

Kudos for Kang

Juliette Kang, Violin
Uri Mayer, Conductor
Maclab Theatre
Sunday, September 17

by James Ingram

The ESO's Super Sunday Matinee Series got off to a promising start last weekend in the Citadel's Maclab Theatre. The series is intended to appeal to a somewhat broader audience than the evening shows (the matinee crowd tends to include more seniors and children — it's palpably less pretentious) and the programme was tuneful and accessible. The orchestra played well, but the real story was the return of Juliette Kang, native Edmontonian and prodigy violinist.

Mendelssohn's "the Hebrides," a short concert overture, opened the performance, and proved to be a nice piece of music. I hate to use the "n" word, but it applies perfectly to

...beyond her age...

Mendelssohn: he was born with lots of talent and lots of money, very likely never had a bad day, and his music reeks of it. "The Hebrides" is meant to musically describe the stormy sea and cliffs of Scotland — the program called it "sombre and brooding" — but really it's much too neat and symmetrical (and, sorry, nice) to brood. It is an excellent concert piece, starting with a simple, minor melody in the lower strings, spilling across the orchestra as the tune is developed, reaching a few dramatic climaxes, and then finishing quietly, repeating the initial theme in the basses. The orchestra's reading was excellent. Maestro Mayer moved through at a steady, controlled pace that let the piece unfold naturally. His handling of the balance was similarly expert: the orchestra had no difficulty in filling the small room, but Mayer held them in check, only letting loose when it was to the best dramatic effect. Good music well played, but call it brooding and

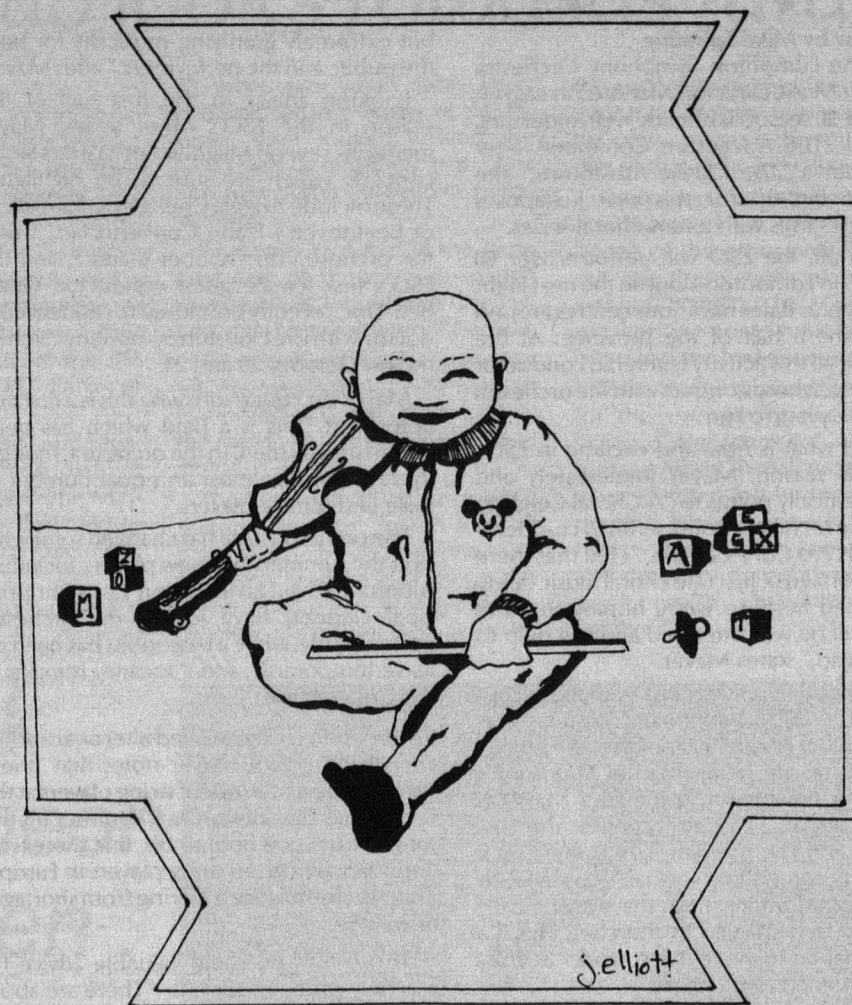
you're on your own.

The next item had me a little worried. It was a complete symphony written by late Torontonian Healy Willan in about 1940. I know it's unpatriotic, but I'm always wary of Canadian content, particularly in classical music, and I confess that I was prepared for some typical middle-twentieth century intellectual music (sort of like Prokofiev with a PhD). The symphony turned out to be a pleasant surprise: melodic, dynamic and far from dry. Willan used Brahms's first symphony as a model, and there are similarities. Each movement works with one simple theme and then develops the heck out of it. Like Brahms, it can sound somewhat dense and even turgid at times, but careful listening was rewarded with constantly changing melodies and moods.

The highlight of the concert was undoubtedly thirteen-year-old Juliette Kang doing the Tchaikovsky violin concerto. The concerto is a definite crowd pleaser; full of familiar melodies that threaten to descend into schmaltz, but always escape by their originality and the skill with which they are used. At the same time, its extraordinary difficulty makes it an ideal showcase for the virtuoso violinist.

Kang's performance, particularly in the first two movements, was so seamless that I kept having to remind myself how difficult the piece actually is. She demonstrated not only fabulous technique but also a surprisingly rich tone and a concert flair that are far beyond her age. Her playing was so energetic that at the end of the first and third movements she had worn through a part of her bow and had to tear off the dangling remains. Her only problem seemed to be fatigue: she was unable to compete with the volume of the orchestra after the long solo in the first movement and had one or two technical problems toward the end of the high; demanding finale. Both times, though, she was able to take a brief rest during an orchestral passage and came back as strong as ever.

For her encore she selected a theme and



variations, in which the same rather insipid tune was repeated using different techniques. The depth of the composition was irrelevant; it was simply a means of showing off his technique. I can only say that I had no idea what a violin can do. At one point she plucked out the melody using the smallest finger of her left hand while accompanying herself with bowed arpeggios, which were fast enough to be of considerable difficulty

in themselves. As important as mechanical skill, her tone was sufficient to fill the theatre, and her sense of musicality transcended the piece and managed to entertain and communicate with the audience. Based on the technique, composure, and artistry of her playing last Sunday, it would be no surprise to see Juliette Kang go on to become one of the world's top violinists.

COUPON COUPON COUPON COUPON COUPON COUPON



COMFORT CONTACT LENS

First Edmonton Place
10665 Jasper Avenue
423-5580

*** Contact Lenses**

\$25⁰⁰ off

This is a limited offer, subject to end without notice.

* Complete fittings only please.

COUPON COUPON COUPON COUPON COUPON COUPON

The Art of Buying Contact Lenses

Who should you choose?

✓ **Choose a company that cares.**

Comfort Contact Lens has a history of service unparalleled in the industry. Ask someone who has been to see us!

✓ **Choose a company that guarantees fit.**

Comfort Contact Lens offers a full refund trial period with every pair of contact lenses.

✓ **Choose a company that supplies fast, efficient service.**

Comfort Contact Lens has same day service on most WEEKENDER, tinted WEEKENDER, and now rigid gas permeable lenses.

✓ **Choose a company with experienced personnel.**

Comfort Contact Lens personnel have been solving contact lens problems in Edmonton for over 17 years.

✓ **Choose a company that allows you to make payments.**

Comfort Contact Lens allows you to make 3 payments with no interest, when being fitted for new contact lenses.

