



Concert at the Palace of Culture, Kiev, USSR.

Reflections on a Musical Adventure

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Part I: The Soviet Union

ON SUNDAY MORNING, February 19, 1961, following a delay of 26 hours due to an airline flight engineers' strike, 94 members of the 116-member University of Michigan Symphony Band personnel, plus a ten-member staff, for a total of 104 men and women, departed from Willow Run (Detroit) Airport for New York City. This was the first leg of a 15-week tour which, when completed, would have encompassed more than 30,000 miles and 88 concerts in ten countries, including 44 appearances in six republics and ten major cities of the Soviet Union. In addition, 44 concerts were presented in the countries of Egypt, Jordan, Cyprus, Lebanon, Turkey, Greece, Rumania, and Poland, with the final performance in Carnegie Hall, New York City, on the evening of June 2.

The tour, made under the auspices of the United States Department of State, with expenses covered by the President's International Program for Cultural Exchange, was the first by a university band and the most extensive ever presented by the President's program.

In addition to the 94 University musicians, the personnel consisted of two conductors, a band manager, doctor, nurse, two interpreters, an equipment manager, a representative from the State Department, and an impresario. Forty-four specially designed trunks weighing a total of four and one-half tons carried the band's instruments, music scores, and uniforms.

The flight from New York's International Airport to

London was made via an Air India 707 Boeing jet, leaving New York at 11:00 p.m. and arriving in London six hours later, where two Russian jets awaited us for our flight to the Soviet Union.

Our Soviet tour was under the administration and sponsorship of the Ministry of Culture, which provided us with four representatives from the Soviet *Goskoncert*. Also, we were favored with the guidance and assistance of four young students as interpreters, two male and two female, from the University of Moscow, each of whom spoke English very well and proved most helpful in all our travels.

Buses for band members and a private automobile for the conductor were available at all times. All arrangements for lodging, meals, transportation, and concert itinerary were assumed by *Goskoncert* and were handled with excellent efficiency and foresight. Daily excursions, sightseeing tours, ballets, operas, concert performances, visits to universities, museums, palaces of culture, pioneer clubs, conservatories, art galleries, collective farms, the circus, a cruise on the Black Sea, and other points of interest were all arranged by *Goskoncert*, through the Ministry of Culture, without cost to our company.

THE BAND'S first concert was in Moscow before a wildly enthusiastic and receptive audience of more than 9,000 persons, who demanded and received nine encores.

During the following eight weeks in the Soviet Union, the band presented 43 additional concerts in the cities of Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Minsk, Odessa, Kharkov,

Sukhumi, Erevan, Tblisi, and Baku. In every city the response to the band's performances was truly electrifying. Concerts which were originally timed for one hour and 45 minutes took two and one-half to three hours when eight to ten encores were enthusiastically demanded.

Standing room was often sold out, with audiences standing in the aisles as well as in the rear of the theatre. Frequently matinees were added to an already heavy concert schedule, and always capacity crowds were in attendance, even though the extra concerts often were performed in early afternoon or at our usual dinner hour.

Concerts in the Soviet Union are normally scheduled for 7:00 p.m., since the dinner hour for concertgoers follows the performance. However, during the course of our tour, concerts were performed at almost every hour of the day, from 10:00 a.m. to 10:30 p.m.

Upon arriving at airports or railroad stations, we were always greeted by the philharmonic committees, conductors, directors of the conservatories, faculty, and students, as well as many music lovers and townspeople who were curious to see young American students—and always there were bouquets of flowers for the party.

Everywhere, Soviet audiences proved to be cordial, receptive, warm, and friendly. Both the young and the old showed a deep appreciation and understanding of classical, baroque, romantic, contemporary, serious, and light repertoire and concert marches. The Soviet tradition of applauding in rhythm from a faint pianissimo to a gradual, thunderous, accelerated fortissimo is one of the most exciting and inspiring moments ever experienced by a conductor and his musicians. To receive such response nightly for eight consecutive weeks proved to be a thrilling and absorbing experience for us all. These scenes were always followed with the entire audience shouting, "Biz! Biz! Biz!", which translated means *again* or *encore*.

Following each performance we were presented with huge baskets and bouquets of beautiful flowers of every

variety, as well as books, photographs, records, band, orchestra, and choir scores and parts, books of poetry, citations, and other gifts.

Soviet music lovers, while responsive and cordial, are also very sincere and discriminating. One is immediately impressed with their attitude toward performance and repertoire, and it is indeed most gratifying to perform for such sensitive and musically informed audiences.

At the conclusion of each concert, the audience would surge toward the stage, eager to meet band members and anxious to engage them in conversation. Among our audiences, in addition to Soviet music patrons, were many university students, professors, conservatory students, teachers, members of the cities' philharmonic orchestras, ballet dancers, actors, conductors, and, of course, critics.

CULTURE in all fields is highly respected, and artists, musicians, conductors, writers, dancers, poets, and teachers receive national recognition and government support.

One is greatly impressed with the concert halls, theatres, and palaces of culture to be found in the cities of the Soviet Union. They are meticulously clean, acoustics are well-nigh perfect, and the designs of the halls are in exquisite taste. In general, the concert halls and opera houses are designed to accommodate a maximum of 2,000 persons and would average approximately 1,400. They are much like those to be found in Western Europe.

There are 22 national conservatories of music in the Soviet Union, of which we visited ten. Each conservatory has an enrollment ranging from 400 to 1,200 students who are highly gifted and thoroughly screened prior to their acceptance. The curriculum is complete and demanding; study habits are rigidly disciplined and highly concentrated.

All education in the Soviet Union is free; tuition, room, board, books, and a small *per diem* stipend are paid by the State. This includes primary, secondary



University of Michigan Band members follow a Russian custom and return applause to audience. The concert was given at the Moscow Sports Palace. Shown are Carl Dephonse, Fairfield, Connecticut; Al Werner, Millersville, Pennsylvania; George Heller, Dexter, Michigan.



Mr. and Mrs. Revelli receive a floral welcome at the Leningrad Train Station.

schools, polytechnical institutes, universities, special schools, conservatories, palaces of culture, and pioneer clubs. (In the latter are taught all forms of the arts to young children between the ages of seven and fourteen who do not qualify for the special schools.)

Special secondary schools of music, science, mathematics, art, painting, and ballet are to be found in every major city. These schools offer highly specialized programs in their respective fields to students from the ages of seven to sixteen. Entrance examinations are highly competitive, and only those students who possess unusual scholarly abilities and talents qualify for entrance to these specialized programs.

For example, it was my privilege to observe the operation of such a secondary music school in the city of Erevan, which is located in the republic of Armenia. The enrollment of this particular music school consists of 550 young Armenians from seven to fourteen years of age, each of whom has successfully passed the school's rigid entrance examinations.

DURING my visit, I heard several young girls and boys perform upon various instruments with a degree of proficiency that could reflect credit upon musicians of mature experience and training. One, a young boy of ten years, performed his own concerto for piano, and it was indeed an excellent work. This youngster is already majoring in composition and takes three lessons per week of one hour each in the art of composition.

Another youngster of thirteen performed the Bach *Chaconne* and the Khachaturian and Tschaikovsky violin concerti. His schedule calls for three violin lessons weekly, each of two hours' duration.

It was our privilege to spend much time in the conservatories and universities, as well as the palaces of culture, pioneer clubs, and secondary schools in the ten cities in which we performed. While visiting the conservatories, we attended various applied music, theory, harmony, composition, and vocal classes. Soviet students performed for us, not only during their lessons but in formal recitals as well; in return, we performed for them. Following such performances, faculty members

and students engaged in forums and discussions pertaining to performance problems, repertoire, and teaching techniques. It was interesting to learn that the quality of Russian wind instruments is far below those of America. Boehm system clarinets are quite uncommon, trumpets and cornets have rotary valves, bassoons, flutes, and oboes likewise are usually of inferior quality. However, in spite of these deficiencies, wind instrument performance was quite good, although in general not as highly developed as were the performances in strings or piano. The repertoire was chiefly that of the Soviet school, which, incidentally, provides many superlative works for the winds as well as other performance areas.

THE SOVIET conservatory curriculum is a very concentrated course of study. Students receive a minimum of two hours of individual instruction per week, plus one studio class. Theory, solfeggio, harmony, counterpoint, composition, music literature, music history, conducting, and ensemble are an integral part of the student's program.

Applied music faculty teach a maximum of five students; hence, one can readily observe the emphasis which is devoted to each individual student's training and progress. Students are required to memorize all repertoire, and at no time did we observe a student reading from a score while taking a lesson or performing publicly. All students showed excellent concentration capacities, vitality, enthusiasm, seriousness of purpose, and devotion to their studies. It was obvious that their professional interests were bound and tied up in their art rather than the materialistic gains which might be achieved from music as a profession.

In all visits to the various conservatories, the directors, deputy directors, faculties, and students were most cooperative. Informal meetings with faculty and administration were a part of each visitation, and in each instance we were shown every courtesy and consideration.

In both the Moscow and Leningrad conservatories, our Symphony Band in addition to small chamber ensembles and soloists performed for their respective student and faculty groups. In several instances, we were honored by performances by their outstanding soloists, ensembles, and faculties. These exchange concerts as well as the studio clinics, seminars, and informal meetings did much to create an atmosphere of friendliness and mutual understanding of the true function of music as an international language and its importance as an art which can stimulate the minds and warm the hearts of people everywhere.

In observing these impromptu sessions, one would not believe that these same students could be so harmoniously agreed with us on the basic philosophy and function of music, yet be so discordant in world politics, philosophies, and ways of life.

AS TO the power of music and its function as a universal language, may I cite an instance. Following our first concert in Kiev, I was visited by Ruchlin, conductor of the Kiev Philharmonic and one of the Soviets' most prominent conductors. Maestro Ruchlin could not speak one word of English, and I can do about equally as well with his mother tongue. Following the usual Soviet bear hug and salutation, the maestro motioned via pantomime that he was a performer and teacher of the trombone,

euphonium, and trumpet. I in turn talked with him (via pantomime) that I was formerly a violinist. With further physical motions and pantomime, we chided each other about having forsaken our original fields and being the better for it.

Following a brief conversation (all via gestures and pantomime) we discussed the band's instrumentation, our performance and repertoire, finally reading (i.e., singing together) a band score to a new Soviet publication for winds—all of this without a single word (except for the language of music) being spoken between us.

As we were engaged in the vocalizing of the musical score, Harry Barnes, our representative from the U. S. Department of State, entered the room and stood amazed that two men who had never previously met, could carry on such an extensive conversation without knowing a single word of each other's native language.

Maestro Ruchlin attended three additional concerts and came to visit me following each performance. Our friendship for each other continued to grow, as did our "vocabulary"; great and far-reaching indeed is the language of music.

DURING my visits to the many schools and universities of the Soviet Union, I was much impressed with the individual attention given to the highly talented youth, as well as with the scope and intensity of study demanded of the individual student by the schools.

In contrast I feel that in our educational program in America we are doing a better job of mass education; however, in our desire for educating the masses, are we not failing to achieve the maximum potentialities with our highly talented academic and music students? Could we not, by means of tests and various screening processes, more effectively evaluate the true potentials and talents of our gifted students and follow these findings with appropriate curricula that would provide opportunities and challenges for their complete intellectual and artistic growth? Are we at present accomplishing these ends? Do we challenge the highly gifted student? Or do we too often register him on the assembly line with students of far less talent, scholarly aptitudes, and capacities?



William D. Revelli (left) is shown speaking to the audience in Kahrkov, USSR. His interpreter stands next to him.

MR. REVELLI'S "Reflections on a Musical Adventure," of which the accompanying article is Part I, affords a significant and timely sequel to "The Arts in the Educational Program of the Soviet Union" by Vanett Lawler, published in the Music Educators Journal, first two issues of 1961, and reprinted in pamphlet form.*

The distinction accorded to the University of Michigan and to the U. of M. band and its conductor is revealed in Mr. Revelli's story. The first chapter, printed here, is to be followed by the concluding installment in a subsequent issue.

Mr. Revelli joined the MENC in 1932 when he was music supervisor of the public schools in Hobart, Indiana. There he was the teacher and director of a band in a "Class B" school, population-wise, which consistently took for five years "Class A" honors in the national competitions in vogue at that time. His wide early recognition, in part, stemmed from the activities known as "band" or "instrumental" clinics, such as he had charge of at the 1935 MENC North Central convention at Indianapolis, concurrent with which the noted choral director, Carol M. Pitts, then of Omaha, Nebraska, conducted daily choral seminars.

In 1935 Mr. Revelli joined the faculty of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, where he is now professor of wind instruments and director of bands in the School of Music. He is and has been for some years a member of the Editorial Board of the Music Educators Journal, is honorary life president of the College Band Directors National Association, of which he was the principal founder and of which he was the progenitor as chairman of the MENC National Committee on Bands and Wind Ensembles (1935-1936). In 1937 Mr. Revelli was made chairman of the Sub-Committee on Bands of the MENC Committee on Music in Higher Education, out of which, in 1942, grew the College Band Directors National Association.

I am confident that we have in America just as talented, resourceful, imaginative, creative, industrious, and skillful youth as will be found anywhere in this universe. However, I am equally certain that we must devote more attention to our search for the talented, highly gifted student, and, when we succeed in finding him, provide all the necessary individual tutorship, facilities, libraries, inspiration, faculties, and environment that will motivate him to achieve his complete growth in his specialized field.

Unless our educational program soon begins to "separate the wheat from the chaff," it is likely that in the foreseeable future we shall fail to meet the challenges now confronting our nation and which are likely to grow even more threatening in the decades before us.

OUR TOUR of the Soviet Union seemed to project two most important facts to every member of our party. Firstly, America and democracy are justly revered by all living Americans everywhere. Secondly, we have much to learn from the Soviets, particularly in the field of specialization in education and in tenacity of application in pursuit of absolute perfection and the necessity for perseverance, sacrifice, and devotion necessary for the achievement of such goals.

Without due recognition of the latter, we might one day lose the former, for the Communist party leaders are agreed that education and progress are inseparable and one cannot endure without the other.

**The Arts in the Educational Program of the Soviet Union*, by Vanett Lawler executive secretary of the Music Educators National Conference. A report of the visit to the USSR by the delegates of the Arts in Education Mission sponsored by the U.S.A. Department of State, 1960. Reprinted from the Music Educators Journal, issues of January and February-March, 1961. Available from MENC, 1201 16th St. N.W., Washington, D.C.



The University of Michigan student woodwind quintet performed at the Leningrad Conservatory. Left to right: Rex Powell, Vicksburg, Michigan; William Scribner, Pontiac, Michigan; David Rogers, Oxford, Michigan; Louis Scheldrup, Bronxville, New York; Karen Hill, Hancock, Mich.



Two band members and a Russian look at the announcement of the University of Michigan Band concert in Minsk, USSR.



At the Leningrad Conservatory band members visited a trumpet class. A Russian student performed for Donald D'Angelo (center) of Baltimore, Maryland, and Ernest Caviani, Iron Mountain, Michigan.



University of Michigan Band concert in Kharkov, William D. Revelli conducting.

The audience at the Leningrad Conservatory was friendly and enthusiastic.

