

NEW FRIENDS OFFER SCHOENBERG HONOR

Rose Bampton and Erich Kahn
Aid in Stefan George Cycle
to Mark Birthday

By OLIN DOWNES

The New Friends of Music began the program of their late afternoon concert of chamber music yesterday at Town Hall with the Stefan George cycle of the Schoenberg songs, Op. 15, "Das Buch der Haengenden Gaerten," in honor of the composer's seventy-fifth birthday. This incident of recognition was particularly significant, since it was with the George lieder and other works of the first decade of this century, such as the piano pieces, that Schoenberg entered upon his atonal period.

Here is dismissal of tonality as it had been conceived up to that time; the "aphoristic brevity" of style, the elapses of development in the treatment of the thematic fragments, and here, all-ready, is the approach to the "sprechstimme" intervallic treatment of the voice.

All this, and much more, has been explained and dilated upon at great length by the Schoenberg devotees and extolled rapturously by them with every fresh manifestation of his art.

A further birthday observance, worthy of the highest praise: the songs were wonderfully done, first of all by Erich Kahn at the piano, and hardly less by Rose Bampton. Merely to achieve correct intonation with these songs is an achievement. Miss Bampton had not learned them, she had absorbed them, and one believes that the composer would have found little to improve in her interpretation.

Saying all and which, this writer can only state his personal opinion that the George lieder, no doubt a most sincere departure of the composer, do not make the grade as music, do not transfigure the text in a tonal language which adds to its meaning and enhances its communication.

Schoenberg's opus was followed by the Mozart Serenade, K. 375, for wind octet, conducted by Ignace Strasfogel and performed by a group of players who were both artists and virtuosos. They were Ralph Gomberg and Jerome Roth, oboes; Clark Brady Jr. and Wallace Shapiro, clarinets; Fred E. Klein and Daniel Cowan, horns; Leonard Sharrow and Bernard H. Garfield, bassoons.

It would be platitudinous to dwell upon the delectable simplicity, perfect proportion and astonishingly inspired instrumentation of this work. It is not one of Mozart's grandeurs; it is simply genius. The summit of the score is certainly the slow movement, but it is all winged and radiant.

Mr. Strasfogel conducted this music in first-class style, without a superfluous gesture but with the most scrupulous observance of accent and nuance, phrasing and balances. One would say that all conductors are expected to do this. They are, but it is seldom done as Mr. Strasfogel accomplished it yesterday. His unassuming authority and effectiveness, and his excellent taste, were in evidence in all the music. He secured their best from his collaborators, to the glory of music and Mozart.