

Introducing Mr. Stokowski as Conductor and Diplomat

By H. T. CRAVEN

PHILADELPHIA, Jan. 22.—Conductor Stokowski of the Philadelphia Orchestra has a way of disarming criticism that statesmen and politicians well might envy. He proves his point in the end. The thing has happened so often that the director must surely sometimes smile to himself while donning that strong armor of eventual justification which easily withstands arrows of preliminary attack.

Two pertinent cases will serve to illustrate the situation. Mr. Stokowski is well known to be an enthusiastic "Mahlerite." Certain auditors of the mammoth choral symphony presented last season expressed the belief that Mahler's magnitude of conceptions scarcely justified the highest praise of the Viennese composer's genius. Leopold Stokowski, like all good statesmen, said little. Without any special heralding, he submitted Mahler's "Song of the Earth" last Autumn, and many who came to scoff remained to admire. It was then plain that "Mahlerism" involved appreciation of more than one side of a great man's musical genius. None of those methods disliked by some in the cyclopean choral work were revealed in the intensely appealing musical setting of the poems of the "Chinese Omar." Unquestionably Mahler was worth considering as a potent factor in modern composition. The breadth of his talents were strikingly revealed. Mr. Stokowski had proved his contentions

and cries concerning "perverse sponsorship" were stilled.

The other victory is still more recent. War partisanship has crept into music as well as other artistic fields. Concertmaster Rich told the present writer some months ago that the European strife was never discussed by the Philadelphia Orchestra's cosmopolitan members. There were often instances of close intimacy between French and German artists in the organization. "Out in front," in the audience, however, no such Utopian conditions have prevailed. Not long ago, in urging support for the endowment fund, Mr. Stokowski rhapsodized over the artistic exultation he felt in interpreting the works of Bach, Beethoven and Brahms. Entente sympathizers stirred uneasily in their seats, and something like this comment was heard on several sides: "He didn't mention a single Frenchman. Did you notice that? It's always the same way. The man is thoroughly Teutonized, from spending his Summer vacations in Germany."

Of course Mr. Stokowski is not a German at all. He is an Anglo-Pole. Possibly he has been entirely unaware of the aspersions cast on his political opinions as applied to art. But it almost looks as though he had realized the situation and were resolved to answer it in his own calm, sure characteristic fashion. This week's concerts in the Academy are to be devoted entirely to French music. The composers to be represented are César Franck (a naturalized Gaul), by the symphonic poem "Redemption"; Henri Rabaud, by the highly interesting symphony No. 2; Claude Debussy, by his lyric poem "The Blessed Damsel," and Paul Dukas, by the familiar and whimsical "Sorcerer's Apprentice." Saint-Saëns himself, once staunch ad-

vocate of musical Teutonism and now most intense of anti-Wagnerites, could scarcely have devised a program more strikingly "tri-colored." When Mr. Stokowski a week ago offered the Franck Symphony in D Minor the presentation of this fine work was interpreted by some of the Allied cohorts as being grudging. But there is no reservation whatever in the broadside of French compositions in prospect. That suggests frank and direct appreciation of one of the most interesting schools of modern music.

Something of Mr. Stokowski's politico-artistic fair-mindedness was also revealed in his incorporation of Edward Elgar's "Enigma" Variations in this week's Friday afternoon and Saturday night program at the Academy. The conductor is an attested admirer of Elgar, and here again his enthusiasm has not been always shared by music patrons. When the "Enigma" was previously given certain self-constituted wags observed that the only real riddle involved was why the work was played at all. It was curious to notice the "Variations" second reception. The "Enigma" is, of course, not the high water mark of music. Exercises in variations by even the greatest composer—which Mr. Elgar assuredly is not—somehow often suggest the joys of Newcomb's logarithms. There is, however, much facile musical writing in the "Enigma" and the instrumentation is forceful and ingenious. The work fully repays a second hearing.

The program as a whole pleased without thrilling. It seems a pity that Horatio Connell, the baritone, drew smaller houses than some of his recent soloist rivals at the Academy. Mr. Connell—who, by the way, is a Philadelphian—is a thoroughly admirable artist. The timbre of his voice is not especially well suited to opera, but on the concert stage and in oratorio he deserves rich laurels. He was heard in Handel's noble, recitative and aria, "Hear Me! Ye Winds and Waves"; in Mahler's poetic little song, embroidered with effective writing for the celesta, "Ich atmet' einen linden Duft," and in Schubert's "Du bist die Ruh," and "Wohin." All the graces of his refined, careful art, his clear, unforced tones, were delectably revealed in this last named number—familiar but never hackneyed, a pearl among lieder. The orchestra alone gave excellent readings of Beethoven's not particularly interesting "Prometheus" overture and of the ever welcome, sunny Mozart Symphony in G Minor.

A musical week unwontedly sterile for mid-season must go on record for having brought forward an exceedingly interesting artistic personality. N. Lindsay Norden, heretofore of New York, is this newcomer, and the adroit combination of vigor and discretion which he infused into the concert that began the Mendelssohn Club's forty-second year stamped him at once as an asset of which Philadelphia should have reason to be proud. Mr. Norden is the third director of this choral organization, since the retirement of the late Dr. W. W. Gilchrist, who had previously led the society since its inception. The club seems now to have a permanent acquisition. Mr. Norden balances his choirs with sterling art, vastly bettering last year's results. Furthermore, he is a tireless investigator of the field of Russian music, whose harvest of novelties appears inexhaustible. Two of his offerings in Horticultural Hall on Thursday evening were the "Credo," a musical setting of the Symbol of Faith of the Russian Church, and "The Day of Judgment," by Arkhangelsky, a stern, gloomy composition, perhaps worth while as medium for displaying the club's skill in a sombre province foreign to its usual artistic leanings. Marie Stone-Langston was the soloist. Other program numbers were

van der Stucken's "Laughing Song" and de la Hale's "Robin Loves Me." Mr. Norden's ability was therefore exhibited in varied moods. The new conductor was undoubtedly the occasion's stellar feature. Agnes Clune Quinlan was the accompanist.

Concerning another musical event listed, art and the law engaged in combat. Law won. The crisis arose over the fourth concert in the Baptist Temple in a series arranged by Conductor Clarence Reynolds. This building, in which church services are also regularly held, has heretofore paid no imposts to the city. Because of charging for admission tickets, the municipal authorities gave notification that the structure would be rated as entering the regular amusement field and insisted on the payment of a \$3,500 tax, if the concert policy were pursued. The entertainment, which was to have been given by fifty members of the Philadelphia Orchestra, led by Mr. Reynolds, with David Hochstein as violin soloist, was promptly cancelled, and Dr. Conwell, pastor of the Temple, gave out the following statement:

"A statement is due to the ticket holders and the public showing the exact conditions and the position the church takes in the matter. Our idea in arranging for the concerts was wholly for the benefit of the people. We thought a great building like the Temple, holding more than the Academy of Music, ought not to be idle, but should be used for the greatest good.

"The concerts were perfected for the musical culture of the great district of North Philadelphia. No individual connected with the management would have received compensation for his services. Even the leader and organist, Clarence Reynolds, undertook the enterprise with no pay for himself."

Notwithstanding this protest, it looks as though Mr. Reynolds' enterprise, under the old régime, at least, were at an end. Perhaps no exquisite pangs of regret are felt by some members of the Philadelphia Orchestra, which has a huge schedule this year. When the season is over, it is likely that Mr. Stokowski's directorship will have been reduced to leading about ninety concerts. Even this is a large order for so painstaking a conductor, but the orchestra's roster still involves more than one hundred performances.

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