TRUMPETS, CYMBALS, DRUMS, AND CHILDREN WENT WILD

Rich and Poor, They Delighted in Crash and Harmony of Philadelphia Orchestra's First Concert Just for Them

Above in the wards of Valhalla, Wotan, god of blondes frantically putting together emergency cots! On the earth a battle—a train wreck—an earthquake. In and out of the storm rushing, shrieking Valkyries, lugging in slain heroes, galloping away through the storm for fresh heroes. Rain—blood—fire—thunder—steel on steel—ax on ax!

In the middle of the uproar and downpour, in figurative oilskins and metaphorical rubber boots, Leopold Stokowski, vice Richard Wagner, like a military policemen, directing traffic in all one hundred and four directions.

Beyond the abyss between faerie and factual, between orchestration and orientation, on safe dry ground, in the safe, hard seats of the Academy of Music sat the children—rich children, poor children, children of indefinite class, public school children, private school children, parochial school children, orphanage children, settlement children, all leavened, equally leavened by thrills multiple, innumerable, incalculable.

Trumpets! crash! clang! strife! blood! thunder! clamor! panic! tubas! trumpets! strings! stop! go! stop! go! stop! go! tubas! cymbals! sirens! drums! we-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e!

Then Merry Christmas

Then Mr. Stokowski, stripping off the dripping oilskins, turned, bowed and wished the boys and girls a Merry Christmas.

So it was yesterday afternoon at the Academy of Music for twelve minutes—nay, an hour. This was the first children's concert of the Philadelphia Orchestra.

This "Ride of the Valkyries," from Wagner's "Die Walkeure," watch alternately infected and cured the children of all known and some unknown variations of shellshock, was the finale of the program that had been selected with excruciating care by Mr. Stokowski, "simple music that would yet stimulate the developing musical understanding" of the boys and girls.

That they had without exception the sine qua non of such understanding, Mr. Stokowski said afterward he was fully sure. He meant that they did not cough separately or synthetically once throughout the whole concert. All the coughs—and there were indeed a few—were adult coughs from the mature larynges and lungs, from schoolmarms and music teachers who were there in a purely formal capacity or from merely persons who were there on tickets that did not belong to them.

In his little preface to the "Ride of the Valkyries," Mr. Stokowski explained to the children that if they listened carefully they could percieve how it "was suspended in midair," and in this was different from the other numbers they had heard.

All of Mr. Stokowski's little prefaces were something like this. Before the first number, the overture from Bizet's "Carmen," he said:

"Carmen was a girl and made cigarettes and smoked them and Don Jose was a soldier who fell in love with her. Later on Carmen fell in love with a toreador. A toreador is a fighter of bulls. In Spain a bullfight is what a baseball game is here. It is an occasion of great joyousness, and Bizet has given us this joyous music for it. Now listen and see if it is not being outside the Polo Grounds on the day of the World's Series!"

"Beautiful Blue Danube"

Before giving the "Beautiful Blue Danube" of Johann Strauss, Mr. Stokowski told the children that when they went home they should look at the map and if they would look hard enough they would find Austria, and in Austria the river Danube, "as beautiful a river as the music that has been written for it, which is the most beautiful dance music in the whole world."

The rest of the program consisted of four numbers on stringed instruments, respectively, violin, viola, cello and double bass. This, said Mr. Stokowski, was so that the children would understand the elements of the quartet and how the violins have been pitched to exactly the ranges of the human voice.

A few of the children went to sleep, but most of them listened absorbed and transfixed, now strangely restless without knowing why, now exalted, now blithe, now led into a sweet peace that was altogether strange. But it was, in spite of everything else, a picked audience, and the orchestra had never played to one picked with greater care.

"Sure I liked it. I liked it fine!" said the shabbiest little boy of all. He was quite breathless and burning eyed about it. But he grew sheepish when he was asked why.

"Why—uh. Gosh, I don't know why," he said finally.

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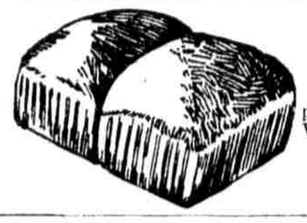

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