

# Music: Solti 'Hollander'

## Ardent Romanticism Under Control

By HAROLD C. SCHOENBERG

Sir Georg Solti and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra maintain a tradition by presenting an opera in concert form Friday night in Carnegie Hall. Ever since Sir Georg came to New York with "Das Rheingold," he has been careful to devote one of his annual appearances here to an opera, generally a German one.

This time it was all of Wagner's "Der fliegende Holländer." It was a foregone conclusion that it would be a success. For some years now Sir Georg and his great orchestra have been culture heroes in New York, and they can do no wrong. At the conclusion of the opera there were prolonged cheering, stamping, whistles and bravos. All of the participants, of course, shared in the enthusiasm. But Sir Georg was the particular hero.

Local opera managers might be excused if they picketed Carnegie Hall on these occasions. It is manifestly unfair. Sir Georg has at his disposal a better orchestra than any opera house in the world. Vienna included, can assemble. He can pick his soloists for the particular occasion. He does not have to worry about stage problems while giving opera in concert form. He can have plenty of rehearsal in Carnegie Hall with an auditorium with exceptionally live acoustics. Small wonder that performances like this make the real opera house sound somewhat dim.

About those acoustics: Can Georg have forgotten that the difference between heavy volume and sheer noise can sometimes be a hairline distinction? He conducted the orchestra with such enthusiasm that the results occasionally approached aural pain. He has one of the most powerful orchestras in the business — those brasses! — and is himself an ardent, impetuous musician. All that, together with Carnegie Hall sound, made for some very noisy happenings during the evening.

Of course there were the usual Chicago Orchestra felicities — the responsiveness of the orchestra and its rich color; the impeccable attacks and releases; the rhythmic spirit that animates all of the Solti performances; the ardent Romanticism that is the keynote of his particular style.

But this is Romanticism with control; a Romanticism tempered with a classic kind of elegance. That is what differentiates Sir Georg's conducting from that of the wild Romantics, who tend to drool over music and push phrases out of shape. Sir Georg never does that.

A strong group of singers and the admirable Chicago Symphony Chorus participated in this performance. Norman Bailey and Janis Martin were the two principal singers. Mr. Bailey does not have the most sensuous sound; his baritone is even

## The Program

CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, Sir Georg Solti, conductor. Chicago Symphony Chorus. Margaret Hillis, director. Norman Bailey, baritone (Dutchman); Janis Martin, soprano (Isola); Martti Talvela, bass (Holländer); Rene Kollo, tenor (Erik); Werner Krenn, tenor (Steersman); Solti, organ, celesta (solo); at Carnegie Hall. Dir. Filmarco Kollander, Wagner.

dry and rough at times. What he does have is a mixture of musicianship, dignity and style that keeps the listener rooted.

Miss Martin, an American soprano originally from California, has sung at the Metropolitan Opera and in recent years has been making a secure career in Europe. She sang an impressive Senta; her voice was appealing, feminine (as opposed to the teamwhistle attacks of some Wagnerian sopranos), almost always right on pitch, and capable of riding the Solti orchestral blasts when necessary.

There was much interest in René Kollo, who sang the role of Erik. A few years ago Mr. Kollo was being touted as the new hope of heldenteners. Then he seemed to go through a bad period. If this performance was any indication, he is in form again. Certainly his singing sounded much more secure than it has been on some recent records. He produced a firm, manly sound without fighting for volume. It is not, one should think, a Siegfried voice, but should be able to take in such roles as Slegmund.

The fourth principal, Martti Talvela, was a superb Daland. He is one of the world's outstanding basses, and he really sings in a smooth, cantabile, line. None of those Bayreuth barks for him. Werner Krenn, who was ill, nevertheless bravely went on as the Steersman, and Isola Jones was a fine Mary. It was a great evening. At the end of each of these Solti exploits, one always wonders how he is going to top it the next time around, but he always manages to do so.

# 'Dutchman' Under Full Sail

By HARRIETT JOHNSON

A giant mobile scene painter, himself—Sir Georg Solti set sail in Carnegie Hall last night with a scenic wonder, Wagner's "The Flying Dutchman" ("Der fliegende Holländer.") He brought the ghost ship to the 57th St. port, together with its alter ego, Captain Philip Venderdecken, the Flying Dutchman, with the skill of a master skipper.

He also brought a real giant, 6-7 Finnish bass Martti Talvela, as Daland, father of Senta the girl who sacrifices herself so that this wanderer of the seas might be redeemed. They all came via the Chicago Orchestra for a concert version of the Wagner opus.

Solti painted the vividly descriptive early music drama of Wagner's like a Winslow Homer obsessed with the sea. He was spectacularly successful in delineating the theatricality of nature with an encompassing fidelity.

For the major singers, the conductor had assembled a stellar cast of exultant artists, who though they were telling an essentially tragic folk legend, sang and interpreted with such ardor, they became triumphant and we were swept along with them.

It was an extraordinary evening, one of great music making of a score that is youthful and not nearly so powerful and magnetic in itself as the later Wagnerian music dramas, i. e. "The Ring," "Tristan," and "Metsringler."

Redeemed by Love

Solti performed the work uncut with a kind of magic which made the many repetitions of long passages with their endless, obvious chromatic runs up and down, seem part of a necromancy that belonged; i. e., the bravado of a man who was rash enough to say he would sail around the Cape of Good Hope no matter what the odds or hazards.

So the devil took him up on his proposition, he condemned him to sail until a woman would sacrifice herself to redeem him by her love. Every seven years he was allowed to land to search for his lady. On this occasion he found a prize, the American soprano Janis Martin, whose voice was made to order for the role. She sang up a storm in her "Ballad" and generally performed with a stirring sense of the drama at hand. Her voice is a full,

lyric-dramatic soprano that soared easily to the high Bs with freedom and beauty of quality.

Baritone Norman Bailey as the Dutchman is a superior artist, and singing from memory, he gave a strong re-creation that produced shudders as well as esthetic pleasure. His voice is not so fresh or rich as Talvela's was as Daland, but altogether he made an impressive, lonely figure. His German diction was outstanding. Talvela's bass was as ample as his huge body and it poured out with liquid ease and beauty. His was the best sung Daland I can ever remember.

Inspired by Sea Voyage

Because of the concert version — especially one played by this orchestra with its great conductor—the ear was free to concentrate on the music. While emotionally "The Flying Dutchman" doesn't reward the spirit as Wagner's later works, it's more or less superficial excitement became electrifying because of the imagination Solti gave the interpretation.

German tenor Rene Kollo made a admirable Erik, singing with freedom and vibrant quality. He didn't project much color and sang too con-

sistently forte but there is no doubt he is first-class in his genre.

Werner Krenn, tenor, as the Steersman, showed a sweet timbre but he didn't have full control of his production. He barely touched the B Flat in the Steersman's first song, a bar which is really a point of climax. Mezzo-soprano Isola Jones sang well as Mary.

Solti's imagination matched his strong, vital sense of rhythm, a force which enabled him to magnetize the music. The result was often hypnotic. Act I was a mysterious building up to one climax after another and then receding from it as if a succession of ghosts or sea monsters were around the corner. Solti made the chromatics sound like the wind.

Margaret Hillis had trailed the chorus to have the same kind of etched, pulsating rhythm that Solti asked and received from the orchestra.

The Chicago's brass section was thrilling as when Daland has first talked to the Dutchman and signals his ship to take off. It was an evening of "taking off," the suspense of a Solti-charged current inspiring an outstanding group of collaborators.

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