

FIEDLER HAS AN AUDIENCE OF MILLIONS

He Grew Up With The Boston Symphony, and The Boston Promenade Grew Up With Him

(By Cpl. Jerome J. Pasten,
in "The Gramophone")

TO become a successful conductor in a city ruled musically by so brilliant a figure as Dr. Serge Koussevitzky is something of a remarkable achievement. But then, Arthur Fiedler is by way of being a remarkable man.

He literally grew up in the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He was born in Boston, the son of Emmanuel Fiedler, first violin in the orchestra and a member of the famous Kneisel Quartet. He received his musical education in Boston and in Berlin (even playing, for a time, at one of the first desk chairs in the orchestra of Johann Strauss III.), and eventually — almost inevitably — joined the Boston Symphony Orchestra in his turn, playing first violin and then viola.

Fiedler's great and influential rule in Boston music, however, did not begin until 1929, when he assumed direction of the Boston "Pops" Orchestra.

Properly speaking, these are the "Pops" (Popular) Concerts of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and it is indeed the same orchestra, less some thirty of the first desk and leading men. But the orchestra has come to be thought of (in Fiedler's time) as a separate entity, and on American records the label reads—Boston "Pops" Orchestra. H.M.V. lists it as the Boston Promenade Orchestra simply for the convenience of those familiar with the English Promenade Concerts.

Building Up the "Pops"

When Arthur Fiedler took over the "Pops" concerts, they were in a lamentable state. Attendance had fallen to the point where scarcely half the hall was filled, and even then many of the audience were admitted on free tickets. The concerts, which years before had been originated primarily as a means of writing off a part of the deficit which a great orchestra always incurs, were actually no longer self-supporting. This was due above all to poor programmes. Mr. Fiedler has shown me instances in which four Rossini overtures were programmed one after the other on the

same concert! Nor had any attempt been made to introduce novelties or challenging, new music, of however light a style.

Under Fiedler, the programmes came to life again. New music was sought and introduced. Fiedler turned impartially to Tin Pan Alley, old folk music, and the best of contemporary writers for his compositions. From Tin Pan Alley he has introduced, in excellent arrangements for full symphony, such popular melodies as *Strike Up the Band*, *Tiger Rag* and *Carioca*. (Watching the staid Boston orchestra playing *Tiger Rag* is a hysterical, if unmusical bit of entertainment.)

Folk-music has been introduced, in sparkling and often witty orchestrations by such men as Robert McBride, such as *Pop Goes the Weasel*, *Arkansaw Traveller*, and *Turkey in the Straw*. And from contemporary composers have come many fine works, some of which have been commissioned by Mr. Fiedler for first performances at "Pops" concerts. Arthur Fiedler has succeeded in introducing, to audiences who would have declined to listen to them ten years earlier, such works as the Rachmaninoff Second Concerto, the Tchaikovsky

Second Concerto, the Gershwin Concerto in F (an especial favourite at these concerts, with J. M. Sanroma as soloist), *Peter and the Wolf*; many of the works of Eric Coates, and Piston's ballet-suite *The Incredible Flutist*. Two short compositions of Eric Coates have been extremely popular at the concerts, *By the Sleepy Lagoon* (since the Harry James popularisation) and the *Knightsbridge March* from the London Suite. When the recording of the *London Again Suite* conducted by the composer was issued in America, it was my pleasure to draw Arthur Fiedler's attention to the *Oxford Street March*, and this has since been added to the repertory and has grown in popularity.

It would be wrong, however, to compare the concerts at the "Pops" with those of London's "Proms." The "Pops" are frankly lighter in genre, purposely avoiding conflict with the superb presentations which Dr. Koussevitzky affects during the course of the Symphony season. And the two seasons complement one another. Nor is it detracting from Dr. Koussevitzky's lustre to say that his audience, composed in part



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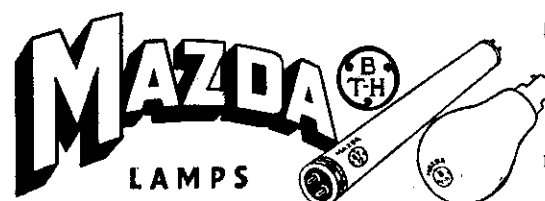
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