

Fodor Picks Fireworks

EUGENE FODOR, violin. Accompanied by Edmund Battersby. At Avery Fisher Hall.

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| Caprice Basque | Sarasate |
| Romance in F major | Beethoven |
| Lepende | Wienlawski |
| Valse-Scherzo | Tchaikovsky |
| Tzigane | Ravel |
| Havanalse | Saint-Saens |
| Serenade malencolique | Tchaikovsky |
| Nel cor piu non mi sento | Paganini |

By **HAROLD C. SCHONBERG**

Lately the publicity wheels have been grinding for Eugene Fodor, the 24-year-old American violinist who shared second prize in this year's Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow (no first prize was awarded). His debut at Fisher Hall yesterday afternoon attracted a huge audience, predominantly of young people. The handsome and talented Mr. Fodor is one of theirs.

His program was not only curious; it was actually stunning in a reverse kind of way. Defiantly setting tradition aside, Mr. Fodor devoted virtually all of his concert to fluffy, showy salon pieces that are usually played as encores. Even in the old days no violinist would come to New York with this kind of music. There had to be some kind of solid grouping—Bach, Beethoven, something, before the last group of lollipops appeared.

There are several ways to view Mr. Fodor's selection. An unkind way would be to

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say that he was out to prove himself the greatest cocktail violinist among the new generation. Another viewpoint would be to characterize it as a very shrewd move. The world is full of struggling, expert violinists who play their Beethoven, Brahms and Bartók, and end up getting nowhere in particular. Mr. Fodor has staked out an entirely different area for himself.

Yet, after all, a musician does have to present credentials of some sort. The repertory that Mr. Fodor has chosen is fun enough in its way, and it contains some very grateful music for the



Eugene Fodor, violinist

everything skillfully enough, but the interpretations were those of a still unformed musician. It so happens that the music he selected, above and beyond the technical fireworks inherent in them, is exceptionally difficult to play. Pieces like the Saint-Saëns "Havanaise" or Tchaikovsky's "Valse-Scherzo" and "Sérénade mélancolique" or the variations for unaccompanied violin on "Nel cor più non mi sento" by Paganini need the keenest and most delicate sense of style. Otherwise they sound like cheap sentimental effusions, or meaningless technical stunts.

violin. But not even Mr. Fodor would claim that Sarasate's "Caprice Basque" or the Wieniawski "Legende" provides much depth. If he is going to specialize in this music, he can never be judged by the highest standards. He will remain an entertainer and nothing more.

As a technician, Mr. Fodor can project a strong, sweet and clear tone. His left hand is agile. His bow arm is perhaps a little weaker; it is not, as yet, capable of the nuance that the really big virtuosos can summon up.

More troublesome was the lack of real character to Mr. Fodor's playing. He did ev-

These stylistic niceties are beyond Mr. Fodor in the present stage of his career. The elegance and identification that could have brought the music to life were missing. Mr. Fodor plays like the extremely talented student he is. The emphasis is on the solution of technical problems rather than the shape of a phrase or the often indefinable personality that the great stylists bring to their playing. Mr. Fodor may eventually achieve that kind of personality, but until he does he really should think twice about trying to evoke the fragile world of salon music for the violin.



Eugene Fodor

Eugene Fodor, 24, the violinist, is the only string player in the Western world to take highest honors in Moscow's Tchaikovsky International Competition—a feat he performed last July. The critical acclaim was perhaps most tumultuous this time, but Fodor has long been accustomed to accepting kudos: He took first prize in the Paganini Competition at age 22 and made his debut with the Denver Symphony Orchestra when he was 11.

