

The 1933 and the Monte Carlo companies played at the same time. Both theatres were jammed. At the Champs-Élysées, youth and elegance. At the Châtelet, lovers of sound ballet-tradition and connoisseurs of good dancing. André Masson made a hideous and senseless décors for Tchaikovsky's *Fifth Symphony*, called *Les Présages*. Massine made for the same work a choreography that in splendor of effect can only be compared this year to the Köchlin score I have just been talking about. Françaix's *Beach*, their only musical novelty, was gay and pretty and sort of cheap. Etienne de Beaumont did some tame sets for *Scuola di Ballo* to music of Boccherini. The old Diaghilev repertory was handsomely performed and also the post-Diaghilev successes *Jeux d'Enfant* (Bizet and Miro) and *Cotillon* (Chabrier-Bérard).

Virgil Thomson

PREPARATIONS IN MOSCOW AND LENINGRAD

OPERA

THE *Mujik from Komarinsk* (Komarinskij Mujik) is a term that was used in Czaristic Russia to express contempt for the revolutionary peasant. Komarinskij Mujik was the personally vital force in a great peasant uprising whose importance to the development of Russia official historians intentionally slighted. He became the subject of satirical presentations and no scientific investigator or poet attempted to clear up the historical significance of this upsurge of revolutionary forces of the eighteenth century.

The twenty-year old composer, Victor Shelobinsky, and a famous poet of the older generation, Ossip Brick, have undertaken to create a music drama from this historical material. Ivan Bolotnikoff, the peasant leader, is the central figure. Destiny leads him from Moscow to Venice, to Lithuania, and finally, as head of the rebellious masses, to the Kremlin in Moscow. The text offers a vivid picture of social conditions and struggles in eighteenth century Russia, and the music to some extent leans on the most significant Russian opera, Moussorgsky's *Boris Godunoff*, whose subject is similar. Shelobinsky promises to become an important composer of historic mass scenes. His gift for austere, dramatically convincing melody is noteworthy.

A certain restraint in the orchestral treatment is lacking now but may come with riper craftsmanship. The last act of the opera, on the death of Ivan Bolotnikoff, the final catastrophe of the whole revolutionary movement, is gripping in its earnest choral treatment and excellent building up of mass effects.

The fate of the same peasant leader is used by the Moscow composer, Wasilij Netschaeff, in his opera *Ivan Bolotnikoff*. This work has so far been heard only fragmentarily. Netschaeff's music, revealing greater maturity than Shelobinsky's, follows a lyrical path. In Netschaeff's opera the preliminary events to the peasant uprising, Bolotnikoff's flight to Vienna, etc., are dealt with in detail, Italian melodies being useful to a certain extent. Netschaeff, one of the most solid of the Russian musicians who became prominent around 1910, is well grounded in the principles of modern music.

Yurij Shaporin, the composer of a new, large scale historical opera, *The Dekabrists*, is, like Shelobinsky, a member of the Leningrad group. Shaporin is not facile, building his works slowly, and, despite unquestioned talent, has not until recently ventured to use operatic material. Shaporin is in his late forties, a full-blooded musician, whose music is born of deep feeling and melodic power. His opera deals with historical events at the beginning of the nineteenth century; the climax is precipitated by the movement of Russian officers toward Western democracy after the defeat of Napoleon. The personal drama concerns the fate of the Dekabrist Annarkoff and his beloved Polina Göbel, who follows him into exile. Shaporin paints a broad picture of Russian life in the first quarter of the nineteenth century and seizes many opportunities to utilize the melodic treasures of the Russian folksong in choruses and solos.

BALLET

Historical material forms the basis of operatic creation by the young and middle-aged Russian musicians, as it has been the source of classical Russian music since Glinka. Rimsky-Korsakoff, Borodin, Moussorgsky are the chief representatives of this kind of opera, which, in a lyrical interpretation is also the groundwork of the most popular works of Tschaikovsky.

A similar influence is vital in contemporary Soviet ballet. Boris Assafieff, the talented musicologist who used the legacy of the French revolution in a great choreographic composition, has already been discussed here. Recently Assafieff finished a new ballet, *The Fountains of Bachtissarai*, after a poem by Pushkin. It is an expression of highly romantic material, in which the themes of tragic love and the clash of two worlds, are mingled. The exotic East—the Crimea—which is the colorful setting for the whole action, and feudal Poland are represented in the ballet through the Chan Girei and his harem wife, Marie Potozki. The lightly flowing music, lilting in its rhythmic structure is reminiscent of the composers of early romanticism—Weber, Field, Glinka. This work by a learned composer marks the rebirth of the Russian classical romantic ballet. A second ballet which will be given its premiere in Moscow this season is Alex Shenschin's *Carmen*, which aims at a choreographic expression of the source material of Bizet's famous opera, Merimée's novel. In this newest *Carmen*, fundamental Spanish rhythms and folkscenes will be utilized. It will avoid romantic dreams, following the intense realism of one of the most significant novels in world literature.

SYMPHONIC MUSIC

In the symphonic field, contrary to the preceding, there is a reversion from the historical in favor of realistic restatement of the great construction program of the Soviet Union. The latest works of such important composers as Maximilian Steinberg and Wladimir Tcherbatcheff accent the most important historical developments of the state's work. The question is not one purely of program music, but of symphonies that reflect the emotional content of the theme. Thus Maximilian Steinberg presents the picture of the gigantic Middle-Asiatic Railroad, Turksib, which gave to the land of the Cossacks the opportunity for a new cultural growth. The musical foundation stones of this classical motive combine with certain individual themes, to form a dithyramb of work and construction. Tcherbatcheff depicts the growing up of the great factory near Leningrad, vital to the metallurgic industry, in a choral symphony with very clearly or-

ganized polyphony. Also in this field of the monumental symphony lies the new trilogy by Nikolai Miaskowsky, a work which takes an entire evening and will have its premiere this winter.

Eugen Braudo

UNDER THE SWASTIKA

IT is difficult to present the world outside with an objective picture of Germany's new cultural status. For we ourselves have no such grasp of the situation. Pessimists believe the German government for years to come will be too absorbed in economic and administrative construction to give due consideration to esthetic questions, making their analogy with the new Russian state which, when similarly pressed, neglected cultural questions. But this view is contradicted by the important part art and culture play in the program of German fascism. From the fascist angle not to incorporate art and artists in the structure of the state would mean to neglect too important a means of public education.

The musical problems in this connection are complex. Of course it is taken for granted that what are termed destructive, "culturally bolshevistic" impulses must be forcibly suppressed, sacrificed to a new idea of unity. But how "constructive" elements are to be differentiated from these in any particular work, what the aspects of a national art should be, just which of many traditions it should follow—about such questions no definite conclusion has been developed. As to the race problem, it is now apparent that even in music the influence of Jewish artists has been reduced to a minimum. It is well known that Wilhelm Furtwängler has raised his voice against complete exclusion with the result that in the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra six Jewish musicians continue to occupy prominent posts; and the Staatsoper has extended its agreements with Alexander Kipnis, Emanuel List and Leo Blech.

The precarious state of all modern art in Germany today was described in the March-April issue of MODERN MUSIC. Two viewpoints are now in conflict. According to the first, all dissonant music is the manifesto of an enemy to the state and