

# TOUT

# Ensemble



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## IN THIS ISSUE:

Notes on the  
"Gurrelieder"

by ARNOLD SCHONBERG  
PAGE 1

Mr. Titus Plans  
Organ Recitals  
at  
Christ Church

PAGE 3

Brass Ensemble  
to  
Premiere Work  
by  
C. Hugo Grimm

PAGE 3

Mrs. Leighton Gives  
First Symphony Lecture

PAGE 3

"Opera in English"

by FAITH EYMAN  
PAGE 3

Meet Your Faculty:  
Sketches of

Karol Liszniewski  
Julian Pulikowski  
and  
Rachel Telford

PAGE 2

An Editorial:

"For the Dolcezza et  
Dissonanza . . .

PAGE 3

Once Over Lightly  
by BEEBEE

PAGE 4

Sport News

PAGE 4

## Notes on the GURRELIEDER

By ARNOLD SCHONBERG

(Written especially for the Conservatory's student publication, TOUT ENSEMBLE)

*On account of the immense apparatus required (five singing soloists, a speaker, chorus of 500, and an augmented orchestra) and the expense involved, GURRELIEDER is seldom performed in full. Mr. Frederic Yeiser, the former Enquirer music critic, summed up the importance of everyone hearing the Cincinnati performances on February 2 and 3, in a letter to the students of C.C.M., in which he wrote: "An opportunity of hearing it does not present itself more than once or twice in the lifetime of a music-lover."—THE EDITOR.*

In 1910 the Viennese "Verein für Kunst und Kultur" (Society for Art and Culture) arranged a concert, giving me the opportunity to introduce, as a first performance, the "Fifteen Songs of the Hanging Gardens," Op. 15, and the "Three Piano Pieces," Op. 11.

Having experienced hisses, insulting criticism and even riots for works of my first period, including "Transfigured Night," the first and second Quartets, Op. 7 and Op. 10, and the first "Kammersymphonie," Op. 9, I was, of course afraid, my opponents might have forgotten that "Transfigured Night" had since become a success. The attitude of the audience had changed; a concert of mine was even favorably accepted. Only the critics still remained negative. Thus I wondered what reaction this extreme turn of style might provoke.

In order to prevent at least those who believed in me from too early "abandoning the sinking ship," I decided to present the first part of the Gurrelieder in this same concert. Why I added a work so contrasting in style, demanded an explanation which I furnished by a "Vorwort" (preface) printed on the first page of the program, excerpts of which follow here:

"I have composed the Gurrelieder around 1900, but the George Songs and the Piano Pieces in 1908. The evolution of style is justified by the interval of time that lies between

their creation. However, to join works of such differences in one program requests an explanation."

Discussing thereafter what forces of imagination and expression had forced me to this new style, I concluded:

"This is why by presenting now the first part of the Gurrelieder I want to remind my friends that also this work 'was not appreciated at the time of its creation.' (But today, thanks to the performances in small circles by Alexander von Zemlinsky, my friend and guide, it has won the

The most striking consequence of this success was the demand of many people to hear the whole work with orchestra and chorus. And I was besieged with questions why I had stopped orchestrating. Even Universal-Edition's president, Mr. Emil Hertzka appeared and offered me a contract for the publication of the work.

I gave in.

I had not finished the score for these reasons. One: I had become discouraged by the tremendous obstacle of ever having this work performed. The difficulties for singers, orchestra, choruses; the fees for all the participants and all the other expenses seemed insurpassably forbidding.

Two: Even more than that, it was the necessity to earn a living, which forced me to spend all my time for the work providing such money. I have established that the actual time for the composing had not required much more than five months. About the same was necessary for the orchestration. Yet, between 1900 and 1903 I was prevented from finishing the score because I had to orchestrate operas and operettas of people who were not able to write for orchestra. I then wrote about 6,000 pages of orchestral scores—among them to the music of some well-known composers.

Three: Also during this time my style had changed. My destiny, internal and external influences had driven me on the road of exploration. I was just beginning to move on many round-about ways toward new goals of expression, formulation and elaboration. I had already composed a few works witnessing this development. In consequence of all these circumstances, I lost interest in the Gurrelieder, abandoned the idea of ever finishing it and decided to leave the incomplete work "for posterity." Fortunately, while writing in the mornings my "Harmonielehre," the afternoons sufficed to finish the orchestration.

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Arnold Schonberg, by Marianna Volz

favor of many people.) This work will show you that it was neither lack of inventiveness nor insufficient technical ability that forced me upon this new road. But that I had to obey to an inherent power within myself, which asked me to pursue this course."

The Gurrelieder, with piano accompaniment, and the largest preludes and interludes, played at two pianos (eight hands) did succeed in creating my first success with quite a large audience. The reaction of this audience was enthusiastic, which soon became known to Vienna's musical circles.