

by Ross Rudolph

It is commonplace knowledge at the University of Alberta, as universally, that the most knowledgeable people are often incapable of transmitting their erudition. Conversely, it has been claimed that those who can, do; those who cannot, teach. Recently, students have had an opportunity to attend some concerts which purported to be at the same time didactic.

Boris Roubakine, formerly of the Royal Conservatory of Toronto, and now associated with the University of British Columbia, is a regular and welcome visitor to the Edmonton scene. Probably most cherishable (aside from the musical riches) in Mr. Roubakine's presentation is his felicitous word choice: vernacular Canadian with French idiom ("Franck was a sincere composer, isn't it?"), all served up in an accent which underscores the speaker's Swiss origin.

Mr. Roubakine spoke the language of a true believer to an audience of the faithful about the miracle of Franck and Faure, two French masters whom he feels underrated. The reasons, as the composers, are different. Franck was characterized during the talks as a "good man" which would be irrelevant except that some see in Franck's music a theodicy, which becomes at times tryingly naive, as in the oratorio Beatitudes and the reduction for piano and orchestra of Hugo's Djinns. But Franck was no saint, as the popular Psyche et Eros conclusively demonstrates. Much of the sentimental in this music it would seem is in the minds of tasteless performers.

The need for a case for Faure is more drastic. A gifted composer in small scale (which is immediately apparent to anyone who has even skimmed through his song accompaniments), Faure has no appeal for the sophisticated modern listener who has heard the 1812 recorded on the spot with a cast of thousands at Cape Canaveral. But then the qualities of so large a work as the Faure Requiem are by no means self-evident (though a Nadia Boulanger can make them unmistakable). Among the Faure hallmarks are a strong, but flexible bass line, and the meandering modulation, quite distinguishable from those of the more opaque Reger and Bruckner (here I refer to the textures rather than actual sonorities, for the three hardly wrote in the same media.)

Mr. Roubakine spiced his talks with illustrations (Snippets, a friend calls them) but the delight of the series was his superlative performance of Franck's gigantic Prelude, Chorale, and Fugue. This is the third time I have heard this artist play the work, and never has his technique been in finer estate. The sprawling work was brought to a moving peroration in the tremendously complex fugue which refers to the rhythmic iteration of the prelude and the solemn sonority of the chorale. The Theme and Variations (Op. 73, 1897) is arguably Faure's piano masterpiece, and it was given what in this view might have been a definitive performance. The immensely difficult penultimate variation with its offbeat accent until the end for once yielded all its secrets. Fortunate those who heard this performance.

Roman Totenberg

The appearance of the distinguished American violinist Roman Totenberg was billed by the Extension Department as a lecture-recital, though the artist's remarks were hardly enlightening, and he desisted from comment in the second half of his programme, for after all, who likes to talk to himself? This great violinist had to undergo the hor-

ors of Con Hall sound with nary fifty people to comfort him. Those were a fortunate fifty. Not even, if my memory does not deceive me, Berl Senofsky or Isaac Stern gave so rewarding a recital in recent years in Edmonton.

A mere recital of the items played is awesome, as were most of the performances. There was some slightly uncomfortable position playing in the opening Brahms's first sonata and some perilous moments of ensemble for the violinist and his partner. But the unaccompanied Bartok Chaconne was a genuine tour de force, with frightening left hand pizzicati and intrepid leaps. The Debussy emerged a model of luminosity which it should be in ideal performances. Not even the "Bach bow" could relieve the burden to Totenberg's all-too occupied left hand in the fugue of A minor Sonata, but he redeemed himself in the realization of the beatific Andante. Two Paganini caprices, No. 24 in A minor and No. 13 in B flat as encore, ended the programme with the violinist's arsenal emptied. The second documented Mr. Totenberg's amazingly sonorous double stopped chords. Let us hope that if Mr. Totenberg is foolish enough to return next year, it will be to a reception commensurate with his worth.

One last word concerning lecture-recitals: on Monday, Dec. 10, 1962, the Music Division will present a lecture-recital of compositions by one of Canada's most distinguished composers, Violet Archer. Admission is free, so the only excuse for not coming is Con Hall's uncontrolled heating. Bring your own anti-freeze and come.

## Showcase For Students

In the last 14 years Studio Theatre has brought over 50 semi-professional productions to this campus and city.

However, the main aim of the Drama Department is to train students in drama. This is done as the students take an active part in the major productions each season, as well as attend classes. But the major productions are not totally controlled by the students. For example, most of the plays are directed and designed by either the staff or by invited guests. Many of the lead parts are also given to outside actors.

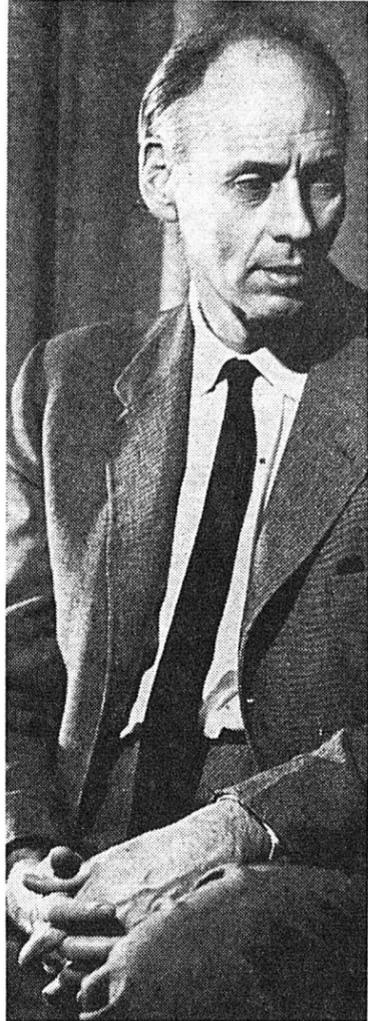
In order to allow a more active participation for students, the Drama Division has introduced the Showcase Productions. Here students can have major roles where otherwise they would possibly be restricted to minor roles, and some plays are student directed.

The second season of Workshop Production begins on Tuesday, Dec. 11 at 8:30 p.m. in Studio Theatre. Admission is free. All students are invited. The work presented in these one evening performances is experimental in order to give students in drama a wider scope, as well as to present plays which would ordinarily not be done in our isolated area.



MUSIC MAN'S chorus line rehearse chant for last week's production.

# FINE ARTS



## Middle Of The World

by Marie dal Garno

Last Friday night we listened to rhymed and rhythm poetry, and it was real. George Johnston's verse was three parts ambrosia shaken with one part hemlock and chilled. We heard the very high and the very low, the how and the why of "the little blessed earth that turns."

This poet took us to a darkening bank and showed us Poor Edward's hat "moving on the water's face." For Edward and his wisdom had come asunder. So we watched and pondered life—and then we were "In it," in it up to our necks, travelling the infinity of the circle of human emotion.

If Irving Layton beat upon two or three tedious drums, George Johnston played a carillon. Or perhaps a street organ.

One time the sky was cold and clumsy, and one time a splendid auk flew across it. One time we watched Mr. Murple's dog "that's long and underslung and sort of pointed wrong . . . leak against the trees," and one time we watched Farmer Elliot's sweet-centered honeybees cramming his hives. There was no smut for its own sake, no rain unless it was followed by sunshine.

We could find no technical innovations in Johnston's verse: the rhymes were mainly masculine, the rhythm was varied but quite usual. The poetry had a dramatis personae recruited from sidewalks and backyards and playgrounds. Mr. Murple and Mrs. McGonigle, Elaine (in a

bikini) and poor Edward.

These little common things, however, mix-up into poems that move through and about and around living. George Johnston has been walking in crowds and in lonely places, mostly collecting feelings. Then he has turned them over in darkness, held them up to the light, and come to Edmonton to tell them.

If there is a fault in this poetry, it lies in that whimsy which is a great part of its charm. Somehow the idea of an auk "hurrying home, or merely taking the weather" reminds one of "The Owl and the Pussycat," and this, while delightful, is not quite inspirational fare.

Mr. Johnston's delivery was a quiet, humble one. The simplicity of his rhyme and rhythm and the pedestrian nature of his people make his poems strong through understatement: just so, his unpretentious reading made one feel that there was something very real and very basic being said.

This poet hasn't been making the sparks fly, he has instead been standing in the middle of the world looking at cats, and birds, and people committing suicide. From this has come poetry that is woeful without being hysterical, glad without being other-worldly. At his weakest, George Johnston tells nursery rhymes and fairy tales. At his best he talks to the world with his tongue in his cheek and tears rolling down his face. And this is an awful thing.

## Music Man And More

by Lord W. Valson

Lights are dimmed and whispers are silenced at blaring brass and clarinets. Drums, crisp, and 76 trombones lead the big, shining parade!

An overture of song for use (because we enjoy being young), with a pistol-crack pop bank and the curtains open with steam whoosh and our music a song of trains that clatter and clang and shoot steam bang and comes now men with talk-chatter-talk of words that shoot and dart and spin and then sit down.

Sunshine lights are glowing on spring-flower dresses. And faces. They laugh; they sing. They're happy—having fun—and we're having fun because they are.

People, fairy-tale people, dance and laugh, scowl, shout, sing, and it stays inside us. It's a story of lovers unfolding, from cynicism to ecstatic discovery. They blossom into young Gods, full of love not just for themselves, or each other, but for humanity.

Never is a moment wasted while a hypnotist, The Music Man, sprinkles a spell around us. He dances, creeps on tiptoe, runs, and surrounds us all, to win the smile of love in a girl's eyes, her soft voice singing in rapture. Together, they embrace us all.

When out in the night and ice-point stars, we know that actors, actresses, musicians, and dozens of unseen fairies have found the spark of light that makes this fairy-tale glitter: from first scene to final applause, they give themselves, and enjoy giving. They give to each other and to use freely—joyously. We float home.

### ARTS CALENDAR

**Lecture-Recital**  
Compositions of Violet Fletcher  
Monday, Dec. 10, 8:30 p.m.  
Convocation Hall, no charge

**Klovanshchina, by Moussorgsky**  
Sung in Russian  
Friday, Dec. 7 through to Dec. 13  
Varscona Theatre

**Inter-Faculty Drama Festival**  
Dec. 17-18  
Education Building Auditorium

**The Night, Italy, 1961**  
Film Society  
Monday, Dec. 10, 8:15 p.m.  
Jubilee Auditorium

**Chamber Music Concert**  
Edmonton Chamber Music Society  
Wednesday, Dec. 12, 8:30 p.m.  
Convocation Hall

**Choral Concert**  
University Musical Club, R. S. Eaton conducting.  
Sunday, Dec. 16, 3:00 p.m.  
Convocation Hall