

Get Classical

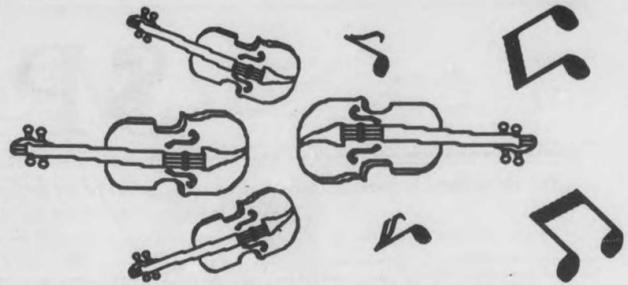
by Paul Campbell

I have been doing some soul-searching to try to verbalize why I prefer classical music to other forms available to us today, and just what I feel about those other forms and why. Consider this a personal statement.

First, I love soul music and its spinoffs, such as Cleo Lane, which marry jazz and soul. I find that it speaks to me directly, that it is musically satisfying and often exciting. You can 'feel along' with the music as you listen, and a good performance is an emotionally satisfying event. The same can be said for much of jazz. Although in its origins jazz was pretty explicitly sexual (did you know that the very

word 'jazz' was an American Negro turn-of-the-century euphemism for the sexual act?), the music quickly expanded beyond that to embrace a wider range of emotions. Jazz is frequently exultant, sometimes sad, or tender, and if it's good, always interesting. The fact that it is improvised as it is played makes it somewhat of a spectator sport, and I find that I feel good myself, along with the performer, when he has pulled off a good one. There remains an inherently sexual component to jazz, which I like, save for the really intellectual, avant-guard jazz, which seems to me impotent (pardon the pun), and for the

most part does not appeal. I grew up with the birth of rock - I was there when "Rock around the clock" first smashed its way to the top of the charts, was in grade 9 when Elvis Presley caused an international sensation by bgrating before the TV cameras - but even as a young fellow I did not find that rock appealed to me. That could be partly because I was already involved in classical music, but many of my friends who were as involved as I got off on rock. Because I have never paid much attention to rock, I am rather naive about it, so bear this in mind. I find rock too aggressive. There are rock groups that I enjoy, and have even sought out to listen



to. But it seems to me that most rock is exclusively concerned with the genitals, that it imposes a style or ethic that does not fit the soul well, and, frankly, it is often boring in its repetition. (I can hear screams and howls of outrage. OK, if I am wrong, set me straight: I would love to share what I learn in this column.) Another naive opinion, for what it is worth: it seems to me that the best rock groups are those that get beyond the genitals and express concern for others, the human state, or deal with concepts, such as Sting,

the Beatles, or Devo.

I enjoy country music. It seems to me at least sincere, and although the emphasis is on love (as opposed to sex), it is much wider-ranging in its subject matter. Country singers search out the whole range of emotions that are part of our everyday life, and sing about them. Also country retains its sense of humour, providing welcome relief by doing so. And woe betide the country singer who gets pretentious. He has to be REAL to be accepted. yet for me both rock and country music suffer from the same limitation; they are word-bound. That is, the lyrics generally carry the message (unless the message is to be found in the simple repetition of the beat) To sing about "the pain of saying good-bye" to the accompaniment of guitar and drums can communicate the feeling, but for the music itself to communicate it to you, you have to turn to soul or jazz, or, pre-eminently, classical music. Classical music has evolved over the centuries as a non-verbal language of emotion and spirit. Sure words are used at times, but the action is generally to be found in the music itself. But more of this next week. Feed-back is welcome. If you feel I have seriously short-shrifted your favorite form of music, my telephone number is 450-3191. And don't forget about my campus musicians register - phone me if you play and want to find others to play with.

This week (today, in fact at 12:30 at Mem Hall) the Duo Pach start their noon-hour series Connexions. The first country they are visiting is Merry Olde England with a performance of a Handel Sonata for violin and piano, the Walton Sonata for the same combination. Charles Burney, indefatigable chronicler of his time, said of Handel: "His general look was somewhat heavy and sad; but when he did smile, it was his sire the sun bursting out of a black cloud. There was a sudden flash of intelligence, wit and good humour beaming in his countenance, which I hardly ever say in any other." You can hear the elements of Burney's description in Handel's music, which is some of the greatest of the Baroque era (18th century). Walton's Sonata is a 20th century work (1949 to be exact), a two movement lyrical composition. Walton is one of the great mid-century British composers, who in the thirties wrote jazz and arranged fox-trots to make a living before he was discovered by the film industry. His music is lush and personal, and I am sure you will like it.

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