



# **The Jewish Experience in Classical Music: Shostakovich and Asia (Arizona Center for Judaic Studies Publications)**

*Alexander Tentser*

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Shostakovich and Asia - this unique combination of two highly dissimilar composers allows us to explore the breadth of influence of traditional Jewish culture on Western classical music of the 20th century and beyond. These two composers speak in different musical languages and have very different personalities. Shostakovich, a 20th century Russian composer living under totalitarian Soviet rule, and Asia, a contemporary Jewish-American composer, are nevertheless connected through time by the common thread of Jewish music. The first part of this book deals with Shostakovich and his incorporation of traditional Jewish elements in his music. In recent times there has been a great deal of controversy concerning Shostakovich's "dissident" outlook and his critical attitude towards the Soviet regime. The contributors to this volume, however, have chosen to focus on the more humane qualities of Shostakovich's personality, his honesty and courage, which enabled him in difficult times to express through his works Jewish torment and suffering under both the Soviet and Nazi regimes. The second part of this book is dedicated to the music of Daniel Asia and to his philosophical and religious identification with Judaism. Of particular importance is the composer's opening article, a valuable testament to the religious and aesthetic beliefs that inspired him to create his most significant symphonic work, the Fifth Symphony, Of Songs and Psalms.

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