

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA.

SEÑOR CASALS AS A CONDUCTOR.

Señor Casals took charge of the London Symphony Orchestra's concert at Queen's Hall last night, and made his programme of three works, Bach's Overture in D (No. 4), Brahms's first Symphony, and Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony.

The great thing about Señor Casals as a conductor is that he means the music all the time and thinks it out in lines of melody, not in contrasts of tone or dynamic accents or in any of the subsidiary features which are apt to attract too much attention from conductors. He thinks of everything as he would bow it on his instrument; every phrase has its own shape in his mind and each belongs to its surroundings. He requires extraordinary suppleness from his players, which was perhaps the reason why the Bach Overture went less well than the symphonies. It took them some time to submit themselves entirely to his sway, but from the first deliberate measure of the Brahms it was evident that he had established a complete control and that the players were straining every nerve to realize his conception of the music. It was a wonderful performance, very different from the traditional readings of the German conductors, and so open to all sorts of question from those who cherish tradition, but like that of Steinbach in the essential that the melodic outline of each movement showed its intense vitality by its continual and exuberant growth. The finale, one of the most amazing pieces of design in the whole of symphonic music, carried the audience away by its sweep forward from the first statement of the tune to its overwhelming climax in the themes from the introduction.

It was a stroke of genius to give Beethoven's "Pastoral" after the Brahms, so that the return to its serene simplicity made its full effect. Even the storm seemed to rise above its obvious theatrical suggestion, and the other movements, especially the first two, had the feeling of leisured delight in simple things which gives this symphony its unique place among the immortal Nine.

Bruch: Kol Nidre, Op 47. Pablo Casals, 'cellist, with London Symphony Orchestra conducted by London Ronald. (Victor, four twelve-inch sides, with a *Haydn-Piatti Minuet* played by Mr. Casals and Blas-Net, pianist, on fourth side, \$4.50.) The magnificent art of Mr. Casals shines forth with moving eloquence in this conventional but popular set of variations. For those who admire great 'cello playing and who know Mr. Casals, nothing more need be said.

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THE WEEK'S MUSIC

—Neuman—

The L.S.O. Concert.

On the first occasion on which Casals conducted in London he did not quite succeed in convincing us that he had been wise in exchanging the bow for the bâton. But it was a very different Casals that we heard last Monday at the London Symphony Orchestra's concert. He is not exactly a model of deportment when he conducts, and to watch him is to have one's auditory impressions somewhat influenced for the worse by his ungainly movements; yet it is also true that unless we watch him we cannot fully appraise his work. For it is very evident that here is the great 'cellist trying to make a strange orchestra, after two or three rehearsals, phrase with his own grace of style and play with his own sensitiveness of tone, and necessarily becoming a trifle impatient now and then at not being able to achieve all his heart's desire. However, though the melodic and rhythmic line as the orchestra would draw it the other evening was not always quite what Casals the 'cellist would have drawn on his own instrument, the playing on the whole was the best we have had at Queen's Hall this season, and a welcome reminder of what a London orchestra can do when a conductor comes who can shake it out of its routine and pass his own electric current through it.

There were moments in the first Brahms symphony when the "flats" (in the theatrical, not the musical, sense of the term) did not quite join, for Casals has a way of somehow or other leaving the transition between a fortissimo and a piano almost unbridged; but in the main the performance was a remarkable one. There was nothing whatever "Spanish" about it; it was the reading of a great European who is penetrated through and through with the spirit of the great German masters, and who brings to bear on their music his own profoundly thoughtful mind and delicate sense of beauty. It was genuine Brahms that he gave us, with any amount of nervous force but without any sacrifice of the solidity of tissue without which Brahms would not be Brahms. Casals saw the Beethoven "Pastoral" also from a point of view thoroughly appropriate to it, and for a Bach suite had again another method of approach; his rhythm and his accents were as decisive here as they were soft and flowing in the deliciously lulling "Pastoral."

Segovia.

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CASALS AS CONDUCTOR

The world is sharply divided into those who think that Casals should never conduct but always play the 'cello and those who are of the contrary opinion. I avow myself, most emphatically, to belong to the latter category. If he had never done anything better than his interpretation of Beethoven's "Pastoral" symphony last night at the Queen's Hall he would be entirely justified in conducting an orchestra anywhere.

But Casals did more than this. He gave us a performance of Brahms's first symphony which was about the best I ever heard. Certainly it was the best piece of orchestral playing that I have heard in the Queen's Hall for many a long day. Without any antics, without any fuss, he made the players in the orchestra play like true artists; something of his own incomparable spirit seemed to descend on each one of them. Brahms's music never sounded to me so alive and clear; nor his orchestration so admirably apposite to its purpose. Yet there was a lady behind me who remarked audibly that it was a bad performance! Truly there are some funny people in the world. There was a large audience and, after the Brahms especially, wild enthusiasm.

F. T.

SHOP WINDOW THREE

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Conducting

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