

"The much-heralded première performance in the Western Hemisphere of Dimitri Shostakovich's new Eighth Symphony was given in Carnegie Hall yesterday afternoon by the New York Philharmonic - Symphony, conducted by Artur Rodziński. The Columbia Broadcasting System, which reportedly paid \$10,000 for the privilege, broadcast the performance to an estimated 15,000,000 listeners. Other CBS broadcasts by transcription will carry the music to Latin America, Europe and the Pacific in the near future.

The symphony, which lasted an hour and three minutes, was greeted by the capacity audience with an ovation. There was an intermission speech ... and a message from Shostakovich to Dr. Rodziński was read. The message said in part: *"In these days of ordeal and hardship—days of decisive battles — music, the art we all love, is a means of friendship and understanding between our great peoples, inspiring them in their heroic struggle against Nazi barbarians for civilization and democracy. With a friendly handshake, I wish you all luck and success."*

On the basis of a reading of the score made possible through the courtesy of Am-Rus, also of the final rehearsals and the performance yesterday afternoon by Dr. Rodziński and the Philharmonic- Symphony Orchestra, it can be said that Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony, on the occasion of its American première, received a superb presentation. This interpretation neglected no technical or expressive detail, and appeared to reveal every facet of the composer's thought. It is conceivable that the composer himself, had he been present, might not have agreed to every tempo and nuance. This we cannot know. But there is every reason to believe that this excellent performance provides wholly authoritative data from which to gain a reliable impression of the music and some conception of its value.

The Eighth Symphony is not quite as long as the Seventh, which was first performed in America by Toscanini and the NBC Symphony in July, 1942. In the interval much has happened. The Seventh, called the "Leningrad" Symphony, was composed in part in that city while it was under siege. Today Russia lives and fights her heroic and exterminating battle against evil on her borders, and Mr. Shostakovich's latest symphony is as timely and as synchronous with events as the one that preceded.

Thus it is said that this Eighth is the second part of a prospective symphonic trilogy; that the Seventh was the symphony of the invasion period; that the Eighth is part retrospect of the catastrophic past, but also foresight of a happier land, healing its wounds and planning the future. A third symphony, yet to be composed, is envisioned as a "Victory" symphony, and there is little more doubt of that symphony taking form than there is of the sure triumph of Russian arms. The question is now not the purport, fairly evident, of the Eighth Symphony, but the actual character of the music. It is logically less bellicose and climactic than the Seventh..."

— Olin Downes, *The New York Times*, 3 April 1944

After such a promising introduction, Olin Downes continued his article to tear apart Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony, with an analysis which really doesn't look to have stood the test of time well. With a good number of music-lovers now regarding the Eighth as a favourite and possibly the best of the composer's entire symphonic output, one can only feel (if only a little!) for the poor critic, forced to conjure up an immediate response to a long and complex work with so very little time for study or contemplation.

There appears to be some confusion abroad as to the work's first performance in the West — i.e. outside of the Soviet Union. A number of sources attribute this not to Rodziński but instead to Koussevitzky. Yet the first performances given by Koussevitzky and his Boston Symphony Orchestra took place some three weeks later — and the first of the two was billed as the "Boston Premiere" in the concert programme. This recording is indeed the symphony's concert première outside of the Soviet Union, and as before, the radio networks had the money to pay the high fees demanded for scores from Moscow, as they had in 1938 when Rodziński conducted the première of the Fifth Symphony (PASC731).

By 1944 the conductor was working his magic with the New York Philharmonic, and I'm delighted to report just how well-captured they were on the 78rpm acetate discs which served as source material for this first ever release of what was indeed an historic concert. *Andrew Rose*



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SHOSTAKOVICH SYMPHONY No. 8  
RODZIŃSKI, PHILHARMONIC-SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA OF NEW YORK

# rodziński

## conducts shostakovich

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XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a  
photograph of Rodziński  
conducting in Carnegie Hall

Live broadcast concert recording  
from Carnegie Hall, New York,  
Sunday, 2 April 1944.

Total duration: 66:05

1. RADIO Introduction (0:34)

SHOSTAKOVICH Symphony No. 8 in C minor, Op. 65

2. 1st mvt. - Adagio - Allegro non troppo (29:03)

3. 2nd mvt. - Allegretto (7:03)

4. 3rd mvt. - Allegro non troppo (6:20)

5. 4th mvt. - Largo (7:52)

6. 5th mvt. - Allegretto (15:13)

Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York  
conducted by Artur Rodziński

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