

the ARTS

Beethoven at the ESO

For a musical pilgrim, the journey to a concert containing only the works of Beethoven is not unlike the approach to a rather sacred shrine. The expectations which one has for the impending performance are usually extremely high, and the feeling is ever-present that one is unfortunately in the company of those who do not really "understand" the "truth" of the composer's work, who will applaud even the most glittering travesty. But the truth is in the listening, for the music of this tormented genius, as it spans the entire spectrum of human experience, speaks to each of us on our own level. The power of that music seems almost as if it can survive, undiminished, even the utterly glaring errors of the musicians who perform it. As well, one could suspect that it is not possible to leave a Beethoven concert not feeling enriched, somehow transformed, if only minutely.

The stage, then, was set for guest conductor Lawrence Leonard, as high priest, to lead the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra and soloist Stephen Bishop through three of Beethoven's less familiar pieces last Saturday evening. Lawrence, as Edmonton audiences will

remember from the years that he used to act as ESO's resident conductor, can usually be relied upon to deliver a reading of Beethoven's work with which one could find little fault, at least in terms of interpretation. But Leonard was hampered Saturday night, and it was not until the second half that his skills became readily apparent.

The concert opened with the *Overture to "The Creatures of Prometheus" Op. 43* in which the ESO did not readily establish an integrity of sound. The opening chords suffered from timing problems in the brass sections. As well, the orchestra seemed to be having problems balancing its texture throughout the piece, and this reflected itself in the unconvincing changes in dynamics through which the musicians moved. Although there were some well played solo passages amongst the woodwinds, as a section they could not pull together.

When solo pianist Stephen Bishop finished his performance of the *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 1 in C Major, Op. 15*, the question which he deserved to be asked was why he chose to be dazzling rather than musical? As the standing ovation and the numerous curtain calls would reflect, Bishop left his

audience immensely impressed with a performance that would have made Beethoven glad that he was deaf. This was not because the soloist was not technically competent, but because he was a visual player, rather than one who focused on the sounds of what he was producing.

To a person who has heard Beethoven's work for the first time, many of the passages may sound fragmentary, especially when he moves from the very soft passages to the very loud ones in quick succession. But, with more careful listening, one begins to realize that everything that Beethoven has written arises quite organically, that it moves, yes, quite logically, and most important, quite musically from passage to passage. That particular aspect of Beethoven's work deserves to be honoured and not pulverized in the way that Bishop had the tendency to do.

One must give Stephen Bishop credit for the sensitive passages which he did produce, especially in the cadenza, but this did not render forgivable the way in which he bit off, chewed, and spat out the ends of his phrases. He struggled throughout the course of the piece to attain a clarity of sound from his instrument which eluded him for the most part, which leads one to question his choice of pedallings as being suspect. His reading of the second movement, marked *Largo*, robbed it completely of its dreamy, poignant quality, and replaced it with a lumbering, percussive, and pedantic flavor. However, the third movement did have a good deal of the requisite sparkle, hampered as it was by Bishop's interpretations. The orchestra, understandably, never seemed to cohere with the soloists work, and the audience had to suffer through some rather sour notes from the horns

and the clarinets.

Leonard and the ESO did, deliver a sturdy reading of the *Symphony No. 4 in B Flat Major, Op. 60*. Here, one could hear that the orchestra was attempting to be faithful to the works of the composer. This symphony, which was described by Hector Berlioz as being "lively, nimble, joyous, or of a heavenly sweetness," reflects a musical personality rarely associated with Beethoven. In order to respect that character, the orchestra must be careful to treat its passages in such a way that they are not heard as being superficially light, but rather that they point towards the profound joy to which the composer was beckoning. Leonard's charge, then was to think through the work, and, using the talents of his musicians, express the way in which he conceived of the work.

For the most part, the performance of the Fourth revealed the consistency of Leonard's thought, and even if one disagreed with some of his interpretations, one had to appreciate the quality of his conception. I, for one, disagreed with his choice of tempos in the second movement, marked *Adagio*, and in the Trio of the Scherzo (third) movement, finding the former a bit fast and the latter painfully slow. It has almost become cliché for this critic to applaud the work of the ESO's string section and call to question the work of the brasses, but, it was another one of those nights where the inaccuracy of some members of the orchestra almost spoiled the results of some rather formidable playing by the rest. In the Fourth, contrasting with their work in the first half of the concert, the woodwinds as a section displayed some well-balanced work, notable for its clarity.

allan bell

Hot Cottage- Farewell

by Bernie Fritze

The farewell concert performed by Hot Cottage last Thursday nite at the Hovel wasn't to see the group off anywhere - it was to be their last gig together. The demise of the group was witnessed by a full house - a final and fitting tribute to one of Edmonton's finest, hard-hitting rock and roll-blues group.

Hot Cottage was formed in the fall of 1970 to jam in a free rock concert. Original membership included Steve Boddington, guitar; Holger Petersen, drums; and Brian Koehli, bass. Lynsey Umrych replaced Holger Petersen, and Bob Derkach was added on keyboards. Nancy Nash, "...who looked like she couldn't carry a glass of water, let alone a tune" became Cottage's lead vocal. This combination of talents resulted in an album that featured Shakey Horton.

In the axe department, Steve Boddington was replaced by Neil McMahon, and then Bob Edwards. Neither of these musicians stayed long, but are well remembered for the contributions they made to Hot Cottage.

In their final form, Cottage consisted of Carn Edwards (guitarist), Nancy Nash, Bob Derkach, Lynsey Umrych, and Brian Koehli.

Hot Cottage split up because "...we've got our own different directions to go in that we'd like to explore them individually." In light of their musical contributions to date, it's safe to assume they'll be back "...in the future, as we expose our different trips to you."

Hot Cottage - hope you caught them at some point in their history. They were 112 decibels of deafening delight.

CLASSICAL INUNDATION

Edmonton Symphony Orchestra

John Barnum, conductor

Mozart Overture to The Marriage of Figaro
Mozart Suite No. 6 in D, Serenata Notturna
Barber Adagio for Strings
Tchaikovsky Waltz from Serenade for Strings
Ives The Unanswered Question
Mozart Symphony No. 35 in D The Haffner

SUB Theatre Friday, November 16, 2:30 p.m.

GFC Positions Open

As a result of the of lack of nominations,
the following positions remain open:

Arts- 2
Science- 3

Nominations for the above positions will
be accepted at the Receptionist Desk between
9 am and 5 pm on Tuesday, November 20.

If an election is required, such election will
be held on Friday, November 30.

Nomination forms and further information
are available from the Receptionist Desk,
Student's Union Building, 2nd floor.