



—Sovfoto.

In the Great Hall—the visiting Symphony Orchestra of Leipzig, conducted by Franz Konwitschny, gives a concert.

## MUSIC IN MOSCOW

By FAUBION BOWERS

**I**N THE heart of downtown Moscow, a couple of blocks from the Kremlin, stands a fine, four-story, brick building painted yellow and white. It has no plaque or sign to say what it is, but an enormous statue of Tchaikovsky, seated and waving his hands, in front of the main entrance gives you a hint. Only after you read the announcements of dozens and dozens of concerts, pasted on the billboards of the outside walls, do you know for certain that this is the State Moscow Conservatory of Music Named after Tchaikovsky.

This edifice is, however, more than even its full, imposing title implies. In addition to being a full-scale music school, it also contains one of Moscow's largest concert halls, the Great Hall, where the Boston Symphony played last year. While it is perhaps small by our standards—like Town Hall in New York, both in size and severity of decoration—it nevertheless sells 350,000 tickets a year to Moscow music lovers. The Conservatory also has a smaller hall, the Little

Hall, where lesser artists and advanced students perform, and where chamber music is played. The Conservatory's greatest distinction lies in the fact that the majority of Russia's most celebrated musicians emanate from here, and most of them eventually—sooner or later—end up here. This has been true ever since 1866 when the Conservatory was founded as the Russian Musical Society and Tchaikovsky was its president. Rachmaninov was a Gold Medal winner, and Chaliapin, Gabrilovich, and Lhevinne, to name only a few, all studied here.

Despite the fact that during the Revolution many of Russia's greatest musicians fled the country, today the Conservatory still manages to exude its magic. It now continues with a galaxy of the Soviet Union's most glittering names. A. B. Goldenweiser, a kindly, little old man with white hair and matching white goatee and mustache (he's the author of a popular book of reminiscences about Tolstoy), is the head and senior-most member of this exclusive sanctum. In the days when he was a pianist

(for which he was made a "People's Artist"—the equivalent of being knighted in England), he taught Neuhaus, the most brilliant Soviet pianist of yesterday, and it was Neuhaus who, in turn, taught Gilels, the best pianist here today. Now, all three teach at the Conservatory in a sort of three-generation, clubby atmosphere. David Oistrakh is a professor, and if you catch him on one of his working afternoons, you can barge in between classes and talk to him without an appointment. The Leningrader, Dmitri Shostakovich, has settled here, and his eighteen-year-old son has just passed the examination for higher studies in piano. Shostakovich holds court here—when he teaches—and is received at court—when he plays his newest works on the piano and submits them to the criticism and suggestions of his fellow-musicians on the Conservatory staff. Aram Khachaturian, of "Sabre Dance" fame, comes from Armenia, but he studied and now teaches here.

**E**VEN some of the students are already famous: the Oistrakh son, Igor, and Leonid Kogan among violinists; Vladimir Ashkenazy and Dmitri Bashkurov, among pianists.

Ever since tsarist times, the Conservatory has sounded a siren call throughout the country. To be accepted as a student was and is a signal honor and a cause for rejoicing. Formerly, there was an added, incidental factor. Jews were not allowed to live in Moscow, unless they were government officials. However, if a Jewish student were admitted to the Conservatory, then his family could come and live with him. For this very practical purpose, many children were encouraged to take up music.

Once the lucky student joins the Conservatory, he is immediately given a stipend. He starts out as "First Class" ("First Class" is the lowest, "Fifth Class" is the highest), and if he is a pianist say, he receives the equivalent of \$25 a month. While this doesn't sound like much, it is adequate in the USSR where the standard of living is low and students live simply. Few have more than one suit of clothes, two or three changes of underwear, and a single pair of shoes. Tuition is free, of course, and the student either lives with his family, or at the hostel, which charges only nominally. Food, in general, is cheap. The student can also augment the stipend by working in his spare time, teaching others who are aspiring to get in the Conservatory, helping out in any of the several musical museums, or playing in little orchestras. During Youth Festivals and Student Rallies, a board commissions student musicians to perform or compose little pieces for which they are given bonuses of 1,000 rubles (\$100). Some of the young composers are still distributing copies of their songs about "Harmony" and "Friendship," which the Government printed in mass quantities for the last Youth Festival. Singers are allowed a larger stipend than instrumentalists or composers (\$50 from the outset), because side jobs are scarcer for them. By the fifth year at the Conservatory, all students receive at least \$45 a month.

THE student at the Conservatory works hard. He practices five hours a day, on the average, part of it at home, part of it at school. He studies the usual subjects, history of music, theory and analysis, composition, and, of course, he has private lessons with his chosen teacher. He is required to study one foreign language. There is a certain rigidity about this. Whatever language he first took up in grade school must be continued. If he started English as a child before he found say, that he had blossomed into a fine baritone suitable for Italian opera, it could happen that he would still continue in English and have to pick

up Italian on his own. But the point is almost an academic one; most singing is done in Russian.

Each student also undertakes some unusual, for us at least, subjects. He calls these "Philosophy"—Marxism for an hour a week in the first year; Political Economy, for the same period of time in the second year; History of the Communist Party, for the third year; and in the fourth, "Aesthetics," as he calls it, or the theory of art as conceived by Plekhanov, Lenin's great friend. At the end of five years, if he has passed each successive, yearly examination, the student receives his Diploma, a title which is the equivalent of our Bachelor of Arts. He then sits for a test to determine whether he can continue at the Conservatory and become an Aspirant. As soon as he passes this, he ascends from the students' lunch buffet downstairs to the professors' buffet upstairs. While the food is the same—sausages, *butter-brod* (open sandwiches), cakes, and soft drinks—the honor of sitting with one's superiors is an added incentive. The next advancement open is Candidate, the equivalent of our Ph.D. Finally, he may become Doctor. This is almost an honorary degree, extremely rare, and is conferred after a good deal of practical work, performances, or research.

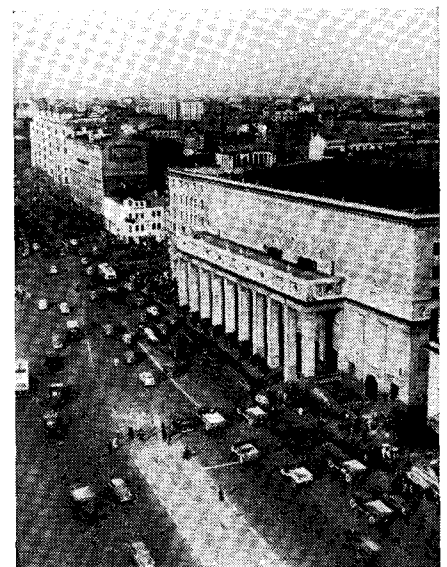
AT EVERY step of the student's life at the Conservatory, there are examinations to keep track of his progress and his ability to continue in this privileged, State-supported atmosphere. These examinations, as in every other country, are terrifying. When I watched one of them not long ago, the students outside were nervously awaiting their turn, pacing up and down in the hall or milling about in the lounge where a large pennant on the wall says bluntly, "Communism is higher than Capitalism." At the far end of the room sat all the senior teachers, or rather, "workers" or "doers" as they are called in common parlance. The ancient Goldenweiser, whom the students affectionately call "the museum piece," was immaculately dressed and huddled near the piano so he could hear better. Nikolayev, the affable director and practical administrator of the Conservatory, sat nearby observing how the contestants were doing. Neuhaus and Sofronitsky, a senior pianist who specializes in Scriabin and Prokofiev, sat together. Some of them wore elegant cuff links. Feinberg, the composer-pianist, wore a green velvet smoking jacket, matching flannel trousers, and thick-soled, foreign shoes. It was obvious that although the students' stipends may seem small, once

they graduate and become teachers, they are quite well-off.

As the questions progressed, I began to realize more and more that I was no longer in conventional Europe: I was in Russia. The basic procedure was usual—"harmonize this melody," "sightread this piece of music," and "answer the following questions about such and such a composer." But in the majority of cases, the melodies to be harmonized were unfamiliar to me, the piece to be sightread would turn out to be a Polka by Smetana or a Gavotte by Liadov, and the questions to be answered were, for example, "How many sonatas did Glazunov write?" (I hadn't known he had written one), or "Name the symphonies of Scriabin." (The trembling girl who got that question, a Latvian, failed it.) Occasionally, Goldenweiser would ask a question, and sometimes the others would politely point out that it had just been answered. While the student sightread, one of the exalted professors would rise and turn the page helpfully for him.

AFTER graduation, the student, if he is for instance a concert pianist, comes under the "management" of the Moscow State Philharmonia, a board which controls the actuarial details of Moscow's musical world. It determines where and when he plays in public and the amount of his fee. An average, good pianist receives the startlingly small sum of \$27 for a full concert at the Little Hall, but, by the same token, admission tickets cost only fifty cents or a dollar. Gilels, or Richter, of course, get more and often go on fifteen-city tours all over the country. The reasoning behind this

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—Sovfoto.

Tchaikovsky Conservatory—"a fine, brick building, painted yellow and white."



# Celli on Callas, Pro and Con

## COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS

WE WISH TO THANK YOU for publishing Teodoro Celli's article, "Great Artists of Our Time: 1. Maria Callas." This is undoubtedly the first comprehensive analysis of Miss Callas as an artist that we have been able to find. Coming on the heels of the innumerable psychological studies of Miss Callas and the lurid press stories, it provides a stabilizing hand.

DORIS L. ROTHGESSER.

Hillside, N. J.

## THE BEST SO FAR

SINCEREST CONGRATULATIONS on the initial "Great Artists of Our Time" series. I have never read a finer article on a singer than Sig. Celli's dialogue on Mme. Callas. But, there are still those of us who will always prefer the glorious voice to anything else in opera and request a hearing.

JOHN M. GEHL III.

New Orleans, La.

## APOLOGY NEEDED

YOUR FIVE-PAGE spread on the most over-rated singer of our times, Mme. Callas, should be in the nature of an apology rather than in praise of the over-publicized diva. To this listener her voice is one of the coldest, ugliest, and most monotonous voices ever applauded by an extremely gullible press and public.

JENNIE SCHULMAN.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

## STATING THE CASE

IN HIS ARTICLE on Maria Callas (SR Jan. 31) Teodoro Celli states that the "Callas case" has not been clarified, but the last two sentences of his article certainly do clarify, more than satisfactorily, her "case."

What has always interested me as regards this singer is that so many critics set up standards for *other* singers which never seem to apply to Mme. Callas. If Tebaldi, Steber, Milanov or other great sopranos commit slight errors in technique or taste, they are castigated, scolded, or simply dismissed or ignored. On the other hand, when Mme. Callas's many egregious "eccentricities," so glaring that they are forced to be noticed, appear, she is excused on the grounds that these blemishes do not really matter in so great an artist.

GERALD HAMM.

Philadelphia, Pa.

## WHAT A SHOCK!

EVERY WEEK FOR THE past three years I have looked forward eagerly to each issue of the *Saturday Review*, but what a shock I got with the issue of January

31st, 1959! The article by Teodoro Celli on Maria Callas is the most elaborate apology for any public figure that I have ever read.

Of the roughly fifteen full columns of the article, ten are spent defending Callas's voice and justifying it musically. But the article concludes with the quotation: "No! She *did not have exactly a voice*. But—" Mr. Celli's logic makes me feel that he finds her voice leaving something to be desired, does not want to admit this, and goes out of his way to prove the contrary.

THOMAS W. SMITH.

New York, N. Y.

## INVALUABLE REMARKS

MANY THANKS INDEED for the invaluable remarks by Teodoro Celli on Callas and her art. This is music criticism at its highest instructive level and it puts the entire Callas controversy in the most sensible perspective yet seen, in this country at least.

JOHN P. MANDAINS, M.D.

Arlington, Va.

## SANS HYSTERIA

MY HEARTFELT CONGRATULATIONS to Messrs. Celli and Weinstock for daring to evaluate the Callas voice in a climate of reason, sans emotion, sans the hysterical journalese that places the Callas personality and its resultant sensational news-copy value as the guiding perspective.

ALAN W. AGOL.

Visalia, Calif.

## EMPHATIC CONGRATULATIONS

YOU DESERVE THE MOST emphatic congratulations for reprinting one of the all too few informal and intelligent articles on the subject of Maria Meneghini Callas. I saw it first in *Oggi* last year and fervently hoped it might possibly gain a more widespread audience.

DAVID WM. BROWN.

New York, N. Y.

## ARMED TO THE TEETH

THANK YOU FOR PUBLISHING Teodoro Celli's article in translation. I have heard about it in the past but never found anyone who knew exactly what he said.

I am clipping this on to the previous article from SR of some time ago—"Maria, Renata, Zinka . . . and Leonora"—This prior article by Mr. Weinstock has succeeded in hushing to some extent—at least in my house—those highly critical of Callas—"because she can't sing." Now I've a double-barreled shotgun!

LOUIS BARTLETT.

New York, N. Y.

## MACBETH ARTICLE TIMELY

MR. WEAVER'S TIMELY article on Macbeth in your Jan. 31st issue is most interesting, despite his indication that the Feb. 5th production at the Metropolitan will be the *American Premiere*.

Thank you for the new series on "Great Artists of Our Time." The profound evaluation of Maria Callas is a gem. This beginning makes one eager for additional numbers and many of them, in a *long* series.

JOSEPHINE DUNCAN.

Los Angeles, Calif.

## WEST COAST APPEARANCE

IN HIS ARTICLE on the Metropolitan Opera's forthcoming first production of Verdi's "Macbeth" ("Verdi's Twice-Told 'Macbeth,'" SR Jan. 31), William Weaver says, "Its appearance finally at the Metropolitan on February 5 is to all purposes its American premiere . . ." (emphasis added).

We in San Francisco fail to grasp the significance of that "to all purposes," since "Macbeth" was presented by the San Francisco Opera Company in 1955, with Inge Borkh in the name part, Giorgio Tozzi and Robert Weede; and again during the 1957 season, with Leonie Rysanek (who is just this season making her Metropolitan debut), Giuseppe Taddei and Lorenzo Alvary.

OLIVE ENGLISH.

San Francisco, Calif.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The comment should have been identified as an insertion by the editor, for which William Weaver was not responsible. It was not intended to discredit the performances by the New York City Opera Company in City Center or the Little Orchestra performance in Carnegie Hall (both reviewed in SR) or the ones in San Francisco. It was, rather, intended to underline the opportunity thus provided for "Macbeth" to be heard widely by Americans through a Metropolitan broadcast and an up to date complete recording (both already accomplished). For Miss English and others who wrote, a promise to be more explicit in the future.

## BUELOW NO LONGER "OBSCURE"

THE "OBSCURE" in the sense of the four Italian words Hans von Buelow had entered into Johanna Strauss' *Stamm-buch* did not pertain to the words themselves. In translation, they mean: fanaticism may be compared to petroleum light, enthusiasm, however, to electric light.

I am indebted to Dr. Willi Schuh, the Swiss Strauss biographer, for his advice as to the allusion Buelow wanted to express with these words. "Young Richard Strauss," he informs me, "at that time, passed through a period of admiration for Wagner, while Buelow, once a Wagnerian himself, had now put Brahms in first place. The entry, therefore, is slightly ironical: fanaticism (for Wagner) is nothing but a slowly burning flame, enthusiasm (for Brahms), on the other hand, is the blazing light."

ROBERT BREUER.

Elmhurst, N. Y.