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Venuti still impresses

by Will O'Hara

Lovers of early jazz and living history were thrilled to see the performance of Joe Venuti, jazz violinist, at the Cohn on Sunday night. Venuti is one of the immortal musicians who at seventy-two still have the speed and wit he had in the Roaring Twenties.

Joe Venuti's back up band featured Toronto pianist Carol Britto, a brilliant pianist dressed in black pant suit with pink and red roses, silver high heels, diamond earrings and a blond wig. The bass player kept well to the background for reasons that were apparent when he played a short solo. The drummer was a good back-up drummer - modest but consistent and responsive to the rhythm changes of Venuti.

Introduced as a friend who had played with Joe Venuti 55 years ago, though not looking over sixty, was trombonist Spegal Wilcox making a special guest appearance. Wilcox introduced himself with the opening measure of Tchaikovsky's

Piano Concerto No. 1 in B flat minor but he soon got into the spirit of the Joe Venuti jazz.

Then there was Guiseppe Venuti himself in a snappy black velvet suit with black pattered leather shoes. Venuti has been internationally known as one of the great jazz violinists since the twenties. He is one of the old style musicians with a simple, direct approach to his audience. Instead of written programs he introduced the tunes himself or in some cases let the audience guess. One of the most impressive things about Venuti was the way the veteran performer handled the audience and the feeling of a good time he created.

Venuti's first tune was the old classic "Sweet Georgia Brown" followed by a 1925 John Green tune called "Body and Soul". Without any embarrassing intro came a medley from My Fair Lady including old favorites like "I Could Have Danced All Night" and "I've Grown Accustomed to Your Face."

In each of these tunes Venuti

would start things rolling and pass the solo to Carol Britto or Wilcox. The piano solos were great and well appreciated by the audience. Improvisation and endless variety are not often so closely linked. Wilcox did well on his solos but he seemed to spend a lot of time quietly watching.

A Duke Ellington medley featured Venuti playing chordal violin by slipping all four strings at once.

Another old classic from a medley of George Gershwin tunes was "Summertime". There's nothing like blues played on a violin to spark summertime images of high cotton and jumping fish.

Most of Venuti's style is reminiscent of the Grappelly, Reinhart sound of Paris in the thirties. The closest to this style was "Autumn Leaves" that he learned in Paris in 1935 when he was twenty-one. By the time most musicians reach the age of seventy-two they start to show signs of slowing down but Joe Venuti seems to be just warming up.

Bim just didn't shine

by TOM CLAHANE

To say the Bim concert at the Cohn was smashing success would be somewhat of an overstatement. He never really swept the audience away but he never really lost them either. Bim was entertainment and entertaining he was good at. He has excellent stage presence and develops instant rapport with his audience. Unlike many performers he shows no unwillingness to talk to

them about his music, or what inspires him, and his music is good, sometimes very good. It just didn't shine with the same brilliance that sets apart stars like Bruce Cockburn or Murray McLaughlin. Until very recently I had never heard of him, and I have very little idea of what to expect from the performance. I certainly wasn't disappointed though. Aided by Betsy and Gary (from Edmonton) Bim rapped, played and

sang and the atmosphere put you sitting around the fire at home. If you're ever out west and you get a chance to see "Betsy and the Bluenotes" you'd be advised to take it. Betsy enchanted the audience from the start, doing a few numbers of her own before singing beautiful harmony with Bim for most of the first half. She possesses a beautiful voice and has a unique country style. Gary plays acoustic lead guitar, flowing easily from folk and blues to M.O.R.

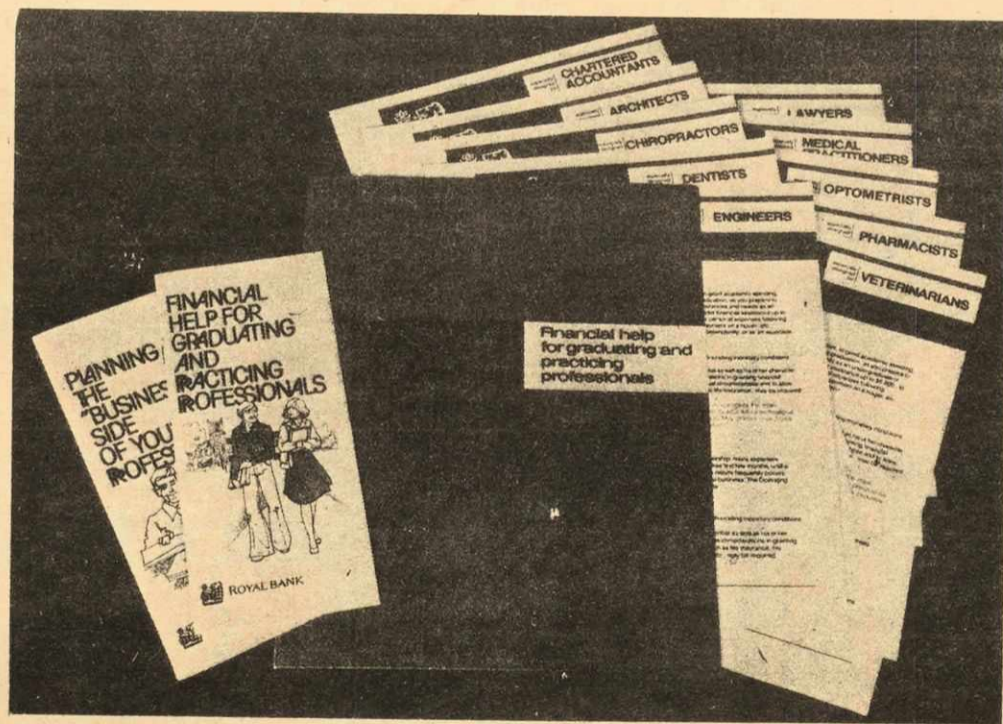
Bim himself has a good though high-pitched voice, which unfortunately tends to obscure many of the lyrics in the faster numbers. I enjoyed the slower ones more, and the long divergences into song origins and just general conversation put the performance at a relaxed easy pace. I enjoyed both the performance and Bim but it's still a long way to stardom for the "Kid Full of Dreams". The second album will be out for Christmas.

Wet-dry

On Saturday November 20, the Student Union entertainment program will feature the first in a series of three "Green Room-wet, McInnes Room-dry" functions. Liquor will be restricted to one room only, the Green Room, while entertainment will be featured in the McInnes Room. This experiment arises out of concern expressed by many students that those under the legal drinking age are restricted from many entertainment programs featured in the SUB. At the October 24 Council Meeting, members decided to institute a function restricting the bar to one room and the entertainment to another. All students will have access to the McInnes Room while only those over 19 years of age may enter the Green Room.

Saturday November 20 will feature "Caper Nite" at the SUB. This function is co-sponsored by the Inter-Residence Committee of the Howe and Shirreff Halls and the Programming Department. The night will consist of:

1. A fish chowder buffet-style meal from 7:30-8:30 p.m.
2. A Cape Breton fiddler, Mike MacDougall and guitarist from 9:00-10:00 p.m.
3. Sam Moon from 10:00-1:00a.m.



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