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Promenade Concert

TRIUMPH FOR THE VIOLIN

TIBOR VARGA'S SCHOENBERG

By MARTIN COOPER

WHEN Sir Eugene Goossens conducted the second half of the BBC Symphony Orchestra's concert at the Albert Hall last night he was celebrating the 50th anniversary of his first appearance as a conductor at the "Proms."

In 1911 he directed a piece of his own, but last night he was entrusted with Schoenberg's formidably difficult violin concerto.

Here the solo part, which never fails to preserve, though in a new guise, the twin character of the violin as a melody-bearing and decorative instrument, is even more prominent and organic than in most concertos, and Tibor Varga's full, secure tone and effortless technical mastery of the often hair-raising difficulties gave the performance its character.

The orchestral detail of the score is extremely intricate and poses continual problems of balance as well as demanding a very wide range of colour.

DELICATE ORNAMENTATION

If some of the detail was insufficiently clear, Sir Eugene was successful in the strict work of accompaniment and never allowed the orchestra to obscure the soloist's line or the delicate ornamentation which is a prominent feature of the second movement.

This concerto represents the extreme refinement of the traditional language of Western European music in its most intellectual form, a process started in the field of sonority by Debussy, whose "La Mer" ended the programme.

Its performance hardly suggested the extraordinary originality of Debussy's colour schemes. For the play of waves in the second movement Sir Eugene set a tempo which too often resulted in an uncomfortable scramble for the woodwind.