

The Gateway fine arts

cil show without pizzaz

It is difficult to review a collection without becoming philosophical, for the demands placed on any art collection are stringent. It must be representational without being bland, concise without being esoteric.

Strangely enough, the CIL Collection of Canadian Paintings fulfills all of these requirements, being representational, bland, concise and esoteric. This leaves it either above criticism or entirely beyond its scope. This critic is undecided.

One thing is certain: the show lacks pizzaz. There must be something more significant about Canadian art than the fact that it has been influenced by Andrew Wyeth. Canadian painting has quality, texture and direction, but in the CIL assemblage it comes across with a great big blah.

The show is by no means tasteless, but the taste displayed is conservative and self-conscious, to say the least; it's like a mild case of the giggles. Even a cursory glance at any of the Canadian annuals from the past few years will reveal that there is a distinction about Canadian art that has been entirely missed in the CIL collection. After all, it is possible to be Canadian without being rustic.

Of course, "the collection is by no means meant to be a complete survey of paintings in the country today; rather, it is felt to be a stimulating group representing significant examples of Canadian painting." It seems strange, though, that in a collection of outstanding examples of Canadian painting such names as Shadbolt, Rogers, Bobak and Tanabe are missing. Perhaps they will be added in time.

Perhaps, too, the time will come when one of the big industries will be bold enough to come up with a design collection representing Canadian industrial and commercial design. One immediately conjures up visions of subsequent projects: Norman McLaren film festivals, travelling exhibits of Canadian theatre design, photography and textiles.

But all that is yet to come. In other words, there's hope yet for the CIL paint-pot.

—Jackie Foord

books a flight through reality

"I tired as arse," complains Mistress Sobers, once Miss Sobers, to her nine-year-old son

in one of her less coarse moments. There is yet a lost of washing to be done for the rich, immoral white woman across the road. And Austin C. Clarke, author of "Amongst Thistles and Thorns" (McClelland and Stewart, 1965) is not afraid of Mistress Sober's languages, nor of Girlie's immorality, nor of Blackman's wanton cruelty, nor of any of the thistles and thorns of poverty in Barbados.

Clarke, a powerful, virile West Indian who now freelances for BBC, excited critics two years ago with "The Survivors of the Crossing," and has done it again in this comic tragedy.

Milton Sobers, child narrator, runs away from home, a leaky shack full of washing and his mother's rough hands, frying fish heads for supper and Willy Willy, his mother's lover-companion who was in Harlem once. He runs away, too, from school and the vicious whippings from the semi-illiterate and not quite honest teacher, Blackman. He runs away for a night and a day but never leaves the town. He hides in cellars and creeps along dark roads. He sees the church blown up; he see Miss Brewster's hair fall off; he see the noble struggles of the Barbadoan people to believe in the god and living standard introduced to them by the white people, in a place where the whites have forgotten God and decency.

Most of the book is dialogue, dialogue that pounds a potent rhythm into you, leaves you with a sense of flesh and work and food. The language is rough but it is right and does not offend. It captures the wit and exuberance of the indomitable Barbadoans. "Amongst Thistles and Thorns" is not a beautiful book, but it is a powerfully human one.

—Vanessa Gavia

music ancient racket at con hall

Have you ever heard a crumhorn? Or a psaltery or a portable organ? If not, then you should have been in Con Hall last Wednesday evening for the first concert in the annual Edmonton Chamber Music Society Series. The program featured the Manitoba University Consort, headed by Christine Mather, in a repertoire of Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque music.

The Consort came equipped with an assortment of odd and interesting instruments which produced an assortment of odd and interesting sounds. Even their names are engrossing—racket, schryari, dulzian, viol da gamba.

But more fascinating than anything else was the music they played, ranging from Handel and Purcell all the way back to 12th century Troubadour songs. When one sits through a program of this kind of music the first thing one is struck by is the marvelous quality of understatement contained in it. This comes as a refreshing change to those of us



—Credico photo

TREMENDOUS RACKET AT CON HALL—Actually the racket is a much less offensive instrument than its name suggests. Within it lie coiled eight feet of tubing; its modern descendant is the bassoon. It and other ancient instruments were played at a Chamber Music Society concert recently. But this damsel really deserves a dulcimer.

who have eaten the apples of rock and roll, and is certainly something which modern concert audiences could better appreciate.

Every number in the program was interesting in its way, but among the most intriguing were "Music from Das Glogauer Lieberbuch" (c. 1480), containing miscellaneous songs and dances for various combinations of instruments; the two Troubadour songs, (exceedingly strange in effect but very appealing); and "Four pieces from the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book", a set of bouncy 16th century English dances. Perhaps the most bizarre number of all was a song by a certain Oswald von Wolkenstein, (1377-1445), entitled "Der May", and consisting almost entirely of an uproariously funny succession of aesthetic barnyard imitations.

The players are an accomplished group of artists, and provided a very satisfactory performance. The two singers were especially praiseworthy. The tenor, Victor Martens, sings with good control and irreproachable artistry, and the soprano, Phyllis Thomson, has a dulcet-toned voice and a marvelous technique. All of the instrumentalists acquitted themselves well.

It is fervently to be hoped that concerts such as this will inspire in Edmonton music lovers an insatiable thirst for more, more, and more music of Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque times, and will moreover drive them en masse to attend the next concert in the series.

—Bill Beard

music symphony program uninspired

Having heard the world-famous pianist Witold Malcuzyński and the Edmonton-famous ESO play in concert last Sunday, in a by-no-means-badly-played performance, I am slightly surprised to discover in myself certain vague feelings of discontent. Mr. Malcuzyński played the Liszt Second Piano Concerto with all of the sweeping bravura and romantic fervor for which he is so justly famous. The orchestra accompanied him bravely and well, and acquitted itself admirably in the Tchaikovsky Serenade for Strings.

Nor was its performance of Benjamin Britten's Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra ineffective. Moreover, Brian Priestman provided us with another example of his ability to understand the heart of the music he conducts.

Beethoven's Egmont Overture was played about as well as we could have expected the ESO to play it two years ago. Some of the execution was marvelous, but the great climax of the overture, where the brass section enters so

powerfully, was mis-timed and poorly balanced. It left me feeling slightly betrayed.

The major problem with the Liszt is that it is simply not very good music. One can appreciate Liszt's great flair for the dramatic and the effective, but his melodies are not inspiring and the concerto as a whole not moving.

The Tchaikovsky is a different matter. It is a work of great melodic inspiration, and was played very well by an orchestra divested of winds, brass, and percussion. The strings of the ESO exhibited a beautiful full tone and an overall technical security which were very welcome.

Benjamin Britten's composition is the sort that distinguishes the men from the boys technically, and it accomplished that task well. The string, woodwind and percussion sections of the orchestra qualify as men, along with the trombones of the brass section. Unfortunately, the trumpets and horns remain in adolescence. The whole piece was accompanied by effective and pleasing lighting effects.

The conclusion I come to is that the program lacked one essential thing—a major work of music. Not to be pessimistic, I think that there are better things in store for symphony-goers in the future. The programming this year is vastly improved from last year, and since the orchestra has shown no really fatal defects, I am sure that most of the upcoming ESO concerts will be worth examining closely.

—Bill Beard