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OF all the political and social phenomena directly resulting from the World War the two most important are undoubtedly Bolshevism and Fascism. But while it is easy, with a little application, to study the latter, Bolshevism has remained enveloped in a thick, impenetrable cloud of mystery. The consequences of the revolution are still distorted by tainted news and grotesque fabrications, this adulterated information being counterbalanced by the hosannahs of the socialists and communists. The only possible attitude has been to wait for time to accomplish its work.

It was, therefore, with eagerness and curiosity that I accepted the official invitation last summer of the Philharmonic State Society of Leningrad and the Moscow Society for Contemporary Music to take part in concerts in those cities. I had visited Russia in 1907 and 1909, making the acquaintance of the surviving members of the great Russian school, Caesar Cui, Balakirev, and Rimsky-Korsakov as well as other important musicians like Liadov and Liapounov. Now all these names belonged to a remote past, and it was with the feeling of a new world awaiting me that I left, one evening last November, for the city that today bears the name of Lenin.

My trip lasted exactly a fortnight. During my brief stay the Russians did everything to make my visit pleasant. From the Citizen Lunacharski, the People's Commissioner of Public Education, and Citizeness Kameneva, president of the Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, to the humblest people, everyone seemed to have but one purpose—to present Russia in the most favorable light.

The first thing to impress an artist in Soviet Russia is that the love of music has not lessened with the change of government.

The present day public seems to differ from the old one chiefly in outward appearance—its soul has remained unchanged. Costly attire, jewels and dress coats have given way to ordinary working dress and black student blouses. (The only ones permitted to wear dress clothes are the conductor and the virtuosos and last December I was the cause of a good deal of amazement for twice making trips after concerts, between Leningrad and Moscow, in evening dress).

The public still seems to offer a mystic devotion to music, and outbreaks of enthusiasm achieve proportions of the wildest Italian furore. I heard various kinds of concerts, some attended only by the poorer workers. Tickets, costing about twenty kopeks (ten cents), are sold at stores and factories. Seats for concerts attended by people in easier circumstances cost as much as four rubles (two dollars). There are also free concerts such as those conducted by the venerable Glazounov in Leningrad.

The music performed corresponds pretty closely to that of the old world; classics, romantics and a fair quota of moderns. Among the latter Tchaikovsky and Scriabin have the strongest hold on the public. Stravinsky is just beginning to be appreciated; until last year his music, accused of "excessive intellectuality," was somewhat frowned on by the authorities. Prokofiev has lately won considerable success; on the streets I kept hearing people whistling the pretty march from *The Love of Three Oranges*. Jazz is still unfamiliar because the bourgeois type of dance—the fox trot, the Charleston, etc.—is strictly forbidden in the land of Karl Marx. This syncopated rhythm is at present a sort of clandestine pleasure for a few slightly "depraved" people.

The Russian orchestras are remarkable. Moscow has two splendid organizations, that of the Opera (which I conducted), and Koussevitzky's old orchestra, which has been playing without a conductor for the last three years. I will not claim that its performances are very individual but they are, at any rate, extremely clear and superior to a good many I have heard in Europe and America under would-be conductors.

In Moscow I found that rehearsals invariably began three-quarters of an hour late. But the enthusiasm of the players induced me to prolong the periods beyond all usual limits. It is

imperative, however, not to allow the players a period of recess for then there is the risk of seeing your orchestra reduced by half for the second part of the rehearsal. This is one more evidence of the slight degree of change wrought by the great revolution on the old, anarchic and wayward genius of the Slavs.

The work at the conservatories is very intense and, it seems to me, very fine. In Leningrad I had occasion to attend a very interesting performance. The conservatory of that city has a theatre with a seating capacity of about eighteen hundred, in which operatic performances are given twice weekly by the students of the vocal and instrumental classes. I had the pleasure of seeing a remarkable production of Dargomirski's magnificent opera, *Peter's Guest*. The settings and costumes were the work of the students themselves and the whole production might well be envied by many European theatres.

I might also add that the vocal students preparing for a career in the theatre take an eight year course and that the Leningrad Conservatory has three complete student orchestras, the first drawn from the orchestra class itself, the second giving symphonic concerts and the third exclusively devoted to operatic performances.



At the State Theatre in Moscow I saw a ballet by Tchaikovsky. The dance as an art form still finds great favor in Russia. But in this theatre I felt a somewhat official and conservative spirit. (In general this is more evident in Moscow, the political capital, than in Leningrad where governmental influence appears to be much weaker.) On the other hand, I witnessed a splendid performance of Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Czar's Betrothed* at one of Stanislavsky's theatres, acted entirely by poor but enthusiastic students. The production was remarkable for its intensity and mastery of the theatre. One of the paradoxes following in the wake of revolution might be noted here—these same actors, pitifully poor, wore the most marvelous, authentic, sixteenth century costumes obtained from various private collections worth millions.

Among other things, the Soviet government had appropriated a number of old musical instruments, and has organized an excellent Stradivarius quartet of two violins, a viola and violoncello. The use of these is now granted annually as a tournament award to a young quartet which then assumes for a year the official title of *Stradivarius Quartet*. In Moscow I heard the present holders of the title and the instruments, and estimated them to be one of the best contemporary groups of the kind.

In the publication of music the new Russian organization is rather weak. The State, of course, confiscated the various publishing houses and at the same time made it a point to destroy most of the mechanical equipment. As a consequence the publication of music is now in the hands of people in no great hurry to act. Save in exceptional cases it is almost impossible to get an orchestral score printed. The music to be published is examined by a committee of governmental "bigwigs" whose decisions sometimes elude the comprehension of a middle-class occidental mind. A young composer may be informed that his music is too "pessimistic," or that it is too "intellectual." And when the State Board does accept a piece of music, it is not paid for on the basis of merit as is customary under the unspeakable capitalistic system, but according to the number of its measures! I doubt, however, whether this procedure can endure much longer. It is surely just one of those blunders that have persisted in the new Russia but which the future will remedy.

There still remains to be discussed the quality of current musical creation in Russia. I believe it is absolutely impossible as yet to judge the artistic production of a country that has just passed through a terrible crisis during which everyone has had but a single thought—to live to see the next day. However, to me one thing seems certain; Russia has no third composer to place beside Stravinsky and Prokofiev. And though we consider both these men profoundly Russian, in Russia there is a tendency to regard them as "occidentals." But what of the new generation? During my two weeks' stay I heard much of the new Russian music, but it was extremely difficult for me to form an accurate idea of its direction or tendency. In fact, my outstanding impression was that the new school had entirely lost its way.

The influence of *The Five* is completely dispelled. That of Tchaikovsky and Glazounov still holds considerable sway over the intermediate generation of which Miascovsky, amazing craftsman, is the chief representative. The youngest generation remains under the spell of Scriabin, whose shadow looms large across their mystic-erotic music that is so anti-plastic in structure and so febrile and sickly in its moroseness. Two things are especially noticeable in this new Russian output—the disappearance of all folk and national elements and a dangerous rhythmic laxity. However I did hear one work, a quartet by the young Muscovite, Mossolov, which proved an exception. It was music dynamically and rhythmically rich. It is a pleasure to learn that one of his works has been chosen for the next festival of contemporary music at Frankfort.

But these discouraging reports on the present status of the young Russian composers should not be considered final. One can not yet formulate a definite evaluation of work that still bears the tragic imprint of the last ten years. And it is significant that the musical life of contemporary Russia is exceedingly alive and interesting, by no means inferior to that of pre-war days. The immense effort made by the Soviet state in every branch of public education is surely destined to have a beneficial effect in the field of musical creation. What Russia needs at present is a revival of spiritual contact with the rest of the world. We may leave it to time to correct the inevitable aberrations which attend all revolutions and especially one which may certainly be considered the most sweeping in history.