

## Guest pianist inspires flagging orchestra

Ted Kardash said last week that all you need to enjoy the music of U of A Symphony is to be in touch with your feelings, and indeed that was the only way to enjoy the concert presented last week.

The orchestra has a kind of magic that can be communicated to a receptive audience, and it also has technical deficits that, to an unreceptive audience, will overshadow any possibility of a relevant evaluation. The members of the orchestra are there because they want to play orchestral music, and there is no other source of profit for the audience except in this emotional appreciation. To sit with a score and criticize intonation in the lower strings and balance in the woodwinds misses the whole point of the performance.

The most obvious area for criticism was the choice of the fifth symphony of Tchaikovsky, an unrealistically ambitious undertaking for an amateur orchestra of the calibre of the U of A Symphony. While I feel that the most pertinent consideration in any critique of this orchestra is that it is amateur, composed mainly of students who will never aspire to be professional musicians, a program that would better emphasize its strengths could be chosen. The early Beethoven symphonies have not been played extensively in Edmonton, and there is much to be learned and appreciated in them. The orchestra's superior performance in the Beethoven concerto suggests this as a more suitable program source.

Both morale in the orchestra and enjoyment by the audience would be enhanced by the substitution of works which exploit the full string sound that the orchestra can produce and play down the weaknesses such as a heterogeneous woodwind section that was so obvious in the Tchaikovsky. I would like to mention here that the clarinets played extremely well and consistently in the entire concert.

The orchestra is at its best in majestic works where the strength of the strings and brass is evident. The inherent pitfalls of the fifth symphony cannot be avoided by anything but a very good orchestra. Tchaikovsky's own fears of over-exaggerated color and sloppy romanticism become inevitable unless played under a very strict discipline of interpretation, which is not characteristic of the U of A Symphony. As a whole, the orchestra played the first movement competently but as the symphony progressed the lack of rehearsal became increasingly evident, until in the last movement the only bright note was the brass

section, who were a pleasant surprise throughout the whole concert. The applause that started at the cadence before what was meant to be a vigorous final few moments expressed the feeling that the orchestra was conveying to the audience—it really was over.

The Tchaikovsky was less than inspiring, but it is a too difficult work that goes too fast to expect inspiration from an orchestra that meets once a week for three hours. Mr. Kardash deserves to be complimented on his tempo relationships in this work.

The essay by Malcolm Forsyth was in contrast a good choice of program. It is not possible to fully appreciate a work on first hearing, but the North American premiere of this interesting composition proved quite enjoyable. A good performance on the part of the brass again facilitated appreciation of Forsyth's skilful use of brass and bass in the orchestration. The interest generated in the audience was no doubt enhanced by the youth of the composer and his presence at this university. The orchestra executed this work with greater concentration than I expected, but a lack of awareness was apparent in the transitions and the resultant disjointed effect de-

tracted from unity. I felt that a certain empathy had been created by the contemporary status of the work and the composer.

The highlight of the concert was Miss Janet Scott, an extremely promising young musician. Her interpretation of the Beethoven piano concerto in C minor was the product of intense musicality and outstanding technique. Her personal and musical rapport with the orchestra was dramatically illustrated in the difference in the orchestra's performance before and after her entry. Her excitement and concentration communicated itself to the audience as to the orchestra in a most inspiring performance. We might wish for more power in the grandeur of the first movement, and certainly for more unity with the orchestra; Miss Scott seemed to be pulling the orchestra in many parts.

The beautiful expressiveness of her playing in the largo was flawless, a truly remarkable feat for one so young. I can find no fault in her spirited interpretation of the Rondo, and the Allegro was brilliant. Miss Scott's performance alone was worth the price of admission.

—Irene Harvie



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## records

ELYSE WEINBERG: *Elyse* Polydor 543.032

Morbid! That's the best way I can think of to describe the songs and singing style of Elyse Weinberg. Her preoccupation with death most directly shows up on "Mortuary Bound," "If Death Don't Over Take Me," "Iron Works," and "Here In My Heart." Most of her compositions involve man's failure to face the fact of his finiteness. Elyse sets out to destroy man's illusions of eternal love, ever-lasting beauty, and life-after-death, and succeeds in eliciting anxiety, frustration, and general discomfort to all who can open themselves up to her. Her singing, to say the least, is powerful and expressive.

Possibly the most penetrating acid song ever written is "Simple Minded Harlequin." The simple minded harlequin to which she refers is one who takes acid in hopes that he will find the experience of an unreal amount of beauty and eroticism. The result is disillusionment and insanity ("I took a look inside a book that was lying on the table, hoping for someone to say it was lovely; but as I turned the pages burnt crumbling into dusk, what a funny book come and take a look"), and sexual impotency ("You're a simple minded harlequin in a mirror maze, groping for your water pipe and looking for a raise").

Besides Elyse's own composition, this album includes Burt Janchs' haunting but ugly love ballad "Oh Deed I Do."

This is a "must-buy" album for all real people; for all people who are at least partly aware of most of their own mechanisms of escaping reality. However, if you are an "unreal" person, there is no need to worry about any possible harmful effects from listening to this album, since your need for nonexistence will lead you to ignore it.

DOUG KERSHAW: *The Cajun Way* W B 1820

Doug Kershaw appeared twice on the Johnny Cash program during the summer, and impressed most people with his unique style of singing while accompanying himself on the fiddle. In this album, however, the Cajun Country spirit displayed in his television appearance is watered down by over-commercialized Nashville-style arrangements.

Featured on this record is "Louisiana Man," one of his very early compositions which has since become a country standard.

—Larry Saidman

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