

Dimitri Mitropoulos's performance of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 10 with the New York Philharmonic in Athens on October 1, 1955, was both a musical and cultural landmark. Conducted in Athens's Orpheus Hall as part of the orchestra's historic post-war European tour, the concert resonated deeply, not only due to the stature of the music but also because it marked a profoundly emotional homecoming for Mitropoulos himself, who served as musical director of the New York Philharmonic from 1949 to 1958.

Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony, completed shortly after Stalin's death in 1953, is renowned for its stark emotional intensity and complexity. Mitropoulos, famed for conducting entirely from memory and noted for his intensely physical approach, brought to this performance an unmistakable depth of expression. His interpretation reflected the tension, anguish, and tentative optimism embodied within Shostakovich's music. This symphony, with its brooding opening movement, vehement scherzo, reflective third movement, and ultimately triumphant finale, demanded a conductor capable of navigating profound emotional contrasts, a task perfectly suited to Mitropoulos's temperament.

The Greek conductor's association with Shostakovich's Tenth was particularly apt; Mitropoulos's own artistic personality mirrored the symphony's inner turmoil and eventual resolution. The Athens audience, aware of Mitropoulos's international acclaim and proud of his Greek heritage, responded enthusiastically to his emotionally charged leadership. The performance served as a symbolic moment of reconciliation and cultural rebuilding, occurring just a decade after the ravages of World War II and civil strife in Greece.

Critical reception emphasized Mitropoulos's remarkable ability to unify the orchestra into a cohesive, potent ensemble, highlighting the New York Philharmonic's capacity for nuanced expression. The emotional power of the symphony was intensified by the context: Mitropoulos's return to his homeland was widely seen as a poignant reunion, infusing the performance with additional layers of meaning beyond the notes themselves.

Preserved in contemporary recordings, this interpretation remains a significant historical document, reflecting both the cultural importance of the event and Mitropoulos's profound identification with Shostakovich's music. Today, this particular 1955 Athens concert performance is recognized not merely as a noteworthy musical event but as a compelling intersection of personal narrative, historical circumstance, and artistic excellence, capturing a conductor and orchestra at a moment of rare emotional and musical convergence.

In 1956, during his tenure as musical director, Mitropoulos recorded Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 1 with the New York Philharmonic, featuring the distinguished violinist Isaac Stern. Stern's performance, guided sensitively by Mitropoulos, is noted for its lyrical intensity, precise articulation, and richly expressive phrasing. The conductor's understanding of Prokofiev's uniquely evocative orchestration and melodic textures complemented Stern's virtuosity, creating a recording that remains highly regarded for its emotional depth and technical brilliance.

A black and white profile portrait of Dimitri Mitropoulos, facing right. He is wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and dark tie. The background is dark and textured.

**mitropoulos**  
conducts prokofiev & shostakovich

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**prokofiev**  
violin concerto no. 1  
isaac stern, violin

**shostakovich**  
symphony no. 10  
(live in athens)

**new york philharmonic**  
conducted by dimitri mitropoulos

studio & live recordings, 1955/56

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PROKOFIEV Violin Concerto No. 1 - SHOSTAKOVICH Symphony No. 10  
STERN, NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC, MITROPoulos

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XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a  
photograph of Mitropoulos

Total duration: 69:57

## PROKOFIEV Violin Concerto No. 1 in D major, Op. 19

1. 1st mvt - Andantino (8:59)
2. 2nd mvt - Scherzo. Vivacissimo (3:34)
3. 3rd mvt - Moderato. Allegro moderato (7:42)

Isaac Stern, violin

Recorded 27 February 1956, Columbia 30th Street Studios, New York City

## SHOSTAKOVICH Symphony No. 10 in E minor, Op. 93

4. 1st mvt. - Moderato (20:46)
5. 2nd mvt. - Allegro (3:35)
6. 3rd mvt. - Allegro - Largo - Più mosso (11:39)
7. 4th mvt. - Andante - Allegro - L'istesso tempo (13:42)

Recorded live on 2 October 1955, Orpheus Hall, Athens, Greece

New York Philharmonic  
conducted by Dimitri Mitropoulos

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