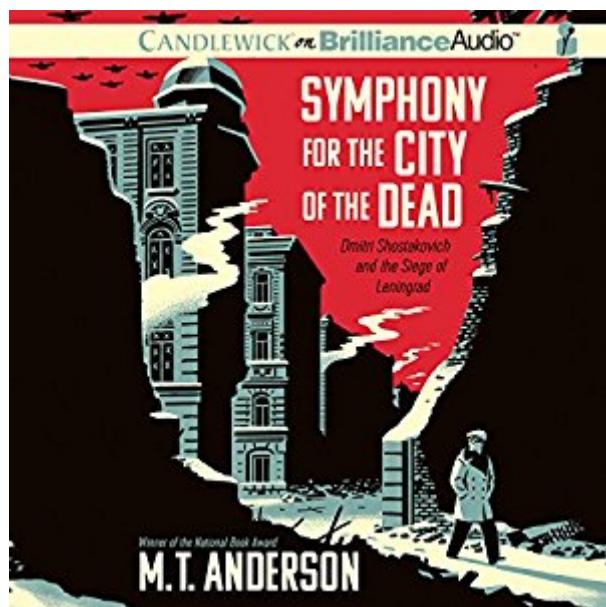


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# Symphony For The City Of The Dead: Dmitri Shostakovich And The Siege Of Leningrad



## **Synopsis**

In September 1941, Adolf Hitler's Wehrmacht surrounded Leningrad in what was to become one of the longest and most destructive sieges in Western history - almost three years of bombardment and starvation that culminated in the harsh winter of 1943-1944. More than a million citizens perished. Survivors recall corpses littering the frozen streets, their relatives having neither the means nor the strength to bury them. Residents burned books, furniture, and floorboards to keep warm; they ate family pets and - eventually - one another to stay alive. Trapped between the Nazi invading force and the Soviet government itself was composer Dmitri Shostakovich, who would write a symphony that roused, rallied, eulogized, and commemorated his fellow citizens - the Leningrad Symphony, which came to occupy a surprising place of prominence in the eventual Allied victory. This is the true story of a city under siege: the triumph of bravery and defiance in the face of terrifying odds. It is also a look at the power - and layered meaning - of music in beleaguered lives. Symphony for the City of the Dead is a masterwork thrillingly told and impeccably researched by National Book Award-winning author M. T. Anderson.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Ostensibly this is a book for younger readers, perhaps for High School Advanced Placement English, Music or History students. This unassuming book however can hold its own in terms of pure scholarship. I am a subscriber to DSCH, and own every book I've been able to get my hands on on the life and music of Dmitri Shostakovich, beginning with "Testimony", as told by

Shostakovich to Solomon Volkov and and New York Times journalist Harrison E. Salisbury's "The 900 Days: The Siege of Leningrad." A superb story teller, M.T. Anderson has created the most fully integrated book on Shostakovich life & times thus far. There are those who consider Shostakovich to be Gustav Mahler's heir apparent as master of the Symphonic form. We can only wish that someday a writer will come to the fore such as Henri-Louie de LaGrange did for the life & music of Mahler, & will write the definitive book(s) on Shostakovich. For readers young AND old, Anderson's book will breath life into the story of this tormented soul who was the 20th Centuries most versatile composer.

As a musician and history buff, I found this book fascinating. The book weaves a biography of one of the 20th centuries best composers and WWII into a very personal narrative. I found myself going back to listen to Shostakovich's symphonies and string quartets with a new appreciation. The book has many interpretations and views that would be unknown from a history of the battle of Leningrad or from musicologists alone. It was a page turner for me - with some supporting photos to emphasize the text - as the book carefully led to a climax just like a good symphony should.

This book starts out slow and clumsy. I was in agony and almost put it down. When the book finally gets into World War II, it becomes riveting--a real can't-put-it-down book. So hang in there and stay with it. You will be rewarded. Definitely a terrific book for anyone interested in WWII. I learned a great deal about Stalin and Hitler. Fascinating.

Gift for my wife and she loved it. Well researched, well written, and a story, for various reasons, not many have heard.

It's either a poor translation, or horribly crafted, not sure which. But the story is compelling and the history well revealed.

This was an amazing book. I would say it is written for an older kid (maybe a 16-year-old?), or a very ambitious younger teen. The story is beautifully told with, I am sure, a reduced level of unpleasant detail.

This is an excellent book for music students and students who choose to investigate Stalin's era. Undoubtedly Shostakovich's 7th Symphony is one of the towering musical accomplishments of the

20th Century; and Anderson's book brings the traumatic circumstances in which it was composed to vivid life. The Nazi siege of Leningrad and the suffering at the hands of the invading German forces is clearly portrayed. Additionally the suffering under the despotism of Stalin is brought to life. Squeezed between them is a chain-smoking, soccer fan ; Dmitri Shostakovich. We are able to emphasise with his predicament. He loves music and Russia but is forced to conform to rules he despises. The book is worth reading just to discover that the manuscript of the Mighty 7th was nearly lost and later found in a train toilet!

This is one of the best books I've read in a long time. We didn't learn much about Stalin when I was growing up and this was a real eye opener. It was very sad, but at the same time I was glad someone wrote about it in an accessible manner.

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