

generous salary dur- long will we get blues and probably in increasing numbers.
By JOHN K. SHERMAN: *Minneapolis Star Journal Dec 1-1945*

Schoenberg Throws Critic ---a True Confession

THE MUCH-DREADED Schoenberg violin concerto was played last night in Northrop auditorium, and so far as I was able to learn, no one passed out, succumbed to a poplexy or needed Swedish massage treatment. That doesn't mean the audience accepted it with greedy



Krasner

alacrity, or besieged Manager Arthur Gaines for a repeat performance.

When I was a boy, and even in my early 20's, I loathed roquefort cheese. To me its flavor was unnatural and perverse; it tasted like the lubricant of an old wheel on an old farm wagon. Since that time I've learned gradually to like roquefort cheese and its curiously rusty-rancid flavor, and now I like nothing better than a dab of it on a piece of celery.

Maybe Schoenberg and his 12-tone music might grow on one like roquefort cheese; I don't know. Maybe he's an acquired taste. Maybe if we heard more Schoenberg we'd finally get to crave a little bit of atonalism every Friday night. It's a horrible thought.

For the record, Louis Krasner, concertmaster; Dimitri Mitropoulos, conductor, and the Minneapolis Symphony orchestra gave a performance of this tortured and cerebral work that was a feat, no less—a feat in memorization, in mastery of the foulest difficulties imaginable, in sheer perfection of execution.

And yet I'd be a hypocrite if I didn't say I have an awful time liking Schoenberg, much less understanding him. (They say only 20 persons in the world understand his violin concerto. I suspect that if I were one of the 20 I'd know it, wouldn't I? Or at least be notified?) The concerto just draws no graph in my mind; I hunt for a peg or an anchorage of some kind, but it always eludes me, like in a nightmare. The music sounds as if it were written by a Martian struggling to adapt himself to the earth's musical idiom.

I can't help but feel, in my naive way, that Schoenberg and

his disciples deliberately manacle themselves when they submit to the iron rule of atonalism and that 12-tone row. It must be like writing music in a strait-jacket. The process seems a negation, for you not only spurn key and tonality, but in a composition like this you seem to spurn sustained line and rhythm and the full resources of the medium you're using—the orchestra.

If this music is vital, why does it sound so monotonous, so gray, so airless? Why is Schoenberg so unnecessarily cruel to the violin soloist, who needs six fingers on each hand? (I don't know when Krasner has had time to grow those two extra fingers; he's been so busy.) And is it illegal for atonalists to strive, just a littel bit, for communication between their music and the reasonably intelligent listener? Or do they merely write for each other, and nod knowingly in the direction of posterity and say, "My time will come"?

I listened with furious concentration to the concerto. I worked at it. I liked parts of it. I felt the surging originality behind it, and the logic too. I didn't follow it. I got a few prickles in the last movement. But I was like a four-year-old listening to Brahms, and here I am, a grown man. Something wrong somewhere. Maybe what this paper needs is a department of atonalism criticism.

I will say this: that Brahms Second Symphony sounded so easy and fatuous after the Schoenberg, I nearly fell asleep.