

1994 marks the ninetieth anniversary of the birth of the late Dmitri Borisovich Kabalevsky, the Russian composer and educator. Kabalevsky's life spanned great changes in the course of Russian and, subsequently, Soviet history. He was born in St. Petersburg in 1904 during the reign of Tsar Nicholas II and lived under the Soviet system. At the time of his death in 1987, Mikhail Gorbachov had commenced the reforms that were to mark the most significant change of focus in Russian Soviet history. Throughout his professional life Kabalevsky held prominent positions in Soviet music and politics, possibly to the detriment of his reputation as a composer in the West.

Kabalevsky placed great emphasis on the education of young children. The majority of his compositions were directed towards them as either performers or listeners. He was concerned with children and their artistic development, especially that which would make their lives more fulfilled and, in turn, enrich the country. As a composer, he is often discussed in relation to his contemporaries, especially Prokofiev, Shostakovitch, Khachaturian, Khrennikov and Shebalin. As well as being a prolific composer, Kabalevsky also wrote many articles on music and pedagogical theory. In 1988, the year after his death, UNESCO published a collection his writings under the title *Music and Education: A Composer Writes About Musical Education*.<sup>2</sup>

Kabalevsky the educator can be discussed from at least two different yet complementary perspectives: the educator with respect to performance or the learning of an instrument; and the generalist educator with respect to school music, including all levels, from early childhood onwards. As an educator of young performers, Kabalevsky was aware of a number of challenges. These included the challenge of composing piano pieces which, in some sense, were sequential and at the same time interesting or attractive enough to appeal to children. He was not content to compose pieces which were devoid of interest for the child. As a generalist educator, he was concerned with the induction of children into the world of music; this included an emphasis on creative activities through music, movement and performance.

It should not be thought that these two aspects of Kabalevsky—as educator of performers and as generalist music educator—were mutually exclusive. Ideally, he stressed the importance of the generalist type of education, certainly at early ages, as a precursor to more specialised training. It is interesting to reflect on this, as the prevailing impression in the West of Soviet music education is that it was an elitist system whereby those selected for specialist training were identified at a very early age and then nurtured for stardom. Whilst Kabalevsky was certainly part of the system in which this did occur, he also recognised the importance of a generalist music education for all children, including the particularly talented. The extent to which he alone was able to achieve this is perhaps open to conjecture. What is certain however, is that during the period of his professional life he influenced numerous students who applied his pedagogical principles relating to the generalist music education of the young throughout Russia. It is to his credit that he was concerned with these two aspects of music education, and it is equally to his credit that both school music educators as well as those concerned with performance training acknowledged his pedagogical principles.

Outside the boundaries of the USSR, Kabalevsky's reputation spread initially as a composer, and particularly as a composer of music for children. He was involved in many political and diplomatic public relations exercises. Quite often he was called upon to participate in and lead delegations outside the Soviet Union. His status as a 'world' music educator was acknowledged in 1972, with his appointment as the Honorary President of the International Society for Music Education (ISME), succeeding Zoltán Kodály. His successor as Honorary President, Sir Frank Callaway, wrote in his obituary on Kabalevsky:

[his] enthusiasm for the work of ISME quickly had its effects on the Society and, through his participation in many subsequent Conferences, he was to become one of the best known and respected figures in music education internationally.<sup>3</sup>

Through his position as Honorary President of ISME, he gained considerable respect from many dif-

ferent quarters with his attempts to bridge the divide between West and East (particularly in Europe), as well as between 'developed' and 'third world' countries. Callaway stated:

Dmitri Kabalevsky's accomplishments in the broadest fields of music education should be disseminated internationally so that his name can take its rightful place beside such well known world figures as Zoltán Kodály and Carl Orff.<sup>4</sup>

Kabalevsky's ideas have not been taken up and adapted to anywhere near the extent of those of Kodály and Orff. And with the political and social changes that have come about in the former Soviet Union, many of his ideas have been rejected, viewed as a remnant of the past Socialist system. With greater economic and political stability in Russia, there could be a return to some form of centralised education, and with that a re-evaluation of Kabalevsky's ideas and their application.

In his writings on education, Kabalevsky often referred to Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin's wife and collaborator, who wrote significant works on education. Like her he believed that:

the edifying influence of art can help a child to understand more deeply his thoughts and emotions, to think more clearly and feel more profoundly.<sup>5</sup>

He was also influenced by A.V. Lunacharsky's *Basic Principles of the United Working People's School* (1918) in which it was stated that:

aesthetic education should be thought of not as the teaching of a simplified child art, but as the systematic development of the sense organs and of creative abilities, which increases the possibilities of taking pleasure in and creating beauty.<sup>6</sup>

These ideas provided a framework for Kabalevsky's compositions and writings. He is on record as saying that 'music for children is art with imagination [that reflects] nature, life and the heart'.<sup>7</sup> It would seem that his compositions for children and his writings shared a common philosophy. In many of his addresses and interviews he repeated such comments as:

When somebody asked the writer Maxim Gorki, 'How should books for children be written?' he replied, 'The same as for adults, only better!'

This reply can equally well be applied to music for children. But it is not enough to be a composer to write such music. You have to be at the same time a composer, an educationalist and a teacher. Only this way can good results be achieved...

The composer will ensure that the music is good and lively, the educationalist will ensure that it is educationally reasonable. As for the teacher, he must not lose sight of the fact that music, like any art, helps children to see the world and nurtures their education by developing not only their artistic tastes and their creative imagination, but also their love of life, mankind, of nature and their country.<sup>8</sup>

He commented that pedagogical sensitivity on the part of the composer is often not reflected in compositions for children. So often pieces do not seem to be written with an understanding of child psychology, including an understanding of children's interests. He continually stressed the need for a simple, yet considered, balance between the composer, the educator and the instrumental teacher.

Essentially, Kabalevsky believed that the foundations of music education rested on three forms or basic elements: the song, the dance and the march. These forms and their application were expounded in his book entitled *A Story of Three Whales and Many Other Things*,<sup>9</sup> which took its title from the Russian folk legend of the three whales that supported the world. For him the 'three whales'—the song, the dance, and the march—comprise the three basic elements of music and music education. He believed that these three forms were the simplest and most accessible to children. They were the 'reliable bridges' across which children could advance into any area of musical art, no matter how complex or abstract, through listening, performing and creating. It should not be surprising that the majority of his compositions for children were based on the song, the dance, or the march.

Kabalevsky suggested the need for a fundamental new approach to the teaching of music. He stated that:

[a] new concept of music teaching would arise from and be based on the music that would naturally relate music as an art to music as a school subject, and school work to real life. This approach, which was musical and aesthetic, rather than musically didactic, afforded a real possibility of achieving the integrity and unity of the teaching process.<sup>10</sup>

As a composer and educator, Kabalevsky considered that his main aim was to arouse in children the clear understanding that music is not only a form of entertainment that may be taken or ignored at will, but also an important part of the life of every individual.<sup>11</sup> He argued that the principal aim of education was to 'fascinate' children with music. Without this fascination, music (in its many forms) would never yield its vast educational, spiritual, pleasurable and enriching role.

Kabalevsky considered children to be an 'inexhaustible source of energy and creative inspiration'.<sup>12</sup> His first compositions for the young date from his student years at the Moscow Conservatoire, when he was engaged in teaching the piano to children. Then and later, his piano compositions for the young were written with a specific intent: to clarify and reinforce a particular technical or musical point. These compositions were never published until they had been fully trialed by the student teachers under his supervision. It is interesting to note that Kabalevsky once said:

If something in the piece bothers a number of students, I rewrite it to eliminate any difficulty. I never publish my pieces until I hear how children play them...not only do we teach our pupils, but they teach us too.<sup>13</sup>

Kabalevsky was an extensive editor and reviser of his own music. The numerous revisions of his works were indicative of a desire to clarify aspects of the composition and musical expression. He wished to 'purge the pieces of the shortcomings which were inevitable in a work by a young composer who had no experience in writing for children'.<sup>14</sup>

Of Kabalevsky's total output, the works for piano amount to about a third of his compositions. It should not be thought that he limited himself to the three forms discussed above. Indeed, he employs a wide range of the major traditional forms in his piano works and other compositions. The main forms he used for solo piano were the sonata, the variation, the rondo and the prelude. Along with these are the many very small descriptive character pieces written for younger performers. There are ten published sets of works for children comprising well over one hundred individual pieces, which span most of his life. These pieces were written alongside large-scale instrumental, choral and orchestral compositions. The piano compositions encompass the entire range of student achievement and deal sensitively with appropriate technical and musi-

cal aspects at all levels of difficulty.

It is in the pieces for the beginning student that we can see most clearly the way in which Kabalevsky embraces the song, the dance and the march. Invariably, the 'song' is predominantly melodic, often borrowing from or inspired by folk-song; the 'dance', for example a waltz or gallop, adopts a bright character and is very suggestive of movement; and the 'march' has a distinct, regularly accented character (clearly a style to which Soviet children could relate). It is interesting that he differentiated the march from the dance, rather than regarding it as a subset of the dance.

Kabalevsky incorporated the toccata in numerous ways in his shorter pieces. The toccata can be seen in terms of one of the three highlighted forms; a toccata/song will, in addition to its 'toccata' aspects, have a predominantly melodic character. Similarly, toccatas were also composed with dance or march-like characteristics.

In the *Three Rondos* from the opera *Colas Breugnon* op. 30 (1969) Kabalevsky uses each of the three forms as the basis of the separate rondos:

No.	Title	Tempo	Descrip.	Bars
1	Grape-Gather's Song	Allegro moderato	Song	107
2	Folk Dance	Allegro con fuoco	Dance	117
3	March	Marciale moderato	March	86

Table 1: *Three Rondos-Colas Breugnon* op. 30 (1969)

In the *Four Rondos* op. 60 (1958) he again uses the three different forms (with the toccata) to provide variety:

No.	Title	Tempo	Description	Bars
1	March	Allegro, tempo di marcia	March	44
2	Dance	Moderato, dolce	Dance	74
3	Song	Andante, molto cantabile	Song	62
4	Toccata	Poco allegro, molto ritmico	Toccata	82

Table 2: *Four Rondos*, op. 60 (1958)

It is in the *Thirty Children's Pieces* op. 27 (1939) that we can see the use of the three forms (with the addition of the toccata) throughout.

No.	Title	Tempo	Descrip.	Bars
1	Waltz	Allegretto cantabile	Dance	36
2	Song	Andantino	Song	17
3	Night on the River	Andantino	Song	18
4	Lullaby	Andante cantabile	Song	37
5	A Little Fable	Allegro moderato	March	18
6	An Old Dance	Moderato	Song	22
7	Clowning	Vivace	Toccata	46
8	Toccatina	Allegretto marcato	Song/ Toccata	49
9	A Sad Story	Cantabile	Song	34
10	Dance on the Lawn	Andantino	Dance	26
11	Rondo	Moderato	March	34
12	A Short Story	Andantino cantabile	Song	37
13	Novelette	Molto sostenuto	Dance	58
14	Playing Ball	Vivace leggiero	Toccata	51
15	Lyrical Piece	Cantabile, moderato	Song	35
16	A Tale	Andantino	Song	49
17	Sonatina	Allegretto	March	43
18	A Little Joke	Vivace leggierissimo	Toccata	53
19	Snow Storm	Presto	Toccata	88
20	March	Allegro	March	43
21	Scherzo	Allegro scherzando	Dance	29
22	Etude in F	Allegro marcato	March	46
23	Etude in A minor	Allegro vivace	March	18
24	Dance	Moderato scherzando	Dance	56
25	The Chase	Allegro	March	44
26	Etude in A major	Allegro	March	105
27	A Warlike Dance	Allegro energico	Dance	26
28	Caprice	Andantino	Song	71
29	Cavalry Gallop	Allegro molto	Dance	63
30	A Dramatic Event	Grave	March	73

Table 3: *Thirty Children's Pieces* op. 27 (1939)

Although the collections of pieces for children are not graded, a fine progression of pieces and exercises may easily be assembled to explore whatever pianistic consideration needs attention, and at the same time

affording students valuable insights into musician-ship. In Table 4, Kabalevsky's piano works have been grouped in four categories: those for the beginning (1), the slightly advanced (2) and the advanced student (3), and the recital works (4).

1. 24 Little Pieces op. 39 (1943)  
30 Children's Pieces op. 27 (1938)  
Five Sets of Variations op. 51 (1952)  
Four Little Pieces op. 14 (1933)  
Lyric Tunes op. 91 (1971)
2. 35 Easy Pieces op. 89 (1972)  
Variations op. 40 (1943)  
Four Rondos op. 60 (1958)  
Four Preludes op. 5 (1927)  
Spring Games and Dances op. 81 (1964)
3. Sonatinas op. 13 (1930, 1933)  
Six Preludes and Fugues op. 61 (1959)  
24 Preludes op. 38 (1943)
4. Sonata no. 1, op. 6 (1927)  
Sonata no. 2, op. 45 (1945)  
Sonata no. 3, op. 46 (1946)  
Rondo op. 59 (1958)

Table 4: Piano Music

In addition to these, there are a number of works for piano and orchestra. For the younger performer compositions in this genre include the 'Youth' Concerto no. 3 in D, op. 50 (1952), Rhapsody on the theme 'School Years' op. 75 (1963) and the 'Prague' Concerto for piano and string orchestra op. 99 (1975).

Alongside the piano works, the other body of material for younger performers is the huge repertoire of songs and choruses. These songs were sung in schools and at youth camps. It is possible that Kabalevsky is best remembered in Russia as a writer of songs. There are about 75 individual songs as well as 33 sets comprising some 120 separate songs. Among the most memorable collections for children are the *Seven English Nursery Rhymes* op. 41 (1944), *Dancing Songs* (1960), and *A Game Chorus* op. 67 (1961). These form a complementary balance to the more renowned cycles such as the *Three Poems* to texts by A. Blok op. 4 and the *Ten Shakespeare Sonnets* op. 53. There are also significant large-scale compositions using the resources of children. Some of these include the cantatas *The Song of Morning, Spring and Peace* op. 57 (1956), *The Leninists* op. 63 (1959) and *Of the Homeland* op. 82 (1965), as well as works described as 'musical scenes', 'plays' and 'presentations'.

Boris Dimentman, a recent President of the Union of Soviet Composers wrote in a tribute to Kabalevsky that:

Not without reason, Kabalevsky took as the epigraph for his programme the works of the outstanding Soviet educator Vasili Sukhomlinsky: 'Music education does not mean educating a musician—it means first of all educating a human being'.<sup>15</sup>

In Kabalevsky we have someone who was at the same time a composer, an educator (in the broad sense of the term) and a teacher (in a more specific sense of instrumental teacher). He believed that:

music is both a marvellous art and a sharp weapon in the fight for the lofty ideals of humanism, for peace and high regard for all nations.<sup>16</sup>

In his compositions for children Kabalevsky promoted what he regarded as the most accessible forms of music—the song, the dance and the march. For Kabalevsky, an education in music was the right of all children, not just the gifted and the exceptional. He wanted all children to have the opportunity to experience music. In his piano music for children, we have a vast array of accessible compositions that have the potential to fire the enthusiasm of the student and, in time, develop relevant musical and technical capabilities.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This article is a revised version of the paper I delivered at the XVII National Conference 'Closer Musical Relations', University of Auckland: 6 July 1994 and draws on aspects of my current Ph.D. research on the educational ideas of Dmitri Kabalevsky as they relate to his piano music for children.

<sup>2</sup> D.B. Kabalevsky, *Music and Education: A Composer Writes About Musical Education* (London: International Bureau of Education, UNESCO, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> F. Callaway, 'Obituary Dmitri Kabalevsky and ISME: A Personal Memoir' *International Journal of Music Education* 9 (1987), p. 45.

<sup>4</sup> Callaway, 'Obituary Dmitri Kabalevsky and ISME: A Personal Memoir', p. 46.

<sup>5</sup> D. Kabalevsky, 'Soviet Music Education: As seen by a Soviet composer', *Music Educator's Journal* 60 (1973), p. 46.

<sup>6</sup> As quoted in Kabalevsky, *Music and Education: A Composer Writes About Musical Education*, p. 22.

<sup>7</sup> Y. Novik, 'Dimitri Kabalevsky – Just Promoted to Teacher of Second-Year Music', *The American Music Teacher* 25.6 (1976), pp. 52-53.

<sup>8</sup> Kabalevsky, *Music and Education: A Composer Writes About Musical Education*, p. 120.

<sup>9</sup> D.B. Kabalevsky, *Pro treh kitov i pro mnogoe drugoe* [A Story of the Three Whales and Many Other Things] (Moscow, State Publisher, 1970).

<sup>10</sup> Kabalevsky, *Music and Education: A Composer Writes About Musical Education*, p. 17.

<sup>11</sup> Kabalevsky, *Music and Education: A Composer Writes About Musical Education*, p. 21.

<sup>12</sup> Kabalevsky, *Music and Education: A Composer Writes About Musical Education*, p. 122.

<sup>13</sup> Novik, 'Dimitri Kabalevsky – Just Promoted to Teacher of Second-Year Music', pp. 52-53.

<sup>14</sup> D.B. Kabalevsky, *Piano Music for Children and Young People* vol. 1 (Moscow, Soviet Composer, 1970).

<sup>15</sup> B. Dimentman, 'Kabalevsky: Music Educator', *International Journal of Music Education* 1 (1983), p. 38.

<sup>16</sup> Kabalevsky, 'Soviet Music Education: As seen by a Soviet Composer', p. 47.

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