By L. A. Sloper

The first performance with orchestral accompaniment of Randall Thompson's choral work, "The Testament of Freedom," was given yesterday in Symphony Hall by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and the Harvard Glee Club, Serge Koussevitzky conducting, as the opening number of the twenty-second Friday and Saturday program of the season. The day's list of compositions was completed by Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony, which was heard here for the first time a year ago.

There was a novel trick of program making; the opening adagio of the symphony was played before the intermission, the other four after it. Presumably this was done to fill out the time for the radiocast tonight.

Mr. Thompson's chorus, for men's voices, was first performed two years ago by the Glee Club of the University of Virginia, where the composer teaches. On that occasion he played a piano accompaniment. It is a setting of four passages from the writings of Thomas Jefferson, and the text evidently was chosen for its timeliness when considered in connection with the present war. Jefferson's eloquent words are stirring today, when victory seems near; no doubt they were even more so two years ago, when the future was less clear.

The sincerity of Mr. Thompson's tribute to Jefferson is beyond question. It is apparent that his purpose was not to draw attention to himself but to remind his hearers of the testament of the great statesman. His setting of the words is straightforward, without unnecessary embellishment. The melodic line follows faithfully the rhythmic shape of Jefferson's sentences, giving the effect often of a chant rather than of a thematic structure.

There are moments when the musical underlaying seems to place the stress on unimportant words; and the musical expression provided for Jefferson's solemn

Declaration of Causes and Necessity of taking Up Arms seems trivial and inappropriate. The orchestral commentary comports well with the vocal part. Whether the work as a whole really intensifies Jefferson's thought is doubtful, but it performs a service in bringing his declarations to our attention.

Dr. Koussevitzky's realization of the work was characteristically fervid. It was possible to feel at times that there was an excess of emotion, that the interpretation was more Russian than American, more passionate than ratiocinative, more Koussevitzkyan than Jeffersonian or Thompsonian.

The early repetition of Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony was perhaps in line with Dr. Koussevitzky's theory that if people hear often enough a work that they do not at first care for they will come to like it. This theory, we may suppose, assumes that the work is a good work. But how can any number of repetitions alter the obvious fact that a symphony is ill-proportioned and excessively repetitious?

The Christian Science Monitor
April 7, 1945
Symphony Concert


By RUDOLPH ELIE, JR.

Yesterday we had Randall Thompson and we had Shostakovich, and it is pretty hard to find much to say that is bright and cheery about either. The Thompson piece, which is sort of a high school graduation cantata with words (and sometimes it seems music) by Thomas Jefferson began the afternoon and the Shostakovich Eighth, which is probably a fine thing but which you have to have a special attitude for, ended it.

Mr. Thompson, whose music has hitherto seemed interesting in an amiable, honest and unpretentious way, has been at pains in his cantata to use no harmonic or melodic invention or orchestral device isolated since 1845. The result, contrasted with some of Thomas Jefferson's most powerful utterances, is a routine and elementary under-scoring of good words like "democracy," "liberty" and "the 4th of July, 1776" with good clean chords, and of underscoring bad words like "despotism" and "aggressors" with big bad chords. The rest goes along with snatches of 19th century melody while the orchestra, when not making good and bad chords, follows along.

What I am trying to say is that this cantata, while certainly destined for great success as an addition to the college or high school glee club repertoire, is hardly worth the services of Dr. Koussevitzky (who is so faithful to his art he conducts this work as if it were the B-minor Mass), the Boston Symphony Orchestra, or the Harvard Glee Club. It is, true, easy to listen to, but Thomas Jefferson's words happen to be important.

Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony, done here last season, has some splendid moments, but it is impossible to stay with it as long as its composer asks us to. There is no need today to extend and repeat and dwell upon musical material to that extent, I am sure, and even though the symphony was made more endurable by the intermission between the first and the following four movements, it was still hard going for all but the most ardent admirers of the composer. Here again, Dr. Koussevitzky and the orchestra gave their considerable all to the effort of proving that Shostakovich must write great symphonies because he writes such long ones.
HUMORESQUE: Serge Koussevitzky and his merry men enjoy a little innocent merriment, with the maestro sitting this number out.
Koussevitzky Conducts Boston Group in Brilliant Reading of Symphony at Carnegie Hall

By OLIN DOWNES

The Shostakovich Eighth Symphony, which Dr. Rodzinski introduced in America at a Philharmonic-Symphony concert of April 2 last year, and which had since been given both Boston and New York, was repeated at Carnegie Hall last night by the New York Symphony, was repeated by that organization under Dr. Koussevitzky's direction last night in Carnegie Hall.

This performance was a sheer triumph of beautiful and brilliant playing by the uninvolved orchestra. It is hard to believe that anything the composer had in mind in writing it is any longer of concern to the interpreter, into which Dr. Koussevitzky put every fiber of his energy and spirit, even the most obvious impression for the composer. For the present writer the eloquence of this performance merely emphasizes the long-windedness and diffuseness of the composition.

Receives Warm Reception

Neither in this symphony nor in any other of the composer's impress us as fulfilling himself as a symphonic writer. He sets himself up in a certain emotional position; the results are artificial. The symphony was respectfully applauded, and with these words the nature of its welcome is amply expressed.

In honor, evidently, of the centenary of the birth of Gabriel Fauré, Koussevitzky had the first of the last two that the Boston Symphony gives this season in New York, included two of the best of the master. The first was the Suite made from the wistful music that he wrote for Mrs. Mary Garden. The production of Maeterlinck's "Pelleas et Melisande." The second was the "Eleiege" for solo 'cello, heard for the first time, to the orchestral accompaniment.

Jean Bedetti as Soloist

This solo, played with the most admirable finish and total excellence by Jean Bedetti, first 'cellist of the orchestra, delighted the audience. A part of the suite was furnished by the suite. Its utter simplicity, its grave beauty and tenderness, conveyed by the fewest possible notes, became in a way a wholly unintended rebuke of the pretensions and inflated rhetoric of much of the music of the age.

This in spite of the fact that the first and last of the movements of the suite, the second and fourth, the 'cello solo, is a case of the "levity" of the score. This was followed by an over-dramatic accent. Formed some of the most joy of all with the spectacular performance that conductor and orchestra gave, and so often has given in the city of the second "Daphnis et Chloe" suite of Ravel.

The New York Times
April 12, 1945
Shostakovich Opus Heard

By GRENA BENNETT

Last evening's concert of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in Carnegie Hall began auspiciously with the Eighth Symphony of Shostakovich, Russia's white-haired boy among its modern composers.

He has written an odyssey of the present world conflict on music paper, last night's composition being self-described as his intention "to put in music the new optimism found by a long-suffering people—and to create a musical interpretation of our triumph over barbarism and express the greatness of our people."

This is rather a large order, long drawn out in analyzing his thesis; diverse and digressing in thematic premise; economic in melodic content; and generous in flamboyant sonorities.

All this was performed valiantly by one of the world's greatest orchestras.

Of different matter was Faure's "Pelleas et Melisande" suite, taken from the stage music to Maeterlinck's tragedy. This was serene and suave, three episodes of fluent, translucent melody performed with ingratiating charm and simplicity.

The same composer's "Elegie" was delightedly played by Jean Bedetti, solo 'cellist.

The orchestral accompaniment was admirable as was the conducting throughout the evening of Serge Koussevitzky.
BOSTON SYMPHONY PLAYS FIRST ADIEU

By OSCAR THOMPSON.

The superlative qualities of the Boston Symphony were lavishly set before its audience last night in Carnegie Hall at the last of its Thursday night concerts of the season. The program, itself, was not an exciting one. Only in the final suite—the second—from Ravel’s “Daphnis et Chloe,” which Serge Koussevitzky has conducted here many times, was there something to cause a stir. But his ensemble played sumptuously. The evening was particularly noteworthy for the sensitive performance of the strings.

The Shostakovich Eighth Symphony is now an old story. The work has its admirers, of course, and its detractors. For many of us it is much too long—its material wears thin. For others, its expansiveness is that of great Russia, the Russia of today. There was a little more than an hour of it last night. Possibly Dr. Koussevitzky’s reading of it changed none one’s opinion. It could scarcely have been achieved more clearly and with more warmth and color. The famous Boston strings were true to their traditions. The nuances the conductor drew from them were fabulous.

Again, in the Suite which Gabriel Faure extracted from his stage music for Maeterlinck’s “Pelleas et Melisande”—gentle, suave, elegant, altogether French—the string playing could scarcely have been more exquisite. Jean Bedetti, leaving his accustomed place as first cellist of the orchestra, moved forward to a place beside the conductor for the solo part of the same composer’s “Elegie,” which was gratefully presented, with a modesty of tone that would never have resulted had a concert virtuoso of the instrument been called in as an assisting artist. Mr. Bedetti was rewarded for his artistry with the applause of a pleased audience.

Saturday afternoon’s program will close the Bosto Orchestra’s New York season. The program will repeat Shostakovich’s Eighth and will afford a first opportunity to hear Ravel’s “The Testament of Egg.” The setting of words by Thomas Jefferson. The Harvard Glee Club will thus be given a part in Dr. Koussevitzky’s seasonal farewell.

The New York Sun
April 12, 1945
Boston Symphony Presents Masterpieces in Tribute to Late President—Conductor Asks Silence for ‘Greatest Man’

BY OLNIX

The concert given by the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Dr. Koussevitzky's leadership has been one of the most moving experiences in Carnegie Hall was an unfort-}


getable salutation to the passing of President Roosevelt. It was an occasion that far transcended in its significance and at-


tuned its emotional impact with the greatness of events and the profundity of the artistic and spiritual objectives to which President Roosevelt's entire achievement of the high-


est art, and exemplification of the American spirit that should take in the life of the world to-


day—by the side of the club of greatest statesmen and in humanity's cause.

Against black cloth at the rear of the stage hung an American flag. The performance of the national anthem was put forward with a solemnity that marked the beginning of the program to the end. And Dr. Koussevitzky, at the stage, announced the music that was to be played, the music of the passing of President Roosevelt.

The program, he explained, would begin with the first movement of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony because the composer intended this symphony as an expression of the tragic events that had been undergone.

Downs

The following are the first two movements of the “Eroica” symphony: the funeral processional, ending with the funeral march which will always rank as one of the greatest marches in music. Koussevitzky asked the audience to be attentive to the final chords of this symphony “to a great man, of the greatest men of the world.”

Finally, the assistant of the Harvard Globe, Dr. Koussevitzky, was given the opportunity to be the first performance in this city of Hansa Harms' setting of words from the writings of Thomas Jefferson in observance of the 200th anniversary of his death, and truly prophetic epitaph of the present day.


day.

Moment of Silence

Dr. Koussevitzky called for a moment of silence before the performance began, and there was no applause at any time during the concert and the audience was in a somber mood.

The conductor had given an extraordinarily fine performance of Beethoven’s Eighth Symphony on the Wednesday evening. It is to be said that on this occasion, under the intensity that drove every note from his soul, he surpassed his former efforts. It is also to be said that the audience commented: “This is the music to which the world listened.” Whether the whole of these symphonies would have this effect on this special occasion is in doubt, but the general speculation on this all movement went the same way.

The same emotion, too, but underlay the revered and controlled devotion that would be the hero there, not the idol of this mortals. The virility and unbrokenly directing of the state, rugged and unimpaired, was one character of this particular instance of patriotism. The second movement of the piece, finished in the first free movement, and was another indication of the fact. When the first movement is taken as a whole, there is a sense of the broken phrases of the opening movement as the insur-


tances, as though by the instrument, with great precision, as indeed as if the last sigh had been heard. The music is praised for its simplicity and clarity. It may be conceived that after such music the composition of a symphony for the concertante of a great artist would be difficult. It is very remarkable that the effect of the music is so profound. Mr. Thompson has written a composition of astoundingly vitality and effect. He has produced what will be called a new symphony in four movements, and one which made a profound impression on the audience.

Fortunate that his virtuosity is as sound as his creation, as written, that he would do a thing, that he would come to this place and that. He had the answer. The introduction to the letter to John Adams beginning, “I shall not do without a light and liberty on steady advance.” And even this apparent degradation, this desolation, this apparent despotism again obscure the sublime freedom in its final form. The country remains to preserve these restore light and liberty to their solemn and towering duties. But the coming of the beginning, the control of the future, the nobility and the love, higher over the orchestra spin.

Admirably Proportioned

His score is admirably proportioned, climaxing and falling away without a break or falter in its progress. It is written, we say, in a way that the time that it uses the orchestra and its members without a break or falter in its progress. The exact unison of the parts set on a theme in balancing musical pat-


terns which have form in a way that the time that it uses the orchestra and its members without a break or falter in its progress. The exact unison of the parts set on a theme in balancing musical patterns which have form in a way that the time that it uses the orchestra and its members without a break or falter in its progress. The exact unison of the parts set on a theme in balancing musical patterns which have form in a way that the time that it uses the orchestra and its members without a break or falter in its progress. The exact unison of the parts set on a theme in balancing musical patterns which have form in a way that the time that it uses the orchestra and its members without a break or falter in its progress. The exact unison of the parts set on a theme in balancing musical patterns which have form in a way that the time that it uses the orchestra and its members without a break or falter in its progress. The exact unison of the parts set on a theme in balancing musical patterns which have form in a way that the time that it uses the orchestra and its members without a break or falter in its progress.
REFUSE INVITATIONS TO LEAD ORCHESTRA

BOSTON, Oct. 2, (AP)—Two of Russia's greatest composers have refused invitations to lead the Boston Symphony Orchestra in their own compositions this season, apparently because of strained international relations, Conductor Serge Koussevitzky said today.

Dr. Koussevitzky said that Sergei Prokofieff and Dimitri Shostakovich at first indicated they would accept, but later sent their "regrets."

"Perhaps," said Dr. Koussevitzky, "their government authorities did not know how they would be received in this country—whether their reception would be good or bad."

"The propaganda...against Russia is terrific," he continued in an interview. "Perhaps they didn't want to risk an unfavorable reception until our two countries are more settled."

The Boston Symphony conductor became an exile from Russia after the revolution in 1917. He warmly supported his native country, however, in World War II.