

Soviets inspire local audience

By Avigdor Zaromp
special writer

The concept of "Glasnost," which has been very abstract for most of us, became a reality at least briefly last week at Orchestra Hall. The occasion was the visit of the State Symphony of the U.S.S.R. as part of the inspiring series of international groups. The high musical standard of Soviet musicians is universally acknowledged and taken for granted. But listening to a live performance of the State Symphony Orchestra from Moscow is an experience that is unmatched by any description or recording.

The two works on the program represent two extremes of Russian music. The Piano Concerto No. 1 by Tchaikovsky is one of the most popular and immortal masterpieces, which audiences never tire of hearing again and again. The Symphony No. 1 by Rachmaninoff, which was the other work on the program, started as a failure when first presented in 1895 and apparently has never recovered since. Most of those



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few who have heard it are more aware of its bad reputation than of its musical content.

CONDUCTOR YEVGENY Svetlanov, whose musical authority is internationally acclaimed, presented us with an artistic universe that we didn't know existed. This was true not only with the neglected Rachmaninoff symphony but with the Tchaikovsky concerto as well. Largely responsible for this new, unconventional insight was pianist Lubov Timofeeva. This is a name that most of us haven't heard before and, following this performance, one couldn't help wondering why.

Timofeeva, who is in her 30s, is an artist of astounding proportion. Her forceful, powerful style brings to

mind Gina Bachauer, whose power at the keyboard was legendary. This power is tempered with refinement and a sense of control that make it distinguishable from mere brute force. The technical ability of Timofeeva is of the kind that could put even some prominent pianists to shame. But the novelty of her approach was beyond the technique. Many of her phrases were unusual, accentuating different notes and bringing out different voices that sounded new even to those who think they know every bar of this work.

Even if one doesn't agree with every aspect of this interpretation, one could not ignore the magnitude and the inspiration required for such approach. The rubato in the double

octaves may seem exaggerated. The slow, subsidiary theme in the first movement may have been too bogged down in her attempt to wring out of it every drop of expression. But this performance showed that there is a whole universe of untapped art in this fascinating music.

IF RACHMANINOFF'S first symphony has flaws, it was hardly noticeable in this performance. The ingredients of the old style and the peek into the future make this work historically interesting. The sometimes harsh climaxes, which were brought forth with saturated sonorities, made this work sound admirable, in spite of its seemingly awkward structure.

The orchestra responded to the prolonged applause with two encore selections — the Musical Box by Lisov and a segment from the ballet Gayne by Khachaturian. In the latter, Svetlanov walked off the stage and let the musicians continue on their own.

The State Symphony Orchestra of the USSR is of the caliber that should make it one of the top music lover's wishes.



Named dance director

Diann Sichel is the new artistic director of Harbinger Dance Company. The first performances under her direction will be Nov. 11, 12 at Wallace Smith Theater, Oakland Community College. Sichel went to New York from California in 1976 and joined Dan Waggoner and Dancers in 1977 and toured United States and Europe with them.

Philadelphia musicians flop here

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The Chamber Music Society of Detroit presented recently a program featuring the Concerto Solists Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia. This group, modeled after the orchestras of Bach and Mozart, attempts to bring its own version of authentically into music. String players, except for the cellists, play standing up, as was traditionally customary in the old days.

Some attempts at authenticity are, indeed, desirable. However, I found this program to be one of the least attractive events, which is rather unusual for the CMS series. If the events of lesser quality serve a

useful purpose by making us appreciate more the ones of higher quality, this program by the Concerto Solists was a prime example.

One promising aspect on that program was pianist Grant Johannesen, who is internationally acclaimed. On this occasion, he performed Mozart's concerto No. 14 in E flat major, K. 449. This, in my opinion, is one of Mozart's less attractive concerti. While featuring some of Mozart's typical passages, these tend to seem like a collection of scales and arpeggios thrown together without an overall sense of purpose and inspiration. Some of the better performances of this work which I heard in the past managed to salvage some musical value from this work, but Johan-

nesen's wasn't one of them. His stumbling over the trills in the development in the first movement and his luke-warm presentation of the final movement were insufficient to overcome the second-class nature of this work.

A FAMILIAR quip about Vivaldi is that he wrote the same concerto 500 times. While Vivaldi was not on the program, his style was reflected in the Concerto Grosso of his colleague Francesco Barsanti, except

that the latter had considerably less inspiration.

The Cavatina by the contemporary American composer Sidney Grinice is a final work, somewhat reminiscent of Bach's popular Air for the G string but, predictably, not quite as good. It may compete for inspiration with Pachelbel's Canon, however.

Flourishing through mediocre works by Donizetti and Copeland, the program ended with Haydn's Symphony No. 63 ("La Roxelane").

Art tour planned

Art Ventures, an art appreciation tour group sponsored by Paint Creek Center for the Arts of Rochester, will hold an excursion to the Windsor Art Gallery at 11 a.m. Wednesday.

The group will see the entire collection, including "Fibre: Tradition/Transition," featuring historic textiles from Essex and Kent counties and contemporary Canadian quilts. Lunch at the waterfront Hilton Hotel will follow.

Reservation deadline is today, Thursday. Carpool will be arranged. For information, call the center, 651-4110.

Artists compete at OCC

The 7th annual Helen DeRoy art competition at Oakland Community College is planned for Dec. 1.

The art show is open to all residents of Oakland County, 18 years or older, and all former and present students of Oakland Community College. Entries must be submitted by Monday along with a non-refundable \$15 entry fee, which entitles the artist to submit up to three entries.

Sculpture, painting, drawing, ceramics, photography, glass, weaving and prints (not reproductions) are eligible. All two-dimensional entries must be framed and suitable for hanging. Over \$1,500 is available for purchase and cash awards. The show will be juried by Kenneth R. Gross, director of the Birmingham-Bloomfield Art Association.

The show will be displayed in the Smith Theatre lobby from Dec. 1 through Dec. 16. For more information, call Kephah Tazian at 471-7594 or write Tazian at OCC, 27055 Orchard Lake, Farmington Hills 48312-4995.

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