

GET CLASSICAL"

by Paul Campbell

Every now and then someone asks me "Just how do you go about interpreting a piece of music?" It's a fairly complex process, but the remark of a friend of mine recently that she had heard someone (she didn't know who) playing Mozart, and it had somehow sounded exactly like Bach, made me decide to write about it.

There's one overriding question when discussing interpretation: how much must you try to be true to the intent, ideas and limitations of the composer, and how much can you do what you yourself want with the music? In my view there are responsibilities and limitations on both sides of this question. If the performer is too inflexible, or is not sensitive enough to the music, he risks the criticism a friend of mine made of another, even closer, friend: "It's wonderful! Everything he plays sounds like Tchaikovsky!" My friend always sounds good, but a certain sameness in his playing eventually gets to you, just as the certain sameness of Beaver Food gets to you; even though it may be good, you tire of it. There are many players who have had marvelous careers always sounding the same; it seems to me to be especially prevalent among violinists, and even the peak violinists of our century, Heifitz and Perleman, are more or less guilty of it.

It is easy and useful to draw a

comparison with the theatre or cinema: some actors, like Sylvester Stallone or Peter Falk for me, always seem the same, whereas others, like Peter Sellers or Ben Kingsley seem to change like chameleons. I have recognized Kingsley half-way through a movie in which he was starring, and walked out of "Doomsday" not knowing which role Sellers played! The actor who has just one image may have the box office advantage if that image is attractive enough, but I find I prefer the films where the actor creates the character out of the script and his imagination. But, you say, what about the individual style? Is the performer not allowed to impose his style on what he plays? The answer to that, I think, is that it is almost impossible for the performer to not impose his style on what he does. I call it "signature". Signature is like your accent when you speak, or the way you look when you move: you are largely unaware of it yourself, but it marks everything you do. The German film director Fassbender was savored for his "divine decadence", even though his films were often incompetent. That was his signature. Falk's personality and characteristics are so strong that it is almost impossible to disguise them. Similarly, the way a musician plays, the sort of sound he or she gets, is largely a characteristic of signature, and you can identify it in even a very young player, even though there may be great deficiencies in skill. So, the individual style will come through:

the art of interpretation lies in how it is varied and adapted to the performance at hand. There is one more thing to consider: can the performer go too far in erasing his signature? Can he go too far in trying to play it exactly as he thinks Bach or Schubert wanted it? The revival of Baroque playing style in the last 15 years has taught us all a lesson. Musicologists finally had the influence they wanted, and got performers to play early music as they thought it had been played originally. To many listeners the much simpler interpretations that resulted were preferable to the overblown romantic interpretations which were current at that time, and the "fad" caught on. But in retrospect, if you listen to an "authentic" recording of baroque music today, and if you know enough, you can easily identify a performance as "Oh, that's 1978 authentic" or "That's 1985 authentic"! So just what is authentic? Can anyone say for sure? No. The best you can do is to be guided by your taste, your knowledge of the musical style you are playing, and try to ferret out of the music itself that which is to be found in the music. And this ferreting out is probably the crux of the art of interpretation. It takes sensitivity to the music, to its

potential and possibilities (but with reference to the style), and at the same time it must fit comfortably in your own range of styles.

I must apologize to anyone I might have misled last week with the announcement of the Abraxis Trio concert. It is this Sunday at Mem. Hall at 8:00, and I can promise that the two flutes and bassoon will provide a charming and perhaps merry entertainment. The other concert this week coming is the last in my own series, the Wednesday Noon Recitals, and I welcome pianist Lynn Johnson. Lynn will join me in an unusual program for the series, as it is made up more of 'solo' works rather than the chamber works which have characterized the other recitals. We will start with a fine sonata for viola and piano by Hindemith, play the Bartok Rumanian Rhapsody, which is largely quite sophisticated 'fiddle' music, and end with the Tzigane by Ravel, a virtuoso violin piece which is one of the jewels of the concert literature. Do come and enjoy it; perhaps you will find the program as exciting as I do!

CARIBBEAN NITE REVIEW

Last Saturday UNB's Caribbean students put on their 19th annual cultural night at the SUB cafeteria. The event was an expected success, and a great evening out, for the audience which packed the cafeteria to capacity.

The evening began with a tasty plateful of curried beef, chicken, and chick peas, as well as rice and red beans with fruit salad for dessert. The food was spicy and tasty but not nearly enough.

The Caribbean circle president, Michael Andrew, began the evening with a welcoming speech followed by the first ever woman guest speaker, Mrs. Kaye Nandlall. Mrs. Nandlall talked about the "cultural hookup" that would be witnessed in the events to follow. She had a very important message for the audience: she said that the Caribbean is not free from conflict and diversity, but the challenge lies in respecting the other cultures which make up this mosaic. The Caribbean Circle has managed to do just this by covering all aspects of their diverse culture.

The programme began with an upbeat, colorful, and at times funny, folk medley of Caribbean songs, which depicted Caribbean life in a light-hearted way. The M.C.'s for the evening, Aurelius Gordon and Gordon Porter, kept the events flowing in between

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