

## SCHÖNBERG POEM IN FIRST HEARING

Philharmonic Gives His "Pelléas"  
Initial Performance in This  
Country

Arnold Schönberg's tone poem, "Pelléas and Mélisande," received its first American performance at the New York Philharmonic concert on Thursday evening of last week, being the principal item of a program which, in its entirety, read as follows:

Goldmark, Overture, "Spring," Op. 36; Liszt, "Der Fischerknabe," "Die Lorelei," Songs with Orchestra, Emmy Destinn; Arnold Schönberg, Symphonic Poem, "Pelléas and Mélisande"; Saint-Saëns, "Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix," from "Samson et Dalila," Emmy Destinn; Rimsky-Korsakoff, "Capriccio Espagnol."

Local concertgoers have now heard six works by this strange personage, so extensively and acrimoniously debated, yet so little understood. But except for the "Kammersymphonie," done semi-privately a fortnight ago before the so-called Friends of Music, nothing representative of the later or fully emancipated (some would have it "completely lunatic") Schönberg, who before the war threatened a veritable musical holocaust in Europe, has been made known here—nothing, that is, unless we except a little set of acrid piano pieces played by Leo Ornstein last spring. But these hid their diminished heads and passed more or less unnoticed because of their proximity to the far more fiery gospel of the young prophet himself, which was vehemently preached at this concert. The few inconsequential songs sung by Reinald Werrenrath a year earlier attracted disproportionate attention just because the name of Schönberg was affixed to them. Something of the sort might be said of the far more engaging string quartet introduced by the Flonzaleys and the sextet proffered by the Kneisels. But while dire rumors proceeded from Chicago and Boston, whose respective orchestras ventured intrepidly into the grisly terrors of the "Five Orchestral Pieces" of undiluted "third period" Schönberg, New York basked in blissful ignorance of what the whole wild pother was about. Some were content that it should be so; the clairvoyant spirits of advancement thundered in the index and hinted darkly at philistinism and other unpleasantness of the sort.

In the strictest sense Mr. Stransky's presentation of "Pelléas and Mélisande" does not remedy matters. It, too, is an early work—Op. 5, to be circumstantial—written a dozen or more years ago, well before the composer blazed the trail of supposedly aesthetic obliquity. Strangely enough, it belongs practically to the period which first knew Debussy's ideal transmutation of Maeterlinck's tragic and mystic play. The opportunity for comparison is, therefore, enhanced. But before proceeding to a deeper examination of the work, it may be said that in point of community of spirit Debussy and Maeterlinck stand in infinitely closer relation than Maeterlinck and Schönberg.

The Teutonic "Pelléas" is a tone poem wrought on the structural and emotional lines of the larger orchestral works of Strauss. One can discern in it the remains of the old symphonic form, freely conditioned by poetic exigencies even as one can in "Heldenleben," "Zarathustra," and the "Domestica." Its instrumental requisitions are as large, if

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(Many thanks for your welcome. It gives me the greatest pleasure to return to America where I have already found the public so inspiring and sympathetic. I am very truly, Louise Edvina.)

A sterling artist is Louise Edvina, who last week made her début for the season with the Chicago Opera Company, in Chicago. Mme. Edvina was a prominent member of the Covent Garden Opera Company in London for several seasons.

not larger than these (it demands more than a hundred players) and it plays for forty-five minutes. It purports to follow closely the unfoldment of the poem. A dark introduction may be said to portray the somber forest of the first scene. Then follow in due time thematic labels denoting *Mélisande Golaud*, *Pelléas*. A sort of *scherzando* passage pictures *Mélisande's* playful sporting with *Golaud's* ring, leading ultimately to a love scene and thereafter to an horrendous climax, then to trisful reminiscences of the beginning and the final consummation of tragedy. But imagination need not strain itself to follow these episodes, for the work, once the title is known, can be listened to as absolute music without any serious loss of pictorial detail.

And yet the "Pelléas" of Schönberg is not the "Pelléas" we know, the "Pelléas" subtly and perfectly defined for us by Debussy. That a German should apprehend and voice in an exact equivalent of musical investiture the mysticism of the Belgian poet was not to be thought. Nor has this composer. His "Pelléas" by any other name would still be amply valid and significant. Such impressionism as it contains is of an unmistakably Teutonic profile. Schönberg's "Pelléas" is as full-blooded as Debussy's is incorporeal. Its passion and stress are as much of the material plane as are Debussy's of the subliminal.

But, however direct or otherwise its application to the programmatic subject, it is a publication of potent sincerity, of violent, not to say virulent, emotional urge. The fateful orchestral explosions have a terrible, an overmastering force of passion. But it is the passion of the nether pit and does not lead to realms of light. Schönberg, like Strauss, like a hundred other moderns, lacks the purity and loftiness of redemptive spiritual vision. Like *Jean-Christophe* he dwells on a plateau swept by clouds and the gusts of tempest; but unlike him, he knows not the glittering peaks, scaling

which he can bathe in the sun's radiance. He can be magical, but not beneficently so.

"Pelléas" owes not a little to Wagner. It owes also much to Strauss and Strauss owes much to it. Various serpentine thematic contours were born in the Strauss tone poems. Various orchestral effects and acid dissonances Strauss used in "Elektra" and "Rosenkavalier." The independence of counterpoint also speaks of Strauss. Yet the technical facility is prodigious and many instrumental devices startling and unusual if not always impressive—they must have seemed trebly as bold when "Pelléas" first appeared. Of euphony and lyrical effusion there is not a little, though the melodic flow is often sentimental and never original.

The Philharmonic played this music with impeccable smoothness and grandiloquent power. Mr. Stransky spared no pains in rehearsing the work and the result told. The lights were lowered during its performance and the audience applauded cordially at the close. The other orchestral numbers were Goldmark's "Spring" Overture and Rimsky-Korsakoff's "Capriccio Espagnol."

Mme. Destinn was the soloist, singing the "Samson and Delilah" aria, and Liszt's "Fisher Boy" and "Lorelei." In a voice even fresher and purer of quality than it was last year, she delivered these numbers with exceptional insight and feeling, the two Liszt songs revealing subtle powers of *lieder* interpretation not usually characteristic of an operatic artist. H. F. P.

Other critical opinions of the Schönberg novelty:

Schönberg's "Pelléas and Mélisande" can hardly be called important. What is beautiful is imitative; what is original has no large message to communicate.—*The Sun*.

Unquestionably an interesting composition—without doubt one of significant importance—this symphonic poem reflects rare qualities of description.—*The World*.

The composer has succeeded well in creating a mystic atmosphere, and some of the details of the story are depicted as clearly as one could expect music to picture them.—*The Herald*.

### NORFOLK ARTIST RECITALS

Kitty Cheatham and Spalding Delight  
Hearers—Festival Plans

NORFOLK, VA., Nov. 20. — Albert Spalding, the violinist, gave a recital here on the 15th, which proved to be one of the most enjoyable given in Norfolk in many months.

Kitty Cheatham opened the season for the Norfolk Music Club on Tuesday night, Nov. 16. She appeared before a splendid audience, and met with unusual success.

The series of morning musicales that have been given in Stieff Hall closed with a lecture-recital on "Edward MacDowell, His Work and His Ideals," by Walter Edward Howe, in which he was assisted by Mrs. S. H. MacDowell (soprano). The recitals preceding this in the series were violin, song and piano recitals by Charles Borjes.

There is much talk of the proposed festival which is being backed by some of Norfolk's most prominent business men, and which is to be under the musical guidance of C. Mortimer Wiske. There has also been considerable talk about another festival which one of the New York Management Bureau is endeavoring to put on. Whether or not this last named affair gets a foothold here remains to be seen. Well, the more, the merrier!

R. V. S.

Greta Torpadie Sings in Baltimore  
Benefit

Greta Torpadie, the young soprano, was heard in Baltimore on Nov. 17 at an important charity concert for the benefit of the French and Italian war fund. The concert was arranged by Mrs. Kirby Flower Smith, who is very prominent in Baltimore, and was attended by a large audience composed of the city's fashionable and musical people. Miss Torpadie sang several groups of quaint songs in French and English in costume, and accompanied herself on a guitar. Another feature of the concert was the singing of national hymns by a large chorus.

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