

ture, but it looks extraordinarily well by itself.

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"PIERROT LUNAIRE"

How posterity will regard Schönberg as a composer we cannot begin to perceive, certainly his place as a great teacher and a revolutionary thinker is assured. But homage must be paid to a man whom his own contemporaries can regard as great, a man who could reveal new worlds of sound and still worship the idols he seemed, if only temporarily, to have shattered. It was right, then, that the London Contemporary Music Centre should celebrate the seventy-fifth birthday of this eminent musician, and right that the relevant programme should include such works of his as can be viewed, through time's kindly agency, from a purely musical angle, without the distortion inevitably occasioned by unfamiliarity.

The audience at last night's concert was fortunate, for its part, in the executants of this programme. The *recitante* was a German, and so able to convey the verses' delicate shades of implication as a foreigner cannot; the instrumentalists were Italian, hailing from the Accademia Filarmonica Romana, and so, by a national characteristic, could bring a maximum of lyricism to the interpretation of music whose lyrical qualities are not easily laid bare. Mme. Maria Freund showed, in a superb performance of the melodramatic song-cycle *Pierrot Lunaire*, a wealth of artistry for her 73 years that few of her younger colleagues could hope to equal. She managed to blend speech and song in such a way that the resultant *Sprechgesang* seemed a wholly natural and aesthetically satisfying medium of expression. Thanks to her, too, the ghoulish, at times comical, morbidity of the poems achieved an ethereal intensity that vividly evoked sympathy for the luckless hero, moon-struck in an age and a clime far removed from his own sixteenth-century Italy (though Pierrot was, historically speaking, French by birth and emigrated to Italy much later than the poet Giraud appears to have believed).

For the rest, we were able to hear Schönberg's historic set of three piano pieces, op. 11, which marks his first break from tonality and the later set of six short, more immediately approachable because more lyrical, pieces. They were played with bravura and authority by Mr. Pietro Scarpini, who also directed the song-cycle. Dallapiccola's chaconne, intermezzo, and adagio for solo cello were interpreted with immense conviction by Mr. Pietro Grossi, whose musicianship is as notable as his technique is prodigious.