

Stocker's chorus performs mixed program

Mixed Chorus is a well disciplined chorus, strictly directed and cheerfully so.

Despite a rather small audience, that was not really sure whether to clap for the orchestra or not, enthusiasm for the chorus was not hesitant. They performed the Bach Motet, *Jesu My Joy and Treasure*, competently sung in English, with very much spi-i-i-i-rit. The program in general was very heavy on religious music, which is quite understandable. The bulk of good choral music has been written in response to religious inspiration. By the end of the long *Jesu, My Joy and Treasure*, I thought the sopranos were showing signs of strain on the high passages.

The Muczynski *Alleluna* was sung powerfully in contrast to the controlled *Alleluna* of Randall Thompson. The tenor section was outstanding in the Thompson, and the whole chorus observed dynamics very well.

I Bought Me a Cat was one of the more popular selections of the evening, and the dramatic break before the final line of each round "My cat says fiddle eye fee," whether it was the idea of the conductor, David Stocker, or if it is part of Aaron Copland's adaptation, was very effective.

The selection sung in German, *Die Mit Tranen Saen*, was possibly the least inspiring of the evening. David Stocker's own composition on a poem by Donne *Wilt Thou Forgive* was expressively sung.

From the Russian Orthodox liturgy, *Hospodi Pomuilui* has less than inspiring lyrics, which make one wonder how the entire chorus manages not to avoid getting tongue tied in the middle. Here again the obvious spirit and rapport of the chorus was the most important factor in putting the music across.

After intermission the

Chamber Choir, composed of 12 of the best (I assume) voices in the choir, performed four works. This was the only time when I could criticize the chorus for imbalance — the fact that I could identify individual voices.

The American Mercury was a sequence of transcripts from the *Americana*, and was the most interesting piece on the program. The inherent humor in the selections was well presented by the use of soloist for *The Staff Necromancer*. The original singing commercial, *God's Bottles*, convinced everyone that apples are better for you than the "harmful" drinks that men make from grapes and put in glass bottles—the verse about the apples made me wonder what the connection was to the original sin. After *The Sublime Process of Law Enforcement*, which is an unbelievably gruesome account of four executions in the early days of Arkansas law, the comic relief provided by a second singing commercial *Loveliness* was welcome.

Claude Debussy's *Deux Chansons* failed unfortunately for the same reason that the

German selection did, duet language difficulties. The French was not precise enough, and frankly did not sound like French. Claire Jacobsen sang the alto solo with a big and graceful sound. The baritone soloist, Frank Giffen, is a very smooth vocalist, and an excellent musician. The choir exhibited an excellent sense of "the cadence" here as in the entire concert.

In the American folksong by C. F. Bryan, *Charlottetown*, the chorus achieved what for me has always been the criterion of an excellent musical performance. The listener was no longer aware of the mechanics of the performance. The choir was relaxed, the dynamics well brought out, and the atmosphere of enjoyment was transferred from the chorus to the audience.

The concert ended, as is traditional, with the University Cheer Song, and even in a period of declining alma mater loyalty (or blind faith), an overall appreciation of the chorus dispelled cynicism and made the audience quite receptive.



records

"MONSTER" STEPPENWOLF Dunhill DS 50066

As a writer John Kay displays with this album that he is one of the best. Politically very aware, he has chosen to write about things he doesn't like about today's society. He has put them across in the way he knows best; through music. Nothing that he is saying is new, but his interpretations are powerful. I spoke to John Kay before the album was released and he said this about it:

"Collectively, all of us know certain musical idioms that we're familiar with and we work within the framework of these, and when there's no influences of what we get exposed to come in and they're fused into that. But basically, our musical advances are of a slow, natural evolution. This particular album will have the same kind of funky, familiar groove to it, but it's a concept album. It's a political-social concept album, where everything revolves around one central theme and it's like one piece of music. There's ten different songs, but they kind of flow into one another or are connected with musical bridges. It's called "Monster" and it deals with the American monster."

The cover on "Monster" is one of the best I've seen. It depicts a huge monster made up of almost everything generally associated with being wicked and evil.

EARLY BLUE GRASS Vintage Series RCA LPV-569

During the past year, country music has been the significant influence in rock music. A cult of fans have gotten behind country inspired bands such as The Band, The Youngbloods, Poco and The Flying Burrito Brothers. The emphasis is on simple country or Blue Grass as in the case of The Band.

Blue Grass is a form of country music developed by string-bands from the heart of the southern Appalachians. The name was coined in the mid-thirties after a group called Bill Monroe and his Blue Grass Boys. This particular group appears on "Early Blue Grass" as well as many of the other originators. The album is a collection of the best with many of the songs having been recorded in the 1930's.

Songs with names like "Windy Mountain", "Going To Georgia", and "Little Bessie" are done by groups like The Lonesome Pine Fiddlers, Roy Hall and the Blue Grass Entertainers, and Charlie Monroe and his Kentucky Partners.

Blue Grass music has made a great contribution to music. It's simple, honest, acoustic and sometimes religious.

A very significant album which many people might dismiss as corny.

—HOLGER PETERSON

DENNY BROOKS: Warner Bros. WB 1822

Formerly lead singer with the Back Porch Majority, Denny Brooks was "discovered" by producer-writer-geniuses Van Dyke Parks. Primarily folk-rock, this excellent record also includes a touch of country and western, acid rock, and gospel. The best cuts are those which allow the most vocal freedom, such as Joni Mitchell's "Both Sides Now" becomes a five minute drama. Gordon Lightfoot's "Wherefore and Why" is also very powerful. The arrangements are good and the album is exceptionally well-produced.

—LARRY SAIDMAN



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