

## MUSIC

By RICHARD ALDRICH.

## The Philharmonic Society.

There was a question whether Fritz Kreisler would be able to play with the Philharmonic Society at its concert in Carnegie Hall last evening, as announced. He was ill in the morning and unable to be present at the rehearsal. He played in the evening without once fighting the indisposition which threatened him.

There was little or no evidence of it, however, in his performance. He played Mozart's concerto in D, finely satisfying the spirit's urgency that belongs to the music, the swiftness and grace, with a delicate firmness of rhythm and with a rich and vibrant tone. It was a performance of much beauty and was heartily appreciated.

Mr. Mengelberg began the program with Bach's suite in E minor, in which he conducted at the harpsichord, as was the custom in Bach's time, when the harpsichord was an invariable member of the orchestra. The harpsichord was on this occasion represented by a modified grand piano intended to imitate the harpsichord tone, which it did with only partial success in getting away from the characteristic tone of the piano.

The performance of Bach's orchestral works always presents problems to the modern conductor. There is, chiefly, the problem of balance. Bach wrote for, or at least had at his disposal, an orchestra of fifteen or sixteen men. In this case the flutes have a distinctive part that would be lost among the tones of the sixty-six stringed instruments that are included in the Philharmonic orchestra, all of which played last evening. Mr. Mengelberg sought to rectify this balance by giving the flute part to eight flutes. This was to a considerable degree efficacious, but not entirely so. In the last movement, Esprit, all the flutes played, but only half the violins.

There was great vigor, firm modeling of the phrasing and distinct strength in the orchestra's performance; there was little light and shade, no nuance of dynamics, and this was, of course, intentional on Mr. Mengelberg's part. Whether the true effect of Bach's music might not have been more characteristically rendered by greater variety in this respect may be questioned.

The program contained also Beethoven's first symphony, played by that strange faculty which purveys orchestral conductors a few days before by Mr. Lamorch and Weber's chamber concerto. The conducting of the symphony was highly elaborated, perfectly balanced, finely finished and of beautiful tone, and again the performance of it seemed worth while, though probably no more of this particular symphony would be required by the New York public this season.

Mr. Lamorch's program for the New York Symphony Orchestra's concert in Carnegie Hall comprised two of Respighi's arrangements of sixteenth century Italian dances, out of the set of four originally announced. César Franck's symphony, a new fantasia for strings by Vaughn Williams on a tune by Thomas Tallis and Rachmaninoff's first piano concerto, played by the composer.

Respighi's arrangements are charming, made with taste and skill to fit them for modern ears as heard from the modern orchestra and not destructive of the essential quality of the old music. Mr. Toscanini played them here with his Italian orchestra, and Mr. Lamorch had given them in his "Historical" series last season.

The fantasia by Vaughn Williams is based on a tune written by Tallis in the sixteenth century for Archbishop Parker's metrical psalter. Tallis was one of the most distinguished of the English ecclesiastical composers and one of the most dexterous conformers to the faith, Protestant or Catholic, that happened to be uppermost. This tune is evidently a product of one of his Protestant moments. It is purely medieval in character and, as the program annotator, justly observes, does not strike modern ears as "raging and roughly braying," as it was called in the book for which it was written. But these characteristics were traditionally assigned to the mode itself.

Mr. Williams has carried out his fantasia quite in the mood of the tune, which strikes modern ears as very dignified, not to say gloomy and depressing. The music is skillfully written for the string orchestra, with an effective employment of the different timbres. And it is in its way imaginative, interesting and impressive up to a certain point, but Mr. Williams is so entranced with the evolution of his fancy that he forgets to stop before the listening ear is satisfied with the gravity and severe decorum of the music. It was well played with a great richness of dark tone.

The symphony received a vigorous and effective interpretation, and Mr. Rachmaninoff played his concerto with his accustomed skill. Both the concerto and his performance of it are now among the more familiar incidents of a season's music.