

marriage caused a sensation; William Ogilvie, a Scotsman transplanted to Dublin, had begun life as a school usher at twelve pounds a year and had quit his job because the authorities would not turn his pounds into guineas. But the marriage turned out very well; Mr. Ogilvie entered the Irish Parliament and made a speech that lasted an hour and a quarter. Not the least interesting of the details concerning the engaging Lady Emily which Mr. FitzGerald has dug up are his references, when he could find them, to the books she knew. She read Fielding, Smollett, and Fanny Burney on publication—"Tom Jones," read aloud by Lord Powerscourt, "diverts the boys," but Mr. Ogilvie did not care for "Humphry Clinker"; he said: "I dislike Smellfungus and all his writing." The book is an urbane and entertaining resurrection piece.

THE RECOLLECTIONS OF ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE, translated by Alexander Teixeira de Mattos, edited by J. P. Mayer. Columbia University Press. \$5. This book, covering the years 1848 and 1849, has had an interesting history. The text was originally published in France in 1893, more than forty years after it was written. De Mattos's English translation appeared in 1896. In 1942, of all years, a new French edition, with additions, was issued. Its editor failed to identify the new material, and Mr. Mayer assumed the task of comparing the editions. He has designated the 1942 additions with brackets and just as the reader of a letter takes particular pains to decipher any material that has been lined through, so will the student of the present text devote special attention to the bracketed passages. But that same student, according to Mr. Mayer, would first "do well . . . to familiarize himself with a reliable history of the French Revolution of 1848," and he appends a reading list. Mr. Mayer's brief but illuminating introduction concludes, however, with a significant statement that brings the "Recollections" sharply into contemporary focus: "What in 1849 were party trends in France are today national policies of Soviet Russia, USA, and Great Britain. The final outcome of a perhaps possible constructive conciliation of these trends is still in the balance; may it draw strength from the wealth of the French political mind, which has always been the laboratory of the Revolution whose course still continues."

—JOHN T. WINTERICH.

OUT IN THE MID-DAY SUN, by Monica Martin. Little, Brown. \$3. When she was twenty Monica Martin set out from England for India. With her

were her nine-month-old daughter, Rene, and her twenty-five-year-old husband, Peter. Peter had been born in India and now a job awaited him with a mica mine in a remote Northern province. In England he had never found employment to his liking but, as events were to show, he had chosen an ideal wife.

Mrs. Martin fitted without difficulty into that long tradition of Englishwomen who have accepted an incredibly lonely and rigorous life, sent their children off to boarding schools in more healthful climates, earned the puzzled but sincere respect of the native-born Indians, and extracted what pleasure there was to be had from a life in which the luxury of plenty of servants was more than counterbalanced by incredible conditions of food, hygiene, medical care, and, most important of all, lack of companionship and even the simplest amusements.

"Out in the Mid-day Sun" is delightful, vivid, and disarming. If Mrs. Martin does not dramatize her life or her material, the unaccented tenor of her account reflects the more perfectly the equanimity with which she seems to have met the agreeable and difficult. She can tell an amusing anecdote about her own mistakes without being distressingly arch. And she is practically unique among feminine big-game hunters in her endearing ability to recount her jungle exploits and hazards without the smallest hint of boasting.

Not for a minute does Monica Martin give in to the common temptation to make a good story just a little bit better in the telling. With unusual reticence she keeps the personalities of the Martins as shadowy as possible, drawing a fascinating and accurate picture of their lives meantime.

—PAMELA TAYLOR.

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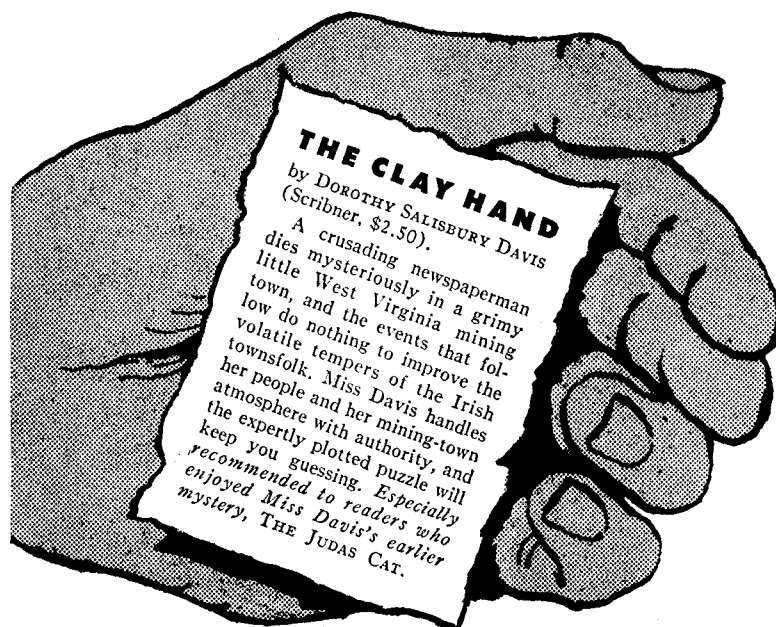
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Music to My Ears

NO RUSSE LIKE AN OLD RUSSE

TIS TRUE life in Russia is far from gay," sings the baritone. "Our good relations with the states of Europe encouraged hopes of lasting peace for Russia," declaims the tenor. "Ah, now we see the traces of those years of foreign schooling!" accuses the bass. Is this, then, a satire or commentary on the present state of affairs in the USSR? Hardly. They are excerpts from the text of Modeste Moussorgsky's "Khovanchina," written seventy-five years ago and just having its first performances at the Metropolitan. Incidentally, it is about incidents in the year 1682.

Whether retiring director Edward Johnson conceived this last novelty of his fifteen years at the Metropolitan as a political commentary as well as an artistic service, he alone can tell—and he isn't telling. The beards are long and the costumes are antiquated but the central theme is as topical as the latest news bulletin from Moscow—mistrust of Western influence in the life of Russia, pride in the times. Prince Galitsin tells us, "I led our war-torn troops against the Poles and broke the pride of their insolent nobles."

Art, when great, is justly considered timeless, but it has no right to be as timely as this save to remind us there are some things so fundamental in the life of the world that a few centuries change not their underlying doubts and conflicts but merely the shape in which they recur in one epoch or another. We may as well recognize that security for "Mother Russia" was as much a problem to Peter's Russia as it is to Stalin's and try to fathom the forces at work. There may not be as much time in the future for leisurely thought as there has been since 1682.

In this patchwork of song and dance, chorus and solo—and, for that matter, Moussorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakoff, for the composer had not finished the score when he died in 1881, and we know it only as "refined" by his colleague—we are in a period when Westernism had the upper hand and the "rebels" were those who wanted to return to "old faiths and customs." Unfortunately for clarity of plot, Peter never appears on the stage (being a Romanoff, he could not be physically represented in a play during Moussorgsky's life)—and it takes mighty much mulling of the separate incidents to assemble the philosophic pattern I have mentioned.

Khovansky (played powerfully, if with little subtlety, by Lawrence Tib-

bett) represents the political rejection of outside influence; Dosifei (splendidly sung by Jerome Hines), the religious force urging return to ancient beliefs as the means of salvation. Always and ever in the middle is the huge mass of Russian people (Moussorgsky called this "a people's music drama"), for whom somebody purports to be doing something—without those concerned knowing much what is being done or how. In the Moussorgskyan connotation it was a reaction against one kind of authoritarianism (the Czars and princes vs. the people). In our framework, it is still authoritarianism (the Stalin dictatorship vs. the people) with the central theme, as ever, peace, security, fear of the Germans (as exemplifying the West).

So much for parable. What of polyphony? "Khovanchina" is no more an opera in the common sense than "Of Time and the River" is a novel in the common sense. Yet the aspects of genius which were Moussorgsky's as well as Wolfe's are all over it. The strange mingling of folk-sounding modal music and sweeping outbursts in a rather Verdian, Italianate manner are not nearly so strange or so jarring as they may seem to the uninitiated. Through the Moussorgsky correspondence of the "Khovanchina" period runs a constant thread of reference to musical ideas "very European" to represent the elements of the story which are European-influenced, with others "Old Russia" in sound and context. To descend from the general to the particular, Moussorgsky was himself a key figure in the struggle against Western influence in the music of Russia. He was by nature (and lack of formal training) opposed to those disciplines and procedures which found their typical expression in Tchaikovsky, considered by his contemporaries the most Westernized of Russian composers.

In this rigorous, rather untheatrical design, interest goes only with dramatic truth—which is not the easy way of effectiveness. The superb prelude painting dawn over the Red Square is known to symphonic audiences and record listeners (a Koussevitzky disc is still current) as are the engaging "Persian Dances" of act four. Even here is a kind of parable, turning the Russian face to the East—for, as Mous-

sorgsky says in one of his letters: "The sun never rises in the West." The musical interest accumulates, rather than develops, with a richly interesting third act, when the impelling factor of most Russian opera—the chorus—finally becomes dominant in both the musical and dramatic scheme. Oddly, the impressive entr'acte of act IV (which Stokowski once recorded) is omitted in the version now given.

The Metropolitan production cost a small fortune (small as fortunes are reckoned these days) and, unfortunately, didn't show it, since the milieu of 1682 had ugliness inherent in it. But while this layout is certainly ugly, it manages to be impressive amidst the calculated squalor and barren luxuries. Ten more rehearsals and a few changes of cast would certainly have improved it, but such singers (and actors) as Robert Weede (Shaklovity), Charles Kullman (Prince Golovitsin), and Brian Sullivan (as Khovansky's son), made much of their opportunities.

Whether the whole enterprise gained by being presented in English is very much an issue. I can't believe that anybody who didn't do considerable homework could have followed the story from the occasionally intelligible words that reached the ear, and the fault was not only enunciation. English syllables, when tortured into the framework of music written for Russian ones no longer sound like the vernacular to us. "Bring water—drinking water" may be the translation of what the Russian text says, but we would certainly say to a servant: "May we have some water?"

Mention of the ladies—Anne Bolinger, Polyna Stoska, and Risë Stevens—has been deferred because none of them was very good and they are, by and large, out of the main stream of the action, used as devices for changing vocal color and mood rather than as integral parts of the story. Miss Stevens, who has some of the most beautiful music in the score to sing, did it intelligently and with as much clarity as her good talents permitted in this exceptional part of Marthe.

Well, "Khovanchina" is here, for which thanks are due to Edward Johnson certainly and to Emil Cooper, who conducted. Whether it stays longer than the few repetitions possible in the remaining weeks of this season depends not on Moussorgsky, not on the public, but on the repertory ideas of Rudolf Bing. He might bear in mind another remark of Moussorgsky: "The artist believes in the future because he lives in it."

—IRVING KOLODIN.

