

Piguet and friends liked it here

By John Kavanagh

The Michel Piguet Baroque Ensemble (Michel Piguet, Baroque oboe and recorders, Colin Tilney, harpsichord, and Mary Springfels, viola da gamba) presented an excellent program of Renaissance and Baroque music in the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium last Monday (the 24th). Authentic and vital performances of early music are not common in Halifax, but the good crowd (considering the usual attendance for such events) and warm reception given to this group may help to change this. Piguet said he was "amazed" at the size of the audience, and all the members said that they would like to return.

For many, this concert was an educational experience. The sound of the harpsichord and the recorder are familiar to most of us, but the Baroque oboe and the gamba are less so. The Baroque oboe is a vastly different instrument from its modern counterpart. The obvious difference is the

two or three keys on the old instrument, as opposed to the silvery framework formed by the fifteen keys, and their attendant mechanism, of the modern one. More important, though, is the fact that the bore is much wider on the Baroque oboe, and the reed is shaped differently, giving it a softer but more colourful sound, slightly reminiscent of the saxophone. The instrument's sensitivity makes it more suitable to the nuances of Baroque articulation. M. Piguet plays an original eighteenth-century instrument.

The viola da gamba or bass viol is a six-stringed bowed instrument about the size and pitch of a 'cello. There is no truth to the epernicious rumour that it is the ancestor of the 'cello. It is actually a hybrid — the offspring of early fiddles and the guitar. It was very popular as an accompanying and solo instrument until the mid-eighteenth century, when the louder 'cello, with which it had long co-existed, edged it

out of the picture entirely — or at least for over a hundred years, since the gamba is making a comeback comparable to that of the harpsichord and recorder.

The evening started with some pieces by Frescobaldi in which the gamba and Piguet's Renaissance recorder played more or less equal roles. Piguet's exotic and colourful ornamentation lent spice to these and all his pieces. His tone was clear and his intonation flawless. Ms. Springfels demonstrated the looseness and flexibility that is the key factor in good viol bowing, and gives the instrument its free and silky tone. A good gamba player is fun to watch, since the wrist movements are graceful and attractive, and the instrument must be moved in and out from the body to play in different registers effectively. It seemed, as one music present put it, as if she were more a part of the instrument than the other way around.

Colin Tilney, considered one

of today's leading harpsichordists, polayed an extended pair of dances by William Byrd with great flair. Following this, Piguet played an unaccompanied piece for recorder by Giovanni Bassano. The Cohn does not have the ideal acoustics for unaccompanied recorder, but the piece came off very well.

Handel's Sonata in F for oboe and continuo followed. This popular work was nicely played and well received. After this came a Concert Royal by Couperin. It was an odd but beautiful piece, though the ensemble had some difficulty in keeping together throughout.

Springfels then played a suite in g minor by Sieur de Machy. Bach's unaccompanied 'cello suites are thought to have been in imitation of the large amount of French music for unaccompanied gamba, and de Machy was a prominent composer of such music. Though not as demanding or serious a work as I would have liked for the

only gamba solo of the evening, it demonstrated the gamba's possibilities for chordal writing, and was played charmingly.

The highlight for me was the final piece — a four-movement trio sonata by Telemann. Springfels played a dessus de viole for this piece, a small viol tuned an octave higher than the bass. Her tone was clear, penetrating, and very beautiful, and a wonderful pairing with Piguet's rich and pleasantly reedy Baroque recorder, especially in the Allegro, which had a Polish flavour and much unison writing. The sense of artistic ensemble in this piece was wonderful, and made a fine conclusion to one of the most satisfying concerts I have ever heard at the Cohn. The group returned to a grateful audience for one encore. It was encouraging to hear afterwards how much they enjoyed being in our city and playing for us, since Halifax was very fortunate in having attracted performers of such calibre.



Entertainment in music

If you had been in the Rebecca Cohn auditorium on Friday evening, you would have found yourself transported into the Renaissance Era via krumphorns, recorders, viols, drums and lute complete with period costumes and dances performed by the Huggett Family.

This group, which specializes in Renaissance music, is composed of Leslie and Margaret Huggett, and their four children Andrew, Jennifer, Ian and Fiona who range in ages from 19 to 25 years old. One marvels not only at the fact that each play a wide variety of instruments (and sing, dance, make their own costumes and do their own research), but in the mere existence of such a family group for over ten years.

Their first selection of three lively, short pieces featured viols, krumphorn and tambourine. A good variety of Renaissance music followed interspersed with dances and humorous descriptions of the Renaissance court. Each performance was featured in various pieces and I was particularly impressed by Andrew's performance on the womens' voices. Margaret, Jennifer and Fiona performed the encore which was a delightful rendition of 'What Child is this' accompanied by Andrew on the lute.

Unfortunately, a lot of their music lacks the feeling of freshness and spontaneity that was present when they first began performing. Perhaps it is now time for the individual members of the

family to grow in their separate directions as they are undoubtedly uniquely gifted.

I was disappointed that some of Andrew's folksongs were not featured in Friday's programme. The family has in the past performed these sensitive tunes which offered a nice balance to those in the audience who were not devoted renaissance fans. Andrew Huggett explained that their audiences came expecting to hear only Renaissance music and therefore he doesn't write them anymore.

In spite of these drawbacks, it was a pleasant evening of Christmas renaissance music and a good introduction for those who may not have had a chance to experience this type of music previously.

This Week's Movies

Thursday, Dec. 11 the NFB is presenting *Independent Films*, including one about Newfoundland and one about a former Barnum & Bailey Circus strongman. As of Friday, *Popeye* (Robin Williams) opens at the Cove and at Penhorn 1. Penhorn 2 has

Private Benjamin as does Paramount 2. Paramount 1 holds *The Octagon*, and Scotia Square keeps *The Stung Man* (highly recommended). Downsvlew 1 has the long-running *Ordinary People*, and 2 has Cheech and Chong's *Up in Smoke*. The Hyland has *Stir Crazy* (Pryor and Wilder), the Oxford presents *Seems Like Old Times*, and the Casino has *Emmanuelle*. Look for *Raging Bull* (DeNiro) 9 to 5 (Fonda, Parton and Tomlin) and *Change of Seasons* (MacLaine, Hopkins, and Derek) to arrive soon.

Friday, Wormwood has John Huston's *Beat the Devil*, while Sat. and Sun. *Days and Nights in the Forest* is showing. Tuesday the Art Gallery shows films on Van Eyck and Memling. Wed. 17 Wormwood has *Distant Thunder*, and on the 18th NFB shows *Tribute to Glenn Gould*.

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'More Specials' provide thematic reggae

by Rob Cohn

When 1979 brought New Wave to the world, one of the many forms that it appeared in was reggae oriented. The heart of the reggae movement in England was the Two-Tone Label and their leading act was the Specials.

1980 brought us more new wave and more reggae and finally **More Specials**.

The Specials are a nine piece group out of Coventry whose reggae based music has found them a large following here in Canada.

Their first LP, simply titled *The Specials*, took off on the charts in Britain but stayed off the charts in Canada. It sold well here due to the non-radio listening public who form the core of new wavers. These people rely on word of mouth for their information.

Word certainly got around on that first album. So much so that people dove on **More**

Specials when it hit the stores. So much so that it is on the charts.

The LP itself, no matter how eagerly awaited, is not a disappointment. The sound is still there and it is refreshing, not repetitive. The Specials have the sound of the streets in their music. In **Stereotypes** they go after the average street kid:

"He's just a stereotype
He drinks his age in pints
He drives home pissed
every night
And listens to his stereo."

Throughout the record they take on all the stereotypes of life, from the **Rat Race** to the **International Jet Set**. They show us the mockery of it all.

This album also has a theme, unlike many popular albums that are merely a collection of songs. The irony of life is in every song, but the message lies in the first cut, **Enjoy Yourself**, which is re-



prised at the end:
"Enjoy yourself, it's later
than you think
Enjoy yourself, while you're
still in the pink
The years go by as quickly
as you wink
Enjoy yourself, enjoy your-
self, it's later than you
think."