



by Ross Rudolph

The standard answer to the question "Aimez-vous Brahms?" must be that "I'm not too fussy about Brahms and Debussy." For all those who would seriously question their attachment to Brahms, the Chamber Music Society gave an ample opportunity to assess a composer who since his lifetime has been more seriously lionized and unmercifully castigated than most in musical history.

The opposing points of view are epitomized by the disagreement on the first work featured by the Winnipeg Trio consisting of Ada Bronstein, piano, Gerald Stanick, viola and Peggy Sampson, 'cello.

Of the Violin and Piano Sonata the music critic B. H. Haggin has pronounced, from the depths of his musical erudition, experience, and (one is forced to say) intuition, that it revealed to him the pretense of Brahms, the striving after effect in the manner (but not matter) of Beethoven. For Karl Geringer, the F Major Sonata initiates a series of instrumental sonatas, including the second and third for Violin and Piano which number among Brahms' finest. You pays your money and you makes your choice.

Unless you happen to be in the felicitous position of writing music criticisms for the Gateway, in which case you pay no money, which does not prevent you from exercising, as is your wont, your freedom to express a prejudice. While I come down firmly on the side of Brahmsin, I would not carry the belief to a fetish.

The later 'cello sonata, unlike its predecessor, does not demand sustained playing from the string member in his higher register, which is more carrying. Against the background of tremolo piano, the passionate opening demands a muscular masculine delivery which one could not honestly ask of Miss Sampson. If one could disregard the mannerisms that result from an artist's total involvement in music making, this was honest and usually moving music-making, to which Ada Bronstein's piano playing made no small contribution. The effects of long association were pleasant to note, an incentive for similarly inclined Edmonton musicians, and suggestive to the local CBC outlet. If there were one criticism of the delivery of this very virile piece, it would suggest that greater effect could be made by regard for outlining rhythms more sharply, especially when mustering the body of tone is so demanding.

A serious question arises when one attempts performance of Brahms' later Clarinet works in the viola transcriptions sanctioned by the composer. I attended the concerts with serious misgivings about the possibility of the appropriateness of the substitution and to my amazement the trio fared extremely well. By comparison with the op. 40 Horn Trio which in its exuberant finale cries out for the French Horn (You who have heard it with the permitted 'cello substitution can testify to the blandness), the op. 114 trio survives the intrusion rather well. My sole objection to the performance was in regard to the tempo of the slow movement. There seems to me a tendency among performers, understandable in light of the anxieties of live performance, to render music faster than its character and my metabolism dictate. It is admittedly difficult to hold either a line, or an audience's attention at a true adagio.

Mr. Stanick's performance of the sonata op. 124 No. 1 was the most debatable. One could question whether even in the hands of a Primrose this can sound viola music. The range of the instrument is hardly exploited by the music; double stopping is with one significant exception virtually absent; the entire piece is performed acro and at that there is only one departure from



The Shaming Of The True

pseudo-art or real?

by Don Wells

More and more these days we are being confronted by something called "Modern Art." It is manifesting itself in all forms of the fine arts: literature, the visual arts, music and drama. Many people, when they come face to face with an abstract painting or read a so-called "beat" poem, call it rubbish.

Pictures are often published of "artists" throwing handfuls of pigment at a canvas across the room, or rolling nudes first in paint and then on canvas, (this situation seldom makes good photo material). Are these methods of making a picture a new technique, or is it some idiot's idea of a joke?

Not long ago I began thinking about the possibility of pseudo-art posing as real art. I became deeply incensed with the thought of these pseudo-artists, these leeches, these toadstools, trying to force crap down the throats of the public under the name of Art.

I began ranting and raving about the dishonesty of it all and was set to crusade through the country, with banners and all, when I suddenly realized I didn't really know what I was protesting against.

Is "modern art" true art? Or are these supposed artists trying to pull the canvas over the public's eyes? Is there any set of rules to which we can refer to judge whether or not a piece of work is art? Can we trust the critics in their judgments? Can we trust the artists?

Actually all these questions are just obscure ways of asking that old stumper that has bothered philosophers, critics, artists and laymen alike throughout history: **WHAT IS ART?**

In order to absolve myself from any blame for any rash statements made in attempting to answer these questions, I interviewed four professors in the different Fines Arts departments.

ARTS CALENDAR

- Richard Lewis, British Tenor**
Celebrity Series Concert
Friday, Feb. 15, 8:30 p.m.
Jubilee Auditorium
- Edmonton Symphony Society Concert**
Sunday, Feb. 17, 3:00 and 9:00 p.m.
Jubilee Auditorium
- The Writer and His Audience**
Lecture by Leslie Fiedler
Humanities Association and Philosophical Society
Thursday, Feb. 21
Room 2104, Med Building
- J.B., verse play by Archibald MacLeish**
Directed by Betty Mitchell
Friday, Saturday, Feb. 22, 23; 8:30 p.m.
Studio Theatre, Education Building
- University Musical Club Concert**
Sunday, Feb. 24; 3:00 p.m.
Convocation Hall
- Exhibition of Paintings**
J. B. Taylor
Associate Professor, Dept. of Fine Arts
Studio Theatre, Feb. 21-March 16.

legato bowing. Within the context of the larger ensemble the pallid character of the contribution to the trio can be lost in the musicianship of the performer; the spotlighting of the viola in the sonata can only reveal its inadequacy.

It is difficult to compare this to the performances of local-based musicians. The only constant criticism of the Winnipeg performers was of a tendency to perfunctory endings. But routinization, the result of constant collaboration, showed itself by the members' knack of anticipating their partners' attacks. If the performances were generally more polished than we can expect from Edmontonians it is not probably the result of any discrepancies in ability. Such a superb Brahmsabend can only whet Edmonton appetites for more, preferably from favorite sons.

First I approached Robin Mathews of the English Department. In reply to my anxious questions about pseudo-art, he stated that pseudo-art is not art and doesn't matter. It shouldn't even be discussed. Art is sublime, but not everyone connected with it is sublime.

Art is like virtue, he went on to say. It's its own reward, and that's why pseudo-art doesn't matter. In every age there are fakes and honest men who make bad art, but only a few great men, maybe five or six, characterize their age, like Shakespeare or Milton.

Prof. Mathews went on to give this impression of what Art is. It is a description of the milieu of mankind. It completes and expands and fulfills human possibility. It must definitely relate to the human condition and aspire to universality.

Art frees the person's seeing, therefore the artist is an original perceiver. The artist, like the physicist, is now faced with—not fact—but perception. Today things are moving fast and we are not yet fully recovered from the two world wars.

The reason for the change in expression in Art, is the changing condition of man. How must the artist look at man through the light of these aspects? It is difficult to understand the new expressions in Art, just as it is difficult to understand Einstein's Theory of Relativity without a background in the subject.

Art is enjoyed by people with leisure—the rich who live on fashion. Often these people are not disciplined enough to tell the difference, so non-art can, and sometimes does, sell. But will it endure?

For a look at the condition of Drama, I went to Gordon Peacock, Head of the Drama Department. He stated that the Theatre of today, for the majority of the audience, has as its purpose an escape into entertainment, which is not Art.

The motives behind the writing of plays make the difference between Art or pseudo-art. A play must be significant to our world today, if not, it is not Art. For example, if Shakespeare becomes insignificant to our world today, "then we shall have to plant him in the academic garden."

In the theatre, as long as we use the living actor and language as the main means of communication, it is very difficult to reach the degree of abstraction that painting or music has. But drama is behind times in other ways too. Mordecai Gorelic said that the majority of the Theatre of today is not "avant garde, but rear garde."

The new Absurdist movement is not yet strong enough to influence the Theatre. But it uses a means of communication, through properties, nonsense syllables, settings, et al, as well as the actor and language.

Does Theatre influence society? Certainly not in Edmonton—only 1/2 of 1 per cent of our fair city's population attends. (In Ancient Greece all male citizens, excluding slaves, that is about 25 per cent, attended.) As well, most American TV programs are "an insult to the intelligence."

J. B. Taylor of the Art Department said that the importance lies in the artist, not the art. The artist must give his interpretation. He must think of his subject in an abstract way, because the essential things are the abstract forms—the untrained person sees only what can be seen, that is the superficial.

For us to understand Art, we must study it. We can't tell an M.D. he's wrong if we have had no training in medicine. The same applies to Art. It is important to study the history of Art, so we can see why the basic forms are interpreted the way they are.

The difficulty in distinguishing between good and bad Art arises from the fact that the critics and the public always demand something new. Also, today there are many more artists than ever before, and therefore many new styles and interpretations.

In order to perfect his work, an artist must learn his subject, know his trade and materials. Then he must strive to attain a unity and personality in his interpretations. That is more important than the result.

For views in the field of music, I interviewed Mr. R. S. Eaton of the Music Department. He said that Music, like visual art, has a basic form, and the artist's creativity comes from his interpretation. Music is organized around a unique way of communication. Most music is written for a specific purpose, but to write any music in the conventional way takes a certain amount of skill.

The standard music that we listen to is played on instruments developed in the 17th century. Now new instruments are being developed which require a new kind of music; for example the new electronic musical instruments.

The public must become an informed electorate in order to fully understand Art. But the requisite for all great Art is to stand the test of time, and non-art doesn't.

To make an attempt to sum up such a vast topic, I think I can safely say that Art is a creative process which is a comment on and a communication to mankind. Anything else is non-art, including entertainment. In order to distinguish between Art and non-art, we must have a thorough understanding of the history of art, including the modern connotations. If you're confused think of the state I'm in!

Thank God!