

BODANSKY

Not merely the upper half
Of a gesticulating magician,
Silhouetted against the glowing abyss
Of the orchestra, when the Opera
Is Tristan, or Eugen Onegin.

But Bodansky, the Conductor of Symphonies,
As he advances with that rapid step to the platform,--
A tall, thin, eager, bitter,
Bundle of nerves.

He gives a rap
With his baton that freezes
You in your chair;
And he's off on the sparkling chase
Of a Mozart Overture,
Or deep in the profoundest intricacies
Of a Brahms Symphony,---passing so swiftly
From austere mood to tender,---

Then his lean left hand brushes impatiently
Over the first violins, if they dare play
One shade louder than pianississimo;
Or that same hand clenched and raised on high,
Hauls the brass trombones out
In a blazing chord,
And holds them there until they almost
Crack the ceiling with their blasts.
Or again, pensive and sombre
With the composer's thought,
He's darkly still,--
He barely moves
That quivering right hand.
And the cellos begin a sobbing theme
That catches you by the throat.

And so through it all,
With a thousand and one
New gestures for new phrases;
'til he nears the end, and sets the oboes
Racing the flutes, and the second fiddles
Zig-zagging like lightning after the first,
With the old bass-viol
Sawing their great strings almost in two
In the gorgeous, frenzied upheaval.

At last he has them, every one,
Clenched in his upraised fists,
Cymbals and great drums battering up
To the final Crash.

Brenda Putnam