

# Souvenirs & Mementos

As a child I discovered Anatoliy Kos-Anatolsky's polka before I fully understood classical music. I knew nothing of the composer, the ballet, or the novella upon which it was based, but I loved the piece. Years later, when I located the piano transcription of the score, I was dismayed that it was too awkward to play as a solo. There was only one thing to do, retranscribe the piece as a piano duet. This was done in 1986 for the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the St. Volodymyr Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral (Toronto) held in the Great Hall of Hart House at the University of Toronto. My sister, Halyna, teamed up with me to perform the premier. As always, we were a hit!

It was more than 30 years later that I discovered the darker side of this ballet. Originally, "The Jay's Wing: Notes of a Misanthrope" (1905) was an early expressionist novella by Western Ukrainian writer Ivan Franko. It deals with a young woman whose impulsive behaviour leads her from one violent misadventure to another in an almost Sadean manner. Much of the story takes place within the Russian Empire. It is a damning portrait of life in Russia.

Premiered in 1956, during the Khrushchev cultural thaw, the ballet was more exotic than expressionistic, more within the realm of Soviet socialist realism than the world of abstract modernism. With a score by Kos-Anatolsky, the ballet was replete with folk motifs and sounds of popular dance music from the 1920s and 1930s. The composer had been a well-known jazz musician in Western Ukraine prior to WWII, prior to the Soviet invasion of Galicia in 1939.

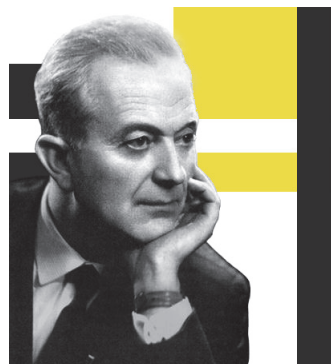
The polka was also included in the soundtrack to Borys Dniprov's (bottom left) retelling of "Little Bear and He Who Lives in the River"—a children's story based on an animated Soviet short film of the same title. This audio story can be heard on Dniprov's LP "Children's Songs and Stories of Ukraine" (bottom right) issued in Toronto c.1980.



Contemporary illustration for "The Jay's Wing."



Left: program of the Cathedral's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Banquet; right: the Great Hall, Hart House, UofT.



Left: composer Anatoliy Kos-Anatolsky; right: author Ivan Franko.

