FOLK SONGS OF OLD RUSSIA

- - - - a program of Russian-Ukrainian songs

St. John's Russian Orthodox Choir of Spring Valley, N.Y.
director, Lawrence Havrilak
The St. John's Russian Orthodox Choir of Spring Valley New York conducted by Lawrence Havriliak

The St. John's Russian Orthodox Choir is made up of 25 voices composed principally of Americans of Russian ancestry and molded together into a group whose technique is animated by this unity of spirit.

The history of the choir dates back more than twenty-five years, but it has been during the last two years that enthusiastic acclaim and international prominence has come to the group. "EXCELLENT CHOIR" has been the appraisal of such eminent critics as Richard Bertrandias, Director of Programming, "Radio Liberty," a record review by Edward Tatnall Canby of Audio Magazine; and Irving Kolodin of the Saturday Review.

About the Composers

Dimitri Bortniansky (1751-1825)
Russian composer born in the Ukraine and trained in St. Petersburg under Galuppi and later in Venice. After his travels in Italy he returned to Russia where he became the director of the Imperial Chapel Choir in 1779.

Alexander Illyinsky (1859-1919)
Born in Tscaroe-Selo and died in Moscow. Pupil of Kulik (piano) and Bargiel (composition) at the Berlin Academy. From 1885 he was professor at the Conservatory of the Philharmonic Society at Moscow. He composed incidental music for Aedipus Rex and Philoctetus by Sophocles.

M. Wedel (1750-1810)
Born in Kiev and educated in the Kiev Theological Academy. His natural tenor voice led to his becoming a voice student at the academy.

In Moscow he studied privately since Russia was without a conservatory until 1862. Nostalgia brought him back to his home town and it was here he was employed by a general as adjutant and director of his choir. Wedel lived as an ascetic devoting himself increasingly to the service of God. While visiting the Perchler Larve Monastery he met with an orphan boy and took him to live with him. The boy, Peter Turchaninov, later became a well known composer of ancient church music.

Edward Napravnika (1839-1916)
Born in Bohemia and arrived in Russia in 1861. He was soon called to direct at the Mariinsky Opera House where he conducted for over 50 years and became chief conductor until his death. Operas of the contemporary composers from Glinka to Tschaikowsky were performed by Napravnika. A song "Oh Countryside—My Native Land" from one of his two operas is presented in this album.

Folk Songs of Old Russia

Hopak ........................................ Davidowsky
The story tells of a fickle maid who cannot decide which of the two Cossacks she prefers. "If I flirt with Ivan I will lose Stephan. Oh, how can I in love be true?" (Finally she abandons both.)

A Far Away Land ............... Napravnika (arr. Havriliak)
Russia is, and always has been, a land of virgin forests.
"Oh countryside, my native land, with thy broad steppers, thou hast parted and spread beyond. Thou has covered thyself and overgrown with dark forests, broad and spacious."

The Monotonous Bell ............... Traditional
Margaret Bennett, soprano
The song tells of a journey on a road in open country. The monotonous ringing of the horses bell and the sad song of the coachman bring forth memories of other nights and other fields.

Illyinsky: Psalm 134 (Responsive Benediction of the Night Watch)
Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which by night stand in the house of the Lord. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord. The Lord that made heaven and earth, bless thee our of Zion.
Solists: Margaret Bennett, Martha Judd, Mary Powers, Irene Kroner

Bortniansky: Psalm 68
Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him. As smoke is driven away, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.

Wedel: Confession (An Easter Hymn from the Lenten Service)
O Lord, Creator of Life, Open the door so I may enter and purify my soul within Thy Divine graciousness.

About the Conductor

Lawrence Havriliak is among the top ranking Russian Choral masters. He became the choir master of St. John's Russian Orthodox Choir in 1957. Irving Kolodin of the Saturday Review wrote of "A Russian Christmas" (Cook 1095) "an excellent choir and a discriminating director in Havriliak." A baritone soloist, Mr. Havriliak sang with the world famous Serge Jaroff Don Cossack Chorus touring Europe with them in 1953-54.

Hear These Other Fine Cook Recordings Conducted By Lawrence Havriliak

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A Russian Christmas (a program of Russian-Ukrainian carols) The St. John's Russian Orthodox Choir ........ Cook 1095

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