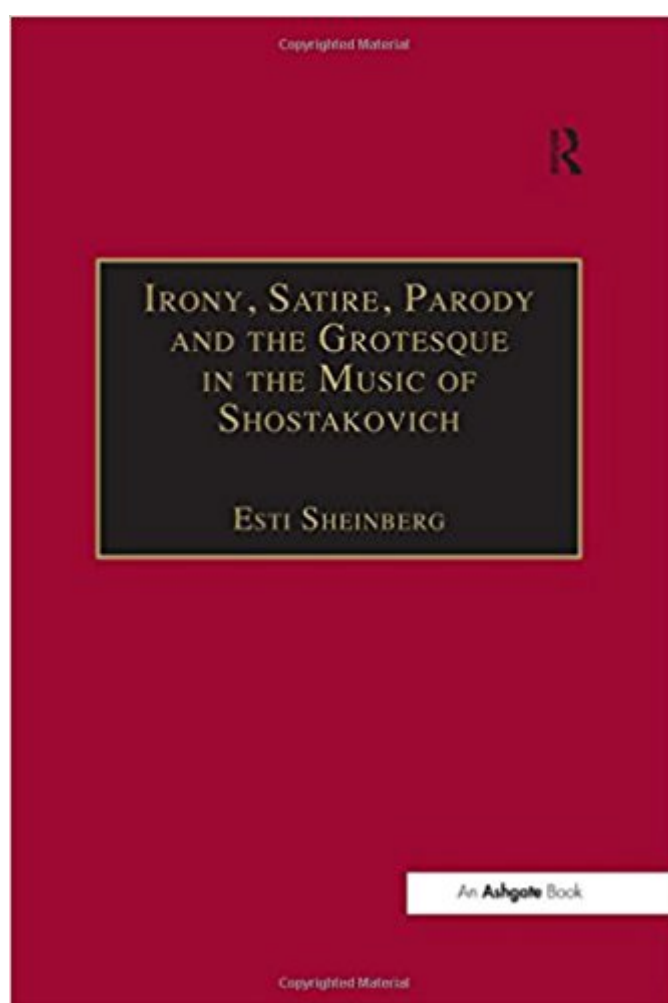


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Irony, Satire, Parody And The Grotesque In The Music Of Shostakovich: A Theory Of Musical Incongruities



Synopsis

The music of Shostakovich has been at the centre of interest of both the general public and dedicated scholars throughout the last twenty years. Most of the relevant literature, however, is of a biographical nature. The focus of this book is musical irony. It offers new methodologies for the semiotic analysis of music, and inspects the ironical messages in Shostakovich's music independently of political and biographical bias. Its approach to music is interdisciplinary, comparing musical devices with the artistic principles and literary analyses of satire, irony, parody and the grotesque. Each one of these is firstly inspected and defined as a separate subject, independent of music. The results of these inspections are subsequently applied to music, firstly music in general and then more specifically to the music of Shostakovich. The composer's cultural and historical milieux are taken into account and, where relevant, inspected and analysed separately before their application to the music.

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Customer Reviews

'A deep multifold work, greatly contributing to aesthetics of music and studies of humor on the one hand and to twentieth-century Russian culture on the other. Shostakovich's work, as a fortuitous case study, undergoes a comprehensive exploration of its very core. An orderly semiotic system, promising to be broadly applicable in various cultural studies.' Dr Marina Ritzarev, Bar-Ilan University 'Dr Sheinberg shows that the interpretation of Shostakovich's music remains an important subject, of interest to musicians, rhetoricians and historians alike, and one that deserves - and can

inspire - responsible, imaginative scholarly treatment.' Professor Richard Taruskin, University of California - Berkeley, USA '...it is a fascinating patchwork, especially in describing distinct aspects of the intellectual and artistic milieu that surrounded the young composer. It is also a helpful guide to the definition, structure and philosophical moorings of the devices listed in the title and the manner in which they manifest in various art forms.' DSCH Journal, no 15, July 2001 'After the flood of books about Shostakovich's life and purported views,... Dr Sheinberg has produced a very personal yet highly analytical monograph of a completely different kind... Dr Sheinberg...bring[s] some order, as well as a rich theoretical and illustrative background, to the difficult and related concepts of irony, satire, parody and the grotesque as they are found, so manifestly, in the music of Shostakovich.' The Slavonic and East European Review 'Sheinberg is breath-takingly thorough in her examination of the elements which make up this particular side of Shostakovich's creative character ... it's all rather impressive.' International Record Review 'In Sheinberg's book, Shostakovich appears inadvertently as a case study, and thus receives one of the best contributions in the body of research devoted to his music... The book in general contributes much to the aesthetics of music and studies of humor on the one hand, and to twentieth-century Russian culture on the other. It presents an orderly semiotic system, promising to be broadly applicable in various cultural studies. As for Shostakovich's work, it undergoes a comprehensive exploration of its very core.' The Slavic and East European Journal

A former student and colleague of Raymond Monelle, Esti Sheinberg's scholarship contributes to the developing field of music signification by combining music analysis and historical research with the semiotics of music.

I haven't finished the book yet, so I will just write about the print issues. And, oh, boy, there are a lot of them, and they are pretty serious. This book is so poorly printed that it looks like some lousy job a clumsy kid would do in the early 1990s, with an inkjet printer and microsoft paint. Most diagrams are just unreadable. The text in general is readable, but pretty uncomfortably. Except for cyrillic, which is almost unbearably painful. See for yourselves:

Esti Sheinberg uses a multi-disciplinary approach to present a theory for the recognition of musical language that implies irony, satire, parody, and grotesquerie. Her approach includes elements of literary theory and semiology rather than traditional music theory. One should have some familiarity with the Russian Formalist (literary theory) and a basic understanding of semiology prior to reading

this book, however, any lacking should not deter you from delving in. Knowledge of traditional music theory is not very important to understand this book, but one should be familiar with the elements of music and musical topics (especially waltzes and marches!) In each section, Sheinberg uses literary theories to define each type of rhetoric (irony, satire, etc.) Since the subject is Shostakovich's music, the Russian Formalist ideas of these terms are examined. Examples are given in literature and (visual) art before looking at music. Sheinberg then lists the musical elements that point towards ironic/satirical/etc. meaning and provides examples of each. The musical examples are not limited to Shostakovich, demonstrating that Sheinberg's theories can be applied to the hermeneutical analysis of any music. The theory itself is based on "incongruities," that is, musical elements that are somehow out of place. For example, a waltz played too fast or with a heavy bass, or excessive repetitions of simple patterns. When these types of things are recognized by the listener, the meaning of the original musical topic becomes altered, whether it be for any of the purposes in the title. With regards to Shostakovich, most of the music the book is concerned with appears in his two operas, and some is in his instrumental music. Though there are some limits to the discussion in terms of volume of material examined, one could go on and apply the theory presented to more. A second weakness is that Sheinberg quotes from "Testimony" frequently, seemingly accepting it as true regardless of its questionable authenticity. To her credit, she does this in a different manner than the "Revisionist Camp" (e.g. MacDonald, Ho, Wilson) who seem to want to impoverish the value of Shostakovich's music by ascribing one purport (anti-Stalin/fascism art). This is clear when she writes: "I believe that Shostakovich is saying much more than that." (See page 318.) I recommend this book to anyone interested in musical meaning. It is well worth reading!

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