

The Russian Revolution and its effect on Russian composers and their music

Initially the new Russian leadership encouraged experimental work in all the arts, theatre, cinema, painting and sculpture. The creators who came out of the Revolution honestly believed that their art and Russian politics were headed in the same direction. But by 1930 the entire scale of values had shifted

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Through one of the ironies of history, revolutionary Russia began to turn out art of a banality and uniformity of expression that represented the antithesis of revolution. Some of the shift Represented the bourgeois character of Stalin. But more than that it represented official Soviet doctrine stemming from the words of Lenin “Art belongs to the people”

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Art was turned into a vehicle for Soviet propaganda and “Socialist Realism” came into being. Stalin banned any kind of adventurous music on the grounds that it represented “decadent imperialistic capitalistic formalism”

Composers could not compose such music and audiences could not hear it!!
The worst thing that a composer could be accused of was “formalism”

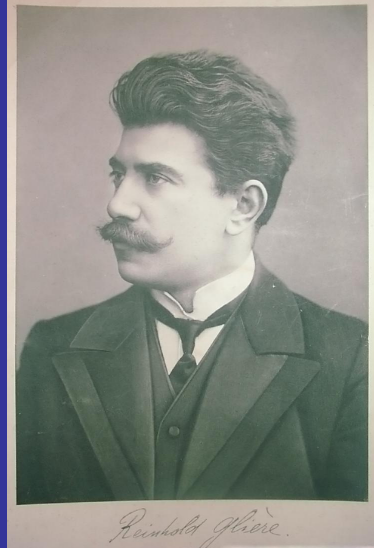
Reinhold Gliere

1857 - 1956

He started out at 9 years old as a violinist and studied at the Moscow Conservatory. He graduated in 1900 and was employed as a music teacher in the Gnesin music school in Moscow.

Whilst still a student and teacher in Moscow he composed his first Symphony (1899) It illustrates clearly enough his preference for the relatively Western Classicism of Tchaikovsky rather than the **Nationalism of the FIVE.**

GLIERE



GLIERE

From 1920 until his retirement in 1941 he taught composition at the Conservatory in Moscow. He showed particular interest in ethnic music from the minorities of the Soviet Union.

During his career he occupied a number of official positions. In the early years of the Revolution he headed the music section of the Moscow Department of Popular Education and was Chairman of the Organising Committee of USSR Composers.

GLEIRE

His work was officially recognised by various state awards, including the title of People`s Artist, bestowed in 1938.

This was in contrast to the condemnation of the music produced by various composers such as Prokofiev and Shostakovich.

He produced a Ballet – The Red Poppy which was praised as the first truly Soviet ballet on a revolutionary subject

GLIERE

I am going to play three pieces of Gliere which have either given me much pleasure or indicate the range of his composing skills.

Firstly the third movement of his first Symphony

Secondly his Russian Sailors Dance from his famous Red Poppy Ballet.

And thirdly the second movement from his Second Symphony

GLIERE



ALEXANDER GLAZUNOV

1865 - 1936

He was born in St Petersburg to a wealthy publisher. He was a genius studying the piano at nine and composing at eleven. When he first appeared in public in 1882, the 16 year old was hailed as truly brilliant composer who summed up all the achievements of the Russian Nationalist school, an astonishing natural talent that promised a bright future for Russian Music

ALEXANDER GLAZUNOV



GLAZUNOV

“This boy will put us all in the shade” predicted Borodin. For later generations, however, Glazunov the Director of the St Petersburg Conservatory had become the embodiment of stale tradition. Prokofiev gleefully recounted his horror at his spiky dissonances, and at the end of his life Stravinsky would still shudder with distaste at the very mention of his name.

GLAZUNOV

Unfortunately he had a morbid craving for alcohol, though credit is given for his dedication to the Conservatory and its students in the hungry, dangerous decade after the 1917 Revolution.

Despite the hardships he suffered he remained active as a conductor, conducting concerts in factories, clubs and Red Army posts. He spent his last years in Paris a disinherited ghost from the past who had nothing to offer the modern world

GLAZUNOV

I would like to play part of the second movement his Symphony No 2 and two other pieces

1 Meditation Opus No 32

2 Ballade in F Major Op No 78