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Few composers' posthumous reputations have grown as steadily as Shostakovich's. Yet outside the concert hall the focus of attention seems to have been on the extraordinary circumstances of his life rather than on the music itself. This book seeks to show that the power of his work stems as much from its craftsmanship as from its political and personal context. The theoretical chapters lay the foundation for a proper understanding of Shostakovich's musical language. The social context is not neglected, however, and alongside many new insights spread across the book a substantial and provocative chapter considers the issues surrounding the composition and reception of the Fifth Symphony. The eleven essays in the volume draw together some of the finest scholars of Russian music in Europe, Russia and America.

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