

A symphony review in parts; Edmonton and university

University

The enthusiastic presentation of University Symphony's program on March 4—Verdi's Overture to Nabucco, Grieg's Piano Concerto, and Sibelius' Symphony Number One—left one savoring a redolent bouquet.

The concentration of the guest pianist, Arthur Bray, throughout the concerto movement allowed for a maximum of musical expression; for example, in the cadenza, the pedal changes were effected with such precision that it was possible to follow the sequence of dissonance and resolution over the sostenuto bass note. The only criticism of the piano playing, again in the cadenza, that I would have, would be that in arpeggio sections the inner tremolo figurations tended to obscure the top melody notes in volume.

The orchestra gave continuous, well-blended support to the soloist, with the exception of the famous cello theme which, no doubt, caused consternation upon each occurrence: but a little sectional rehearsal would have soon remedied that. For the first time, I was able to trace the melodic threads of individual sections; particularly in horn accompaniments to the soloist. Such careful overlapping of voices deepens the dimensions of the music.

That Overture to Nabucco is a sensible choice for a student or-

chestra was definitely proven. The programmatic element received just recognition, and aside from some false entries, the whole was thoroughly enjoyable. In both this overture and the Grieg concerto, I felt that the vivacity, and presence of attack was a result of the conductor's having the confidence of the orchestra.

Ambitious, and by far the most demanding work on the program, came Sibelius' First Symphony. Unfortunately, from a listener's stand-point, this work presents more intellectual than musical appeal through the sheer intricacies of design. This in turn presents problems in performance—the planning of high points, the scaling of dynamics. Unless one brings salient features into relief against this often-thick texture, homogeneity results; for example, in the first movement, there is a tremolando in the strings, while the harp punctuates with a pedal figure; in the performance, one was only aware of an excessively long tremolando.

As with wine, so with the orchestra, the passage of time produced better results in the ensuing movements. Particularly effective were the Andante where the string playing gave intensity, and in the Scherzo with all its energy abounding. Not wanting to miss the opportunity of ending in O. Henry fashion, all united in the final quiet pizzicati.

Edmonton

The last of the regular symphony concerts of this season—with the exception of the Performing Artists Competition yet to come—featured an all-Beethoven program: Coriolan Overture, the Violin Concerto with guest artist, Henryk Szeryng, and Symphony No. 7.

Overture to Coriolan, written in 1807 as an introduction to Collin's play, stands apart from other works of the same form in that it is in itself complete, there being no other known music for that play from which to draw themes. As a general observation, on long decreasing notes in both strings and woodwinds, a weak, dwindling tone was what should have been an intense, retreating tone.

With Beethoven's Seventh Symphony came a prelude to spring, the lively 6/8 rhythm contributing to the continuous forward motion. The first theme in the Allegretto received exceptionally fine treatment from the violins, violas and cellos. However, further on in this movement, the second violins' spiccato accompanying figure lagged slightly.

An ailment common to the Vivace and the latter part of the Scherzo was indistinct phrase endings and beginnings. Possibly the choice (or lack of choice?) of so fast a tempo, as in the Scherzo, played a part in this problem. However, the opening showed good phrasing and controlled dynamics.

The orchestra's projection of the rhythm in the Presto and their deliberate acknowledgment of the syncopations in the last, and waltz-like theme restored one's humour.

Of Mr. Szeryng's playing, as witnessed in the violin concerto, one cannot criticize but only observe those things which are considered the ideals of string playing. His assiduous concern for a beautiful sound, and how best to achieve it; for example, the tasteful use of harmonics, the variation of speed of the vibrato, and care in attacking and releasing notes; his personal solicitude for the direction of phrases and sections. The polyphonic cadenza, in the first movement, testified to his Bachian scholarship (and was later verified in Mr. Szeryng's encore, the Fugue from the G Minor Partita for unaccompanied Violin). Although the material of the cadenza was wholly derived from what preceded, I felt that many figurations were overworked. However, when one considers the facility required to play such notes, this is but a minor point.

In the Larghetto, the orchestra provided a beautifully sonorous background, both bowed and pizzicato, for the unaffected but deeply ponderous line of the solo violin. But alas for the finale Rhondo! A little more visual contact between conductor and soloist might have prevented several non-coincisions, both at major phrase resolutions, and in particular, in the first round of the bassoon obbligato.

There can be no question that artistry equals technical command plus interpretive sensitivity. It is to be hoped that the next Edmonton Symphony season will be host to artists as distinguished as Henryk Szeryng.

By way of a sneak preview: an informed source tells me to expect Arthur Fiedler, conductor; Daniel Barenboim, pianist; Igor Oistrakh, violinist; and Lois Marshall, contralto on the musical menu.

—Barbara Fraser

Verdi's La Traviata in April, Edmonton Opera Association

Verdi's *La Traviata* is to be the next presentation of the Edmonton Opera Association.

The opera, under the direction of Irving Guttman, will be staged April 3, 5 and 6 at the Jubilee Auditorium. It brings together three artists who have been warmly received by Edmonton audiences in three separate previous operas.

Heather Thomson, the young Canadian soprano who was seen here in January of 1957 in *Faust* will sing the part of the courtesan Violetta Calery. Frank Porretta of the New York City Opera, the Rodolfo of the Edmonton Opera Association's *La Boheme* in May of 1966, will play the role of Alfredo Germont. Enzo Sordello of the La Scala Opera Company in Milan portrays that part of Giorgio Germont. Mr. Sordello will be remembered for his excellent interpretation of the villainous Baron Scarpia in *Tosca* in the fall of 1966.

John Crosby, general director of the Santa Fe Opera, will conduct the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Crosby founded the Santa Fe Opera in 1957 as a repertory company with festival standards and the daring to present unfamiliar works.

In the 11 seasons since then, he has guided its steady growth and seen it gain international reputation. Mr. Crosby finds the time to

conduct regularly and is recognized as a specialist in the works of Puccini and Strauss.

The large chorus will be under the direction of Sandra Munn who has been chorus master for *Tosca*, *Faust*, and *Barber of Seville*.

Celia Franca of the National Ballet will do the choreography for *La Traviata*. She will work with Ruth Carse of the Alebrta Ballet. It is expected that the lead dancers will come from the National Ballet in Toronto.

In addition to the three principal parts, Verdi wrote many exceptional lead roles for *Traviata*. These parts will all be taken by Edmontonians who have all appeared in previous productions.

Lucie Baril (Musetta in *Boheme*) has been cast as Flora. Lucien Lorieau (Angelotti in *Tosca*) will sing Doctor Grenvil. Elise Dery (Siebel in *Faust*) is to be Annina. Valentin Sagert (Sergeant in *La Boheme*) is the Marquis D'Obigny, and Armand Baril is Baron Douphol. Jean Letourneau, one of the founders of the Edmonton Opera Association and a well-known tenor, will sing Gastone.

Tickets are now on sale at the opera box office in Heintzman's. All students will be able to reserve any seat in the house for half the regular price.

leftovers

Many people on campus this week, asked if they were interested in protesting the fee hike, said that they felt it would do no good, and that inflation in the field of higher education was inevitable.

Four years ago, in the spring of 1964, the university proposed a hike in residence rates of sixteen dollars a month. Residents and other students were enraged; they banded together and protested the move by demonstrating in front of the administration building. Five hundred students were present at this demonstration.

A further protest was to be held at the Legislative building, but a phone call from the premier of the province, who exercised less political subtlety in those days, squelched the move. The demonstrators were forced into retirement—a retirement, it seems, which has become permanent.

But the important thing is this—the protest was a successful one, and residence rates were not raised as much as had been planned. It was proven that a physical protest, orderly or disorderly, can get results.

It is curious that the lesson has so easily been forgotten. Whining complaints of "what can we do?" accomplish nothing, as two residence rate hikes in as many years have proven. But the students of The University of Alberta seem to enjoy being trampled on—they wallow in an ecstasy of economic masochism, while the wealthy province of Alberta flogs them with new increases in what can only be described as taxation.

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As you have undoubtedly realized by now, this is the last issue of the Gateway, the last issue of Casserole, and the last Leftovers column of the year.

We would like to take this opportunity, first of all, of thanking all those who contributed to the publication of Casserole throughout the academic year.

Casserole is still, after two years, largely an experiment. It has not yet realized its full potential, and new ideas to help it reach that potential are always welcome.

The Leftovers column made its first appearance this year, designed to terminate the supplement, to amuse its readers, to make frivolous social comment. If it has succeeded in any, all, or none of these aims, please feel free to drop us a line and tell us what you thought of it.

And finally, let us say good-bye to that happy troupe of SUB denizens: the Phantom, Joshua Quickfingers, Emily Broadbottom, your friendly neighborhood supervisor, and all the others who made the wee hours a little less lonely.

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