Debussy Selections, Schubert's 'Great' Symphony Are Previewed

By ROBERT ZELENKA and STEFAN OFFENBACH

The eleventh concert pair of the Houston Symphony Orchestra, on the evenings of February 12 and 13, will feature the works of two composers, Claude Debussy and Franz Schubert. Sir John Barbirolli will conduct.

With the orchestra will be the Women's Voices of the Houston Chorale, directed by Alfred Urbach. On the program will be Debussy's "Nocturnes" and portions of his "Pelleas and Melisande," concluding the concert will be the Symphony No. 7 in C major of Schubert.

THE "NOCTURNES" are in three parts: Nuages (Clouds), Fetes (Festivals), and Sirenes (Sirens). The work was composed between the years of 1897 and 1899; it was first performed in Paris on December 6, 1900.

Debussy's own words provide the best commentary on this music. Concerning Nuages, he tried to create "the unchanging aspect of the sky, with the slow and melancholy passage of the clouds dissolving in a grey vagueness tinged with white."

In Fetes are "the restless, dancing rhythms of the atmosphere, interspersed with abrupt scintillations. There is also an incidental procession—a wholly visionary pageant—passing through and blended with the argent revelry; but the background of uninterrupted festival persists: luminous dust participating in the universal rhythm."

THE THIRD of the Nocturnes, Sirenes, is scored for orchestra and women's voices; there are no words to the music, the human voice becoming an agent of pure music. This is the nature of Debussy's music: the captured spirit, the impressions of things, rather than the things themselves.

"Pelleas and Melisande," an opera in five acts, was inspired by Maurice Maeterlink's play (1892), and gave a musical setting to that drama. There are no arias in the opera; the singing is on gentle risings and fallings of voice, rather akin to human speech. (The music room of Fondren Library has two good recordings of the work.)

THE MUSIC IS lyrical in quality, and serves as both framework and background for the singing. The reviewers do not know what portions have been selected for presentation.

Schubert's "Great" Symphony in C major is the last work on the program. This symphony is known variously as the seventh or ninth Symphony because it was the seventh symphony Schubert finished and the ninth he started. After he finished the Sixth Symphony, he started work on a symphony in E major. He only finished one movement of this symphony and began to work on his Eighth Symphony, the "Un-

When he had written two movements of this, he started his "Great" C major Symphony, the one with which we are concerned.

He finished it in March, 1828. It was performed for the first time by the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna on December 14, 1828, twenty-five days after Schubert's untimely death at age thirty-one.

THIS SYMPHONY, one of the most difficult of all symphonic works to perform, springs from the same romantic spirit of the early nineteenth century which caused lyric poets like Keats and Shelley to write. It is a coda, the final and ultimate summation, of... (Continued on Page 10)
what Schubert tried to say in his music.

The symphony opens with an extended, dignified introduction, Andante, which gradually increases in tempo and excitement until it leads into the main body of the first movement, a buoyant Allegro ma non troppo. At the conclusion of the movement, without a slackening of pace, the theme of the introduction makes a triumphal reappearance.

The second movement is a subdued, march-like Andante con moto that features a plaintive melody sung by the oboe. The vigorous Scherzo that follows is marked Allegro vivace; its trio, the middle section, is more relaxed to provide appropriate contrast. Allegro vivace is also the tempo for the boisterous, onrushing finale, which brings the symphony to a wildly joyous conclusion. It marks the final triumph of the human spirit over the chains and bonds of earthly prison.