

Mendelssohn's Elijah shows choir's harmony

By STUART SHEPHERD
 Wednesday, November 10, massed forces of Toronto's musical establishment staged a spectacular which recalled the days of cultural colonialism when this town was fanatically British and hopelessly Protestant. Elmer Iseler and his Mendelssohn Choir presented the first major performance in years of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy's Victorian warhorse, the oratorio Elijah.

In the hands of someone as competent as Iseler, the oratorio reveals itself as deserving a place in the company of these works. In Elijah, the composer was successful in combining contrapuntal sections of Handelian grandeur, with passages in the romantic style for which he is best known. Some of the latter are unredeemably slushy and sickly, and is surprising that Iseler and

other conductors don't do a bit of discreet editing; it's perfectly plausible in places and would help the whole immensely.

Iseler's appreciation of Mendelssohn's dramatic use of counterpoint came across in the clarity of superimposed voice lines, and alteration in their relative weights. The choruses "Be not Afraid" and "And then shall your light" were especially memorable.

The sensitivity of Iseler's interpretation was revealed above all however in the more fragile numbers of the work. He took extreme care to avoid the very great danger in this music of gushy oversentiment. The chorus "The deeps afford no water" was bewitching; the handling of phrasing in "Cast thy burden upon the Lord" was absolutely inspired.

As far as solo vocal work is con-

cerned, the contribution of all participants was at least adequate. Ingemar Korjus' portrayal of the prophet Elijah was especially good, exploiting fully the range of emotion and colour of the character without overplaying the part.

The Hamilton Philharmonic, while making a respectable contribution overall, proved to be the weakest component of the whole. The strings especially made rather more than a permissible number of scattergun entries and uneven phrase endings. The organist, perhaps overused to the delayed reaction time of pipe instruments, and was consistently ahead of the game on his electric instrument.

It was clearly the Mendelssohn Choir's night. Whatever reservations one may have about suppressing individual creativity

inside large ensembles, the almost celebrate relationship between Iseler and his choir resulted in breathtaking control and overall expressive possibilities.

I won't be ready for more tuxedos, choirboys, and little old

ladies for some time myself. However, if you missed the Elijah performance, try to attend one of the other performances of the choir this season. A Penderecki-Bernstein concert next April should be especially interesting.

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Monday, 4:00 - 5:00 — Earth Tones.
5:00 - 6:00 — An Interview with Mel Brooks.
6:00 - 8:00 — Eli's Coming.
Tuesday, Nov. 23, 2:00 - 3:00 — Betty Pearson and the Pearson Quartet.
Wednesday, 12:00 - 2:00 — The Wednesday Show with Host Craig Noble.
2:00 - 4:00 — Brad Meslin on a Secret Mission.
4:00 - 6:00 — Lynn Trantor presents a Class Special.
8:00 - 10:30 — U. of T. Blues vs. York hockey Play by play - Ian Wasserman.

Today, 12:00-2:00 — New Music with host Stuart Shepherd.
2:00 - 6:00 — "The Nature of Music". Produced by Carolyn Brunton and Donald Hope.
Friday, 11:00 - 12:00 — Tomorrow will the Raven Sing, part three.
5:00 - 7:45 — Special Tribute to the "Move".
7:45 - 10:30 — Canadian College Bowl Game: Western Ontario vs. Acadia University.
Saturday, Nov. 20, 8:00-12:00 — Giulio Malfatti stars in the Sunday Show.

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