

Love for their Artist

by Liesl Garner

Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony was premiered during the height of Stalin's Great Terror in the 1930s. People present on opening night said they looked around after the first movement wondering if they could be arrested for just listening; it was so obviously a fist in the face of Stalin.

At one point he had a flute represent a child playing and the rest of the orchestra became the boots of the soldiers stomping over the town. Everyone listening knew exactly what he was saying. Rumors had given the government a hint at what the music would be saying. The Secret Police were in the first row waiting to arrest him.

But for once, they feared the people. Feared they would tear the concert hall apart with their bare hands, their love for their artist was so powerful. That night, they gave a 45 minute standing ovation and could not be contained.

Later it was said that no other artist could have done what he did. A visual artist would have been too obvious. A poet or a playwright would have been too obvious; would have been shut down by the government. The music was deliberately, ridiculously, blatantly obvious to the people of Russia – who felt vindicated in their fears, heard in their muffled sobs, in their agony, in their families torn apart, in their desperation for a new leader who would be truthful and honest and care for them as a leader should.

I started my day off afraid because of issues in this upcoming election. I worry about the outcomes, and then I heard classical music at my little sons preschool, and was reminded that when any civilization tries to squelch freedoms or send artists underground, the artists become stronger. If religion is forced underground, it becomes stronger. Anyone who is denied freedom, that anyone becomes stronger.

And I remembered the power of art – the power of music, the strength of the people, the power of love, the ability to create puts us in league with the powers that breathe life into living things. We are surrounded with beauty even on our darkest days, even when we are afraid, we can look to art, to our artists, to once again show us the way.

GREAT END

“Art enlarges experience by admitting us to the inner life of others.” Walter Lippman – As I watch my son create art piece after art piece to give to me, I see his inner life, his little soul enlarged by love. Let us take comfort that there are always those born to create & inspire!