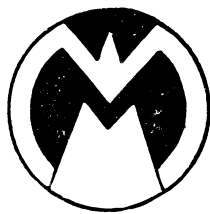


KEYNOTE SERIES BOOK I.

**TWENTY
SOVIET COMPOSERS**

BY

RENA MOISENCO



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TWENTY
SOVIET COMPOSERS

BY

RENA MOISENKO

B.A. LENINGRAD

WITHDRAWN

Published by

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PUBLISHERS' FOREWORD

In a publication necessarily so restricted in price, and consequently in size, it is obviously impossible to cover entirely such a vast new field of enquiry as the development of music in the U.S.S.R. since the Revolution. The Author has been forced to limit her scope to a survey of contemporary Soviet composers—and, even so, to a selected few. The choice was difficult and was eventually chiefly based upon recent Stalin Premium Winners. Nevertheless, in the biographies of these selected composers there is to be found a wealth of information on the course of cultural development so amply fostered by the Soviet Government for the direct benefit of every citizen of the Union.

At a joint conference of Soviet composers, music scholars and operatic producers held in Moscow on January 17th, 1936, Premier Stalin spoke of the "necessity to create Soviet classical music." He outlined also a programme for "Soviet popular, realistic music drama," and suggested as subject matter a realistic representation of new heroes, drawn from contemporary men, and the use of the many aspects of the people's fight for their country and for Socialism. He urged Soviet composers to develop the characteristic psychology of the "new man"—product of this Socialist Era.

In Mme. Moïsenko's account of the lives and activities of the composers will be found abundant evidence of their reaction to this call for living art. If ever further proof were needed of the close link between art and the society which produces it, here it is!

Imagine a people of so many diverse nationalities consciously fostering their arts as a social activity, pooling their cultural resources and experiences, sustaining their artists at the expense of the whole community—above all, planning their art as they do their economy—study the results and the effect on the spirit of such a people at a time of crisis like the present—and you get an effective answer to those critics who still maintain that "art has nothing to do with politics"!

What Mme. Moïsenko has attempted is not a subjective treatise but a factual account, translated to a large extent from *Sovietskaya Musica* and other Soviet musical journals. Even curtailed as it is, it cannot fail to convince the reader of the vigour and virility of the Soviet Union's culture.

Reference is frequently made in these pages to the Soviet Union's "Nationalities Policy" in relation to the Autonomous Republics. In a few words (those of Stalin) this policy is defined as "the development of cultures, national in form and social in substance."

Many eminent composers, for the reasons already stated, have to be omitted from this booklet: we mention especially Knipper and the Brothers Pokrass (popular composers of mass-songs for theatre and film); Koval, Bogatyrev, Blanter, Kositzky and Prof. Alexandroff (conductor of the Red Army Choir); Anatole Alexandroff and Rauchverger (composers of songs for children); and the women composers Loubov Streicher (who conducted research work in Uzbekistan), Vera Gaïgherova and Julia Weisberg.

Having taken, with this book, the first step to make the British public acquainted with the rich store of Soviet musical art, we are confident that other books will follow to implement the promise held out by Mme. Moïsenko's admirable effort. This is hardly a time for the lengthy discussion of aesthetic niceties, when our Soviet Allies are sacrificing without stint life, love and leisure to retain for the world a freedom in which the arts may flourish. Nevertheless there is much in the following pages to demonstrate that fearless and self-abnegating attitude of the artist which is a direct reflection of the spirit behind the defence of Leningrad, Sebastopol and Stalingrad!

THE PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE,
WORKERS' MUSIC ASSOCIATION.

October, 1942.

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

The success of Soviet music, closely interwoven with the Socialist structure of the U.S.S.R. makes it possible to-day to speak of Soviet music as "New Music" from the standpoint of its substance, its quality of ideas, its style and its directive line. This new music possesses an emotional language, strong optimistic subject-matter and, above all, a realistic outlook.

The Soviet composers, both old and young, are animated by one common feeling of love towards their socialist country, their people and their chosen leaders. They share the one common urge to render their compositions harmonious with the Socialist achievements of the Union; to find strong musical colours, combinations and forms to depict that new human being dwelling in the Union—its proud and consciously developed citizen.

From time to time we hear protesting voices deploring the fact that the Soviet State Party "interferes" with the creative freedom of the composers. Such phrases as "politics in music," "revolutionary trend of all subject-matter in songs and operas," etc., find their way into the European press and are prone to misinterpretation. It is a fact that the Soviet State plans its music as well as other things, but one should bear in mind that the Soviet State is the Soviet people themselves. The great M. Glinka once wisely and candidly admitted: "It is the peoples who create; we, composers, but arrange. . . ." The Russian Soviet composers hold the view that "Soviet classical music will become a reality when the composers from the autonomous brother-republics," while continuing the study of national music, have all absorbed the priceless heritage left to the world by such geniuses as Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and Glinka. The Russian Soviet composers know it is their obligation to pass this heritage on.

RENA MOISENCO.

June, 1942.

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BORIS ASSAFIEV is one of the foremost Soviet composers, a notable music scholar and an authority on musical history.

He was born in 1884, in St. Petersburg, Leningrad, into the family of a very junior Civil Servant, that is to say into a most reactionary stratum of Tsarist society. The fixed bourgeois traditions and universally accepted gentility of such circles would insist upon the boy's musical training as a matter of course, but Assafiev early displayed considerable aptitude for musical matters in general and at the end of his college years was sent to St. Petersburg Conservatory of Music. At once the trend of his talents asserted itself: not only did Assafiev become, at the age of 19, engrossed in composing opera for children but he developed an insatiable curiosity for precise data in everything appertaining to music: the history and evolution of music interested him passionately. In those days such studies were not easy, for Russia lacked reliable text books, especially on the subject of the music of his own country. Assafiev saw the need of the moment and turned to writing, his view being that constructive criticism could do much to help aspiring composers to develop a concrete style of self-expression. Under the name of Igor Glebov, Assafiev wrote critical surveys in the more advanced musical papers of his time: "Musical Contemporary," "Melos" and "Music." That was in 1914.

By the time of the Revolution of 1918, Assafiev had acquired a fairly solid reputation for journalistic prowess and reliability of documentation. The Soviet regime availed itself of Assafiev's scientific inclinations with alacrity. Until 1930 he held a responsible position at the State Institute of History of Arts and later at the Conservatory of Music, Leningrad. The bulk of Assafiev's writings is impressive; among his better known works are: "Instrumental Compositions of P. Tchaikovsky" 1921; "Studies on Symphony" 1922; "Musical Form as a Process" 1930; "Russian Music since the beginning of 19th Century" 1930, etc.

To Assafiev is due the U.S.S.R.'s first attempts to solve scientifically a series of standard problems connected with musical research, an extremely important branch of musical activity since it is so closely connected with the Nationalities Policy.

Boris Assafiev has always been an indefatigable worker in the Musico-socialological field. In the early years of the Revolution

a special Department of "Music and Theoretic Doctrines" was created by the Commissariat of People's Education. Assafiev directed the Pedagogical Section there. He was Principal Lecturer in Methods of Composition at the Leningrad Philharmonic School; he acted as Musical Adviser to several theatres in the Metropolis. His journalistic writing extended to the daily press.

When the "A.C.M." (Association of Contemporary Music) was formed Assafiev became its leader. He ardently supported the most extreme "left" tendencies of Western European Musical Art; he then organised a special Circle of New Music where some of the more audacious, not to say "experimental," present day music was performed. This Circle of New Music, for a time at least, exercised a very marked influence upon the activities of theatres and concert platforms. Assafiev himself, however, was too meticulous a scholar not to realise eventually the fallacies of Western Contemporary Music thesis, its alien spirit when confronted with the problems of Soviet musical art. With unerring judgment and true scientific vision he discovered the ultimate result of this contemporary musical striving at all costs after "modernism" and "novelty." The fact that he had organised the Circle of New Music enabled him to keep in the closest touch with all musical "extravagance" which kept trickling through to Leningrad from Western Europe, and thus to assess its correct value. Viewing the subject in retrospect, Assafiev came to the logical conclusion that Western music was being slowly but surely ensnared by Formalism; that this brilliant display of musical cleverness in the West was effectively obliterating the personality of individual composers. Assafiev took up the pen to attack Formalism with all the vigour of his journalistic skill.

He prepared a series of articles on "The Crisis in Personal Creativeness" where he warned contemporary Soviet composers against "Professional Aristocratism" and of the dangers of losing touch with the "Social Necessity of Music," etc.

These articles were published in "The Soviet Music" magazine, since 1933 the monthly organ of the Union of Soviet Composers; they attracted nation-wide attention. It is to a large extent due to Assafiev's timely warning that Soviet musical art is what it is to-day in Russia proper.

As a composer Boris Assafiev excels in music for the theatre. He composed operas and ballets for children when still quite young; his first ballet, "The Fairy Gift," was written in

1910. This was followed in 1911 by the ballet "White Lily"—also for children. For three to four years after the Revolution Soviet theatres commissioned Assafiev to compose incidental music for such dramatic productions as "Don Carlos," "The Seducer from Seville," and for the Shakespearean tragedies of "Lady Macbeth" and "The Merchant of Venice." Then came his appointment to the "Institute of History of Arts" with all the important research work it entailed, and Boris Assafiev left off composing. In 1930, however, he resumed his temporarily interrupted career and from that time onwards his musical creativeness increased. He wrote several operas: "The Cashier's Wife," "Minin and Pozarsky" (historic episode of 1608), etc., and went from success to success with the three ballets: "Flame of Paris," "The Weeping Fountain of Bakhtchicarai" and "The Prisoner of the Mountains"—the latter two on themes from A. Poushkin's famous poems.

What is so extremely interesting about the ballet "Flame of Paris" is the fact that Boris Assafiev has here combined his enormous knowledge in scientific musical research with practical experience acquired earlier in the theatre. The action of the ballet is based upon an incident in the great French Bourgeois Revolution; the music, on 17th and 18th Century French court opera, French street songs and dances of that revolutionary period. Assafiev has developed the idea of employing scientifically explained historical music. As he so aptly puts it himself, he "has steeped his mind in the composite melodious sound of the French revolutionary epoch," and has attempted to express his personality through it.

Assafiev's third ballet, "The Prisoner of the Mountains," is universally acknowledged to be his best; the Soviet Press was unanimous in its praise when the ballet was produced in 1938. The composer conceived it on the lines of a symphony, with appropriate indications in the scores, *i.e.*, "the night is dark; the river roars; the trees bend to the storm" (from Poushkin's verses). An outstanding musical item in the ballet is a wonderful violin solo which the Musical Director and Producer, Y. Faier, used for an intermezzo between two Acts.

The ballet opens and closes with a choral scene. Poushkin's immortal poem is treated by Assafiev from the point of view of the juxtaposition of two civilisations—the cold superficial one of St. Petersburg of Poushkin's time and the fierce but patriarchally severe civilisation of Caucasian mountain folk. The Prisoner—a "society exquisite" captured in the wars by Circassians, tells a

Circassian native maiden of his far away city on the Nova. While he recites, the magnificent Caucasian mountain scene is slowly veiled by a snowstorm through which gradually, mistily, appears the famous copper monument of Peter the Great, riding his charger. And so throughout the whole of the St. Petersburg part of the ballet the scene remains shimmering with the unreality of a mist. Assafiev has been most successful in the reproduction of various St. Petersburg Society types: the heartless actress-coquette, the calculating banker, the police spy, are all insignificant acting parts but drawn with effective truthfulness and with considerable musical sincerity. To paraphrase for a moment the composer's own words, Assafiev had so "steeped himself" in the atmosphere of Poushkin's St. Petersburg that the listener is inclined to feel the music as being familiar although actually it is original throughout. A simple little waltz tune played by a military band is introduced by the composer for the skating gala on the Nova; a very similar waltz accompanies the scene in an ambassadorial ballroom. But how cheap and trivial Assafiev makes the waltz sound for the mixed crowd of skaters, and what dignity it suggests during the Ball where only the smart set might be expected to properly disport themselves!

The Caucasian part of the ballet consists of vigorous music: passion, honour, military bravery all possess well-defined themes, almost enlarged "leit-motifs," and the characters of the Circassian people—the warrior, the native maiden, are painted with great precision and quite unmistakable musical realism. Assafiev has studied the Caucasian folklore well; only twice does he "quote" an old Circassian tune—yet the entire musical conception of this part of the ballet breathes a true Caucasian atmosphere. The character of the native maiden who loves the prisoner with such sincere devotion is beautifully presented; her "leit-motif," as is the case with all others, is given in a dance—the Goblet Dance. This melody, played by the clarinet, hovers according to the portrayed emotion, between major and minor and by its lack of calmness suggests the trepidations of a youthful heart.

Assafiev's "Prisoner of the Mountains" created ballet history in the U.S.S.R., in that the choreography was employed to depict nationality and realism and not merely to show off the superior technique of the dancers. Consequently all dances throughout the ballet are scenically justified.

Boris Assafiev is Member of the U.S.S.R. Order of Merit (Arts).

II

EUGENE BRUSILOVSKY belongs to the generation of Soviet composers whose genius matured after the great Proletarian Revolution.

Brussilovsky was born in 1905 in Rostov-on-the-Don. He was sent to the newly opened Workers' School there, which he attended until 1921. By that time both his parents were dead. Having no other ties in Rostov, sixteen-year-old Brussilovsky joined the army. He saw a good deal of service in the expedition of the Political Section to the Caucasian front and had occasion to distinguish himself in action in many ways during the course of twenty strenuous and exciting months. Brussilovsky's musical talent became so obvious that at the end of 1922 he was released from the Red Army and entered for the preparatory course at Moscow Conservatory of Music.

Unfortunately Brussilovsky lacked adequate financial support. He was forced to seek fixed employment, which necessitated curtailing the hours of attendance at the Conservatory and interfered with steady progress in his musical education. To make matters worse he fell desperately ill in 1924. His absence from the lecture hall now assumed a permanent aspect. It was, therefore, without undue surprise that young Eugene Brussilovsky, while still in hospital, received an official notice to the effect that the Annual Commission of Enquiry into the Working Results of the Moscow Conservatory had decided to exclude his name from among the students as of an "academically poor element"!

Brussilovsky did not leave the hospital till the autumn of that year. He then went to Leningrad. So great was the young musician's desire to continue upon a musical career that for two years he followed a systematic course of studies on his own. Such zeal did not go unrewarded and at the end of that time Brussilovsky was admitted to the Leningrad Conservatory of Music for special studies in Theory of Composition under the direction of Professor Maximilian Steinberg.

Professor M. Steinberg is an exponent of the best traditions of the so-called Rimsky-Korsakov School of Musical Thought. This very significant fact shaped the ways of Brussilovsky's musical genius. In the five years of his studies under Steinberg, Eugene Brussilovsky assimilated the genuine spirit of true Russian Academicism. The young composer received the Diploma for composition in 1931, by which time he had already

published a series of small pieces for piano and voice, also some slight instrumental music chiefly resulting from his practical musical activities and in connection with his work at the Conservatory. All these compositions, gifted as they are, show the influence of Professor Steinberg's teachings.

Brussilovsky's First Symphony for Chorus and Orchestra appeared in 1931. It was an important work, and one which established the young composer as a bold seeker after original style; but it was still too academic in its general aspect to command wholesale appreciation. The Second Symphony, published in the following year, proved to be a success and received an enthusiastic reception from music critics and concert-going public alike.

The year 1933 brought added fame to Brussilovsky, when the Union of Soviet Composers (Leningrad) commissioned him to undertake research work in connection with the music of the S.S.R. of Kazakhstan. Upon Brussilovsky fell the important duty of fostering national Kazakhstan opera, which, in conformity with the programme of the Nationalities Policy of the U.S.S.R. was to be based upon pure Kazakh music. The composer went to live in Alma-Ata, capital of Kazakhstan. He had been supplied with a wealth of ethnographic material, and was familiar with the excellent work of A. Zataevitch, collector of "One Thousand Songs of Kazakhstan." Nevertheless direct contact with primitive Kazakh music greatly enriched the realistic powers of his musical language.

Brussilovsky composed three operas in Alma-Ata, of which the first (1934), "Kiz-Ji-Bek," is the simplest of all, musically speaking. The composer simply presented Kazakh national songs in as straightforward a manner as possible with scarcely any independent orchestral accompaniment. He feared that complicated Western chords would be too difficult for young musicians of the Kazakh theatre and might possibly put the singers off. Kazakh artists were just beginning to get familiar with choral and ensemble music; the orchestra, therefore, could only be useful while playing the principal melodies in support of singers.

"Er-Targhin," second Kazakh opera produced in 1935, is symphonically much more broadly developed. The orchestral part of the opera assumes a slightly predominant aspect; Brussilovsky begins to utilise it in a psychological manner to describe the characters of his heroes. "Er-Targhin" relates the story of a legendary knight of that name who fought the Tartar

Khans, oppressors of Kazakhstan, and eventually betook himself, his beloved—the Kalmik maiden Tana—and his people to the “peaceful freedom of the Steppes.” This national Kazakh subject provides Brussilovsky with ample opportunity for lavish scenic display and for an Oriental ballet, introducing Persian, Tartar and Kalnick dances. Especially good is the scene in Act IV in the tent of Tartar Khan Aksha.

Brussilovsky's third and best opera, written in Alma-Ata, “Jalbir” was composed for the ten-day Festival of Kazakh Art which took place in Moscow in 1936. In it Brussilovsky has been able to make the greatest use of the healthy traditions of his academic training. And this testifies to the young composer's enormous achievements in the duty laid upon his shoulders by the Union of Soviet Composers: for to create Kazakh National Opera Brussilovsky had not only to write his music on truly national Kazakh lines but at the same time he was obliged to make Kazakh audiences and artists realise the importance and necessity of Western symphonism without which knowledge and application musical art can never be complete.

The opera “Jalbir” secured for Eugene Brussilovsky the title of People's Artist, S.S.R. Kazakhstan.

Jalbir is the Partisan leader of the Kazakh peasant mutiny of 1916. The opera has many highly dramatic moments; clashes of opposite emotions, murder of partisans by Tsarist soldiers, etc.

Brussilovsky built the overture and all symphonic interludes of the opera “Jalbir” upon that remarkable old Kazakh melody, “Ellemai” (Oh, my country!).

Eugene Brussilovsky's Third Symphony, entitled “Kazakh Symphony,” was composed in 1938.

III

OLES CHISHKO was born in 1895; he was a Ukrainian peasant.

For generations Chisko's people lived in a tiny village by the name of “Two-River Cut,” near Kharkov. The sun-kissed orchards of that glorious countryside sheltered Chishko's happy childhood. Beauty surrounded him since his early days—beauty of flowering apple trees, of quiet rivers and clear skies. Chishko was an only boy, the darling of his “little grandad,” whom he still remembers with affection. The composer often relates stories about that tall sedate old gentleman in a straw hat and a white linen coat smelling of honey—“so that the bees should know him.” It was Chishko's grandfather who first noticed the boy's aptitude to memorise village folk songs. He encouraged young Oles to sing Ukrainian tunes, with the result that when the boy went to a secondary school in Kharkov he was at once singled out for special attention by the musical authorities.

Oles Chishko's musical education began in the school choir; as the choir usually sings unaccompanied this provided excellent training ground. Chishko possessed a lovely clear boy-soprano voice and sang the solo parts whenever necessary. He next took up the violin and had a few years' tuition in pianoforte playing, but Chishko wanted to become a singer. Ambition and impatience to “get on” made him enter the Kharkov Conservatory of Music before his voice had properly matured for such intensive training. After only a few months of study Chishko lost his voice! But love of music and the urge for self-expression latent in every instinctive artist prevented Chishko from throwing up his musical education altogether. He had his scholarship transferred to the Theoretic Branch of the Conservatory and took up composition.

Chishko left the Kharkov Conservatory of Music without completing the appointed course for a degree. The composer is wont to explain his actions by the fact that he was short of money and feared to get into financial stress; the truth is probably that after years of rest and proper attention his voice returned and Chishko was able to revert to his chosen profession, that of an operatic singer.

The year 1922 finds Oles Chishko engaged as principal singer and conductor at the Operatic Group of Novorossiysk Garrison (Political Education Section); he also tries his hand at composing. Songs his grandfather made him memorise serve as

background for those first immature efforts—choral pieces and ballads with Ukrainian words, new settings to old favourite folk tunes, etc. Then, in 1923, Chishko composed an opera, "Judith," and had it performed by the Garrison Operatic Group. It scored a success. The Kharkov musical press expressed itself very favourably about it and, indeed, that characteristic tunefulness which has since stamped all music coming from Chishko's pen was already pleasingly evident in "Judith." Greatly encouraged by this initial success, Chishko went to Leningrad to consult A. K. Glazounov. The world-famous composer listened to the opera and pronounced it good; he advised Chishko to dedicate himself entirely to composition. But Chishko still hankered after an active part in the theatre; the life of a singer attracted him more.

In 1927, Chishko, while working with the "Ukrainian Opera Company" in Odessa, organised what he called a "Composer's Workshop." This society later became a club for musical and political discussions which collected all young composers in Odessa. Chishko directed the "Workshop" till 1931; during those four years the Club's aims were to write music for various dates of Soviet celebrations, "Red Army Day," "Pioneer Day," etc., incidental music for the theatre and musical illustrations for radio productions. A definite attempt was made by all members to create Soviet opera and ballet music. Chishko himself wrote a second opera, "Imprisoned by Apple Orchards," which is still performed in Ukrainian theatres. The activities of these young people stimulated a definite interest in modern Soviet music all over the Ukraine; works by Paschenko, Spendiarov, Gliere and Vassilenko were gradually included into operatic repertoires; Gliere's ballet, "The Red Poppy," took firm root everywhere.

In 1931 Oles Chishko left the stage and went to Leningrad to continue his studies in the theory of composition. He was eventually accepted at the Leningrad Conservatory of Music in the class conducted by Professor P. B. Riazanov. Since then Chishko appeared only occasionally on the concert platform.

In the years that followed his entry into the Conservatory Chishko composed considerably for symphonic orchestra; among better known works are: Overture "Red Army Days," "Suite for Dancing," "The Ukrainian Capriccio" and "Scherzo," a Suite called "Youth" and several arrangements of Ukrainian songs for chorus and orchestra. Chishko developed great skill in a certain type of music for declamatory singing—all his own.

His ideas on opera became more crystallised. Chishko understood that the music of Soviet opera should be completely in harmony with the subject; that, whether national or individual in form, the musical language of Soviet opera must always remain realistic. In this spirit the composer approached the creation of his masterpiece, the famous opera dedicated to the Red Navy—"Mutiny on the Battleship Potemkin."

It is interesting to note the special care which Chishko lavished on the libretto of his opera. Originally the opera was suggested by the Odessa State Theatre who forwarded their libretto on to Chishko with a simple request to put it into music. After doing some extensive research on the history of the 1905 Naval Mutiny in Sebastopol, Chishko decided that the Odessa libretto was inadequate. He appealed to the Leningrad Union of Soviet Composers for artistic help; the Union put him in touch with the "Kirov" Theatre in Leningrad, who, in their turn engaged that well-known poet, S. Spassky, to write a proper "Soviet" libretto for the projected new opera.

When "Mutiny on the Battleship Potemkin" was produced in 1937, it was under the personal supervision of the famous artistic director of U.S.S.R.'s theatres—S. A. Samosud; and conducted by Melik-Pashaev. Scenery, costumes, artists' gestures—all were copied from historic documents as closely as it was possible. The success of the opera was colossal.

The music of "Mutiny on the Battleship Potemkin," though completely devoid of operatic tendencies, is extremely melodious and plastic. It follows the scenic development virtually bar by bar, because, as Chishko said in an interview, "One extra musical bar may hamper the action on the stage." The composer added that librettos of Soviet operas did not permit independent enlargement of musical material; therefore, solo numbers and ensemble pieces appear in the score only when dramatically justified, as for instance Valinchuk's and Grunia's duet, "Lullaby," a single instance. Mostly individual characters in the opera are allotted recitative dialogues and monologues—ariosos (like Mimi in "La Boheme" or Boris in "Godounov.")

Chishko's use of chorus is highly original and masterly. Actually the seamen of "Mutiny on the Battleship Potemkin" constitute a species of Collective Hero, and consequently the chorus in the opera is a very important medium of musical and dramatic expression from beginning to end. Seamen Valinchuk, Kachura and others act as spokesmen of this revolutionary mass, always together with the chorus, often singing the lead. Their

solo numbers never oppose the musical texture of the chorus but rather enhance its psychological characteristics, which vary according to the dramatic moment on the stage. Nevertheless, their diverse personalities are not submerged, and therein lies Chishko's cleverness as a composer.

The officers commanding "Potemkin" have been drawn to represent a strong negative element in the opera, and have no individual musical description; they are all summed up with one "leit-motif," which sounds in the orchestra whenever any one of them appears on the stage or is merely mentioned by the chorus. The officers are intended to oppose the seamen as a single group of enemies.

A specially important part is assigned to the orchestra. Chishko conceived it as a musical backcloth for the opera, consisting of a chain of widely developed "leit motifs" and what the composers himself would call "musical symbols," designed to convey the characters of leading personalities and of principal ideas and dramatic situations of "Mutiny on the Battleship Potemkin." Often the orchestral accompaniment renders a total picture of the environment in which the dramatic action is being unfolded, and this remains throughout the whole action as a sort of reminder.

The opening pages of Oles Chishko's opera are superb. Orchestra and chorus announce the approaching tragedy with a sombre solemnity of accent which is quite unforgettable. The stage is in semi-obscurity during the Prologue, and the beauty of Chishko's musical phrases with their long, typically Russian national melodiousness, make the scene only the more poignant.

IV

ISAAC DUNAYEVSKY, Member of the U.S.S.R. Order of Merit (in Arts), was born in 1900 in Lokhvitsi, a small provincial town near Poltava.

Dunayevsky was a child prodigy. It was found impossible to keep baby Isaak away from music of any kind; singing, piano playing, the gramophone held a fascination for him which became more and more pronounced as time went on. When the boy was four years old, his parents decided to give him regular lessons in piano playing; Isaak contented himself with that until he was eight, and then demanded to be taught the violin as well! In 1910 the boy began to compose. That same year his parents took him to Kharkov and entered him for the Kharkov College, which later was reorganised on broader and more comprehensive lines and became Kharkov Conservatory of Music. Dunayevsky remained there till the end of the course, and qualified in violin playing under the famous violinist I. Akhron, and in theory of composition under Professor S. Bogatyrev.

Isaak Dunayevsky is known to millions of Soviet people as master composer of melodious and joyful songs for the masses—popular songs. But before achieving this overwhelming success Dunayevsky went through a lengthy process of self-development, writing during all that time a good deal of music of different types. Nor has he neglected the more classical side of musical art, and to-day has to his name such outstanding works as: The First String Quartet; Requiem for Reader and String Quintet; Shakespearean Sonnets; a Symphonic Suite "On a Chinese Theme," and a considerable amount of music for violin, 'cello and piano.

In 1919 Isaak Dunayevsky started to compose for the theatre. His first important commissions came from the Kharkov Theatre of Drama and required some tragic musical element from the composer as well as tunes suitable for dancing.

Since 1921, however, Dunayevsky has "found" himself. He tried his hand at lighter music for the Theatre; he wrote a lot of dance tunes, mostly for the music halls. He composed two Ballets: "The Fawn's Repose" and "Mourzilka" for children; also a "Ballet Suite" for Symphonic Orchestra.

Isaak Dunayevsky's first comic opera, "Share and Share Alike," was composed in 1924. This was followed two years later by "Bridegroom." Then came "The Knives" in 1928;

"Arctic Passions" and "Million Languors" in 1929, and "The Golden Valley," composed in 1939, and many more. Taken as a whole, these comic operas resemble high class vaudevilles, set to really brilliant music. They are written on contemporary Soviet themes and sparkle with truly merciless Soviet humour and caustic wit.

The popularity of Dunayevsky's comic operas throughout U.S.S.R. is immense. Thanks to them he is considered to be the leading Soviet composer of music in the "jazz" idiom.

The Soviet cinema claimed Isaak Dunayevsky in 1932, his first musical illustrations being for the film, "Platoon No. 1." In one way or another, composer, librettist or producer, Dunayevsky has been connected ever since with every important film production by the Soviet cinema studios.

Isaak Dunayevsky is a tireless worker and a splendid organiser. No single man has done so much for the co-ordination of Soviet musical talent as this one-time child prodigy. Dunayevsky's social and musical activities include the Presidency (since 1937) of the Leningrad Union of Soviet Composers. Under Dunayevsky's leadership this Union is fast becoming a real creative organisation. Its sections cover almost the whole field of musical and kindred Arts, covering sections for theatre (opera, comic opera and ballet); symphonic music, chamber music (instrumental and vocal); choral music; music for the masses (popular); brass bands; cinema music; musical illustrations for dramatic productions; folk music; children's music; political-educational works; propaganda of Soviet music; music critics and musicians. At the head of each section stands a member of the Executive Committee of the Union, ready to guide and advise all younger composers, etc.; and when such important people as Shostakovitch, Prokofiev, Steinberg and Professor Gnossin are called upon to express their valuable opinion on matters pertaining to the working of a section, their help can be and is considerable. Dunayevsky has arranged that every composer contemplating the writing of a new work, or engaged upon a special musical essay, can in an interview explain his aims and requirements to the Executive Committee of the Union. In a series of talks with its members the composer's plans are discussed; specialists offer him help and advice freely; a sketch of the future composition is collectively prepared, after which the composer is introduced to members of that particular section of the Union where his type of work properly belongs. These members all collaborate in filling in the details of the

new work on the assumption that strength or weakness of any talent is more visible to a friendly and discriminating critic than to the artist, however honest with himself. The only condition imposed upon the composer, thus lavishly assisted, is that he should justify the help accorded him through the Union by showing progress in his composition within a period of three months. Therefore, it is possible to say that during the year of 1938 no major musical work was composed in Leningrad without the Union's encouragement.

Thanks to Dunayevsky's ceaseless efforts the Leningrad Union of Soviet Composers is now closely connected with the Leningrad Philharmonic School; it has acquired sufficient influence to ensure that outstanding compositions by its members (and others) are included in Leningrad Season's Concert programmes. Moreover, such chosen musical works are constantly performed in all big factories, in different sections of the Red Army and in Workers' Clubs. This enables the young composers to meet an attentive, discerning and critical audience, and to learn much by personal contact with it.

But, perhaps, the most important and humane achievement of Dunayevsky's Presidency over the Union is the passing of the resolution that musicians engaged on work requiring a good deal of time and effort are entitled to financial aid, which is allowed for in the budget of the Union. This generous course of action means that not only does the Union cherish all musical talent which comes in its keeping but it also enables this talent to grow and develop in circumstances of peace, undisturbed by financial worry. Some of the musicians have even been provided with musical instruments through the Union's financial assistance, and there exists, thanks to Isaak Dunayevsky, an "Arts Rest Home" for composers on the Stn. "Olgino."

Dunayevsky is a strong supporter of the idea that "mass songs" (popular songs) ought to possess local colour.

As in the case of the Red Army, which has a musical literature and a special music all its own, Dunayevsky advocates music for railwaymen, spinners and weavers, plumbers, etc. From personal observation the great composer maintains that worker audiences display added interest in allusions to their particular craft, even where the quality of the music is merely "average." Dunayevsky edited a collection of "Songs of the Railwaymen" in 1938, which brought upon his head some severe criticism from the pen of I. Nestiev in 1940. But the Soviet composer proceeds to deal with the music critic in the same

cavalier fashion as the Soviet music critic deals with the composer. There followed a lively exchange of articles in the musical press, wherein the famous composer of some of the most satirical operettas in the Union disclosed an unexpectedly virulent capacity for epigrams.

Dunayevsky's genius undoubtedly lies in the sphere of popular music. He seems to have discovered a spontaneous musical turn of phrase, a jaunty rhythm, a joyous "optimistic" catch to his melodies which render them completely Russian and at the same time deeply human and understandable to everyone. No other Soviet composer has been able to link up together, by that common musical language of mass song, all the odd 160 nationalities which form the Union's citizens. Dunayevsky is known and loved over the whole vast area of the U.S.S.R.

For outstanding merits in the field of Soviet Music the Supreme Council bestowed upon Isaak Dunayevsky the Order of Red Workers' Banner in 1936.

V

IVAN DZERSINSKY, pianist and composer was born in Tambov in 1909.

Although Dzersinsky displayed signs of musical ability fairly early in his childhood, he had no systematic musical training till after he left Tambov in 1928. That year he went to Moscow to study music and to perfect his pianoforte technique under Prof. Gnessin. When in 1930, Dzersinsky finally decided to establish himself in Leningrad it was for the purpose of dedicating his whole life to music.

For two further years Dzersinsky attended the First State Technical School for Music, and then entered the Leningrad

Conservatory of Music to study composition under the eminent Prof. P. Riazanov. Dzersinsky took his final degree in 1934.

Dzersinsky's greatest friend and adviser during the period of his first efforts at composing was Boris Assafiev.

Such works as incidental music for the drama, "Pushtog," the "Poem* of the Dnieper," and the "Spring Suite" for piano, all of which were composed by Dzersinsky between 1930-1932, bear upon them distinct marks of French impressionism and are too sketchy in form to be classed as finished compositions. It must be noted here that by this time Ivan Dzersinsky was already becoming famous for his exceptional brilliancy as pianist and for his truly remarkable gift of improvisation. Dzersinsky used to give concerts at which he would illustrate some literary masterpiece with music composed actually on the spur of the moment. For example, the classical poem by Gogol about the beauty of the river Dnieper: "Lovely is the Dnieper in quiet weather . . ." and then again: "Lovely is the Dnieper in any weather when, free and sedate, the barges float down with cement." (A. Bezimensky—Building of the Dnieper Dam). Later, these musical ideas were incorporated in Dzersinsky's "Poem about Dnieper." Though a gift of improvisation necessitates continuous creative planning on the part of the composer and therefore becomes an asset to him, such a spontaneous approach to the art of composing is apt to lead the author to content himself with a somewhat indefinite shape for an entire work. Indeed, Dzersinsky in 1932 felt that having once expressed his principal musical thought on the piano no further detailed musical development of any kind was required to render the work more complete. This is where Assafiev's friendship proved to be of the utmost value to the young man. Assafiev suggested to Ivan Dzersinsky that a course of systematic study of composition would confer greater clarity and precision to the form of all his work. He also advised Dzersinsky to abandon the slighter type of compositions as being too easy for him, to write operas and symphonies instead. Assafiev's advice completely changed Dzersinsky's musical career. Whereas the brilliant and famous pianist and improviser had hitherto tended to supersede the serious talented composer in Dzersinsky, now, after two years of study under Riazanov, Dzersinsky was able to reveal his real artistic personality to the world.

* Skriabin's definition.

So far Ivan Dzersinsky had composed three operas. The first two—"The Quiet Don" and "Virgin Soil Upturned"—have created history in the evolution of the Soviet musical theatre, in as much as they have fulfilled all the requirements of Soviet musical ideals, Socialistic subject matter, and individuality and realism of musical language.

Both operas are written round the subject of Mikhail Sholokhov's books of the same name, which deal with the picturesque life and centuries-old customs of the Don Cossacks; their ruthless class traditions and love for inherited land that their forefathers had tilled; their former loyalty to the Tsarist service; their courage, endurance and pride; and the painful process of gradual transmutation of all these splendid qualities into the firm Socialistic convictions and a wholehearted understanding of the spirit behind the policy of the collectivisation of farmsteads.

Dzersinsky composed "The Quiet Don" between the years 1932 and 1934. In this, his first opera, the composer discloses all the typical characteristics of his talent—the long, melodious phrasing, the tendency to powerful forms of tonality; the great lyric surge of recitative; the realism of musical language. The last appears to be excessively simple but this is illusory since Dzersinsky is capable of becoming sharp, even harsh, if occasion demands.

When Mikhail Sholokhov was interviewed on the success of the opera he expressed himself very well pleased with Dzersinsky's musical conception of his book. He pointed out two or three minor discrepancies in the matter of local colour in the setting of the drama, and criticised a certain unevenness of literary wording in the libretto. The young Academician, who has the reputation of being the best prose writer in the Soviet Union, was well entitled to his opinion, especially as living among the heroes of his books, Mikhail Sholokhov is used to the eloquent flowery language in which the Cossacks speak. Moreover, because Soviet classical music requires strict realism in the musical language of the composer Sholokhov's criticism was most appropriate. It drew Dzersinsky's attention to the necessity of closer combination between words and music if he were to convey successfully the true meaning of Mikhail Sholokhov's epic story.

The distance from Leningrad to "Veshenskaya Stanitz" on the Don where Sholokhov lives is in the neighbourhood of 1200 miles. It is, therefore, more than probable that Ivan

Dzersinsky composed his opera basing it on the book alone which in itself was an admirable thing to do, as Mikhail Sholokhov's literary style is superb. Sholokhov has the ability to select the most characteristic features to infuse life and truth into every sentence, to describe his hero with a few terse words so vividly that the reader almost sees him standing there in the flesh.

Dzersinsky may well be forgiven for falling into the error of trying to visualise something through the eyes of another. However, after reading Sholokhov's criticism he realised the importance of gaining first-hand impressions for himself. Before Dzersinsky commenced to compose the music for his second opera—"The Virgin Soil Upturned"—he went down to "Veshenskaya Stanitz" and spent some considerable time in Mikhail Sholokhov's house. The two young men became fast friends. As deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., Sholokhov takes an active part in the cultural life of the Stanitz. Among other things he helped the Cossacks to organise collective farm theatres and Cossack song and dance ensembles. Dzersinsky mixed with the people of the Don, listened to their rich talk and tuneful music and thus got thoroughly acclimatised to the local colour pervading Sholokhov's books.

The opera, "Virgin Soil Upturned," received its first performance on the 23rd of October, 1937, in Leningrad. Dzersinsky's second opera is a tremendous step forward in the development of this young composer's art. The musical characterisation of leading personalities is quite distinct and precise—even Sholokhov admits it. The dramatic action has been closely knit with the music which is especially successful in the general scenes; it flows continuously without ostensible breaks. Haunting folksong of the Ukraine though never actually reproduced is nevertheless effectively exploited to its most effective extent; and yet the composer's musical language remains wholly individual, warm and sincere throughout dramatic descriptions of that intense and stormy period which heralded the coming collectivisation of the Ukrainian countryside.

There are no ensemble numbers in the opera, "Virgin Soil Upturned"; their omission on the part of the composer is quite deliberate. Dzersinsky holds the view that ensembles in opera are not consistent with the conception of realistic musical dramatic art of U.S.S.R.—that, in fact, it is not possible to have three people singing at one time expressing different emo-

tions in the same kind of music; that, on the other hand, a chorus always represents a unified feeling of some sort. Therefore, Ivan Dzersinsky substitutes the chorus, in larger or lesser variety, for the more classical operatic "ensembles."

Interesting, too, is Dzersinsky's reaction to Cossack folk-lore. Although the composer's music is for ever reminiscent of folk tunes these are never literally reproduced. Nor are they "camouflaged" in arias or orchestral texture. Dzersinsky once said that he is always listening to new folk songs, but he never writes them down. He lets them drop to the bottom of his memory and remain there, in the shape of characteristic "Cossack" intonations and colours, to be later woven into his own music.

In 1938 Ivan Dzersinsky travelled to Siberia and the Far East to "collect impressions" and to "listen to the songs of the Siberian partisans of 1923" as a preliminary move in the preparation of plans for his fourth opera, "Days of Volotchavka."

A film of the same name had been made there shortly before and the composer saw in it a possible subject for opera. This time Samouil Samosud, Artistic Director of the theatres of U.S.S.R. was going to collaborate personally with Dzersinsky.

Ivan Dzersinsky composed a "Russian Overture" for symphony orchestra in 1939.

He still gives occasional concerts where he plays his own piano compositions, chiefly the First and Second Pianoforte Concertos which tax even his masterly technique to the limit. Dzersinsky's style of execution is that of a true virtuoso; his climaxes are well balanced and his lyric emotions always correct.

VI

USEIR GADZHIBEKOV is the foremost national composer and musical scholar of the S.S. Republic of Azerbaijan. He is also a member of the Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R.

Gadzhibekov's social and musical activities extend over a period of thirty years; they have been of utmost value to Azerbaijan national culture, so much so that it is no exaggeration to say that the history of Useir Gadzhibekov's artistic life is mainly the history of Azerbaijan music.

He was born in 1885 in a small mountain village at the foot of the stony Caucasian Ridge. Thanks to the isolated position of the village, Aghzabed, and the lack of proper roads of communication with Baku, always a deplorable failing in Tsarist times—Useir Gadzhibekov had very little schooling as a boy. In fact, he was educated at a Teachers' Seminary where he acquired some rudimentary musical knowledge only.

The Transcaucasian panorama is extremely varied and exceptionally beautiful. From the burning sands of the Caspian seaboard to the forest jungle on its Northern ramparts Azerbaijan is a land of contrasts; cotton fields bask in the sunshine, mountain streams rush cool and turbulent down the craggy surface of the hills; snow-capped mountains shine and sparkle eternally and seem to be piercing the azure of a semi-tropical sky.

Like the great Maxim Gorky before him, Gadzhibekov tramped on foot up and down his native country, learning much of its ancient legends, fairy tales, "destans" and cast-iron artistic traditions; studying the 16th century examples of its remarkable style of architecture and listening with rapture to its entrancing music. Azerbaijan has been long famous for its folk singers and musicians—Ashugs and Sazandars—who, from generation to generation, have preserved and transmitted the truly wonderful Azerbaijanian epic tales and songs, and whose original type of artistic performance has survived through centuries until the present day. "Study folk lore," Gorky had said apropos his wanderings among the peoples of Tsarist Russia; "the better we understand the past, the easier will it be for us to realise the great significance of the present which we are building . . .," and subconsciously Useir Gadzhibekov followed this advice, led by the deepest feeling of love and admiration for the national art of his country. How wise Maxim Gorky was in his pronouncement Gadzhibekov understood only after 1922 with the coming of the Nationalities Policy to the S.S.R. of Azerbaijan.

In the meanwhile Useir Gadzhibekov began collecting folk tunes and musical items composed for the native string instrument, "the Sa'az." Thus, for the first time in Azerbaijan history native music was written down. Previously to Gadzhibekov's attempt Azerbaijan music was transmitted orally and the musicians, though highly skilled in this art, played by ear only. Ashugs and Sazandars were essentially solo performers; on those rare occasions when a duet had been staged by them it was invariably done in the form of "question" and "answer," never

as an ensemble. The idea of choral singing or orchestral playing was quite untenable to these Azerbaijanian musicians, who traditionally understood music as a purely individual artistic exhibition of talent.

By 1907 Useir Gadzhibekov had amassed sufficient musical material in European notation to be in a position to write an Azerbaijanian opera. He chose for his subject an old Arabian fairy tale, "Leili and Medzum" (Leila and the Madman), and personally arranged the operatic libretto from the 16th century classical version of the story, by that greatest of all Azerbaijanian poets, Muhammed Fisuli. In substance, "Leili and Medzum" is an Eastern version of the love between Romeo and Juliet, and is universally known in Transcaucasia. The opera was produced in 1908 in Baku. The bare fact that such a thing had been done in the days of Tsarism, when all national manifestation was rigorously suppressed, showed how energetically the 22-year old composer toiled to render Azerbaijan people conscious of their national heritage.

In his reminiscences Useir Gadzhibekov narrates some interesting details about the composing and the production of "Leila and the Madman." He admits that only two years previous to the actual writing of his first opera he had no knowledge of the theory of composition, but that he procured a couple of good text books and set enthusiastically to work. He realised almost at once, however, that to apply the teachings of those text books in his case would be impossible, because he had to overcome the traditional repugnance of all Azerbaijanian artists for performing anything simultaneously together. Gadzhibekov therefore planned his opera in two uneven musical parts. One of the parts, by far the greater, consisted of improvisations by the soloists who, naturally enough, needed no written music for their airs and monologues. All the composer had to do here was to indicate to the singer the type of tonality (or its variation of the Mougam) which from his point of view suited best the dramatic moment on the stage, and the soloist proceeded to perform, accompanied by a trio of two stringed instruments, "Tara" and "Kemantcha," and a tambourine. The player of the "Tara" improvised the introduction to the aria and closely followed the singing; the player of the "Kemantcha" in his turn took his cue from the first player, while the tambourine kept the beat. In this manner three artists improvised at the same time!

Gadzhibekov's "score" was a mass of annotations of these improvisations, but such an unusual approach to music for the

theatre is quite understandable if one remembers the mentality of an Azerbaijanian artist of that time. The other part of Gadzhibekov's opera consisted of dances and songs "in unison" with melodies fixed by the composer and accompanied by an orchestra whose members were all native players on the "Tara" and the "Kemantcha." These, again, performed without music; they merely followed the logical development of the given Mougam (tonality). Occasionally Gadzhibekov was fortunate enough to secure the services of a couple of fiddlers or of a clarinet and a flute, who of course played from music written down by the composer then and there.

The art of improvisation, this ancient art of Azerbaijan Ashugs so dearly beloved by all the country, was thus grafted on to the operatic performance. But this did not mean that the performance itself or the music of the opera were ever permitted to become shapeless. The Azerbaijan people have evolved a truly remarkable musical tradition; thus a song once improvised would be repeated on other occasions with no more variation than one could reasonably expect from the "cadenzi" of a temperamental prima-donna. After a few performances Useir Gadzhibekov was able to write the whole opera down and to insist that it should be sung and played more or less accordingly.

The difficulties of knitting together a company of such highly individual performers endowed with cultural traditions dating back to the Middle Ages were extreme. Gadzhibekov further recalls that he collected all his personal friends—artists, teachers and students—and coached them in their parts himself. His leading Tarist* was one Kourban Primov, now the bearer of the title of People's Artist of Azerbaijan. The tragic part of "Medzum" whom unhappy love had driven crazy, was played by Hussein Sarabsky, another famous artist to-day. The beautiful and gentle Leila was sung by a man—for the laws of Shariat forbade the women to appear on the stage. Neither should there have been any women present in the theatre during the performance, but a private box completely draped over with black veils was prepared for Azerbaijan noblewomen from which they could watch the stage if they wished without being seen from the audience. Gadzhibekov says that, because of the presence of this funereal box his leading man—the handsome young Arabsky—was set upon and beaten in the streets by order of the Mullah the very next day!

* Player of the "Tara" instrument.

The success of the opera was enormous. The Azerbaijanian audience of Baku, mostly workmen, artisans with a sprinkling of intelligentsia, followed the performance with baited breath. After each act Arabsky had an ovation until, overcome with emotion and with tears in his eyes, he shouted to the public, "Wait and see what I can do in the next act. . . ."

"Leili and Medzum" is still considered to be the most popular opera in Azerbaijan. During the 30 years of its evolution, the opera "grew up," so to speak, as the ensemble work of the artists and the technique of the orchestral players improved. Gadzhibekov was, after all, able to apply to his music such theoretical knowledge on composition as he had found in his first two text books in 1905.

With the coming of the Revolution of 1917, Useir Gadzhibekov's work became easier. His opera company received State support. In 1922 he was made Director of Baku Music School, in those days the only music school in Azerbaijan, and at once organised a section of National Music and introduced European musical notation for players on the "Tara," the "Sa'az" and the "Kemantcha." Since then Useir Gadzhibekov has been enlarging his musical and social activities more and more. The pupils of his first musical school have, under his direction, organised an orchestra of players of Eastern native instruments which broadcasts regularly from Baku Radio Station; they possess now a written repertoire. The Azerbaijan State Mixed Choir is 200 voices strong; Gadzhibekov conducts it himself and composes its songs. The Baku State Conservatory of Music, of which Useir Gadzhibekov is Founder and President, boasts a thousand students, players of the Tara and Kemantcha.

Nor are Gadzhibekov's achievements as writer on musical matters less imposing. He wrote a treatise on "The Origins of Azerbaijan Music," several books on the complicated Mougamic traditions of Azerbaijan; he compiled text books for the "Tara" and made exhaustive studies on the history of Azerbaijanian national musical instruments.

It would be impossible to enumerate here everything that Gadzhibekov composed, wrote, classified and discovered about his native music.

Sufficient to say that without Gadzhibekov's indefatigable efforts there would be no such thing as Azerbaijan national music.

The crowning success of Useir Gadzhibekov's career as composer came in 1938, during the "Ten-day Festival of Azerbaijan Art," when his latest Opera-Ballet "Ker-Oglu" was pre-

sented to Moscow audiences. "Ker-Oglu" had been playing to packed houses all over Transcaucasia since 1937; the hero of the opera—Ashug Rowshan—surnamed "Son of the Blindman" (Ker-Oglu) is a historic figure whose exploits date from the 16th century and who is equally well known in Uzcbpkistan, Turkmania, Armenia and Georgia. There does not exist a single tower, fortress, caravanserai or antique cave in the whole of that mountainous region which is not connected with legends of "Ker-Oglu."* The thirteen parts of the epic of "Ker-Oglu" are as monumental as the remarkable 17th century Mausoleum of Carabatchmar—one of the finest in Azerbaijan.

Ashug Rowshan was a leader of peasant mutiny and a famous "condottiero" who in the 16th century meted out justice and protected the oppressed whenever they appealed to him. His cavalry roamed as far as the Chinese borders. Hence his international renown. Ashug Rowshan rebelled against his liege Lord the Khan Hassan when that potentate blinded Rowshan's father, a stable man, for the loss of a favourite stallion.

This poignant moment opens the opera. Gadzhibekov possesses an extraordinary flair for dramatic action; he builds up his climax slowly but uninterruptedly throughout the first three Acts of the opera until the mass scene at the foot of Ker-Oglu's tower (Chenli-Bel) in the fourth Act. The general style of Useir Gdzhibekov's music in "Ker Oglu" is classical; all the usual Western operatic forms are present—arias, duets, ensembles and recitative. The orchestral part is highly developed symphonically and coloured by the presence of a strong mixture of native instruments.

Gadzhibekov wisely introduced original songs composed by Ashug Rowshan in the 16th century for all the arias and monologues of his operatic hero. And, in fact, the entire opera of "Ker-Oglu" is composed upon Ashug melodies (not the Mougams). The scenery is painstakingly correct in every ethnographic 17th century detail. Gadzhibekov is an acknowledged authority on the matter himself.

The opera "Ker-Oglu" secured for Useir Gadzhibekov the 2nd Stalin Premium† of 50,000 roubles in 1941.

* See the Rev. Penn, missionary and explorer, on "Tales of the Bandit Ker-Oglu."

† "Stalin Premiums" are awarded for outstanding works in Art and Literature.

VII

REINGOLD MAURICE GLIERE is the President of the Moscow Union of Soviet Composers. This universally famous "Master Musician of U.S.S.R." is principal composer, promoter and organiser of opera in his native Azerbaijan.* R. Gliere is now in his late sixties, a professor of Moscow Conservatory of Music. Already before the Revolution he had made his name in the musical world as a particularly sensitive artist though lacking in originality and in subject matter. R. Gliere is still a true representative of the best classical traditions in Russian music, although Azerbaijan claims him as one of its most gifted composers. The Nationalities Policy of the U.S.S.R. filled Gliere with enthusiasm; he saw in it tremendous opportunities for music in general and for his native land in particular. At the request of the Government he transferred his musical activities to Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. This land of freedom-loving Ashugs† boasts, among other things, of some of the oldest muslim architecture and frescoed mural decoration in the world.

The style of Azerbaijan artistic culture has always been dominated by Arabic-Iranian influence, especially in music of the Ashug; some of the best traditions of this mixed influence are still traceable in Azerbaijan melodies. And this can be readily understood if one realises that the national Azerbaijan music is as yet but partially recorded and transcribed. Considerable difficulties lie that way; firstly because the "Mougams" having no musical notations, were always sung and played by ear. Before the Nationalities Policy had been introduced in Azerbaijan, Baku possessed only one Music School for the whole extensive country, and in it a single Azerbaijanian student. The national instruments, for which the Mougams were composed, are the "Sa'az," the "Tara" and the "Kemantcha"; none of these entered into the curriculum of the Baku Music School.

Secondly, the fundamental "Mougams" (the word, literally translated, means "tone") are eight in number.‡

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|----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. "Rast." | 2. "Seiga." |
| 3. "Shoor." | 4. "Tcharga." |
| 5. "Bayat-Isphagan." | 6. "Shooshtar." |
| 7. "Hodmayun." | 8. "Za'abil." |

* The S.S.R. of Azerbaijan lies on the shores of the Caspian Sea.

† Native singers of Trans-Caucasia.

‡ "Foundations of Azerbaijan Music." U. Gadzhibekov. Muzgiz, 1938.

Each of these Mougams is distinguishable by its characteristic scales, within whose limits every Mougam has sprouted numberless co-related variations. Incidentally, the greater bulk of national Azerbaijan songs are built up on Mougams No. 2 and 3. "Mougams" are veritable rhapsodies; they astound the listener not only by the wealth of their melodic material and its striking tonality but also by their most meticulous rhythmic development. Taken collectively, the Mougams are big musical and literary cycles consisting of single compositions held together by one common poetic thought. The Azerbaijan "Mougam," possessing a highly masterful approach to the intricacies of its musical idea, required great skill of execution, which — ever within the limits of the fundamental Mougamic scale and in conformity with the Mougam general poetic thought—gave the performer a certain latitude for improvisation. This latter point, of course, added substantially to the difficulties of every musical collector of original Mougams. At the same time, such an opportunity of improvisation explains the deeply individual artistic interpretation of Mougams by some of the best Azerbaijanian Ashugs.

Ashug Art is as ancient as the history of Eastern people. National legends of Azerbaijan have preserved until to-day tales about poet singers who accompanied their "chants with string instruments"; the oldest known example of such poetic compositions dates back to the 10th century, "The Book of Dede Korkud." From the 16th century onwards, the Ashugs are represented as disseminating works of classic poets of Azerbaijan—Fizuli (16th century), Wagiff (17th century), and others—and playing the "Four stringed Sa'az" specie of pear-shaped lute made of nut tree wood with a very long finger board. Ashugs were always extremely well-beloved by the population. Their activity was wide. They appeared alike in caravanserais and feudal castles. Only one woman seems to have ever competed in this essentially masculine profession—the almost legendary Ashug Zarniar, successful winner of a contest against 39 male artists. Her prowess is described in a fairy tale (destan) of the 16th century. The Ashug is a wonderful singer; his vocal technique is remarkable; he is also something of a dancer.

Finally, Ashugs were authors for and actor-producers of marionette-theatres and dramatic sketches.* The usual Ashug

* See "Marionettes Theatre and Plays of Azerbaijan." U.S.S.R. Academy of Science. Affiliation of Historic Series XXV. Baku, 1936.

performance opens with a short discussion upon a moral subject; then follow two or three independent songs. The main item of the programme is the recounting of a legend, or of a fairy tale (destan), which the Ashug does in a conversational manner, illustrating it with songs when the subject of the tale demands. Dramatic sketches and marionettes are introduced during intervals between episodes of the "Destan." The performance ends with solo dancing. Throughout the act the Ashug accompanies himself by playing the "Sa'az," the 10 strings of which, grouped in 2, 3, and 4, are tuned in unison, in D, G, and C; in this manner the end groups of strings form an interval of a major second. The individuality of the artist Ashug shews itself not in the improvisation of the music for the performance but principally in the choice of the Mougam or of one of its logical variations. For instance, Ashug Assad, decorated singer of Azerbaijan S.S.R., bases his melodies on a Diatonic Pentachord: A, G, F, E, D (from D), whereas Ashug Avac when confronted with the request to render a similar melody would probably employ a different variation of the same Mougam.

The Ashugs themselves figure as principal heroes of Azerbaijanian Mougam epics. For centuries, under the cloak of artistic activities, these intrepid performers roamed the countryside bringing progressive ideas to the very heart of peoples, whom Stalin,* at the outset of the Revolution had described as once being one of the most backward feudal communities in human society. The Ashugs acknowledged no political or racial frontiers, they were equally well loved in Uzbekistan, Turkmenia, Armenia and Georgia. Since the 16th century their names rang over the whole vast territory of Central Asia; their exploits were idolised; they were simultaneously claimed as native heroes by every country there. The nationality of Ashug Ker-Oglu, who in the 16th century led a peasant uprising in Azerbaijan, was disputed among those countries nearly as much as the birthplace of Homer in Ancient Greece! Thanks to the synthesised art of the earliest Ashugs, Azerbaijan artistic culture became international in the truest sense of the word; its influence upon other cultures of Central Asia and Transcaucasia was enormous, and that in spite of preponderant Arabic-Iranian cultural traditions. It might be of interest to note here that when a piece of "good" music is demanded for a concert programme or a simple amateur performance anywhere in that part of U.S.S.R., it is invariably

* Joseph V. Stalin is a native of Georgia.

Azerbaijan music which fulfils the requirement to-day, as it used to do centuries ago.

The Soviet Nationalities Policy insists upon real national music for Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic. R. N. Gliere set himself, therefore, the task of composing an Azerbaijan opera based upon pure Azerbaijanian musical material, treating a popular Azerbaijan theme. His choice fell upon the 400 years old fable about the beautiful Shah-Senen and her love for Ashug Kerib.

Kerib is poor. Fate has endowed him with nothing more than "a high heart and the gift of song," so runs the Azerbaijan fairy story. His fearlessness, wit and talents win him the hand of Shah-Senen, whose father the Khan had promised her in marriage to the victor of a large musical contest arranged in the caravanserai. Kerib's poverty infuriates the old man. There is, also, another reason for the Khan's wrath. He knows the Ashug is a stout champion of the oppressed people of the town; he refuses to deliver Shah-Senen to Kerib. There is a mutinous rising of the common people, who wish to help their hero; the Ashug banishes Kerib from his native land. But Shah-Senen, the beautiful, loves him faithfully. She is as brave and freedom-loving as the Ashug. The plot has a happy ending.

R. M. Gliere began composing the opera, "Shah-Senen," in 1924; he admits that he only partly succeeded in separating the pure Azerbaijan Mougam from Iranian music. In fact, the composer indicates all "uncertain" musical moments in the opera; thus, Shah-Senen has a "Persian arioso" in the First Act. Altogether about 30 antique Iranian melodies have been used by Gliere, taken from repertoires of famous Ashugs, all of them designated for the opening symphony, the mass scenes and the grotesque dances of the opera. Kerib's musical character, however, is built upon the "Seiga" Mougam—"with perfect taste and accomplished mastery" say the U.S.S.R. press notices. Alone the Mougam "Tcharga" is introduced in its national Azerbaijan purity; throughout the opera Gliere gives truly remarkable samples of its tonality.

Not the less noteworthy are the composer's efforts to utilise Azerbaijanian rhythmic peculiarities, which are many. The improvisatory style of Ashug performances, the colourful sounds of the native "Kemantcha" Gliere interprets in the orchestra. through a characteristic use of violin parts. A combination of flutes and violas reproduces that other national string instrument, the "Tara."

"Shah-Senen" was performed in Moscow for the first time in 1938 during the Ten-day Festival of Azerbaijan Art.

But long before that Gliere's opera had been playing its important progressive part in the musical life of modern Azerbaijan. "Shah Senem" was the first national grand opera, written in classical form by a U.S.S.R. master composer, to be seen in the theatres of the Republic. Azerbaijanian audiences, artists native composers grew and qualified in musical art with its help. Endowed with all the technical resources of European musical culture, R. M. Gliere came to Azerbaijan as special Envoy of the Soviet State, to show native composers the only right way to create their own national and socialist music.

VIII

MIKHAIL FABIAN GNESSIN represents the older generation of U.S.S.R. composers. He is an authority on Hebrew and Jewish music.

Gnessin was born in Rostov-on-the-Don in 1883. He had excellent schooling as a boy, and in 1901 was admitted to the St. Petersburg Conservatory of Music where he studied under Rimsky-Korsakov and Liadov. At the end of the course, in 1908, the young composer joined forces with V. Meyerhold and worked among the workmen's clubs in that city—a unique occurrence in those days! From 1914 to 1921 Mikhail Gnessin lived in Rostov-on-the-Don, taking an active part in Socialist movements among the working classes, composing a good deal and teaching all the time. In 1921 Gnessin went to Palestine for special research into Hebrew music; he stayed there two years.

After his return to the Soviet Union, Gnessin spent the time teaching alternatively in Moscow and in Leningrad. In 1936 he was offered by the Soviet Authorities the chair of Professor of Composition at the Leningrad Conservatory of Music, which he occupies to this day.

Gnessin has been composing since 1903. His first works were not original enough to attract attention, but he very quickly developed his own personal creative style, although one strongly influenced by impressionism and symbolism, so fashionable before the First World War.

This initial period of the composer's music produced some beautiful and refined vocal numbers of a truly lyric-improvisory character. Gnessin wrote around Eastern poems, Russian symbolic verse and antique sagas. His best effort, perhaps, was the "Symphonic Dithyrambus," composed on the death of the famous Wroubel, Russian painter and modernist.

Gnessin's association with Hebrew and national Jewish music in Palestine completely changed his musical creative outlook. From the style of declamatory music, which till then he had adopted, Gnessin turned to a richly ornamented, purely singable line of melody. He dipped at first into the ancient Hebraic melos, later into that of the Biblical East. The most remarkable examples of Gnessin's music of this second period are: Op. 32, "Three Hebraic Songs," and the opera-poem "Abraham's Youth."

The great Proletarian Revolution in October of 1918 inspired Mikhail Gnessin to write his major composition, the "Symphonic Monument." This signalled the commencement of Gnessin's "third" and last period of musical convolutions.

Gnessin planned the work in 1905—the year of the abortive revolutionary attempt in Russia; as a musical memorial of the people's struggle for freedom. The composer definitely begins to strive after a realistic musical language, a language suitable for his nation. Thus the Hebraic music of Mikhail Gnessin acquires colloquial, even conversational intonations, which eventually led him to compose the incidental music for the "Story about the Red-headed Motel" (by I. Utkin).

The bulk of Mikhail Gnessin's compositions consists of vocal music, but he has also written some instrumental music. Among the better known are: Sonata-Ballad for 'Cello and Piano, "Requiem for Quintet," "Song of Ancient Fatherland" (a poem for Orchestra), variations on a Jewish national theme for string quartet, and a Concert Suite for violin and orchestra.

IX

ARAM KHACHATURIAN, Member of the Order of Merit (Arts) for the S.S.R. of Armenia, and its most celebrated composer, was born in Tbilisi in 1904. Up to his 19th year Khachaturian never touched music; he could not even read musical notation.

In 1923 the young man decided to come to Moscow. He joined the "Musical Technicum" school, named after Gnessin. There he learnt to play the 'cello, and three years later began to study composition under Gnessin himself. Eventually Khachaturian was admitted to the Moscow Conservatory of Music where he continued his studies in composition under Miaskovsky, and instrumentation with Vassilenko. Altogether these lessons went on uninterrupted for 10 years, after which Khachaturian got his diploma in composition with honours. His name is now engraved "For Posterity" on the marble plate of honour in the main hall of the Moscow Conservatory.

A. Khachaturian wrote about 40 small musical pieces for voice and piano and for various stringed instruments before leaving the Conservatory.

His first important composition was performed in 1933—the First Symphony—which shows distinctly the line he intended to take—one of strong individuality combined with national Armenian melodiousness, as understood by the composer. This Symphony was followed by music for the film "Pepo" permeated with the characteristics of Armenian folk songs. As a general rule Khachaturian prefers not to introduce authentic Armenian melodies into his works. How well the composer understood Armenian national melodic construction is proved by the fact that the main song from this film music has become in Soviet Armenia a national song.

Between 1933 and 1937 Khachaturian continued to compose, one after another, a series of big works, mostly instrumental. The "Dancing Suite" in five movements for Symphonic orchestra; A "Song-Poem" for violin and piano, a violin sonata; a toccata for piano; and the Second Symphony. The composer's fame rose rapidly until it spread beyond the borders of U.S.S.R. In the winter of 1937 his works were performed successfully in Paris.

The composition which made Aram Khachaturian world-famous is the Trio for clarinet, violin and piano. It is an early

work, having been composed in 1932, but the freshness of musical language, the temperamental strength of the composition make this Trio an excellent sample of Soviet Chamber Music. Khachaturian composed the Trio on themes from national Eastern music; he treated these themes artistically in the true Armenian style. That is why Khachaturian chose not to plan the Trio on classical lines, but presented it in the shape of variations following the principle of Ashug Art. Part One of the Trio, with its ornamental melodic phrases, is typically Transcaucasian. The dance rhythm of Part Two is designed to convey the whirlwind velocity of Eastern dancing. Part Three is a genuine Uzbek folk song. Khachaturian made the clarinet part purposely predominant in the Trio because its tone is reminiscent of certain national Armenian wind instruments. The composer also explained that, by creating his complex harmonies for the Trio, he aimed at the reproduction of overtones which sometimes occur when the "Tara" is being played.

In 1937 Khachaturian composed his first Piano Concerto. It was hailed as "an event in Soviet music."

Of all branches of musical composition, music for the piano had attracted Soviet composers least. This was mainly due to the attitude of the "A.C.M." (Association of Contemporary Music) which considered music for the piano "A form of Bourgeois drawing-room music making," with the result that in the U.S.S.R. very few piano concertos had been composed. Only four attained anything like large publicity, and these were "Turkmenia" (Boris Shekhter); 2nd Piano Concerto (Kabelevsky); Piano Concerto by Tikhan Khrennikov; a Concerto by Professor Makarov-Rakitin. Khachaturian brought out his Concerto at the time when Soviet music was in danger of ignoring completely the pianistic traditions of Franz Liszt. Khachaturian reinstated them at one stroke; his Piano Concerto is a virtuoso rivalry between the soloist and the orchestra. It is in three movements—the sonata-like "Allegro"; the "Lyric romance"; and the "Dance." The orchestral part is vivid.

Khachaturian's piano concerto derives from Armenian folk song, and in parts imitates national Armenian instruments. This aspect of the work was certainly an innovation in Soviet piano concerto music when compared with those of Rachmaninov, Scriabin, and even of the Western composer Igor Stravinsky. But that does not mean that the folk song character of Khachaturian's concerto possesses no specific tradition. One has only to remember Balakirev's and Tchaikovsky's piano concertos

to see how right Khachaturian was in deciding to compose a "National" piano concerto once more.

In 1937 Khachaturian composed the "Song Poem of Stalin" for chorus and orchestra, on words by the Armenian Ashug Mirza Bayramov of Tauza. It is considered to be the best composition of its kind in U.S.S.R. The musical language of the "Song Poem of Stalin" is picturesque, realistic, dynamic and colourfully national. Some of the finest Transcaucasian tunes are to be found in it.

Khachaturian aims at combining a folk song style with the symphonic principles of melodic development, laid down in Western European classical music. The violin concerto composed in 1940 is a striking illustration of the composer's creative attitude. Khachaturian was awarded one of the five "2nd Stalin Premiums" of 50,000 roubles for his violin concerto in 1941.

Apart from the above enumerated works, Khachaturian wrote the film music of "Zanghezur," the story of Armenia's metallurgical centre, first mentioned in history in the 6th century B.C.; the ballet "Spartak" in 1942; and "Song of Stalin" for a brass band.

Khachaturian's social musical activities are many and varied. He is a noted authority on Oriental music and its instruments. He has been "borrowed" on many occasions by the autonomous Republics of Uzbekistan and Tadzhikistan to conduct research work in connection with their national music.

X

TIKHON KHRENNIKOV is a true Muscovite. He was born in 1913 in the heart of U.S.S.R.

At the aged of 16 Khrennikov went to the Moscow "Musical Technicum," a college that bears the name of Gnessin and is planned as a preparatory school for the Moscow Conservatory of Music.

Tikhon Khrennikov remained there for three years, after which the young composer was accepted for the Second Year's Course of the Conservatory. Tikhon Khrennikov studied Composition in the class of Prof. V. J. Shebalin. In 1933, at the end of one year's studying, he composed a Concerto for pianoforte and Orchestra (Opus 1) which brought him to the immediate attention of Soviet musicians and music critics; a great future was predicted by all for the young composer.

This initial success was followed by "Five Pieces" (Opus 2), a cycle of dainty pianoforte works, and music for the play "Mick." In 1934 Tikhon Khrennikov began composing his First Symphony (Opus 4), on which he worked for over eighteen months. If the preceding compositions showed Khrennikov's partiality to the influence of Shostakovich's masterful musicianship, the First Symphony establishes the young composer's own musical style—that of emotional lyrician and remarkable melodiousness.

After the First Symphony Khrennikov reverted to composing for the pianoforte with a "Second Cycle" of small works and also songs with piano accompaniment. Music for the theatre, written in 1936, comprises that for the Shakespearean comedy "Much Ado About Nothing," produced in the Theatre Vakhtangov, and "Concert," a play in which Khrennikov collaborated with Professor Shebalin.

In 1937 Khrennikov composed the opera "Brothers," in eight scenes, based on N. Virt's celebrated novel "Solitude." As the young composer explained later, his intention was to write a people's heroic drama; he deliberately chose the subject, that of peasants' struggle against the counter-revolutionary bands of Antonov, as it gave him the desired opportunity of illustrating his conception of Soviet opera. The libretto was prepared by A. Faiko, who had to alter the plot of Virt's novel and adapt it to theatrical technique. Positive characters had to be built up. Much was made out of Listrat's part* and of Grandad Vassili (the village Communist), "who had been to Moscow and spoken with Lenin." Antonov, principal negative character in the novel "Solitude" only appears in the opera once, in the drunken "isba" scene with his mistress Maruska. Storozhev, on the other hand, was created as a sly and dangerous enemy. The dramatic interest of the operatic action, so far as the leading characters are concerned, lies in the fact that Aksinia, a Tanbov peasant woman, has two sons—one Listrat (a Communist) the other, Lionka (a reactionary Russian, follower of Antonov's counter-revolutionary attempts). Lionka subsequently is converted. Lionka is loved by Natasha, and when—at the end of the opera—Lionka is gravely wounded by Storozhev, Natasha grabs Lionka's rifle and kills the enemy outright. Antonov's fighting bands are conquered and the peasants start the collectivisation of farmland.

* Short for "Callistrat."

The music of Khrennikov's opera is operatic music in its truest sense. Khrennikov avoids all innovation; he employs the usual operatic forms, which are always nicely finished and rounded up—be it an arioso (Natash's "Blue Shawl" in Scene 1) or a dramatic scene (Peasants' Chorus in Scene 2). Khrennikov's characters are well defined, especially the women—the harassed mother, Aksinia; the passionate Natasha; the cruel Maruska: whose parts the composer wrote with consummate knowledge of vocal effect upon dramatic scenes. The music of the opera "Brothers" is very melodious, true Russian in its intonation, although authentic national songs are quoted only on two occasions. Local colour is achieved because folklore tonality comes from Tanbov and Orel, where the action takes place.

Khrennikov's musical language is extremely simple, even laconic, and very clear. What he has to say he says in a straightforward manner with dramatic effectiveness and in the best traditions of classic operatic art.

By 1942 Tikhon Khrennikov wrote the Ballet "Crystal Goblet" and the "Shepherd and Swineherdess" (Kolhos), a film in which the music is the chief motivating force of the film (not just film music). His Second Symphony is nearing completion. War songs which Khrennikov had published are appearing in million copy editions—all of them consumed by the eager and appreciative Soviet public.

Tikhon Khrennikov is one of the most gifted composers of the younger generation in U.S.S.R.

XI

GRIGORI VARFOLOMEI KILADZE is a Georgian composer and member of the U.S.S.R. Order of The Red Banner for Labour.

Kiladze was born in Tbilisi (Tiflis) in 1905. He first learned music in his school choir which was conducted by Z. Paliashvili. Kiladze composed some songs as a schoolboy and Paliashvili had one of these performed by the boys' choir, presumably by way of encouraging the lad who came from a poor working-class family. Kiladze took lessons in violin playing while still at school, and he kept his musical training up after leaving school although he could ill afford it.

Grigori Kiladze had to work hard for his living. He was employed, in turn, as a greaser at the Tbilisi electric power station, odd-job man in various garages and mechanic in a second-rate cinema. But he persevered in his musical efforts and during free hours played the violin and conducted the amateur orchestra of the "Society of Young Georgian Musicians."

The application of the Nationalities Policy to the S.S. Republic of Georgia gave Kiladze the chance to take up music seriously. In 1925 he joined the Tbilisi Conservatory for two years and studied under the famous Georgian professor of music, critic and scholar-composer Arakishvili. Afterwards Grigori Kiladze went to Leningrad where he completed the course in composition directed by B. Riazanov.

1930 found Kiladze back in Tbilisi. He was then appointed musical director of the Theatre "Shota Roustaveli," named after the greatest of national poets in Georgia.

At present Kiladze is a professor at the Tbilisi Conservatory of Music. He holds classes in instrumentation and practical composition.

Kiladze's particularly successful sphere of composition is that of symphonic music. He wrote several orchestral suites, "The Heroic Symphony," the "Festive Overture for Soli, Chorus and Orchestra" and the symphonic poem, "Gandeghili" (The Recluse), in 1936—which was awarded one of the five "2nd Stalin Premiums" of 50,000 roubles, in 1941. "Gandeghili" was specially composed for the fifty-year jubilee celebrations of the Georgian poet, I. Chavchavadze. It is written on the theme of the poet's best-known work of the same name. Its main idea is a call to a bright, happy, useful life. A shepherdess's song in the distance disturbs the Recluse's peace of soul. An internal conflict ensues after which the man returns to the world to lead a fuller life.

Grigori Kiladze possesses a remarkable mastery of every orchestral tone possibility and that of instrumental colouring. "Gandeghili" is musically based on national Georgian melodies; it throbs with dramatic feeling and although extremely colloquial in its musical phraseology, does nothing to subdue Kiladze's strong individuality.

The symphonic poem of "Gandeghili" is acknowledged to represent the best example of Soviet national symphonism.

Kiladze has composed two operas, "Bakhtioni" and "Lado Ketskhoveli"—the latter recounting the life and exploits of a notable Bolshevik. During the years when Kiladze was musical

director of "Shota Roustaveli" Theatre, he wrote a considerable amount of incidental music for the theatre and staged two films, "The Last Masquerade" and "Arcene." Several compositions for massed choirs and "The Song about Stalin" testify to Kiladze's capacity for blending human voices in as masterly and original a fashion as he does the instruments of his orchestra.

XII

FEODOR KORNILOV, himself a native of Yakutia, instituted research into the vocal tradition of the Yakuts. He was a school teacher at the time. With the idea of developing a national culture among the Yakut people he organised a choir of young Yakut men and women. Previously, community singing occurred in Yakut life only twice yearly — during the Spring and Summer Horse Milk (Koomis) Festivities—accompanied by traditional song and dance. Kornilov observed that Yakutian professional singers, who were poets as well, performed the epic fairy tales and songs of Yakutia in a declamatory recitative, based on five melodies descriptive of the five leading characters in the Yakut heroic epos.

1. Melody of the Knight of the Middle (earthly) World (being also the principal melody of the entire Yakut Epos).
2. Melody of the Knight of the Devil World (subterranean).
3. Melody of the Witch (whose face is turned back to front).
4. Melody of the Ancient Slave Woman (whose bed is a slab of snow).
5. Melody of the Tungus Knight (the latter character expressed most poetically and usually sung).

The epic tales, though extremely fantastic, give a fairly good historic account of Yakut feudalism. The songs speak of seasonable bird-flights; of the coming and going of spring; of the eternal snows of the north.

Kornilov had some difficulty with the choir. The men thought it degrading to sing in a crowd; the national choral repertoire was infinitesimal. In 1923, F. Kornilov began collect-

ing and transcribing Yakut songs* with a view, primarily, of teaching them in Yakut schools; but he soon perceived that the very varied rhythm of these little melodies, presented a process of musical evolution in one of its stages, hitherto unexplored. The melody of Yakut declamatory recitative is built on the intervals of the Third and the Second pointing to the great antiquity of that music. The Yakutian folk songs, in addition, use bare Fourths, usually downwards—like a final cadence.

The basic musical and poetic rhythm of Yakut songs, is that of a seven foot choriamb (2—2—3). Prof. Kornilov's observations disclose through the variations of that rhythm first the transformation of choriamb into iambics; and later, the birth of anapest and dactyl from the choriamb. Thereafter Yakut folklore has become the earnest study of U.S.S.R. musicologists.

XIII

NICOLAI MIASKOVSKY, Doctor of Science (Research in Arts), is the celebrated Soviet Symphonist whose fame has spread across the European continent and reached America, although the composer himself has never left the territory of U.S.S.R.

Not much is known of Miaskovsky's private life to-day; but behind this shy reticence is hidden a personality of tremendous social activity and widespread artistic interests. Miaskovsky, the pedagogue, has brought up two generations of Soviet musicians who, even after leaving the Moscow Conservatory of Music, are loth to break their connection with him. Not only young composers but old-fashioned celebrities of the musical world bring their creative problems to that sympathetic and painstaking honest artist.

Miaskovsky was born in 1881 in the Fortress of Novo-Georgieusk near Warsaw. His father was a military engineer, which meant that, as a boy, Nicolai Miaskovsky travelled a good deal about the country following his father's Government appointments. He was a precocious child, and could read and write at the age of four. Of his life in Novo-Georgieusk, the composer recollects only two things—the martial tune, to the

* Collection of Yakut folk songs (Nos 1 to 88) F. Kornilov. 1936. (Muzgiz).

strains of which a trained bull used to march along a tree trunk in the big circus tent in Warsaw, and the fact that he himself usually sat under the piano whenever it was played. When Miaskovsky was seven years old his father moved to Orenburg at the foot of the Ural Mountains and thence to Kazan, on the river Volga. Here Miaskovsky's mother died—a bitter blow to the boy whose friend and teacher she had been. At that time there were five children in the Miaskovsky family, three of them younger than the future composer. In his autobiography a short unemotional note which Miaskovsky was at last persuaded to write in 1935, he half-humorously describes the arrival of "Auntie"—his father's sister—who came to Kazan to look after the bereaved family. "Auntie" was something of a celebrity, having sung in the chorus of St. Petersburg Opera House—then called "Maryinsky." To her Nicolai owes his first music lesson on the upright piano which had to be hired for the "celebrity," and also the frequent visits to such operatic seasons as were arranged in Kazan. Miaskovsky says that the music of Glinka's "Ivan Sussanin" transported him with ecstasy when he first heard the opera. Miaskovsky's father was not a well-to-do man; the children had to be educated by means of Government grants in schools specially provided for families of servicemen. Nicolai was sent to Nijni-Novgorod Cadet School, as his father intended the boy to take up a military career. While having lessons from "Auntie" young Miaskovsky displayed an exceptionally retentive musical memory and a faultless ear; he practised scales on the hired piano with great zeal and untiring patience, in spite of the fact that his teacher was inclined to be neurotic. By that time the elder Miaskovsky had risen to the rank of General and could afford the expenditure of a few extra sums on the boy's education. Nicolai's keenness to continue to take lessons in piano playing was thus gratified. Miaskovsky tells in his autobiography of the many difficulties he had at the Cadet School while trying to practise his scales regularly. The elder students were for ever clamouring for the use of the piano; Miaskovsky protested vehemently and fought "defensive actions" and "bloody battles" over the keyboard. Matters did not improve much after General Miaskovsky's move to St. Petersburg, where young Nicolai followed his father, being automatically transferred to a similar cadet school in the capital. Although he had private lessons at home now once a fortnight, when on "leave," love for music urged him to spend every free moment over the piano. This time, the school authorities for-

bade him to play. Then Nicolai Miaskovsky took up the violin and joined the Cadet String Orchestra, conducted by Kazani. The composer says the orchestra was mostly conducted with an odd chair leg as Kazani was prone to lose his temper and break every baton in his hand.

In St. Petersburg Miaskovsky had greater opportunity of hearing good music well performed. In 1896, Arthur Nikisch conducted a symphony concert, the programme of which included Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, and the equally superb ballad, "Voyevoda." Miaskovsky was overwhelmed by the magnificence of pure symphonic music; he decided to take up music seriously at the first opportunity and to compose symphonies himself as soon as he knew enough about it; in the meantime he kept a piano score of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony permanently on his desk.

In 1899 Miaskovsky finished his training at the cadet school and, at his father's wish, entered the Academy of Military Engineers. Only the pick of the students were admitted there and Miaskovsky remembers those three years of highly specialised training with pleasure because of the charming and intelligent type of young men he had for comrades. At the end of the course Nicolai Miaskovsky was posted to Moscow. His opportunity to study music seriously had come.

Not knowing whom to approach for private lessons in composition in Moscow, Miaskovsky wrote a letter to N. Rimsky-Korsakov, "that teacher of all teachers."* He hardly expected an answer to his modest request, but one came, advising him to go to Taneev. When, however, he presented himself before that famous musician he was so overcome by shyness and a sense of his own unworthiness as composer that he refused to let Taneev hear any of his illiterate musical dabbings, as Nicolai Miaskovsky calls them in his autobiography. An astonished Taneev found himself advising the tall, trembling youth to go to Reingold Gliere, who had just completed the course of the Conservatory of Music. Within six months Miaskovsky had covered the entire course in harmony.

Two years later (1904) the military authorities moved Nicolai Miaskovsky back to St. Petersburg. Before leaving R. Gliere he showed him for the first time some of his compositions—songs for voice and piano (subsequently destroyed by the composer), Gliere pronounced them "promising" and sent the

* The U.S.S.R. considers Miaskovsky to be that himself now. R.M.

young officer to Kryshanovsky, celebrated Doctor of Medicine and composer theorist, promoter of the concert series known as "Evenings of Contemporary Music." Miaskovsky studied with him for two more years—he took composition, counterpoint, instrumentation, etc.—in fact a preparatory course for the entry to the Conservatory of Music—but although in constant touch with a circle of literary modernism (he read Leonid Andreev and M. Gorky) Nicolai Miaskovsky was not attracted by this urge to find the last word in musical technique and inventiveness. Miaskovsky was ever an individualist. During that period he composed a "Cycle of Songs" on words by Z. Gyppius and Balmont, and a series of piano pieces.

In 1905 Miaskovsky joined the St. Petersburg Conservatory as a voluntary student in the class of the redoubtable Liadov. The young musician felt the ties of military service more and more. According to his own avowal, Nicolai Miaskovsky had to use phenomenal tact and discretion to please the military authorities and not to miss Liadov's lectures. Here it was that he made his famous resolve—"never to lose a single minute of time." At last, in 1907, his obligatory military service came to an end and Miaskovsky was permitted to resign his commission.

His first year of freedom was difficult; he was short of money. Miaskovsky started teaching music and Liadov, of whom even to-day the greatest Soviet symphonist thinks "with admiration and abject terror," recommended some pupils, amongst them Kobylansky, who is now Professor of the Lenin-grad Conservatory. It is more than probable that the sensitive, highly strung musician has made such a wonderful teacher only because he had himself been so tyrannised over by his professor. Liadov possessed an extremely liverish temper; moreover, any deviation from what he called "clarity and logic" in a Fugue made him impatient. Miaskovsky, on the other hand, was seeking a style of musical expression of his own; hence the friction between professor and pupil. Miaskovsky never showed him his First Symphony composed in 1908 (Op. 3) but took it to A. Glazounov direct, who liked it immensely and awarded Miaskovsky half of the "Glazounov Scholarship" to enable the young composer to pay the fees of the Conservatory (250 roubles p.a.; in those days £20 10s. 0d.).

Nicolai Miaskovsky now felt he had found his particular sphere of musical creativeness in symphonic music—his heart had told him long ago.

In 1911 Miaskovsky left the Conservatory. He showed

Liadov two string quartets (later incorporated in Op. 33, Nos. 3 and 4), which Liadov approved and granted Miaskovsky his diploma. A suite for voice and piano, "Madrigal," by Balmont, and "Silence," a symphonic fable, the composer calls it, on a theme by Edgar Allen Poe, followed almost at once. "Silence" was performed in Moscow with great success. That same year Miaskovsky became collaborator in the magazine "Music." Thus his name was brought before the public as that of the foremost composer and music critic of the day.

In 1912 Miaskovsky composed his Second Symphony and the symphonic poem "Alastor" (Shelley). He accepted the post of teacher of harmony in one of the musical schools in St. Petersburg, where he remained until the general call-up of reserve commissioned officers for the war of 1914.

From 1914 to 1917, "Sapper" Nicolai Miaskovsky was in the front lines on the Austrian front. The ghastly retreat through Galicia he recorded in the Fifth Symphony, of which the Scherzo is based on an authentic "Koliadka" heard by Miaskovsky in Lwow.

In 1917, Miaskovsky was working on the naval fortifications of Reval (Tallinn), when he was wounded. A position on the staff of the Admiralty, transferred to Moscow in 1918, kept him busy until demobilised in 1921.

Since then Nicolai Miaskovsky has held the post of Professor of Moscow Conservatory of Music.

Miaskovsky's spiritual life can be traced through his 21 symphonies. In the "Autobiography" in 1936 Miaskovsky candidly criticises himself for the subjective pessimism of his first Five Symphonies. He tells how in the cold and hungry winter of 1919 a young Frenchman, who dropped in for a chat, demonstrated to the composer the way Parisian workmen sang "La Carmagnole." Miaskovsky had never heard that dynamic rhythm, that elated and indomitable spirit which permeated the song. It left him with the profound conviction that the human soul was fundamentally optimistic—that an objective thought made it so. The result of such a change in mental outlook was the remarkable Sixth Symphony with chorus, the only one of its kind, first performed in 1924. It marks the end of subjective music in the composer's art.

Miaskovsky is continuously working to "create a musical language of social realism" which this great Soviet symphonist says, "in instrumentation is very different from the vocal line of all folklore."

Perhaps the greatest favourite with Soviet audiences is the 16th Symphony that Miaskovsky dedicated to the Red Air Fleet.

In 1939 Miaskovsky wrote a symphonic poem on words by Djambal, "From the entire Soul," and "Festive Overture" to commemorate Stalin's 60th birthday.

In 1940 he composed his 21st Symphony; it is a "chamber" symphony in size; its conception is objective; its musical language is simple, even laconic; its emotionalism sincere; nothing has been exaggerated—in fact pure Soviet symphonism.

Miaskovsky in 1941 was awarded for the 21st Symphony one of the three "1st Stalin Premiums" of one hundred thousand roubles.

He founded the Union of Soviet Composers (collective of composers, then called) in 1919.

Beside the 21 symphonies and five string quartets Miaskovsky composed a cycle of songs on verses by Lermontov (Op. 40) and a violin concerto performed in 1938 (with David Oistrakh—solo violin).

XIV

ZAKHARIA P. PALIASHVILI (1872-1933) is the foremost composer of the S.S.R. of Georgia—one whose love for his native country had led him to study Georgian folklore and musical culture long before the advent of the Nationalities Policy in the Soviet Union, but who, through the facilities provided by that policy, has been able to lay the foundations of National Georgian music as they are to-day.

Paliashvili was a pupil of the great S. I. Taneev, whose composition classes he attended in the Moscow Conservatory of Music from 1900 to 1903. A native of Tbilisi, capital of Georgia, Zakharia Paliasvili, after taking his diploma at the Conservatory, returned there. For the next few years he was busily employed in giving piano lessons, organising choirs, conducting the Tiflis orchestra, and attending to various other social musical activities. Then Paliashvili began to travel extensively through Georgia to collect Georgian folklore, which he required for the opera, "Abesalom and Eteri," that he had had in mind for some time. His journeys took him to Eastern Georgia; and it was there, among the workers in the fields and vineyards, that Zakharia Paliashvili discovered their remarkable polyphonic music—the traditional heritage of Georgian culture.

As distinct from the neighbouring Azerbaijan, where single-line melodies are "the rule," Georgian ancient music is written for many voices. Choral singing either *à capella* or accompanied by native stringed instruments (Chongur and Pandur) and the Georgian cylindrical drum—"doli"—is more developed there than in any other country in the world. Paliashvili was fascinated by the complex system of national Georgian harmony. Before he could positively declare the national authenticity of the musical construction, Paliashvili had to make lengthy studies of the various influences prevailing in Georgian music. Hellenic and Byzantine influences were fairly obvious, but Persian were more difficult to trace. Research in that direction led Paliashvili to the works of the 18th century Georgian poet and composer, Ashug Sayat-Nova. This one-time serf and weaver, who, at the age of 14 invented a loom which, for the first time in history, could be operated indoors, was Court Musician to the Georgian King Irakli II in 1740. Twelve years later, because of his biting criticisms of the King, Ashug Sayat-Nova was made to take holy orders. In his reminiscences written in the Kakhava monastery, "Father Stepanos" (Sayat-Nova) says: "I used to play the chongura well, and write Georgian songs to Persian melodies. . . ." As Ashug Sayat-Nova left 210 songs, in three different languages, Paliashvili had to search extremely carefully to find what he wanted. Nevertheless, the composer succeeded in liberating the true Georgian national music from everything extraneous and began a systematic collection of ethnographic material. This occupied him for many years.

Here, once again, Eastern Georgia played an important part. Paliashvili and others after him discovered that Georgian peasant songs, which seem to accompany every possible type of work, can be grouped in thirteen different classes, from the rhythmic and harmonic points of view. The oldest form of Georgian polyphonic music belongs to the songs which were sung during the winnowing: it consists of a solo voice and chorus (in unison) calling to each other. The solo voice intones its melody a fourth above the chorus. Paliashvili was able to trace the evolution of this particular form covering a thousand years.

During the period which occupied this intensive research into the origins of Georgian polyphonic music, Paliashvili composed many choral works and arranged folk songs for voice and piano. It may be said that in those works the composer

developed and brought to perfection Georgian polyphony pending the creation of bigger things.

His first really important work was the opera "Abesalom and Eteri," performed in 1913, in Tbilisi (Tiflis). It made Paliashvili famous overnight. He wrote the libretto himself; it is based on a Georgian national legend and relates the boundless love of the Tsarevitch Abesalom for the peasant girl, Eteri.

In this opera Paliashvili reveals himself as a composer of note, inasmuch as he blends the Georgian national polyphonic style with that of those great 18th century polyphonists—Bach and Handel. Starting from the best traditions of advanced Russian music, Paliashvili has evolved a strong individual musical language, deeply rooted in Georgian nationality.

It thus becomes clear that when the Proletarian Revolution occurred his principal artistic ideas were already fixed and he had a fully developed cultural outlook; also, that all these being realistic, they coincided with Soviet musical philosophy.

In 1924 Paliashvili composed his second opera, "Daici" (twilight) where the theme of love and rivalry is skilfully woven round the defence of the Fatherland from enemy aggression. Zakharia Paliashvili continued uninterruptedly in his efforts towards the creation of national heroic musical drama for Georgia. If anything his musical language becomes more intensified in the opera, "Daici."

Paliashvili's third and last opera, "Latavra," was composed between the years of 1925 and 1930.

Soviet authorities have assessed Paliashvili's talent at its true worth. After the Revolution the composer held for several years the post of Rector of the Tbilisi Conservatory of Music. He was awarded the title of People's Artist of the S.S.R. of Georgia for scientific achievements.

After his death in 1933, the opera and ballet theatre of Tbilisi, one of the finest in the Union, was named after him.

Paliashvili compiled a number of books on Georgian music; the famous scholar-composer blazed a trail for the younger generation of musicians.

His work on National Georgian Music has earned him the highest artistic reward of the Union—the title of Peoples' Artist of the Republic. To his eternal credit be it said that Paliashvili gave to the musical world at large the rarest gem of Georgian national polyphony which, unknown to Western Europe, has had over one thousand years of evolution. It has been proved that Georgia's native musicians used Pan-pipes. Traces of

ancient Greek and Byzantine cultures having been definitely observed. Paliashvili followed them up, procuring valuable data for historians and ethnographers. Thus science labours hand in hand with music in U.S.S.R. In January, 1939, the first authentic collection of Georgian folk songs made its appearance; it was published in three languages—in Georgian, Russian and French—it contains over 400 solo and choral items. Paliashvili, together with other well-known music scholars of Georgia, has been preparing it for print for many years.

XV

SERGEI PROKOFIEV is one of the greatest composers of the present era. He was born in 1891 on the estate "Sontovka," Government of Ekaterinoslav, where his father was General Manager.

The child of to-day is the man of to-morrow. To understand Sergei Prokofiev's genius it is essential to know him as a child.

In his autobiography, written in 1941, Prokofiev refers to five lines along which his talent developed.

1. Classical.
2. Innovationary.
3. Motory.
4. Lyric.
5. Grotesque.

He says he owes the "classic line" to his mother who was an excellent pianist and used to play Beethoven's Sonatas. Prokofiev at the age of four would not go to bed unless she did so. He loved the piano and with his mother's help picked out the notes on the white keys. His first composition at the age of five was written in F major. Prokofiev omitted the B Flat "probably because I feared to touch the black keys," he explained; but his mother said it would sound better with "the black one," and wrote it in.

When Prokofiev was nine he began composing an opera. It never went beyond the first act; the family circle, however, performed it with great enjoyment. At eleven, Sergei Prokofiev already possessed an original style in composition. He inclined to choose fantastic subject matter—his second opera, which he showed later to Taneev, was entitled, "The Giant." This

tendency towards the theatrical was the first sign of realism in the boy's make-up.

The pianoforte, even as a child, Prokofiev treated as a means for loud platform demonstrations which eventually turned into a "noisy concert rally" spirit.

At the age of thirteen Prokofiev was sent to the St. Petersburg Conservatory of Music. He arrived for the entrance examination doubled up under the weight of his compositions. At the end of the examination Taneev, who had listened to the first act of the opera, "Giant," with commendable patience, remarked: "The melodies seem to be rather simple," and laughed. Prokofiev never forgot that outburst of hilarity. In his effort to create "complicated" melodies the composer developed a taste for innovation in music. Thus the second line was found.

At the Conservatory Prokofiev studied under Glazounov, Rimsky-Korsakov, Liadov, Tcherepnin and the famous pianist, Mme. Essipava. With the exception of Tcherepnin, Prokofiev quarrelled with them all. His best friend, N. Miaskovsky, attempted to exercise a restraining influence over the young musician, but it was no easy matter to cope with a boy whose sense of humour led him to call his piano compositions "little dogs," because some wit had said they were "biting."

During the years of his study Prokofiev composed several big works, partly published; amongst them two symphonic poems, "Dreams" and "Autumnly," the opera "Madalena," four piano sonatas, a cycle of piano pieces entitled "Sarcasms" and two piano concertos. A great deal of that music had met in public with a very mixed reception but nothing daunted the young composer. It is to be noted that for the final test at the end of his course at the Conservatory Prokofiev chose to perform his First Piano Concerto—the second one having shortly before created an uproar at Pavlovak when the audience left the Concert Hall as a sign of protest against music that was "nothing better than cat-calls in a back alley." The music critics, however, expressed themselves enraptured with the freshness and vigour of Prokofiev's style.

The young composer graduated in composition, conducting and piano playing—securing at the same-time the first prize—a grand pianoforte—offered by the Conservatory.

Sergei Prokofiev now divided his time between composing and fulfilling concert engagements. As a pianist Prokofiev is

magnificent; his technique is superb; his interpretary style unique.

From 1914 to 1918 he composed, "The Scythian Suite," for symphonic orchestra; the Classic Symphony; the opera, "Gamester"; the cantata, "Seven of Them," for tenor, mixed choir and symphonic orchestra; the ballet, "Joker"; the Violin Concerto, etc.

The composer's creative personality emerges in this period with complete precision. This is a domineering, continuous motion (motory of music), energy and virility, colossal will-power, cast-iron rhythm, sharpness of harmonic language, brightness of colouring, constructive clarity and a great deal of irony and "grotesqueness."

Incidentally, Sergei Prokofiev in his autobiography protests against the word "grotesque" as applied to his compositions; he himself prefers to use the expression "joke."

This was the time when Prokofiev felt strongly the influence of Diaghilev's artistic ideals, who rather encouraged the young composer's exaggerated musical style, but also fostered his National feelings.

Miaskovsky, a sincere admirer of Sergei Prokofiev notes in his reminiscences that he "loved the rushing marches of pre-European Prokofiev." And Gorky sensed the lover of nature and of mankind in the young sceptic when he listened to the "Ugly Duckling." It was that humanitarianism which brought Prokofiev eventually to the threshold of Soviet musical art.

Prokofiev was away from the U.S.S.R. from 1918 to 1933. He toured Japan, U.S.A. and lived for many years in Paris.

During his absence he composed some 20 works ranging from the opera, "Love of Three Oranges," to the Third, Fourth and Fifth Piano Concertos.

Since his return to U.S.S.R. Prokofiev has been taking an extremely active part in the building of Soviet musical culture.

Of himself, Sergei Prokofiev says: "It is essential to feel in music the day that is to be," and he asks: "What is musical reality? It is music which has its roots planted in Russian folklore."

The latent lyricism in Prokofiev's talent now came to the fore.

Two things helped Prokofiev to develop a true Soviet musical language; his contact with songs of the masses, he wrote "Partisan Zhelezniak," "Antiutka," etc., and the music he composed for children, Op. 65 "12 Children's Pieces" ("Peter and

the Wolf"). The celebrated Commissar for Education, A. Lunacharsky, once said: "Much in Prokofiev's music comes from the nursery. Hence the joy and the gracefulness of his music."

In 1938 Prokofiev composed "Alexander Nevsky," a symphonic cantata on a patriotic theme.

The opera, "Semion Kotko," raised as much controversy round the 50-year-old composer as the "Scythian Overture" did when Prokofiev was 22.

In 1939 he wrote, "Zdravitsa," a cantata dedicated to Stalin.

His latest compositions are: "Betrothal in the Monastery" opera; "Cinderella," ballet; and a String Quartet on Kabardinian melodies, composed at the beginning of this year.

Prokofiev is a prolific composer. One has only to recollect how very few works (20 in all) Prokofiev had composed between the years of 1924-1933—the last years of his life outside the U.S.S.R.—to realise that the composer found it impossible to express his creative thought in a satisfactory manner.* He lacked subject matter; his musical language dwindled into forms of abstract speculation; he lost touch with his audience, which began to shrink, bewildered at the "barbaric noisiness" of his compositions (the Second Symphony and parts of the Fifth Concerto) which apparently nothing could explain. It would be completely erroneous to state that Prokofiev had ever been affected by western musical fashions—as the Soviet critics readily admit—but the world of western actuality which surrounded Prokofiev hampered the successful growth of his favourite type of musical composition, that of music for the theatre. After his return to the U.S.S.R., in 1933, Prokofiev started composing rapidly once more (27 works in five years). He worked incessantly, striving to discover a fresh musical language for himself that would make his art accessible to the mass of workers, a language "attuned to the epoch of Socialism," as Prokofiev wrote in the Soviet Press. The first composition which identified Sergei Prokofiev with Soviet music was Opus 60—"Lieutenant Kije"—children's film music. The two symphonic suites, based on themes taken from his ballet "Romeo and Juliet," proved conclusively that Prokofiev had grasped the meaning of Soviet musical art and had become a Soviet composer himself. These two symphonic suites were specially composed by Proko-

* Soviet Press.

fiev for performance during the celebrations of the First Decade of Soviet Music (1937). They disclose the composer's determination to express his aesthetic thoughts with the clarity and simplicity imposed by a sense of true realism. At the same time the two symphonic suites bear all the hall-marks of Prokofiev's individual style of composition—its inventiveness, finesse and characteristic "brittle" mastership. Prokofiev's realistic sincerity as a musical realist could never again be doubted.

XVI

YURI SHAPORIN, Professor of Moscow Conservatory of Music, is a pupil of A. Glazounov. He was born in 1889.

At the end of his musical training Shaporin worked for many years in the big dramatic theatre in St. Petersburg as composer, musical director and conductor. There he developed an ease and variety of musical style which enabled him to transmit successfully the wit and sparkling comedy of the "Straw Hat" and the farcical playfulness of the "Flea" as well as the deepest pathos of the "Storming of the Perecop."

But Shaporin does not content himself with writing for the theatre and the cinema. He composed a cycle of songs on words by A. Poushkin (Op. 10), the nearest approach to perfect philosophical lyricism, especially in No. 3, "Death"; two piano sonatas (1924-1927)—a form of musical composition only too rare in Soviet music and the First Symphony, which marked a turning point in the composer's musical evolution. It was performed in 1932 by which time Shaporin was a close friend of Maxim Gorky and had thoroughly absorbed the pure Russian national tendencies of that celebrated writer. The main theme of the symphony is "Revolution and Intelligentsia"; it is full of intonations of national songs and dances. Shaporin's opera, "Decembrists" (December Revolution in time of Nicolas I) was produced in 1937. The composer, always critical of himself, inclines to a perfection of style requiring a lengthy polishing process, and spent 15 years working on this opera.

In 1938 Yuri Shaporin composed the magnificent oratorio "Fields of Kulikov," the first and only oratorio in Soviet music at the time—words by Alexander Blok. The Battle of Kulikov was an epoch-making event in Russian history inasmuch as it routed the Mongolian hordes led by Mamai, thus saving Europe from Tatar enslavement.

The Oratorio is in six parts :

1. Prologue.
2. Bride's Cavatina.
3. Dramatic scene : "Night"—best number—(choral).
4. Knight's song.
5. Battle scene : "Centuries on the march" (choral).
6. Epilogue.

It is written for three soloists, a mixed choir and symphonic orchestra.

For the oratorio "Fields of Kulikov" Yuri Shaporin in 1941 was awarded one of the "First Stalin Premiums" of 100,000 roubles.

XVII

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH, Professor of Leningrad State Conservatory of Music, was born in 1906. At the age of 19 Shostakovich, having studied under Maxmilian Steinberg and Leonid Nicolaev, received his diploma in composition and pianoforte playing from the same Conservatory.

Dmitri Shostakovich is not only one of the most talented representatives of Soviet musical culture but was also a famous pianist-virtuoso. Since the beginning of his musical career his artistic personality was subject to so many discussions that Shostakovich has been in the public limelight for years.

He composed his First Symphony while still at the Conservatory (1925). It is a work of great originality which compares with the best compositions of Scriabin and Tchaikovsky. The First Symphony gives conclusive proofs of Shostakovich's musical credo; in the Scherzo—always a strong point with the young composer—he uses the pianoforte in a highly original manner. Shostakovich after the First Symphony became a fervent student of works of the West European composers Hindemith, Schönberg and Stravinsky. The young Soviet composer found himself unable to adopt a sufficiently critical attitude towards their harmonic language and new principles of musical form which purposely tended to break away from a realistic type of musical thinking. The result of such infatuation led Shostakovich to compose the opera "The Nose" (by Gogol) wherein one find the composer "holding discussions with melody"—and two more Symphonies (Nos. 2 and 3)

The ballets "The Golden Age" and "The Bolt" mostly accentuate the satirical elements of the composer's talent. Nega-

tive personalities are drawn by Shostakovich with greater force and conviction than positive ones.

The opera "Lady Macbeth of Mzensk," 1932, and the ballet "Clear Water Springs" acquired tremendous popularity with musical audiences in U.S.S.R. These works were strongly criticised by leading Soviet music scholars for their obvious musical formalism and naturalistic aspect of subject matter. His music was subjected to the severest enquiry from Soviet musicologists and was pronounced to be false to Soviet artistic ideals. Under the wise and friendly guidance of Maximillian Steinberg, encouraged at all times by fellow-composers, Shostakovich struggled with his problem. But he did not follow the path of superficial reconstruction, which to such a past-master in form and style would have meant a simple musical compromise! Instead, after months of deep internal self-examination, he succeeded in finding new artistic means for the creation of compositions totally different in quality from those earlier ones when his musical personality was submerged in the swamp of formalism.

In 1933 Dmitri Shostakovich composed a Piano Concerto and "24 Preludes for the Pianoforte," very effective works but "dry, clever and exaggerately grotesque."* Being a wonderful exponent of his own pianoforte music, Shostakovich had an enthusiastic following and many pupils. This influence over younger composers of Leningrad was acute, and, in the case of inexperienced Zhelobinsky—disastrous. Shostakovich became the target of the Soviet daily press which insisted that "this menace to individual development of musical talent should be stopped."

In 1937 Dmitri Shostakovich composed his truly magnificent Fifth Symphony, a work of great depth of feeling, emotional completeness and human sincerity. All traces of eccentricity, virtuosity and formal experimentation had disappeared. Thus this Symphony is a realistic presentation of the story of a man who vanquishes fear and pain in the endeavour to become a spiritually strong entity. Here the listener-critic is present at the birth of a "new man, psychologically complete"; the tragic world of Hamletian emotions, doubt and disillusion are conquered by intellect and will-power; the musical portrait of a young man of the Socialist Era stands vividly revealed.* Although Shostakovich, when referring to the Fifth Symphony calls it his

* Soviet Press.

autobiography—its main philosophical theme, that of a “changing man in a changing world”—yet the strong realism of his musical interpretation renders this Symphony of widely human, true socialistic interest to Soviet audiences. It was hailed as a masterpiece of Soviet Symphonic writing.

This was followed by the Sixth Symphony judged to be “considerably paler in comparison” by the U.S.S.R. music critics. Then, in 1940, came the celebrated “Piano Quintet”—which was awarded the “First Stalin Premium” of 100,000 roubles in 1941; it is considered to be Shostakovich’s masterpiece.

The Piano Quintet first of all is classic in its conception but it gives an original interpretation of conventional chamber music style. It possesses clearness and perfection of form and individuality of musical language combined with great spontaneous simplicity. The Scherzo is rhythmically impulsive; it depicts the simple optimism of a people’s sincere enjoyment.

Shostakovich reveals himself as a veritable master composer in the Piano Quintet; for to arrest the listener’s attention by such simple means is not possible to any but a true genius. It is debatable whether Shostakovich conclusively establishes a new pianistic style in the Quintet; Soviet pianoforte music, however, is greatly enriched by the composer’s use of that instrument’s role in the ensemble.

In 1941 Shostakovich composed his Seventh Symphony, the score of which, in the form of micro-film, was flown to this country. It describes Leningrad under enemy fire; it anticipates the coming triumph of the Red Army, the lifting of gloom from Germany-enslaved Europe. It is a vigorous call to human courage and to victory.

The world-famous composer was born and bred in the beautiful “city of Lenin,” a city that Alexander Poushkin, the great Russian classic poet, called “Venice of the North.” Dmitri Shostakovich would not leave the besieged Leningrad; he stayed on and joined in the battle the Soviet people were grimly waging there. He enlisted in the Voluntary Fire Service to prevent with others the burning of this glorious town.

Professor Dmitri Shostakovich is to-day just another U.S.S.R. citizen passionately striving to play his part in the greatest struggle for survival humanity has ever had to face.

XVIII

A. SPENDIAROV, the great classic Armenian composer, was born in 1871, in Kakhovka, a small town near Port Simferopol, in the Crimea. His family came from good middle class Armenian stock and its members were all extremely musical in an amateur way.

Spendiarov was by nature modest and unassuming, even timid, but this was entirely due to his inborn accurate sense of proportion. When asked to supply a few autobiographical notes in 1913, Spendiarov, quite sincerely, began by saying “nothing outstanding has ever occurred in my life.” It came out, however, in the course of his recollections that as a child he was gifted in many ways. At the age of three he used to play at fashioning paper figures of animals and birds, making them with his fingers only. The famous painter, I. Aivasovsky, a friend of the family, was so impressed with the boy’s original skill, that he took a few samples of his work away to St. Petersburg and had them exhibited in the Academy of Arts. When Spendiarov was eight years old he painted pictures which the Art dealers pronounced as “good.” He wrote poetry and composed waltzes and marching songs before he reached his tenth year. His mother, an excellent pianist, tried to teach him to play the piano but Spendiarov frankly confessed that as a boy he detested practising scales and so his musical education had to be temporarily abandoned.

A. Spendiarov was brought up in a classical school in Simferopol, and sent to Moscow University in 1890. There he studied natural history and, later, law, for five years, but was not called to the Russian Bar till 1897.

For years Spendiarov treated his musical talent lightly although everyone else who came in contact with the young composer believed in his gifts. Spendiarov tells, however, how once in Vienna, after listening to a particularly good performance of “Carmen,” he left the theatre with his father, determined to compose an opera of his own and to hear it played sometime by an orchestra equal in magnificence to that of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra! Unfortunately, fate decreed otherwise; and when, in 1939, the superb performance of his opera “Almast” stamped it as the one perfect specimen of Armenian classical music, Spendiarov had already passed away.

A. Spendiarov learned to play the violin when still in Simferopol’s classical school; he liked that instrument better

than the piano, practised it assiduously and achieved such mastery of technique that he was offered the lead in the Moscow University Symphonic Orchestra, conducted by Professor Klenovsky. Klenovsky it was who persuaded the young man to study the theory of composition after hearing some of Spendiarov's earlier works. Spendiarov went to N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov when Klenovsky left Moscow in 1895.

At this point in his reminiscences, Spendiarov paused and smilingly suggested that, perhaps, his meeting with Rimsky-Korsakov was an "outstanding moment in his life." He remembered the nervous trepidation with which he waited for Rimsky-Korsakov's verdict on his compositions, and the thrill and satisfaction when that grand old master-musician pronounced his very flattering opinion.

Spendiarov never again lost faith in his musical talent. He studied composition with Rimsky-Korsakov for four years, during which time he wrote mainly chamber music—the First String Quartet, and "An Eastern Melody" for voice and piano to words by the Armenian poet Tsaturian.

Spendiarov's Concert Overture was composed in 1900, and performed in June of the following year in the celebrated Concert Season at Pavlosk. In 1903 Spendiarov composed the "Crimean Sketches" and the "Three Palms: a symphonic picture"—which latter he conducted personally in St. Petersburg. It scored an overwhelming success, not only with the public but with A. Glazounov and Liadov, who both expressed their admiration for the "sincerity and refinement of musical thoughts" in the work of the "great composer of Armenian people."

Between 1903 and 1913, Spendiarov wrote the "Legend of Beda-the-Preacher" for contralto and orchestra, a second series of "Crimean Sketches," and "Forgotten Tombs" for tenor and orchestra to a poem by the Armenian poet Abovian; also Second and Third String Quartets and a great number of compositions for 'cello and violin.

Spendiarov, as Glazounov and Liadov had so correctly pointed out, was primarily a composer of the Armenian people. Always a confirmed nationalist, Spendiarov took an immense pride in the ancient cultural traditions of his native country. With that fastidiousness which characterises all truly great talent, Spendiarov was for ever seeking the best in Armenian national art. The logical quality of his legally trained mind and attention to detail which professional practice had enhanced induced him to separate Armenian from other cultures, an extremely com-

plicated task if one bears in mind that Armenia, during the two thousand years of its historic existence, had been in turn overrun by Assyrians, Romans, Persians and Arabs, each people endowed with a distinctive culture of their own. The geographic position of ancient Armenia made the country extremely vulnerable from the point of view of periodic invasions, especially as the principal caravan routes ran across Armenia, joining East to West with powerful bonds of commerce. Spendiarov's research work revealed that although it seemed to have been submerged by those other cultures — sometimes for two hundred to three hundred years—Armenian art has exercised a steady influence over the East. Spendiarov was thus able to correct the generally accepted error of ascribing to the Mediaeval period in Oriental art the influence of conquering Mohammedans when, in fact, that influence was purely Armenian.

The great Soviet Revolution found Alexander Spendiarov established in Jalta, deeply engrossed in the study of Armenian folklore and Ashug art. He had been collecting national Armenian songs for some years past. He spent some time in Shirak, near Leninakan (previously Alexandropol), the land of Armenian Ashugs, where he wrote down the few remaining songs of the greatest Armenian poet-improviser, Ashug Dzhivani (born 1846). Spendiarov's opera "Almast" had been planned to be representative of the finest melodies of Armenian folklore and was awaited by all great musicians of Russia with lively anticipation. It was, however, only during the "Ten Days' Festival of Armenian Art" in 1939 that Moscow first heard this masterpiece of Armenian music. The revolutionary years, with their turmoil and added social activities prevented the opera "Almast" from being shown outside Armenia. Perhaps the two most striking numbers in the opera are "The Persian March" and the "Ashug Song." Professor Maximilian Steinberg, a personal friend of the composer, supervised the final musical edition of the Moscow production of the opera.

When the Nationalities Policy was applied to the S.S.R. of Armenia, Spendiarov was commissioned by the Soviet authorities to collect and classify the thousand years old Armenian epics of "David of Sasun." This is a remarkable example of national creative genius; the legends, songs, poems and fables grouped round the central heroic figure of "David of Sasun" depict practically the entire martyrdom of ancient Armenia, as also its customs, mode of living and the glorious freedom-loving spirit of its people. The work entailed in the Soviet commission was

colossal; but the foremost scientists, ethnographers and historians among Armenian nationalists rallied round Spendiarov at his call.

The Soviet Union is justly proud of what has been achieved for Armenian culture by these men; the compilation of the heroic Armenian epic "David of Sasun" is considered to be a priceless acquisition in the treasury of world's knowledge, equalled only by the discovery of the Kirghizian epic "Manas" and of the Mougamic music in Azerbaijan.

Alexander Spendiarov was awarded the title of People's Artist of S.S.R. of Armenia.

He died on the 6th of May, 1928.

XIX

MAXIMILIAN STEINBERG was born in 1883. His creative activities properly belonged to the last ten pre-revolutionary years. The U.S.S.R., however, has honoured Prof. Steinberg with the Order of Merit (arts), as representing the best type of Russian artistic "intelligentsia" which established the connecting link between Tsarist and Soviet Russian Music.

M. Steinberg was a pupil of N. Rimsky-Korsakov, A. Diadov and Glazunov. From all the three great men in turn, Steinberg acquired a solid technique in composition and a faultless style of orchestration; their influence, also, determined the purely academic line of the composer's early works.

By 1907 Steinberg had forsaken pure academicism; was at first strongly influenced by Scriabin's mysticism. Between 1907 and 1917 Steinberg composed his Second Symphony, the Triptych "Metamorphoses"—on a theme by Ovid (ballet: scenery by Steinberg and the painter Bakst), and the Dramatic Poem "Heaven and Earth," by Byron.

In 1920 he wrote the music for "Faust and the Town," a play by the People's Commissar for Education, A. Lunacharsky. For the next few years Steinberg studied Eastern music in all its aspects and wrote "Five Songs of Persian Poetry" and two Cycles of Songs on words by Sir Rabindranath Tagore.

The most problem-ridden composition of the years 1920-1930 was the Third Symphony. Here the composer set himself the object of presenting in symphonic form the struggle between the principles of Individualism and Collectivisation.

In 1931 Steinberg made an arrangement of "Eighteen National Songs for Voice and Symphonic Orchestra" (Op. 23,

Muzgiz). These songs met with a well-merited success and have been performed on many occasions by the celebrated singer Irma Yauzem. It is interesting to note that Irma Yauzem had herself supplied several folk tunes to the composer from her very extensive ethnographical repertoire. The famous U.S.S.R. mezzo-soprano has travelled over the whole Union with members of scientific expeditions collecting folklore of little explored nationalities. Especially beautiful is the Chinese melody from Kharbin which Irma Yauzem wrote down from the voice of Kue-Khon-Chi, the Buriat singer.

Maximilian Steinberg has displayed extraordinary skill in the various settings of these songs besides disclosing his truly enormous cultural knowledge. He seems to have been able to penetrate into the very heart of each folk-song and to have captured the substance of its nationality. The Buriat-Mongolian "Sagan-Siossek" (The White Flower) is a good instance.

Steinberg's Fourth Symphony "Turksib" was the logical outcome of the Composer's intensive studies of central Asiatic folklore. As the title itself suggests, the Symphony is an illustration of man's heroic fight against the deserts of Turkestan and Central Siberia during the building of the Turkestan-Siberian Railway.

From the nebulous mysticism of the poem "Heaven and Earth" to the stark reality of the symphony of "Turksib" Steinberg's musical development had covered a big field. But that is not all. Through a careful study of his whole creative output it is possible to watch the gradual spiritual re-equipment of the man himself.

In 1939, Steinberg composed the ballet "Till Eulenspiegel" (Charles de Coster).

As a teacher M. Steinberg is superb. He has clarity of vision and a capacity for sensing the beginning of a faulty mental process in his pupil's artistic reasoning which is a sign of true pedagogical genius. For many years Steinberg has been the artistic Director of Leningrad Conservatory of Music. His most brilliant pupil is Shostakovich.

XX

VALERI ZHELOBINSKY was born in 1913, in Tambov. This young composer-virtuoso was entirely brought up by the Soviet scholastic system and is considered in U.S.S.R. to be a shining example of what that system can do. Zhelobinsky's

musical talent was first observed at school at the age of six. He was encouraged to compose and given lessons in composition and in pianoforte playing almost at the beginning of his schooling. At the age of fifteen Zhelobinsky finished his studies at the Tambov Musical Technicum School and entered the Leningrad Conservatory of Music where he continued his studies in composition under Professor Scherbachiov. Zhelobinsky did not abandon the piano but took lessons and practised at the Leningrad Musical Technicum and accepted engagements in Concert Halls as a solo pianist before he was seventeen years old.

Valeri Zhelobinsky composes with great ease and intensity. He is extremely prolific in all forms of musical creations; he has written lyric songs, symphonies, chamber music and music for the theatre and cinema. Many of these works were composed while Zhelobinsky was still at the Conservatory and bear the masterly touch of his famous teacher, Professor Scherbachiov. From 1933 onwards, however, the youthful composer begins to stand on his own.

Zhelobinsky's first opera "Komarinsky Muzhik" (The Peasant from the Village of Komarinsk), was produced in 1933 at the Leningrad Little Operatic Theatre. This work made Zhelobinsky famous and definitely related the composer to the traditions bequeathed by the great classics of Russian music—Balakirev, Tchaikovsky and Glazounov. The subject matter of Zhelobinsky's opera deals with the peasant uprising in the 18th century led by Ivan Bolotnikov. Two years later the same Theatre put on Valeri Zhelobinsky's second opera "Birthday." Between 1933 and 1937 the composer wrote a Symphony, two Piano Concertos and a Violin Concerto—all of which have been performed in the biggest concert halls of Leningrad and Moscow.

In 1937 Zhelobinsky composed his famous opera "Mother," from a novel of the same title by Maxim Gorky; excerpts of this work were given during the celebrations of the First Decade of Soviet Music held in Leningrad. The opera was not produced until 1939.

In these last few years, Valera Zhelobinsky composed the "Dramatic Symphony," the Third Piano Concerto and the Ballet "Party Ticket."

Zhelobinsky's compositions are being played and performed all over the vast territory of the U.S.S.R., from the Black Sea to the Barents Sea.

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