

The Strad, London

07-1975

Covent Garden audiences have already experienced the talents of Yuri Ahronovitch, and there had been sensational reports of his baton skill circulating for some time. None of them were wrong as his debut with the London Symphony Orchestra showed on June 5. Here was a conductor with more obvious movement, more blatant conviction, more drama than we had experienced for a long time. His stick whistled through the air, his voice could be heard in the melodic lines, and his energy seemed frightening.

Admittedly this debut was in Russian music, which so often provides opportunities for all these displays, but it cannot be denied that this was a whirlwind of conviction, control and musical conflagration. After a sumptuous and sensitive view of the Prologue to Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty*, he found unexpected elements with Maurizio Pollini in the third concerto of Prokofiev. Perhaps Londoners have become too familiar to treating this work as a witty, crypto-romantic early 20th century essay in modernism. This time, the brittle power and relentlessness reminded us at last that this is a successor to the implacable second concerto, and that Prokofiev was not the escapist he is sometimes held to be. Pollini and the conductor made this a most memorable collaboration.

Finally, that great autobiographical outpouring of Tchaikovsky, his *Manfred* Symphony. This was given in the form preferred by Soviet musicians, without the rhetorical conclusion and the organ, in an attempt to impose greater symphonic cohesion. It was a great experience in dynamic shading, and the fluctuating moods of this master of orchestral colour. Once again, greatness was restored to Tchaikovsky, and one awaits the return of Mr. Ahronovitch with considerable impatience.