

Russian Music Vies With Wagnerian Scores for Favor

**Damrosch Selects Former
for Historical Concert and
Philharmonic Uses Ex-
cerpts of German's Dramas**

By H. E. Krehbiel

Russian and Wagnerian programs are trump cards in the concert game this season, and have been played over and over again, especially the latter. Mr. Walter-Damrosch, with his Symphony Society Orchestra, reached the former yesterday afternoon in his historical series at Carnegie Hall, and Mr. Strinsky, with the Philharmonic Orchestra, repeated a lot of excerpts from the Wagnerian dramas in the evening.

What artistic significance the two incidents had with relation to the question now much discussed as to how "musical" New York really is might detain us for a space, but we fear the discussion would become unduly prolonged and lead to nothing at the end. Perhaps the best summing-up of the situation is that which is suggested by a paraphrase of Lincoln's saying: "For a people that like that kind of music that's the kind of music they like."

This does not in any way reflect upon the music of yesterday's programs, or necessarily upon the taste of the public. It was good music. Some of that in the afternoon—the excerpts from Stravinsky's "The Fire Bird," for instance—would have had more meaning and therefore more beauty (characteristic beauty, that is) if it had been accompanied by the pantomime of which it is a part. So probably to seasoned Wagnerites there may have been left longings for words and action and scenery by the excerpts from Wagner's dramas.

But the charm of Russian music, which has been beneficial for years, is still upon us, and the spell of Wagner is unbroken, despite (or because) he has been all but banished from our lyric theaters.

Mr. Damrosch's program omitted the music of one great Russian (speaking nationally rather than racially), but for that no apology was necessary. Rubinstein, in a pathetically cynical, humorous remark about himself and his music, set down the best characterization of himself when he said that the Russians called him a German, the Germans a Russian, the Jews a Christian, the Christians a Jew, the classicists a romanticist and the romanticists a classicist.

Years ago, when this reviewer spoke of the ineffectual efforts of Dudley Buck, whom he thought essentially a composer for the church, to be dramatic, Mr. Buck good-humoredly quoted a Boston critic to the contrary and added the comment: "Issachar is a strong ass between two harden!"

In this respect, at least, Mr. Buck may have resembled Rubinstein. Mr. Damrosch made no unpardonable mistake in omitting Rubinstein's music from his scheme. He gave his audience the inevitable (but monumental) melody of the Volga bargemen, though in Glazounoff's setting, not Stravinsky's, as the subject of Rimsky-Korsakoff's overture to "Ruslan and Ludmilla," Tchaikovsky's "Tempest" (though Tchaikovsky has been resented by the Russian revolutionaries), fragments of Rimsky-Korsakoff's "Scheherazade" and Stravinsky's "Fire Bird" and Rachmaninoff's second pianoforte concerto.

The last number, of which the solo part was played by the composer, was the crowning sheaf of the Russian gleaming. Better than any other living Slavic composer, Rachmaninoff represents the best of Russian musical art to-day.