

MUSIC

By VIRGIL THOMSON

PHILHARMONIC-SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA.
 Dimitri Mitropoulos, conductor, concert last night in Carnegie Hall. Soloists, Joseph Szigetli, violinist. The program:
 Overture to "The Marriage of Figaro".....Mozart
 Five Orchestral Pieces.....Schoenberg
 Symphony in E flat, No. 3 ("Rhenish").....Schumann
 Violin Concerto in D major.....Brahms

Arnold Schoenberg



Whose Five Pieces were played by the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra last night

In Waltz Time

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG'S Five Orchestral Pieces, which Dimitri Mitropoulos conducted at last night's concert of the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra in Carnegie Hall, were written in 1909, nearly forty years ago. Previously they have been played in New York, I believe one and three-fifths times. They are among the more celebrated works of our century, and yet few musicians or music lovers have heard them. The present writer, though the owner of a printed orchestral for twenty-five years, listened to them last night with virgin ears. Having followed the performance score in hand, he is able to certify that Mr. Mitropoulos and the Philharmonic boys read them to perfection and faithfully. His opinion of the work, by the way, is that it deserves every bit of its world-wide prestige and none of its world-wide neglect.

The orchestral sound of the work is derived from French Impressionism in general and from the music of Debussy in particular. The orchestra is delicate, coloristic and clean, at no point emphatic or demagogic. There is not in it one doubling of a note for purposes of weight. Harmonically it is consistently dissonant and atonal, though there is no twelve-tone row in it. Contrapuntally and rhythmically the texture resembles that of the Brahms Intermezzi, though it offers a more advanced state of the technique.

That technique tends toward fragmentation of the musical material by rhythmic and contrapuntal device. Schoenberg here carries it close to the state of ultimate pulverization that his pupil Anton Webern attained fifteen years later. Rhythmic contradictions, the gasping, almost fainting utterance of intense emotion in short phrases conventional of curve, the constant chromatic character of these phrases—all this is out of Brahms, though the harmony is far harsher and the sound of it all, orchestrally speaking, is French.

The expressive character of the Five Pieces is deeply sentimental, in spite of a touch (and more) of irony. Four of the five are in triple time. Composed, as they are, almost wholly of phrases consecrated by Vienna to waltz usage, your reviewer is inclined to consider them a sort of apotheosis of the waltz. He realizes, however, that their waltz structure is no obvious or perhaps even consciously intended communication. All the same, except for the one called "The Changing Chord" (in reality an unchanging one), which is an essay in

pure orchestration, he finds them all evocative of waltz moods and waltz textures, an etherealization of a theme that is at bottom just good old Vienna. He also suspects that in another decade they may be understood by all as something like that.

The rest of the program was carefully executed, a little dry, perhaps, but very neat, very pretty as workmanship and only occasionally a bit loud.