

MUSIC

By Richard Aldrich

The New York Symphony Orchestra.

The Russian composers whom Mr. Damrosch illustrated yesterday in the historical series he is giving with the New York Symphony Orchestra in Carnegie Hall were Glinka, Tschalkowsky, Rimsky-Korsakoff, Stavinisky and Rachmaninoff. The program was headed by an arrangement of the Volga boatmen's song, "Cry Ouchnem," made by Glazunoff—an arrangement made by Stavinisky that was put on the program being considered not robust enough.

Glinka was represented by his overture to the opera, "Russian and Ludmilla," written before there was any "Big Five" or much thought of making a national school of Russian music under the influence of Russian folk-song. Not the slightest influence of this sort is discernible in the overture, a cheerful and brilliant piece, which might have been written almost anywhere in Europe in the late '30s. Tschalkowsky's representation by his fantasy on "The Tempest" was not fortunate; the piece has few of Tschalkowsky's characteristic qualities; it is very long and rather tedious. Tschalkowsky's Russian side does not appear in it at all, and as a piece of program music it does not carry much conviction.

Rimsky-Korsakoff's rich and oriental imagination is hardly given fuller play anywhere than in his "Scheherazade," of which, however, only two movements were given at this concert. A suite arranged by Stravinsky himself from his ballet "The Fire Bird," came next. It was announced as played for the first time in this country; but this is not true. The suite was played here last season (five movements instead of four) by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and in 1916 Mr. Damrosch himself played a suite of the same origin. Perhaps it is not of great importance; but these things being as they are, it is a strange proceeding to announce this number as "new; first time in America." It may be said now, as was said at the previous performances (and the remark is not made for the first time in America) that justice is not done to Stravinsky's music, to the inventiveness, imagination and picturesqueness of his suite, by playing the music thus apart from its context. It stands this treatment better than "Petrouchka" no doubt, which was dismembered in the same way earlier in the season. It is of delightful fancifulness, boldly fantastic, capricious, ingenious, picturesque; and much of all these qualities undoubtedly persist in the music when there is no scene and no action for it to illustrate.

There was, finally, Mr. Rachmaninoff himself to play his second piano concerto; the one that is perhaps most familiar to this public. It is more immediately appealing than the third and Mr. Rachmaninoff played it most persuasively, most beautifully. It gained much admiration.