

## SZIGETI IS SOLOIST FOR PHILHARMONIC

Violinist Is Heard in Concerto by Brahms as Mitropoulos Leads at Carnegie Hall

By OLIN DOWNES

The performances given under Dimitri Mitropoulos by the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra last night in Carnegie Hall were exciting and challenging and uneven. But he had a program and a soloist to reckon with. The soloist was Joseph Szigeti, playing the Brahms violin concerto. Sandwiched between the joyous overture to the "Marriage of Figaro," and the fine careless rapture of the youthful Schumann's "Rhenish Symphony" came the Five Pieces for Orchestra of Arnold Schoenberg, which have not been heard here, we believe, for a quarter of a century or more, and which, with arresting modernity, furnished at least a sharp seasoning to a dish which had a good deal of unleavened tonality in the keys of E flat and D major.

The program annotator gave us plentiful quotes about Schoenberg and his art and even the dates of first European performances, but we, who needed them, did not discover in any part of his learned disquisition the time of the first performance of these extraordinary pieces in New York. We heard them when Karl Muck presented them with the Boston Symphony in Boston in December of 1914. The pieces were then wholly incomprehensible and unacceptable. Now thirty-four years have passed; Schoenberg has proceeded more radically in later scores than he did then. Nevertheless, the "Five Pieces," whether one liked them or not, sounded arrestingly fresh and audacious last night. It compelled close attention, and it communicated mood. It is in fact hyper-emotional music, very intense and compressed. And neurotic into the bargain.

When the "Five Pieces" were first performed in Vienna and in London they had no titles. It was Schoenberg himself who provided titles for the second London performance, which he conducted, in 1914. This seems a little disingenuous, since Schoenberg's attitude, more or less consistently maintained, is that of the artist who does not attempt to secure by any compromise the approval of the public. We may, however, take the composer's explanation of the moods of the music as authentic. His titles are "Presentiments," "The Past," "The Changing Chord," "Peripeteia"—which some have translated as "Denouement" and "The obligato recitative."

### Essentially Harmonic Music

Also interesting is the fact that this is essentially harmonic music—music often highly dissonant, but music fundamentally of chord-structure, and not merely of contrapuntal lines, as "melodies," running amuck without responsibility to chord or key. This is not the same as Schoenberg's music anarchic of tonality, and which came later.

The music can be called, without attempt to alarm, decadent if not morbid. There is in the first piece a certain nightmarishness. There are tonal vistas of unearthly, or let us say a sun-less nature. In stages there is an intense if phosphorescent beauty. The pieces are strikingly scored for an immense orchestra of enormously expanded brass, wood and percussion groups. These many instruments are used for purposes of precision and often of great delicacy, not for bulk or mere impact of tone. The "changing chord" is a piece of opalescent tints, and subtle shifting modulations that cluster about a very few tones, repeatedly or gradually changed in one or another constituent element of the slowly evolving chord.

### Still Is Bold Music

It is bold music today. How much bolder in the year 1909 of its composition! We are no partisan of Schoenberg—on the contrary. Just the same, this is a striking score, in structure—the first piece has the elements of a fugue—in the directness, economy, concentration of the style and the strange coloring. The first and the last pieces we rate lower than the middle three. And doubt if we care to live with any of them, or with a kind of art which we rate as a

## Emergency to Be Met

Therapeutics, the art and science of healing, is employed in hundreds of ways in New York's eighty-six voluntary hospitals. Tetanus, tumor, thyroid trouble, tuberculosis and tonsillitis are only a few of the illnesses afflicting people unable to pay who are treated each year at the nonprofit institutions. Last year one out of seven persons living in this area received free or less-than-cost care.

The seventieth annual campaign of the United Hospital Fund seeks \$2,845,988, the operating deficits for 1947, to keep open the therapeutic doors. Unless the money is raised from public contributions, New York's high health standards will be seriously jeopardized. Significant rises of food and medical costs have incurred the deficit, which is the highest hospitals have faced in their seventy years of existence. New Yorkers are urged to give generously that the emergency may be met.

Contributions should be sent to the fund at 8 East Forty-first Street.

rather decadent flower of yesterday and not of today or tomorrow. It is incontrovertible that the Mitropoulos reading was magnificent, and that the music could hardly have been presented more graphically.

The other performance outstanding was that of the Brahms concerto, which got off to a somewhat nervous and breathless start, but evolved into one of the most virile and truly characteristic readings of the great score that we have heard in this city. The singing of the slow movement, with the oboe in the orchestra and with the wonderful and infrequent sensuous beauty of tone with which Mr. Szigeti injected it, stands out beyond any other moment of sheer interpretation of the evening. The rousing finale was the fitting climax, and one does not think of this as one person's performance, Mr. Mitropoulos was part and parcel of the achievement.

Mr. Mitropoulos' treatment of the Schumann symphony was curious. His finest movement here was unquestionably the impressionistic cathedral music of the fourth part. His last movement was the most interesting reading we have heard of a part of the symphony that customarily falls from the level of the preceding movements. His scherzo was way off the beam, being much too fast, in plain violation of the composer's mark, "sehr maessig." This was Schumann on a jag, reeling from tempo to tempo. The slow movement was hardly inappropriate. Here the dreaming poem, shyly confessing his passion, was seen in a lively flirtation with a frivolous muse.

At the end of the concert there was an ovation for Mr. Szigeti.