Ravinia Baton Is Taken Over by Georg Solti

BY SEYMOUR RAVEN

Georg Solti, yesterday's new conductor at Ravinia, takes music intensely and personally. Having also a microscopic familiarity with a Mozart score, he knows what is there, anticipates what is to come, and rejoices at its arrival.

The Hungarian conductor nonetheless did not present a consummate performance of Mozart's "Jupiter" symphony because, it seemed to me, he did not understand that the Chicago Symphony orchestra also knows pretty much what to find in Mozart. A first class, readily responsive orchestra wants leadership, not spelling out of the text.

Perhaps as Mr. Solti gains the feel of the orchestra over the week he will refrain from over conducting. Then it is very likely that a truly provocative conductor will emerge, an interpreter whose music will communicate to the audience what was bottled in last night within the orchestra. It is quite evident that there is an abundance of rich emotion in Mr. Solti's makeup and I doubt that he is a fussy pedant.

Indeed, if you prefer to give a man the benefit of doubt at the earliest possible moment, you could recognize even in the finale of this concert—Beethoven's "Eroica" symphony—a strengthening of tie between orchestra and conductor. Beethoven's larger score permits more of that "equal and opposite reaction" than does Mozart's, and the players could give back more of what they took from the insistent Mr. Solti.

Last night's soloist, also a newcomer, was the cellist, Paul Tortelier. He played K. P. E. Bach's concerto in A major midway in the concert. Enjoyment of Mr. Tortelier's work was thwarted by these things: The younger Bach's concerto, with chamber orchestra accompaniment, is too slender for projection across a large area. The soloist's tone had no warmth in the first movement, and was discouraged from warming up when, in the second movement, it began to rain and listeners on the grass began scurrying into the pavilion for shelter. When the rain and hubbub let up, the soloist had no more work to do until next Saturday, leaving not much to get cellistic about on Tuesday.

Notes
Several times revised, Mr. Solti's week-end programs at Ravinia now list: Saturday — Beethoven's "Egmont" Overture, Brahms' Double Concerto [with Ruggiero Ricci and Paul Tortelier], and Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony. Sunday — Mozart's G Minor Symphony, Prokofieff's Third Piano Concerto [with Alexander Uninsky], Schubert's "Unfinished" Symphony, and Strauss' "Don Juan."