



Arnold Schoenberg

### *Happy Birthday!*

LOS ANGELES has ushered in her concert season this fall with a series of celebrations for Arnold Schoenberg who, on September 13th, was seventy-five years old. The birthday party itself was a program presented by the Los Angeles chapter of the International Society for Contemporary Music. On September 19th, Evenings on the Roof opened with a Schoenberg program and on October 27th the Philharmonic orchestra featured an Interlude and the Waldtaube song from the Gurrelieder on its opening program.

Except for two of the composer's earlier songs, sung by Scotte Sloan, baritone, the program of the birthday concert was made up entirely of compositions of recent years: the String Trio, played by Adolph Koldofsky, Cecil Figelski and Kurt Reher, the "Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte" in its original form for string quartet, reciter and piano, and a first performance of the new Fantasie for violin and piano, played by Adolph Koldofsky and Leonard Stein.

The new Fantasie, like the Trio, is in what might be termed Schoenberg's later style. The composer no longer limits himself to tone-rows. Having explored all tonal relations and come to terms with them, he uses what he needs to bring about his tremendous musical tensions or to carry forward and complete the musical structure which they create. Not that it is simple music. Schoenberg is not a simple man. But we suspect it to be great music. Adolph Koldofsky merges himself so completely with a composition as to create the impression that the music has played itself.

Another evening of outstanding performances was the "Evenings on the Roof" concert on the nineteenth of September. Here we heard Schoenberg of the "middle period", the Second String Quartet with soprano soloist, Olive Mae Beach; "Pierrot Lunaire", conducted by Ingolf Dahl and performed by Alice Mock, Lillian Steuber, Leonard Posella, Kalman Bloch, Guido Pettinari, Manuel Compinsky, Joseph Reilich and Edgar Lustgarten, and the Concerto for Violoncello played by Kurt Reher and Mario Di Tullio.

The audience will not soon forget the "Pierrot Lunaire" which they heard, with its subtle variance of pathos and humor, sentiment and vio-

# Speakin

lence. The "sprechstimme" of Alice Mock balanced with the melodic lines played by the instruments with the utmost delicacy and effectiveness. The words were sung in English. To the audience was given, in addition, a printed translation and adequate light for following it.

The whole musical world of Southern California was pretty well represented at both concerts. A hundred had to be turned away at the birthday concert. In the milling crowd around the patio of the Assistance League Theatre where the concert was given, we saw musicians from as far north as San Francisco. Schoenberg is loved and appreciated by the community of his adoption.

In 1933, when the Viennese composer had just arrived, this writer was a member of a class in analysis which he taught. We were curious about tone rows, of which we knew nothing, and we confess also to curiosity about a man who was regarded as the greatest iconoclast in all musical composition. We learned, presently, about tone rows, but chiefly as a by-product. Our teacher's first concern was with the basic principles of composition; the unchanging logic with which musical ideas must be assembled and expressed. We came away with a new set of critical values and a new awareness of what is eternal and what is merely passing in the matter of styles or mediums in any art. It is in the light of these permanent standards that Arnold Schoenberg wants his world to understand his music. If this, the desire of any sincere composer, has not been quite realized yet, at least this birthday demonstration should reassure him that the fulfillment is on its way.

—P. A.