Light Concert Features Brahms, Ravel, Strauss

By ROBERT ZELENKA and STEFAN OFFENBACH

The twelfth concert of the Houston Symphony Orchestra will be on the evenings of February 19 and 20. The program will feature Phyllis Curtin, soprano, and the Women’s Voices of the Houston Chorale.

The overture “La Gazza Ladra” by Rossini, Floyd’s Mystery for soprano and orchestra, and Brahms’ Variations on a theme by Haydn will be played. Also on the program will be the Four Last Songs of Richard Strauss and two of the “Daphnis and Chloe” suites by Ravel.

**THE OPERA, “La Gazza Ladra,”** was written in 1817. It is a semi-serious work, based on a French play by Gheradini. The story of the opera is that of a servant girl, accused of stealing a silver spoon, and sentenced to death by hanging. As she mounts the scaffold, a magpie appears with the spoon in its mouth. There is great rejoicing, and the girl is released. The main theme of the overture is from the third act. The music starts with the roll of snare drums, followed by a march. There are a great many false climaxes in the work.

Alfred Ernest Floyd is an Australian composer and musician. His Mystery is patterned after the musical mystery, performed in many European churches before the Reformation. It is scored for soprano and orchestra.

**THE BRAHMS** Variations are based on a theme in Haydn’s Chorale St. Antonii. It is uncertain as to whether the theme originated with Haydn, and was found among a collection of music scored for wind instruments. There are eight variations and a finale to the work. The theme itself is divided into two sections, and the variations follow the rhythmic pattern set by the theme.

The Last Four Songs of Strauss were composed some twenty years after the last of his preceding songs. The poems set to music are “Spring;” “September;” “Going to Sleep,” by Herman Hesse, and “In Evening’s Glow” by J. V. Eichendorff. The last song is the longest of the four, and is considered by some to be the most moving.

**THE SCORING** proceeds from regular orchestration (orchestra with double wind, an additional English horn, bass clarinet and bassoon), adding instruments as each song is presented. An additional flute and two trumpets appear with the second song, and three trombones and a tuba are introduced for the last two songs. These songs, written in 1948, are Strauss’ “farewell to the world,” and are the last works he wrote.

The “Daphnis and Chloe” of (Continued on Page 7)
Ravel is a musical setting for the Greek love story of Daphnis, a young shepherd, and Chloe, his sweetheart. In the legend and the ballet, Chloe is captured by pirates, but is returned to her lover by the intervention of the god Pan. The music of which the suites are composed is a set of fragments from Ravel’s “choreographic symphony.” The music is of unoppressive substance, easy to listen to, and suggestive of the story which it parallels.

The coming concert will be lighter than the preceding ones in its choice of music and composers. It should be well enjoyed by all who attend.