

Philharmonic Season ¹⁹³⁸ Concluded

By RICHARD D. SAUNDERS

The Philharmonic Orchestra season came to an end Saturday night with the final concert of the Brahms cycle, conducted by Otto Klemperer, attracting a responsive audience to the Philharmonic Auditorium. At the conclusion, conductor and performers were accorded a rousing ovation.

Interest largely centered in the first performance of the g-minor Quartet for piano and strings, which Arnold Schoenberg has arranged for full orchestra. The result is to all intents and purposes a fifth symphony by Brahms, thematically antedating the first symphony, and instrumentally projected into the decade after the composer's demise.

Schoenberg did not confine his attentions to a mere orchestration of the piano part, but balanced proportionately throughout with every care. The score seemed rather too thick in some places, notably in the final Rondo, though Klemperer's reading was there so ponderous that the movement might fare better under more gracious handling. The instrumental coloring was undeniably fresher and stronger than Brahms might have used, but as a whole the revision was treated with great sympathy and understanding.

The opening Allegro held much fire and energy in its exposition, its melodic richness showing to advantage in the orchestral version. The deftness of the Intermezzo, on the other hand, was more heavy when translated into instrumental terms. The impressive breadth and sweep of the Andante con moto were finely expounded, delivered with much intensity, and developed with almost operatic opulence to a peak of sonority. The Gypsy spirit of the final "Rondo alla Zingarese" was admirably retained in the strings. Percussive effects included an appropriate tambourine and a less suitable xylophone, which is a poor substitute for the Romany cembalom.

However, this arrangement adds another work of symphonic proportions to the Brahms category, and it will without doubt make its way into formal programs of the future. It will sound better when familiarity leads us to hear it for its own sake, and not merely compare it with the chamber work original.

The program began with the seldom heard second Serenade (Op. 16) for small orchestra, wherein Brahms omits the violins, as in the first movement of his requiem. The five movements were presented with considerable plasticity. Most enjoyable, as well as most distinctive, was the slow movement.

In conclusion was an admirable reading of the Fourth Symphony, with its expressive interweaving of sad and gay moments and rich tapestry of counterpoint.