Stoki Directs 'Brilliant' Evening

By HERBERT GARON

Under the baton of Leopold Stowowski Monday evening the Houston Symphony presented a program of varying moods featuring the work of three contemporary British composers—John DeLacey Woolridge, Benjamin Britten, and William Walton.

The Tchaikowsky Symphony No. 5, in E minor, which was the main business of the evening was given a dynamically brilliant performance. In the spring of last year we heard this same work performed by the orchestra under Vladimir Golschmann, former conductor of the St. Louis Symphony who is now retired.

MR. STOKOWSKI'S reading of the Fifth — Tchaikowsky's most popular symphony — was done with a fine realization of its dramatic content and nothing more. Stokowski, like Golschmann does not wear Tchaikowsky's heart on his sleeve, and he doesn't care for the dark gloom over which sentimentalists have wept, as if Tchaikowsky did not weep sufficiently for himself.

The public sobbing that is an embarrassing part of the second movement was done in a constrained manner, in an interpretation that had logic and consistency; and the tremendous varirhythmed orchestration that marks the finals was dispatched in mighty and powerful waves of sound. This is music of great affirmation and it was brilliantly done.

THE PROGRAM WAS borrowed largely from composers of England, who do not often penetrate beyond the metropolitan music centers, and rarely into the hinterland.

William Walton's Partita for Orchestra, in three parts, is light in expressive substance. The composer explains, "My Partita poses no problems, has no ulterior motive or meaning behind it, and makes no attempt to ponder the imponderables." The brightly cheerful Toccata and the "veddy" English Giga flank a meditative Pastorale full of lovely sounds. A graceful work, something to whistle or hum, a score that moves no mountains, but simply delights you. The performance did not try to "probe" the score, yet it was not bereft of drama and subdued passion.

AFTER HEARING the Pascaglia from Britten's opera "Peter Grimes," we understand why he remains the greatest master of English lyrical-dramatic composition of the past two centuries. The dark night of Pe-

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eter Grimes’ soul is exemplified by this sinister theme. The orchestra recognized the crucial dramatic significance of its thematic content in bringing it both expression and excitement.

Woolridge, the least known of the three, was a hero of World War II as a pilot in the RAF before an automobile accident tragically ended his life at the age of 46. Most of his life was spent writing scenarios for the screen. His concert overture, “The Elizabethans,” like a well-tooled product by Heppelwhite displays fine handling of its sweetly flowing passages and drawing-room atmosphere; it was very pleasant to hear.

All in all the evening was a brilliant one.