

The author's detailed analysis of the relation of Maxim to Plato is an invaluable service, although this is not a new topic. Denissoff recently dwelled on it in detail, but he cited only disjointed quotations from Maxim's works, torn out of context, to confirm his opinion that Maxim was a Neoplatonist. Haney, on the other hand, addresses himself to the whole complex of Maxim's writings, revealing in many places Platonist views. Haney also adopts a more cautious point of view than Denissoff. Referring to the kinship between Plato's and Maxim's outlooks, he shows that those peculiarities of Plato's philosophy which are found in Maxim do not contradict Maxim's strict orthodoxy. In this respect the views of Maxim are, in principle, different from the views of many of his contemporary Neoplatonists. Further study might show that the sources of Maxim's Platonism must be sought not in the Italian humanists but in the Greek Fathers of the church. In the last chapter, touching on the political views of Maxim, the author indicates that Maxim's ideal political system is very close to Plato's ideal state.

One must evaluate the book (especially the fourth and fifth chapters) as, on the whole, a valuable contribution to the study of the life and literary inheritance of Maxim the Greek.

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COLLOQUIAL RUSSIAN. By *William Harrison, Yelena Clarkson and Stephen Le Fleming*. London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973. xii, 428 pp. \$8.00.

This book is part of a series of colloquial foreign-language texts designed in part as self-teaching manuals and containing keys to exercises. *Colloquial Russian* was prepared for a British television series. In addition to half a dozen introductory pages devoted to pronunciation and the alphabet, it contains twenty-eight lessons, a key to English-Russian translation exercises, an English-Russian and a Russian-English vocabulary, plus a brief index of grammatical topics treated. The format of the lessons is traditional: a dialogue-reader section followed by a running glossary, grammar commentary with examples, and exercises.

Perhaps the best feature of the book is the dialogue-reader section, which provides good samples of colloquial Russian in Soviet situations. They are interestingly and often humorously written, and contain excellent possibilities for cultural discussion on the Russian way of life. Unfortunately, the authors neglected to provide any commentary on cultural differences in the USSR, a very serious omission.

Grammar is presented in an extremely haphazard fashion. For example, part of the rule for forming the imperative is given in lesson three (based on the few verb types thus far presented), another part of the rule comes in lesson thirteen, and this too is incomplete. Nowhere is there a clue as to how to form imperatives from verbs such as *davát'* or from verbs with infinitives ending in *-ch'*, for example, *pomóch'*. Any verb that does not conform to the simplest conjugation patterns is labeled "irregular," for example, *kupít'*, *vstrétiť'*, *pokazát'*, *skazát'*, *zakrýt'*, *otdokhnút'*, *stat'*, *opustít'*, and many others (pp. 109–11).

The section on pronunciation treats the important problems of vowel reduction, voicing and devoicing, and assimilation, but confuses the issue with erroneous information and examples—"In the word *èkspért*, *p* coming before *e*, is soft; but so

too, therefore, are the preceding consonants *s* and *k*" (p. xi). Certainly *k* would not be softened in this position, and even *s* would probably not be softened by most contemporary speakers of Russian. One frequently encounters such ingenuous statements as the following: "In order to avoid an ugly combination of consonants it may be necessary to insert a vowel . . ." (p. 187).

The exercises in the book are often imaginative, but many are too difficult given the inadequacy of grammar explanation. There are some rather striking omissions of important concepts, for example, *nádo* is provided, but nowhere is *núzhn*, *nuzhná*, and so forth, to be found. Although *dólzhen* is given as a vocabulary item along with the feminine form *dolzhná*, it is never explained. Yet exercises (p. 113) call for its use in transformation drills from past to future.

Another drawback to use of this book in a beginning course is the extremely heavy vocabulary load, approximately 2,000 items, or 70 per lesson. If one were to attempt to complete the book in two semesters, a very rapid assimilation of vocabulary would be expected of the student.

In summary, then, it would be impossible to recommend this book for the level at which it was intended—beginning Russian. It might possibly prove useful in a more advanced course as a source for conversation and simple reading material.

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A. LOFTIER FLIGHT: THE LIFE AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF CHARLES-LOUIS DIDELOT, BALLETMAS-
TER. By *Mary Grace Swift*.
Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press. London: Pitman Publishing,
1974. x, 230 pp. \$15.00.

It is a cliché to write that ballet is an ephemeral art, yet this is only a partly true statement. The whole practice of ballet has been changed through such pioneers as Noverre and Didelot, Camargo, Sallé, Taglioni, Pavlova, and Vaganova, to name but a few, even though today's dancers and their public may not be aware of their influence.

All too often dance history has been an arid subject, revealing fact upon fact but never the truth. The present book is a magnificent exception. Its author portrays a flesh and blood character and situates him in his period with great skill.

In the Soviet Union today Charles-Louis Didelot is very much a living influence. He set the scene for everything that followed: the Romantic ballet that still holds the stage. He turned from classical themes to folklore—Byron, Scott, and Shakespeare. He mounted the lavish spectacles, still so loved by Russian audiences, with a flying corps de ballet, gushing fountains, and elaborate lighting; and he gave the Russian ballerina the opportunity to act in movement in which she has excelled ever since. Didelot was the first to mount Pushkin's *Prisoner of the Caucasus*, used so many times since. Pushkin, who frequently introduced the name of Didelot into his poems, wrote from his exile in Bessarabia to his brother, "Write me about Didelot, about that Circassian girl Istomina, whom I once courted like the *Prisoner of the Caucasus*."

If I have concentrated on Russia in this review, it is because Didelot is still active there, and the dancers and public are aware of it. The author, however, has given a complete biography of Didelot, from his birth in 1767, that includes travel in all the ballet-conscious countries of his period.