

The Gateway fine arts

la traviata done well by opera

Last week's production of "La Traviata" was definitely a Good Thing. Of course, the stage direction was mostly bad, some of the sets weren't terribly imaginative, and the chorus had its usual moments of coarse singing, but on the whole, the presentation was a success. Verdi's opera is pretty sure-fire stuff, and it is difficult to bungle it irredeemably.

Maria di Gerlando has a voice of considerable beauty and surprising range, and sang very satisfactorily during most of the opera. She is fundamentally a lyric-dramatic soprano, and her delivery of the coloratura portions left something to be desired. But in the main she gave a sympathetic and moving portrayal of the beleaguered Violetta. The tenor, Pierre Duval, is much improved since he was last in Edmonton for the EPOA "Rigoletto". Not only is his voice more consistently pleasant in tone, but his singing in the declamatory scenes is very exciting indeed. He lacks some of the sophistication necessary for any great operatic performance, but his artistry was sufficient to satisfy most people in the audience attending the production.

The key point for singers in most Italian operas is an ability to sing a legato line, and Duval managed to achieve the smoothness necessary for the role. Glyn Williams turned in his best performance to date as the elder Germont. For the first time he was able to cut through the orchestral accompaniment and project his beautiful baritone voice properly. Brian Priestman coaxed a solid performance out of the orchestra, and the difficult Preludes to Acts I and III were done very nicely.

The highlights of the performance were the scenes between Violetta and Germont, and the entire last act. The last act is undoubtedly the best in the opera, both musically and dramatically, and in it the entire company took fire. Violetta and Alfredo sang with real feeling, the orchestra was nearly faultless, and Priestman showed again that he inevitably comes through in the clutch. Even the set was excellent.

The EPOA's next production is Puccini's *La Boheme*, to be presented in May. If the performance is as good as that of "La Traviata", it will certainly be an event worth seeing.

—Bill Beard

feiffer is fun at yardbird

Jules Feiffer is so adept at drawing personality types that most of us think at one time or another that, if he hasn't been looking at us, he must have been analyzing some of our best friends.

There's the "I'm so sensitive and nobody seems to realize it"

artist and the "Oh, that's so true" female, the "I communicate but there's no one listening" neurotic and the "he's only after by body but I've got a mind too" stacked broad.

The Musicians and Actors Club (MAC) of Calgary brought fourteen people to Edmonton to put on the **Feiffer Revue Number Two** at the Yardbird Suite in one of the first Interurban-peace-through-artistry steps, extending knowledge of each other's cities by shipping indigenous artistic expressions. Calgary, in return, gets Bud D'Amur's productions from the Yardbird Suite. Mayor Dantzer has made no comment.

It was a sloppy show the night I saw it, nervous and slightly slipshod. Thanksgiving traffic meant the cast had to go from the car to the stage almost immediately. But in spite of the rush the cast had enough determination to put on a fairly good show.

The fellow who played Bernard (Feiffer's Charlie Brown) was exceedingly good, and the rest of the cast seemed to be enjoying themselves. Held up at times by careless stage work, the show itself was erratic and not as smooth as it could have been. The caricatures were accurately brought to the third dimension, and the individual skits were for the most part rapid and amusing.

The question of whether or not comic strips should be brought to life is not central here. Whereas *Lil Abner* on the stage (or screen) was only a bare re-creation of Al Capp's marvelous world, and Dennis the Menace not the same thing as the single frame at all, Feiffer's characters are taken directly from the coffee-houses in the first place and when they're put back there there's not much of a disruption.

Hostileman was the only skit which lost anything on the stage, perhaps because it is a comicbook style parody of a comic book character in the first place and not so much a parody of "real live people."

Anyway, a lot of fun.

—Jon Quill

watson play produced this week

Another curious entertainment by Wilfred Watson will be playing at the Yardbird Suite this weekend: **Tom Jones Meets Fanny Hill**.

To my knowledge, Watson is so far the only dramatist to have taken for his theme Edmonton itself. Lots of others things pop up in his plays; indeed, the best parts of this summer's brilliantly successful *Chez Vous Comfortable Pew* were those whose targets were national, not local.

But surely the heart of each of Watson's dramatic creations is his vision of the war between the lunacy of the city and the lunacy of the individuals who compose and decompose it.

The targets this time are: the Edmonton police force, represented by a female chief-of-police (matriarchal figures keep bobbing up in Watson plays); the teenage thing, for which Watson uses Tom and Fanny; and the desire of shrews for masterful husbands, the shrew being named Rebecca and her victim Jonathan. There is also a dramatic exorcism (or so it looked at the rehearsal I saw) called Clarence. The parts



—Stacey photo

HOOPLA?—Actually, it's one of the lighter moments from the EPOA production of Verdi's "La Traviata" at the Jubilee.

are taken by (in the same order as above) Armgard Conradi, Allan Hughes, Sue Smith, Gail Roberts, Peter Montgomery and Denis Kalman—all of whom promise well.

Bud D'Amur is directing like mad; Margaret Mooney and Jon (yes!) Whyte are designing allegedly breathtaking costumes. I don't promise a Great Work of Dramatic Art, but anyone interested in Edmonton, or in local drama, or in the relationships between the two shouldn't miss it. Those looking for an evening of sheer entertainment might drop by too.

—J. O. Thompson

little symphony is superb

The Edmonton Symphony Society has decided to inaugurate a Little Symphony series this year. The series consists mainly of eighteenth and early nineteenth century works, played by a 12 to 18 piece orchestra.

The existence of such a series is necessary to the musical life of any city, and the present plans promise to be satisfactory. There is a vast area of music which cannot be properly coped with by the regular Symphony concerts. All the Baroque composers, Mozart, Haydn, and a host of other masters wrote their music for small orchestras, for performance in intimate surroundings.

Now the Jubilee Auditorium, I think you will agree, does not constitute an intimate surrounding, so the Little Symphony concerts are being held in the Macdonald Hotel Ballroom.

The difference between listening to music performed in a monstrous great concert hall and listening to music played in a small room is immense. There is no doubt whatsoever about which is the best.

When you are practically sitting in the orchestra, the presence of the music is overwhelming, and there is a sense of identification with the music and the musicians. Furthermore, the members of the Little Symphony are the elite of the ESO, so the music receives a better performance than it would under ordinary circumstances. Besides, this is the only opportunity we have to hear this music in live performance.

The first concert in this series

was held last Wednesday evening, and included Corelli's "Christmas" Concerto, "Nocturne" by Dvorak, Bach's Third Brandenburg Concerto, and two works by Mozart, the Piano Concerto K. 449 and the early Symphony No. 29.

On the whole, the concert was anything but a disappointment. The Corelli was played with appropriate vigour, and was one of the highlights of the concert. The dreamy chromaticism of Dvorak's "Nocturne" was well conveyed.

The soloist for the Mozart piano concerto was Ross Pratt, who has recently joined the U of A Music Department. The concerto was undoubtedly the best music *per se* in the concert, but unfortunately Mr. Pratt's technique on this occasion was simply too weak for a really satisfying performance of this great work.

His playing was characterized throughout by an uncertainty and imprecision which is especially disastrous in Mozart.

There could be few qualms, however, about the second half of the performance. The Bach was done with admirable verve and bounce, and the Mozart Symphony was simply dazzling.

I have never been as entirely satisfied with Brian Priestman's conducting as I was at this concert, and I am certain that his great skill on the podium will be shown to its fullest extent in this series.

Curiously, the audience attending the concert filled barely half the room. Affairs have come to a parlous state when this city's top musical attraction is playing to half-filled houses; and it would be a mortal sin, punishable by eternal damnation, for any Edmonton music-lover to miss the next concert in the series.

—Bill Beard

film society membership is bargain

I hate to keep bringing up the matter of season tickets; but it's time to buy what is unquestionably the most worth-while and least expensive season ticket to be had in Edmonton: Student membership in the Edmonton Film Society.

Eleven films are being shown this year—one more than usual, as a parting salute to Mr. H. P. Brown, who as secretary of the

Film Society has watched the Society grow from extremely modest beginnings to its present position as the largest film society in Canada.

Of the program itself I can't say much more than is said—rather hastily, unfortunately—in the Society's brochure. (There have been a few changes since the posters and the brochures were printed: *The Passenger* has been moved into the "To Be Announced" slot; its place will be taken by a Japanese film the name of which I unfortunately don't have at hand as I write this. And, if at all possible, on the same program as *The Passenger* will be shown *Bay des Anges*, a delightful film starring Jeanne Moreau.)

But of last year's program, chosen by the same hands as are responsible for this year's choice, I can speak.

It was magnificent.

We are condemned by our location and our size to view a great number of second-rate, excellently-intentioned performances. The wonderful thing about a film society is that it can bring us exactly the same films that have been seen in Paris and London and New York. This sounds gauche, but I think it's important; we get exposed to too little of "the best".

Mundane details: Student memberships cost \$3.50, which works out to less than 35 cents per program. Two Guest Admission tickets are also included. But student memberships are limited to a thousand in number, and are apt to be sold out soon; so dash down to the Extension Department in the Old Education Building, or to the Allied Arts Box Office in the Bay.

—J. O. Thompson

fine arts calendar

"Tom Jones Meets Fanny Hill" (another Edmontonian by Wilfred Watson)—Friday through Sunday—Yardbird Suite—9:30 p.m.

Edmonton Symphony (with guest artist Witold Malcuzyński, pianist)—Saturday, Sunday—Jubilee—8:30 p.m. Saturday, 3:00 p.m. Sunday.

Minneapolis Symphony (Celebrity Series)—Tuesday—Jubilee—8:30 p.m.

CIL Collection of Canadian Paintings—to Oct. 21—Edmonton Art Gallery (9842-105 St.)

Michael Ayrton Drawings—to Oct. 29—Fine Arts Gallery (90221-112 St.)—7-9 p.m.