February 28, 2017, at 8:00

**Jay Friedman** Conductor

**Glière**

Symphony No. 3 in B Minor, Op. 42 (*Ilya Muromets*)
Wandering Pilgrims—*Ilya Muromets* and *Svyatogor*
Solovei, the Brigand
The Palace of Prince Vladimir
The Feats of Valor and the Petrification of *Ilya Muromets*
Reinhold Glière
Born January 11, 1875; Kiev, Ukraine
Died June 23, 1956; Moscow, Russia

Symphony No. 3 in B Minor, Op. 42 (Ilya Muromets)

Reinhold Glière was among the preeminent Russian musicians of the generation between Tchaikovsky and Shostakovich. Born in Kiev on January 11, 1875, Glière was the son of a Belgian-born wind instrument maker, though as a child Reinhold studied violin. In 1891, he enrolled at the Kiev Conservatory and three years later transferred to the Moscow Conservatory, where his teachers included Arensky, Ippolitov-Ivanov, and Taneyev. He graduated with a gold medal in 1900, and immediately joined the faculty of the Gnossin School in Moscow. Glière was already composing prolifically by that time, and during the following decade he wrote three symphonies (the Third, *Ilya Muromets*, is generally regarded as his masterpiece), an opera, a symphonic poem (*The Sirens*), two string quartets, and several other chamber works. In 1905, he briefly became involved in the nation’s turbulent political affairs, but then spent the next two years traveling and studying in Germany. After returning to Moscow in 1907, Glière continued to compose and teach, and also started appearing as a conductor and pianist. He taught at the Kiev Conservatory from 1913 to 1920, serving as that school’s director after 1914. In 1920, he moved to the Moscow Conservatory as professor of composition, a position he held for the rest of his life; Prokofiev, Khachaturian, Miaskovsky, and Mussorgsky were the most distinguished of his many students.

In addition to creating numerous works of pure music, Glière also espoused Soviet ideals in his music after the Russian Revolution—many of his compositions are frankly propagandistic in nature. Perhaps the best-known of these nationalistic works is the “realistic” ballet of 1927, *The Red Poppy*, but his catalog of some 500 compositions is filled with pieces for orchestra, band, and chorus with such titles as *For the Happiness of the Fatherland*, *Twenty-Five Years of the Red Army*, and *Victory*. (His 1949 *Hymn to the Great City*, dedicated to Saint Petersburg, has been played for decades at the midnight departures of the Red Arrow, the elegant overnight train between Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Shostakovich hated the custom.) Glière also carried on significant research in native Ukrainian, Uzbek, and other music, whose melodies served as the basis for several of his scores, including the opera *Shakh-Senem*. Glière served as national director of music education for the new government during the 1920s, and he was later named a member and then chairman of the USSR Composers’ Union. He was given the title People’s Artist of the USSR in 1938, and went on to receive many national awards, including an honorary doctorate, the Order of the Red Banner, and four Stalin prizes. He died in Moscow in 1956. Glière was heir to the tradition

**COMPOSED**
1901–11

**FIRST PERFORMANCE**
March 23, 1912. Orchestra of the Russian Musical Society, Emil Cooper conducting. Moscow, Russia

U.S. premiere by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, January 18, 1918

**INSTRUMENTATION**
piccolo, three flutes, three oboes, english horn, three clarinets, bass clarinet, three bassoons, contrabassoon, eight horns, four trumpets, four trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, celesta, two harps, strings

**APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME**
71 minutes
of Russian romanticism, and most of his works are in the large, public genres of opera, ballet, symphony and symphonic poem, generously supplemented with vocal and chamber pieces.

The twenty-first-century concept of the “superhero” that unspools endlessly in the CGI-driven, save-the-world spectacles at the local Cineplex has its archetypal roots in ancient legends of the indomitable warrior that were already old by the time of Homer. In Russia, belatedly brought into the modern world at the turn of the eighteenth century by Peter the Great, such legends held long and powerful sway, and among the most enduring and potent heroes of that tradition is Ilya Muromets.

The semi-legendary Ilya Muromets apparently drew characteristics from storied warriors of the eleventh, thirteenth, and fifteenth centuries, and even from a monk named Ilya Pechersky, who, famous for his physical strength, was beatified by the Orthodox Church in 1643. Legend holds that Ilya Muromets was born into the family of a peasant farmer in a village near Murom, 200 miles east of Moscow (i.e., “Ilya from Murom”). He was unable to walk, either because of a birth defect or an early illness, for his first thirty years, and survived by lying motionless above a stove in the family’s kitchen until he was miraculously cured by two mysterious passing pilgrims and endowed with superhuman strength and courage. He valiantly defended his homeland against invading pagan hordes and came to be regarded as the greatest of the bogatyrs, the Russian knights-errant in search of chivalrous adventures. Headstrong after winning a twelve-day battle with wicked Tatar opponents, Ilya cried, “Where is the heavenly army that we, the bogatyrs, may annihilate it?” The two mysterious pilgrims who had earlier restored his health responded to his challenge as holy warriors, but as Ilya kills each heavenly soldier, two more spring up in his place until he is finally overwhelmed by the force endlessly multiplying against him. As he and the bogatyrs attempt to retreat, they are turned to stone.

Ilya’s exploits were handed down orally in many byliny, traditional epic narrative poems that began to be systematically collected as part of the wave of ardent nationalism that swept Europe and Russia in the nineteenth century. (“Byliny” was derived from the past tense of the verb “to be” and indicates “something that was,” i.e., a historical tale.) The fearless Ilya became a symbol of Russia’s might and provided the subject for paintings, historical fiction, films (including a currently ongoing animated movie franchise), a postage stamp, and even the names of a World War I bomber and a Russian Navy icebreaker launched in 2016. Ilya’s legend also inspired operas by Catterino Cavos (1807),
Leonid Malashkin (1879), and Alexander Gretchaninov (1901), and, most significantly, the monumental Symphony no. 3 that Glüere created around the mythic hero in 1909–11. The work was premiered by the orchestra of the Moscow branch of the Russian Musical Society on March 23, 1912, under the direction of the distinguished Emil Cooper (1877–1960), who was to leave the fledgling Soviet Union in 1924 and work in western Europe and America, where he conducted, among many others, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Opera Guild of Montreal, and the Metropolitan Opera; his tenure in New York included the U.S. premieres of Britten’s Peter Grimes (1948) and Mussorgsky’s Khovanshchina (1950). The score was dedicated to Alexander Glazunov, one of the country’s most influential musical figures as both an esteemed composer and director of the Saint Petersburg Conservatory, who had praised the Russian qualities in Glüere’s works. Ilya Muromets earned Glüere the third of his three Glinka awards.

Glière’s Symphony no. 3 was introduced to America by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra on January 18, 1918.

The following paragraphs were printed in Glüere’s published score. Brief notes have been added to indicate important musical events that help delineate the story.

**Wandering Pilgrims—Ilya Muromets and Svyatogor.** In olden times, in the days of the gracious Prince Vladimir, lived Ilya Muromets, a peasant’s son. For thirty long years he had remained motionless [the somber, darkly hued introduction]. One day two wandering pilgrims appeared [a chant-like melody first intoned by english horn and bass clarinet], and cried to him, “Arise! Go forth! Thou shalt become a puissant bogatyr.” [A passage of swelling power based on a theme associated with Ilya throughout the symphony.] And Ilya Muromets arose and went forth [resolute music using a bold, leaping motive also associated with him]. Procuring a bogatyr’s steed, he set out to find the noble bogatyr Svyatogor. The earth could scarcely bear the weight of Svyatogor [a solemn brass chorale], who roamed the lofty summits of the Sviaty Gory (Holy mountains). Ilya approached him, saluting him with respect. They leaped astride two fleet steeds, and rode a long, long time over the Holy Mountains, diverting themselves with heroic games [development of Ilya’s leaping theme and Svyatogor’s chorale]. They discovered an immense coffin, into which Svyatogor laid himself and from whose profound depths he could not be raised [a huge climax followed by a passage of ebbing strength]. Before he died, he gave much sage counsel to Ilya. Then his body became covered with rivulets of sweat, and he expired... His heroic force was transmitted to Ilya, who traveled straight to the capital, Kiev. His courser galloped as the falcon flies, bestrode lakes and streams, while his tail swept away cities.

**Solovei, the Brigand.** In a dense forest [ominously whirring strings with avian twitters and slithering chromatic lines from the woodwinds], seven oaks sheltered Solovei, the Brigand [contra-bassoon solo]. Whistling like a nightingale, sending forth ferocious cries, Solovei knocked to earth thick forests, and all the men, if any there be in the forests, were struck dead. Solovei heard the powerful gait of the bogatyr [Ilya’s distant fanfares]. Three maidens, cherished by Solovei,
lived in the forest. They owned great heaps of gold, of silver, and of beautifully rounded pearls, with which they enticed passers-by [a luminously voluptuous passage replete with birdcalls]. Ilya bent his giant bow and shot an arrow of glowing iron into the right eye of Solovei, which felled him to the earth [Solovei’s cavernous theme combined with Ilya’s leaping fanfares and the ominous string whirrings lead to a massive climax]. Ilya tied the Brigand, injured but still alive, to his stirrup and dragged him to the palace of Prince Vladimir of Kiev [galloping music recedes as the gloomy forest closes behind them].

The Palace of Prince Vladimir. Vladimir was holding a noble feast, to which he had gathered princes, boyars, and the bogatyrs of invincible strength [a festive folk dance followed by a broad, noble melody]. Arriving at the gate of the palace, Ilya commanded Solovei [their themes recur] to send forth his ferocious cries. Then trembled the roof of the palace, and all the proud princes and all the famous boyars fell dead when it collapsed on them. Prince Vladimir alone, though enfeebled, stood. Ilya then sliced off the head of Solovei. Vladimir, in recompense, gave Ilya the place of honor at his table, and all the bogatyrs acknowledged him as their distinguished brother [festive music reprised].

The Feats of Valor and the Petrification of Ilya Muromets. Batygha the Wicked and his pagan army arose in Orda, the land of gold. The smoky breath of their horses obscured the gleam of the sun, and from them arose the Tatar odor that suffocated every Christian. Ilya Muromets advanced at the head of his twelve bogatyrs. For twelve days they battled, defying the entire army of miscreants [a massive, ferocious fugue]. Ilya drew near to the giant warrior Oudalaya Polyenitsa. At first they exchanged blows, but neither was wounded. Each seized the mount of the other by the mane, but without advantage. They dismounted and gripped each other vigorously. They struggled and strained until evening, and from evening until midnight, and from midnight until dawn. Ilya fell to the earth, and by this contact his strength was doubled. He struck the white breast of the warrior with a blow so formidable that it sent him above the great trees of the forest. Soon he put out the shining eyes, detached the rebel head from his shoulders, fixed it on a Tatar lance, and carried it back, amidst acclamation, to the camp of his heroic friends. The bogatyrs advanced with Ilya upon the land. “Where is the heavenly army that we, the bogatyrs, may annihilate it?” They had scarcely pronounced the mad words when out sprang two warriors [the pilgrim’s chant from movement 1], who shouted, “Come then, bogatyrs, measure your strength against ours.” One bogatyr stood forth. Suddenly the two holy warriors became four. Ilya sabered them—and they became eight, unhurt. All the bogatyrs threw themselves upon the Heavenly Host, charging and saberng; but they multiplied again and again, and charged upon the bogatyrs. The bogatyrs fled to the rocky mountains, toward the somber caverns. One fled—and he was changed into stone. Another retreated—and he, too, was petrified. Ilya Muromets ran toward the mountains—and he, even he, was suddenly changed into stone [themes from the previous movements are recalled, followed by the motionless music of the symphony’s opening]. And since that day, the bogatyrs have disappeared from Holy Russia. 

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Richard E. Rodda teaches at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, and provides program notes for many American orchestras, concert series, and festivals.