

The Muse and Guns

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Stalin-prize Winner

The Seventh Symphony is a programme composition inspired by the formidable events of 1941. It is in four parts. The first describes how the threatening forces of war broke into our beautiful, peaceful life. It was not my intention to depict military operations in a naturalistic way (the roar of planes, the clatter of tanks, the salvoes of canons), and I did not compose so-called battle-music. I wanted to convey the inner significance and meaning of those grim events.

The first movement of the symphony tells of the happy life of people who are confident of themselves and of their future. It is simple, peaceful existence, such as thousands of Leningrad citizens now under arms, the whole city and the entire country lived before the war.

The theme of war permeates the entire middle part.

The second part is a lyrical scherzo. Here are recollections of pleasant events and happy episodes. All this is clouded in a light haze of melancholy and dreaminess.

The third part is a pathetic adagio, expressing a rapturous intoxication with life and worship of nature. It blends into the fourth part without interruption. The fourth part together with the first form the core of the whole composition. The first shows the struggle, the fourth—the coming victory.

These are the thoughts which I wanted to share with those who listen to my symphony. I have put much strength and energy into this composition, and never before I have worked as ardently as now. There is a current saying: “When the guns roar, the muses are silent.” This may truly be said of the guns which by their roar suppress life, joy, happiness and culture. Such is the roar of the guns of darkness, violence and evil. We are fighting in the name of the triumph of reason over madness, of justice over barbarity. There are no nobler and loftier tasks than those which inspire us in our struggle against the dark forces of Hitlerism.

Today I have learned that my last symphony has been awarded the highest reward—the Stalin-prize. This news lends me new strength.

During the great war for our fatherland, our writers, artists and musician are working excessively, intensively and fruitfully, for their creative activity is armed with the most progressive ideas of our era. And when our guns roar, our muses also raise their mighty voices. Never will anybody succeed in striking the pen out of our hands.