

Get Classical

by Paul Campbell

I saw J.B. Priestly, the English author, interviewed on TV years ago. He was asked a curious question by the interviewer, Adrienne Clarkson: "What sort of writer are you?" Priestly, a charming man, was somewhat taken aback. He thought a moment, and answered: "In my view, there are two sorts of writers: those who write from some sort of internal deficiency; they write in an attempt to compensate for their perceived deficiency, or to fill it up; and those who write from a fullness of spirit. They, such as Thackeray and Dickens, overflow with energy, and wish to communicate their joy and experiences with others. I count myself as a minor light in this constellation." A useful thought. One which has served me many times when that lurking question, "Why don't I like his work, or this composer, etc" comes up. The judgement of to which constellation an artist belongs often yields surprising results, which, if nothing else, will tell you something about yourself. Well, it is to tell you about one of the greater lights in this 'constellation of energy' that I

write this column.

Franz Schubert was not by usual standards a fortunate fellow. His family was poor. He wrote an incredible amount of music in his short life (he was 30 when he died), but not much of it was performed publicly during his lifetime. He wrote nine symphonies and fragments of others (his Unfinished Symphony is perhaps the most popular!), but never heard any of them performed. Yet, though poor, his was a loving and supportive family, they were musical, and you can be sure they were proud of their young Franz, encouraging him in his musical endeavors. He learned to play violin, and started to compose. The family made chamber music together (his father played 'cello), and often played things Franz composed. Some of his friends were singers and he composed over 600 songs for them, (12 operas as well,) and in the process he redefined the song as it was then known.

The thing that the impecunious and largely unknown Schubert had going for him was that he had an overwhelming passion. This passion was music, and although he lived a life which was perhaps uncomfortable at times, and perhaps at times frustrating because

he knew that he should have had public recognition when he didn't, still his life was a full one for all its brevity. He became the centre of a group of young creative intellectuals poets, painters, philosophers, and other musicians. The frequent meetings of this loose group became known as "Schubertiads", due in part to Schubert's animating force, and also because most evenings he would play (and sing, if necessary) his latest compositions. Conversation was lively, centering on the issue, (often artistic ones) of the day, and often boisterous. Much good Viennese beer was drunk, and often the participants in a Schubertiad found themselves home just in time for breakfast. It was an agreeable lifestyle: he dreamed his music, scribbled it furiously by day, and met his stimulating friends by night — a lifestyle which for Schubert did not lead to dissipation but rather fed the creative energies of his passion. I think in a sense we can all be envious of Schubert: while he lived he was able to do what he really wanted to do, and his desire to do those things was almost overwhelming. His life was full and satisfying in a way that not many are. It is important to have a

passion in our lives. And if that passion is a creative one, or one which does good for others in some way, our lives are the happier and the richer for it.

I write about Schubert because at the moment I am immersed in his B flat Trio, which will be on Sunday night's Creative Arts Concert. The Trio was written by Schubert because his friend Rellstab, a poet, was having a birthday, and this was Schubert's inexpensive gift for him. A gift to the world it was in fact. There are few works in the chamber music literature which are as satisfying to hear. A difficult work to play, in sings with energy and grace from the beginning to the final cadence, leaving the listener at once feeling drained and happily satisfied. I suggest you come and hear it. Other works on the program are the "Ghost" Trio of Beethoven, so named for the spooky slow movement; also a great work; and the Ravel Trio, an evocative and bewitching piece of impressionist

writing. I will be joined for this concert by Paul Stewart, an impressive pianist who is proud of his Bluenose origins but who now resided and works in England, and the fine 'cellist, Rick Naill, at one time a member of our own Brunswick Quartet, but now working and studying in Los Angeles. The concert will be Sunday evening, 8:00, at Mem. Hall.

Other concerts: Tonight is your chance to hear the "Messiah", that great baroque masterpiece, and a Christmas and Easter tradition in most of the English-speaking world. The performance will be by the New Brunswick Chamber Orchestra with soloists and a choir made up of local members of the New Brunswick Choral Federation. The concert will be at the Grace Memorial Baptist Church on Northumberland Street at 8:00. And finally, next Wednesday, I will welcome Rick Naill to my noon-hour series for a performance of the Ravel Duo Sonata, and a duo



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