

*BLOCH'S VIOLIN CONCERTO

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IT would be easy to say that this work offers nothing new. To those of us familiar with Bloch's earlier music these moods and methods are old friends: the same opulent web of sound, the well-known fanfares of open and barbaric fifths followed by the familiar dramatic descent into the sombre and bitter depths. In spite of the author's disclaimer, here again is a *Rhapsody* of strongly Hebraic flavor: for if this work is not "Jewish" then neither are *Schelomo* nor *Baal Schem*. It is once more a music evocative and pictorial; so strongly so, in fact, that occasionally the inward eye has flashes almost in the direction of Hollywood.

The methods of juxtaposing and combining fragments of themes; the alternation of mountain-peaks of exaltation with valleys of despair; the systematically built-up climaxes — all these we know. Here we have again a violent and passionate first movement followed by one which is at least slightly nocturnal in character; and this again is followed by one more buoyant and joyful, in which themes from a preceding movement are recalled in procedure typical of Bloch's usual treatment of the cyclical form. The moods of the whole work recall *Schelomo* and the methods still more strongly those of the *Viola Suite*, the *Sonata for Violin and Piano* and the *Quintet*.

But when all of this is said the work does not stand condemned. The admirers of Ernest Bloch have an important event in store for them, for the concerto is a work of character and maturity and one which is an unquestionable addition to the literature for violin and orchestra.

In form it is, if anything, superior to the *Sonata for Violin and Piano* which was, in turn, a great advance in conciseness and clarity over the *Viola Suite* that preceded it. The slow movement in this *Concerto* is perhaps less profound than those in the earlier works already mentioned but it is so perfect in its form, in its architectural and dynamic proportions,

*This is the second of MODERN MUSIC's articles on important American works that have been recorded. The *Concerto*, performed by Joseph Szigeti and the Orchestra de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire de Paris, under Charles Munch, is a Columbia release.

that repeated hearings only enhance its values. The orchestration throughout is admirable, colorful and yet restrained; the writing for the solo instrument is full of variety and effective in the best sense of that word. One feels that Bloch's early training as violinist under Ysaye has stood him in good stead.

The last movement, as in the earlier works, appears less entirely satisfactory. This fact may be due to Bloch's conception of the cyclic form — that form which was "invented" by César Franck, if one may speak of any form as the invention of any one man — in which themes from one movement are consciously made to reappear in the others. It may indeed be due to an idea inherent within the cyclic form itself. Although this community of themes between the movements does give a certain obvious unity to a large work as a whole it also blurs the differences between the individual movements. It affords the listener that pleasure associated with the *déjà vu*, with the coming again upon a familiar friend. But it seems to prevent the composer from constructing a musical object which is complete in itself and it is in any event true of the Bloch works that in these movements the thematic material seems less clearly defined, less individual, than in those which are conceived as complete and "closed in" entities. Whether this method is beneficial to the work as a whole is a question of opinion and taste, with the author of the present article opting rather strongly "against."

A moment of particular and striking beauty is that in the first movement when, after the long and rather elaborate cadenza, the orchestra, starting with the timpani, gradually comes in again. It is difficult to say why this moment should be so arresting or, for that matter, why any particular moment in any great work should stand out and particularly impress us. It is, perhaps, the relationship which the particular moment has to the whole, its absolute "rightness," which makes us feel so poignantly that which the movement as a whole may make us feel more generally. Here, in any event, we have one of those moments again, comparable to the corresponding ones in the violin concertos of Beethoven and Brahms: moments which we all remember as being fraught with special emotion when, after suspension, the thread of life is taken up again. Here in Bloch it is a moment of such quickened awareness: one which is inexplicably "right" and thrilling. One feels again that Bloch is one of the few great composers of our time: a master fully mature and a figure unquestionably unique.

FROM ERNEST BLOCH'S CONCERTO
FOR VIOLIN AND ORCHESTRA

OPENING FANFARE

Allegro deciso
(♩ = 100)

2 Fl.
2 Ob.
2 Cl.
in La
4 Corni
in Fa

This musical score for the Opening Fanfare features five staves: 2 Flutes, 2 Oboes, 2 Clarinets in La, and 4 Cornets in Fa. The tempo is marked 'Allegro deciso' with a metronome marking of 100. The music begins with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The woodwinds play a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, while the brass instruments provide harmonic support with sustained notes and rhythmic patterns. Dynamics include *f* and *mf*. The piece concludes with a fermata over a sustained chord.

ENTRANCE OF THE VIOLIN

Moderato (♩ = 72)
misterioso

p *>* *dolce*

The musical score for the Entrance of the Violin is a single staff for the violin. The tempo is 'Moderato' (72) and the mood is 'misterioso'. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The piece begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a series of eighth notes. It features a dynamic crescendo leading to a 'dolce' (sweet) section. The score ends with a fermata.

ENTRANCE OF ORCHESTRA AFTER THE CADENZA

Moderato (♩ = 72)

Temp.
solo Violin
Celli.
C.B.

f *dim.* *Breve* *piu p* *pp* *etc.* *pp*

This score shows the re-entrance of the orchestra after a cadenza. It includes staves for Timpani, solo Violin, and Cello/Double Bass. The tempo is 'Moderato' (72). The solo violin part begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a melodic line. The orchestra enters with a dynamic decrescendo (*dim.*) and features 'Breve' (short) notes. The dynamics range from *f* to *pp* (pianissimo), with a 'etc.' marking. The piece concludes with a fermata.

OPENING OF SECOND MOVEMENT

Andante (♩ = 76)
semplice ed incolore

Fl.
Cl.
in La
Fag.
Arpa

pp *(p)* *pp* *(p)* *pp* *(p)* *pp* *(p)*

The musical score for the Opening of the Second Movement features five staves: Flute, Clarinet in La, Bassoon, and Arpa (Harp). The tempo is 'Andante' (76) and the mood is 'semplice ed incolore' (simple and colorless). The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The music is characterized by a sparse texture with piano (*pp*) dynamics and a gradual dynamic increase to *(p)*. The harp provides a simple accompaniment. The score ends with a fermata.