Glinka, Mikhail Ivanovich (1804 – 1857)

Russian composer. He broke away from the prevailing Italian influence and turned to Russian folk music as the inspiration for his opera *A Life for the Tsar* (originally *Ivan Susanin*, 1836). His later works include the opera *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (1842) and the instrumental fantasia *Kamarinskaya* (1848). He is often regarded as the founder of Russian music, exerting a strong influence on two generations of composers, most notably Mussorgsky, Tchaikovsky, and Stravinsky.

The son of a wealthy landowner, Glinka was born on his father's estate at Novospasskoye. He was sent to school in St Petersburg 1817–22. He picked up lessons casually, including some piano lessons from John Field, and also studied violin and theory. At his father's wish he worked in the Ministry of Communications 1824–28, but he gave it up, not being obliged to earn a living and wishing to devote himself to music. He visited Italy 1830–33, where he had lessons from Francesco Basili in Milan, then Vienna, Austria, and lastly Berlin, Germany, where he studied under Siegfried Dehn. On his father's death he returned to Russia, settled in St Petersburg, and married in 1835. There he worked at *A Life for the Tsar* and succeeded in having it produced in 1836; it was an immediate success, combining nationalist musical elements with a patriotic tale composed at a time of unrest. *Ruslan and Lyudmila* was delayed by domestic troubles and the separation from his wife in 1841, and was produced in 1842. In 1844 he visited Paris, France, and Spain, in 1848 Warsaw, Poland, and France again in 1852–54. It was during a visit to Berlin, 1856–57, that he died.

Glinka freed Russian opera from German and Italian influences and at the same time introduced harmonic innovations that were to bear fruit in the work of nearly all the later nationalist Russian composers. He wrote a vast amount of music for one who was trained so late, including over 80 songs, and died comparatively early.

**Works**

**Stage** operas *A Life for the Tsar* (formerly *Ivan Susanin*, 1836) and *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (1842); incidental music to Count Kukolnik's *Prince Kholmsky*.

**Orchestral** *Jota aragonesa (Capriccio brillante)*, *A Night in Madrid* (1851), *Kamarinskaya* (1848), *Valse-Fantaisie*.

**Chamber** string quartet in F major; trio for clarinet, bassoon, and piano; sextet for piano and strings.

**Other** about 40 piano pieces; Polish hymn and *Memorial Cantata* for chorus; about 85 songs; some vocal duets and quartets.

**quotations**

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