

**E** **SCHOENBERG SUITE  
IN PREMIERE HERE**

Played by the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall.

**E** **TWO MOVEMENTS PLEASE**

On the Program With Wagner's 'Lohengrin' Prelude and Tchaikovsky Symphony.

By OLIN DOWNES.

If ever arid intellectualism and emptiness were put on the spot and exposed for the useless things that they are, this occurred at the Philharmonic-Symphony concert directed by Otto Klemperer last night in Carnegie Hall when Arnold Schoenberg's new "Suite for String Orchestra" was given its first New York performance. The music, which professes to be in the classic vein, and which is a return by Schoenberg from the method of atonality to the intervals and harmonic relations of established scales, was mercilessly exposed in its paucity. For it was preceded by the miracle of Wagner's "Lohengrin" Prelude and followed by the sensuous song and the throbbing humanity of Tchaikovsky's Fifth symphony. In this environment the Schoenberg music was mercilessly revealed, a pale monument to lifeless theory.

One had expected more of this music. The suite was evidently intended by Schoenberg as an excursion into classic territory, in the simpler and more melodic vein. Possibly because of the color and the cerulean transparency of the Wagner music which had preceded, the opening measures had a particularly depressing effect upon the ear. They are thickly and mud-dily written. The thematic material, plausibly diatonic, is commonplace. There is affectation of the old sturdy manner, and thereafter mordant counterpoint. But it is an empty and unbeautiful exhibition. A fatigued person might thus make a show of gymnastics. One! Two! Three! Four! Up go the arms and down go the legs, up go the legs and down go the arms. It is hollow; it is "ersatz." Ersatz music, music on and of paper!

Two movements more agreeable than the others, and therefore a pleasant surprise to the audience, were the Gavotte and Gigue. The Gavotte is lively and plausibly fashioned, with a pseudo Viennese flavor and a drone bass accompaniment in the middle part. The Gigue starts out with a four-note figure and makes use of a sort of hunting motive in 12-8 time, as many old giges did. And it doesn't cost a cent more, either. The net effect of this music would have been self-condemnatory, even if it had not come between the fertile and creative expressions of Wagner and Tchaikovsky.

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If they served to emphasize the artificiality of Schoenberg, Schoenberg served to heighten the effect of their beauty, potency and feeling. We hear the Lohengrin Prelude so often that we forget it is one of the miracles of all music. None but Wagner could have done it, and Wagner only did it once. Among his sublime pages it remains entirely unique, spun out of the invisible stuff of the spirit, and of a special radiance that is without compare in orchestral literature. The listener is spellbound by interweaving themes which follow a special law of organic development, while a nimbus of orchestral sonorities envelop the theme as a luminous mist might envelop and protect from impious eyes the Grail. Here is one of the incredible demonstrations of Wagner's power of transmuting a poetical image into tone. And they say music has no association with ideas outside itself! What of this image of descent and return of the Grail to the skies?

The performance of Schoenberg's suite was very painstaking and comprehending. Undoubtedly it said everything that was to be said for the composition. For Wagner's Prelude a more glamorous edgeless tone, and subtler blending of choirs, would have served, though the interpretation was devout and dramatic. The performance of the Tchaikovsky's symphony, of course, excited the audience. But Tchaikovsky deserved better from Mr. Klemperer, who more than once was unduly hasty, noisy, frenetic, tearing passion to tatters. For this is more than sound and fury, or mere Russian hysteria. The finale alone, the one majestic and victorious gesture to be discovered in Tchaikovsky's symphonic music, has a grandeur and a wild triumph at moments suggestive of Beethoven. Now and again there was a fine plasticity, poetry and irresistible emotional sweep, required by the music. Then Mr. Klemperer, victim of his own dramatic temperament, would fly off the track, with disaster to the proportions of the symphony.

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