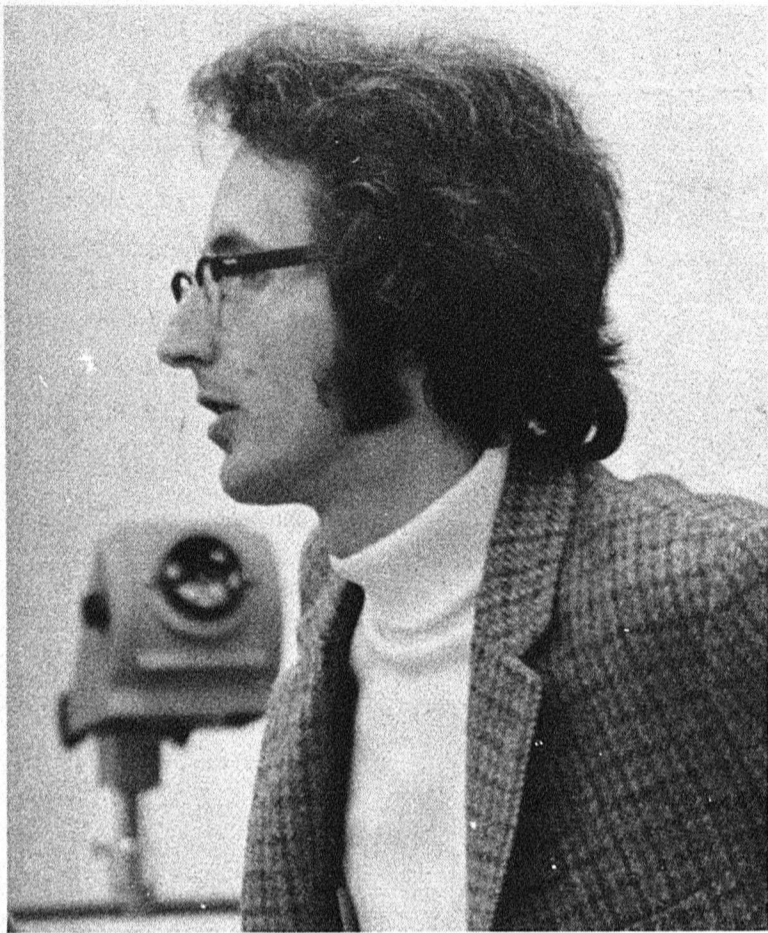


arts: arts: arts:

league of poets



Stephen Scobie

An oral anthology of current Canadian poetry was presented to a polite and responsive audience of about 200 Saturday evening. Fourteen members of the League of Canadian Poets which met here for its annual convention over the weekend read selections from their own work. Faced with a five minute time limit which was seriously violated by only two poets, the majority of the readers wisely presented samples of their shorter works. The brevity of most of the poems and the rapid changes of reading voices was beneficial for both the audience and the poets. The evening had a pace and variety which kept the attention of the crowd and enabled the last readers to be listened to with as much alertness as that given to those on the early portion of the programme. This session proved that given a proper format poetry can be not only effective communication of ideas and feelings but pleasant entertainment.

DEDICATED TO A. M. KLEIN

The series of readings was dedicated to the memory of A. M. Klein, a Governor-General's Award winner, who died in August. F. R. Scott opened the session by giving a brief biography of Klein whom he termed "an outstanding Canadian poet." Scott then read Klein's "Political Meeting" and selections from "Portrait of the Artist as Landscape." Because Klein's death was scarcely noted by the news media, M Scott's reading of the opening lines of "Portrait" served as a sadly ironic elegy for one of this country's most accomplished writers. "Not an editorial-writer, bereaved with Bartlett, mourns him, the shelved Lycidas./No actress squeezes a glycerine tear for him./The radio broadcast lets his passing pass./And with the police, no record. Nobody, it appears,/Either under his real name or his alias,/missed him enough to report."

Lionel Kearns of Vancouver was the first to read from his own work. Mr. Kearns, who said that "art seems to me to be a strategy for defeating time," read five poems unified by their concern with the pressure time exerts on the life of the artist. His first poem "One Time," for instance, described the familiar scene of a boy experimenting with matches and setting fire to some dry grass. The result is that "Delight turns into terror/which lasts thirty years/and turns into a poem." Unfortunately Kearns was too aware of time. The five minute time limit seemed to panic him; he read so quickly that one could grasp only a few items of the dizzying catalogues which filled his poems.

OCCASIONALLY HORNY

In comparison with the work of the other readers, the prose poems of Stephanie Nynych of Toronto were pure juvenilia. Theatrically attired in black she presented episodes from her private life that every adolescent would readily recognize. Unredeemed by fresh imagery or original thought the pieces gave one a weary sense of *déjà vu*. Lines like "I am suspicious of teachers, no matter who pays them" are merely clunking clichés. Miss Nynych should have also realized that the word "fuck" has lost its shock value but she glanced at the audience and flashed a coy smile each time she used it in her poem on "The Plight of the Single Female." In an oral presentation stage manner is an important part of communication. Her manner when reading this poem cheapened it. Of course it did emphasize the significant message of the piece: Miss Nynych occasionally gets horny.

STEPHEN SCOBIE

A ring of honest feeling resounded through the poems of Stephen Scobie, a professor in the English department. As one of his poems has it, "Elegies are

for those who survive" and it was evident that he was struggling to grasp the significance of the feelings aroused by the recent death of his father. His elegies were rough but contained genuine sentiment which never deviated into mawkishness. The whole series seemed to be one poem tracing his various feelings as he was confronted by the fact of death. These elegies described his initial shock, his bitterness, his loneliness, and his final resignation in the conclusion, "Grief, I'll let you go now/Father, I'll let you pass."

HIGHLIGHT OF EVENING

Undoubtedly the highlight of the night was the reading by Maria Fiamengo of Vancouver. In a loud, crisp, and effectively dramatic voice she read "In Praise of Old Women." The first half of the poem described the condition of women in Europe and the second half contrasted this with that in America where no one is old and everyone is searching for eternal youth. Proclaiming that "I will grow old in America" she said that possibly the "highest manifestation of wisdom" is to be old and woman. She received the best ovation of the night.

The masters of ceremonies, Stephen Scobie and Douglas Barbour, are to be congratulated for keeping their introductions brief and for keeping the session moving quickly.

Raymond Jones

(chamber) (review)

For me, the Edmonton Chamber Music Society concerts at Con Hall are more enjoyable than the Symphony Society's presentations at the Jubilee Auditorium. Chamber music tends to attract more young people, fewer culture vultures and more die-hard music enthusiasts. The concerts are also more intimate and less class conscious because the space is limited and seats are not reserved. Most important, the majority of the audience comes to hear the music, rather than to model the newest fur coat.

The Edmonton season opened auspiciously last Wednesday night with a recital by the U of A String Quartet which has recently returned from an overseas tour. The foursome opened with W. A. Mozart's Quartet in C, K. 465. The serene and dreamlike introduction-adagio and the elegant and lively minuetto were compelling but the quartet seemed to lack an unidentifiable quality that prevented me from totally enjoying the performance. It could be that the Mozart was merely overshadowed by what was to follow.

Elizabeth Maconchy's Quartet No. 10 was written especially for the U of A ensemble and the piece was premiered in North America on Wednesday evening in Con Hall. I, unlike many, thought the quartet was well conceived and performed and, although Maconchy relies upon a number of techniques (polyrhythms,

atonalism etc.) that I consider redundant in the "new music", the piece sustained my interest in a way few 20th century works can. The composer has been influenced by Bartok, but she has managed to create something that is distinctly her own. For instance, she uses a recurring glissando to give the work a loose structure that might not have been obvious to some. The beautiful, eerie chord that terminates the piece seems to exist at a half-way point between consonance and dissonance. Such a device tends to make one feel restless and tranquil at the same time. The quartet (Michael Bowie in particular) played magnificently.

Even then, the best was yet to come - Beethoven's Opus 18, No. 4. Besides containing a great deal of the blunt, energetic, conflict-resolution that Beethoven is famous for, the work utilizes crunching, simple homophony to create an exhilarating strength that too many only associate with the master's symphonic works. A single step modulation during one of the most intense passages in the opening movement almost levitated me out of my seat it was so powerful. Because the quartet was able to come to grips with, and express the dynamic characteristics of the work, in such an impressive and convincing manner, I would have to say that this was the finest performance of the evening. It also provided an appropriate and satisfying finale for a superb night of music.

David Chorley

seeger!!

"May there always be sunshine
May there always be blue sky
May there always be Mama
May there always be me."

Only Pete Seeger would be confident enough to sing a song like that in front of an audience of full grown people, and know that everyone would enjoy it. That was one of the many unpretentious, unsophisticated songs that Pete Seeger sang to an audience of less than 1800 people last Thursday night. It was written by a four year old child in Moscow, and Seeger sang it both in Russian and in English.

The only disappointing thing about the Pete Seeger concert was that it wasn't a sell out, which is surprising, considering the quality of his performance and the cheapness of the tickets (\$2.00, \$2.50, and \$3.00). It is doubtful that the Students Union made any money on the concert.

As well as his usual

repertoire of traditional American folk songs, Pete Seeger did some of his own songs, (eg. Last Train to Nuremburg, which he wrote after hearing about the My Lai massacre) songs from other lands (eg. the Ukraine, North Vietnam, Africa) and a surprising number of Canadian Folk songs including The Old Man's Courtship, Canadian variant of an English ballad which he learned from the late O.J. Abbot of Hull, Quebec; a French Canadian song written in the 1800's (Un Canadienne Errant); and a song he learned from none other than Alan Mills. An old song about the lady who swallowed a fly was transformed into a women's lib song about a young woman who swallowed a lie.

Most of his songs had choruses that the audience knew and could sing along with; those that they didn't know, Seeger taught them. Thus, throughout most of the concert, the auditorium was filled with song.

A lot of stories, anecdotes, and a children's musical drama about Abee-yoyo, the evil giant who was conquered by a kid

with a magic wand and ukelele, rounded out the program. In a more serious vein, he read an article from the New Yorker, which was a scathing attack on the U.S. bombing in North Vietnam, stating that it wasn't Nixon that was doing the bombing, but the American people (in a poll that was recently taken, 55% of the people of the U.S. agreed with the bombing, 32% disagreed and the rest didn't know what they thought.) Pete Seeger had recently spent a few weeks in Vietnam, and was overwhelmed by the friendliness of the people. Whenever he smiled at anyone, they always smiled back, he claimed, which isn't surprising at all for when Pete Seeger sings everyone sings; when Pete Seeger laughs everyone laughs. And even when Pete Seeger is alone, as he was half hour after the concert at the back of the Jubilee Auditorium, the sound of his yodelling comes back to him.

Perhaps Pete Seeger is the only human powerful enough to give formal, depersonalized places like the University, an echo. Larry Saidman