

Wagner

John (The eve of the festival), the latter of which, technically speaking, denotes the time rather than a character.

The music of the opera centers around these themes, and is a splendid example of the composer's versatility in that it is based on a subject different than any Wagner ever attempted before.

Wagner was the culminating musician of the Romantic period of German art. He has placed German opera on the level of the world's greatest music, and has expressed perhaps more so than any of his fellow-countrymen the proud German patriotism and typical love of Fatherland. We shall learn to appreciate him more and more as the years go by, not so much as a German ~~and~~ an internationalist. His is the art that overcomes prejudice, misjudgement hastily made, and even the dimming effects of Time....for despite its strongly apparent nationalism it can be applied to all eras and countries and thus becomes universal in significance.

Modern German Composers

During the twentieth century----especially from the time of the first world war to the present day----very little,if any,important music has come out of Germany. With the rise of Hitler into power, cultural inspiration and encouragement seems to have ceased,and all efforts have been directed towards Germany's world domination and her plunging all of civilization into a second period of Dark Ages in which melody,art,literature,science,and progress have no place.

For this reason we are obliged to go back quite a few years to record Germany's very latest efforts in the field of music,an art in which she figured so highly and so proudly once upon a time.

Anton Bruckner,an Austrian by birth,contributed much to the field of German religious music. He lived during the same period as Johannes Brahms,but because of the latter's prominence,as well as the wave of Wagnerism that swept the world,it was not till much later that Bruckner's popularity was realized. His music is the type that one enjoys more after hearing it many times. He left nine great symphonies(the last one unfinished),as well as three excellent masses. His pieces are very long----he was in life a rather boring individual and some people seem to believe that ^{much} some of his personality was transmitted to his music----but more often than not they change their opinions after becoming more familiar with his reverent,brooding works.

Max Bruch was the creator of the beloved Violin Concerto in G minor. His choral music is excellent,and his talent profuse. We do not hear so much about him because biographers disliked his

Modern German Composers

personality---the egoism and lack of charm and manners in his nature, Yet he was a great musician, and his melodies are so broad and flowing that they have established him permanently as a first-rate composer.

Hugo Wolf has been called by Hansl and Kaufmann "the genius of modern song", and is ranked by no less an authority than Newman as greater than Schubert as a song-writer. Newman explains that while Schubert was inspired so easily, he lost himself and the thought of the words in his efforts to produce perfect music. Not so with Wolf. He steeped himself in the mood of the poem about to be set to music, enchanting anyone who happened to hear him read it aloud, and then for days he would work feverishly, sacrificing rest, sleep, good food, and comfort until a masterpiece was finished. As Newman put it himself, "Wolf, with one or two trifling exceptions, never sacrifices the verbal sense and the verbal accent to the needs of the melody in this way; yet he always manages to give his melodic phrases a look of perfect naturalness." And he finds for every poem a means of expression so poignantly beautiful that it is hard to imagine the same verses being set to any other music than his. He displays a vast range of interests; Newman calls it a "Shakespearean breadth of sympathy". He catches the perfect atmosphere of all pieces, and gives the piano accompaniment a very significant part it has never before had. His clear method of writing is exhibited in all his songs; he did not have one style, but

Modern German Composers

many pliable ones that he could make fit any type of song. His type of writing was very fluent, the mood of the music changing along with that of the words. When he had once written a sketch for a song he seldom made alterations afterward. Newman says "The poems laterally set themselves". In a letter to a friend of his (dated March 27th, 1888) he wrote that he loved Schumann's setting to the poem "Das verlassene Magdlein", but new music suggested itself to him and he wrote it against his will.

He avoided many of Schubert's errors by familiarizing himself completely with a poem before even attempting to create music for it. His music is extremely logical; there was a perfect reason for every note, movement, and modulation. He brings out and dwells upon the most important highlights, subduing less significant parts, and allowing all shades of tonality to agree with the moods. Wolf attacked every musical problem directly; he was accurate and explicit in mood, color, and circumstance.

It is also interesting to notice that many types of musical settings could not have been composed earlier, because, since music is so much younger an art than poetry it would have been difficult to reach harmonically the same period of development of thought as verbally. This may be one of the reasons Wolf makes so many earlier song-writers appear inferior by contrast.

Newman is all enthusiasm when discussing Wolf. The great critic, being most probably musically in advance of his times, sees in him a greatness that the general public has not as yet had the

Modern German Composers

chance to discover. To sum up Newman's opinion: "Now the secret of Wolf's peculiar power is that he pierced to the very heart of the poem as few musicians have done even in isolated cases, and as no other has done in so many varied cases.***It was not that he was so little of a musician that he could not, like the other, bend any poem to his arbitrary will, but that he was so much a musician that he could accept any conditions the poet liked to impose upon him and yet work as easily under them as another man could do without such seeming limitations.***As for the contention that Wolf's writings for the voice is 'unvocal', that need not detain us long. The same charge has been brought against all his predecessors; even Schubert in his own day was accused of writing badly for the voice and of making his accompaniments so difficult as to be unplayable.***It would be nearer the truth to say that the German school treats the voice as a voice, and the Italian school treats it as an instrument.***It is in Wolf, in fact, that we have the perfect ideal of the song-composer of which Wagner dreamed.***What brings us back to Wolf time after time is the extraordinary breadth, depth, and variety of his conceptions.***When he set Goethe he was Goethe, not Morlike of Geibel, --- and Goethe not in one aspect only, but in all.***His peculiar virtue is not that in the fact that he adopts the principle, but in the fertility and eloquence with which it is applied."

Modern German Composers

Here we have the essence of the style of Hugo Wolf. He wrote over five hundred songs, the best known of which are "Zur Ruh", "zur Ruh", "Der Feuerreiter", "Auf dem grünen Balkon", and "Geh', Geliebte". He had one completed opera "Corregidor" and another which he never finished entitled "Manuel Venegas".

He was insane for five years before he died, and, as Hansl and Kaufmann put it, "He seemed to be the slave of an inner force wholly beyond his control, which eventually destroyed him, but not before it had driven him to create songs of breath-taking beauty."

Our next German moderner, perhaps the most famous as yet, is Richard Strauss, "a romantic realist." He is typically German not only in his music, but in life as well. He is tall, fair, fond of his home and family and an occasional glass of beer and game of cards. It is rather difficult at present to find out much about his most recent musical activities, but he was a figure of fame before the present war, having to his credit such works as "Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks", "Don Quixote", the "Domestic Symphony", "Macbeth", "Don Juan", and "Death and Transfiguration". It is the last-mentioned work that I intend to discuss in detail.

Goepp calls it "Radical in its departure from the usual lines of tonal design." It is based on motives of Wagnerian drama, Liszt symphonies, and on a poem of Ritter's, part of which

Modern German Composers

I am quoting here to give the reader a general conception of the mood of the piece:

"Thus he presses on and urges,
Never ceasing from his aim----.
What he ever sought of yore
With his spirit's deepest longing,
Now he seeks in sweat of death,
Seeks----alas, and finds it never,
Though he grasps it clearer now,
Though it grows in living form,
He can never all achieve it,
Nor create it in his thought.
Then the final blow is sounded
From the hammer-stroke of Death,
Breaks the earthly frame asunder,
Seals the eye with final night.
But a mighty host of sounds
Greet him from the space of heaven
With the song he sought below;
Man redeemed----the world transfigured."

In the music the mood grows out of the themal material, but the themes are difficult to discover, especially those that develop from one another. The themes come mostly in pairs, the second in answer or protest to the first. (Here it resembles the pleading

Modern German Composers

of the second theme of Beethoven's fifth symphony with that of doom.) Some of Strauss' themes have the effect of tonal word-painting, because of their realistic touches. Strauss is evidently superior in the harmonic field rather than in the melodic one. He delays harmonies, and achieves strange effects with contrasting overtones and numerous ornamental phrases. Speaking of Strauss' new harmonic field Goepp says, "It is here that his music bears an individual stamp of beauty."

The modern counterpoint that he uses is developed from the Scherzo of Beethoven's fifth symphony and from Schumann's piano pieces. He (Strauss) makes use of much organ-point; the passing notes run heedless of the rest of the harmony. His music also assumes refreshing originality in that it lacks a powerful main form so essential to earlier compositions, and that numerous small motives add interest. The quality of his music lies in the power and weight of his endings.

"Death and Transfiguration" begins in a Largo tempo in an uncertain key. The rhythm is irregular and refers, as Goepp says, to that which "Bach and Chopin and Wagner have taught us to associate with suffering." The first figure is a melancholy descent of pairs of chords, while above, the flutes sound hopeless cries. The harps join in, somewhat warming the atmosphere, and then appears the first main theme:

Modern German Composers

More descending notes lead to the next melody:

These two themes form the first pair, and serve to illustrate the sick man sleeping restlessly before his next encounter with the force of Death in the small, candle-lit room.

Suddenly the music becomes wilder, more desirous, and while crashing pairs of chords descend, a new theme, like that of a battle-hymn, is heard:

Modern German Composers

Then comes music that sounds warlike, with harsh dischords, but above it sounds a simple and lovely melody, which, after a few bars also turns martial:

Of the four main themes warring with each other the last one finally gains the upper hand, and the others are heard softly only for their rythm. Regardless of the fury of the music (with the one wistful theme becoming more powerful)* the mood gains a certain touch of assurance that completely fits into the picture. A crashing climax brings this section to its close.

*But not so much so as the theme in D.

Modern German Composers

The new scene is in Meno Mosso tempo, and with difficulty it is possible to trace some of the former motives. The music now assumes the form of a dance, which gracefully continues until it is interrupted by a theme in C. This, however, is quickly dispersed by a new joyous mood. Finally the music turns into phrases of "languorous passion", as Goepp calls them, and then all the motives give way to the very first theme, returning in snatches at times, but helping constantly to create the effect of soaring upwards. This last impression is a masterly touch on Strauss' part, as he has each small phrase's ending play in an upward direction.

Now the marching theme reenters, but with gusto rather than harshness. It helps this time to add joy rather than to dispell it.

All the motives are now heard in a wild, glad hymn of victory with the following (Theme C) in control:

Of this part Goepp says, "The battle is won. Though former moments are fought again (and new melodies grow out of the old plaint), the triumphant shout is near and returns (ever from a fresh tonal quarter) to chase away the doubt and fear." The sounds die away, like the first rays

Modern German Composers

of the sun at evening, and then after one more wild burst of striving the music ends, while entirely new tones lead to a soft rendition of the triumphant hymn, which gradually vanishes completely.

Strauss began his career with the determined idea to develop his music along classical lines. He seemed to feel that the style of Mozart and Beethoven had not been fully enough expounded. The poet who wrote the words to "Death and Transfiguration" was the person who actually influenced him to write more program-music, but it was in truth his first hearing of Wagner's "Tristan and Isolde" that opened his eyes to the opportunities of modern musical expression and led him to reveal entirely new musical methods and helped make him the first of really modern composers. It should be mentioned that he has several excellent operas to his credit, among which are "Rosenkavalier", "Salome", "The Egyptian Helen", and the much-discussed "Elektra".

His moods vary considerably, ranging from humor of "Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks" to light waltz and romance of "Rosenkavalier" to the passion and heavy dischords of "Salome". Undoubtedly he is one of the greatest composers of our own day, but exactly what his greatest accomplishments in the field of music have been it is hard to say.

Arnold Schoenberg's music has created vehement demonstrations and public uprisings unknown since the days of Wagner. Of it James Huneker said, "If such music-making is ever to become accepted,

Modern German Composers

then I long for Death, the Releaser." Upon the first performance of Schoenberg's "Five Pieces for Orchestra" the composer's friend was deprived of spectacles and almost his voice for shouting in his defense. It is believed that Schoenberg's music has seldom left an audience unmoved in one way or other. Yet Schoenberg the man seems anything but a "sensation-monger".

He always showed signs of remarkable talent, and so far his style of composing fall into three periods. In the first Mozart, Bach, and Beethoven were his models, and his outstanding compositions at the time were "Die Verklarte Nacht" and a quartette which was commented upon as being "a sad negation of all that is artistic".

His second period is characterized by searches into new realms of tone. Here new freedom of self-expression and attempts at building a complex polyphonic structure are noticeable. "Gurrelieder" is written for five solo voices, a reciter, two choruses, and an orchestra of one hundred fourteen instruments. Hansl and Kaufmann call it "music for hardened listeners". Schoenberg required special manuscript paper of forty-eight lines to compose it. The orchestration is unusually complicated. Other works of Schoenberg's second period include "Pelleas et Melisande", his Second String Quartette, the "Kammersinfonie", and Six Songs for Orchestra.

The composer in his third period is known for his abundant use of fourths instead of the usually thirds, and for unfixed tonal-

Modern German Composers

ities, very free rhythms, and strange, revolutionary instrumentation. It will take time for the public to grow accustomed to his music, but certainly ^{after a while} ~~in time~~ audiences will learn to appreciate it. For there is great beauty in its odd harmonies, and they certainly do express something of the turmoil and complexity of events ⁱⁿ ~~of~~ the Machine age.

As was the case in previous years, a composer ~~is~~ scoffed at until the public and music-critics ~~are~~ made aware of the value and beauty of his music either by reaching that point of intellectual development themselves, ^{or} by encountering a new composer whose complex music is still more difficult to understand. Richard Strauss is no longer the complicated, almost-menacing composer he once appeared to be, and no doubt Schoenberg will in time win the love, trust, and admiration of the average layman. As I mentioned once before, Richard Wagner is just beginning to be completely understood by ~~opera-goers~~ ^{the} today. That gives us a slight indication of the stage of musical development of our present-day audiences.

German music has not ceased forever. It would be false to conceive the idea that because a blood-thirsty tyrant lusting for power has gained control ~~over~~ that beautiful nation, that he can still the voices of a people who were among the first in Europe to sing, and who in years past have offered the world so much. There will come a time when Germany will be restored to her former position of culture and glory....when the voices of her people (individually or as a folk-group) will rise again in songs of praise and joy. The bloodshed, suffering, and subjugation of the German people now, will serve later to liberate deeper and more lofty inspirations than any they have ever had before.

Russian Folk-Music

For hundreds of years the people of Russia underwent a suffering so acute and bitter, under harsh rulers, cruel laws, extreme poverty, and serfdom that perhaps their only means of endurance to drown out their misery was their escape through song.

Complete isolation and loneliness during long cold winter months that swept down from Siberia in dark periods of frost, ice, and wind; continuous hours of toil and sweat under the blazing heat of midsummer out in the wheatfields and meadows close to the fertile earth; the general effect of serfdom----the retarding of progress and culture and the retention of the peasants in complete ignorance and superstition----have lent to the Russian folk-lore a primitive, sorrowful, "close-to-the-soil" quality that is its main characteristic.

For a great length of time Russia isolated herself (like old China and Japan) and, turning her back on western civilization and cultural ideas, ignored the rest of the world in her mute, slow, painful development. In spite of this, however, the influences of a great variety of nations have made themselves felt through the ancestry of her people and ~~by~~ the barbaric invasions of countries that tried to break in on her to gain territory and subjects. The silent patience of Scandinavia; the warmth, color, and temperament of the Slavic countries; the religious fervour of Ancient Greece; the mystic intensity and splendor of the Orient----all have a place in the character of both the people and the music of Russia.

Russian Folk-Music

The size of the latter country must also be considered in regard to the wealth of its folk-lore. Extending from the Pacific on the east to the Baltic westward, and from the Arctic down to the Black Sea on the south, it covers about one-seventh of the world's area. Because of the various invasions in early times which led to intermarriages throughout the nation, it now boasts about seven or eight races whose temperaments vary with the locality and climate of their homes. Therefore it is perfectly natural for a country of so large an area and population to have a wealth of folk-music so enormous as to appear upon first glance unbelievable.

The music of Russia is found mainly in minor keys because of the sufferances of the people and something in their temperaments that misery has created. Although they patiently bore the burden of serfdom and poverty and made no attempt to throw off the yoke of their oppressors until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many of their songs, nevertheless, reveal, by the sudden unexpected changes of mood every few bars (shifting from major to minor key), an inner tumult and revolt. Melodies like "Kasbeck", which tells of a Caucasian youth displeased with the mode of living in his native town, who leaves it to wander and drown his unhappiness with wine, women, and song, best illustrate this restlessness and dissatisfaction. Note the loneliness and sorrow of the poignant:

Russian Folk-Music

in comparison with the almost-wild hilarity of:

Yet in severe contrast to "Kazbeck", we find a song like "Doobinooshka" or, in English, "Little Cudgel", which compares the lot of the Russian worker to that of the British. According to the song, when the latter becomes dissatisfied he invents machine after machine to save himself labor, while the former, when he feels a mood of depression pending sings "Doobinooshka" to ease his lot. This merging of self with song is so typical of the character of the Russian peasant that it may offer an explanation to the fact that he endured misery for centuries without attempting to free himself.

Another form of great misery in old Russia more than in the new was the prisons of Siberia with their chain-gang systems and hard labor in the mines. One of the most expressive songs on this topic is "Ech, Tee Dolia" or "Oh, My Fate, My Fate". It relates how a Russian prisoner after working in the mines for many years meets old friends from his native village who bring back memories of his home and his unhappy past:

Russian Folk-Music

It fully captures the spirit of:-

Siberia, steeped in somber snow
Spreads savagely before our eyes,
As silent shadows steal across
The silver of her twilit skies.

She sleeps, a country garbed in gloom
In white austerity that gleams
Across the grim and gruesome steppes,
Beyond the essence of her dreams.

Long ago, before the invention of steamboats and their introduction into Russian life, great barges of freight were pulled up and down the Volga River by men along the banks. Worn by their task to little more than brutes, they chanted in their dejection the monotonous, yet beautiful "Song of the Volga Boatmen", thus finding a certain relief from their misery and weariness. The song, which consists only of a few exclamations and six words is more like the moan from which it probably originated than an expression in music of suffering humanity. As Conway Walker states, "No words could fittingly express the misery of this inhuman drudgery." Thus the music itself is called upon to explain what rhetoric found impossible to express.

Russian Folk-Music

Sung on the concert stage the song is represented as heard by one standing still on the banks of the stream, first softly from farther up the river, then gradually augmenting in volume and intensity until it reaches and passes the point where he remains to listen, and finally dying into a murmur in the distance where it disappears. It can be readily recognised by its soft opening bars in a dull minor key:

Picturing the animal-like subjugation endured by the boatmen, one can hardly fail to be reminded of the subject of Edwin Markham's famous poem "The Man With The Hoe". The following lines might just as well describe any of the toiling bargemen, and the author's prophecy finds its answer in the Russian Revolution of 1917:-

"The emptiness of ages in his face

And on his back the burden of the world.

"Through this dread shape the suffering ages look;

Time's tragedy is in that aching stoop;

Through this dread shape humanity betrayed,

Plundered, profaned, and disinherited,

Cries protest to the Judges of the World,

A protest that is also prophecy.

Russian Folk-Music

"O masters, lords, and rulers in all lands,
How will the future reckon with this man?
How answer his brute question in that hour
When whirlwinds of rebellion shake the world?
How will it be with kingdoms and with kings----
With those who shaped him to the thing he is----
When this dumb Terror shall reply to God,
After the silence of the centuries?"

Henry Lefkowitz's arrangement of "The Song of the Volga Boatmen" is to be especially recommended, with of course about two or three extra repetitions of the middle section which he fails to include, probably because of lack of sufficient space. In one part a bit of the melody is formed by the first five notes of the scale descending in correct order and is accompanied in Mr. Lefkowitz's arrangement by a corresponding scale an octave lower. However, when the melody reaches and pauses at the tonic note the accompaniment continues to descend to dominant, thus forming one of the most expressive interpretations of the old Russian song. Mr. Lefkowitz also succeeds in introducing some quite original musical motions throughout the piece that in no way detract from its nationalistic character. However, a glance at some of his other editions of Russian music will reveal that he is definitely at his best in "The Song of the Volga Boatmen", as the national fla-

Russian Folk Music

your is often endangered by his too liberal handling of harmonies and accompaniments. As far as interpretation is concerned, perhaps none better than Feodor Chaliapin's may be found for "The Song of the Volga Boatmen". The basic understanding and rich treatment he gives the song render it a most deftly-artistic work, a far cry from its humble and tragic beginnings.

Of an entirely different mood is the song "Booblitchki" or "Pretzels", a newer melody originating not more than fifteen years ago as a finished product. It represents the melody of a ragged vendor praising his goods (a special type of Russian pretzels) as the people crowd around him to buy them fresh and hot. Although also in a minor key its mood is one of jovial good-humor with perhaps the slightest vein of seriousness, rather than sadness, running through the music every once in a while. Its lively melody, as well as the possibilities of interesting chorus effects, make it a song of great popularity throughout Russia:

Russian folk-songs may generally be divided into two groups, the "horovodi" and the "piesni". The former simply denotes the group-songs consisting either entirely of a chorus or of a soloist and chorus alternating. This forms a delightful dialogue or conversation in music and the form is extremely popular among the Russian

Russian Folk-Music

peasants and working people. The other type, the "piesni", is found far less often in Russian folk-music because, as it requires merely a soloist it gives fewer people the chance to participate. During the warm summer evenings when the Russian peasants gathered in the fields around a bonfire to tell stories and sing songs, the piesni were heard less and less often, until today almost all the folk-songs of the country have chorus parts scattered through them. Both forms are usually based upon folk-epics called "builini" which form a most fascinating study in themselves.

In many of the horovodi surprisingly excellent counterpoint is displayed, closely resembling that of medieval songs and ballads.

The musical structure of the Russian folk-song, although simple (its melody often encompasses only five or six notes) is of extreme irregularity. The rhythms change often every few measures and in some of the songs the succession of 5-4, 3-4, and 4-4 time may be used in alternative bars. This inequality, as well as the sudden changes of mood in one composition, is caused by the rhythms and sounds of words in the Slavic language and adds much nationalistic character to the songs. The phrases, also, are often of unequal lengths, and it is not unusual to find a song in 7-4 tempo suddenly revert to 5-4 time (both tricky rhythms for simple folk-melodies) or one in 2-4 rush into 3-4, usually a dance rhythm.

There are a good many folk-songs in major keys, but by usage of imperfect cadences and melodies that end on chords other than dominant

Russian Folk-Music

and tonic a mournful, typically Russian effect is achieved.

The balalaika, a guitar-like instrument, most often accompanies the songs and by the use of other typically Russian instruments the music may be expressed with the most intrinsic national touch.

However, there are some melodies (autobiographical epics, for example) which actually require no instrument but the human voice to interpret them. These usually belong in the piesni class, thus achieving an effect of such monotony and endless reiteration that they assume an odd and most peculiar charm.

Russian folk-music lacks a permanent scale, but from the Orient it has imported several ancient ones seldom in use today. Because we are unaccustomed to hear them, these lend to the songs a mournful tone that sounds mystic, almost incomprehensible, and deep to us. The Russians, however, can conceive nothing unusual or more perfectly logical than the usage and effects of this morbid and weird atmosphere.

Another characteristic that originated in the Orient is the specific neatness of detail. Grace-notes, small turns, etc., although they seldom form the actual melody, are missed when left out for the clear effect they manage to impart to the songs. One way of distinguishing between Russian and Hungarian music, so closely related, is by the prominence of these grace-notes. The music is likely to be Hungarian if they form part of the actual melody, but their function in the Russian music is chiefly to enhance the ancient qualities of the scale structures by occurring in the most important positions of these.

Russian Folk-Music

The melodies, needless to say, were developed first, that is, after the stories were created, while the harmonic structure and ornamentation followed later. There are often many stanzas to one melody, the soloist usually singing one or two before the group joins him. It is not unusual, however, that songs with several melodies shall finally conclude on the first one.

The forms and types of songs are of course diversified because of the vastitude of the country and the number of subjects that suggest themselves to the imaginations of a musically-minded people. Love-songs like "The Peddler" (also called "Who'll Buy My Basket?" or "Korobooshka") express a fervour and passionate poignancy that unconsciously reflect a love of country and life. This melody is one of the loveliest, most typical, and most artistically expressive of all Russian folk-songs. It tells of a young country peddler who tries to sell his wares while passing through the wheat-fields where the peasant girls reap the harvest. He catches the glance of one of the maidens, falls in love with her at first sight, and vows that for a gaze from her eyes and a kiss from her lips he would lay all his worldly goods at her feet. Note how successfully even the opening melody catches the atmosphere of golden wheatfields, sunlight, the sound of sickles, and joyful, carefree youth:

Russian Folk-Music

However, there are other Russian folk-songs, beautiful to begin with, that tend to lose much of their charm and become trite through too much usage by amateurs and second-rate musicians. Such melodies are "Dark Eyes" ("Otchi-Tchornyia") and "Two Guitars". Both are of extreme sentimentality----the first a young man's praise of his sweetheart's black burning eyes, and the second the memories of lost youth, joy, and good times recalled by the tinkling of two guitars. Poor editions of these scores have also done much to depreciate their value.

"Farewell", a melody in which a village youth says goodbye to family, friends, sweetheart, and country, fearing they will soon forget him, yet still determined to leave, is also a song of pure sentimentality, but it still retains a quality of richness and sincerity that "Two Guitars" and "Dark Eyes" have long ago lost in the opinions of many musicians and critics. Yet "Farewell" is a popular melody and will be readily recognised by its main theme:

Any melody, under certain conditions and treatment may assume a Russian air. The use of special unique harmonies is perhaps the most important factor, but secondly, I feel, come the typical phrase and song conclusions. I have listed nine here that are found repeatedly to give the effect of a Russian atmosphere. A few of them appear continuously in the folk-music of that country. It is perhaps an extra step in determining the individuality of Russian folk-tunes and how they differ from those of other nations:

Russian Folk-Music

It is interesting to note that in olden times peasants regarded robbers as great heroes because they plundered the rich. Often praising a thief for his courage resulted in songs in which he (the robber) became the soloist and the peasants the chorus.

In the next few pages I intend to discuss the Ukrainian folk-music which differs noticeably from that found in other parts of Russia in its spirit and local color. It is considered by many to be the most interesting of all Russian folk-music because it is based, more than that of any other region, on the very thought of the residents of the area. Perhaps the main reason that it differs so from other Russian folk-music is that it absorbed the best of the culture of Austria and Poland while under their control long ago. Thus its folk-music actually includes two influences other than Russian today.

The attitude of Russian influentials towards the Ukrainian folk-music (even while the area was ruled by Russia) greatly estranged the melodies from those of the mother country and until lately kept them apart both in structure and ideas. Bandurists and kobzars (sometimes called "lirnyks"), the individual singers of the Ukraine who corresponded to the Minnesingers of Germany and the Troubadors of France were persecuted by the Russian government until the time of Czarina Elizabeth. Her Majesty, very fond of music, made one Ukrainian bandurist formerly known as "Blind Beggar" a Russian nobleman, and from then on the "kobzars" gradually gained more freedom. (Brotherhoods, the group singer or "guilds",

Russian Folk-Music

17
existed as recently as early World War#I days.) But prejudices in other forms still existed during the ~~earlier~~ centuries. While collecting national folk-music Professor Kolessa was prohibited by the government from visiting Ukrainian villages. The music of this region could be performed at concerts in Russia only if the texts were translated into French. The irony of the situation was finally revealed in the second half of the eighteenth century, when a volume entitled "Collection of Simple Russian Folk-Songs, With Notes" appeared and consisted mainly of Ukrainian melodies.

But despite the opposition of the Russian government toward Ukrainian music, many great Russians persisted in regarding it very highly.

"No public holiday in the Ukraine is complete without music," said Professor J.H. Blasius after his expedition there in 1844.

Gogol's emotions regarding the folk-music of the area are expressed in the following:

"The character of the Ukrainian folk-song cannot be expressed in one word....It is exceedingly complex. In many songs it is light, graceful, it hardly touches the ground, it seems to play and trifle with tones, while in others it assumes manly power, its tones grow strong, forceful....and again they become free, broad, and strive to embrace limitless stretches....As for the music of sorrow, it is heard nowhere so vividly as in them, the tones of it live, scorn, tear the soul."

Syerof, famous Russian music-critic who also composed a few interesting works, wrote of Ukrainian folk-songs;

Russian Folk-Music

"....They are flowers which came into the world as if of their own volition,grew their luxurious,glittering garb without any author or composer....just as a lily in its chaste garb outshines the glitter of silk and precious stones,so the folk-music,with its child-like simplicity,is a thousand times richer and stronger than all the cunning artifices of school learning which are preached by pedantic musicians in conservatories and musical academies."

The history of Ukrainian folk-music may be divided into three parts: the pre-Christian,Christian,and post-revolutionary periods. The first consists mainly of ceremonial and ritual songs,and little is known about the last except that it is tending to unite with the music of the rest of Russia,but the music of the Christian era forms an immense topic in itself. The facts related here are but highlights of a wealth of fascinating material.

First of all,several world-famous Christmas carols were originally folk-songs of the Ukraine. The folk-element in the locality's music crept into the compositions of the church,giving them an essence of color,purity,and richness that added much to their value. The people of the region created music for every season,and the Easter song("haevka")is a beautiful example of a primitive welcome to spring. It is closely related to the same type of song of the Indo-German race,the connection being based upon the use of pure diatonics and lack of a permanent diatonic scale. •

New methods from Byzantium greatly enriched the folk-music and gave it a more complicated rythmic structure. They also did much to deprive

Russian Folk-Music

the songs of the archaic diatonism so typical of them during the pre-Christian era. It may be here added that prominence of religious themes aside from melodies of the church resulted from the Byzantium influence.

Perhaps the greatest source of inspiration to the folk-music of the Ukraine was the presence of Cossacks in the country. Their main purpose was the preservation of the Ukrainian race, and their rebellion against the enemies of the nation made an extremely deep impression upon the people. They introduced three scales into Ukrainian folk-music, the most famous of which is the "Cossack duma". Thus they definitely marked their influence in the culture of the locality. Aside from a few lovely lullabies their music consists mainly of spirited, lively rhythmic marches and battle-songs. The rhythm is usually more important than the melody, being greatly accentuated, and in many songs the pauses in the melody are filled in either with the basic rhythmic pattern or else by chromatic and diatonic notations of a clear and definite beat. The songs are very mobile and flexible in structure, and a fitting interpretation renders them expressive beyond measure. In several of the songs the clapping of hands, the production of sounds imitating the galloping of horses, and the raised cries accompanying the rhythmic pattern during the pauses in the melody tend toward the Spanish, if not Moorish style. However, many effective introductions of primitive instrumentation keep the music in the typically Russian category.

"Everything is filled with song, everywhere breathed from them the great freedom of Cossack life. Everywhere is felt that Cossack strength,

Russian Folk-Music

joy, and greatness with which they threw away the quiet and safety of home life in order to drive into the poetry of danger and battle," says Gogol in speaking of the Ukraine.

The melodies of the locality were used in the compositions of Weber, Haydn, Beethoven, Hummel, Knorr, and Liszt, and in Russia by Tschaicowsky, Glinka, Syerof, and many others. The value of the neutral, yet typically Russian tonalities of Ukrainian folk-songs is just beginning to gain appreciation and general recognition in recent years.

Conway Walker has said, "No government has protected, encouraged, and developed its folk-art as did the Imperial government of Russia. Some of its most distinguished musicians were delegated to gather its wealth of melodies from every part of that vast empire. Thus there have been preserved the records of a vigorous folk-music, the product of a people of austere principles, homely traditions, and intense religious fervour."

Mr. Walker might equally well have added the present-day government of Russia to what he has said of the Imperial government. Now more than ever before intensive studies are made of folk-music from all over the nation, much of which has been completely neglected up to the present because of difficulties in transportation, communication, and dissatisfaction of various kinds throughout the country. Now, however, the government is taking special pains to investigate music in far and remote places, sending expeditions there to bring back specific information and the written scores of folk-songs. These expeditions have proven that an extremely encouraging tendency exists, namely, that creation of Russian

Russian Folk-Music

folk-music is still on the incline and tends to remain so for many years to come. This means that composers not only in Russia, but all over the world may remain conscious of, and if necessary draw from a vast source of inspiration popularly believed to have disappeared with the dawn of writing and the decline of primitively ancient and pre-historic days.

In 1938 Steinman, head of the Music Conservatory of Moscow, conducted a tour through Siberia, and the evidence of musically-inclined tribes he visited (many of whom are still wandering wild on the cold, snow-bound steppes) forms a tale worth mentioning.

According to Professor Steinman it seems that the new conditions in Russia, despite the fact that some of the tribes are still wild, wandering, and little in contact with them, have already tended to raise their cultural standards. By means of sleds and troikas they come to Moscow from the most remote localities to listen to musical performances and cultural lectures.

One of the most interesting of the tribes he visited was the Yamal-sky Nantze, whose folk-music differs from that of most others in that most of its songs belong to the piesni group. The typical form of ensemble of the tribe is to have part of the group repeat what has just been sung by one member while the rest proceed to a new part.

"This is typical of their reaction to things which greatly interest them," Steinman stated. He remarks that their comprehension of new ideas comes slowly and must be "digested" in parts before new learning is begun.

Russian Folk-Music

"They conceive songs in connection with topics rather than motives," he claims, "and their most common instrument is the drum."

"When recordings of the folk-music of different tribes were played for them they constantly preferred those most closely resembling their own," Steinman added.

Their most modern folk-songs deal mainly with the struggles of the poor against the rich and are, interestingly enough, socialistic in nature unconsciously. Older music of the tribe appears in the form of autobiographical epics that use many old Russian legends. Also, there are numerous songs honoring the dead, most of which are extemporaneous.

Music is used by them indirectly as a livelihood. When hunting, one man will sing to attract the attention of the animal while the other proceeds to capture him.

Perhaps their most interesting legend is the one in which they explain their remote ancestral origin. They claim that in primeval days a hunter by the name of Willkie saw a beautiful white bear and chased it for many miles. He finally fell into a lake and remained frozen there for forty years. After this he was so hardened (physically as well as morally) that the god of the tribe considered him a suitable husband for his daughter. These two are believed to be the first ancestors of the tribe, which still worships the white bear as an idol of good luck.

A great number of the folk-songs of the tribe were brought back to Moscow for publication, but it seems that so far none are completely arranged musically for public inspection.

Russian Folk-Music

Of an entirely different nature is the musical life in Tadgikistan. Here people are more civilized, living together mostly in mountain villages. Traveling expeditions have discovered rich quantities of talent that incorporate the republic's folk-songs in symphonic compositions. Musical notation is found to be very highly developed and a great culture is growing among the people.

One of the great musical achievements of the area is a complete sound-recording laboratory and station. Here mechanical recorders and special types of apparatus allow several records of one composition to be made simultaneously. The material used for these is found to give a much clearer tone and produce more solid and lasting records than that previously imported. Musicians come from all sections of the republic to have their compositions and the folk-songs of the locality recorded for future reference.

The laboratory has done much to further musical knowledge in Tadgikistan, but it is still a new institution and therefore quite handicapped in several respects. The interest of some of the local musicians is still lacking, planning is unsystematic, and research is not done in a scientific manner. Lack of specialists in the field of harmony and folklore also retards the progress of what might otherwise prove to be an extremely promising institution. But local orchestra members have formed a special organization to develop and train others to become the specialists they so badly need.

Lack of funds has necessitated that the laboratory be located be-

Russian Folk-Music

low the steps of a musical theater with the provision that a new building is to be obtained for it at any convenient time.

Yet despite these almost overwhelming odds the institution has already published a book entitled "One Hundred Folk Songs" that is attracting attention in many other parts of the nation.

A local orchestra was formed in 1929 and, with the aid of the laboratory, has accomplished much in the improvement of musical taste of the inhabitants.

At that time there was no musical theater, but seven men-students performed ensemble at the local dramatic theater. Hearing them play local folk-instruments in a tea-room one afternoon a theater-executive got the idea that they form an organized group with one member becoming conductor to develop general musicianship in the area. In this way the orchestra was formed, gaining more and more members, until by 1938 it boasted forty-two participants from all over Tadgikistan.

Although still very primitive it has achieved much because of the fact that it is in an organized form. Above all, it is continuously gaining popularity with the natives.

In 1932 harmony and theory classes were formed for the purpose of teaching note-reading to the musicians, who previously played by ear and memory. Because this practice is still in existence to some extent today the orchestra still remains handicapped in the growth of its art-work. No rehearsals were actually needed, as sheets of

Russian Folk-Music

music at performances appeared merely for decoration.

The repertoire of the orchestra includes folk-songs, melodies, and dances as well musical poems, called in Russian "shash-macomy".

Compositions of national and European writers are performed, and although mostly European instruments are used some members still persist in playing those of the locality.

The financial standing of the orchestra, as well as that of the sound-recording station, needs improvement mainly for the purchase of better instruments. Those used at the present (1938) are very crudely made and may help account for the fact that no women musicians are attracted thus far to join. Their field seems to be more in the line of the ballet-school, a separate branch of the orchestra opened in 1937.

The accomplishments of these groups in Tadgikistan are remarkable. Before their formation folk-talent received absolutely no training, education, or attention, and the improvement of culture and musical composition in the area since their formation cannot be too greatly stressed. The idea of training folk-talent is an excellent one and may do much to elevate cultural standards internationally.

The orchestra has yielded several promising composers who will be discussed in a later chapter entitled "Modern Composers Residing in Russia".

Thus we see that the folk-music not only has had a glorious past, but finds a rich future to which to look forward. By some it is considered as the greatest of any nation. It has offered to musicians all

Russian Folk-Music

over the world vast inspirations, and many great symphonic structures are built on themes or rhythmic cadences heard in the songs of Russian peasants. The greatness of these people and their music lies mainly in their loss of sorrow through melody while toiling endlessly in the fields or along the rivers----something that usually encourages the creation of the very best.

At the present time steel and factory are replacing much of the barren steppes and farmlands, and peasants have become, for the most part, city laborers and hard working agriculturalists, yet something in their temperament has not permitted their creed to change. But it is the combination of their diversified origins, the misery and bitterness they experienced for so long a time, and something in their idealism and character that allows us to expect of their folk-music the very greatest----a continuation of individuality, ripened by time to strength and mellow color that will warm the hearts of all that hear it, helping them to understand better the nature of a people so different from themselves.

Passing through the Russian Wheatfields,
Miles and miles of golden grain,
Meadows swaying in the sunlight,
Amber covering hill and plain.

Cloudless skies of sweeping blueness,
Workers toiling in the sun,
How their faces shine with gladness,
And what pride when work is done.

Russian Folk-Music

Through the wheatfields, happy workers
Tilling joyously the land,
With sincere and true devotion
Make their mighty nation stand.

Russian Church Music; Forerunners Of Tschaicowsky

The individually composed music of Russia began, as it did in most other nations, in the church. Yet it is odd that in Russia the early church was the suppresser of song----that although the people devoted themselves intensely to religion they were denied the privilege of worship by melody.

In the sixteenth century, at the command of an important priest, a huge fire was kindled in Moscow into which all song-books and musical manuscripts were cast to be destroyed.

Singing and dancing were considered incentives to sin, and for this reason no musical instruments were permitted in the churches. Gradually, however, this attitude changed, but either out of sheer habit or else poverty the holy institutions remained bereft of instruments, thus establishing groups which have come to be known as typical of Russian church music, namely A Capella choirs. These, without the assistance of any accompaniment whatsoever, sing in many parts the religious songs and hymns of their nation, rendering them so poignantly expressive that their effect is undescrivable, but must be heard to be understood and appreciated. The A Capella choirs helped develop in Russia the lowest bass voices in the world, which were already rendered possible by the climate of the country. Thus many of our finest bass singers either come from that nation or are of Russian descent, their voices also possessing a penetrating quality that is still more enhanced by a characteristic dramatic skill. Feodor Chaliapin, already mentioned for his interpretation of Russian folk-music, is a note-worthy example.

Russian Church Music; Forerunners of Tschaicowsky

In one form of these choirs the bass is doubled, that is, the bottom and supporting part is sung the way it is written as well as one octave lower by an extra group. This might be called five-part singing except that the two lowest parts are identically the same but for the difference of one octave. The effect achieved is like that of a hidden organ accompanying and proves extremely strange and interesting. Should the bass ever prove too heavy in this case the tenor part is also doubled similarly. Sometimes parts may even be tripled in various octaves, thus illustrating the enormous range of male singers of this nation.

The church music of Russia is effected chiefly by Greek modes, as Russian religion and alphabet came from Greece. The diatonic scale is used and Ancient Byzantium worship prevails. Also, culture was first taught in churches, and many Russian Christmas carols (favorites the world over) are based on the Greek tradition.

There is an extra coloring, however, lent to Russian church music by the Jewish communities throughout the nation, the retention of the Oriental and the Hebrew that, in its orthodox intensity has helped place the religious music of the country in one of the very highest categories.

From the church music there gradually developed the creations of individual composers, but the typically Russian spirit, so penetrating and hard to shake off today, was not in existence until the time of Glinka. The musicians of Italy, that great musical nation whose culture began so early, invaded Russia in vast numbers and either traveled there constantly, thus spreading their national ideas far and wide, or else set up music schools

Russian Church Music; Forerunners of Tschaicowsky

and studios, where they proceeded to dictate their Italian theories and impress them firmly upon Russian musicians. The result was that by the time the latter group was sufficiently educated and informed to commence the creation of individual compositions its members were unable to write anything out of the Italian tradition.

Then came the rise of the colossal German world of music---Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and already Schubert, and the tide in Russia slightly turned from the Italian to the German. Imprisoned between these two commanding forces the Russian spirit was practically quenched, yet it was known that such a spirit existed because of the tremendous wealth of folk-music of the nation. A search began for the individual expression of the typically Russian, and finally, after much effort, failure, and discouragement an opera entitled "A Life For the Czar" appeared that definitely marked the dawn of the history of Russian music. Its composer Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka had taken several lessons in Germany from Dehn (of Berlin), who challenged him to return home and write something really Russian. This opera was his answer; it received immediate ovations and popularity in his native land and earned for him the title of "Father of Russian Music." But Glinka deserved this title not only for helping originate the expression of the musical spirit of his own country, but directly that of Spain and Poland, and unconsciously that of the entire world. Let us analyze these separately. It has been proven that a certain odd tie exists between many musicians of Spain and Russia, just as there is one between some poets of England and the charm of Italy. This musical attraction originated at the

Russian Church Music; Forerunners of Tschaicowsky

very start, that is, with Glinka. Having made the effort of freeing his own nation's music from the grip of outside influences as well as indolence (it must be remembered that Russia did not begin her "building-up" movement in music until Germany was well on way with the Romantic musicians----Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Brahms) Glinka felt a certain sympathy and understanding for other nations handicapped by the same disadvantages. Spain was perhaps the most sadly neglected country with the most unexpressed talent and beauty, and what Glinka did in the way of encouragement, as well as personally writing some of his own music in the Spanish style, will long be remembered by this land of olives and tamborines. It is also pleasant to think of it as a call of similar ancestry, that it, the response of what is Oriental in the Russian to be attracted to what is Moorish in the Spaniard. Unwittingly Glinka began a tradition, and many Russian musicians after him, most prominently Rimsky-Korsakoff, have dedicated several compositions to Spain.

In his opera "A Life for the Czar" Glinka made use of countless Russian folk-melodies, but in order to highlight them by contrast and also to follow his story he included many folk-tunes of Poland, thus helping to boost the music of Russia's down-trodden, divided little neighbor.

The struggle in Russia to obtain a typical and national spirit in music put composers in many other lands conscious of musical nationalism, and the success with which they (the Russians----or I should say Glinka) achieved their ambition has acted as a spur and encouragement internationally.

Glinka's music is seldom barbaric; he controlled it quite well, yet it still has a quality of roughness in its clumsy modulations and awkward

Russian Church Music; Forerunners of Tschaicowsky

harmonies. It must be understood that Glinka had an unusually pale personality, and it is only because his music is so impersonal that it is of interest to the public. The color it exhibits comes either from the folk-tunes used or else from the composer's surroundings.

There are many faults in Glinka's compositions. His solutions to problems of symphonic architecture are extremely childish and often completely miss the point. He does not always thoroughly digest his own material, and the main disadvantage of his style is that his exceptionally fresh backgrounds to main themes bring out the weaknesses of his motives.

Yet there are many points in his favor, because of which we may consider him a first-rate musician. In parts he is vigorous and powerful, and even though this fact tends to bring out the contrasting weaknesses in others (as is true in the poetic writings of Walt Whitman) the better sections are too good to be overlooked. The material he works with is seldom original, but his handling of it is quite individualistic. Strangely enough, he attains an odd dignity in the rudeness and ruggedness of his naive expression, and draws his main power from his complete sympathy with the people. His compositions, without being in the least way personal, are healthfully refreshing, simple, and beautiful. His lightness and certainty of touch (almost transparency) is a rare gift and leads us to the greatest part of his talent----his undisputable mastery in orchestration and orchestral colour. Not only was he able to draw the most out of every instrument in the orchestra, but from the orchestra as a whole he achieved the most interesting and exacting effects. His color-

Russian Church Music; Forerunners of Tschaicowsky

ing is rich and brilliant and completely compensates for his modulations and harmonies.

He discarded in orchestral music the symphonic mould, preferring the shorter and more popular form containing purely national contents. The folk-lore in his operas are emphasised for the fantastic and fairy elements, and most of his music is colored by Oriental-sounding effects. (This explains why it was not so difficult for him to write "A Night in Madrid" and "Jota Aragonesa", both Spanish overtures.)

"A Life For the Czar" is a purely patriotic, historical text set to music mostly in folk-style, illustrating the essence of Glinka's greatness--- his putting both the folk-music and consequently all other music of his nation on an individual footing. It should be mentioned that many faults eminent in this opera are corrected in a second more well-known work, that is, the opera "Ruslan and Ludmilla". "A Life For the Czar" is seldom heard outside of Russia, but there even today in the communistic society it goes under a different name and with certain details changed remains as much of a favorite as it was upon its very first performance. "Ruslan and Ludmilla" is more famous abroad, especially for its overture.

Another gem of Glinka's that should not be ignored is the song "Midnight Review", which depicts the ghosts of Napoleon and all his soldiers rising in forgotten glory out of the grave on St. Helena's Island for a few hours at midnight. Chaliapin's interpretation is especially to be recommended.

Before we proceed to the chapter on Tschaicowsky the name of Anton Rubenstein should be mentioned. This composer whose exact rating in music has never been clearly defined is essential in our study Russian music with the

Russian Church Music; Forerunners of Tschaiowsky

German for two reasons. First of all, he had so much in common with the German Mendelssohn that a comparison of the two is definitely called for, and secondly he was severely criticized because he wrote in such a German style.

Both he and Mendelssohn were originally Jewish and both were obliged to change their religion, yet we find the Hebrew quality and coloring constantly through both their works. There was a certain insipidity and, as Romain Rolland calls it in "Jean Christophe", "sweet emptiness" in the compositions of Mendelssohn that are fully duplicated in the music of Rubinstein, but in both the sweetness is so refined and striking that we are usually apt to overlook the emptiness. Their ideas in harmonic structure and orchestral color are similar, as well as their types of melodic patterns. Both were for the most part well off financially, and as this factor has been believed by many to be the cause of the lack of depth in Mendelssohn's music we may equally well apply it to the case of Rubinstein. But Rubinstein was definitely influenced by Mendelssohn and not vice versa, as the German was twenty years older than the other and died at the age of thirty-eight, while Rubinstein was laid to rest when he was sixty-five. Perhaps had Mendelssohn lived longer he would have followed other tendencies that would have given us less cause to compare him with the Russian, but what we can say with certainty is that the latter followed the paths Mendelssohn took in his youth and developed them to their fullest capabilities without straying.

Rubinstein is to be remembered for his "Kamennoi Ostrow" mainly (a piano composition later orchestrated) and also for the beloved "Melody in F".