

the ARTS

Con Hall Concerts

Yes, there are talented musicians studying at the university and they do put on concerts which deserve to be much better attended than they are. This weekend The St. Cecilia Orchestra and the Symphonic Wind Ensemble produced pleasurable concerts on Friday evening and Sunday afternoon respectively at Convocation Hall.

For those of you who may be wondering, the difference between the two organizations is that the Orchestra has the full complement of strings, woodwinds, brasses, and percussion instruments that one would find in any medium-size orchestra. Where as the Wind Ensemble does not have the string section but has increased numbers of woodwind and brass players, as well as a number of musicians on instruments rarely encountered in orchestral situations, such as the saxophones. The two organizations play material that has been scored particularly for their instruments, but the Wind Ensemble also plays pieces that were originally written for orchestra but were rescored for the instruments available.

The St. Cecilia Orchestra, under the direction of Michael Bowie, did an admirable job of handling the material that they programmed. Beginning with the *Hymn and Fuguing Tune No. 2* of H. Cowell, passing through *Kamarinskaja* by M.J. Glinka, and ending nobly with Schumann's *Symphony No. 1*, the orchestra displayed poise and precision throughout. The musicians have a formidable

sounds, but they are capable of moving from contrasting dynamic levels with ease and conviction. Some entries by the brasses were somewhat unconvincing, but the timing by the rest of the orchestra was clean throughout. Some caution ought to be exercised by the orchestra in future concerts so that they don't drown out some of the solo passages in the same manner as they did with the solo violin passages in the Schumann piece.

Sunday afternoon's concert saw the Symphonic Wind Ensemble, with conductor Fordyce Pier, present a program ranging from the more traditional material of Handel and Beethoven to the more contemporary music of Copland, Ives, and Persichetti. It must be remembered that it is more difficult to establish a cohesive sound in an ensemble dependent upon woodwinds and brasses because of the distinctive nature of their individual "voices". However, the problems that the SWE had arose from the inaccuracy of the musicians rather than from problems inherent in the scores. This was especially true of the solo passages, with the notable exception of clarinetist Randy Bain. However, their problems did not entirely mar their performance. Rather, there were some remarkably well-played sections of Holst's *First Suite in E-Flat*, Copland's *An Outdoor Overture*, and Persichetti's *Chorale Prelude: So pure The Star* that made the afternoon's concert well worth attending.

allan bell

NIGHTWATCH

Good suspense movies are very rare these days. Mainly because there have been so many that it is difficult to come up with a truly original plot, or a truly original way of creating suspense. Unfortunately, many of the suspense movies today attempt to come up with new twists and fall short of entertainment. In 'Night Watch', playing at the Rialto, director Brian Hutton borrows liberally from all the established forms and combines them in a refreshingly different way.

The film features Elizabeth Taylor in what I consider to be one of her finest performances. She is cast as the wife in a formula of old house-mysterious neighbor-loving? husband-best friend who may be having an affair with the husband-innocent wife = story formula, a role she overplays perfectly. Normally, an overplayed role would not be considered perfectly played, but Taylor adds just the right amount of screaming hysteria and frightened bewilderment

necessary to keep the suspense on an edge-of-the-seat level. She is competently offset by Laurence Harvey as the concerned, loving, husband.

The mind of the viewer that something isn't quite clicking, a feeling that is finally brought to light in the unexpected climax.

The plot basically follows the line that Taylor as the wife, Ellen, thinks she sees a corpse with its throat cut from ear to ear through a window in the old house next door during a lightning storm. She calls the police, and when their fifth or sixth such trips turn out to be fruitless, the inspector, played by Bill Dean has a long talk with John (Harvey) and they both come to the conclusion that she is deranged and she should be sent away to recuperate. This is suggested to us by frequent flashbacks in Ellen's mind to a tragic car accident in which her first husband and his mistress were killed. Billie Whitelaw plays Ellen's childhood friend, and seems to be having an affair with

Blood Wedding

Thursday's opening of Federico Garcia Lorca's *Blood Wedding* at Corbett Hall showed tragic signs of unreadiness. I have a great reluctance to present this review, approaching the task rather like a pathologist performing an autopsy on an old and dear friend might; reluctant to slash away at the corpse but determined to lay bare the cause of death that others may profit from the knowledge.

Lorca's tragedy is a simple tale of hot blood told with hyperbolic passion. A mother overcomes her misgivings about bad blood and agrees to her son's marriage. On the wedding day the bride abandons her husband of a few minutes and runs away with her first love who is already married. The old passions are soon fanned into full flame and the pursuit of revenge is the first order of the day. The manhunt is waged with intensity and soon winds its way to the inevitable conclusion of spilt blood. The church fills with the women; mothers, family friends and that rarest of all creatures, the virgin widow.

Why did this splendid, fiery tale fall apart on the Studio stage? In part the problem lies with Lorca. His drama is quintessentially Spanish and its mood is an elusive one that is depressing when it is successfully captured. The drama is relentless in its grinding drive to fulfill the prophecy of violence that fills the air from the very first scene. Lorca's play is transparent from the beginning. It demands a great deal of suspense to maintain the momentum of the play until it arrives at its dismal conclusion. In concluding his tale Lorca is redundant in the wailing and moaning and overpowering keening, an embarrassment in a society that customarily draws a veil over the mourning of the dead.

What of the players? Many of them showed talent and all of them showed diligence. The sweat showed but the inspiration seemed to have missed the mark. They failed to pull the play off because they started out at fever pitch and then found themselves with nowhere to go. The cast repeated themselves in successive scenes making the same points over and over again. Having interpreted their entire role and revealed it in the early scenes

they had no room to grow, nor had they any interesting avenues left to explore that might reveal some interesting new facets of character. They could only become tedious as time wore on.

As a company the cast displayed the worst flaw of all. They played alone, each and everyone of them acted like movie stars entranced by solo spotlights more concerned with themselves than their colleagues. Until they play with each other, reacting and interacting as well as acting, they will accomplish little more than the promotion of vacuous emoting.

Amongst the members of the company Sandee Guberman as the Bride showed great promise in the early scenes but quickly fell victim to the temptation of excess after she had been married off. Granted the Bride must be highly confused and upset but the actress must maintain a greater degree of control than was evident here. Her moments of desperation were like a death aria that was interminable and finally defeated her in its integral illogicality. As the bridegroom, Bob Baker was reduced to doing little more than looking helpless, gritting his teeth and breathing heavily, a characterization that seemed to owe more to Rudolph Valentino than inspiration. The role of the bridegroom isn't an enviable one but it's too important to make so little of it.

Susan Ferley mauled a small part by playing the servant to a grotesque excess. She did the role a disservice by attacking it with an overzealous approach trying to prove herself capable rather than trimming herself to meet the demands of the part and the play. Janet Green was bested by her part as the mother of the groom. In all fairness, the demands were greatest here and she did show signs of being able to measure up to them with a little more experience. She failed not because of lack of technique or talent, but for lack of judgement. The smallest measure of control and a better sense of pacing would have made all the difference in the world. Should she have the opportunity to play the part again in a few years she is not likely to disappoint anyone. Shelah Megill was quite charming in the part of a young

girl in the early part and gave the play a necessary contrast that was much needed. Alas, she completely reversed herself and was quite outlandish as a beggar woman in the last half.

It was Fiona Law as the wife of Leonardo that showed the sense of self-control that was lacking in others of the cast. Although she occasionally erred on the side of less than enough depth she found the right level of intensity for her character for the most part. Miss Law also showed some growth in her character, she changed with the tide of events.

About the guest artists, Ken Agrell-Smith, Lee Royce, and Stuart Carson, the less said the better. They were quite inadequate and hardly merit the distinction of the title of guest artists of the company. In the rest of the cast there was nothing outstanding except for a most curious reading by Ken Noster as a young woodcutter that was delivered in the manner of a nineteenth century actor reciting poetry while performing Kung-fu exercises.

Frank Bueckert's direction was most notable for its courage in allowing his cast to tackle Lorca's challenge and his decision to let the poetry carry the play. His efforts were frustrated by the lack of ensemble feeling amongst the cast and seriously marred by a spectacularly tedious dance number choreographed by Jacqueline Ogg. Not that it was danced badly but that it was such a jarring departure from the tenor of the play. Can an audience seriously be asked to accept a realistic framework which can suddenly be usurped by a dance number in which the peasants spontaneously perform intricate dance maneuvers in the manner of Busby Berkeley? And accomplish it without faux-pas? And, damn it, the dance smothered some important business and worst sin of all, some important lines. The dance might have been fine in a Shakespearean setting but it was highly questionable on this occasion. Miss Ogg's contribution was quite misplaced.

Most crippling of all to the entire evening was the set design of Dave Bigoney who produced the most inept setting seen at Corbett Hall in some time. The cliché use of slides was hardly justified, useful, or imaginative. The sets might have been useful to a ballet company but gave neither the actors or the director much to work with. His lack of innovative sets definitely created

a mysterious man she tells no-one about, referring to him as 'Barry'.

However, Ellen has grounds for her beliefs, as she sees her next door neighbor, digging grave shaped plots in his garden for his plants. This might seem a bit obvious, but it is compounded by the fact that Mr. Applebee (the neighbor) once lived in the house Ellen and her husband now occupy, and has a habit of skulking in the old abandoned house where Ellen claims to have seen the corpses. All of the little twists of the plot come to a thoroughly unexpected yet strangely obvious climax. The energy generated by the film is so great, however, that some of the overflow suspense trickles into the denouement with the result that

the viewer is not aware of the final outcome until the credits roll.

All the parts have been extremely well cast, and Brian Hutton, an experienced British director, uses a bit of imagination to whip up a tantalizing concoction from a few old ingredients. (No offence intended for Miss Taylor or Mr. Harvey). This is the first work of Hutton's that I've seen, and I enjoyed it immensely. One of the best methods of creating suspense is creating mood, and in this case the mood on one hand is thrown in your face by what appears to be an almost constant storm outside with flashes of brilliant lightning and thunder that seem uncommon even for London, while it creeps up unobtrusively on you from

behind with the use of excellent camera work and form-fitted music. Taylor is constantly on the verge of hysteria. Harvey has a perpetual concern on his face, and Whitelaw is always a mystery to try and read. These particular expressions may be considered overdone or underdone in other cases, but they fit this film perfectly. The only thing I considered to be laid on a bit were the constant flashbacks to the car accident involving Ellen's first husband. Basically, the reason for *Night Watch* success is that everything is tight, everything flows, we have a group of professionals who know what they have to do, and Hutton is the man who has no qualms as to throwing in plot twists by the truckload, which give the viewer something to ponder on, and make what might have been a obvious climax an unexpected one. His real magic shows through in the ability to combine apparently small hints into one powerful ending, rather than harping on one theme and using that as a climax. Here he harps on the theme of the flashbacks of the accident, and does it in such a way that it is expected to figure prominently. While it does figure prominently, it does not bring about what the audience might expect. Basically, a fine acting job, professional cinematography and effects, and competent directorship make *Night Watch* a cut above the run of suspense films, and certainly make it worth seeing.

Woody Allen strikes again

The Stage production of Woody Allen's comedy *Play it again, Sam*, will be presented in the Library Theatre from Wednesday, November 7 to Saturday, November 17. Prestige Productions during the past three years has become known for producing a series of fine musicals such as *Cabaret*, *Stop the World, I want to get off*, and the most recent production of *The Boyfriend*.

The very funny stage production of *Play it again, Sam*, is the first non-musical

production presented by Prestige. The director is well-known Edmonton theatre personality Bud D'Amur and the cast includes: Joe Vassos, Sandy Price, Terry Read, Peter Feldman and Mike Bell to name a few. The producer is Ken Graham.

Tickets are now on sale at Mike's Ticket Office on Jasper Avenue at \$3.00 each. Reserved seats can be obtained by calling Mike's at 424-8911. Curtain time 8:30 p.m.

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