

nual Christmas concert last night at Powell Hall. (Post-Dispatch Photo by Steve Perille)

## Casadesus Appears With Symphony

By ROBERT NICOLosi

Pianist Robert Casadesus appeared with the St. Louis Symphony in Powell Hall yesterday afternoon in a performance of St. Saens's Fourth Piano Concerto. Walter Susskind was on the podium.

Their collaboration was the only lackluster part of an otherwise dazzling concert that included Bartok's "Suite No. 2 for Orchestra," Strauss's "Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks," and the world premiere of "Design for Percussion and Orchestra" by Lothar Klein.

In Bartok and Strauss, when orchestra members could give their undivided attention to Susskind, they played with the clarity, precision and gusto of any of the Big Five orchestras. Unfortunately, this technical sheen was in arrears when that extra measure of devotion and awareness was required in the concerto. Conductor and soloist must equally share the blame in this instance.

In matters of tempo, phrasing and over-all stylistic conception, the two could not get together and the audience had to witness the tug of war. Casadesus does not approach this concerto as a bravura piece (which

it is) but rather with typical Gallic restraint. The many opportunities for a truly lusty sound were sublimated in favor of a more introspective interpretation.

Despite the rather slow tempo of the first movement, it did not lose cohesiveness and went the best of all. Signs of distress began to appear in the second movement but it was in the final section that the obtuse factor really took hold. The phrasings and articulations initiated by the pianist were not matched by the orchestra.

There were times, too, when Susskind's beat could have been more accommodating to the soloist but at other times both men were elusive. The pianist's left hand was often too subdued and in those places where Casadesus's tone could have been more assertive, the orchestra could have been equally mitigatory.

Klein's new piece is an interesting bit of eclecticism in which variegated motives unravel themselves in a rhythmically imaginative way with the assistance of heavy percussion. Stavinshy's neoprimitive style of 1913 flashes by as do some American symphonic jazz idioms. The piece is tasteful and shows talent.

Bartok's Second Suite for Orchestra was a good companion piece and Susskind handled the neoromantic and neoclassic elements intelligently. Soloistic passages a bound and special mention may be made of James Meyer's expressive bass clarinet solo in the slow third movement.

Strauss's tone poem concluded the concert. The performance was sparkling and tight-knit without the humorous parts being overdone. The four horn players and clarinetist George Silfies took much-deserved bows. The concert will be repeated this evening at 8:30.

THE ST. LOUIS BACH Society presented its annual Candlelight Christmas Concert last evening in Powell Hall.

Conductor William Heyne and James Paul, new associate conductor, shared the podium.

Paul conducted the opening half of the program that featured two Bach cantatas, No. 50 ("Nun ist das Heil und die Kraft") and No. 190 ("Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied") both sung in English.

The first cantata for double chorus started out a little on the sluggish side and the choral sound was a bit muddled. In the second cantata, the chorus was more sensitive to the conductor's wishes and the vocal agility and diction improved markedly, especially in the fugue.

The soloists were Mary Foxx, alto, Larry Wahler, tenor, and Garret States, bass. Paul's conducting is spirited and full of authority; he seems to know what he wants and is capable of getting it.

After intermission, Heyne conducted the orchestra and chorus in a Brahms-Leinsdorf rendition of "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming." The candlelight procession began to the strains of Mozart's March in D, K.237 followed by traditional Christmas carols. Lockwood's interesting "Carol Fantasy" was sung to good effect with good intonation and phrasing. Heyne's arrangement of "Silent Night" (in German and English) was coupled with Norman Luboff's arrangement of the Austrian carol "Still, Still, Still."

The final segment of the concert was a fine performance of the opening and closing choruses from Handel's "Chandos Anthem No. IX." The festival chorus was assisted by the Parkway West Senior High School Choir, a well disciplined group under the direction of Jerry Anne Galloway.

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