



An experience with Dal's chamber orchestra

BY NATALIE MACLELLAN

This past Friday evening the Dalhousie Chamber Orchestra presented a Town and Gown concert at St. Andrew's Church on Coburg Road. Not being an expert in chamber music, I was a little unsure of my qualifications as a reviewer, but I bravely accepted the challenge.

The orchestra, under the direction of Professor Phillippe Djokic, began with Mendelssohn's Schweizer Symphony in C Major. As the music commenced I sat back and got as comfortable as possible in my pew, and let my imagination flow with the music. Allow me to now pass on to you the various images inspired in me by the music.

As my mind began to wander, I found myself being transformed into one of those little animated fairies you may remember from Disney's *Fantasia*. The music varied in tempo and intensity, and I was led on a fantastic fairy adventure. After awaking at dusk, I set off through the forest carrying out my good fairy deeds. A soft, romantic interlude in the music inspired a midnight rendez-vous with my fairy-lover. Our happiness was short lived however, as an angry owl mistook us for his dinner. After a long and frightening chase, my heroic fairy-lover saved me, and the symphony had a happy ending.

As you can imagine, when I finally opened my eyes after this symphony, I was rather worn out

and very appreciative of the 15 minute intermission to get my thoughts in order. The next piece was Handel's Concerto No. 4 in F Major, which featured organ soloist Jennifer Goodine. It began with alternating playful organ solos and more melancholic, full orchestra segments. I closed my eyes again and I felt as if I was watching someone on the brink of a major change in her life. She was looking back on the happy days of her childhood, wondering if she'd ever be that happy again. I became engrossed in her story and was really beginning to worry about her future when everything was wrapped up with a very exciting, happy piece, and I knew things turned out alright.

Wrapping up the night was Vivaldi's Concerto No. 11 Opus in D Minor, featuring Erika Low and Megan Bain on violin and Colin Meek on cello. I found this much more relaxing than the two earlier pieces, with very spiritual undertones. The music didn't tell a clear story, but inspired images of beauty, suggesting a union with the gods — a reclaiming of paradise.

After a long week of midterms and stress, the Town and Gown concert was a refreshing interlude. It's a challenge I'm glad I accepted, and would gladly do again. The Dalhousie Music Department is home to a wealth of talent that goes sadly under-appreciated by the student body. They offer an entertaining and affordable alternative to a movie or pizza on a Friday night, and just think how cultured you'd seem to that cute gal in your Biology class when you ask her to attend a music recital with you. The possibilities are endless...

Whodunnit at Neptune

BY ANDREW SIMPSON

There was murder, suspicion and fear on the stage of the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium this past Friday, as Neptune Theatre began their 1996/97 mainstage season with Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None*. The play is Christie's own adaptation of her 1940 novel *Ten Little Indians*.

The setting of the story is August, 1939 in a summer house on Indian Island — a small private island off the coast of Devon, England. Ten guests, including two servants, have responded to requests that they should spend their summer holidays on Indian Island. They are to be the guests of a mysterious stranger by the name of U.N. Owen.

The story quickly veers into the abnormal world of murder and suspense when Rogers, the butler, unknowingly plays a pre-recorded message that accuses each of the guests of committing murder and warns them that the time has come to pay for their crimes.

Suddenly U.N. Owen is revealed

as a play on words — U.N. Owen/unknown — and the guests are plunged into a world of confusion, wild accusations, and eventually murder.

The play draws its name from the last verse of the nursery rhyme "Ten Little Indians" and the rhyme is actually printed on a wall in the house. Beneath it, on a mantle, are ten little indian dolls and each time a guest dies, one of the little dolls is broken or disappears.

Set and lighting designer Nigel Scott is one of the stars of this production. The set is a recreation of a 1930s modern Art Deco house. Not having been around in 1930, I wouldn't know Art Deco from a hole in the ground, but it did the job for me. The lighting effects, combined with the set, credibly created sunny seaside mornings and the stormy nights essential for any good "whodunnit".

The cast of 11 produced several performances that are worth mentioning. General MacKenzie (David Renton) is a charming old-man who is both senile and prophetic. Philip Lombard (Peter

James Haworth) is well cast as the dominant presence on stage, while the nervous Dr Armstong (Bryan Foster) is the perfect antithesis to Lombard's confidence. Vera Claythorne (Anne Farquhar) is an endearing secretary who is central to much of the play, and despite stumbling a couple of times (verbally), Farquhar plays her character with strength and style.

Director Linda Moore had the difficult task of staging murder and intrigue right before our eyes. An interesting quirk is that the audience never sees any of the 10 little indians disappear — like a magician's hand, the action draws our eyes away from the mantle and before we know it another character is dead and another doll is missing.

This may not be avant-garde theatre (to say the least), but if you're ready to suspend disbelief, sink down into your chair and immerse yourself in the highly fictional world of Agatha Christie, this might be your ticket.

And Then There Were None continues at the Cohn until November 3rd.

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