

Get Classical

"GET CLASSICAL"
by Paul Campbell

The concept "Quality of life", while not a new one by any means, has had a recent surge in popularity. We jog or work out in the gym. We watch carefully what we eat, and increasingly insist that our food be not only nutritious and not threatening to our health, but be tasty as well. We have become much more conscious of our environment, recognizing its fragility, and its importance not only to the quality of our lives, but to our very existence on this planet. These are relatively new popular phenomena, and reflect, perhaps, a new stage in the growth of our culture. To show just how new, and for those of you who have not read it, may I recommend the book "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance", a fascinating and in a way important book, in which the author chronicles, among other things, the difficulties he had introducing the concept of "quality" into the academic environment. It goes without saying that we are each of us responsible for the quality of our own lives, within limits, at any rate. What I want to talk about in this column is some of those factors which most strongly influence life quality, with specific reference to music.

One of the things which most

broadly affects the quality of our lives is the culture in which we live, and which shapes and often determines how we feel about things, or how we react to situations. This is culture with a small "c", and like it or not, like an accent, we all have it, but don't necessarily know it. Ours is a young culture. Canada is only 124 years old this year, and the eastern parts of Canada (Upper and Lower Canada - or Ontario and Quebec - and the Maritimes) were only given self government in 1848 - 143 years ago. In terms of civilizations this is young indeed, compared with the thousands of years most other cultures have had to evolve. I think we have done very well in developing a culture which is practical and for the most part serves us well. And, as my statement (above) about quality indicates, there are signs that it continues to develop, and at a very fast pace. There are those who think that it is developing too fast, and that perhaps it is being pushed too hard.

If it is true that our culture is tripping over itself in its haste to grow, then what are the factors causing this? The phenomenal growth of communication in the last fifty years has played a large role, as has the immigration and assimilation of many peoples of diverse

cultures. And there exists what I will call a Culture industry (with a big "C") which has a direct effect on our culture (small "c"). Let's deal with these one at a time.

Television has had an enormous impact on all cultures, but particularly those of "have-not" peoples. Just as people of one hundred years ago were satisfied for the most part with their standard of living, in spite of the fact that today all but the very poorest have a much higher standard of living, so were people of third world countries content with their lots until they saw with their own eyes the way we live. Similarly, we can see the way others live, or even stronger, hop on a plane and spend some time in another country. We can turn on the radio and hear the products of other cultures, or even discussions about cultures, or we can pick up a paper and read something like this column, until we are surely more conscious of culture and the things which make up and influence our culture than any previous civilization. Is this good? Yes, I think it is, because if culture affects our happiness and the quality of our lives, then the more we know about it, the better off we are.

Immigrants to our country have expectations of how things will

be, among them, the expectation that things will be different (otherwise, why come?). However not only is it difficult to change everything, but there are bound to be things and values in their cultures which are very important to them, and which perhaps they have not questioned, and assume that everyone values as they do. Acquaintance with these people expands our own concept of what is right and wrong and valuable. They add to our culture.

The Culture Industry is concerned with the high end of culture: with the preservation and propagation of the best and most profound insights and products of the most creative minds of our various civilizations. While there is not necessarily any connection between big "C" Culture and small "c" culture, the state of integration of the two is a mark of the maturity of the culture. And it is at this juncture that we run smack into the big "Q" of Quality of life. Most older cultures (the European ones at any rate) have learned that knowledge and awareness of those things coming under the big "C" makes a large difference in the real quality of the lives of its people. Not only Culture a mark of civilization, but an active interest in Culture leads to a better and fuller (read happier) life. In many older cultures this interest in Culture has become a class mark: the lower classes are considered uncultured, and possession of a strong cultural knowledge can lead to passage to the upper class. Fortunately we do not have that here, but examination of why so many cultures have adopted these values will do us no

harm. In my next column I will address just what we can expect and learn from Culture.

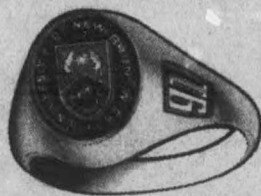
In the meantime, there are a couple of concerts coming up which may give you a chance to brush with Culture in high style. The first of these is the Creative Arts Playhouse Series concert Monday, Feb. 18 at 8 PM, featuring the famous Canadian chamber orchestra I Musici de Montreal. I Musici have won worldwide praise for their performances and their mirad recordings. The concert here will be an event, and you should treat yourself to it. Tickets for students cost \$5 at the door, and it is a bargain at that price. Go for it! On Wednesday at 12:30 I welcome Sonja Adams, 'cello, and Chris Buckley, viola, to my series of concerts. We will play two trios, one by Schubert, and one by Dohnanyi. The Schubert is a delightful and gracious little thing, and the Dohnanyi is a major and pleasurable listenable work. That same day, at 8 PM Sonja and Chris and I will play a fund raising concert for the Conservation Council. The program will be a Mozart duo (it Mozart's year), a rather lush trio by Tanieva, and again the Dohnanyi Trio. The concert will be followed by a feast of deserts prepared by the best in the city, so if you like music, or believe in the aims of the Conservation Council, or just have a sweet tooth which demands quality, do come.



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