

CHAPTER VII

MUSIC

No people in the world is altogether unmusical, but there are some peoples for whom music is an exception, an occasional yielding to innate human impulse, and there are others for whom it is a rule and a delight. When Professor Oldenburg, the secretary of the Russian Academy of Sciences, visited Chinese Turkestan a few years ago he was struck by the fact that the people, in spite of dire poverty, in spite of the oppression of Chinese officials, were irrepressibly musical, that they were constantly breaking into song. It seemed to Professor Oldenburg that such an invincibly light-hearted people must be of Aryan race even though it spoke Turkish. But a neighbouring Turkish nomad people, the Kirghizes, are gifted both poetically and musically. The Volga Tartars, again, another people of Turkish tongue, though they have songs of their own, sometimes very touching and melodious, cannot be described as musical.

The Russians are a people for whom music is a delight. The air is full of music and the people are always humming a song or thrumming an instrument. Of all the books in the book-hawker's bag none have a better sale than the song-books. During haymaking songs come floating across the fields, and the peasant women sing when they are picking fruit or gathering peas and beans or digging potatoes. On Sundays and holidays the girls of the village walk to and fro in pairs singing endlessly. The youths follow, one of them playing an accordion. The balalaika, a sort of triangular guitar, was formerly the favourite instrument of the peasants, but the accordion is fast superseding it, and is used to accompany the older Russian dances which are still popular in many villages, as well as the new-fangled Western dances, the pas d'Espagne and so forth, which are rapidly spreading

over the country together with town finery. In the first, more good-humoured stage of drunkenness a Russian workman, cabman, or peasant almost invariably sings hoarsely and discordantly some wildly sentimental song, although an interruption of the song may very easily lead to a torrent of violent oaths and the breaking of limbs. But it is curious how persistently a drunken peasant will resume his trolling even after frequent interruption; there could hardly be a clearer indication of the inevitableness of song for the Russian peasant as a means of expressing emotion.

From the very dawn of their history the Russians have been a singing people. They worked, they danced, they revelled to the accompaniment of music.

**A Singing
People.**

The "bayan" or bard, the singer of heroic songs, was a prominent figure at the courts of the early Russian princes, and the "guslar" or player on the "gusli" or lyre was always present at the feasts of warriors or merchants. The "skomorokhy" or jesters jested in song, and in spite of perpetual ecclesiastical prohibitions of the secular songs or "devil's music" that celebrated pagan deities or expressed a sheer reckless delight in living, the people clung to these songs and handed them down from generation to generation, words and melody closely linked in characteristic unity. The Russians, including the Great Russians of the North, the White Russians of the West, and the Little Russians of the South, have preserved an extraordinary wealth of folk-song, which was diligently recorded during the first half of the nineteenth century by a number of collectors, while even now careful gleaners in remote country districts may still gather fresh songs to add to the rich harvest. There are songs of the seasons, ritual songs reminiscent of the days of nature-worship and celebrating the return of the sun after the shortest day, the coming of spring and the summer equinox, all dates of primary importance in the husbandman's calendar. These songs were later adapted to the Christian festivals of Christmas, Whitsuntide,

and St. John's Eve, but they retain, hardly disguised, the traces of their heathen origin. The complex ceremony of peasant weddings was, and in many places still is, accompanied with endless singing. There are splendid epic songs, the so-called *byliny* relating the exploits of semi-historical, semi-mythical personages in the regions of Kiev, Novgorod, and Moscow. And lyrics of love, warfare, and death, unconnected with seasons, ritual observances or historical events, are to be heard in every corner of Russia on any day of the year. A number of the songs sung by Russian workmen during their work have been used by the German Professor Bucher in support of his theory that the rhythm of poetry and song had its origin in the rhythm of the physical effort of lifting heavy weights, or hauling, dragging, sawing, or rowing.

Nearly all these songs are traditional, and though certain districts have lyrics of their own, not a few of the songs are spread over wide areas, which is not surprising considering the wandering habits of the people and the lack of natural barriers. But there are frequent variations, both in words and melody, and these variations are by no means always due to errors of transmission. They are often simply the result of the play of the artistic instinct. This is particularly true of variations in melody. When peasants sing there is often a combination of solo and chorus, and in the chorus there is a kind of part singing which as often as not seems to be based on free improvisation, with rollicking twists and twirls and a racing above and below the melody. The soloist, too, often makes variations on the melody while retaining the fundamental pattern with sufficient exactness to make it clearly recognisable.

In Russian folk-songs words and music are hardly separable, while often both are so intimately connected with dancing that the sound of them sets a peasant's feet involuntarily tripping or his hands clapping. The words alone fail to give the full effect of the song, though with their rhythm, their reiteration, their assonance and their striking imagery the

songs as pure lyrics make a strong appeal to the imagination, and through Pushkin and other poets influenced the development of Russian literature in the last century. But it is the strange, quaint melody of the songs that lifts the words out of that region of folk-rhetoric in which they frequently seem to linger, and carry them home. These melodies are as truly expressive of the national spirit as the language itself, are indeed in some way linked with the language and present more definitely, with greater liberty from the necessities of concrete description, the music that is implicit in the language. There are resemblances between Russian melodies and those of other Slav peoples like the Poles and the Czechs, and to a slighter extent, those of the Baltic peoples, the Lithuanians and the Letts. A few resemblances have been noted, too, between Russian and Finnish melodies, but these latter are probably the result of borrowing, and the marvel is, considering the infectious character of the popular airs, that so few parallels to Russian folk-music have been found among the neighbouring peoples. The folk-song is most characteristically Russian, and while in Little Russian melodies there are occasionally approximations to West European melodic structure, the Great Russian folk-song seems to have a style absolutely distinct from that of the Germanic and Romance peoples, and, as far as is known, from that of Eastern music. But the possible remoter connections of Russian folk-music have hardly been studied yet, and in any case the music has such a distinctive quality of its own, that it may well be taken, as the best Russian composers have taken it, as a basis for the development of a national school of music.

Russian folk-music must be heard in its natural environment to be truly appreciated. Transferred to the concert-hall it nearly always suffers some modification that mars its native quality. Composers in transcribing or adapting it frequently introduce intervals that are suggestive of Western rather than Russian

music, harmonise it in a conventional manner, try to smooth down its roughness and to prevent its seeming to the average listener too odd and too remote. Sung under such conditions by ladies and gentlemen in evening dress to the accompaniment of stringed instruments that are popular only in name but are in reality as artificial as all the appurtenances of the concert-hall, the Russian folk-song is only a faint and muffled echo of its original self. It cannot, in fact, be transferred to the concert-hall as a song. But that is not to say that it must be left to perish in its native fields, as it is bound to perish with the extension of technical civilisation. It will continue to serve as it has served for the last fifty years as material for modern composers. As themes in symphonies, sonatas, orchestral accompaniments, and as operatic airs these spontaneous melodies will live on in a more complex world of art.

It is when you get away from the neighbourhood of the railway line into some sleepy region where the "sokha" or wooden plough is still in use, and where men wear curious, old-fashioned hats instead of the peaked caps common near the towns, that there is hope of hearing Russian songs in something like their purity. Best of all if the women are singing in the fields during harvesting. Perhaps their voices are harsh, perhaps they show a tendency to sing through the nose, but when they are singing in chorus, cheering each other at work among yellow sheaves on the riverside in the light of the afternoon sun the harmony between people, landscape, and the plaintive melody of the song seems complete. What seems to us the plaintiveness of most Russian melodies does not, however, mean that they are necessarily sad. Perhaps this apparent plaintiveness is simply the expression of some intimate correspondence between the Russian mind and that great expanse which has been the home of the Russians for centuries. But there is a wide play of varied emotion in these folk-melodies. Sometimes they express monotony, sorrow, solitude, as in the very familiar melody

of the song, "One birch tree in the field," in which the four-fold reiteration of a slowly-falling cadence at the end of sets of three bars gives a peculiar effect of hopeless loneliness. The wedding songs, too, are very mournful, the bride constantly expressing her bitter grief at leaving her home, her father and mother, and going out to a cheerless life among strangers. The gloominess of the Russian peasant woman's attitude to marriage is striking. To judge by the songs and by the wailing of the relatives it might be imagined that marriage was a calamity hardly less grave than death itself. But the songs again bear witness to the contrary, and though maidens frequently complain in songs of their sad and bitter lot and of the faithlessness and the "consciencelessness" of lovers, they often sing very artfully of their victories. It is remarkable, indeed, how much real humour there is in many Russian melodies, and how much humour the peasant youths and maidens can put into them by means of appropriate gestures and modifications of the voice. Often the humour of Russian melodies consists in a kind of parody on plain-tiveness, sometimes in the arch trippingness of songs that go on and on endlessly eluding pursuit. Not only is there humour in Russian airs, but there is a fine rollicking sense of space and freedom not altogether unlike that which is found in the older English sea-songs. It is the sense of the steppe, or of broad rivers like the Volga, the Dnieper, or the Don, or of the Black Sea over which Cossacks roved in their plundering expeditions. It is the delight in a *shirokoie razdolie*, a broad rolling expanse in which a man can draw deep breath, shake off all trammels and feel the strength that is in him. All this is in the Russian folk-melodies and a world of emotion besides. Not all the melodies are quaint and stirring. Some are simply dull and colourless, and others are depressing. Folk-songs are not always charming simply because they are folk-songs. There are many points at which inspiration fails just as in the world of art, and often instead of new melodies one finds simply combinations or adaptations of

well-known **airs**. But even making allowance for such waste spaces there is such a wealth of melody, such an originality in Russian folk-music that even custom, the accordion, and the gramophone itself cannot stale its infinite variety. When one gets a little weary of Great Russian music one can turn to the music of Little Russia, and indeed, there is no chance of one ever growing sated, for the older folk-music is gradually slipping away from the hearts of the people who alone can keep it living a natural life.

It is melancholy that the folk-songs should be disappearing, but it is inevitable that it should be so. The people would not be the people if in face of a general modernisation of life it preserved its customs, its costumes, and its songs exactly in the form in which archaeologists and ethnologists and all lovers of the beauty of an older day seen in the perspective of the twentieth century would like to have them kept. Peasants are not figures in a museum. They are living human beings whose main concern is to live as best they can in a changing world. They wear leather boots instead of bast shoes, if they can buy them. And it is just as natural that they should abandon the reed-whistle for the balalaika and the balalaika for the accordion. After all, it is not very certain whether the balalaika was originally a Russian instrument. It may have been borrowed from the Tartars, or adapted from a Kirghiz instrument of a similar type named the "domra." The "gusli," a kind of zither, another instrument that has almost disappeared, may not be purely Russian in spite of its Slavonic name. The neighbouring peoples, both Turkish and Finnish, have similar instruments, and perhaps the gusli was borrowed long since from the Greek South, just as the accordion has been borrowed at a later day from the German West. Since the peasants change their **instruments** it seems natural that they should change their songs, too. A few of the folk-songs have come into the town and are sung without spirit by underpaid Government

clerks in uniform, making anaemic efforts to be cheerful in the white nights of May in summer cottages on the outskirts of St. Petersburg. But for a half-dozen devitalised folk-songs that find their way into the towns a hundred tinkling town songs find their way into the country. The true folk-song is being replaced by the *chastushka*, or topical ditty, representing a state of mind which is shallow and commonplace compared with that represented in the folk-song. The factories, which lump together large masses of men and women, blur their individuality and cut them off from the calming and healing influences of nature are very largely responsible for this. The songs born of minds wearied by a long day's mechanical work indoors to the sound of roaring machines cannot possibly have the freshness and the depth of the songs of the forest and the open field. They are of necessity shallow and sentimental, and the airs to which they are sung will be imitations of the cheap and sentimental airs made familiar through the gramophone or through such cheap concert-halls as the workers may have access to. The factory songs quickly find their way to the country, and so, instead of pretty appeals to the winds to bear a message to a lover about a dream his maiden dreamed about a broken ring, the village girls on holidays walk about arm in arm singing to a colourless and sentimental air a song of town life telling how "Evening falls, the composers are going (to work), and poor Marusia is being carried to the Obukhov Hospital" (in St. Petersburg). Then follow lustreless verses describing how Marusia's friends asked the doctor and the nurse to let them see her; but Marusia was already in the morgue, and in the end they learned that she had poisoned herself for love.

One may mourn that the quaint old songs should be thrust into oblivion in favour of such dreary banalities. But it must be admitted that songs about composers, hospitals, and suicide make a much more direct appeal to peasant girls living around the St. Petersburg of to-day than picturesque

old songs descriptive of the exploits of the insurgent Stenka Razin on the Volga. There is more art in the older songs, but the spontaneity of popular art fades away in the atmosphere of the modern towns. The native impulse must, under the changed conditions, be supported by the resources of modern art. But there are difficulties which will be referred to later. The "chastushki" are often freely improvised on current events or on well-known persons in the village by more or less skilful singers. With a given pattern of metre and melody and considerable room for disposing of superfluous syllables such composition presents no insuperable obstacles. Collections of "chastushki" have been made which have a certain value as documents of the period, but are musically and poetically trivial. More interesting is another and earlier type of song which has to a large extent taken the place of the folk-song. It is hard to give this type a general name; perhaps if the most recent type is to be described as the factory ditty, the more indefinite type may be described as the song of the artisans and petty tradesmen who felt the modernising influences of the nineteenth century before the factory had attained its present dimensions. But the type includes regimental songs as well, and the army has been and is, in its way, almost as effective as a levelling force as the factory itself. The difference between the army and the factory in this respect is that the former naturally maintains a closer contact with tradition, especially with the fighting tradition of the nation. These regimental songs, and the songs of the petty tradesmen and artisans long ago became the stock music of the "traktirs," or popular eating and drinking houses and many acquired a traditional character, so that frequently they were confused with the genuine folk-songs. In the song-books in circulation among the people it is these songs that hold the chief place, and Nadiezhda Plevitskaia, a peasant woman from Kursk who a few years ago made a momentary sensation in the capitals as a singer of folk-songs, had hardly a real folk-song in her repertoire.

What she sang was simply such a well-known pseudo-folk-song as "The bold young merchant Ukhar," or that song about the great fire of Moscow in which Napoleon is described as standing in a grey overcoat and saying to himself with "the still voice of consciousness" that "Fate plays with man and is fickle ever."

Another type of song that is often confused with the folk-song is that of the songs sung by the gipsy choirs which perform in the larger restaurants frequented chiefly by the merchants. Occasionally these choirs do sing real folk-songs, occasionally real gipsy airs, but just as often as not the songs they sing have found their way to Russia from town to town, from restaurant to restaurant right across Europe. If the gipsy choirs have a remote connection with the people on one side, they are much more closely connected on the other with that café-chantant world which in various ways passes on to the people trivial and facile modern airs that are caught up as a makeshift for interpreting the hasty and superficial emotions of a new time.

The people is, in fact, musically in a helpless position at the present moment. All sorts of natural forces are crowding out the quaint, distinctive, traditional folk-music, and flooding the country with nondescript, semi-European airs. The people submits to this natural process. The striving of the younger generation after modernity, polish, gentility, is perforce satisfied by the musical scraps flung down by the noisy machinery of European civilisation in the dreary, dusty, untidy streets in the workmen's quarter on the outskirts of the great cities. The people is unable to exercise any selective power, and so far it has been helped very little. A great deal could be done to develop native musical taste by the organisation of popular choirs, as is shown by the example of the Finns, Letts, and Esthonians, whose village choirs and annual choral festivals in various towns in Finland, in Reval,

**Modern
Influence on
Native Music.**

in Esthonia, and in Riga, the Lettish centre, have done a very great deal to raise the general level of musical capacity in the respective nationalities. In Russia only sporadic attempts have been made so far to organise popular choirs—in connection with certain philanthropic institutions in the towns, for instance—and, indeed, the villages have been hitherto so neglected in the most essential respects that probably other forms of organisation, such as fire-brigades and co-operative societies, will have to precede that of glee-clubs. Until recently the political conditions were such as to prevent all kinds of organising work among the peasantry, but it now seems possible that village choirs will soon take their place among the many factors of change that are rapidly transforming country life in Russia.

One of the impediments to secular musical organisation in the country, and to a large extent in the towns also, is that there is no centre around which to organise. In Finland, Esthonia, and in the Lettish country, the Church, which in these regions is Protestant, serves very frequently as the necessary rallying-point, if there is no other centre sufficiently influential. But the Orthodox Church does not encourage the cultivation of secular music within its precincts. Attempts made during the early part of the nineteenth century to hold concerts in connection with church services were soon put a stop to, and though the Church does not oppose good secular music now as it did the folk-music of the older time, it does not give any opportunities for disseminating it among the people. The musical instruction it gives is like all the instruction in the parish schools purely ecclesiastical. But it is fortunate that it does at any rate give instruction in ecclesiastical music, and through the parish choirs maintains a certain level of musical taste in a time of rapid change.

Church music occupies a position akin to popular music as a source of modern developments. In its way Russian church music is very national and distinctive, though it certainly shows more traces of foreign influence than the

folk-song. There is at least as much modern art as ancient tradition in the magnificent singing of the Metropolitan's

The Music of the Church. Choir in the Alexander Nevsky Lavra in St. Petersburg, for all that it seems to untrained ears so strikingly Eastern. But there is a real

basis of Eastern tradition. Russian church music is derived from that of the Greek church of Constantinople and from the music of the early Bulgarian church. The tradition was handed down through the troubled middle-ages of Russian history, partly by means of a notation called the "signs," or the "hooks," partly through occasional reinforcements of Greek ecclesiastics for whose benefit the Greek text was long retained side by side with the Slavonic in the service-books. But there were natural variations in the course of the centuries, and radical reforms were effected in the time of Ivan the Terrible and during the seventeenth century. During Catherine's reign French and Italian influences made themselves felt in church music, hardly to its advantage, and all through the nineteenth century there was a conflict between a Westernising and a nationalist school of ecclesiastical music.

Russian church music thus bears a composite character, and several of the most popular masses composed during the last century have a predominantly Western and modern colouring. Towards the end of the century several specialists in church music, of whom Feodor Lvovsky and Stepan Smolensky were the chief, did a great deal in transposing for modern use ancient Russian, Greek, and Bulgarian music. The intrusion of foreign elements, though it sometimes lessens the impressiveness of Russian church music, has not availed to rob it of its distinctiveness, and indeed the whole ritual of the Eastern service sets certain very definite limits to **change.** The Slavonic language of the prayers has a regulative effect upon the music, and all the Greek suggestions in ritual terminology, in vestments, and other ecclesiastical forms prevent a too sudden break with tradition. Several

of the best modern Russian composers, like Chaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov, have paid considerable attention to ecclesiastical music, and Chaikovsky's liturgy is sung every year on Whitsunday in the Alexander Nevsky Lavra in St. Petersburg. Concerts of church music are frequently given in the capitals, but in the concert-hall such music seems to lose its essential quality and to become too plainly modern and uninteresting. There is a Choirmasters' Society in St. Petersburg, and in all the towns and villages of the Empire priests, deacons, monks, cantors, and choirmasters or *regenty* make efforts to spread the knowledge of ecclesiastical singing as a branch of ritual observance. In all this there is a great deal that is coldly official, a great deal of uninspired effort to furbish up, modernise and popularise tradition. But singing is singing, and Russian church music at its very worst never lacks some touching note of other-worldliness, while at its highest it subtly stirs in a way that no other music can, a strange complex of worshipping emotion in which predominates a humbling and deeply penitent sense of sin.

The older church music is retained to a large extent in the services of the Old Believers, whose nasal mode of singing resembles that practised in Greek churches in the East at the present day. The music of the other Russian sects presents a wide and interesting field for study. Sometimes the psalms and hymns of the Dissenters are sung to familiar fragments of church music; but very often, and this is particularly true of the hymns of the Khlysty and the Skoptsy, folk-songs, folk-melodies form the basis of their psalmody. The modern Westernising sects adapt for their own use English and American revival hymns. There is one other type of song that may be included in the category of popular music, namely, the revolutionary songs that were in vogue a few years ago. They were not popular songs in the strict sense of the word. Most of them were written by students or other educated revolutionaries. The melodies were not original, but were adapted from folk-songs and other

familiar airs. There was an adaptation of the Marseillaise, and one of the most affecting of all the revolutionary songs was sung to the music of a well-known military funeral march. It is curious that the revolutionary period did not produce a single song of original poetical beauty and deep passion, and this is especially noticeable if the revolutionary songs are compared with some of the sectarian hymns—those of the sect of the New Israel for instance—produced during the same period. Perhaps the moment of political upheaval is unfavourable to artistic production, and in any case in Russia the revolution as a political movement did not find striking expression either in literature or art, and certainly not in music.

All the manifold forms of traditional and popular music have served as a basis for the development of a modern school of Russian music. Such a musical people as the Russian could not fail in adapting the technique of Western civilisation to its own uses to express itself in the forms of modern music. And here it had less ground to make up than in other spheres of art, modern music being after all such a recent discovery. French and Italian music had a certain influence in Russia at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, and in the first half of the nineteenth century there were obscure quasi-national composers, most of whom are forgotten now except Lvov, the author of the National Anthem, "God save the Tsar." It was not until towards the middle of the century that a genuinely national school of music took its rise in the work of those three who may be regarded as the pioneers of modern Russian music. Glinka's national opera, *Life for the Tsar*, was produced in 1836 in St. Petersburg, and had a great and immediate success. But this was only a brief gleam. Italian opera secured for many years a monopoly of the St. Petersburg stage, and Glinka's masterpiece did not secure permanent success until the 'sixties, when a new era began for music as for all other forms

of public activity. But Glinka did not live to see the brighter day. His life was a sad and restless one and he had the disappointments of the pioneer and few of his joys, except the one inalienable joy of hearing sweet sounds that no others could hear. When he was a little boy he delighted in the sound of church bells that came floating in through the windows of his home in the government of Smolensk. He conceived a passion for folk-songs, and it was he who later made the first really successful attempts to embody folk-melodies in operatic music. He travelled far and wide, visiting the Caucasus which made a deep and ineffaceable impression upon him as it did upon his contemporaries, the poets Pushkin and Lermontov, and spending four years study in Italy, towards which in the 'thirties the eyes of Russian artists were constantly turned. Seven months' work in Berlin gave Glinka a more thorough and intimate knowledge of musical theory. The comparative failure of his opera, *Ruslan and Ludmila*, on its production in St. Petersburg in 1842, sent the restless composer abroad again. He gave concerts in Paris with his friend and admirer Berlioz as conductor, wandered to Spain where he collected folk-songs, and roved constantly between St. Petersburg, Smolensk, and Paris until his death in 1857. Like many wanderers he suffered keenly from home-sickness, and it was his home-sickness that accentuated his national feelings and impelled him to write the first Russian national opera and deliberately to devote himself to the work of establishing a distinctively Russian style in music.

Glinka exercised on his contemporaries and his immediate successors an influence that is difficult at the present day to appreciate. Much of his music retains its

Glinka. attractiveness, though his methods have been so frequently made use of by others that they have lost the charm of freshness. Glinka anticipated Wagner, for instance, in his use of the *leit-motiv*. Moreover, Glinka's style is by no means purely Russian, and there are

many traces of Italian influence. His *Life for the Tsar*, based on the story of how Michael Feodorovich, the founder of the Romanov dynasty, was saved from pursuing Poles by a peasant named Ivan Susanin who led the Polish troops astray in the forest and was killed by them when they discovered the ruse, has become a standard patriotic opera, and owes its popularity as much to the familiarity arising from frequent performance as to the real beauties it undoubtedly possesses. But these beauties are sporadic, and foreigners find it difficult to share the admiration of many Russians for the opera as a whole. Much superior to *Life for the Tsar* as a work of art is *Ruslan and Ludmila*, based on a delightful fantasy of Pushkin's, although it was not until twenty years after its earliest production that *Ruslan and Ludmila* secured that position in the first rank of Russian operas which it occupies to this day. Glinka composed a number of songs and instrumental works which are still occasionally performed, but his fame rests mainly on the two operas which keep fresh the memory of that powerful creative impulse in which modern Russian music had its birth. He died in Berlin at the age of fifty-three, disappointed and embittered, one of the causes that hastened his death being, it is said, a letter of Rubinstein's in a German newspaper ridiculing the attempt to found a Russian national school of music. A monument of a cheerlessly official type has been erected to his memory near the St. Petersburg Opera House and Conservatoire in the street that bears his name.

Glinka's contemporary, Dargomyzhsky, is chiefly known as the author of the still popular opera *Rusalka*, the subject of which is drawn from a poetical fragment of Pushkin's. His unfinished opera, *The Stone Guest*, which is based on another fragment in which Pushkin treated the Don Juan legend and was completed after the composer's death by Rimsky Korsakov and César Cui, has not been produced of recent years though preparations have been made for its revival. As a song-writer

Dargomyzhsky was much more successful than Glinka, and many of his songs, in spite of their old-fashioned form, continue to charm and to delight. His orchestral works, such as *A Finnish Fantasy*, are full of suggestions which were later developed by other composers. Dargomyzhsky seems to have had a strong vein of humour, but he lived in a cheerless and baffling time, his artistic path was strewn with disappointments, and the impression he leaves is one of rich possibilities only half realised. Like Glinka he was a forerunner. Both had inadequate means at their disposal, but both were enthusiastic in their efforts to give musical expression to the manifold emotions of that brilliant period of intellectual awakening which produced such writers as Pushkin, Lermontov, and Gogol.

Alexander Nicholaievich Sérov, the third prominent composer of the Glinka period was less talented, if more learned than either Glinka or Dargomyzhsky. He

Sérov. was known as an able musical critic before he came before the world as a composer, and it is as a critic that he rendered his greatest services. His operas, *Rognieda* and *Hostile Forces*, are rarely produced nowadays, and another opera of his, *Judith*, holds its position on the stage because in it the part of Holofernes is sung by such an incomparable artist as Shaliapin. Sérov's figure has been rescued from the oblivion into which it was fast sinking by the very interesting memoirs recently published by his widow, herself a composer, who has devoted herself to the popularisation of music and is erecting in a village near Chudovo in the Novgorod government a choral amphitheatre for the production of operas by amateur peasant companies.

Dargomyzhsky and Sérov lived to see the beginnings of an era of fulfilment. Russian music sprang into vigorous life in the sixties when the breath of renewal passed through the whole social and political structure of the Empire. A talented group of young composers appeared and carried on with energy the work of Glinka and Dargomyzhsky in the development of a national school of music. This group was

called the Balákirev circle, from the name of its leader, and later came to be known familiarly as the *moguchaia kuchka*, or the "mighty clique." In France it is spoken of as "Les Cinq," since it consisted of five members, Balákirev, Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, Musorgsky, and César Cui. The traditions of the group are still fresh. César Cui is still living, and may frequently be seen at St. Petersburg concerts. Balákirev died in 1910, and Rimsky-Korsakov in 1908. Borodin died as long ago as 1887, and Musorgsky in 1881 at a comparatively early age. The members of the group differed greatly from one another in character and in the nature of their talent. They did not even constitute a school in the strictest sense of the word, for after a few years of ardent co-operation they drifted apart, each composer taking a path of his own, growing differences in views and methods leading in certain cases to estrangement. The imperious talent of Balákirev, which united the group at the beginning, gradually ceased to exercise commanding authority over the other members. But a strongly national spirit characterised all, except perhaps Cui, who is of French extraction, and in this sense the group together with other composers, who were closely associated with its members, may justly be described as the New Russian School. Balákirev and Rimsky-Korsakov were ardent admirers of Glinka, and both carefully studied folk-music and collected and harmonised folk-songs. Their nationalism was no mere patriotic masquerade. It was something inseparable from their artistic instinct, from the very nature of their talent. It represented an effort to express the Russian spirit in music which was just as legitimate as the effort of Pushkin and his successors to express the same spirit in poetry, or that of Turgeniev and Tolstoy to express it in prose. The development of music in Russia ran parallel, in fact, with the development of literature, and the Slavophil and populist influences which made themselves felt in literature stimulated nationalism in music. But music, since it approaches more nearly to the absolute

than any of the other arts, fortunately largely escaped the effect of those anti-aesthetic tendencies which impeded the growth of literature in the 'eighties and 'nineties. Those who denied art on general grounds might continue to occupy themselves with literature in some form, if only to condemn literature. But music they simply ignored. And the national school of music vindicated itself in such strikingly original work as Borodin's *Prince Igor*, Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov* and *Khovanshchina*, Rimsky-Korsakov's long series of brilliant operas, and the admirable songs and instrumental pieces of Balákirev and Cui.

But the national school had to fight a continual battle against opponents at home. The pianist, Anton Rubinstein, for instance, was an advocate of cosmopolitanism in music. It was just before the rise of the national school that Rubinstein assumed in the history of musical development that prominent position which he continued to hold for the remainder of his life. Born in 1829 he made his *début* as a pianist in Moscow at the age of nine and in Paris at the age of eleven, after which he toured in England, Holland, Sweden, and Germany with striking success. For five years he studied the theory of music abroad, Meyerbeer being one of his teachers and Mendelssohn one of his warmest admirers, and on his return to Russia he became musical adviser at the court of the enlightened Grand Duchess Elena Pavlona. He was the first director of the St. Petersburg Conservatoire, opened in 1862, and he was incessantly active as a pianist and composer. Of his genius as a pianist, of his unrivalled touch, of that power of interpretation that was tantamount to re-creation all Europe and America had frequent opportunity to judge. He was extraordinarily prolific as a composer, but the general estimate of his work in this respect is expressed in the familiar dictum, "Chaikovsky wrote so much that it is not surprising that some of his compositions were poor, and Rubinstein wrote so much that it is no wonder

that some of his were good." It is not as a composer that Rubinstein ranks high in Russian musical history, but as an interpreter and a populariser. The "purple patches" that from time to time occur in his compositions are separated by long tracts of undistinguished fluency. Many of his piano-forte pieces and his symphonies still enjoy popularity in Russia, but of the twenty operas that he wrote, including four "religious operas," or musical dramas on Biblical subjects, the only one that is now staged is *The Demon*, which owes its continued popularity less to Rubinstein's music than to Lermontov's romantic poem which forms the basis of the *libretto*. Rubinstein was conservative and cosmopolitan in his musical tastes, and in general an opponent of the Russian national school of music. His occasional attempts to write in the national spirit ended in failure, but at times he succeeded in giving his music a distinctive and original oriental colouring. In his efforts to spread a knowledge and love of music among the general public Rubinstein was unwearied. He was the chief founder of the Russian Musical Society, which now has branches in all parts of Russia, and, in spite of various defects, has done most important work in raising the general standard of musical taste, and in firmly establishing the conception of music as an art with lofty claims. Rubinstein's concerts, particularly his historical concerts, were of great educative value. In the 'seventies and 'eighties he was one of the most popular figures in the Russian capitals, and his square, bulky form, and leonine, Beethoven-like head, with the thick masses of hair and the rugged forehead were familiar in all public assemblies.

Anton Rubinstein's brother Nicholas also possessed extraordinary talent as a pianist, and as the head of the Moscow branch of the Russian Musical Society and the Moscow Conservatoire he greatly stimulated the development of musical culture. Like his brother he was a Westerner in his musical tastes, although by his concerts he did a great deal to popularise

**Nicholas
Rubinstein.**

Russian music in Western Europe. Chaikovsky owed much to his influence. Nicholas Rubinstein possessed, in fact, as a musical pedagogue such a marked and forceful individuality that the tradition he established has not yet wholly lost its hold on the present generation of Moscow composers.

With both Anton and Nicholas Rubinstein, Balákirev and his associates found themselves in conflict on the question of the relative merits of Russian national and cosmopolitan music, cosmopolitan music being, as the nationalists insisted, simply German music under another name.

But the nationalists were very far from condemning German music, they acknowledged their great debt to Beethoven and were ardent admirers of Schumann and Berlioz

Balákirev. and also of Liszt, with whom Balákirev was on very friendly terms. They insisted, however, on the autonomous rights of Russian music, both as regards form and spirit. Hand in hand with their nationalism went a tendency to deprecate the importance of musical training, and to leave inspiration untrammelled by theory. They could point to the example of Dargomyzhsky, who had written beautiful work despite his lack of training in form, in fact Dargomyzhsky openly expressed his contempt for musical learning. Balákirev had an unerring instinct for form that made up for the lack of systematic schooling in music, and perhaps it was this fact that made him impatient of efforts to promote systematic musical training in Russia and explains his hostility to the establishment of the St. Petersburg and Moscow Conservatoires in the early 'sixties. He dreaded that official Conservatoires might have the effect of establishing musical mediocrity, and for his part he would only encourage talent. But he was a stern taskmaster to his associates, and they owed much of their skill to his hard lessons. Musorgsky, a young officer, was simply brimming over with musical talent, but he rebelled against the efforts of the Balákirev group to induce him to study theory and to elaborate the formal side of his work. He and Rimsky-Korsakov lived

together for a time in the early 'seventies, and he was greatly indebted to his friend's suggestions, but later he slipped away from all discipline, drank heavily, listened to endless laudations of his genius from boon-companions and finally died in delirium tremens.

Borodin was a professor of chemistry, and was a distinguished scientific investigator as well as a talented composer.

But he lived in delightful disorder. His rooms were constantly besieged by students, and the remarkable works he did produce were like flowers that grew wild amidst a litter of very varied and interesting occupations. It is characteristic that the best work of both Musorgsky and Borodin was set in order, arranged or completed by Rimsky-Korsakov.

Rimsky-Korsakov was a very different kind of man from the other members of the group. In his youth he was a naval officer, and after showing Balákirev some early work in which his talent was clearly displayed, he went off on a three years' cruise.

Rimsky-Korsakov.

On his return he once more came under Balákirev's influence, and again began to compose, learning the rules of composition in practice. It was the Balákirev way, and it was a very good way for men of talent and fine musical instinct. But Rimsky-Korsakov was not only talented but conscientious, and when, in 1871, he was invited to occupy in the St. Petersburg Conservatoire the chair of composition and instrumentation, he shrank from accepting because, as he said, though he was the author of such works as *Sadko*, *Pskovitianka*, and *Antara*, which had been favourably received, he could not harmonise a chorale, he had never written an exercise in counterpoint, he had only the vaguest idea of the structure of a fugue, and was ignorant of much of musical terminology and of the technique of various instruments. But having been induced to accept the chair he set to work to fill up the gaps in his knowledge and in a few years became one of the most thorough masters of musical theory and practice in Russia. In his

later works he paid the closest attention to details of form and revised his own compositions again and again, besides editing the work of his associates and predecessors, and giving constant counsel that has borne valuable fruit in the work of the younger Russian composers. With Rimsky-Korsakov, however, form was never supreme over inspiration, but only gave firmness of outline and clearness of expression to the strong impulse of his rich talent. He was the most persistent and most prolific worker of all the members of the Balákirev group, and maintained throughout his life a rare serenity of outlook. He was an optimist, his work is a constant affirmation of life, is full of colour and movement, and is often suggestive of that of a man so different in many respects from Rimsky-Korsakov as William Morris. His delight in the world of ancient Russian history and Eastern legend, his pantheistic view of nature, his humour, his sense of the beauty of dream are all co-ordinated and controlled by a sensitive, artistic conscience which is closely akin to that moral delight in overcoming which pervaded his work and his life. National feeling was for him a perpetual source of inspiration. He recalls how an invitation to an estate in the Tver government once aroused in him such a sudden and keen enthusiasm for the very soil and heart of Russia that on the strength of it he sat down and wrote anew one of the choruses in *Pskovitianka*. He was happy in his home life, honoured as a professor and later as the Director of the St. Petersburg Conservatoire, and from the later 'eighties onward wielded commanding influence in the Russian musical world. He held aloof from politics, but in 1905 he took the side of the students of the Conservatoire in a moment of unrest and was deprived of his post for doing so—the result naturally being an outburst of enthusiasm on his behalf. Rimsky-Korsakov was a strong and a happy man, one of the few Russian artists who have attained inner harmony.

It is interesting to compare Rimsky-Korsakov's nationalism

with that of Balákirev. The leader of the group of five had by no means such an outwardly successful career as that of his most distinguished pupil. In opposition to Rubinstein and the so-called German school with its Conservatoire, Balákirev founded a Free Musical School for the encouragement of musical talent, and for some years exercised great influence through this school and the concerts he conducted in connection with it. For a time, too, he even directed the concerts of the Russian Musical Society, an official institution in which the cosmopolitan school had its stronghold. But Balákirev fell on evil days. The concerts of the Free School proved financially a failure. The German school prevailed against him in the Musical Society and the composer was compelled to accept a position at £8 a month on the Warsaw railway. He became devoutly religious, fasted regularly, and in addition became an ardent Slavophil. Slavophil nationalism combined with Orthodoxy was antipathetic to Korsakov's pantheistic sentiment, and this circumstance partly accounted for the break between the two composers. But Rimsky-Korsakov later became Balákirev's assistant in the management of the Court Choir, and showed in his *Legend of the Sunken City of Kitezh* how deeply he could enter into the spirit of Orthodox mysticism.

There was a great variety, in fact, in the shades and forms of the nationalism of the Balákirev circle, but there was a striking unity in fundamental tendencies. What an astonishingly new world these composers opened up after all, and how endlessly rich it was! They drew on Russian history and on Russian legend. Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov* treats of the Moscow tsar of that name, and his *Khovanshchina* of Khovansky, the commander of the *strieltsy* or regular troops, during the regency of the Princess Sophia, the half-sister of Peter the Great, that is to say, these operas deal with the troublous times at the beginning and the end of the seventeenth century. Borodin's *Prince Igor* is based on a beautiful poem of the Kiev period, and is full of the romance of the

conflict of the early Russians with the nomads of the steppes. Balákirev did not compose an opera, but he makes skilful use of Russian airs in his pianoforte and orchestral works, and his symphonic poem, *Rus*, is inspired by a review of the whole course of Russian history, while in another symphonic poem, *In Bohemia*, the composer gives expression to his Slavophil sympathies. In the long list of Rimsky-Korsakov's operas there is only one, *Mozart and Salieri*, based on a poem of Pushkin's, which does not deal with Russian subjects, historical or legendary. The titles of his operas indicate their character. *Sadko*, the hero of the most famous epic-song of the Novgorod cycle, was a young merchant who, by his singing, charmed the daughter of the King of the Sea, and set the King himself dancing in his realm under the waters. *Pskovitianka* deals with the life in the republican city of Pskov during the reign of Ivan the Terrible. *May Night* and *Christmas Eve* are fairy tales of Gogol's. *The Snow Maiden* and *Mlada* are heroines of fairy-tales. Into his symphonic works, too, Rimsky-Korsakov constantly wove Russian folk-melody.

It is curious that the Oriental spirit in Russian legend and even independently of Russian legend seems to have appealed to the composers of the national school in such a way as to suggest a close affinity between the Russian and the Oriental world. Musorgsky introduced a Persian dance into his *Khovanshchina* without the slightest apparent necessity. Some of the best of Balákirev's work was inspired by the Armenian, Georgian, and Persian music he heard during a visit to the Caucasus, and he describes the extraordinary impression made on him by an Eastern air heard in an open field in the Stavropol government in the silence of a moonlight summer night. This air he made use of in the Andante of his First Symphony. Balákirev's *Islamei* is a pianoforte piece of a vividly Oriental character, inspired by the music of a Kabardine dance. Oriental themes continually recur in the works of Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakov.

César Cui, who in his younger days shared the ideals of the Balákirev group and fought its battles in the press, gradually lost touch with the more progressive

César Cui. members of the school, failed to develop his talent, and confined himself to the composition of melodramatic operas and graceful drawing-room songs. Cui is a general of engineers and a professor of fortification, and his works on military engineering equal his musical works in bulk.

In certain external respects much of the work of some members of the Balákirev group is now old-fashioned, and, just as in literature there are not a few writers who have attained a greater perfection of style than Turgeniev and Tolstoy, so there are composers at the present day who produce work that is more complex in form than a great deal of what Musorgsky, Borodin, and Rimsky-Korsakov wrote. But what gives the work of the masters of the Russian school a permanent and unfading beauty is that original force of personality they display in their magnificent sweep of fantasy, and their sheer native strength of creative impulse. It is the rich vitality of their compositions that constitutes one of the chief motive forces in modern Russian musical development.

The other motive force is contained in the work of Chaikovsky. Chaikovsky held aloof from the Balákirev group.

Chaikovsky. The son of a manager of ironworks in the government of Viatka he served for two years as a Government official after completing his studies in the School of Law, but in view of his striking musical gifts he was induced to enter the newly-founded St. Petersburg Conservatoire, where from 1862 to 1865 he studied composition under the director Zarembo and Anton Rubinstein. His connection with the Conservatoire effectually removed him from the sphere of influence of the Balákirev circle, which was bitterly hostile to the Conservatoire, Rubinstein and the Russian Musical Society. Chaikovsky came

to be regarded as an eclectic in musical taste as opposed to the nationalist school. He was appointed professor of the theory of music in the Moscow Conservatoire, where Nicholas Rubinstein exerted a strong influence upon him, and this chair he retained until 1877, when the generosity of a benefactress whom he never met enabled him to devote himself entirely to composition. His earlier work was not appreciated by the public, and it was not until he produced in 1879 his opera, *Eugen Onegin*, a musical setting of Pushkin's best-known poem, that he gained a popular success. *Eugen Onegin* is to this day the favourite opera on the Russian stage. In the later 'nineties it enjoyed an extraordinary run of popularity, and the example set by the Emperor who named his daughters Olga and Tatiana after the heroines of the poem was eagerly followed in all ranks of society. Many lines of the poem are household words and airs from the opera are hummed everywhere. Another opera on a poem of Pushkin's, *The Queen of Spades*, which Chaikovsky wrote towards the end of his life, is always sure of a favourable hearing. His other operas, *Mazepa* and *Charodieika*, are now rarely heard, while *The Little Shoes*, the subject of which is drawn from a story by Gogol, has only recently been revived. *The Sleeping Beauty*, *The Lake of Swans*, and the *Nut Cracker* established a new standard in Russian ballet-music. His songs are among those most frequently sung.

But it is as a composer of symphonies that Chaikovsky reached the height of his fame, both in Russia and abroad. His was a strange and complex nature, and he had a profound and constantly saddening sense of the complexity of life and the inexorable movement of fate. In his personal life there were many elements of tragedy which led to attempts at suicide. In striking contrast to Rimsky-Korsakov, who delighted in the expression of an all overcoming, all pervading harmony, Chaikovsky was pre-eminently sensitive to the beauty of defeat and loss, to the yearning poetry of a vain struggle of the soul with over-ruling powers. And the beauty

that he felt most keenly he expressed most powerfully in his symphonies, especially in the Sixth Symphony, the *Pathétique*, composed just before his death.

Chaikovsky had a remarkable power of developing the suggestions of other composers, and of transfusing a variety of alien influences—those of French and German schools, and also of the Russian school—into something wholly his own. He was a national composer, but not in the same sense in which Musorgsky, Borodin, and Rimsky-Korsakov were. Though he frequently used national themes in his music, they are not so characteristic as that element of personal suffering which is the fundamental motive of his work. With the members of the Balákirev group he was never intimate, but when Balákirev was compelled, owing to the intrigues of his enemies, to retire in 1870 from the post of conductor of the concerts of the Russian Musical Society, Chaikovsky wrote an article strongly protesting against the injustice. When he died in 1893, in St. Petersburg, his funeral formed the occasion for a demonstration of popular sympathy such as had never before been accorded to any Russian composer. His memory is still fresh. A brass tablet indicates the house in Gogol Street in St. Petersburg where he spent the last few years of his life, and there are many middle-aged musicians who speak of him not as Chaikovsky, the famous composer, but affectionately as Piotr Iliich, who not so very long ago was conducting his own symphonies in that splendid Hall of the Nobles' Assembly which has witnessed so many of the triumphs and the defeats of Russian music. Russian criticism has not yet arrived at a settled estimate of the value of Chaikovsky's work. Some ardent supporters of living composers are impatient that the public should still be satisfied with his operas and symphonies, though, as a matter of fact, the public has grown restless and curious of new forms and combinations of sound, and there are many signs that, for the present, at any rate, Chaikovsky's popularity is on the wane. On the other hand, some of the most

independent and penetrating critics set the intrinsic value of Chaikovsky's music very high. They declare that as a force in Russian musical evolution he must be placed on a level with Glinka, and that no Russian artist, whether he be musician, painter, or poet, with the one exception of Dostoevsky, has such a profound sense as he of the mysteries of the inner life, and that his hopeless yearning to solve the inexorable tragedy of life by the power of love is distinctly Slavonic. They object to the assertion that Chaikovsky is eclectic as opposed to the nationalist school, and affirm that he is as thoroughly national as Glinka and Borodin, though he expresses another side of the national character. The judgment of the Germanic countries and of England seems to be more decisive on this point than that of his own countrymen. There, at any rate, Chaikovsky is recognised as a most distinctively Russian composer.

The "New Russian School" and Chaikovsky represent the immediate past. What of the present? The present is very rich and full of promise. The impulse

**The Musical
Outlook.**

to development given by the composers of the past generation is operating with great intensity. Russia has taken her place in the foremost ranks of musical progress. She is no longer a mere recipient of foreign influences. In music as in literature she is able to exert influence in her turn, and the unmistakable signs of her influence are visible in the work of modern French composers. **Musical life in Russia is a flowing tide.** The taste of the public is being gradually refined by first-class concerts. The Conservatoires of St. Petersburg and Moscow, the schools of the Russian Musical Society, and many other institutions have widely disseminated a knowledge of the theory and practice of music, and new training-schools are constantly being opened. The number of composers is steadily growing, and musical publishers issue an endless stream of new works, a surprisingly large proportion of which show vigour and originality. Many of the younger composers are boldly displaying fresh

musical resources, and the outlook of Russian music at the present moment seems exceedingly hopeful in every respect.

There are several living composers who form a link between the older and the newer schools. In St. Petersburg Alexander Konstantinovich Glazunov and Anatoly Konstantinovich Liadov were both pupils and intimate associates of Rimsky-Korsakov. The former, who is now director of the St. Petersburg Conservatoire, wrote his first symphony in 1881 at the age of sixteen, and his early work secured for him from the musicians of the Rimsky-Korsakov group the nickname of "The Little Glinka." Glazunov has written eight symphonies, a number of symphonic poems and scenes, and several ballets, of which *Raymonda* is considered the best. There are many traces in his work of the influence of the national school, but he is not so distinctively Russian as his predecessors. He lacks profundity of psychological analysis, but his command of musical form and the strength and impressiveness of his symphonies give him a high rank among Russian composers, while his popularity is frequently attested in the concerts he conducts in St. Petersburg and Moscow.

Anatoly Liadov, a professor in the St. Petersburg Conservatoire, is the author of a number of pianoforte works and of some charming miniature symphonic poems, *Baba Yaga*, *The Magic Lake*, and *Kikimora*, in which the Russian element is very strong. Liadov is reproached by his friends for his dilatoriness in production, but what he does write is elaborately chiselled and polished to a nice degree of perfection.

The nationalist tradition, which for some years suffered an eclipse, has recently been revived with great success in the work of a talented young St. Petersburg composer, Igor Stravinsky, who in his fairy-tale ballet, *The Fire Bird*, has shown himself to be a direct successor of Rimsky-Korsakov, and in his *Petrushka* (Punch and Judy Show) has with rare vigour and colour given a musical presentation of the life of the street.

In Moscow the influence of the Rubinstein-Chaikovsky tradition lingers. Anton Arensky who, before his premature

death in 1906, was first a professor in the Moscow Conservatoire and later the leader of the choir of the Court Chapel, was a follower of Chaikovsky and displayed in his music no marked individuality of his own. A pupil of Chaikovsky's, Sergei Ivanovich Taneiev, exerted over the younger musicians in Moscow an influence comparable in degree with that exerted by Rimsky-Korsakov in St. Petersburg, but his work is devoid of any traces of the influence of Russian folk-music and lacks colour and charm.

At the present moment Moscow is the scene of a very interesting and complex musical movement. There is a group of composers ranging in age from thirty to a little under fifty who have produced a great deal of work of high quality and of very varied interest. This group cannot be said to constitute a school. Its members profess no common musical creed, and it is only in virtue of what they are not that they can be placed under a single category. They are not nationalists in the sense in which the word was understood by the Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakov school. And it is all to the good that they have freed themselves from the bonds of an obligatory nationalism, since nationalism is a source of inspiration only when it is original, real, and personal, when, as was the case with Borodin, Musorgsky, and Rimsky-Korsakov, the character of the composer is vitally connected with the elemental forces of the nation. Nationalism as a mode, a mere imitative nationalism is fatal to true art, as the numerous efforts of mediocrities have demonstrated to weariness.

The chief of the Moscow composers are Grechaninov, Rahmaninov, Vasilenko, Metner, and Skriabin. Grechaninov (born in 1874) has written a great deal of vocal and instrumental music that has attained considerable popularity, and his songs in particular, among which are adaptations of Scottish airs, set to versions of Burns' poems, are widely known. Grechaninov has also won distinction as a composer of ecclesiastical music.

Sergei Rahmaninov (born in 1873) studied at the Moscow Conservatoire under Taneiev and Arensky, and in a number of pianoforte pieces and orchestral works he has upheld with sobriety, earnestness, and power, added to a highly-developed technique, the Chaikovsky tradition. He is probably the most popular of living Russian composers.

Sergei Vasilenko (born in 1872), now professor of instrumentation and orchestration in the Moscow Conservatoire, is an original and interesting composer who has already passed through several phases of development from absorption in the religious mysticism of the Russian people, expressed in his *Legend of the City of Kitezsh*, and his *Epic Poem*, to an eager assimilation of the influences of the latest school of Russian poetry culminating in the pantheistic optimism of his orchestral suite *Au Soleil*.

Nicholas Metner, a writer of pianoforte music and songs, stands wholly apart from other contemporary composers.

**Nicholas
Metner.**

He shows no trace of Russian influences and is severely classical in his forms. His work is impressive, for one thing, on account of its high technical finish, and it has aroused considerable discussion, some critics accusing the composer of coldness and lack of feeling, while others declare that his music, for all its severity of outline, affects them in that profound and inexpressible manner which is characteristic of the highest art. Metner is a pianist of great distinction, and in several concerts in St. Petersburg and Moscow he has given effective interpretations of his own work.

By far the most interesting and most hotly-discussed of contemporary Russian composers is, however, Alexander Skriabin, who was born in 1871 and studied under Taneiev and Safonov in the Moscow Conservatoire. Skriabin has written over

Skriabin.

sixty orchestral and pianoforte works which, taken together, form a remarkable record of a passionate search for new musical forms to express the finest shades of blended religious

and artistic emotion. The strangeness of Skriabin's work repels the many, while it has attracted to him a small band of ardent and devoted admirers. And the many admit the haunting, elusive beauty of much of his work even while the novelty of its forms irritates and baffles them and arouses the most violent controversy. It is to Skriabin's advantage that the upheaval of the last few years has largely broken down that rigid conservatism in matters of art which made the general public on principle hostile to innovations in painting, literature, and music. The most ordinary man has experienced during this period of political and social unrest a range of emotions of which under normal conditions he would never have imagined himself capable, and he is therefore disposed to be more tolerant than formerly to the expression of emotion transcending his own experience in forms to which he is not accustomed.

Skriabin was profoundly influenced by Chopin and Liszt, and also by Wagner. His admirers, indeed, place Skriabin and Wagner on a pinnacle apart as the only two musicians for whom life, musical creation, and religion constitute an inseparable whole. Art as religion and religion as something involving the conception of art, this, so these admirers declare, is the fundamental idea of Skriabin's work, and his compositions are a succession of attempts to express this idea in forms which grew in power and impressiveness in the measure that the author's perception of the idea became clearer and more profound. He is more than a musician. He aims at reuniting the arts which, originally blended in one whole in the celebration of ancient religious rites, have separated, each taking its own separate course of development, elaborating details, working out its own perfection, and are now ripe for a fresh synthesis, as Wagner foresaw. For Skriabin all art is a mystical form of activity aiming at causing that ecstasy which means the attainment of the full light of knowledge on the highest planes of nature. His first symphony, as his interpreter Leonid Sabaneiev points out, is a hymn to

art as religion; his third symphony, *The Divine Poem*, expresses the liberation of the spirit from fetters, the self-affirmation of personality; and his *Poem of Ecstasy*, the joy of untrammelled action, the creative ecstasy. This creative ecstasy arises from the artist's realisation that he himself fashions the life of his spirit, and that in incessant, creative play, in unending movement towards attainment unattained, the spirit lives.

In *Prometheus, the Poem of Fire*, an astonishing symphony of ecstatic creative energy, Skriabin has reached for the present the highest point of his development, but he is understood to be engaged on the composition of a *Mystery* in which his religious ideas shall find their most complete expression.

This is not the place to enter upon a detailed examination of Skriabin's work, but enough has been said to indicate the wholly novel character, the extraordinary boldness of his **musical conceptions**. To give adequate musical expression to such a far-reaching philosophy obviously demands a fertility of resource that only a very exceptional composer can have at his command. What makes Skriabin so interesting is that his philosophy is not a mere product of reflection. It has been developed in perpetual association with its musical expression. It has been thought out in music. But the effort to think out such thought in music has led to a series of interesting discoveries, to an opening of new ways in composition, to the evolution of new harmonies, which are believed to arouse a peculiarly mystical vibration. All this leads to a greatly increased complexity of musical technique, and seems, in the opinion of Skriabin's interpreter, to foreshadow a revolution leading to the supersession of the scale at present in use by one much more finely subdivided and far more capable of expressing the faintest nuances of spiritual emotion.

In his *Prometheus* Skriabin has taken a step towards the reunion of the arts by availing himself of his sensations of a definite correspondence between sounds and colours, and associating with his musical symphony a symphony of colours.

So far, however, the technical means for producing the symphony of colours in the concert-hall have not been discovered, and all that is known of it is derived from the reports of enthusiastic friends who have experienced the combined effects of the parallel symphonies in the privacy of the composer's own rooms. The production of the musical symphony, *Prometheus*, in Russia and abroad has had the result of greatly perplexing both critics and public, but there is a strong disposition to admit that, in spite of an obvious lack of unity, the work is very possibly that of a genius opening up a world unknown. All Skriabin's admirers are eagerly looking forward to the completion of that *Mystery*, in which the suggestions contained in his earlier works shall blossom out into fullest expression.

It remains to give some account of the various aspects of everyday musical life in Russia at the present moment.

**Musical
Instruction.**

Musical education is still largely the monopoly of the official Conservatoires in St. Petersburg and Moscow, in respect of which the musical schools of the Russian Musical Society in a large number of towns stand as secondary schools to the Universities. When the St. Petersburg Conservatoire was founded, over fifty years ago, its objects were hardly understood. A lady who wished to enter her daughter as a pupil expressed to Anton Rubinstein the hope that special care would be taken that pupils should keep up their knowledge of foreign languages, and was amazed to hear that the language of instruction would be Russian. But though Russian was the language of instruction the spirit that governed the Conservatoire was for a long time German. This institution was, in fact, the stronghold of those German tendencies in music against which Balákirev and his associates carried on such a vigorous campaign. The German spirit, added to the official and academic spirit, made the Conservatoire at one period the bugbear of the progressive composers, but in the end, in spite of a hundred obvious drawbacks, both the Moscow and St.

Petersburg Conservatoires have by the work they have done powerfully vindicated their right to exist. They have made obligatory upon all composers a certain very high standard of musical training, and the fact that for many years Rimsky-Korsakov was the leading spirit of the St. Petersburg institution and Chaikovsky of the sister institution in Moscow would be alone sufficient to rebut the accusation that Conservatoires impede development. It is true that the professorial spirit deadens and revolt quickens, but after all without the professional spirit revolt itself would beat the air and progress would lack buoyancy. It is an admirable feature of the Russian Conservatoires that they not only impart a musical training but try to give their students an all-round education.

A free Popular Conservatoire, the object of which is to disseminate musical knowledge amongst wider circles than those reached by the official conservatoires, and to avoid the disadvantages of official routine, has been established in Moscow by private enterprise and has been in the best sense successful. **It is not wealthy.** It has no building of its own, and its lecturers hold their classes in various hired rooms, in private houses, or in schools, but it has awakened an eager interest in musical theory among many busy people, including working men, who are unable to take the regular courses in the old-established institutions.

The Free Musical School in St. Petersburg founded by Balákirev in opposition to the Conservatoire, and once famous for the excellence of its concerts still exists, but has lost its importance. In the capitals and the provincial towns there is naturally a large number of private musical schools.

The capitals are well off for concerts. The traditional symphony concerts of the Russian Musical Society have become lifeless and uninteresting, but at the **Concert-giving.** subscription concerts, organised by prominent conductors and musicians, a very wide selection of the best classical and modern music, including many new works

by Russian composers, is performed every winter by first-class orchestras assisted by various executive artists of European fame. And the singers and the violin and piano virtuosos who come to Russia every year in large numbers nowhere attract such crowded and enthusiastic houses as in St. Petersburg and Moscow, in spite of the expensiveness of tickets. The ovations in a Russian concert-hall are a sight to see. When the programme has been played or sung through, encores given, and the more sober part of the audience is gradually dispersing, the enthusiasts, mostly young in years, press forward towards the stage and by their whole-hearted applause create such a liberating atmosphere of triumph that the artist is involuntarily infected and plays on and on for sheer joy of unrestrained playing. Very often this informal termination is the best part of the concert. Concerts are constantly given in provincial towns and are everywhere largely attended. One misses in Russia the open-air brass band or orchestral concerts that are the rule in Germany, but during the summer months orchestral concerts are held at the Pavlovsk Station in the neighbourhood of St. Petersburg, and at the various health resorts. Military bands are not utilised to anything like the extent they might be for enlivening the few public squares and gardens the capitals possess.

The opera is cultivated chiefly in the Imperial Theatres in St. Petersburg and Moscow, which, owing to their great resources, are in a position to produce operas

The Opera. very effectively. A great variety of works is staged, from *The Huguenots* to Wagner and the latest works of the Russian school. Unfortunately the Imperial Opera Houses are not very accessible to the general public, for one thing because of the high prices charged, and for another because the subscription system has created a kind of close corporation, the members of which renew their subscriptions from year to year and leave their tickets to their heirs in their wills. The number of first-class singers

engaged in the Imperial Opera is much smaller than might be expected. There are, in fact, only two, the bass Shaliápin, and the tenor Sobinov. Among the women artists there are none who can be placed on a level with these two. Feodor Shaliápin was born in 1873, and is the son of a peasant in the Viatka government, was a choir-boy in his boyhood, then sang in the chorus of a provincial opera troupe in Ufa, and at the age of seventeen made his début as a soloist. He roved over Russia with a Little Russian troupe, found in Tiflis a benefactor who gave him some regular lessons in singing, and then made his way to Moscow and finally to St. Petersburg. In Mamontov's Opera House in Moscow he secured triumphs in performances of a number of operas of the Russian school, and these triumphs were repeated in St. Petersburg, and later in La Scala in Milan, and in America. Shaliápin has a voice of marvellous power and timbre, which of recent years has unfortunately shown signs of wear and tear, a striking presence—he is considerably over six feet high—and he is an actor of such remarkable skill and resource that it is safe to assert that he would meet with equal success on the dramatic stage. For the present he is the idol of the concert-going and opera-loving public throughout Russia. Leonid Sóbinov has a clear bell-like tenor, and is at his best in the part of Lensky in *Eugen Onegin*.

In the Imperial Opera in St. Petersburg and Moscow two evenings a week during the season are devoted to the ballet, a form of entertainment the popularity of which in Russia has only during the last few years become intelligible in England, thanks to the performances of Russian dancers in London. At a time when the ballet had become obsolete in Europe it was artificially maintained in Russia, and the best traditions of the earlier period of ballet-dancing were guarded at the Imperial expense during a period when the great proportion of the Russian public remained entirely indifferent to the art. In the 'nineties of the last century the ballet attracted the attention of leading musicians and artists, the

possibilities of expression contained in ballet-dancing were discussed, and some of the best musicians, including Chaikovsky and Glazunov, composed ballet music while many talented painters were engaged as decorators. The new conception of dancing as an art, or rather the revival of classical conceptions in the person of Isidora Duncan, whose performances are highly appreciated in St. Petersburg, exercised a marked influence on the Imperial Ballet, and now the routine of that ancient tradition which Marius Petipa upheld for so many years with such firmness and dignity has given place, under the enthusiastic guidance of M. Fokin, to an eager effort to test all the resources of expression contained in bodily movement associated with music. Such systems of training in rhythmical gymnastics as that of Jaques Dalcroze have also had an influence. The element of acrobatics in the ballet is being thrust into the background by the growing tendency to emphasise rhythmical expressiveness, just as the florid arias of Italian opera are being superseded by music adjusted to the necessities of expression and not subordinated to the display of technique. The revival of interest in the ballet in Western Europe has stimulated the revival in Russia, and Russians have begun to look on such dancers as Pavlova and Nizhinsky with new and wondering eyes.

The operatic demands of a broader public in St. Petersburg are provided for in the People's Palace of the Emperor Nicholas II, where operatic and dramatic performances of very fair quality are given at exceedingly moderate prices. An entrance fee of twopence-halfpenny gives visitors the right to wander over the grounds, to look at side-shows, and to stand in the large hall in which the chief performances are given. A few pence extra gives the right to a seat, and a seat in the front row of the stalls does not cost more than two or three shillings on ordinary occasions. The People's Palace is frequented, especially on Sundays and holidays, by crowds of working people, artisans, and soldiers who are given the opportunity of becoming acquainted with a great

variety of standard operas both Russian and foreign. In connection with the People's Palace an immense theatre, capable of seating three thousand persons, has recently been erected, and the performances given here are of a better quality and the price of tickets higher than in the older hall.

The musical development of Russia is more than keeping pace with the general development of the country. It is strongly affected, it is true, by prevailing political and social forces, and the literary tendencies of the moment are very clearly and faithfully reflected in music. The nationalist movement in music ran parallel with the populist movement in literature, and a similar movement in painting, and the modernist movement in literature and in painting is closely associated with certain recent tendencies in music. But music from its very nature is freer than the other arts, is not subject in the same degree as they are to the social conditions prevailing at a given moment. The increasing popularisation of music goes hand in hand with economic progress, but popularisation does not dictate the line of development which music is to take. It only multiplies indefinitely the opportunities for the display of that free creative faculty which has been exercised with such striking effect during the last fifty years of comparatively limited opportunity. And from this point of view the prospects of musical development in this immense Empire are hopeful in the highest degree. It is no wonder that while, on the one hand, composers like Skriabin are refining to the utmost the means of musical expression, there are others who dream of the coming of a great national art in which the whole people shall be actively participant, and the crown and pinnacle of which shall be a perfected music.