

City symphony fails to convince with Tchaikovsky

Frankly, Tchaikovsky has never convinced me, and the Edmonton Symphony's all-Tchaikovsky program last Saturday only strengthened that feeling. And if the blame for this falls anywhere it falls on the composer himself.

It is not that the orchestra wasn't competent—it was. There were only a few occasions, particularly in the second movement of the Violin Concerto in D and at the beginning of the second movement of the B-flat Minor Piano Concerto, where sloppy playing became unsettling. The trouble with an evening of Tchaikovsky is that—like the Trojan Horse—it is hollow at the centre.

The excerpts from the Nutcracker Suite were really done excellently. Conductor Lawrence Leonard had obviously stressed precise playing at the rehearsals and he achieved the toy-like effect which is all that is required. The Nutcracker Suite is all icing and no pretension and that is the way it came across.

The B-flat Minor Concerto with Jerome Lowenthal at the piano warned us early that we were in for a "performance". Right from the sustenato on those ever-so-famous opening chords, it was obvious Mr. Lowenthal was going to wring this piece like a wet rag; or at least try to. The Concerto itself was the cause of most of the problems. It wants to be overpowerfully happy and then too, too sad. It wants to bluff you into believing it is great music. It isn't.

Mr. Lowenthal went along with the composer and tried to bluff the audience and I must say he gave it everything he had both muscularly and musically. But this is a concerto where technical difficulties do not produce music so much as they produce a cascade of noise blurring into each other. The slower and quieter passages have always been the real test of musician-

ship to me and Lowenthal's interpretation was just not inspiring. It was a hollow performance of a hollow concerto.

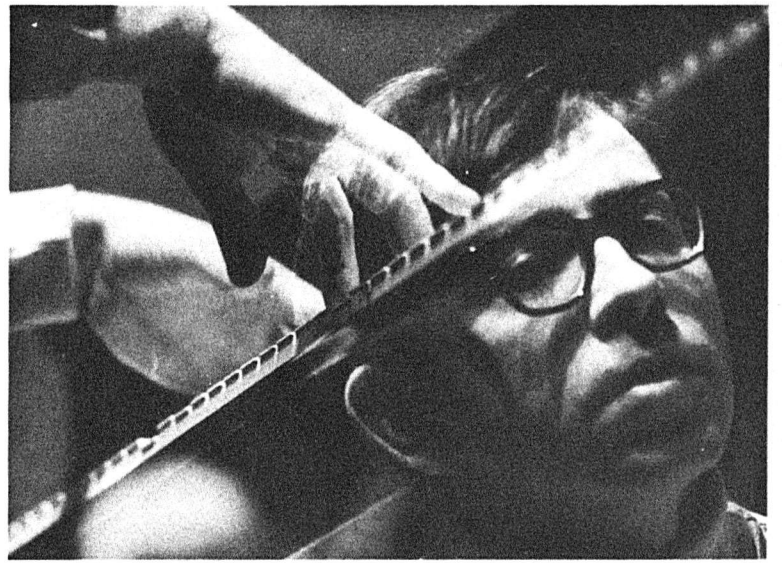
I was not optimistic when I came back after the intermission, but I hadn't expected anything as brilliant as Charles Treger. He is without question the finest violinist ever to appear with this orchestra. He played the D Minor Concerto with nuances of phrasing and a sense of dynamics that was extraordinary. In his hands the concerto was handled with the assurance of a craftsman shaping the final curves of a

sculpture he knows is beautiful. This was the triumph of the evening.

The "Romeo and Juliet" Fantasy Overture was the last work on the program and the more I hear it the less I like it. Tchaikovsky did not understand the play and the overture shows it. The Orchestra played well and accurately, but to no avail.

To sum up: "I've come to bury Tchaikovsky, not to praise him." Now that we've heard an evening of this "master" let's not hear any more from him for another few years.

—Brian Campbell



University Symphony presents pop concert

Popular music introduced in an effort to reach wider audience

The University Symphony Orchestra will break new ground this month as it presents a concert of popular music on February 10.

The program is to include such songs as "I Think I'm Going Out of My Head" and "Love is Blue", music from the Broadway musicals Porgy and Bess, Sound of Music and West Side Story, an American Salute, and Mississippi Suite.

Up to now, the Symphony has limited itself to classical material, such as the Brahms Violin Concerto of its November concert. As a result attendance has remained in the family-and-friends category, well below its potential.

"We felt that if we could reach out to the University audience and grab their attention, we could gradually build the sort of annual audiences that the Mixed Chorus gets," said Ted Kardash, conductor of the Symphony.

By presenting a program of popular music, the Orchestra hopes to gain wider acceptance from the University students,

as well as from the outside community where most of its support now comes. The November concert went a long way toward this goal, with the auditorium jammed to capacity.

If this concert proves successful, the University Orchestra can perhaps expect more money from the Students' Union in the future. With it they hope to make this Pops Concert an annual event, and may expand the number of performances to two or three evenings.

On March 17 the last concert of the year, an evening of Shostakovich, is scheduled.

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