

MUSIC

By VIRGIL THOMSON

Edward Steuermann



Who appeared as piano soloist with NBC Symphony yesterday

NBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, Leopold Stokowski, concert broadcast from Studio 8 H. Radio City yesterday afternoon with Edward Steuermann as piano soloist. The program: Tu mancam a tormentarmi. Cestl-Stokowski Unfinished Symphony.....Schubert Piano Concerto, Op. 42 (first performance).....Schoenberg

Real Modern Music

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG'S Piano Concerto, which received its first performance anywhere yesterday afternoon by the N. B. C. Symphony Orchestra, Leopold Stokowski conducting and Eduard Steuermann playing the solo part, is the first original work for large orchestra by this master to be heard in New York since quite a long time back. For many of our young music lovers it is no doubt their first hearing of any orchestral work of its kind. One can not be too grateful to Mr. Stokowski for giving himself the trouble to prepare it and for paying his radio listeners the compliment of presuming their interest. It is an honor paid not only to one of the great living masters of music but to the American public as well; and the General Motors Corporation, which sponsored the broadcast, should be proud of the event.

The piece, which lasts a shade under twenty minutes, consists of four sections neatly sewn together and played without pause—a waltz, a scherzo, an adagio and a rondo. All are based on a single theme, though there is considerable development of secondary material in the scherzo. The musical syntax is that commonly known as the twelve-tone system, which is to say that the employment of dissonance is integral rather than ornamental. The expression of the work is romantic and deeply sentimental, as is Schoenberg's custom and as is the best modern Viennese tradition.

The instrumentation is characteristic, too, of its author. It is delicate and scattered. The music hops around from one instrument to another all the time. It sounds like chamber music for a hundred players. There is plenty of melody but no massing of instruments on any single line for giving the melody emphasis, as is customary in oratorical symphonic writing. The work is not oratorical, anyway. It is poetical and reflective. And it builds up its moments of emphasis by rhythmic device and contrapuntal complication, very much as old Sebastian Bach was wont to do. Its inspiration and its communication are lyrical, intimate, thoughtful, sweet and sometimes witty, like good private talk. At no point is there grandiloquence or theater. The work derives much of its impressiveness

from its avoidance of all attempt to impress us by force.

Its great beauty is derived partly from the extreme delicacy and variety of its instrumentation and partly from the consistency of its harmonic structure (a result of its systematic observance of the twelve-tone syntax). Its particular combination of lyric freedom and figurational fancy with the strictest tonal logic places it high among the works of this greatest among the living Viennese masters (resident now in Hollywood) and high among the musical achievements of our century. With the increasing conservatism of contemporary composers about matters harmonic, many of our young people have never really heard much modern music. Radical and thorough-going modern music, I mean. It is too seldom performed. Well, here is a piece of it and a very fine one, a beautiful and original work that is really thought through and that doesn't sound like anything else.

Edward Steuermann played the piano part with all delicacy and love. There isn't much in it to show off with (only two brief and fragmentary cadenzas, and they are not written for brilliance), but the piano is there all the time. It weaves in and out rather in chamber style, and Mr. Steuermann never overplayed it or underplayed it. Everybody gave his serious best to this serious and far from easy work. One came away almost not minding that it had been preceded by the inexcusably long and dull commercial plug that the N. B. C. hours sacrifice to commercial sponsorship.

HOLLYWOOD NEWS

and NEW YORK SCREEN NOTES

Miss Lake in "Girls' Town"

From the Herald Tribune Bureau  
HOLLYWOOD, Feb. 6.—Veronica Lake will be starred opposite Fred MacMurray in "Girls' Town," the story of a war-time industrial town where Mr. MacMurray is the overseer of a plant employing only girl workers. The picture will be made by Paramount as a musical and the studio is planning to cast five other top feminine stars in the picture. Production will begin after Miss Lake completes her current role in "Bring on the

Five First-Rate

Five new picture films in the West series

Francis X. Bushman, actor, will return to picture to portray Bernard M. "Wilson," the biography of Woodrow Wilson which Zanuck has in production at Twentieth Century. The man retired from the service several years ago and has been engaged in

Dorothy Moore, after a vacation in the Arizona desert, is scheduled to appear in the first picture of the "Tales of the Desert" series directed for

Julius and Ethel

Plays 'Well' Julius and Ethel, devoted Clavichord Chamber afternoons includes a first by Goldstein, dispersed marks for the were intended to whom but will

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