

The Gateway fine arts

arabian nights in edmonton

Music lovers: I bring you tidings of great joy! To wit—the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra in its concert of Sunday last showed definite signs of improvement.

Those happy few attending the concert (some 2,500-odd, witnessed an amazing thing—a genuinely satisfactory ESO performance. The virtues of the orchestra were shown at their pinnacle in Rimsky-Korsakov's "Scheherazade."

Now I think that no matter how you cut it, "Schererezade" is by and large second-rate music. I was horrified and outraged to find it on the program, but the orchestra produced such a powerful, and above all, accurate performance that my ire was soothed, and transformed into joy.

But the program's main attraction was American pianist Gary Graffman, one of that country's outstanding soloists. He played the Brahms D Minor Piano Concerto, and his technical bravura and taste were indeed something to behold. Moreover, the orchestra upheld him nobly.

Of course, not everything was all beer and skittles. The Gabrieli "Sonata Pian' e Forte," scored for brass and woodwinds, had a few awkward moments, and so did the Rimsky piece, but really both were on the whole well done.

If the ESO can perform as well hereafter, perhaps people will no longer refer to Edmonton as a musical wasteland; and if the orchestra improves as much in the next year as it has in the last, citizens of this fair city will have more to boast about than a rash of high-rise apartment buildings.

Last Wednesday, the CBC rebroadcast for us on "Festival" their French-language production of Rossini's "The Barber of Seville." There is no doubt in my mind, or anybody else's for that matter, that "The Barber" is one of the funniest and altogether most delightful of operas.

It is really quite fruitless to go on and on here about the melodic charm, etc. etc. of this work, so I will pass immediately to considerations of the televised performance.

"The Barber of Seville" is most definitely not one of those operas which has to be cut to shreds for "popular" consumption. It can be presented in its entirety with no apologies whatever.

Bu-u-t, the CBC had only 90 minutes at its disposal, so the production, which would ordinarily run about twice that time, was skillfully hacked to bleeding bits.

Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the bleeding bits were most satisfactorily presented. The cast was a strong one, and the singers playing Figaro, Almaviva, and Basilio were exceptionally good.

The most effective thing in the production, though, was the stage direction, which was wonderfully imaginative and striking.

The indisputable fact of the matter is that the CBC should allot far more time to presentations of this kind, or better. So

far at least, I cannot remember one musical program on television that has been a failure.

Old productions of "Falstaff," "Othello," and some of the Savoy Operas await rebroadcasting in the CBC's musty vaults, and there are innumerable other works which simply cry out for television production.

So I urge each and every one of you to write a violent letter to your MP, and do something about what must be one of the most outrageous systems ever perpetrated on the public by the International Bourgeois Conspiracy.

—Bill Beard

yakking it up with academy six

If great art can be compared with epic poetry, the only statement which can be made about the Academy Six show at the Royal Bank Building is that it comes across like Mother Goose.

The Academy Six is most concerned that they don't become artsy-craftsy, but when you present pioneers carved out of roots (complete with jejune little poems about the pioneer "with blood like acid"?), how artsy-craftsy can you get?

Friends of mine attended the opening. They were unceremoniously booted out, ostensibly because they didn't have invitations. I suspect the real reason is because they were obviously art students and might be bad for business.

And business it is! The Academy Six's aesthetic may be turn of the century, but their business sense is right up to date. Edmonton cries for the banal; that's what it gets.

The only phenomenal thing about the show is the prices. To quote a friend: "The artists all looked like executives." Precisely.

Let's get explicit. Susanne Langer (has anybody read her lately?) says that, "art is the affirmation of life." Life, in other words, goes beyond the Royal Bank Building.

Life has texture, vigour, intensity, yes and pathos. And life, the last time I looked, doesn't have a price tag.

—Jackie Foord

harp and flute duo delightful

Wednesday evening's Jeunesses Musicales program at Alberta College proved how delightful a recital with commentary can be, and what a marvellous intimacy between audience and artist can be achieved.

Flautist Christian Larde and harpist Marie-Claire Jamais (Mme. Larde) displayed to the fullest the range of their talents and the beauties of their instruments in presenting a program that, considering the youth of

BELONGS IN PARLIAMENT



—MacLaren photo

A JOYFUL INDIGNATION—Irving Layton, one of Canada's best-known/loved poets, speaks to an agog throng of students belonging to, or infiltrating, Dr. Eli Mandel's class in Canadian Literature. Mr. Layton visited the campus last Friday and read dynamically from his works to more than 250 students in mp 126.

their audience, was light and varied.

The evening began with "Greensleeves," which with its familiar melody and simple harmony, served particularly to acquaint the audience with the instruments and to put them in the proper frame of mind. This was, I suppose, necessary because of the scarcity in Canada of harp-flute combinations, long great favorites elsewhere.

The Sonata for Flute and Harp by Mr. Blavet progressed a step from the simplicity of "Greensleeves" to a more complex interplay between harp and flute. The harmony, with its dependence upon the use of figured bass, was more involved; and the melody, in frivolous dance style, was more extensive.

The Harp Sonata by Dussek and the Sonata for Flute and Harp by Bach where the successes of the evening. The Dussek displayed, as no other work, the art of Marie-Claire Jamais. The great depth of harmony and melody allied with subtle intonation of each single note reminded me very much of a Mozart sonata.

Mme. Larde played in a relaxed, free style that allowed one to concentrate on the music, and the harp beneath her hands became almost a part of her.

The Sonata for Flute and Harp by Bach was originally written for flute and harpsichord. But the effect of having the harp play the harpsichord part actually enhances the overall tone, giving the piece a new transparency and simplicity.

The second half of the program consisted of 19th and 20th century music in an attempt to show the

development of compositional technique for the harp-flute combination.

The Fantasy for Flute and Harp by Gabriel Faure set the stage for music that generally becomes more and more impressionistic. It is a music that makes greater demands of the performers and the audience in that generally the melodies are ill-defined, the harmonies unusual to the classical ear, and the beauty consequently harder to find.

The highlights of the second half were "Syrinx," for solo flute, by Debussy, and "Dialogues for Flute and Harp," written especially for this tour by R. Loucheur.

In the Debussy, we heard for the first time the solo flute. M. Larde, displaying a great feeling for his instrument, played this work with its somewhat Oriental flavor with great charm.

However, throughout the evening I became aware of a certain lack of dynamics on M. Larde's part. This at times left an imbalance between the harp and the flute.

The "Dialogues for Flute and Harp" was very progressive. It has all the characteristics associated with a "modern"; and alas, as so often happens with this type of composition, it was lost on the audience. But it is significant in that it probably represents the decompositional trends of our time; and this leads to an interesting question.

From where are to come composers who will be able to exploit to the fullest the talents of artists such as the Lardes?

If concerts as enjoyable as this one are to continue, this is one question that will have to be answered in the future.

—N. Riebeck

fine arts calendar

Yardley-Jones reads Dylan Thomas—Friday through Sunday—Yardbird Suite—9:30 p.m.

Academy Six Group Show—to Saturday—Royal Bank Building.

"You Touched Me" (Tennessee Williams)—to Nov. 20—Walterdale Playhouse—8:30 p.m.

"Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" (Albee)—to Nov. 27—Citadel Theatre—8:30 p.m. (Box office phone 424-2828).

Noon Concert (Music Division)—Monday—Con Hall—12 noon.

Film Society (main): "Le Feu Follet"—Monday—Jubilee—8:15 p.m. (members only; memberships still available).

U of A Symphony—Monday—Con Hall—8:15 p.m.

Chamber Music Society: Edmonton Chamber Music Players—Wednesday—Con Hall—8:30 p.m. (members).

The Nude Figure (facsimile drawings); Sculpture (Group Show)—to Nov. 19—Fine Arts Gallery—7-9 p.m.

Indian Masks (from the Glenbow Foundation)—through November—Edmonton Art Gallery.

Bruce Boyd: paintings, drawings, prints—to Nov. 20—Jacox Galleries.

Inn The Beginning, the SCM coffeehouse, opens its new season this Saturday with folksongs by Chris Rideout and a super-spectacular reading of Thomas Campbell's idyllic epic of pioneer life, "Gertrude of Wyoming," starring Shirley Newman, John Thompson, Bill Stocks, Jon Whyte as the footnotes, and a cast of thousands. Doors open at 9 p.m.; the address is 11145-90 Ave.