

CONCERT AND RECITAL

'Manon Lescaut'

RADIO IN REVIEW

or a tennis court

Metropolitan Revives Puccini

Opera After 20 Years

By Francis

Notable Occasion

By Arthur Berger

A program that finally did proper justice to Arnold Schoenberg, whose seventy-fifth birthday is being observed these days with sporadic and not very significant gestures, was offered by the International Society for Contemporary Music last night at the Museum of Modern Art. With the revival of one of his masterly scores of the '20s and the brilliant co-operation of Dimitri Mitropoulos as conductor and then pianist, it attracted a distinguished and capacity audience, and turned out to be a thoroughly notable occasion.

Schoenberg's Serenade, Op. 24, of 1923 is for the unusual combination of clarinet and bass-clarinet, mandolin and guitar, three strings and (for the fourth movement) baritone. It was not, as the program stated, a first New York performance, but having been unjustifiably neglected here since the 'twenties, and being exceptionally difficult to execute, it was enough of a rarity in a splendid reading to create quite a stir. It belongs to what I have always considered the happiest and most inspired period of its composer, namely, the period just before and during the early years of the schematization of the twelve-tone technique which was to come with the following opus, the fine Suite for piano. The "tone-row" is already used in the Serenade, but not the rigorous "technique" subsequently attached to its deployment. As in the Suite, however, the twelve-tones are kept somewhat within bounds of symmetrical forms of the classical suite—march, minuet, aria, for example. This is all to the good, and helps Schoenberg achieve the economy he has sought so strongly through admirable transparency of texture. The Serenade has something in common with Stravinsky's "History of a Soldier" (1918) in its unpredictable choice of instruments and in imaginative distortions of march and waltz rhythms. The upturned phrases of the Viennese waltz, incidentally, never quite leave Schoenberg, even in his march.

If the Serenade just precedes the twelve-tone technique, the "Ode to Napoleon," the other work heard last night, represents, by contrary, one of his recent departures from it, allowing even for generous inclusion of traditional major chords. Heard for the first time here in its original form as piano quintet, it had the advantage of a recitation of the Byron text by Adolph Anderson that did not adhere too closely to Schoenberg's prescribed inflections—inflections that suggest the crudities of a beginning elocution pupil.

tion even if it did not achieve genuine distinction. His feeling for style is generally well-grounded and only failed him completely

Debussy's "Poissons d'or" received by Mr. Rumor master's gold-fishes serves more like sea than that day glass be

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