

Puppet Theatre Lives!

by Cheryl Downton

Concerttheatre, a uniquely pleasing combination of visual theatre and music art, played before a rather sparse Halifax crowd this past weekend at the Cohn. The third in the series of ongoing duMaurier Pops concerts presented our own Atlantic Symphony Orchestra, under the capable baton of Klara Mizerit, in performance with some dozens of puppets under the lithe-like control of Daniel Llords.

Llords' Concerttheatre is but one facet of Lord's International, a one man operation. Daniel Llords is a man of many talents. He has played Mozart with a symphony at the tender age of seven; he has sung at the Hollywood Bowl; played in numerous motion pictures; been featured in radio series, and has designed opera and stage sets. For the past decade or more, what had been a hobby has turned into a fulltime profession. Llords began his present career as a sole marionettiste as a continuation of a boyhood interest.

He now has more than nine hundred marionettes which he skillfully uses in original interpretations of great musical works through the medium of a 'puppet theatre' - thus the concept of concerttheatre. He controls everything, and is limited only by his seemingly limitless imagination. He designs his own sets, stage, and scenery and the marionettes are all of his own design and construction: He choreographs each number, and controls lighting, visual effects, and spectacular special effects, as well as the multi-stringed marionettes, solely by himself. Llords uses a combination of his hands and feet and a specially designed, many corridorred and curtained puppet stage to create a visual effect of

effortlessness and constant movement.

The marionettes themselves are breathtakingly intricate. Each one is controlled by numerous strings which enables it to appear very lifelike, especially when precise movements are called for. (ie. dancing on a tabletop, or playing a violin). They are realistically costumed and are easily recognizable as the characters they are meant to portray. There is no lack of colour, and everything is very detailed.

In his concerttheatre with the ASO, Llords choose to do his visual theatre interpretations of three well known and powerful musical selections. The orchestra seemed a little more inspired than on previous occasions, and they appeared to enjoy having the music they played channelled through a corresponding visual medium. They also played Tchaikovsky's "Capriccio Italien" (as well as two other works) solely as an audio production, and were well received. Llords and his marionettes accompanied the orchestra with an original interpretation of Gounod's ballet suite from Faust, where Faust sells his soul to the devil for love of Marquerite, and is condemned to eternal damnation.

Other collaborations between the two art mediums were in works by Telemann (Don Quixote) and Offenbach, where Llords' marionettes performed to music from the Overture to "Orpheus in the Underworld". This comical comment on style-conscious Paris of the 1890's included a chorus line, a violin solo (nicely timed to intergrate with the orchestra), a testy woman of questionable character, and much jovial frivolity. Llords eye for detail was ever evident, and greatly appreciated by the delighted audience.

At the conclusion of the concert-

theatre performance (a comfortable one and a half hours), the audience, which housed some children, responded warmly, as they had throughout the programme, to this fresh approach to art as entertainment. It was unfortunate that more people were not in attendance—this

was one time they had really missed out on something good. Perhaps the inconsistency of the ASO performances, or the general lack of visible publicity may have been at fault. At any rate, Llords International and all it contains and holds forth, really was too good to miss.

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