

arts

Maestro guides symphony through nursery rhyme

by Les Sheldon

The Edmonton Symphony Orchestra opened its new season October 8. The premier show, with guest pianist Abbey Simon, was a solid performance.

Maestro Hetu expertly guided the orchestra through the three major segments of the program — *Overture to the Flying Dutchman* (Wagner), *Variations on a Nursery Rhyme*, Op. 25 (Dohnanyi), and *Symphony No. One* (Sibelius).

The *Overture to The Flying Dutchman* was a vivid sound portrayal of the tales of the phantom ship that inspired Wagner's opera. The fury of the storm and the doleful crew are powerfully presented in agitated and forlorn passages. The somberity of the resigned crew is admirably juxtaposed to the melodic love of the maiden Senta. The boisterous, courageous songs of the ship's crew are echoed by the orchestra

until the close of the overture.

Abbey Simon performed the piano passages of *Variations on A Nursery Rhyme*. The ominous, suspenseful initial passages were terminated by a single crash of the bass drum which sent the audience into the depths of horror. The solo entry of the piano playing a tune familiar as "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" swept the audience into memories of secure, happy times. The smiles on everyone's faces witnessed the power of the music. The Nursery Tune was repeated 11 more times, with each version being more complex than the preceding. The closing passage was very similar to the first variation, providing a pleasing full-circle ending.

Abbey Simon performed masterfully. He answered his third stage call with a solo performance of *The Dance of the Blessed Spirit*. The melodic passages, the precise trills, and the pleasing harmonics drew another thunder of applause from

the audience. As a parting gift, Abbey Simon performed an un-introduced, energetic keyboard study.

Symphony No. One in E Minor was of the Grant European genre. The first movement was introduced by a solitary woodwind. The lyrical passages of the second were given added grace by the harmonic harp strains. The rhythmic characteristics of the third movement were heralded by the timpani. The final movement, introduced by the same woodwind passage, as the first, closed in violent and disturbed passages.

Anyone who has even a passing interest in classical music should take the opportunity to see a symphonic orchestra of international caliber such as the Edmonton Symphonic Orchestra. Appreciating classical music without attending a concert can be likened to passing a course without attending lectures: It doesn't work.

If you have been thinking about classical music and don't know where to start, this could be the one. Deutsche Grammophon (2721 051) has released a two record album featuring a popular work from each of 14 major composers. The works are performed by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of H. Von Karajan. Everyone should find at least two pieces of music that they will like.

dirty linen

by Gordon Turtle

When I was in Grade 9, one of the major activities of our social gatherings was to assemble around one of those globe-shaped stereo speakers that looked like old Star Trek props, and carefully analyze *Revolution #9*, from the white Beatles album. Skeptics and believers alike listened attentively, eager to discover some clue as to whether Paul McCartney was still alive; indeed, to find out if he had ever existed.

Well, I never did find out from that album whether or not McCartney lived in the material world then, (he certainly does now), but I did learn an enormous amount about the Beatles, and their place in contemporary music.

There are some people who still insist that the Beatles were never really serious musicians, but I think it is safe to say, (even if I share a cliché opinion), that the Beatles reached and maintained a level of maturity previously unheard of in pop music. In fact, the prime contribution of the Beatles to the modern entertainment world was their still unique ability to blend serious subject matter and musical content with popular appeal and trendy techniques. Take a song like *Eleanor Rigby*; no song at that time had ever reached the top ten and dealt with a topic that this song does.

I remember running home from a friend's place during the Paul McCartney's death rumours, scared half-crazy of God-knows-what, after hearing some voice say, "I buried Paul," very distinctly, at the end of *Strawberry Fields Forever*. We followed that sadistically with a close listening to *A Day in the Life*. Talk about shivers up my spine!

I mention this to provide some evidence as to the tremendous impact the Beatles had on all of us, during our adolescent years. Even if you never owned a Beatles album, I am sure you were touched somehow by the four lads.

No doubt the high point of the Beatles' career, (if it is possible to establish one single high point at all) was the *Abbey Road* album. Even though the album sold for one dollar more than most other albums, (I'm sure we all remember that), it was well worth the extra buck. Many qualified music critics I have met, and none of them real Beatles fanatics, content that *Abbey Road*, remains the perfect example of exquisitely-produced rock music. I am inclined to agree to a large extent. The second side of that album is funny, sad, lovely, exciting, and puzzling, all at the same time. And there are so many significant things on that album! Every time the Beatles say "yeah, yeah, yeah," the significance is astounding!

Listen, even my mother likes a couple of Beatle songs. Everyone does. Can you name any other artist or group that has touched the world to such an extent? The summer Beatles' revival served at least one purpose; it awoke a lot of people to the importance of the band. And even though we now hear *Yesterday* more than we hear *You Never Give Me Your Money* (which is regretful), we should appreciate the fact that the Beatles have been even slightly resurrected from potential obscurity.

Remember, it was John Lennon who taught us how many holes it takes to fill the Albert Hall.

Acting fails to play

Enter a Freeman by Tom Stoppard. Walterdale Playhouse. by Kevin Gillese

A production marred by awkward transitions, yet with excellent acting from its amateur cast, opened the Walterdale season Tuesday with *Enter A Freeman*.

The play deals with the affairs of George Riley, a detached semi-lunatic inventor (played by Warren Graves), and his family.

Riley has been an "inventor" of sorts all his life and the play opens with his invention of an envelope having gum on both sides of the flap "so it can be used twice."

The new invention creates a crisis in Riley's life and he walks out for good on his wife Persephone (played by Mary Glenfield) and his daughter Linda (Joan Milroy).

He walks out because his family doesn't understand his invention - just as they haven't understood his other inventions (such as the water-cooled machine gun which makes tea for

the soldiers working it). When Riley walks on stage the beginning he is a laughable character - when he walks off at the end of the play, he is a sad figure, living in his own world wrapped up in a dream-world of his creation.

To make the transition from this initial laughable character to the final pathetic figure is a very difficult thing to do - and unfortunately I don't think this play does it.

Graves plays Riley well. Glenfield makes the mother a warm figure and the daughter does a good job with what is best a type-cast situational role. But somewhere along the line, the production falters. There are awkward moments when timing is off in a glaring way.

The play needs polish from the director and more emphasis on timing and small details. The acting is fine - of a very high calibre for amateur theatre. But it's still not enough to pull the production from its definitely amateur status at present to what it could be - a work of considerable dramatic impact.



Alice Artzt performing at the Provincial Museum and Archives, to an assorted audience of classical guitar enthusiasts. Ms. Artzt was brought in by the Edmonton Classical Guitar Society. Photo Keith Miller

Stark movie explores the bizarre

by Gordon Turtle

Obsession, Director: Brian de Palma. Starring Cliff Robertson and Genevieve Bujold.

Director Brian de Palma has stated that *Obsession* was made in honour of the world of Alfred Hitchcock, and has chosen the plot for the movie to be quite similar to Hitchcock's *magnum opus*, *Vertigo*.

In duplicating a Hitchcock film, however, de Palma was not entirely successful. Although *Obsession* contains much of Hitchcock's rather macabre humour, it does not possess the flair and dynamism of most of Hitchcock's work. Rather, *Obsession* is a dark movie, almost totally devoid of cheer, and constantly full of bleak, stark, and hopeless imagery.

Obsession examines, from the inside, the struggle of a man who, torn between reality and illusion, eventually chooses to believe the impossible. The movie examines distrust, suspicion, and betrayal, but concludes, on a note of redemption, albeit the redemption is perhaps too late.

The movie opens on an evening in 1959, to find Michael Courtland, (Cliff Robertson), and his wife Elizabeth, (Genevieve Bujold), hosting a party to celebrate their tenth wedding anniversary. Very Truffaut-ish, the party scene includes a dance that Courtland has with his nine-year old daughter; a dance that is to prove significant near the end of the movie.

After the guests have left, the Courtlands' romantic interlude is interrupted by a cry from their daughter's bedroom, and Elizabeth goes to investigate. When she doesn't return, Michael goes to check it out, and discovers that wife and daughter have been kidnapped, and a note demanding 500,000 dollars ransom is found.

Against the demands of the kidnapers, Courtland calls the police, who assure him they will solve the matter and retrieve wife, daughter, and money with no problem at all. But the police plan fails through their own bungling, and Courtland's wife and daughter are killed.

Sixteen years later, we find Courtland still feeling guilty about the whole affair, not to mention a deep sense of loss for his wife. To perk him up a bit, his business associate suggests the two of them go to Florence, (where Courtland first met his wife), for a bit of business and pleasure.

In Florence, Courtland visits the church where he met Elizabeth twenty-six years earlier, and is shocked to meet a girl who is exactly like his late wife in appearance and mannerisms. Sandra, (Genevieve Bujold) soon is made aware of the uncanny similarities, and quite quickly, Courtland brings her back to the U.S.A. to be married.

The bizarre soon turns to the unbelievable, as Courtland becomes obsessed with Elizabeth-Sandra, and soon, there is no distinction; Sandra is Elizabeth.

The movie concludes with a number of surprises and shocks,

all of which are successful in their purpose; yanking the audience from disbelief to reality, and then back the other way again. Courtland, strong in his belief that Sandra is somehow his late wife returned to him, loses his friends and his job in a desperate attempt to win back his love.

Obviously, the movie is very romantic, and the less cynical amongst the audience might shed a few tears, (of sadness at first, then joy), as the movie concludes. But *The Way We Were* fans should avoid *Obsession*, as should admirers of *The Gumball Rally*, as the movie is generally low-key, but psychologically tense.

Cliff Robertson, because of the nature of the film, is forced to carry the bulk of the movie's impact on his shoulders. And the task he accomplishes marvellously. Courtland is moody, reticent, and difficult to understand, and Robertson's characterization is above reproach.

Genevieve Bujold's assignment is equally difficult because we never know who she is until the end of the movie. She is many people, all at the same time, and Bujold, (redeeming herself after *Earthquake*), is startlingly mysterious and puzzling.

Although not scary in the same way that *Black Christmas* was, *Obsession* is shudderingly suspenseful, and its conclusion is highly emotional, as well as informative. Although not quite obsessed, I was somewhat swept away by the ending; which is what I like in a movie.

Mind you, I hate *The Gumball Rally*.