

Tschaicowsky

Tschaicowsky is known in music as "the poet who weeps as he sings" and "the Apostle of Gloom." Melancholy, emotional, and morbid, his is one of the musical personalities that best finds expression in his compositions, which are mainly of a subjective nature.

His music may be divided into two parts----the calm, light, "normal", almost-Italian vein, in which he controlled his emotions beautifully and indulged often in his much-loved ballet-form, and the deep, gloomy, vibrant music of his hysterical self, dramatic, philosophical, nostalgic, extremely frenzied, emotional and violent, preferred by far by the public the world over, as it includes such compositions as his fifth symphony, "Romeo and Juliet" overture, Pathetique symphony, B minor piano concerto, etc.

Tschaicowsky, as a person, was a fascinating, magnetic individual, sensitive, emotional, and typically Russian. There have been discussions, debates, and controversies in all countries of how far his nationalistic feelings extend in music, and people have come to the conclusion that it is best to judge his compositions as "pure music" rather than to look for nationalistic meanings or try to read them into his music.

Gerald Abraham says of Tschaicowsky, "So we must admit that if he thought in Russian he did not naturally express himself in Russian."

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This is true in most of his compositions, but there are places where he uses folk-tunes of his country with such abandon, and others, the "Caprice Italien", for instance, where he employs foreign subjects with such success that it is perhaps best to let the matter rest as personal opinion and agree that, as a man, his nationalistic qualities are unquestionably *intrinsic*.

The main reason that his "Russianness" is so great a source of concern and so much more stressed than the nationality of other composers is that, by way of contrast, there were schools of music in his country that so exaggerated the preservation of the national spirit (so difficult originally to achieve) that he, not belonging to them, aroused not only their hostility, but the comment, notice, and sometimes even criticism of music-lovers the world over.

In the beginning of his musical career, it will be found that the folk-element appears quite often, decorated, however, in Western fashion, but later, as his composing becomes more and more subjective, his personal moods and conflicts absorb the whole intensity of his creative power, making nationalism seem a trite, petty concern in comparison to vaster, far more lofty ideas.

His music has many weaknesses of which he was painfully conscious, being a high-strung and sensitive individual, but, although he invented little that was new and different, he developed and expounded forms discovered by other composers who often merely

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touched on them and then hurried on to something else more original. A man like Tschaicowsky is as great a necessity to music as the other types mentioned, for the full value of new ideas and the inspiration this developing of them offers to younger and still more modern composers cannot be over-estimated, and might be lost without an intensive study exhausting their possibilities. He sums up his own faults quite well in the following words to Madame von Meck, which are dated as belonging to the year 1878, "I have always suffered from my inability to round and polish the form of my works. Only after strenuous labor have I at last succeeded in making the form of my compositions correspond, more or less, with their content. In earlier days I was too careless and gave too little attention to the critical re-examination of my sketches. Consequently my seams always showed, and there was no organic union between the separate episodes.... But the form of my works will never be exemplary, for the essential qualities of my musical nature can be improved, but not completely altered."

His music is full of color, gloom, and glamour, and he ranks definitely as not only one of the greatest Russian musicians, but as one of the greatest composers of all times.

His own fifth symphony he considered inferior, saying of it, "Something repellent---patchiness, insincerity and 'manufacturedness'", something which music-lovers today cannot comprehend, as

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he writes so clearly, naturally, and flowingly that the listener is inclined to feel close to him as well as his music. But it is well to remember that Tschaicowsky, in his criticism, hesitated at nothing, and some of his opinions, possibly first impressions whose foundations he never investigated, are so ridiculous that we are apt to question the intelligence, if not the sanity, of the man.

Of Berlioz he says, "His harmony is distorted and sometimes intolerable to a finely organised ear. We hear in it an insane incoherence, the absence of any natural feeling, and an inconsequence in the management of the parts which prevents his works from appealing directly to the musical emotions of his audience."

Wagner he calls an "obstinate, richly-endowed, but narrow-minded German", and his impressions of Rimsky-Korsakoff's music may be judged from the following: "This Philistine----a conservative at heart----has been enticed into the arena of the free-thinkers, and is timidly making his abjuration of faith. As a result of this want of sincerity, Rimsky-Korsakoff's recent works have become dry, cold, and formless; a condition of things not always concealed by his elegant workmanship and minute stippling."

In Tschaicowsky's austere veneration of Beethoven, he resented the persistent, narrow-minded praise lavished upon the composer for all works, whether or not they reached the standards of judgment. In this he was correct, yet we are inclined to wonder whether "professional envy" didn't enter into the matter to a certain extent.

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He thought Handel's music "intolerable", and by no means shared the enthusiasm at the revival of interest during the middle of the century in Bach's masterpieces, terming them "real classical bores". Of Schumann he says, "As regards instrumentation, Schumann not only stands on a lower level than such masters as Berlioz, Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer, and Wagner, but he cannot even be compared with many second-rate composers who have borrowed his best inspirations."

His opinion of Brahms is revealed in the following: "Towards the end of his career, Schumann, through the medium of his musical journal, published in Leipzig, began to prophesy the advent of a musical Messiah, who was destined to illuminate the whole world of music and to fill the place left vacant by Beethoven. When Brahms' first sonatas appeared, Schumann, in one laconic phrase, 'He has come', announced the advent of the expected genius, whom he proclaimed in the person of young Brahms. Time has proved, however, that Schumann's unexpected proclamation was a mistake into which the indulgent and amiable composer was easily led. Brahms has not fulfilled the obligations which Schumann laid upon him and upon all musical Germany personified in him. He is merely one of those 'routinier' composers in which the German school has been so rich. He writes fluently, skillfully, correctly, but without a spark of independent genius; contenting himself with endless trifling with empty musical ideas, long since become stale, and borrowed chiefly from Mendelssohn; while he

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also strives to imitate certain external mannerisms of Schumann's. Brahms, however, is not devoid of talent; therefore he stands a whole head above his contemporaries. But there is no question of the fulfillment of impossible hopes in his genius."

Later (after he had met the German composer) his views were expressed less crudely, as Brahms' jovial personality won both his liking and admiration, yet in his diary of the tour taken in 1888 we see that a certain dissatisfaction with his music still existed and prevented the two from becoming the close friends they might otherwise have been. This time, however, Tschaicowsky attributes his dislike to the nature and tastes of his typically Russian character: "There is something dry, cold, vague, and nebulous in the music of this master which is repellent to Russian hearts. From our Russian point of view Brahms does not possess melodic invention. His musical ideas never speak to the point; hardly have we heard an allusion to some tangible melodic phrase than it disappears in a whirlpool of almost unmeaning harmonic progressions and modulations, as though the composer's special aim was to be incomprehensible and obscure. Thus he excites and irritates our musical perceptions, as it were, yet is unwilling to satisfy their demands; he seems ashamed to put it plainly, to speak clearly and reach the heart. Hearing his music, we ask ourselves; Is Brahms deep, or does he only desire to have the semblance of depth in order to mask the poverty of his imagination? This question is never satisfactorily answered." "It is all very serious," Tschaicowsky continues, "very distinguished, apparently even original, but in spite of all this the chief thing is lacking----beauty!"

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Mussorgsky's realism repelled him more than the insipidity of Cui, and he was so sensitive that often it may have been the details of a composition and not its more important points (form, outline, structure, etc.) that decided either the work's praise or condemnation in his opinion.

Tschaicowsky, by nature a great lover of ballet-music, chanced to hear Delibes' musical setting of "Sylvia" and confided to his brother (August, 1876), that "the ballet 'Sylvia' is a thousand times finer than 'Gotterdammerung'!"

It is interesting to note Tschaicowsky's reactions to the music of Chopin. Upon first hearing it, he was delighted, but gradually he noticed the similarity between his own music and that of the latter, the same weaknesses, the same sentimental, moody, melancholy temperament, and turned from his as would from the shadow of his own conscience.

One of the greatest connections between musical personalities is Tschaicowsky's worship of Mozart. Starting in his youth, the adoration and idolization of the latter lasted throughout Tschaicowsky's life, and he wrote two great works to him, "The Mozartiana Suite" and ~~an orchestral concertino~~ entitled "Night", which consists of a group of variations on Mozart's "Fantasia in D minor" for pianoforte.

Mozart's influence, together with that of the Italians Donizetti and Bellini, is present in all of Tschaicowsky's operas, and helped develop the essence of the latter's musical thought.

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It is interesting psychologically to discover the cause of this passionate Mozart-worship, and my personal opinion confirms more than ever the fact that Tschaicowsky was extremely nationalistically inclined. When we read his impressions of the music of other composers and when we know the characteristics of their methods of expression we see that it is natural for not one of them to have the appeal of Mozart to him, because Mozart's musical qualities that typify him as a composer are lacking to some degree in the compositions of every one. Tschaicowsky, being essentially Russian, admired above all (like his compatriots) simplicity and sincerity, and in analyzing the music of those criticized by him we find one or the other to be partly and even entirely missing. It is worth noting that he admired rather than loved Beethoven, being held in awe of him by the latter's complexity of ideas and unearthly soulfulness, but when it came to simplicity Mozart answered his demands in a way Beethoven, with his massive intellect and emotional conflicts found it impossible to do.

Thus we see that, as a critic, Tschaicowsky is by no means an authority, and what he says of his own fifth symphony may be more a matter of a composer's personal preference than anything else. It is quite natural for an artist (in any field) to select one or a few of his own works as his favorites, and often these choices are based on conditions surrounding him at the time of their creation, influences most of the time lost on the public at large. Also it

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is significant that frequently a certain personal touch, perhaps only imaginary in the mind of the artist of his favorite work is completely obscure in the eyes of the public----even in those of the critics and authorities, while other compositions find favor and distinction for a value the artist himself is incapable of seeing in them.

A piece like Tschaicowsky's "Caprice Italien" has never, according to the composer, received the appreciation and consideration worth its due, being one of his most beloved numbers, just as "Lenora" was Beethoven's, but others of his works, like "Overture of 18-12" which Tschaicowsky never credited with much attention took the world by storm.

His fifth symphony falls into this class. It happens to be the second symphony in music (chronologically speaking) to occupy the unusual key of E minor, Brahms' fourth being the first.

Its opening movement begins andante, and is composed of a parent theme and four other main motives. By the former the symphony is to be recognised, by the bold blare of:



The four other main themes, all lyrical and wonderfully melodious, are lettered below for the sake of convenience:

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Themes A and C are of the "agitato" type, while B and D are "cantabile". It will be noticed that there is very little tonality contrast between C and D, and the former, being an extremely neutral melody, combines beautifully with the other three. Preparations for it are found as early as bars 15 and 19.

The andante suddenly switches to allegro, which tempo remains through the rest of the movement.

The Durchfuhrung (see chapter on Beethoven for definition) of movement one is, strangely enough, almost insignificant when com-

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pared to the beauty of the rest of the movement. It is the only part in this symphony which reveals free modulations, and instead of leading to the climax of the allegro, returns to the beginning of the latter which is repeated fully again. The introduction to

the Durchführung:



is one example where Tschaicowsky writes with so great a clarity and simplicity that these assets acquire a beauty in themselves. Another place where this is dominant is in his transposition following this to the key of G minor:

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The Durchfuhrung, being quite scanty, makes the coda appear quite large by comparison, existing in the following proportion:

95-56 against 188-166 (for the two statements) and 37 for the introduction.

The coda here is the diminuendo contrasting against the preparatory rise of the first movement, and appears in the composer's typically mournful manner of writing. It descends all the way down to the tonalities of the lower strings and bassoons, and ends sadly in keeping with the mood of the rest of the movement.

Movement two, Andante Cantabile con Alcuna Licenza, is accompanied all the way through by this rhythmic figure:

Its main theme is the lyrical, throbbing:

whose complete statement occupies thirty-six bars of four-measure phrases. The fourth of these is subject to a diminution of one bar in order to allow for a foretaste of the next main motive, but it will be noticed that this loss is compensated for later by the addition of one extra measure in the sixth phrase, thus retaining complete balance throughout.

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The ninth phrase, which actually introduces the second motive, is constructed in a rather mechanical way, but this may be overlooked when it is compared to the ease and delightful spontaneity of the theme itself:

Following this comes the intermezzo, whose subject, although rather commonplace in itself, fits exceptionally well in the movement and becomes lovely through Tschaicowsky's great variety of tonal effects, through which it passes with great rapidity, creating the impression of restlessness:

At the conclusion of the intermezzo Tschaicowsky uses organ-point,

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and the return is the same as the beginning, except for the inclusion of variations to give a more fancy effect.

It is the second movement of this symphony that human feeling is most highly valued, that the play of emotions is revealed with the clearest and deepest sincerity.

The tempo of movement three is called "Valse" only because it is in 3-4 time and not, as first impressions would imply, because it is a type of dance. In general, music of this rhythm falls into four categories:

(1)Waltz, resembling the minuet, only more lilting and having an accompaniment of this type:

(2)Polonaise, giving emphasis to the first beat of each measure.

(3)Mazurka, strongly stressing the second beat.

(4)Minuet, giving marked emphasis to every beat.

Thus we see that the third movement of Tschaicowsky's fifth symphony belongs definitely in the "Waltz" (or "Valse") group, even though it is not a dance, and many composers since his day have written symphonic music in the same class.

The middle portion is a subdivision of perpetual motion:

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and to introduce it syncopated rythm is used:

Being very humorous and entering where it does this middle section should be called "capricious" instead of "empty". Of it, Rosa Newmarch, authority on Tschaicowsky, says, "The effect of this intermezzo is truly excellent; not, as some might think, in spite of, but rather because of its being built upon absolutely nothing."

At the coda the parent motive of movement one appears again to prepare for its main entrance in movement four, but here its proportions are different. This may be more clearly noticed by comparing it with the original version:

New Appearance:

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Original Version:

The only other important fact to be remembered about movement three is its chief theme:

The fourth movement (Finale), although it appears last in the symphony, was probably written first, since the parent theme is most highly developed there.

In regard to proportions, it consists of an allegro vivace (alla breve) of four hundred fourteen bars, preceded and followed by maestosos of fifty-seven and thirty-two measures respectively. After this comes the presto. The material of each maestoso is the same, being composed of the parent theme in a major key in march-form, which extends to several eight-measure phrases:

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but the characters of the two differ somewhat. The first, being less elaborate and fuller than the second, has a greater subdivision of beat-value, and keeps the figuration below the melody instead of, as the second, above it.

Of the Allegro Rosa Newmarch says, "There is that about the Allegro which is Tschaicowsky's very own, and with which therefore it is a pleasure to have to deal."

One rhythm is applied to various melodies and harmonies, as there is a great sparsity of material; yet, despite its utter simplicity, the Allegro appears powerful and masterly. Its opening subject is:

After this has been played once everything is immediately repeated, this forming part of the character of the movement.

Another interesting theme, which shows Tschaicowsky to be a great master in instrumentation, is:

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The presto leads to a reminiscence of the first movement, with which the symphony ends.

Of this work Goepp has said, "We must be clear at least of the poet's intent. In the Fifth Symphony Tschaicowsky sang a brave song of struggle with Fate." However, Dr. Sigmund Spaeth is of a different opinion, claiming, "It would be easy to interpret this fifth symphony of Tschaicowsky as also a struggle against Fate. But in view of man's recent struggles against himself, which seem far more vitally significant, it may be possible to give it a spiritual meaning, with possible ideals of peace on earth, good will to men."

Few composers have had the success of Tschaicowsky with all their concerto music. His, typical of his musical traits in almost every direction, finds its way into the hearts of virtuosos, theoretic technicians of music, and listeners (laymen and authorities) everywhere. His B minor piano concerto is a masterpiece not only of technicality and training, but of fine musicianship as well. The first movement, Allegro, is introduced in the key of D flat, to which it never returns or even refers afterward, by the following:

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(to be added in the music)

The asterick, marks a trick typical of the composer in this concerto, the interruption of a cadence and the graceful method of concluding musical phrases.

Next comes the leading theme supported by the orchestra:

after which the second subject is announced in A flat by the woodwinds and horns:

In the two opening bars of this second subject it will be noticed that the lowest note changes. This is a mannerism typical of Tschaicowsky, and it may be seen, upon further investigation, that the note continues to descend whole steps until it reaches D flat, whereupon it returns in whole tones to F.

The introduction to the third subject is made in the exposition of the second:

and in the third itself Tschaicowsky proves himself a master at pedal-bass:

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Reminiscences of these melodies are now developed by the orchestra and repeated by the piano solo until the return of the beginning, which is so adorned that it is difficult for the listener who has no musical score before his eyes to realize that it is the first theme being performed again.

The movement closes with a delightful cadenza that completes itself with a diminution of the third subject.

Movement two, *Andante Semplice*, is pastoral in character, stressing the importance of the woodwinds. The instrumentation is very light, and it would be quite possible to have two horns do all the accompanying work.

The first theme is preceded by four bars of pizzicati, which continue to accompany it. The theme is announced by the flute:

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After four more measures comes what seems to be a second subject, but what is really a development of the first. These bars illustrate Tschaicowsky's habit of giving a foretaste of what is coming later.

A semi-quaver motion (consisting of sixteenth notes to give a quivering effect) is then taken up by the piano, and the instrumentation undergoes a general transformation, while the main melody remains that of the opening two bars. This is followed by another interrupted cadence, which leads to the prestissimo intermezzo, already partially introduced after the main theme:

Although trivial, this touch proves extremely charming due to the composer's treatment of it. Its beauty lies solely in the instrumentation.

Meanwhile, the solo piano part is engaged in elaborate, non-melodic work. It is interesting to note that whenever the solo part is left free it plays the aforementioned four measures until the orchestra sets it off on a cadenza which crosses hands in a style typ-

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ical of eighty of so years ago. A cadenza finally returns the movement to its original theme, with which it closes.

The next and final section of the concerto is in rondo form, being called Allegro Con Fuoco, and is composed of two themes plus an intermezzo. Musically speaking, its material is not at all pianistic in quality, but nevertheless lovely and interesting as a work of music.

A "Quasi-Cadenza" (resembling in comparison, but intrinsically different) leads to several returns to the first subject, as well as the approach to the coda, which is also preceded by an orchestral interlude. The coda, however, inverts the order of the subjects, taking the second one first and the opening one last, with very interesting effects.

The main theme first modulates to G flat and is then taken up by the entire orchestra; then it goes to A flat to be played by all the instruments again. But, when it modulates to the tonic key (B flat), it continues there in order to emphasize the importance of this key and prepare for the conclusion, while the orchestra reverts to the second theme.

New and light counterpoint is introduced with the second entry of the theme, and the solo part, although difficult, is extremely effective.

Of this movement Rosa Newmarch says, "The finale is worthy of a work, which taken in its entirety is one of the most remarkable productions of the age."

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Unlike many other great composers, such as Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, and Bach, Tschaicowsky should be studied for his less-popular works in order to get a clear conception of him as a musician. Judged by bulk, he was as much a stage-composer as a symphonist. Unknown to most audiences, is the fact that he wrote ten operas, of which "Eugene Onegin" and "Pique Dame" are all that are usually performed outside of Russia, and some musicians even consider his Pathetique symphony, called by Hansl and Kaufmann "one long, magnificently orchestrated sob", a dramatic ode with the stage element omitted. This composition has the distinction of being the first symphony (chronologically speaking) to have a sad conclusion, and is notable for its great sense of outer form and harmony, being extremely well-knit. It is claimed by those not too fond of Tschaicowsky to be a product of over-ripe genius rather than the peak of the composer's career, which they consider to be the fourth symphony, the fifth being, in their estimation, inferior in quality. However, Tschaicowsky is so deft and skillful in the handling of certain of his own individual mannerisms that they assume and charm and poignancy despite any weaknesses or peculiarities they may conceal, without which they themselves might never have been called into existence. The sixth symphony is definitely a deep and richly mature work; just how mature it is to be considered by each listener depends largely upon the meanings he reads into it. One striking characteristic, even "oddity", of Tschaicowsky's writing is that an infinite number of messages may be dis-

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closed from it by different people, and it is so typical, yet so pliable, in quality that it assumes a host of symbols and still remains essentially Russian and in the style of the composer. This may help to account for the controversy already mentioned of Tschaicowsky's place in national (Russian) and world music.

Also unfamiliar to British and American audiences are several of his ballets and much incidental music.

The ballet-form, being his favorite, was employed to capture much of the Italian style and gaiety, something against which Russian composers before him and even in his own day struggled with conscious precision and dread.

Both precedents and contemporaries of Tschaicowsky were mainly of the opinion that, of the two foreign influences which so long deterred the growth of national music in Russia, it was by far preferable to succumb to the German than to the Italian one, as the former was less penetrating and easier to shake off. (This train of thought will be found occasionally in even the music of Glinka.) Imagine, then, the fury and contempt of the Five and similar schools when Tschaicowsky produced a work like "Caprice Italien" and dared to call it his own favorite and best composition!

His love of Italy in every field and phase may be compared only to the adoration of Shelley and Browning for that land. It seems strange that these three, with so much to inspire them at

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home, sought the same distant, entirely foreign place to encourage their creative geniuses.

Another comparison with English poets is made by Goepp, who says, "The Byron of music is Tschaicowsky for a certain alluring melancholy and an almost uncanny flow and sparkle. His own personal vein deepened the morbid tinge of his national humor."

Further on, Goepp adds to this opinion by stating, "With Tschaicowsky feeling is always highly stressed, never in a certain natural poise. He quite lacks the noble restraint of the masters who, in their symphonic lyrics, wonderfully suggest the still waters that run deep."

The corresponding affinity between Tschaicowsky and the British poet may be noticed when reviewing the score of the former's symphonic setting of Byron's "Manfred". It is interesting to note that Byron especially demanded musical assistance for this work, and Schumann, as well as Tschaicowsky (with whose compositions his own had much in common) composed a setting perhaps even closer to the original effect intended than that of the Russian. But Tschaicowsky had the advantage of an incomparatively better instrumentation, and throughout we can feel the example and influence of Liszt.

In many instances Tschaicowsky chose foreign subjects to which to give musical settings. His "Romeo and Juliet Overture-Fantasie", the tone-poem "Francesca di Rimini", the overture-fantasie "Hamlet" (dedicated to Edward Greig), and "Triumphal overture on the Danish national hymn" are a few of his successes. But music like his second

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symphony (on Malo-Russian themes) and the 1812 overture reveal his subconscious attachment to his homeland and hold for many a higher value because he so accurately depicts the characteristics of Russian temperament, scenery, and history.

It is especially the latter composition that reveals a skill and beauty of which Tschaicowsky himself was not fully conscious. As Rosa Newmarch claims, "The overture has a certain picturesque brilliancy that raises it above the level of mere sensational music." She goes on to add, "In using these subjects Tschaicowsky is guilty of a double anachronism; for the Marseillaise was probably not in use in the French army as late as 1812, while the Russian hymn was only composed by Lvov in 1863."

Nevertheless the work remains a masterpiece in the clever and the historical sense. The overture relates the efforts of Napoleon Bonaparte to enter Russia, and opens with the national hymn "God save Thy people". Following this comes the suppressed stirrings and uneasiness preceding war:

where, by an exquisite melody of his own introducing a folk-song, Tschaicowsky depicts the monotonous rural life of the peasants in a manner astounding for one about whose nationalism there is so much controversy. The theme is one of great beauty and seems

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to express a knowledge, yet resignation, of future struggle and suffering:

It calls to mind:

The wheat-fields----golden seas of grain----shimmer in
early autumn,

As great shadows of twilight steal across the deserted
plain like unknown forebodings----

As far as the eye can see, slender stalks of wheat, pierced
with red and green, sway lightly in the quiet meadows,
And a lonely peasant woman, with a load on her back, blind
to the beauty about her,

Plods onward----ever onward----towards a red sunset.

The folk-theme following is more lively, representing the home life of the Russians:

The "Battle of Borodino" is then heard, with the firing of cannon and "thunder of artillery", and through it all come broken strains of Marseillaise to denote the earlier possibilities of Napoleon's victory. But gradually this is mingled with the Russian hymn until the latter triumphs, and then the long, weird pealing of Kremlin bells,

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usually heard on feast-days, concludes the work.

Typical of the composer's writing is his habit of passing a theme from instrument to instrument through the entire orchestra, the charming grace with which he adorns all his musical figures, his delightful frankness, and a noticeable division of thought and emotion.

His workmanship is brilliant, his emotion highly-wrought, and through it all there is a fresh variety, pliancy, and eclecticism that ranks his music with that of the very greatest.

Like Walt Whitman, he succeeded in both the national and international, and was one of the few composers to gain immediate and constant popularity and immortality.

His most intimate school-friend,* who later became an author, dedicated to Tschaicowsky the following words:

"Do you remember how you used to drown
Your soul in art, forget this world of men?
And how we dreamt of some ideal renown,
For Music was our worshipped idol then,
And Life a fleeting dream to us...."

But above all else, his music is to be remembered as one of the greatest cornerstones in the development of Russian art.

*Apukhtin.

THE RUSSIAN NATIONALISTS

Out of the creation of a Russian spirit in music that ended completely the necessity of depending upon strong Italian and German influences, there arose a school of song whose chief ambition was the preserving of the tendency towards native nationalism. It was known as "The Mighty Handful" or, more familiarly as "The Five". The musicians in this group were strictly opposed to the school of Rubinstein and Tschaicowsky----they valued not so much the development of individual musical expression as the permanent establishment of their country's racial melodies. They delved chiefly into the wealth of Russian folk-tunes for their inspirations; as a matter of fact, it may have been this very tendency, carried on without limitations, that prevented one or two of them from becoming the great world-masters they might otherwise have been. All of the musicians of the group are valued highly in Russia; only three of the five are popularly known outside. The Five include César Cui, Balakirev, Borodin, Moussorgsky, and Rimsky-Korsakoff, but as a word of introduction I would like to discuss a musician by the name of Dargomizhsky, who was actually a forerunner of the school of nationalists.

Dargomizhsky is best known for his opera "The Stone Guest", a musical setting of Pushkin's well-loved work. It is actually this musical composition that inaugurated the school of The Five----as César Cui later said, "We come to the keystone of the new school of Russian opera in Dargomizhsky's last work 'The

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Stone Guest'." Of the same composition Gerald Abraham said, "It is one of those works which are landmarks without being masterpieces."

It is interesting to notice that while all the members of The Five greatly admired this opera, they seldom imitated it.* It was, however, of great service to the younger men in The Mighty Handful as a reference more than a model, and it certainly is worth studying because of its historic importance musically.

Dargomizhsky's music has several faults and weaknesses---- it lacks lyrical possibilities, it tends to be trivial at times**, and it often follows the style of Halevy and Meyerbeer. Yet in dramatic qualities it is intense and powerful, and even an opera like "Boris Godunov" (based on an entrancing Russian legend) is popular in Russia today, despite its weaknesses because of Chaliapin's masterly interpretation of a leading role.

There is in Dargomizhsky's style a delightful realism; the composer himself complained that Glinka understood only the lyrical elements of Russian music and neglected the humorous and dramatic aspects, and he tried to do the opposite to his own compositions by way of contrast. Dargomizhsky suffered from his environment in that he mixed mostly with his artistic inferiors.

*Moussorgsky, the most interested, imitated it only in "Marriage", set to a work of Gogol, but he soon lost interest. Rimsky-Korsakoff, willing to try anything, also attempted it, but with no unusual success.

**Dargomizhsky himself confessed as much.

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It was not until a year before his death that he met The Five, and while they encouraged him, displaying deep interest and admiration for even his faulty compositions, it was actually too late to accomplish much. "The Stone Guest" was written during the period of their acquaintance; the group met weekly in his home as the score grew. Dargomizhsky had contemplated setting Poushkin's "little tragedy" to music as early as the year 1863, when he was in perfect health, but its vastitude frightened him. Now, when he was losing his health he composed three quarters of the opera in a period of two and a half months. At the time he wrote to the singer Karmalina: "I have scarcely any physical strength left.... It is not I who write, but some unknown force of which I am the instrument."

As Gerald Abraham says, "Even a Wagner needs encouragement, and Dargomizhsky was no Wagner." Yet despite it all, despite the fact that "The Stone Guest" is actually only a "museum-piece" even in Russia, its value in helping to encourage the works of The Five renders it worthy of a special place in Russian music.

César Cui describes the organization of The Five as a group of friendly musicians brought together for the purposes of discussing and debating numerous phases of the art of song. They soon developed ~~ideals common~~ ideals common to them all, and while each member retained his own individuality, he sought to impress the goal of the group (retention and firm establishment of the Russian spirit) upon his own music.

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The group also belived in "Music for music's sake"----in other words, in music that retained its full value when heard without scenery, language, and any type of explanations. It will be noticed that this proves a direct contrast to the color-music of Scriabine that came later on. Each piece of music, the group thought, should be independent of other compositions by the same composer, not merely a pale reproduction of it, as is so common in the school of the Italians Rossini and Donizetti. Harmony, orchestral coloring, and counterpoint should each be used to their fullest advantage, The Five argued. They would not tolerate the insertion of commonplace passages merely to relive these audiences too stupid to concentrate for any great length of time upon true art.*

César Cui was not of Russian parentage----his father was a Frenchman and his mother a Lithuanian. And Cui himself, while protesting that Tschaicowsky and Rubinstein wrote international music, chose foreign subjects constantly for his own themes.** His melodic gifts are not profuse----while his tunes are not exactly stolen from other sources, they are copied from or at least suggested by them. However, there is a great loveliness about them, a warm lyric quality best illustrated in the soprano parts of his operas.

Of the group of The Five, it was Cui who mostly hated Wagner and his ideas. To quote the Russian: "Wagner's operas are a tremendous

*This does not necessarily establish greatness. Shakespeare frequently kept all types of his potential audiences in mind when writing.

**He chose from works of Heine, Hugo, Dumas, and Maupassant.

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mystification to which he himself fell a victim; for there is every reason to suppose that he mistook his meaningless noises for real music, and his tedious phrases for heavenly melody, believing each of his notes to be worth its weight in gold. I should like to save my fellow-countrymen from the dangerous contagion of Wagnerian decadence. The man who likes his music has ceased to like real music; the man who cares for his operas is bound to consider Glinka a composer of vaudevilles. In fact, the desire to discover something deep where there is really nothing whatever can only have alarming consequences and drive people to madness. I can say this in all seriousness and can quote examples of what I mean. Joseph Rubinstein, the accompanist*, went mad on the occasion of the first performance of 'The Ring' at Bayreuth, and one cannot doubt that Wagner's music must have had something to do with the death of his royal friend. So that I trust I may end my days without boring my readers any more by dissertations on Wagner's music, and I trust equally that he will refrain from boring me any more with his unmusical operas." This rather stupid attitude has been attributed to the entire group of The Five. However it was mainly Cui who was responsible for the opinion. I call it stupid not because I grudge him his rather unusual opinion, but because of the illogical conclusions, such as the madness of the pianist, to which he jumps. It is interesting, as a side-issue, to notice the resemblance of such reasoning to that of general prejudice even in existence today.

*Not to be confused with the composer Anton Rubinstein.

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Cui does display interesting originality, however, in some small orchestral compositions, such as Marche Solemnelle, Petite Suite, and Circassian Dances. He has some lovely songs, as well as interesting piano pieces, among which there is a number dedicated to Liszt.

Balakirev was notable for his vitality and constant energy. Although he composed very little, the most part of which is unknown outside of Russia, he was quite skillful at arranging and transcribing pianoforte music, and his collections of folk-songs are quite valuable. He depends on the Russian folk-songs throughout his compositions, and in a symphony, a symphonic poem entitled "Russia", and in an overture on three Russian themes they are best put to use. His lyrics are wonderful, his passionate vehemence outstanding, and the broadness and simplicity of his melodies render them an odd grace and impulsiveness. He came very little in contact with the theater---his only theatrical composition of merit is "King Lear" in four entr'actes. "Tamara" is perhaps the best-known of his works outside of his native land, and the value of this is even rather questionable. Perhaps if he had depended less on folk-melodies and more on his own inner inspirations he would have made a more successful composer.

Borodin was considered the most individually-gifted composer of the group of The Five. He practically led the school, even though,

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like Cui, he was not a musician by profession.* Unlike Balakirev, he felt himself unusually attracted to the theater, and suggested to his colleagues that they compose an opera entitled "Mlada", each of them writing one act. The plan was enthusiastically accepted, but before the work was finished the theater-house where it was to be performed came under different management and the new owners refused to present the work. The group gave up working on it and turned to other phases of individual composition, but later the youngest member, Rimsky-Korsakoff, produced his own version of "Mlada", rewriting, finishing, and polishing Borodin's original fourth act. The effect of writing part of "Mlada" upon Borodin, however, was to help him write his gorgeous and dazzling opera "Prince Igor".

Borodin had attempted an opera before "Mlada", and when his first work came to nothing he wrote the first movement of his famous B minor symphony. Then the idea of "Mlada" intrigued him, but when this failed and he later turned to writing "Prince Igor" he used much of the music planned for "Mlada" in his new work. Thus the three compositions are closely related in mood and source of inspiration. The "Priest Music" in "Mlada" is identical to the opening prologue of "Prince Igor", and the chorus of women's voices in "Igor" is the same as that used for the "Procession of the Gods" in the first opera.

The opera of "Prince Igor" is quasi-historical. There exists not only a legend of epic of Igor's war in the Caucasus, but documentary and historical evidence to prove that the events of his battles actually occurred. The documents were first discovered by the

*Cui was professionally a militarist; Borodin was a scientist. Later we shall find that Rimsky-Korsakoff was ^{a naval} an engineer.

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archeologist Musin-Pushkin in the Spaso-Yaroslavsky Monastery in the year 1795. During the Moscow fire of 1812 the manuscript was destroyed, but another copy of it was discovered in 1865. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, when it was first published by the man who discovered it, its genuineness was doubted, but today it is accepted as a contemporary account (probably by a professional bard) of an actual historical event.

Borodin made careful studies of this document, as well as of other sources of archeology, legends, and Russian folk-lore. He retained, in his final version of "Prince Igor", much of the rhythm of the words (as well as the words themselves) of the afore-mentioned document, and he composed the most stirring and beautiful music to the same document. Every detail was carefully ascertained, so as not to give a merely superficial account of the atmosphere, and indeed, the aspect and spirit of the colorful, primitive life of the warriors and their clans, as well as the intense, Oriental, setting in the midst of the purple Caucasian mountains, are retained throughout the musical work, and serve to ~~enhance~~ the richness of the music, as well as the interest of the entire plot. Borodin realized that the subject was not too suitable for dramatic material, but he loved it just the same, and today "Prince Igor", though seldom performed publicly on the stage, is extremely popular for the quality of its melody and mysticism throughout. The Polevetsky Dances are outstanding for their intrinsic barbarism and sharply contrasting flow of serene, soulful melody that at once brings to mind a vermillion sunset on the snowy peaks of the lonely,

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purple Caucasian mountain----bare,rugged,shadowy:

It is a masterpiece of writing. Of Borodin,Gerald Abraham says,"And in Borodin the spirit of that old barbarism of the vast steppes and their nomadic warriors did live again. He was naturally adapted to receive and transmit such impressions;the descendant of princes----he betrayed both his personal appearance and in many pages of even his earliest important composition,the E flat symphony,the heroic and Oriental elements in his nature." He goes on to add,"The epic of Igor led this nineteenth century scientist back to primitive things----the natural,the physical,the cruel,the healthy. Almost all his later music glorifies them. An idea lived with for eighteen years must necessarily become part of a man,and if the world of 'Prince Igor' was only a world of escape from the academy of medicine and the lectures on chemistry and the feminist campaign,it was probably more real to Borodin than this other more tangible world of science and sociology."

Before we leave Borodin we should not fail to mention an orchestral work of his entitled"On the Steppes of Central Asia" because it depicts so well that fascinating,lonely,and lesser-known part of Russia. Its mood is poetic and sad,its form original and interesting. Of his own symphonic poem Borodin said,"In the silence of the sandy steppes of Central Asia resounds the opening burden of a quiet Russian folk-song. The melancholy sound of an Eastern melody and the approaching steps of

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horses and camels are also heard. A caravan, accompanied by Russian soldiers, crosses the wide expanse of desert and continues its long journey without fear, trusting confidently to the protection of its military escort. The caravan winds on and on, the native song and that of the Russians blending harmoniously and being audible across the waste, until at last they die away in the distance."

Borodin was a master of technique----he was weak only in his lack of unity in conception and in the total absence of calmness in his music. He lent to Russian^{music} a personal note----he was essentially Russian with a leaning more towards the Oriental than the European side of that country's nature, and his imagination and melodic inspirations were so vivid that his compositions, unlike those of the two previously mentioned members of The Five, fascinate audiences throughout the world.

Moussorgsky, the next member of The Five, offers sharp contrast to Borodin in that technically he was perhaps the weakest of any world-masters. As Pougin says, "Moussorgsky evidently had a profound contempt for rules or discipline of any sort." He was more a Bohemian in nature----he personified the wild, kindly-barbarian in the spirit of Russian people. He was poorly educated, what musical talent he had came solely from his own individuality, and his sense of drama was unusually powerful----a typically Russian characteristic.

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The Russian folk-music and its spirit were impressed upon him so deeply that he used their technique almost unconsciously. One example of this is in the first composition of the "Nursery Set", where he changes his tempo markings twenty-seven times in fifty-three measures. This is also a characteristic of modern music, but in Moussorgsky's case there can be no doubt that it sprang out of the style of his nation's folk-songs.

He also had great difficulty writing his tempos correctly, and most of his compositions, as we are familiar with them today, were either recopied or even almost totally rewritten by some of his colleagues or later composers. Rimsky-Korsakoff did much in the polishing of Moussorgsky's pieces, as well as those of other composers of The Five.

Moussorgsky's essential musical characteristics are well summed up by Pougin in the following words: "Strictly speaking, Moussorgsky was not a musician; he was what Berlioz has been sometimes called----a poet using musical material; only in this case the distinction was more acute, seeing that the musical material was singularly limited. His education was so incomplete that he did not know how to set down his ideas in a way to do them justice, or even how to shape to a simple melody for the voice. His songs are mere sketches; they have no logical development, and as often as not they come inexplicably to a sudden stop before they have barely begun. On the other hand, the musical ideas have a strongly original flavour of their own, and frequently show an exquisite feeling for poetry and an astonishingly powerful sense of drama; they are indeed real heart-cries of moving and often tragic inten-

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sity."

"A Night On The Bare Mountain" is a particularly expressive and lovely orchestral work, and resembles Borodin's "On the Steppes Of Central Asia" in mood, except that Moussorgsky's composition cries out in a more gloomy and passionate type of loneliness. "Khovanstchina" and especially "Boris Godounov" are popular operas even today. Some musicians claim that they are so revised that Moussorgsky is scarcely recognizable in them, but there are undeniably parts where the foundation, which he established, is so clear that we carry away the impression that the entire operas are outcomes of his musical thought and genius.

That Rimsky-Korsakoff took so much time and trouble in his interest in Moussorgsky is good evidence of the latter's inner talent and unusually poetic mind. Moussorgsky was typically Russian in every way, and like the real Russian he hid an extremely keen sense of humor. The proof of this lies in his orchestral work "Pictures In An Exhibition". Here he is perhaps at his best, not only revealing wit and jovial mirth in such parts as those which represent chickens hatching in their shells, etc., but also a superb, almost inequitable power of precise musical description, such as in the section describing an old cart on a muddy road, or the impressive city walls of Krakow. The description of the cart is so perfect that one can clearly visualize the soggy road, and the place where the cart, following it, turns on its almost broken wheels with difficulty. The entire tone-poem shows the most unusual inspira-

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tion and forms a vivid account of Russian life.

Rimsky-Korsakoff was perhaps the most prominent member of the group of The Five. Like Borodin he constantly expressed the spirit of the Oriental, but in a lighter, dreamier, more fairy-like mood that contrasts well with his fellow-musician's wild and ruggedly primitive expressions. In comparing him to his pupil, Stravinsky, Sabaneyeff says, "Rimsky-Korsakoff was a naive, kindly grand-father with fairy-tales, Stravinsky is a wicked magician, but both use 'children' to work on and they fool them without believing themselves." Hansl and Kaufmann call Rimsky-Korsakoff "One Russian who dared write happy music".

He dwelt fondly on fairy-stories and legends, and among his colorful compositions are "Le Coq d'Or", "The Snow-Maiden", "Sadko", "The Tsar's Bride", "Tsar Sultan", and "Kastchei". Hansl and Kaufmann state, "The 'program-music' suites for orchestra, 'Antar', 'Russian Easter', and 'Scheherezade' are a kaleidoscope of gay bandanas, tambourines, colored Easter eggs, and Arabian Nights' dreams." It is the last-mentioned suite that I shall discuss in detail.

"Scheherezade" was written as a suite, but is actually of symphonic proportions. The story is adapted from "The Arabian Nights" and depicts that famous literary character, Sultana Scheherezade, who craftily prevents her cruel husband from killing her by telling him, for a thousand and one nights, fascinating tales that are

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never completed the same evening they are begun. By this time he is so in love with her that all thoughts of her execution are permanently banished from his mind.

Rimsky-Korsakoff does not wish that the background be considered too seriously or too literally. As Spaeth says, "Each movement represents a definite story and set of characters, all bound together by the recurrent theme of the solo violin which represents Scheherezade herself, saying, 'Once upon a time'." The violin theme is as follows:

a sultry, beautiful, Oriental motive that prepares the audience for the mystic, legendary events about to follow. Before this, however, is heard the brutal theme representing the Sultan:

After the violin motive is introduced, the story of Sinbad the Sailor is begun. This occupies the first movement. First are heard "rocking tones of the cello", as Spaeth calls them, and these illustrate the tidal motions of the sea. The Sultan's theme is now used to represent Sinbad's ship skidding through the waves:

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Spaeth explains, "There is real ocean in this music, real sails, real winds, and a real tropical sky, even a bit of storm and ensuing calm." One more theme is needed to provide the rest of the material for the story of Sinbad:

This section or movement of the suite is ended by the two themes of the Sultan and Scheherezade, giving the listener to understand that another story is about to begin.

We now come to movement two, The Tale of Prince Kalendar. The Scheherezade theme is now accompanied by the harp, veiling it in more mysticism, and illustrating that the Sultana now feels more confident of her success.

The bassoon begins the tale dealing with a grotesque character. The exact story of this movement is unknown. Spaeth explains one ascertained fact: "the Kalendar were a species of wandering fakirs, among whom a prince would in any case have some comic significance." Here is the bassoon's motive:

There is a suggestion of exotic tropical dances, finally interrupted by loud fanfare:

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Excitement and conflict reign supreme, although exactly what occurs is not quite clear.

Movement three is called "The Young Prince and Young Princess". A quiet mood now prevails. The two main characters, according to the tale, were supposed to be brother and sister, "children of the moon". Two new melodies are heard, one for each character. This represents the prince in his boyhood:

The Princess melody, which enters later, is suggestive of an Oriental dance:

Scheherezade's voice closes the movement.

The finale is explained by the following words on the score:
"Festival at Bagdad. The Sea. The Vessel is Wrecked upon a Rock Surmounted by a Bronze Warrior."

At first the Sultan's voice is again heard, but it is silenced by the musical description of the festival at Bagdad. This is a live-

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ly and picturesque:theme:

The second festive melody begins,with new rythms,and upon careful examination it may be seen that it is derived from earlier parts of the work:

A few echoes of the Princess theme follow,after which comes a motive representing the tossing of a stormy sea. Spaeth well describes it in the following:"The magnetic rock looms up,with the bronze warrior on top. The ship crashes,and all is over. The woodwind reminds us of the calm after the storm,and Scheherezade utters her story-telling theme once more,through the voice of the solo violin."

By this time the Sultan wishes to keep his fascinating wife with him and the violin solo ends in beautiful ethereal harmonies that depict great happiness for everyone.

The character of all his music is graceful and sweetly melancholy. Its main fault is that in places it is too heavily ornamented. But in spite of this it is delightfully entrancing,full of poetic reverie and passionat humor. Rimsky-Korsakoff's technical knowledge is vast;it offers severe contrast in its suave

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perfection to Moussorgsky's crude attempts at jotting down and developing his own music.

In his opera "Antar", which is set to an Oriental tale, Rimsky-Korsakoff borrows three Arabian melodies, and an overture entitled "La Paque russe" is built on Russian church themes.

He also wrote a one act opera entitled "Mozart and Salieri" set to Poushkin's poem that depicts the Austrian composer unknowingly poisoned by the stranger who requested him to write a Requiem that he never finished.

"The Snow-Maiden" ("Sniegourochka") is strongly Russian in character, and is perhaps Rimsky-Korsakoff's best theatrical work.

It is interesting to notice that Rimsky-Korsakoff took a great interest in Spanish music, as did many other Russian composers, because of a sympathetic feeling for the Spaniards who, like the Russians, were trying to liberate their native music from foreign influences. Rimsky-Korsakoff wrote a composition for this cause entitled "Capriccio Espagnol" that is quite a favorite on concert programs even today.

Before I leave the group of The Five I would like to briefly ~~mention~~ three pupils of Rimsky-Korsakoff. The first, Glazounov, was one of his teacher's favorites, and has produced numerous rather important works. He began his career with the principles of Rimsky-Korsakoff's school in mind, but later he switched over to the style of Tschaicowsky in his later phases. Glazounov's

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type of composing is noted for its imaginative power, fine display of temperament, and skilful technique. In his younger days it was heavy, muddled, and hard to follow, but later it cleared considerably. It never quite gained an aspect of simplicity; as Pougine said, "He is fond of being complicated, and perhaps the reason why his pianoforte music is inferior to his orchestral is that he tries to get too much out of the instrument." He has eight symphonies to his credit, two overtures on Greek themes, and many symphonic poems, pictures, and fantasies.

Liadov, also a student of Rimsky-Korsakoff's, has many compositions to his credit, too, but most of them are on a very small scale. His more important orchestral works include a brilliant scherzo entitled "Baba Yaga" (who was a Russian witch figuring so highly in the folklore and nurse-songs of that country) and a mazurka which he called "Rustic Scene; near an Inn". He also composed a "Hymn to Rubinstein" and an exquisite little number called "The Music Box". Liadov, despite his dedication of a composition to Rubinstein, remained faithful to Nationalistic tendencies.

Michael Ippolitov-Ivanov*, like Glazounov, turned from the inclinations of "The Mighty Handful" and became known as an "Occidental" composer----in other words, an international composer. He has nevertheless written an overture on a Russian theme, a suite Caucasian, and a book of National Songs of Georgia (a part of Russia). He was the

*Not to be confused with Michael Michaelovich Ivanov, a Russian composer of lesser importance to whom he was not related.

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man commissioned to write the official Coronation Cantata when the last Tsar came to the throne of Russia.

Let us return to Rimsky-Korsakoff in closing this chapter. After the death of Tschaicowsky and Rubinstein he found himself at the head of a new movement in Russia. I have so far mentioned only three of his pupils----but he had so many prominent ones that it may be safely said he helped greatly in evoking the continued interest of his country-men in the development of the so-promising Russian music. He wrote variations on a theme based on the letters in Bach's name(as did the German himself),and perhaps the most helpful thing he did for the popularity of Russian music was the establishing of the fact that not all of it is gloomy and full of treacherous despair. His book "My Musical Life",published posthumously by his widow,is an excellent account of his memoirs,and proves very encouraging to all young musicians.

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There is a theory based on the fact that both light and sound travel in waves and help carry the main sensations to the mind. The spectrum of light consists of seven colors(excluding indigo,which is a combination of blue and violet),while the musical octave contains seven notes(excluding the eighth,which is a repetition of the first at a higher pitch.) Man learns his culture chiefly through the eye and ear---- the former enabling him to enjoy art and literature,the latter to appreciate music.

Especially at the beginning of the twentieth century there was an endeavor in several fields towards the combination of these two sensations. In literature Amy Lowell(and to some extent the Imagists of England and United States) sought to substitute one for the other,frequently expressing sound-effects in terms of color and vice versa. In science we have attempts at television that would most probably have remained inconceivable had it not been for the invention of two important sound-devices,the radio and the telephone. And in music we have several fascinating instruments designed to help forward the possibilities of interpretation and therefore the creation of color-music. The theory in connection with music has for the most part expired by today, and it is doubtful whether it will ever prove of sufficient promise or importance to be seriously resumed again,but it forms a curiously delightful event in the history of music,and must be mentioned with the name of the Russian Scriabin,the composer through whom it gained most of its universal fame and popularity. It appeals to people as does the conception of a machine that will travel through time(suggested by H.G.Wells),or the

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possibilities of nations of people alive on other planets, and while it is far less vague and uncertain than either of these two, it nevertheless is extremely impractical because of certain limitations.

First of all comes the difficulty of combining the correct musical notes with their proper corresponding shades of color. Shall each whole-tone be assigned a definite color that will not be permitted to vary in different compositions, or shall each composer devise a system of color-harmonies before beginning the composition of each musical number? Shall half-tones be a merging or blend of their neighboring whole-tones, or shall they assume entirely individual shades of color? Shall the colors of the spectrum be applied in proper order to the notes of a scale in music, or else at random according to the fancies and emotional conceptions of musicians? And how is the musical public to grasp an understanding of the proper combinations of light and sound?

In answer to this last question comes a new impracticability. Instruments were invented on which a vertical chart or board (usually electrically connected with the musical keyboard) displayed the correct colors when musical notes were struck. It can easily be imagined how this type of chart might be so enlarged that it could assume the position of a screen (as in a motion picture house) and thus ^{accommodate} ~~accomodate~~ a capacity audience, who would be able to watch it while listening to the music. On first thought this arrangement sounds ideal. But it must be kept in mind that music is so flexible and pliable an art that often compositions of a most ethereal and sublime nature that would be expected to produce effects of unearthly beauty on a color-screen would in truth render nothing more than a confused

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blur or grayish-white motion. This would be true in the least-expected cases, where instrumentation and harmonic development were extremely rich and full.* Also it should be mentioned that although light travels quicker by far than sound, the eye retains an image much longer than does the ear. For this reason the tempo of color-music is also limited to slow paces, as it would result in blur were the tones to follow on each other before the eye could grasp them. This may be made clearer by using the illustration of the magician. Audiences are continuously fooled by his tricks of drawing the most unexpected objects from peoples' ears and coat-pockets, etc., while in truth it is only the lightening-like rapidity of his motions that performs the tricks. The eyes of his audience are never quick enough to follow his movements; the same applies in the case of color-music. A composition like "The Flight of the Bumblebee" by Rimsky-Korsakoff would be impossible on a color-music instrument, because its basic effect depends upon its whirling motion that in itself seems to create the effect of the buzzing insect.

Also the watching of colors while listening to music is bound to divide a hearer's attention, thus allowing faulty music frequently to leave the impression of the sublime.

However, there is a practical angle that prevents color-music from being nothing more than a fad, and that is its possibilities in the teaching of harmony. It is often the case that people learn better with their eyes than their ears, and the association of certain notes and chords with cor-

*We know from physics that a combination of all colors of light yields white, and that a combination of all colors of pigments yields black.

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responding colors will serve to impress them firmly upon the minds of the students.

These facts form the basis of research and compositions (to some extent) of Scriabin, who, unfortunately, was prevented by death from carrying out to the fullest the possibilities of color-music. Some believe his death at middle age still more regrettable than those of young composers, as he worked on an original field that might have encompassed various forms of science and culture instead of music alone.

Not all of Scriabin's music is based on these lines; as a matter of fact, until late in his life he scarcely concerned himself with color harmonies. His earlier compositions are modern, it is true, but devoid of shrieking cacophonies and savage dischords; in this he may be said to be the exact opposite of Stravinsky, of whom we will speak later in this chapter. However, he is famous for his harmonies; he based many of his writings on the theory of the "mystic chord".

If a note of the piano (say C two octaves below middle C) is pressed down so as not to produce any sound, and is held firmly down while certain other notes are audibly ^{struck} in staccato fashion, we will hear these notes echo for some time after they have been struck, through the tone that is held down. This is known as the "mystic chord" theory----that one tone is actually composed of about all other notes in the scale. It is like mixing paint to obtain a certain off-color (lilac, for example.) We need two parts of white plus one part of red mixed with three parts of blue to find the exact shade for which we are look-

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ing. In music every note is composed of others also mixed in definite proportions. The notes which form the greater part of the resulting tone may be struck with the latter and give the least amount of dischord (C with different octaves of itself, for example; or, a bit further related, E with C), while we cannot fail to notice that these forming but a small portion of the final note can scarcely be heard if applied to the previously mentioned test (holding one tone down and playing others staccato). The less we hear of a note in this test, the less it serves to form the final result, and the greater the dischord will sound when it is played simultaneously with the latter. This may help somewhat to illustrate the harmonic development of music through the ages. There were times when octave playing was gingerly attempted to produce stronger tones; this led to thirds, fifths, and sixths, all of which, it must be remarked, came as terrific blows to conservative methods of harmonic structure. We find this preposterous today, as combinations like thirds, and triad fifths and sixths are the mildest forms of harmony we can imagine. The Classical School of Music worked with them, and the inauguration of sevenths was taken almost breathlessly, with much hesitation and deliberation. Harmonies of the Romantic School of Music please the majority of our public today. They include fuller chords for the most parts, as well as variations (raising and lowering of certain constituent parts a half a step). By the present time musicians have become exceptionally bold, and their art has reached chromatic combination, much of which both public and critics find difficult to tolerate. It shows that they are about fifty years behind the uni-

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cians of the day.* We wonder what will come next, that is, after the possibilities of chromatic combination have been exhausted. Search-even further into the construction of the mystic chord may indicate development upon quarter-tones, but this would be a most revolutionary step, since it would demand an entire revision of musical instruments.**

Musicians of today who look upon the compositions of Scriabin no longer consider him (or Rachmaninoff either, for that matter) ultra-modern. It is a matter of comparison----the music of Stravinsky has gone so much further than that of either of these other two Russians, and in turn that of Shostakowitch has even, in some respects, outstripped Stravinsky. But to return to Scriabin; his music reveals a sensitivity and delicacy that is nonetheless strong and curiously interesting, and, incidently, scarcely Russian. He was accused, as was Tschaicowsky (whom he ardently followed), of being a "Germanophile in the worst sense of the term and a wilful scorner of Russian culture", according to a critic of the day. This person also proclaimed him "the outcome of all that was worst in Wagner and Strauss" and compared his choice of titles for his compositions to "beer-bottle labels"! Although this is obviously childish, its fallacy should be pointed out to emphasize another interesting detail of Scriabin's character and music. It will be noticed that his titles are usually French, and that his whole trend of culture and composition favors this nation rather than Germany. It is true that in some ways he

*It has been remarked that we are just beginning to understand Wagnerian music dramas.

**In passing it is interesting to note that Chinese music is built on a quarter-tone scale; thus accounting for the flavor of their instrumentation.

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resembled and even followed Wagner, but this is comprehensible when considering the tremendous ~~effect~~ ^{influence} the German had over entire Europe. To be quite exact as far as nationality is concerned, it should be mentioned that the music of Scriabin resembles in mood the poetry of the Belgian writers Maeterlinck and Verhaeren. His form, harmony, and clearness of construction are his main assets.

Before leaving Scriabin it should be mentioned that he seemed to have a premonition of his death, thus becoming isolated, reserved, and self-centered, all of which reflected in his later music. He assumed a rather religious feeling, doting on meditation (as did Brahms) rather than company, and we find the last thing he was writing to be even beyond pure color-music----a combination of sound, color, and incense, a type of religious ritual.

Even if color-music never again revives, he will still be considered a first-rate composer, loved for his etudes, piano preludes, and his still-unfamiliar symphonies. The world has yet much to learn of Scriabin; as it is, he lived too recently to be appreciated to the fullest extent.

We now turn to a fellow-student of Scriabin's, Sergie Rachmaninoff. To audiences today he is most popular as a concert pianist of unusual dexterity, but his compositions, regardless of the fact that he resides in America and disagrees with conditions in Russia, still reflect the rich and somber spirit of his native land. Like Scriabin, he is not the most extreme moderner of either Russian or international composition, yet his expression is far beyond that of the Romantic School, and seems to have developed naturally, without prodding or particular demands of

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modernism. His music holds appeal for all types of audiences, regardless of the fact that all cannot yet thoroughly understand it. It is full of sonorous melody and rich orchestration, great sobbing passages and delightful harmonies that bring to mind wind-swept snowy steppes and sunlit plains of wheat----in general, a placid nostalgia and longing for home. Rachmaninoff is not without a sense of humor, either. In the second movement of his Piano Concerto #4 he somberly introduces the theme of "Three Blind Mice", developing it with the most sedate seriousness in various parts of the movement. The effect is utterly refreshing, as it serves to divert the listener's attention ever so often from the massive quality of the remainder of the concerto. It is also a test that reveals, to a certain extent, our modernism, whether or not we are broad-minded enough and sufficiently liberal to accept this touch at its face value and not turn our noses up at "plagiarism" and introduction of so lowly a theme.

Both this concerto and the composer's symphony #2 in E minor were performed in Philadelphia during the 1941-42 season, with Rachmaninoff himself present as the soloist in the former number. I have chosen to discuss the symphony (perhaps his most popular) in detail. It not only has popular appeal, but basic and lasting value besides. Of it Goepf has said, "In this movement" (Number One) "at least we see the type of real symphony, that throbs and sings and holds us in the thrall of its spirit and song."

The movement opens somberly, full of emotion, in Largo tempo before assuming the designated Allegro pace: