Stokowski Rapped On Brahms Venture

By JOE KRUPPA

Thresher Fine Arts Columnist

Leopold Stokowski’s second all-Brahms venture was a lesser success than the first, but it managed to contain its own share of special excitement. Much of this excitement may be attributed to Zino Francescatti’s contribution as soloist in the Brahms Violin Concerto, however.

Francescatti not only possesses technical powers of the highest mettle, but he also controls and uses these with a real musical sense, and it is the combination and coordination of these faculties that makes him such a stunning soloist.

Strong Interpretation

His interpretation of the Brahms Concerto was strong at every point, tending to a trifle harshness of tone at times, but these were minor failings in an otherwise forceful statement. His cooperation with Stokowski in matters of balance was a lesson in itself, and an indication of Stokowski’s special genius in this area.

Stokowski surrounded Francescatti’s appearance with the Variations on a Theme of Haydn, and closed the evening with the Brahms Second Symphony. The Variations were a masterpiece of poor taste, marred with excessive retard, and a raggedness of execution that destroyed the quality of this work.

Stokowski Inconsistent

The Second Symphony escaped with fewer scratches, but Stokowski managed to plant the claw marks of his oft-times inconsistent personality in it just the same, and the result was less than we might have hoped for. This performance was distinctly inferior to his rendition of the Fourth just two weeks ago, and makes one wonder about the nature of the guiding hand.

Many of the same elements were present. The string section achieved a lusciousness that adds greatly to Brahms, and the woodwinds played well enough. The failure lay rather in the looseness of structure, propagated by Stokowski’s quirks of tempo and emphasis which may be defended as the letter of the score, although they do precious little to give it a unified spirit.