

Yale Russian Chorus Is Skillful, Dramatic

The Yale Russian Chorus gave their first performance in Boston yesterday afternoon at Jordan Hall—twenty-eight young men under the direction of Denis Mickiewicz, their young founder and arranger, sounding very strong and very Russian.

Their strength and their Russianness came partly from their firm grip on the fundamentals of a small men's chorus—precision and tone—and partly from a quality that was more their own—a fine, rhythmic, dramatic, Slavic emotionalism. They let themselves go.

Expressive Chant

Their program began with Russian liturgical music. Here, perhaps, they let themselves go a little further than their sources; whatever a chant in a Russian monastery sounds like, it is probably not as expressive as the Yale Russian Chorus made it.

But in all the rest of their program—folk songs, and almost-folk songs, about bandits, soldiers, lovers, snowstorms and fires on the steppes—they let themselves go skillfully, handsomely and stirringly. Mr. Mickiewicz directed his arrangements with the same kind of forcefulness, and there were a number of short solos, and a duet, that were better than one had a right to expect.

The basic explanation of their success may be that they have a more than ordinary reason for existing. They have made four trips to Russia, singing to Russians, talking to Russians and making contact with Russians; they are now raising money for a fifth trip. Yesterday afternoon's

audience in Jordan Hall applauded them with the explosiveness of Yale alumni at the Harvard game and of music lovers at a concert of more than usual importance. G.B.

The Program

Yesterday afternoon in Jordan Hall the Yale Russian Chorus were directed by Denis Mickiewicz in Russian liturgical music by Bartiniensky, Tchaikowsky, Arkhangel'sky and Kastalsky; Russian classical songs by Rimsky-Korsakov and Shaplorin; and Russian folk songs arranged by Mr. Mickiewicz, Zazherov, Gretchaninoff and Shostakovich.

Music Review

Yale Russian Chorus Rousing in Concert

YALE RUSSIAN CHORUS, Denis Mickiewicz conducting, gave a Jordan Hall concert Sunday afternoon devoted to Russian music: liturgical, classical, brigand ballads, soldier and folk songs.

"The savage cavalry charge of yelling Cossacks was such a fixture in European minds that newspaper artists in August, 1914, were able to draw it in stirring detail without having been within a thousand miles of the Russian front." So notes Barbara Tuchman in "The Guns of August."

Cossack choruses probably have underlined the stereotype in making an art form out of those yells.

On stage Sunday afternoon, before a large Jordan Hall audience, the Yale Russian Chorus demonstrated the magnificence of swelling men's voices and the sudden soft passages following which are so evocative of Cossack choruses.

And it is interesting to read of West Berlin's heart-felt response when the Yale group sang a memorial concert at The Wall for Peter Fechter, the German boy killed in an incident, though their program was undoubtedly not Russian.

The Jordan Hall concert was devoted to Russian liturgical and classical music, brigand ballads, soldier and folk songs under the able and energetic direction of Denis Mickiewicz.

The 29-voice chorus has a fine robust sound, a number of good soloists and all the flexibility needed for the muscular rhythms and dynamics of the music. It also has considerable enthusiasm (which sometimes resulted in vocal entrances be-

fore the downbeat) both for part singing and solo work.

An attractively bright tenor voice and a companion, dustier in tone, were heard in duet in "Metelitsa" ("The Snowstorm") and the basses, wonderfully solemn, were other fine performers in "The Legend of the Twelve Brigands." The group's lead baritone, another bright voice, was also good in "A Maiden's Heart" with the chorus muttering a background song.

With such riches in soloists, it is to the conductor's great credit that no single voice stands out when the chorus sings as a whole. The blend is remarkable.

Moreover, when the music calls for one voice section to be prominent over the others, the blend among that section is solid. The sound of very high tenors floating above the lower voices in the opening of Bartiniensky's Te Deum Laudamus was superb in this respect. And of the other liturgical music, the weaving in and out of louds and softs of the Psalm, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the council of the ungodly," was stirring.

This arrangement was, by the way, traditional at the Kiev-Pecherski Monastery (not a name familiar to the uninitiated), but indicative of the sources which the conductor examined for his own arrangements and for performance.

The Yale group grew out of the university's Russian Language Club. Its fame (culminating artistically in first prize for male chorus at last Summer's International Festival of Choral Singing) is well deserved. M. M.