SCHOENBERG: TRANSFIGURED NIGHT
LOEFFLER: A PAGAN POEM

A master of the acoustical properties of music and a peerless painter in the orchestral spectrum, from the tiniest whisper of a pianissimo to the mightiest crash of a fortissimo.

The New York Times

SERAPHIM
"Angels of the highest order"
Leopold Stokowski conducting his Symphony Orchestra

Schoenberg: Transfigured Night (Verklarte Nacht)

Loeffler: A Pagan Poem

When he was seven, Leopold Stokowski realized that music is not only very beautiful, but that it is the expression of the highest poetry of life. Today, some 80 years later, he still feels that way. It is perhaps this philosophy of music that has inspired him to a lifetime of innovation on every scene of the musical world. Stokowski's intellect and senses are always alert and receptive to new ideas. A modern music enthusiast, he was the first in the United States to conduct many of Mahler's, Straßinsky's, Satie's and Schoenberg's works including Transfigured Night.

In 1940 Stokowski personally auditioned 10,000 young musicians and then selected 90 of them to perform in his All American Youth Orchestra. Years later, many of these youngsters were to rejoin him as full-fledged musicians to create the Hollywood Bowl Symphony Orchestra. In 1944 at the request of Mayor La Guardia, the maestro busied himself organizing the New York City Symphony Orchestra so that music could be within easy reach of all.

In essence, Stokowski is a renaissance man, a seeker after innovation in areas directly (and indirectly) associated with music. In order to improve the quality of records and radio transmission he studied acoustics and electronics. He also was associated with the inventor of magnetic tape, Professor von Braunmuehl. Stokowski is author of a book and because of his firm belief that motion pictures carry a greater influence than any other media, he has appeared in four of them. But it is as a conductor, the role in which the world best knows him, that Stokowski is most intent on expanding the possibilities of music. He has studied every instrument in the orchestra in order to understand the players' point of view. He continues developing music by giving it life, flexibility and the fire of creation as he conducts his current season with the American Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall.

Schoenberg: Transfigured Night (Verklarte Nacht, Op. 4)

arranged for string orchestra by the composer

The history of Schoenberg's Transfigured Night (Verklarte Nacht) is the familiar one of the masterpiece that is at first reviled for its radicalism and a few years later eulogized for its beauty.

The astonishing thing about the rejection of Transfigured Night at the beginning of this century (it was composed in 1909 and first performed in 1910) is that it was not really a revolutionary piece at all. There must have been many many cultivated listeners at the time who could hear that it was post-Wagnerian music, an extension of the idiom of the master of Bayreuth.

Still, there were disturbing things about Transfigured Night. Absolutely novel was its introduction of the symphonic poem into chamber music. (It must be remembered that the piece was originally scored for sextet, and that the string orchestra version was not made by Schoenberg until 1917.) Yet Schoenberg was very careful about preserving in this work the typically polyphonic nature of chamber music. His six instruments naturally produced a rather thick texture, but the thickness is more the result of the richness of polyphony than of orchestral chordal writing. The same is true of the harmony: the clashes grow out of the counterpoint. It is here that Schoenberg goes considerably beyond Wagner. Wagner was not at all a contrapuntist; his thinking was harmonic. Schoenberg was a contrapuntist almost by nature and certainly by cultivation. His first musical experiences were in the world of chamber music and he lived by its principles during the whole of his career. It was their fusion with the Wagnerian idiom in this work that made it sound strange, radical, and exaggerated. Its passion and intensity were also something new in chamber music. The extraordinary climaxes of the work mark the course of events in the poem that served as its program.

The story of Transfigured Night is this: A man and a woman wander in a park in the cold moonlight. The woman tells her companion of her guilt: she has been married to a man whom she did not love, and though she had been unhappy in this marriage she had been faithful to her marital vows. Now she is with child by this unloved husband, but she has fallen in love with the man now walking with her. She fears that he will condemn her. But his love, in harmony with the splendor and radiance of nature, is great enough to overlook the tragedy and make the unborn child his own.

Schoenberg composed this score in the amazingly short time of three weeks during the summer of 1899. The poem which provided him with the program for his music was one called Weib und Welt ("Women and the World") by Richard Dehmel (1863-1920), a poet whose verse ranged from the highly intellectual to the sentimental. Schoenberg had already composed settings of three of his poems in his Four Songs, Opus 2, and later he set two more, one in Opus 3 and another in Opus 6. Transfigured Night is commonly regarded as an isolated work in the totality of Schoenberg's music. But if it is isolated, it is only in its extraordinary popularity. Nothing else has had a fraction of its success, though some pieces have had a kind of notoriety. The bulk of his most important works is still "advanced." Yet Transfigured Night is completely Schoenberghian in what it reveals about the composer's basic attitudes. This early piece is as rigorous in its logic as anything written later in the twelve-tone method of his later years.

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SERAPHIM—"ANGELS OF THE HIGHEST ORDER"
1290 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N. Y. 10019


with Robert Hunter (piano) and William Kosinski (English horn)

Charles Martin Loeffler was born in Mulhouse, Alsace, in 1921, when that province was still a part of France. He was thus born a Frenchman, and a Frenchman he remained, in a cultural sense, to the end of his days, even though he was an American by virtue of citizenship acquired in 1887, and even though he resided in Boston and its environs for the whole of his adult life. Though he took great pride in being an American, he resisted completely any influences of the American scene, remaining always an artist of Gallic temperament and tastes.

Loeffler was a man of unusually broad culture, not only in music but in literature, drama, and painting as well. By far the greater number of his works have literary inspirations—a play by Maeterlinck, a tale by Gogol, a hymn by St. Francis of Assisi, poems by Yeats, Poe, Baudelaire, Verlaine, and the Greek Classicists. Hand in hand with these interests went a kind of antiquarianism that attracted him, for instance, to the obsolete viole d'amour (for which he wrote parts in several scores), to Russian liturgical chant, Gregorian plain song, the old modes.

The Poem is his masterpiece. It is based on Virgil's eighth Eclogue, which tells the story of a girl of Thessaly who, having been deserted by her lover, tries to win him back with the aid of sorcery. The score calls for a group of obbligato instruments—piano, English horn, and three ophicleide trumpets. In several passages they form a kind of concertante group within the orchestra, and as such they represent the magical elements of the story. The trumpets have a special role: they are placed backstage, so that their forte will sound piano to the audience. Toward the end of the piece, they move gradually closer to the orchestra, finally taking their places there and joining with the three orchestral trumpets for the final great climax of the work, in which the powers of love and sorcery triumph over the truant lover.
SERAPHIM
"Angels of the highest order"

SCHOENBERG

(SP1-8433) 33 1/3
STEREO
S-1-60080
1.

TRANSFIGURED NIGHT (Verklärte Nacht, Op. 4)
(arranged for string orchestra by the composer)
28:18

LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI
conducting his symphony orchestra

Recorded in the U.S.A.
SERAPHIM
“Angels of the highest order”

CHARLES MARTIN LOEFFLER

(SP2-8433) 33 1/3
STEREO

A PAGAN POEM, Op. 14
23:39

LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI
conducting his symphony orchestra
with Robert Hunter (piano) &
William Kosinski (English horn)

Recorded in the U.S.A.