Drobaŭ, L. *Bielaruskija mastaki XIX-ha stahodździa*, 'Biełarus', Minsk, 1971. 112 pages. Illustrations.

The apparent neglect by Byelorussian writers on art of the cultural traditions of their country prior to 1917 is hard to understand, and has been a source of constant irritation to amateurs of Byelorussian painting. So often art historians seem to skip over centuries of cultural achievement in their haste to expand upon the merits of Socialist realism during the Soviet period. Leaving aside the incomprehensible omission to deal with Byelorussian iconography in an age where Russian icons are exhaustively studied and discussed, the works of such gifted 18th and 19th century painters as H. Lejbovič, Ja. Alaškievič and J. Chrucki have persistently failed to attract the attention of Byelorussian art historians. Whether this is because their style of painting was too academic and genteel to be considered genuinely Byelorussian, or whether the scientific study of art in Byelorussia is still in its early stages, must for the present remain an open question. It has fallen to writers such as M. Kacer and L. Drobaŭ to help correct the balance.

One glance at the pages of this excellently produced and presented book will suffice to persuade the reader of the high level attained by Byelorussian art in the 19th century. Drobaŭ considers the artists of the so-called Vilna School in their proper Byelorussian perspective. 'Certain art historians have spoken of the Vilna School as if it were some Polish or Lithuanian group. In this way artists such as Valencij Vaňkovič, Iosif Alaškievič, Vikencij Dmachoŭski and others have been adopted into the

culture of neighbouring states. But they were not only Byelorussian in the form of their art, but also in their lives, and among the people they spoke their own native language — Byelorussian (p. 6).'

In his book Drobaŭ provides biographical notes, comments and illustrations of the works of the leading artists of the Vilna School — Jan Daniel (1780-1840), Iosif Alaškievič (1777-1830), the portraitist Valencij Vaňkovič (1799-1842), the genial creator of the Byelorussian *nature morte* style Ivan Chrucki (1810-1885), the landscape artists Vikencij Dmachoŭski (1807-1862), Kazimir Alchimo- vič (1840-1917), Apalinaryj Haraŭski (1833-1900), the portraitist Mikadzim Silivanovič (1830-1918), the landscapist Henrych Vejsenhof (1859-1922), Stanislau Bohuš-Siestrżancevič (1839-1927) and Ferdinand Ruščyc (1870-1936). He fails to make any mention of the works of the Minsk portraitist Ja. Kruher (1868-1918) and the Viciebsk master Ju. Pen (b. 1856) — possibly because only members of the Vilna School retained the author's interest.

The black and white illustrations are of good quality, and Drobaŭ's work casts fresh light on a neglected yet very rewarding period of the history of Byelorussian art. One hopes that future books on the subject will prove a little more comprehensive, and further dispel the false impression which has been conjured up over the years, that prior to 1917 Byelorussian art was essentially, if not exclusively, a folk-art.

H. Pichura

Elatov, V. I. *Melodičeskiye osnovy belorusskoj narodnoj muzyki*. 'Nauka i Technika', Minsk, 1970. 143 pages.

This little book is the third in a series of works of V. I. Elatov about Byelorussian folk music. Like its predecessors, *Ladovye osnovy belorusskoj narodnoj muzyki*, published in Minsk in 1964, and *Ritmicheskie osnovy belorusskoj narodnoj muzyki*, which appeared in 1966, this work about the melodic foundations of Byelorussian folk music is clearly and solidly written. Its three chapters expose the matter of Byelorussian melodic sources methodically and the author generously illustrates all his

points with many fitting musical examples, thus making the work quite approachable. A useful bibliography is provided at the end of the book.

It is, however, regrettable that these three otherwise very useful books are written in the Russian language. One would presume that those most interested in Byelorussian folk music would be the Byelorussians themselves, who would more readily care to read such a work in their own language rather than in Russian.

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