

Stern flashes

by Leonard Hild

Dalhousie Cultural Activities "kicked off" its '77 fall season in a big way last night with the presentation of Isaac Stern in recital. Over the course of the past few years many fine violinists have been presented at the Cohn Auditorium; few of these, however, brought with them the expectation and renown like that which people have for Stern.

As the house lights grew dim, a hushed stillness fell over the near-capacity audience awaiting the first sign of the master. Short and plump, with silver hair and distinguished features, Stern walked on stage carrying his precious "stradivari" violin, immediately establishing an excellent rapport with the audience.

With a breath cue from Stern to his pianist, the concert began. The first piece was the **Sonatina No. 3 in G minor, Op. 137, No. 3** by Franz Schubert. This work for violin and piano incorporated many contrasting themes and melodies. The piano part, played by David Golub, was an important element in the piece. For the most part it was played very well, however Golub was a bit too loud in certain sections where the violin was the major part. But this piece was nothing more than a warm-up for the next item on the programme, Brahms' **Sonata No. 3 in D minor, Op. 108**, which proved to be the high point of the evening.

Brahms, who for many years made a living by accompanying such famous violinists as the Hungarian Remenyi and Austrian

Joseph Joachim, knew well how to write for both the violin and piano. Here was a mature work obviously being played by a great master who must have played it many times before. It required a good technique, but Stern gave more than this — he showed us art. Each phrase was thought through and the intonation was precise. The moods he expressed ranged from the introverted "Un poco presto e con sentimento" to an almost savage "Presto agitato."

After the intermission Stern played two more works by Brahms — **Sonatensatz, Op. Posth.** from the **F.A.E. Sonata** and **Sonata No. 2 in A major, Op. 100**. In these two earlier works Stern managed to evoke the gypsy flair in us all. Yet even though they were played with beauty and precision I felt there was too much Brahms on the programme to take in all at once. So it was a welcome relief when Stern played the **Siciliano and Rigadon** by Fritz Kreisler and **Notturmo and Tarantella** by Smanowski. Both composers, in their day being great violin virtuosos, wrote these encore pieces to show off their "flashy" technique. So Isaac Stern, in the tradition of these great violinists, gave us all a treat with a display of some brilliant finger work.

At the end of the concert Stern received a standing ovation. There is only one way to sum up the evening's performance. This would be by quoting one of the thrilled spectators as she left the house asking, with her hands in the air, "What can I say?"



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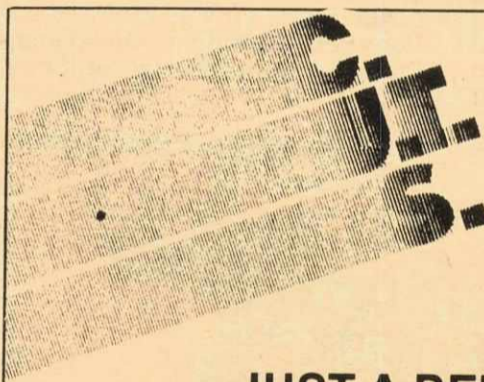
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