

# Huston caps Kipling

by Dorothy Becker

Henry James said that Rudyard Kipling's stories converged "the irresistible magic of scorching suns, subject empires, uncanny religions and uneasy garrisons." This statement sums up perfectly the atmosphere of John Huston's film of Kipling's story "The Man Who Would Be King". Twentieth century audiences may find the nineteenth century mixture of patriotic imperialism, religious fervor and high adventure amusing and possibly even unrealistic, but Huston has undoubtedly captured the flavour of Kipling's stories which made them so popular with both children and adults of the late Victorian era.

The film begins in India where we meet Kipling himself (Christopher Plummer) as the young correspondent of an Indian newspaper. He is in the process of having his watch stolen by a rather seedy character, and then surprisingly, having it returned by the same character

because at the end of the watch chain dangles a gold insignia of the Brotherhood of Masons. And so begins Kipling's involvement in a rather strange and macabre story. The shady character turns out to be Peachy Carnahan (Michael Caine), sometime soldier, thief, womanizer, and irrepresible all-round adventurer. Peachy introduces Kipling to his life-long and no less exuberant companion in devious enterprises, Danial Davit (Sean Connery) and, almost before he knows what has happened, Kipling finds himself witnessing the signing of a pact of friendship between Peachy and Danny as a prelude to their plan to become "King" of "Kafiristan", (an unexplored country somewhere north and east of India from which no white man has ever returned alive).

The long and dangerous journey to Kafiristan, their incredibly fortuitous meeting with a native of Kafiristan, Billy Fish (a former

soldier in the British Indian army who speaks English) and a miraculously "lucky" skirmish, result in their being able to formulate a small army of adoring natives. Danny and Peachy have not only become conquering heroes, the natives believe that Danny is a god, the son of Alexander the Great. Glory, riches, power--all seem to be within easy reach. Kipling, the Victorian moralist, cannot leave his heroes at this pinnacle of delight and the finale of the story is as shocking as it is believable.

Sean Connery and Michael Caine are both excellent as the robust, loyal and "loveable" adventurers. Their former roles as James Bond and Alfie seem almost bland compared to these colorful, eye-twinkling, and lusty characterizations. Plummer, as Kipling, portrays a personality in which personal reticence and the writer's curiosity are nicely blended to contrast vividly with the devil-may-care attitudes of Peachy and Danny. The film is a very colorful documentation of an era in which unbounded optimism and unmitigated belief in the achievements of the white race were not only fashionable, but inspiring.





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# Competence but no polish for soloists

by Bradley Warner

On Saturday March 27th, the Dalhousie Chamber Soloists attempted to give their Rebecca Cohn audience a decent concert of relatively appealing works. I do not wish to seem unduly critical, for on the whole it was a pleasant evening of music, displaying the talents of a number of fine musicians.

The program consisted of three quartets and a trio serenade: Benjamin Britten's Phantasy Quartet, Op.2 (1932), for Oboe and String Trio; W.A. Mozart's Quartet in D Major, K.285 (1777), for Flute Violin, Viola, and Cello; Quartet Op.40 No. 3 in Bb Major, for Bassoon and String Trio by Franz Danzi; Erno von Dohnanyi's Serenade in C Major, Op.10, for Violin, Viola, and Cello.

The string trio was Dalhousie instructors: Philippe Djokic -- violin; William Vallo -- cello; as well as guest violinist, Leslie Malowany, presently Principal Violist with the Vancouver Symphony. The woodwind contingent were also Dalhousie music instructors: Jeanne Baxtrasser -- flute; Peter Bowman -- oboe; and David Carroll -- bassoon.

This concert's strong point was the woodwind complement; oboe, flute, and bassoon, each appearing as a dominant actor in the first three works. Ms. Baxtrasser, in particular, gave an impressive per-

formance in the Mozart D Major Quartet. Messieurs Bowman and Carroll gave equally creditable examples of their artistry in the Britten Phantasy and the Danzi Quartet.

However, the string trio was rather disappointing, they lacked the consistency (perhaps sensitivity) which is necessary in maintaining the interest and excitement of the music. A string trio or quartet is limited in strength. (Perhaps the Rebecca Cohn Theatre was not suited to such a chamber concert.) Particularly in the last work, the Dohnanyi Serenade, the trio was unable to unite their energies consistently, so that at times, their exertions ran at cross purposes. The music's textures, emotions--dramaticism, were extremely taxing on the three performers.

But alas, although Mr. Djokic may be a fine solo performer, he still has to learn the skill of melding properly within a small ensemble.

Mr. Vallo, whom I normally regard as a consistent and sensitive ensemble player, somehow managed to be 'out of tune' during the Mozart number. However, he was dexterous enough to make this lapse not seem to be too glaring in the ear of the listener. Finally, the special guest soloist, Mr. Malowany, was also rather disappointing. But perhaps this is only to be

expected, since the trio only had a few days to get acquainted with each other's playing styles in practice session. Maybe I expected that the Dalhousie Chamber Soloists would perform works which would better display the talents of the Principal Violist of the Vancouver Symphony.

Oh well, "C'est la vie". Not all concerts are stimulating experiences.



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