

on a bust of the Cossack writer Mikhail Sholokhov the latter raised one objection to the work he saw in the clay. "But where's the Cossack grin?" he asked, and insisted that the sculptor remodel the corners of his mouth and the wrinkles at his left eye. Mr. Virsky needed no prompting to lay emphasis on that particular form of Ukrainian humor which Gogol often described in his deathless tales of the Ukraine and its Cossacks. This humor is broad and unsubtle. It often takes the form of an unironic assertion of man's moral power to emerge smiling from all the buffetings and disappointments of life. Take, for instance, the dance scene "The New Boots." Three *chumaki* dance it, three bullock-cart drivers bringing salt from the Black Sea coast to the Ukrainian steppe-lands, who own a single pair of boots. In turn they try on the newly acquired boots during a short halt under the torrid sun on their dusty road northward from the sea. The boots collapse under the strain of their efforts to make them fit their feet. But the dance does not end on a note of disappointment. To hell with the boots, we can get along without them, the *chumaki* tell us in their concluding steps.

Virsky's big set dances such as "Kalina," or "The Cossack Spear Dance," or even "The Whalers," a modern number, provide evidence that Virsky is always trying to tell his audiences something about the Ukrainians.

I have suggested that the reason for this stems from the Ukraine's historical task of striving for its national identity. To be more concrete, it was the specific task set to the troupe when in its original form it came to Moscow in 1937 for the first festival of Ukrainian art. In those days national dance troupes were few in number: Igor Moiseyev was just gathering together the company that this year celebrated its twenty-fifth birthday; the older Piatnitsky troupe was essentially a choir. The war, with the occupation of the Ukraine, interrupted Pavel Virsky's work, but, when it ended the need for a dance troupe extolling the virtues of the Ukrainian people and reminding them of their historical past became urgent. "We are Ukrainians. This is the kind of people we are," was a message intended not in the first place for foreign audiences; it was vitally necessary to stimulate the local patriotism of a people who had been uprooted, driven from their homes, shipped all over Europe as forced workers, evacuated to the heart of Asia, put to work on rebuilding burnt-out villages. . . .

And because of this Virsky's dancers are always telling us something, always expressing themselves through choreographic and dramatic means.

Cause and Effect in Russian Music

By VICTOR SEROFF

OF THREE recently issued recordings of Russian music Mili Balakirev's incidental music to Shakespeare's "King Lear" (Artia MK 1570) and Tikhon Khrennikov's Violin Concerto (Artia MK 1574) should be of particular interest to those who have studied the "causes and effects" in its development, while Vassili Kalinnikov's Symphony in G minor (Artia MK 1572) is merely an introduction to a composer whose works have been almost forgotten. Kalinnikov's first symphony, written in 1897 by a thirty-one-year-old composer, is in traditional style, in four movements, and is a charming pastoral piece which could without violence easily serve as background music for one of today's more peaceful Russian motion pictures. It is lyrical and harmonious and, above all, as gentle and delicate as the name of the composer sounds to the Russian ear. Although Kalinnikov lived during the most active period of "The Mighty Five," he was not in the least influenced by this group of innovators and remained much closer to Tchaikovsky.

It is gratifying that Kiril Kondrashin, who leads the Moscow State Symphony Orchestra, has refrained from infusing Kalinnikov's symphony with some "newly discovered style" as he often does Tchaikovsky's music, and conducts it without trying to make something more out of the piece than it is.

The other two recordings—of Balakirev and Khrennikov pieces—give food for thought. As performances go, Leo Ginsburg with the USSR Radio Symphony Orchestra gives Balakirev's work its due, while Leonid Kogan's playing of Khrennikov's concerto does more than the work deserves. Balakirev's Overture and five Preludes to each act of Shakespeare's "Lear" are his early work (1858) written at the suggestion of Vladimir Stassov, who took the twenty-one-year-old Mili under his protective wing shortly after Balakirev arrived in the capital from a provincial little town, where he had "learned" to compose by merely "making music" with an amateur orchestra on the estate of Alexander Ulibishev, a wealthy landlord. As might be expected, this composition bears no signs of the Bala-

kirev who became the leader of the others of the revolutionary "Five": Borodin, Cui, Rimsky-Korsakov, and Moussorgsky. They called, "On to new shores!" and broke with the old traditions exemplified by their antagonist Tchaikovsky.

And yet this Balakirev opus can serve as one of many examples of "cause and effect" in the history of Russian music. Balakirev was already the mentor and the leader of his group when he hoped to win Tchaikovsky to his camp. He not only suggested that Tchaikovsky write the "Romeo and Juliet Overture," but in one of his letters offered him his method of composing; that is, the one, he said, he himself was using when writing the Overture to "King Lear."

Modesty was not Balakirev's forte. Moreover, while he was writing this letter, a musical phrase occurred to him and he promptly included it in the letter advising Tchaikovsky to "begin in this style . . . [to] become enthusiastic over this germ, and . . . [to] brood over it . . . until something vital came of it. . . ."

LATER on, when, Tchaikovsky's score was almost ready for performance, Balakirev mercilessly criticised it, much in the same manner as he treated his "pupils." "The first subject does not please me at all," he wrote Tchaikovsky. ". . . In the crude state in which it lies before me it has neither strength nor beauty. . . . There is nothing of old-world Catholicism about it; it recalls rather [one of Gogol's characters] who wished to cut off his nose to save the money he spent on snuff." Balakirev told Tchaikovsky that something like one of Liszt's chorales would be more appropriate: "The Night Procession, Hunnenschlacht, St. Elizabeth." "As to the B minor theme," he went on, "it seems to me less a theme than a lovely introduction to one," and he added that he hoped that after the agitated movement in C major, something really forceful and energetic would follow. "The first theme in D flat major," he continued, "is very pretty, though rather colorless." He said that he was fascinated with the second theme, in the same key — "it has the sweetness of love, its tenderness, its longing." But even here he could not refrain from

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Recordings in Review

Schubert Without Sentiment

SCHUBERT: *Symphony No. 9 in C. Otto Klemperer conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra.* Angel S 35946, \$5.98.

Schubert without sentiment? Might as well speak of Verdi without passion, Beethoven without nobility, Rimsky without Korsakov. Yet Klemperer, by an acute act of suppressing the normal instincts of the fine instrumentalists who make up the Philharmonia, manages to do it through three of the cleanest, almost antiseptic, movements of Schubert one could hear.

Everything is neatly in place, like the contents of a well-furnished room—with the difference that very little betrays the personality either of the proprietor (Schubert) or the occupant (Klemperer). Phrases, pages, and measures follow each other in rigorous succession, always with the suggestion that something is about to happen—but not very much does. What bothers me is a lack of articulation in the striding figurations of the strings and the chattering woodwinds in the first movement, a suppression of tenderness and contrast in the second (though a cello counterfigure is not overlooked), a severity of accent in the scherzo that depresses its robust humor.

But, for those who have the will, persistence provides a reward. This is a performance of the finale, which, like the finale of Klemperer's otherwise stodgy Ninth Symphony of Beethoven, is extraordinary for its logic, its strength, its penetration of a design which is by no means self-revealing. And the excellent performers, given a little slackening of the reins, respond with a show of pace and spirit altogether invigorating. The recording is consistently first class.

Masterwork by Bloch

BLOCH: *Concerto*; BARTOK: *Rhapsody No. 1. Roman Totenberg, violin, with the Vienna State Opera Orchestra conducted by Vladimir Golschmann.* Vanguard VSD 2110, \$5.98.

Why a work whose high quality is so generally acknowledged as Bloch's Concerto for Violin has had no known recording between Joseph Szigeti's celebrated one of the late Thirties (for which the then little-known Charles Munch was the conductor) and this



Totenberg—"qualities of mind and spirit."

one is a puzzle best left to the A and R—artist and repertory—men of the industry to decipher. Or perhaps it is simpler to say that Bloch pursued his own lifeline in a rigorous, solitary way without running with groups, packs, or gardes (avant or otherwise) and thus forfeited the incidental benefits of promotion such identification may confer.

What he did in this instance (as in sundry others) was to evolve a musical structure both logical and compelling, deeply felt and strongly made, lacking either in affectations of utterance or faddish concealment of emotion.

Withal, it follows in no servile imitation the example of any predecessor, with the result that it stands as strongly individual and typical of its creator today as it did twenty-five years ago.

Of the many violinists of the world who might have been alerted to this opportunity (Menuhin played it very well with the New York Philharmonic on a well-remembered occasion in 1957), Totenberg is one of the few ideally equipped to add his thoughts to the prior ones of Szigeti. For it is rather more the matter of thinking through its texture and tonal imagery than this work requires than mere technically adept execution. Totenberg has in abundant measure all of the latter that is required, but he has even more the qualities of mind and spirit to savor the mood of this deeply reflective work and recreate it

for the listener. He has assistance of a thoroughly suitable kind from Golschmann and the orchestra (likewise in the more often recorded Bartók). I would not put this among the best of Vanguard's Vienna recordings—the sound is a little cramped, however, lacking definition in the space that is utilized.

Carter and Kirchner

CARTER: *Double Concerto for Harpsichord and Piano with Two Chamber Orchestras.* Ralph Kirkpatrick, harpsichord, and Charles Rosen, piano, with Gustav Meier conducting. KIRCHNER: *Concerto for Violin, Cello, Ten Winds, and Percussion.* Tossy Spivakovsky, violin, and Aldo Parisot, cello, with Kirchner conducting. Epic BC 1157, \$5.98.

Elliott Carter and Leon Kirchner are two composers who share solid esteem among the musically informed, more or less without respect to their own affiliations and preferences (I say "more or less," because there will always be dissidents). Hence it is gratifying to find them sharing a disc as a result of the enterprise of the Fromm Music Foundation.

As the scope of means employed suggests, there is also some community in the scale of sonorities employed. However, that is about as far as a common statement about them can go, for they diverge sharply on a fundamental issue of today's musical objectives: Is sonority the end purpose of creation, or is it merely the textual element from which something more meaningful should emerge?

Needless to say, neither composer states his premise in so many words. But with Carter, the quest for a sonorous profile is so determined that each ensemble (one led by the harpsichord, the other by the piano) "emphasizes its own repertory of melodic and harmonic intervals," each of which "is associated, for the most part, with a certain metronomic speed." "The motion of the work," says Carter, "is from comparative unity with slight character differences to greater and greater diversity of material and character and a return to unity."

Is it necessary, really, to command all these facts (only a share of the total elucidated by Carter) to deal with Carter's achievement? To me it is both indispensable and not very helpful; for with all the statement of procedure, the proof reposes in the sounds that are heard—and these strike my ear as fragmentary in the extreme, less a sequence of consecutive lines than a coming together and going apart of