

Young Authors' Club

FLORENCE COOK, Editor

SENIOR DAY

THE FIRST PRESENTATION

Original by Philip K. Dick
One evening, having nothing else to do, I went over to my friend's house to see what he was doing. I found him listening to some music over the radio. We began to talk about this and that almost at once, and it was not until some time had passed that there was silence long enough for me to catch a bit of the music. It sounded familiar, but I could not place it.

"What's that?" I asked my friend.

"Just a minute," he replied. "It tells in last night's newspaper."

As he was rummaging around in a window seat for the paper I said: "You know, I heard that piece a month ago on the radio, and they didn't tell what it was. I've wondered since because I liked it very much."

My friend found the paper and looked through it. Suddenly he looked up at me with a queer expression on his face.

"Have you found it?" I asked.

"Listen to that music a little longer," he said. "I don't believe it could be the same piece you heard before."

I listened a few minutes more and said, "Yes, that's the piece all right. What does the paper say about it?"

"The paper says," he replied slowly, "that tonight's concert will consist of the first presentation in America of the new Russian Battle Hymn." He laid the paper aside, "So you see," he continued, "it couldn't possibly be the same piece."

"But it must be!" I exclaimed. "Have you ever known me to confuse two pieces of music before? The paper must be wrong. Or you read it incorrectly."

Before he could answer the music stopped, and there was the sound of applause.

"Listen," my friend said. "We'll hear now who's right."

A moment of silence passed and then the radio announcer said, "You have heard the first performance anywhere outside of Russia of the new Soviet Battle Hymn by the contemporary Russian composer . . ."

I snapped off the radio. "But I won't understand it!" I said. "I know I heard that same piece last month. I don't see how I could be wrong." And to prove it I

whistled a few bars of the music. "They played that part before I came in tonight, didn't they?" I said. "I couldn't possibly have heard it just now."

My friend looked at me and pondered. At last he asked, "Do you remember what station you heard it on before?"

"I don't know what one it was, but I noted the place on the dial where I heard it. It was a far away station, and it faded out just as the piece came to a close and I didn't get where it was from," I replied. I went over to the radio and pointed to a spot on the dial. "Right here," I said. "This is the exact spot."

He came over and took a look at it. Then he produced a copy of White's Radio Log and studied it. Finally he looked up and in a perplexed tone said, "According to this listing, and it's the latest, there is no station either in Amrelea or the rest of the world which broadcasts on that frequency!"

We stared at each other. "Whistle that part again," he said. I did so. "That's the part they played before you came in here, all right," he mused. "You couldn't possibly have heard it tonight. I don't understand it."

We thought for awhile. Then my friend asked, "Do you know just exactly when you heard that piece?"

"Let me see," I said. "It seems to me that it was the day I got back from Los Angeles. Yes, I'm sure of it. I was unpacking my suitcase when I heard it over the radio."

"That was the middle of last month?"

"The sixteenth."

He picked up the paper again and read aloud. "The Soviet newspaper Pravda stated that the composer of the new Hymn began and completed the work on his birthday, the sixteenth of last month!"

(The author of this doesn't amplify on the strange experience of the narrator of this story. Occult? Perhaps. Insignation? Maybe. In other words, in a story of this type the reader takes it or leaves it. I consider the story well written, although I'm not sure from a plot standpoint it can be classified as a story. Interesting reading anyway.)

CREDIT LINE

Five credits for Philip Dick,
May 22, 1944.