet.” The name-cipher that begins and nearly ends the piece narrates a musical history, commenting on his life as composer. Regarding its composition, Shostakovich wrote in a letter to his lifelong friend, Isaac Glikman, dated 19 July 1960:

> “Instead I wrote this ideologically flawed quartet which is of no use to anybody. I started thinking that if some day I die, nobody is likely to write a work in memory of me, so I had better write one myself. The title page could carry the dedication: ‘To the memory of the composer of this quartet’.”

To paraphrase the composer, the task of the quartet is not to function as a new piece of music, but to remember the old pieces that marked his compositional career in a musical way. D-E♭-C-H promotes the notion of the composer as autobiographer; its significance in proportion to the other elements of the quartet should not be overplayed.
Other autobiographical settings of D-Es-C-H include his self-parody *A Preface to My Complete Works and a Brief Reflection on that Preface*, Op. 123, in which he sets his “name, occupation, and nationality” by cycling through the D-Es-C-H motive; and, the Fifteenth Symphony, his seventh to last work, in which he introduces a “slurred parody of his epigram” in the third movement. The latter opus is the fourth and last known piece in which Shostakovich uses exactly the notes D, Eb, C, B in deliberate succession.

**DATING D-ES-C-H**

Due to the short time that elapsed between Stalin’s death and the Tenth Symphony, there has been much speculation that the Tenth Symphony was written from the vantage point of the heroic Shostakovich crushing the deceased Stalin with his name-cipher D-Es-C-H. Traditionally, Shostakovich biographies demarcate the time following Stalin’s death in 1953 as the Ehrenburgian “Thaw.” However, biographies of this time period suggest that this period of time was never a thaw for Shostakovich. His reaction as documented in Fay follows:

[S]hostakovich in private remained sober about prospects for the future. Flora Litvinova recalls that while he exhibited a sense of relief, he felt no euphoria. And when the young Denisov asked him if whether he thought there would now be changes for the better, Shostakovich replied: “Edik, the times are new, but the informers are old.”

Shostakovich fared better in the year-and-a-half following Stalin’s death by all objective counts: he premiered several of his desk-drawer works, completed the long awaited Tenth
Symphony, and received the International Peace Prize, as well as the title “People’s Artist of
the USSR.”

However, no sooner could he have counted his blessings than tragedy befell. On
3 December 1954, Shostakovich’s wife Nina, mother of his two children, suddenly died of a
cancerous tumor—a loss of unimaginable proportion. Moreover, Shostakovich, still in hot
water with the Ministry of Culture for his “formalist” tendencies, was denied a repeat
staging of his “revised” Lady Macbeth at Mtsenk that had garnered the editorial in Pravda,
“Muddle over Music,” in his late twenties, nearly wrecking his compositional career. For
Shostakovich, the “Thaw” amounted to nothing more than a change in Soviet-aesthetic
ownership. Events in his personal life reveal much more about his music than the relatively
unchanged political climate. The time period from 1950 to 1967 in particular stands out as
an aesthetic singularity for his canonic exploitation of 1-5-6-5. Following Twenty-Four
Preludes and Fugues, the Tenth Symphony was the first composition outside of the cycle to
allude to the motive.

An inexplicable mystery shrouds the relationship between the fugue cycle and the
symphony. The circumstances surrounding the creation of the Tenth Symphony are among
the most nebulous of Shostakovich’s output. Eight full years elapsed between the creation of
the Ninth Symphony (1945) and the Tenth Symphony (attr. 1953)—the most between any
two consecutive symphonies. Moreover, evidence from numerous mutually contradictory
sources highlight three timeframes in which portions of the symphony (or possibly its
entirety) may have been composed. Apparently, he had begun work on the symphony in
1947, but became “dissatisfied” and planned to “start over.”\textsuperscript{33} Later, pianist Tatiana Nikolaeva would claim that he began the symphony during the early months of 1950 while he was writing the Twenty-Four Preludes and Fugues and finished that same year.\textsuperscript{34} However, personal correspondence in letters from 1953 and the dates on the manuscript indicate that he was working on the symphony anew, again possibly from scratch, starting with the first movement and going through to the fourth movement to completion.\textsuperscript{35}

The most peculiar feature of the Tenth Symphony is perhaps its unifying gesture D-Es-C-H. The compulsive use of this autobiographical device in the symphony’s third and fourth movements has excited a myriad of interpretations and judgments, ranging from the Elmira-infatuated opportunist’s gimmick to the dissident Shostakovich snubbing the newly deceased Stalin. Even the origin of the name-cipher D-Es-C-H is uncertain and widely attested to compositions before the Tenth Symphony. Incidentally, the 1-5-6-5 motive is juxtaposed in time to its four-note cousin D-Es-C-H in at least one of the above timeframes, and the composer mysteriously combines the two themes in the fourth movement of the Symphony.

There are four primary composer-authored documents that contain instances of or references to his cipher. These are the intensely autobiographical or “life-programmed” compositions: the D-Es-C-H and Elmira name-cipher duo in Symphony No. 10, Op. 93 (1953), the autobiographical Eighth Quartet, Op. 110 (1960), and the two parodies in Preface to My Complete Works and a Brief Reflection on that Preface, Op. 123 (1966) and Symphony No. 15, Op. 141 (1971). The other two secondary documents, as previously
stated, are the letter to Isaac Glikman from 19 July 1960 and his autograph appearing on the
envelope from 1974 (recall Figure III-5 and Figure III-6). Each occurrence is overt,
autobiographical, and relates to his public persona and how others view him. Still, the
question still remains. When did the composer discover the cipher? Is it possible that he
could have known about it decades before the third and fourth movements of Symphony
No. 10 were composed?

In favor of conspiracy and coincidence, most theories quickly overlook the motto’s
true origin: Bach. D-Es-C-H is Shostakovich’s B-A-C-H. If there were ever a time that
Shostakovich was obsessed with Bach, it would have been during 1950-1951 while he was
writing the Prelude and Fugue cycle. Fay’s account in *Shostakovich: A Life* yields the timeline
in Figure III-9. Tatiana Nikolaeva claimed in several interviews later in her life that
Shostakovich had started on the Tenth Symphony during his work on the Preludes and
Fugues. Fay provides the evidence for and against her testimony, but there is no reason to
suppose that Shostakovich could not have started thinking about the Tenth Symphony
during this time.

Even though his personal correspondence during 1953 tells us that Shostakovich did
not write the Tenth Symphony during 1951, he might have had preliminary sketches for it
as early as Nikolaeva’s account. The D-Es-C-H cipher could have originated during
Shostakovich’s infatuation with Bach. After all, the B-A-C-H cipher is most famous for its
appearance in The Art of the Fugue, BWV 1080. Shostakovich first uses his cipher in the
third movement of his Tenth Symphony, and it occurs several dozen times throughout.
Additionally, as was discussed in Chapter Two, Shostakovich uses the 1-5-6-5 motive as the seed to the first subject in the Tenth Symphony’s fourth movement.

The 1-5-6-5 motive and the D-Es-C-H cipher are remarkably complementary four-note signature motives. The former is expressively transformable, whereas the latter is stoically immovable. Though 1-5-6-5 is not flimsy, it has a malleability that allows it to be used in varying melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, and textural schemes. D-Es-C-H on the other hand is more like a fingerprint, with predefined melodic and harmonic implications and rhythmic proportions; it has very few transformational possibilities. 1-5-6-5 is transposable; D-Es-C-H is not. D-Es-C-H is a cipher, which in isolation means nothing; 1-5-6-5 is physical: a contour, like a sculptor’s curve. Shostakovich grants the motive a musical transformation, not according to cryptographic ciphering schemes.

These two signature motives propagate through Shostakovich’s music in opposite fashion. 1-5-6-5 in its germinal stages flourishes as a contour in the Twenty-Four Preludes and Fugues, spreads throughout his compositions for a seventeen-year period, and then abruptly comes to an end in his Seven Romance Verses on Poems by A. Blok with a startling quotation-reminiscence from the Prelude and Fugue cycle as demonstrated in Chapter Two. 1-5-6-5 propagates through a web of allusions, each transformation connecting to every other transformation via its multidimensional existence in time, pitch, contour, rhythmic stress, and so on. D-Es-C-H on the other hand, begins as a well-done cipher gimmick in the Tenth Symphony, becomes incorporated into the composer’s autobiographical Eighth Quartet as one of the many self-quoting, external devices, and
comes to an end, this time in the overt parodies of *A Brief Preface to my Works and a Brief Reflection on that Preface*, Op. 123 and Symphony No. 15. D-Es-C-H is an extroverted motive that displays the composer’s wit. 1-5-6-5 is the true Shostakovich introvert, existing on the plane of allusions and symbols.

Shostakovich simply does not have a hidden stratum of music in which D-Es-C-H exists as an ulterior symbol. It does not want to be proven to exist, yet it leaves clues for its existence. As for attributions of D-Es-C-H occurring before the Tenth Symphony, it would
make very little sense for Shostakovich to backwards-develop into the motive from transposed forms or “near misses.” These close calls early on further illustrate the point that the composer was already using an idiom to which D-Es-C-H belonged. The Twenty-Four Preludes and Fugues, in debuting 1-5-6-5, contain such an intricate web of allusions that it is hard to imagine, if his intention were to do the same with D-Es-C-H, the result would be so sparse and dependent on transformations that obfuscate the true musical intentions of the attributed works.

More than likely, D-Es-C-H originated spontaneously in the manner of an epiphany. He probably came to his variant on B-A-C-H while composing his fugue cycle in early 1951. If so, then he may have immediately tried to begin his Tenth Symphony to make use of it, the timeframe that Nikolaeva corroborates. Assuming that he failed to produce the symphony that year, he may still have been saving the motive for that opus, which could explain why he did not simply introduce D-Es-C-H in one of the five opuses between the fugue cycle and the Tenth Symphony. In what became the final Tenth Symphony, he pits D-Es-C-H against the Elmira name-cipher that supposedly spontaneously arose during his infatuation with her in 1953 and in the fourth movement, he juxtaposes two themes, the first of which derives from 1-5-6-5 and the second of which pertains to D-Es-C-H. Therefore, the Tenth Symphony might have been conceived in part during 1951, but composed in 1953. D-Es-C-H in the same way could have originated in early 1951 when he was working on the fugue cycle or during the summer of 1953 when he actually composed the third movement in which he debuts his name-cipher.
CIPHER CONSPIRACY THEORIES

A catalogue of D-Es-C-H red herrings might be a useful addition to the Shostakovich scholarship in the future, but it is beyond the scope of this chapter to investigate each barbarism individually. However, it is useful to show the extent of the delusions that have appeared in print, and interesting to speculate on the attractions of cipher-hunting.

Derek Hulme dedicates an entire appendix in *Dmitri Shostakovich: A Catalogue, Bibliography, and Discography* (2002) to the history and use of D-Es-C-H. He identifies that Shostakovich “first openly spotlighted it in 1953,” and is quick to point out that “it occurs earlier and possibly unwittingly in *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District* pitched a perfect fourth higher with a ‘near miss’ in the Scherzo of the First Violin Concerto of 1947.” He posits that Shostakovich did not discover the cipher by himself, and argues that Benjamin Britten used it first in 1936, and presumably through their correspondence, Shostakovich picked up the cipher. However, in the letters that Shostakovich sent to Britten, there is no evidence that they ever discussed D-Es-C-H. Yet, Hulme’s hermeneutic has been adapted by the DSCH Journal as the official (and invariably bogus) history.

David Hurwitz, music critic, in a section of his recently published book *Shostakovich: Symphonies and Concertos* (2006) on the Scherzo of Violin Concerto No. 1 writes:

>There are several important firsts in this dynamo of a movement, starting with the presence of Shostakovich’s musical acronym, formed from the first letter of his first name (D) and the first three letters in the German spelling of his last (SCH). This produces the four-note motive: D, E-flat, C, B. You can hear this motive in many works of this and later periods, including the Second Piano Trio, Second Piano
Sonata, Tenth Symphony, Fifteenth Symphony, and Eighth Quartet. It appears in this movement for the first time, played loudly by the soloist about ninety seconds in, right after a grotesque passage for the full woodwind section (with ribald horn snorts) over bouncing two-note figures in the violin.\(^{37}\)

This passage is rife with misinformation. The Piano Trio No. 2, Op. 67, is ten opuses behind, and the Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 61 a full sixteen, the Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 77 (even contradicting the notion that this a “first” in his Violin Concerto). Furthermore, while the Piano Trio does quote pieces from earlier in Shostakovich’s life, there is simply no allusion, thick or thin, to D-ES-C-H in the Piano Trio, and the Piano Sonata and Violin Concerto only contain mangled forms, which occurred certainly by coincidence as previously stated.

Among the more exotic accounts, Piers Burton-Page, author of *Philharmonic Concerto: The Life and Music of Sir Malcolm Arnold*, discusses a connection between Arnold’s String Quartet No. 1, Op. 23 (1949) and D-ES-C-H in an article from the Musical Times titled “Malcolm and the String Quartet”\(^{38}\). He fantasizes of Arnold having played in Shostakovich’s Sixth Symphony, Op. 54 (1939), recognizing the piccolo solo at the end of the second movement, *Allegro*, which takes the shape of D-D-D|ES-ES-ES|D-C|Bb-A (recall Figure III-7), picking out the D-ES-C-H motive (despite the mangled order, repeated notes, the lack of the “H,” and the addition of the A), and incorporating it into his String Quartet No. 1 by 1949:

The end of the work brings back the Holstian theme one last time, but is in effect a gradual fade-out on long held notes. Through them it is
possible dimly to discern once again the outline of a four-note motif of the kind that has casually occurred at other points in the quartet. [...] Is there, one may wonder, a hidden significance, or a homage to the shade of B-A-C-H? In the search for clues, it is worth nothing that the motif in the third movement corresponds exactly to D-S-C-H, Shostakovich's musical monogram. Shostakovich himself had used this motif long before the Tenth Symphony and Eighth Quartet made it famous. It surfaces in his First Violin Concerto, which was written precisely at the time that Arnold was writing the First Quartet—but the composer held back the piece for fear of Stalin, and the first performance was not until 1955. But Arnold could have played in or heard Shostakovich's Sixth Symphony of 1939, where the motif is found at the end of the second movement. Is this pure coincidence?\textsuperscript{39}

More than coincidence, it is a sensationalist (though imaginative) fantasy! However, this account does prove an important point. If another composer is capable of finding these notes by chance, then it should not surprise anyone that Shostakovich, one of the most, if not the most, prolific Soviet composer of the twentieth-century would stumble across the pitches unknowingly, especially when the notes in isolation already convey a harmonic world that belongs to his natural idiom. Shostakovich certainly liked the melodic contour earlier in his life when he gave the tune G, Ab, F, E to Katerina Izmailova in the opera \textit{Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District}, Op. 29.

Shostakovich sympathizers have depended too much on his name-cipher to grapple with the intensely philosophical and symbolic meanings in his music. Whenever they look for a concrete allusions, they find exactly what a cipher represents—nothing. One hopeful numerologist has even published his theory on the use of D-Es-C-H and perfect squares in the key ordering of the string quartets in the DSCH Journal.\textsuperscript{40} Willful exaggeration and rampant speculation are the means behind D-Es-C-H conspiracy theories.
VOLKOV, ORLOV, AND THE TENTH SYMPHONY

Solomon Volkov, editor-author of the controversial “memoirs” of Shostakovich, *Testimony*, has long been at the center of attention in a very prolonged, still ongoing debate over the origin and authenticity of memoir documents which are regarded by scholars as Volkov’s own calculated and exaggerated diatribe against the Party. Volkov still maintains decades later that Shostakovich communicated the document to him in person. Defecting from Russia in 1976 with the precious *Testimony* “manuscript,” he pushed for its publication in the West. Genrikh Orlov, then Soviet musicologist, was called in to do an internal editorial review for Harper & Row Publishers. After flagging it as a fake, they published it anyway. (In fact, the decision to print the book was made before the internal review took place.) After teaching in the United States for six years, Orlov retired from music academia and became a publisher and translator of philosophy and art history. Volkov remained active in musicology and wrote a follow-up to *Testimony* called *Shostakovich and Stalin* (2004). Several other discourses have emerged endorsing *Testimony*, including Ian MacDonald’s *The New Shostakovich* (1990) and Allen Ho and Dmitri Feofanov’s *Shostakovich Reconsidered* (1998).

In *Testimony*, a passage of conspicuous angst, written from the point of view of Shostakovich, claims that the Tenth Symphony personified Stalin:

I couldn’t write an apotheosis to Stalin, I simply couldn’t. I knew what I was in for when I wrote the Ninth. But I did depict Stalin in music in my next symphony, the Tenth. I wrote it right after Stalin’s death, and no one has yet guessed what the symphony is about. It’s
about Stalin and the Stalin years. The second part, the scherzo, is a musical portrait of Stalin, roughly speaking. Of course, there are many other things in it, but that’s the basis.45

Laurel Fay, Shostakovich biographer and Volkov-critic, did a small investigation into the above sentiments from Testimony, and footnoted her results in her discussion of the Tenth Symphony:

Considerably more attention has been paid to the sensational revelation attributed to the composer by S. Volkov in Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich (New York, 1979) of a “hidden” program in the second movement: “The second part, the scherzo, is a musical portrait of Stalin, roughly speaking” (141) I have found no corroboration that such a specific program was either intended or perceived at the time of composition and first performance. Maxim Shostakovich has classified this as one example of the “rumors” reproduced in Testimony: “I think some musicologists set this idea forth. Others repeated it…. Father never said it was a portrait of Stalin.”46

This simple statement of fact provoked a lengthy rebuttal in Volkov’s Shostakovich and Stalin:

The Tenth Symphony has a clear “subplot”: confrontation between artist and tyrant. The wild, frightening Scherzo (the second movement), which overpowers the listener, is a musical portrait of Stalin. Shostakovich himself told me this, and later it was confirmed by Maxim, his son. But the main evidence that this interpretation is not his later invention can be found, as usual, in the music of Shostakovich, the great master of hidden motifs and quotations and juxtapositions of rhythmic figures. The “Stalin” part of the Tenth Symphony is based in great part on Shostakovich’s music for the film Fall of Berlin (1950), in which the ruler was a prominent character.

The composer-as-hero is described in the symphony even more clearly: he is represented here by Shostakovich’s musical signature—the theme D-Es-C-H, which had appeared in the composer’s earlier
work only in hints. In the Tenth Symphony, this musical author’s monogram does not simply float to the surface; it literally fills the work, becoming its central theme. And Shostakovich pits it (in the finale) against the “Stalin” theme when that reappears on the horizon. This is a direct duel in which the Shostakovich theme wins. The theme D-Es-C-H, executed with maniacal stubbornness by various instruments—first the French horns and trumpets, then strings and woodwinds, and finally the kettledrums—concludes the symphony, as if the composer is repeating the assertion: “And I’m alive!” (Recall Shostakovich’s remark at Zoshchenko’s grave.) [Parentheses are Volkov’s, emphasis above added]47

Volkov continues his attack, this time on Genrikh Orlov for dismissing D-Es-C-H as non-autobiographical in the context of the Symphony.

I doubt that they [the audience at the 10th Symphony’s premiere] could decipher all the musical signs and symbols—even many years later, Soviet musicologists who knew the meaning of Shostakovich’s “musical signature” still continued to insist with a stubbornness worthy of better application that “this monogram theme should not be endowed with autobiographical significance.” But the general emotional meaning and subtext of the Tenth was immediately obvious to many. [emphasis added]48

In context, Genrikh Orlov had written:

However, in the Tenth Symphony the second theme of the Allegretto possesses a remarkable high-pitched constancy. In the overwhelming majority of cases, the theme is constructed out of the same sounds: D, E-flat, C, B, which written in German constitute the composer’s initials: d–es–c–h = D. Sch. However, one should not assign an autobiographical significance to this monogram theme. Its frequent appearances in important dramatic collisions and emotional changeability impart the theme with a deeper meaning. [emphasis added]

Однако в Десятой симфонии она обладает примечательным звуковысотным постоянством. В подавляющем большинстве случаев она строится на один и тех же звуках – ре – ми-бемоль – до – си, которые в немецком написании составляют инициалы
Volkov’s heated polemic against the two renowned musicologists begs the question: what is at stake for Volkov if the Tenth Symphony is not about Stalin? Secondly, in a desperate last effort to derail Soviet musicologists he claims that Orlov was not interested in the “emotional meaning and subtext” of the symphony, yet if he had widened his quotation by one sentence to include Orlov’s following statement, “Its frequent appearances in important dramatic collisions and emotional changeability impart the theme with a deeper meaning,” then perhaps Volkov would have yielded to the intended argument. Just as cipher-conspiracy theorists pick and choose notes out of context, Volkov is willing to do the same if it proves his interpretation involving the “Stalin theme.”

Interestingly, the fourth movement does, in fact, have two main themes (in sonata-allegro form actually). The first is the 1-5-6-5 motive from Twenty-Four Preludes and Fugues (as discussed in Chapter Two). The second is D-Es-C-H. Both are allusions to Shostakovich’s own work. To suggest that 1-5-6-5, which is in the major key nonetheless, is a “Stalin theme” after all the evidence laid forth in Chapter Two of its use in Shostakovich’s work before and after the Tenth Symphony, is now out of the question. The fourth movement, if it is a battle, is, paradoxically, a musical one between the canonical liberty of 1-5-6-5 and the tyrannical absolutism of D-Es-C-H. Shostakovich is not Wagner as Volkov presumes by insisting that Shostakovich issued Stalin a postmortem leitmotif. In fact, the
sheer beauty of the Tenth’s fourth movement is the collision of 1-5-6-5 and D-Es-C-H, which amalgamate into a single chord, pounded out in the same stress-final four-note rhythm.

Furthermore, as discussed earlier, Shostakovich’s decision to use D-Es-C-H in his new symphony most likely occurred in 1951 before Stalin died. The symphony’s connection to Stalin is at best circumstantial, and more importantly, such observations undermine the talent of the composer and the concinnity of the music. “No one has yet guessed what the Tenth Symphony is about…” Volkov’s Shostakovich says. Volkov guessed Stalin, casting the entire passage into doubt; however, the question may still be valid. What is the Tenth about? In my opinion, it is a clash of public and private interests. D-ES-C-H is the composer as party member, restricted and bound to external expectations; 1-5-6-5 is the composer as musician, liberated and averting party propriety.

D-ES-C-H FOLKLORE

As a result of the widely published claims of origin by music scholars and critics and the perpetuation of the cipher in music by contemporary composers, D-ES-C-H has achieved celebrity status much like Bach’s B-A-C-H, but in mutated form: DSCH. When Shostakovich referred to his cipher in writing, he used either “D-ES-C-H,” or wrote his full last name using a mixed transliteration, “D. Schostakovich.” Never once did he use the compacted and potentially misleading “DSCH.” The origin of this form likely dates back to 1962 when Ronald Stevenson, Scottish composer, wrote Passacaglia on DSCH. Following
precedent, musicologists and music critics since then have adopted the casual DSCH form
to refer not only to D-Es-C-H, but also to the composer himself. Since the mutated form
has propagated orally as well as in printed publication, the shift from D-Es-C-H or D. Sch.
to DSCH is worthy of a small folkloristic study within the sphere of music criticism.

It is not a coincidence that DSCH originated in the English language. Since Bach’s
cipher is so close in note names to Shostakovich’s, it is useful to compare English usages.
When referring to Bach’s motif, BACH is the written form, pronounced bee-ey-see-eych. It is
written BACH because each letter corresponds to a note name in German. However, in
letters of ‘DSCH’ (pronounced dee-es-see-eych), the S is not a German note name as written,
rather, the phonetic sound of English S, ‘es,’ is the phonetic sound for the German note
name for E-flat. Thus, DSCH is not a German spelling, like BACH, nor does it comprise his
initials: Дмитрий Шостакович > Dmitri Shostakovich > D.S., or even Дмитрий
Шостакович > Д.Ш. > D.Sh. (depending on which step takes the transliteration). It is
closest to the German transliteration of his Russian first and last name initials, that is:
Дмитрий Шостакович > Д.Ш. > D.Sch.; however, ‘DSCH,’ in a deliberately
unpunctuated upper case does not represent his initials visually.

Yet, DSCH has surfaced in several sources not only in deference to the cipher, but
also to the composer himself. A substantial number of internet sources utilize DSCH in a
possessive role, i.e., “DSCH’s music.” As discussed earlier, D-Es-C-H is a cipher, not a
monogram. DSCH on the other hand is a superposition of composer’s essence and his
name-cipher, thereby creating a new symbol—a monogram. Paradoxically, it is the
Shostakovich’s music critics and appreciators that flocked to his cipher after his death in their search for its meaning and origin that created his monogram!

In discussing the folklore element of D-Es-C-H, the internet can not be overlooked; however, I will limit the scope of my research to a macrostudy, comparing the overall usage preference in documents about Shostakovich found on the internet. I chose a simple search engine\textsuperscript{51} to provide an approximate number of hit counts per keyword associations.\textsuperscript{52} In March 2007, I queried the keywords shown in Figure III-10 together, to get a picture of the overall distribution. In this study there is no way to account for context, or the possibility that these keywords might be used for other meanings than the ones intended; however, these are factors which more or less evenly affect all of the data here.

Four noteworthy consequences come to mind. First, the composer is associated with the DSCH monogram in nearly one-tenth of all documents containing his name. Second, DSCH is preferred to the composer’s transliterated initials by several orders of magnitude. Third, the use of DDS (\textit{Dmitri Dmitrievich Shostakovich}) and DSCH is highly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keywords</th>
<th>Hit Counts</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shostakovich</td>
<td>2,132,569</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>All pages presumably containing a reference to Shostakovich the composer</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSCH, Shostakovich</td>
<td>201,651</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>Pages using DSCH acronym</td>
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<tr>
<td>DDS, Shostakovich</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>0.035%</td>
<td>Pages using transliterated initials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDS, DSCH, Shostakovich</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>0.0034%</td>
<td>Pages referring to both DDS and DSCH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Es-C-H, Shostakovich</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>0.0025%</td>
<td>Pages using correct D-Es-C-H form</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{Figure III-10.} Keyword query search on the internet for DSCH versus his initials and the name-cipher’s German note-names.
mutually exclusive; only a tenth of the pages that contain DDS also mentioned DSCH. Fourth, the form D-Es-C-H is hardly used at all.

The fundamental result is that audiences have latched on to DSCH as the embodiment of Shostakovich, even more so than B-A-C-H is for Bach. In reality, Shostakovich intimated much more about his compositional priorities with the 1-5-6-5 allusions cast over the years of 1950 to 1967 than D-Es-C-H could ever show in its overt, humorous, and autobiographical sparseness. Shostakovich’s name-cipher tells us as much about his life and compositions as B-A-C-H tells us about Johann Sebastian Bach—next to nothing.

In my opinion, DSCH, as opposed to D-Es-C-H, exists within music criticism as a way of heightening the suspense behind discussions of Shostakovich’s meanings and intentions. The 1-5-6-5 motive is a transformable and organic gesture, much like other elements in Shostakovich’s composition. Along the same lines of thinking, D-Es-C-H conspiracy theorists have tried to argue that his name-cipher carries the same potential for transformation, but the musical evidence for this is severely lacking, especially when compared next to 1-5-6-5. Shostakovich makes the comparison for himself in the fourth movement of the Tenth Symphony, concluding paradoxically with the opposite of what music critics want to believe, and aiming for irony, not self-infatuation.
SUMMARY

D-Es-C-H is Shostakovich’s name-cipher and the frenzy of D-Es-C-H sightings by scholars, music critics, and music appreciators have left its widely debated origin in desperate need of authority to determine conclusively when it originated, how, why, and where he used it. As I have argued, the name-cipher most likely originated during the middle timeframe given for the conception of the Tenth Symphony of early 1951, or possibly in the later 1953 timeframe when the symphony was finally composed. The Tenth Symphony is inextricably linked to D-Es-C-H. Likewise, its conception, however abstract or raw, can be narrowed to 1951 at the earliest, and for the majority of its physical composition, 1953. Either way, I have narrowed the window of creation for both the Tenth Symphony and D-Es-C-H to a relatively small time period of two-and-a-half years, from concept to composition.

Volkov’s Stalinist interpretation thus has several flaws. The last movement contains a reference to 1-5-6-5, pitting it against its four-note counterpart D-Es-C-H. There is simply no room for Stalin in the two-theme Sonata-Allegro form. The third movement centers on D-Es-C-H and his Elmira cipher. Again, this imagined honeymoon leaves no place for Stalin. Finally, if the Tenth was conceived as early as 1951, then its rawest form could not be about the death of Stalin since he had not yet died.

The other conspiracy theories all have one thing in common: a desperate necessity to explain D-Es-C-H as representative of the closet dissident’s ego. Yet, with little evidence to the contrary, it is simply an arbitrary cipher that functions subordinately to the greater
goal of his musical purposes, and incidentally exploited a harmonic idiom of which he was fond. Lacking the power to transform as it is, there is no virtue in rearranging or modifying the letters to create an endless number of anagrams.

The cipher means nothing as concrete as Volkov is suggesting, but it did hold some affective meaning for the composer. In other words, it must have meant something to Shostakovich, but there is no way of knowing what with any degree of certainty. Pairing conspiracy theories with wishful thinking, the publicity of D-Es-C-H sightings and all the analysis in the past thirty years failed to find its close cousin 1-5-6-5, which inherited a web of allusions that tells us much more about the composer’s individuality than the cipher of a name passed down from his father.
Shostakovich was a keen opportunist. His use of the 1-5-6-5 motive discussed thus far suggests that he exploits every imaginable avenue to craft subliminal allusions inside his works. He uses 1-5-6-5 in works from nearly every main genre: solo piano, symphony, concerto, quartet, song, and film. Undoubtedly, the allusions taken as a whole are real and intended, but individually, some seem too tenuous to be considered explicit occurrences.

Having presented substantial proof of the existence of the motive in the foregoing chapters, I turn now to placing the motive in its biographical context. This chapter discusses what I am calling Shostakovich’s “composing personality,” speculates on the internal compositional forces at play in writing music with recurring motivic allusions, and highlights the 1-5-6-5 motive’s associations with mortality, especially towards the end of the time period 1950 to 1967. In particular, I will recall quirks of Shostakovich’s composing habits, speculate on how these mannerisms led to his use of allusions in his compositions, and propose and define two modes of creativity, “passive composition” and “active composition.” I will also pay special attention to the apparent suicidality of 1-5-6-5, and how Shostakovich brings the motive deliberately to its most unnatural conclusion. My
conjectures are informed by both primary sources—the composer’s music and written letters—and secondary sources—interviews with friends and family of the composer, and documented personal events.

**COMPOSING PERSONALITY**

A plethora of first-hand accounts infer several of Shostakovich’s personality traits and composing habits. We know that he had an exceptionally strong musical memory and perfect pitch. He often worked out entire compositions in his head before writing them down. Though he did play his pieces on the piano, he only did so after they had been written down. He would orchestrate music one full bar at a time on each instrumental staff without a referring to a “short” score. He rarely restarted compositions once anything had been written down on paper, seeing every piece to completion, even if he ended up disliking it.

One of the few surviving examples of a false start is the “Unfinished Quartet,” parts of which later became the first movement of the Ninth Quartet. It appears that he started the Ninth Quartet three times, the first of which the composer claimed to have burned himself. The Tenth Symphony, as discussed in Chapter Three, also appears to have had two false starts. However, these compositional aberrations usually resulted in writing a completely different piece, rather than reworking existing material.

Shostakovich had no qualms about destroying personal archives. In fact, he seemed fond of it. He once burnt a stack of his own compositions in an exercise of “healthy self-
criticism," and after his mother died, he retrieved all of the letters he had written her to burn them. As an exercise of orchestration, he once decided to orchestrate Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Romances*. He orchestrated each song bar by bar, and when he came to the end of a piece, he shredded the papers and threw them away. He apparently did this for each of the songs, so that at the end of the exercise there would be a completely orchestrated volume of Korsakov’s songs—in the waste-bin. It is probably only by sheer luck that we even have the Unfinished Quartet!

On the whole, Shostakovich was a remarkable perfectionist, and in some ways obsessive about micromanaging every detail of composition. He would number his own opuses, sometimes “saving” opus numbers for compositions he had not yet completed. He never outsourced his orchestration to the composer’s guild for others to complete, which was common then, especially for film music. He even wrote out parts to ensemble works until he was too feeble to do so. Shostakovich had a remarkable musical memory, and kept most of his scratch work in his head and to himself, the only “safe” place.

**THE ACTIVE AND PASSIVE COMPOSER**

Let us assume for the moment that we know nothing about Shostakovich’s psychology, personality, or lifetime, except that he is a composer who is definitively observed to have used the 1-5-6-5 motive in the nine works mentioned previously. Since neither Shostakovich nor any of the people who knew him are on record as having a discussion about this motive, we know of very little that could have directly caused this
phenomenon. Yet, we do know that during the first and last times Shostakovich uses the motive, he must have been hyperaware of its presence; the elements which depend on it can only be conceived of explicitly—i.e. structure, irony, symbolic allusions, etc. The use of the motive in these cases could be considered to be the result of an active and alert reasoning.

By contrast, there are several examples of the motive in which Shostakovich might not have been fully aware that he was alluding to his motive—passive allusions—even though he was using it in a very prominent way. A few occurrences in the Preludes and Fugues appear unfocused or exist so briefly that they are almost not worth analytical attention. The film music to *An Unforgettable Year: 1919*, discussed in Chapter Two, demonstrates a lower level of potentially “active” allusions. In this composition he does not have a clear aim of highlighting the motive, nor does its spare use preclude anything symbolic. In comparison to the other musical themes, the motive is isolated, and might simply derive from a germ cell already in use that bears no resemblance to 1-5-6-5. The motive probably originates in his mind’s repository of raw musical material, and it provides one of many possible foundations for thematic unity (or even athematic singularity).

I would argue that Shostakovich approached composition much like a sculptor approaches a slab of marble. Let us consider an analogy between a composer and a sculptor, as though the former followed the procedure of the latter. The impetus or decision to write a piece of music requires that the composer find the raw material for the piece, like looking for the right slab. Then the composer must then imagine the piece as a whole; if not, then a
small mistake could render the whole slab useless. Forethought is crucial. However, approaching a three-dimensional object with eyes that perceive in two dimensions and a chisel that can only carve in a single dimension requires the composer to take both “passive” and “active” roles in sculpting. The passive role could be thought of as the shaping of the figure’s contours and profiles—the things that can not be viewed in totality during their creation due to the inability to natively perceive the whole object in three-dimensions. The more precise and structural details, such as the motifs (musical “motives”), are worked out at the moment actively. Every chisel-stroke is like a note on the paper (or possibly on the imagined page in the mind of the composer with an acute memory). When the composer sees the sculpture and is satisfied, it is finished. A sculpture is not “revised” because sculpting is in itself an ongoing process of revision until the work is finished.

Regarding Shostakovich’s piece Suite on Verses of Michelangelo, Op. 145, Evgeny Shenderovich, the pianist who accompanied at the premiere of the work, recalls Shostakovich’s consummate music in homage to the sculptor Michelangelo:

Before starting the eighth movement, ‘Creation,’ I timidly suggested, ‘Dmitri Dmitriyevich, I cannot rid myself of the association of the first chord in this movement with your music for . . .’

‘My music for Hamlet?’ Dmitri Dmitriyevich finished my sentence for me. He did not deny it, but he informed me that this movement contained another association: he had read that Michelangelo possessed such power and precision that with his very first blow he could hew out of a boulder all the superfluous marble. He very rarely ever needed to correct his work.
And indeed this image is almost visually present in Shostakovich’s music [for the Michelangelo songs], with the abrasive chords, the syncopated rhythms and the short passages spiralling upwards like a whirlwind. You can vividly hear the great sculptor’s hammer blows and the scraping of his chisel on the marble. 57

Given what we know about the methods of Shostakovich’s composition and his lack of revisions as discussed above, the parallel to sculpting seems apt.

From the sculpture analogy we can infer a model of his composition process and his passive and active use of motives. These do not strictly mean “unconscious” and “conscious,” since this would imply that Shostakovich was completely unaware of his passive form of composition. As an example to the contrary, when he developed the occasional “composing block,” he would play the composition on the piano up to the point of the block, as though it were a recording and then “leap into the void” forcing the music to the surface via the inertial stimulus gained from hearing the beginning. Improvisation is the epitome of the passive role, but Shostakovich was certainly in “conscious” control of it. Likewise, the active role is not necessarily conscious. For example, he wrote to Elmira on 10 August 1953 about a dream in which he heard the entire third movement of the Tenth Symphony, and he remarked he had remembered some of it and planned to reuse some of this “inspired” material in the actual third movement. Thus the active role can also manifest itself unconsciously. Passive and active composition refers, more or less, to the breakdown of music into implicit and explicit material.

As an example of these processes in Shostakovich’s composition, let us consider the origins of the 1-5-6-5 motive. According to Nikolaeva, the composer only planned a small
collection of preludes and fugues at first, and sometime after having started, decided to turn it into a cycle in all twenty-four major and minor keys. This claim is corroborated by the origins of 1-5-6-5. The motive certainly occurs in the subject of the first fugue, yet it goes unused by the composer until Prelude and Fugue No. 4 in which it makes its debut as the unifying thematic element. In other words, what would have otherwise been an unassuming and passive group of four notes, became explicitly reinterpreted and used pervasively throughout the rest of the cycle.

Another way of thinking of passive and active composition is through their stylistic extremes: free improvisation and serialism. The former relies on physical stimulus and the expectation of certain congruous or incongruous sounds, whereas the latter depends solely on the active reasoning ability of the composer. A composer does not often hear a row of twelve unique notes passively. One would surmise that even the most basic characteristics of dodecaphony such as “play each chromatic note before returning to the first” does not translate into any implicit expectation except through repetition and honed practice, and as the level of complexity is increased, the ability to learn an expectation in which the serial gesture can be natively understood decreases. When the mind can no longer use heuristics to passively “guess” the answer, it must resort to reasoning and computation. A piece with serialized pitch, dynamic level, and articulation would prove impossible for even the most trained mind to passively produce simply by musical expectation.

Shostakovich used both passive and active faculties in composing. Without the active processes, we would not have any of the philosophy or beautiful structures that are so
commonly associated with his music. Yet if his music were written entirely actively, then
the all of the raw improvisational-like gestures would be lost. The Twenty-Four Preludes
and Fugues is a document that shows exactly how he accommodates these competing
internal emotional, philosophical, and sometimes purely musical forces.

**Suicide, Mortality, and Hopelessness**

Having studied the use of 1-5-6-5 in the Twenty Four Preludes and Fugues in great
detail, I would argue that the cycle is Shostakovich’s most “formalist” work, in the sense of
the Soviet Composer Congress’s definition of formalist music as a “pernicious ‘theory’
according to which complex, untexted instrumental-symphonic music ought to occupy the
leading and defining position in Soviet music.” It is similar in structure to Bartok’s
*Mikrokosmos*, except that there is a clear narrative from start to finish. Each prelude and
fugue represents a different character piece in a universe of 1-5-6-5. In this sense, the cycle
is timeless; it shows us nothing about the political atmosphere of the time nor the events in
Shostakovich’s life. Thus, the fugue cycle is an “introverted” work, though not in the sense
of the late quartets, in which a morbid awareness of death occupies the musical subtext. In
fact, these late works of the 1960s and early 1970s are Shostakovich’s most oft discussed
works because they are so musically candid.

As discussed earlier, though 1-5-6-5 began in a formalist fugue cycle, it “meets its
maker” in the eerie, symbolist, and very worldly Blok cycle in a series of allusions to the
Prelude No. 18 in Eb major. Of course, there were milestones along the way: the Tenth
Symphony, the Eighth Quartet, the film score to Kozinstev’s *Hamlet*. For reasons upon which we can only speculate, the 1-5-6-5 motive became associated with suicide, mortality, and hopelessness.

There are two accounts of Shostakovich having overtly contemplated suicide. The first occurred in January 1948 after undergoing the scrutiny of Andrej Zhdanov (Stalin’s Ministry of Culture appointment) and the Central Committee for his Eighth Symphony. Zhdanov decried, “Without mincing words, I have to say that a whole series of works by contemporary composers [referring to Shostakovich primarily] are infiltrated and overloaded to such a degree by naturalistic sounds that one is reminded—forgive the inelegant expression—of a piercing road drill, or musical gas-chamber [dushegubka].”

Later Shostakovich checked into a sanatorium in a “terrible state,” and Nina, Shostakovich’s wife, remarked frankly to Yuri Levitin, a student of Shostakovich’s, “You cannot imagine our position. Mitya [Dmitri] is on the verge of suicide.” Levitin recalls how Shostakovich overcame these difficulties:

> Once, sometime afterwards [about two years later], Dmitri Dmitriyevich said with habitual irony, ‘I have decided to start working again, so as not to lose my qualifications as a composer. I am going to write a prelude and a fugue every day. I shall take into consideration the experience of Johann Sebastian Bach.’

> And what do you think? In a few months’ time Dmitri Dmitriyevich showed the finished result of his labour, the brilliant Twenty-Four Preludes and Fugues […] I have to say at once that the Preludes and Fugues aroused no enthusiasm from the Union officials. Zakharov and others like him severely criticized Dmitri Dmitriyevich’s work.
Thus, according to Levitin, the Preludes and Fugues were the composer’s self-renewal and willing choice to continue living and composing.

Despite this renewed interest in his life and work, Shostakovich would again contemplate suicide after the Party turned down his membership application a decade later in 1960. The rejection resulted in a work in and of itself: the Eighth Quartet, about which the composer remarked, “The pseudo-tragedy of the quartet is so great that, while composing it, my tears flowed as abundantly as urine after downing half a dozen beers.”

Lev Lebedinsky recalls Shostakovich’s state of mind after he had finished writing the Eighth Quartet:

It [the Eighth Quartet] was a farewell to life. He associated joining the Party with a moral, as well as physical death. On the day of his return from a trip to Dresden, where he had completed the Quartet and purchased a large number of sleeping pills, he played the Quartet to me on the piano and told me with tears in his eyes that it was his last work. He hinted at his intention to commit suicide. Perhaps subconsciously he hoped that I would save him. I managed to remove the pills from his jacket pocket and gave them to his son Maxim, explaining to him the true meaning of the Quartet. I pleaded with him never to let his father out of his sight. During the next few days I spent as much time as possible with Shostakovich until I felt that the danger of suicide had passed.

Again, we have another record of the motive in close proximity with suicidal tendencies; as discussed in Chapter Two, 1-5-6-5 complements D- Es-C-H in the Eighth Quartet. Just as the D- Es-C-H motive begins the piece, 1-5-6-5 ends it (in vertical inversion).

Shostakovich’s health problems and frailty from the late 1950s and on cannot be overlooked in considering his mental state. In 1958 he received treatment for his right arm,
the beginning of a condition that was diagnosed years later as polio. He received another
treatment for pain in his right hand in February 1960. The next October he broke his left
leg. In 1962 he had a third treatment for his hand. In 1965 he spent twenty days in the
Moscow hospital “neurological unit.” In April 1966 he checked into a sanatorium for a
“severe respiratory” problem. The next month, he suffered a heart attack. September 1967
he broke his left leg in a car accident in Moscow. He spent a substantial portion of the rest
of his life in hospitals for various illnesses. The composer reported grimly on 30
September 1967 to Glikman: “Here is a general report. Target achieved so far: 75 per cent
(right leg broken, left leg broken, right hand defective. All I need to do now is wreck the
left hand and then 100 per cent of my extremities will be out of order.)”

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, 1-5-6-5 coincides with the suicide of Ophelia in
Grigori Kozintsev’s film of Shakespeare’s Hamlet. Ironically, the stressed fourth-note of the
motive corresponds within a fraction of a second of the camera revealing the submerged
Ophelia. Additionally, several allusions appear in the Seven Romance Verses on Poems by
Alexander Blok. The first movement is the “Song of Ophelia,” an obvious reference to suicide.
The second movement, “Gamayun the Prophet Bird,” begins ominously with a reference to
the opening of the Tenth Symphony. In the last movement, titled “Music” by the composer
himself, Shostakovich approaches the 1-5-6-5 by a descending minor scale set to the
words, “Oh, how much music there is with God,” and follows it with 1-5-6-5 in hemiola
with the words, “Such sounds [there are] on earth!” Again, the fourth note of the motive
corresponds exactly with the words “sounds.”
The notion of Shostakovich alluding to his own music to represent the “sounds on earth” may seem egotistic at first glance, however he probably a different reading in mind. Without the allusion ascribed to the latter line of poetry, a normal reading would interpret both poetic statements as motivated by “awe,” and the incongruity posed by music and sound is that of contrariety not contradiction. In other words, “sound” does not mean “noise,” rather it connotes other acoustic vibrations which are not music. However, in a letter to Glikman following the completion of the Blok cycle, Shostakovich writes cynically:

Dear Isaak Davydovich,

I am thinking much about life, death and careers. In this connection, recalling the life of certain famous (I do not say necessarily great) people, I arrive at the conclusion that not all of them died at the time they ought to have. For instance, Musorgsky died before his time. The same can be said of Pushkin, Lermontov and several others. Tchaikovsky, however, should have died earlier than he did. He lived slightly too long, and for that reason his death was a terrible one, or rather his last days were.

The same applies to Gogol, to Rossini and perhaps to Beethoven. They, like a great many other famous (great) people, and people who were not famous at all, outlived their true span and crossed over that boundary in life beyond which it (life) can no longer bring joy but only disappointment and dreadful happenings.

I expect you will read these lines and ask yourself: why is he writing such things? Well, it’s because I have undoubtedly lived longer than I should have done. I have been disappointed in much, and I expect many terrible things to happen.

I am also disappointed in myself. Or rather, [I have become convinced] that I am a dull, mediocre composer. […]

Nevertheless, the urge to compose pursues me like an unhealthy addiction. Today, I finished seven songs to words by Aleksandr Blok.
Shostakovich, considering himself “dull” and “mediocre,” most likely read “sound” as “noise” or even “mere sound,” wherein sound is a result of the inability to write music. This allusion is deliberately buried underneath the overly contented sound of 1-5-6-5 and the conventional reading of the “awe” of Blok’s “sounds.”

As shown in Chapter Two, the movement finishes with the reference to the end of Prelude No. 18, and the last bar is marked morendo, literally “dying away,” for all three instruments: the violin, violoncello, and piano. The music to the Blok cycle ends in the middle of the Fugue cycle. Now it is possible to sense what Shostakovich meant about having “lived longer than I should have done.” In the Prelude and Fugue cycle, Prelude No. 18 is the turning point, after which despair takes over, ultimately reconciled via the introduction of the “quartal character” and its amalgamation with 1-5-6-5. The Blok cycle tells a different story, one which ends much sooner than it was intended. Shostakovich’s lament to Glikman over the error in the timing of his death is inextricably linked to suicide. The last movement of the Blok cycle symbolizes quite literally, musical suicide, and, I would venture that the “suicide note” left behind in his allusions gives us the reason: the failure of his self-renewal seventeen years before in Twenty-Four Preludes and Fugues in the eyes of the Union of Composers.

**MESSAGES IN A BOTTLE**

There are no known secondary documents in which Shostakovich mentions the 1-5-6-5 motive. The sections from the letter to Glikman reproduced above with the music
to the Blok cycle together are the closest thing to a 1-5-6-5 “Rosetta Stone.” The written account corresponds so well with his musical intentions that together they unravel the web of allusions into a single intelligible thread. It has been said that Shostakovich speaks “in code”; if so, the question remains, “to whom?”

We have no testimonies on record of Shostakovich ever providing a detailed analysis of his works for performers or friends, and he was known for insisting that the music speak for itself. Contrary to the claims of certain biographers his use of these allusions did not exist simply because he feared the “formalist” brand. While Shostakovich had several close friends with whom he trusted his life, it seems strange that he never mentioned the allusions. Like a mirage, the source of his music is illusive, possibly reflecting the Shostakovich we want to see, instead of what Shostakovich wants us to see.

The search for meaning in the music of Shostakovich yields only its ineffability; however, in the search for its musical meanings, we find the rich contemplations of the composer, which he desperately wanted to communicate in his native musical language. These allusions, addressed anonymously, are for whomever finds them, Shostakovich’s messages in a bottle.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Shostakovich, Dmitri. Syuita iz musyki k kinofil’mu “God Kak Zhiza” [Suite from the music to the film “A Year As A Life”]. Moscow: Soviet Composer, 1970.


### APPENDIX A

**COMPLETION DATES FOR INDIVIDUAL MOVEMENTS IN TWENTY-FOUR PRELUDES AND FUGUES, OP. 87**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Date of Completion on Manuscript</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prelude No. 1 in C major</td>
<td>10 October 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fugue No. 1 in C major</td>
<td>11 October 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prelude No. 2 in A minor</td>
<td>12 October 1950</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fugue No. 2 in A minor</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prelude No. 3 in G major</td>
<td>14 October 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fugue No. 3 in G major</td>
<td>16 October 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prelude No. 4 in E minor</td>
<td>22 October 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fugue No. 4 in E minor</td>
<td>27 October 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prelude No. 5 in D major</td>
<td>29 October 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fugue No. 5 in D major</td>
<td>1 November 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prelude No. 6 in B minor</td>
<td>2 November 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fugue No. 6 in B minor</td>
<td>9 November 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prelude No. 7 in A major</td>
<td>10 November 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fugue No. 7 in A major</td>
<td>11 November 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prelude No. 8 in F♯ minor</td>
<td>26 November 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fugue No. 8 in F♯ minor</td>
<td>27 November 1950</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prelude No. 9 in E major</td>
<td>30 November 1950</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fugue No. 9 in E major</td>
<td>1 December 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement</td>
<td>Date of Completion on Manuscript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prelude No. 10 in C# minor</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>7 December 1950</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prelude No. 11 in B major</td>
<td>9 December 1950</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fugue No. 11 in B major</td>
<td>11 December 1950</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prelude No. 12 in G# minor</td>
<td>13 December 1950</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fugue No. 12 in G# minor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fugue No. 15 in D# major</td>
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<td>Prelude No. 16 in Bb minor</td>
<td>11 January 1951</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fugue No. 16 in Bb minor</td>
<td>13 January 1951</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prelude No. 17 in Ab major</td>
<td>15 January 1951</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fugue No. 17 in Ab major</td>
<td>21 January 1951</td>
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<td>Prelude No. 18 in F minor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fugue No. 18 in F minor</td>
<td>22 January 1951</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prelude No. 19 in Eb major</td>
<td>26 January 1951</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fugue No. 19 in Eb major</td>
<td>3 February 1951</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prelude No. 20 in C minor</td>
<td>7 February 1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fugue No. 20 in C minor</td>
<td>14 February 1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prelude No. 21 in Bb major</td>
<td>15 February 1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fugue No. 21 in Bb major</td>
<td>16 February 1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prelude No. 22 in G minor</td>
<td>17 February 1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fugue No. 22 in G minor</td>
<td>18 February 1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement</td>
<td>Date of Completion on Manuscript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prelude No. 23 in F major</td>
<td>20 February 1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fugue No. 23 in F major</td>
<td>23 February 1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prelude No. 24 in D minor</td>
<td>23 February 1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fugue No. 24 in D minor</td>
<td>25 February 1951</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

COMMON ATTRIBUTES IN 1-5-6-5

I. Core Properties
   i. Melodic composition
      1. One isolated gesture, set off by rhythmic stress
      2. Two distinct intervals
         a. Larger interval, often P5
         b. Smaller interval, often M2 or m2 (minor)
         c. The composite interval: larger + smaller
      3. Three distinct pitches
         a. By altitude: lower, middle, higher
         b. By harmonic implication: tonic, dominant, dominant preparation
      4. Four notes
   ii. Rhythmic stress
      1. First note (ex. Prelude No. 17 in A♭ major)
      2. Antepenult note (ex. Fugue No. 1 in C major)
      3. Penult (ex. Prelude No. 20 in C minor)
      4. Final (ex. Fugue No. 4 in E minor, second subject)

II. Function and Placement
   i. With respect to the immediate melodic phrase
      1. Local
         a. Beginning (ex. Fugue No. 1 in C major)
         b. Middle (ex. Fugue No. 15 in D♭ major)
         c. End
            i. Harmonically stable (ex. Fugue No. 16 in B♭ minor)
            ii. Cadential (ex. Prelude No. 19 in E♭ major)
      2. Structural (ex. Fugue No. 6 in B minor)
      3. Iterative (ex. Fugue No. 8 in F♯ minor)
   ii. With respect to the middleground
      1. Musical contrast via:
         a. Duration of the rhythmic values compared to surrounding note values (ex. Fugue No. 16 in B♭ minor)
b. Juxtaposition with nearby melodic themes (ex. Introduction to “The Unforgettable Year 1919”)
c. Foregrounding or use of solo textures (ex. chimes in “A Year As A Life”)

2. Similarity to surrounding melodic material
   a. Developing repetition (ex. Clarinet solo in “A Year As A Life”) 
   b. Transposed imitation (ex. Symphony No. 10, movement 4)

iii. With respect to the section or movement
   1. First occurrence, or critical occurrence
      a. Agent
         i. Initial situation, motive begins immediately at the onset of new material (ex. motives in fugue subjects) 
         ii. Melodic theme developing into motive (ex. Prelude No. 24)
      b. Contribution
         i. Emotional climax (ex. Cello Concerto No. 1, second movement) 
         ii. “The Point,” philosophical-intellectual accumulation (ex. Seven Romances on Blok)
   2. Non-critical occurrences
      a. Tagging (ex. Fugue No. 24 in D minor)
         i. Use of motive with notes in quick succession 
            1. First note stressed (ex. “A Year As A Life,” ending measures of last movement)  
            2. Final note stressed (ex. Fugue No. 4 in E minor) 
         ii. With rhythm only (ex. end of Symphony No. 10)
      b. Within iterations of fugue subjects (ex. Fugues)
      c. Repetition
         i. Used as an iterative motive (ex. Prelude No. 17 in Ab major) 
         ii. In melodic developments (ex. Symphony No. 10)
NOTES


2 For the rest of this chapter, all music fragments come from Shostakovich, Dmitri. *Twenty-Four Preludes and Fugues*. Moscow: DSCH Publishers, 2000, unless otherwise noted, and proceed in the order established by the cycle. Each example is located at the end of the chapter.

3 This is not the first time that Shostakovich used two numbers in thematic structure. The fourth movement of Piano Trio No. 2, Op. 47, can be viewed as a competitive conflict between things of five and things of four. The violin begins with a melody three half-steps wide that alternates the number of notes in each plucked gesture: five, four, five, four. Later, time signatures such as 5/4 become more prevalent leading paradoxically to the dramatic reprise of the first movement opening, which happens to be in 4/4. In the end, “five” and “four” reluctantly end together on the final beat.

4 Take for example the opening to the first movement of *Three Fantastic Dances*, Op. 5 (orig. Op. 1) that begins in key of C, but in the Locrian mode. Shostakovich was only fourteen years old when he composed this piece, yet his fascination with the modes would remain throughout his life.

5 Recall that Fugue No. 1 does not contain a single accidental, yet contains an answer at every scale degree; thus, every answer is modal.


7 Wilson, 258.
During my research, I was unable to acquire the suite to the film score *Five Days–Five Nights*, and the Shostakovich Volumes of Collected Works contained only a small portion of the whole score. Thus I am unable at this point to provide an analysis of the music, except through its audio recording. In the first movement, *Introduction*, 1-5-6-5 seems to tag a phrase approximately two minutes in. In the second movement, *Dresden in Ruins*, the trumpet alludes to the motive at about 2:30, the clarinet at about 4:00, and the trumpet again at 4:30.


Oscar Hammerstein II’s lyrics to the song *Do-Re-Mi* from the 1959 Broadway *The Sound of Music*: “‘Do,’ a deer, a female deer; ‘Re,’ a drop of golden sun; ‘Mi,’ a name I call myself; ‘Fa,’ a long, long way to run; ‘So,’ a needle pulling thread; ‘La,’ a note to follow ‘So’; ‘Ti,’ a drink with jam and bread; that will bring us back to do, do, do, do.”


It is worth noting that since *soggetto cavato* disregards consonants, the choice of solfege Fa or La to replace the vowel ‘a’ is arbitrary.


Autographed envelope dated Dec. 7, 1974. At the top “D. Schostakovich,” in the middle a treble-clef staff with the whole notes D, E-flat, C, B (D-Es-C-H) with no barlines. Beneath in Russian is written “With Best Wishes” and his name is signed “Д ШОСТАКОВИЧ” (D Shostakovich). Published in Hulme, 2002, p. 568.
With regard to phonetics the SH hushing in English word “she” lies between the sounds of Russian letters Ш (soft) and Щ (hard). In the ISO/R 9:1968 standard adopted in 1968, the Russian transliteration scheme takes advantage of the Czech script—a sister Slavic language already employing romanized letters with diacritics—and became š and šč, respectively. (The caron diacritic is known as a háček, pronounced haa-chek). The Czech character š roughly corresponds to an English SH, and the č to English CH. Thus, we arrive at the modern Russian romanization scheme in which Ш and Щ transliterate to SH and SHCH. Occasionally Щ is written in a shorter form SHH.


Chapter Two posits that 1-5-6-5 is actually the final gesture to end the piece.


Hulme, Derek C. Dmitri Shostakovich: A Catalogue, Bibliography, and Discography. Scarecrow Press (Maryland, 2002). 568.

Ibid.

As explained by Wilson (Shostakovich: A Life Remembered, 259): “Ilya Ehrenburg’s novel The Thaw was published in 1954, and this title became synonymous with the liberal politics of the 1950s.” Both the Fay and Wilson biographies contain a chapter entitled “The Thaw,” the former extending to 1958 and the latter to 1961.


Ibid. 188-192.

Ibid.

Ibid. 197.
33 Ibid. 186.

34 Ibid. 186.


36 Hulme, 567.


39 Ibid. 552-553.

40 This hypothesis appeared in DSCH Journal No. 10 (Winter 1998) by Iain Strachan, p. 48-49. A follow-up article in DSCH Journal No. 12 (January 2000) by the same author details the supposed use and manipulation of “special” numbers in Shostakovich’s music. However, information theory, which is not addressed in either of these articles, would suggest, that such “coincidences” occur even in a system with completely random noise; any isolation of information can lead to the perceptions of patterning, much like imagining shapes in clouds. “Confirmation bias,” as the psychological phenomenon is called, is prevalent in many areas of contemporary symbolic numerology.


43 Ibid. 106.

44 Kovnatskaya, Ludmila. Ibid. 100.


48 Ibid. *Shostakovich and Stalin*. 258.


50 Hundreds of examples can be found by searching for “DSCH’s music” in any internet search engine. For example, the following Google search, queried on March 29, 2007, yielded 266 matches:

   `<http://www.google.com/search?q=%22DSCH%27s+music%22>`

51 `http://gigablast.com`

52 It should be noted that I avoided using a more prominent search engine because their sophisticated algorithms have volatile hit counts due to their page-ranking software.

53 Wilson, 34.

54 Wilson, 436-437.


56 Wilson, 301-302.

57 Wilson, 455.


59 Wilson, 209.

60 Wilson, 210.

61 Vladimir Zakharov was one of several Principal Secretaries of the Union of Composers in 1948 who persecuted “formalist” music. See Wilson, 505.


63 Lev Lebedinsky was a musicologist and expert in music folklore who knew Shostakovich very well in the 1950s. See Wilson, 491.

64 Wilson, 340-341.

65 Hulme, 558-559.
Incidentally, only the first two movements of the Blok cycle took their names directly from Blok’s original titles. The rest were untitled by Blok, thus Shostakovich named them. See the Afterword in Schostakovitsch, Dmitri. *Romanzen-Suite: für Sopran, Violine, Violoncello und Klavier, op. 127*. Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik. DvFM 9401.

Sheinberg, Esti. *Irony, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque in the Music of Shostakovich*. England: 2000, pp. 3-29 outline a theory of “incongruities” in Shostakovich’s music based on the semiotic square (or, semantic rectangle) in which unity, contrariety, and their opposites, non-unity (contradiction), and non-contrariety have Boolean combinations that lead to ambiguity in meaning.