

Pinchas and Eugenia

The Zuckermans in concert at Cohn

by Brad Warner

Last Thursday night, March 31, the internationally distinguished violinist, Pinchas Zuckerman, accompanied by his wife and accomplished flautist, Eugenia, performed at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium. Also being introduced at this concert was pianist, Marc Neikrug, friend and collaborator of the Zuckermans.

Pinchas Zuckerman is well known, even in parochial Halifax, where several years back he made a 'triumphant' entry to the Maritimes, performing here with the Atlantic Symphony Orchestra. Although his past reputation is one of fiery temperament and style, Zuckerman provided Halifax audiences with a new perspective of himself as an artist.

Zuckerman, whose career has been established primarily as a concerto soloist performing with many leading symphony orchestras, has begun of late to turn away from this milieu in favour of an equally strong involvement with chamber music. He is also seeking to introduce Eugenia Zuckerman, (whose own career has been moderately successful) as an artist in her own right. They are sharing the 'spotlight', so to speak, in a natural combination of the flute and violin. Their programme gave the listener a cross-section of tastes in chamber works which demonstrated their talents singly (with piano accompaniment), as a duo, and of course, in trio ensemble with Marc Neikrug.

The concert programme consisted of eight works listed as follows under type of ensemble. For violin and piano: Gabriel Faure's Sonata in A, and Sonata in G minor by Claude Debussy. Flute and piano: Sonata by Francis Poulenc, and two short pieces also by Faure—Sicilienne, Op. 78 and Fantasy, Op. 79. Flute and violin ensemble: a Duo in G by C.P.E. Bach and a Suite in G by Georg Phillip Telemann. One trio ensemble (flute, violin, and piano): Franz Doppler's Andante and Rondo.

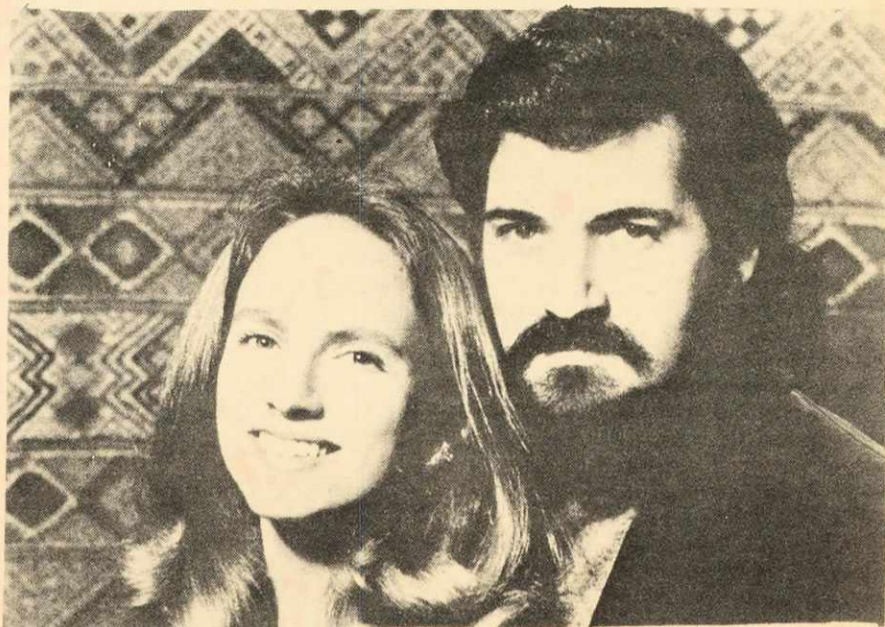
The evening spent with Zuckermans in concert proves to be difficult to review. Not that it was a bad concert, mind you, rather in this case it is simply that there was little that one could say about it in superlatives or strong criticisms. It was not an exciting concert that one could rave about as was done so in a local daily. One positive mention

might be that Pinchas and Eugenia Zuckerman played to a full house. Another, is that some fresh repertoire—excluding the C.P.E. Bach and Doppler pieces—were introduced to Haligonians (and Dartmouthians) in an eminently agreeable fashion. Further, Marc Neikrug, new to this music center, demonstrated that he is a fine and sensitive accompanist, able to provide the suitable framework for this kind of chamber music.

Eugenia Zuckerman, on the other hand, sharing equal billing with her husband, is a very accomplished musician but unfortunately not yet a performer of his caliber. Murmurs of criticisms during intermission suggested that she made all the mistakes which many other soloists have done in the same works during the past. So what! Her stage presence and personal dynamism counters the complaints of these cultural aesthetes. Further, as most of the audience was probably unfamiliar with the scoring of Eugenia Zuckerman's repertoire, I would suggest to you that mistakes and all—if they really were all that bad—were lost in the overall good effect of her playing.

Perhaps the brunt of the criticism should be directed to Pinchas Zuckerman for not contributing as actively as might have been expected to the tenor of this artistic partnership. There was ample evidence of his marvellous technique, but I don't think so much of the feeling. I suggest he displayed more reserve or restraint than was perhaps warranted, even in the cases of flute and violin ensemble where often out of necessity he must defer to the weaker projection and sonority qualities of the flute. The Faure and Debussy violin sonatas were executed well—the attentiveness of the audience at these points in the concert were so strong that without the music there would have been perfect silence. However, I consider his allover effort to have been more mechanical than with any great artistry.

Typically, the first part of the programme was less solid than the second. The C.P.E. Bach Duo probably was intended to be a light and happy introduction of the Zuckerman partnership. It lacked the strength and brilliance to open this concert. Other than that, there is little more criticism. The second part of the concert opened with the Telemann Suite, a much more



appealing and diverse work which was executed well by Pinchas and Eugenia, the former finally appearing to thaw slightly to the audience and perhaps even starting to enjoy himself. Eugenia was as exuberant as ever from beginning to end; perhaps demonstrating finally that this marital and career partnership does in fact have strong possibilities.

One last comment rests with the short memory of the audience. I cite the last work, the Andante and Rondo by Doppler, which—believe it or not—Halifax has heard before and laughed at it heartily. It is a Romantic piece of 'schtick' (humour) full of familiar cliches, and I don't mean for the musically informed. I believe Garry Karr and his Friends performed this fun piece once or twice and drew a few

laughs. I was watching the Zuckerman duo with Marc Neikrug exchanging glances. They were enjoying themselves but they couldn't figure why there wasn't at least a chuckle or two from the audience. What a cold and sober way to end a concert.

One slight contradiction there is, however. The audience in its sobriety treated the Doppler as if it truly was a great work of art (and I must admit that parts of it are 'pretty'), and gave it a loud joyous applause. I wish it could have been given sooner to enliven the concert as a whole. Yet, it was a good concert, not an outstanding one.

Oh yes, there was one small encore. — a little bit more of Telemann in duet, Pinchas and Eugenia Zuckerman ending off their concert in a bit of a hurry.

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