



by Ross Rudolph

The conjunction of my unavoidable absence from the Sunday concert of the University Musical Club featuring Prof. D. Murray, Department of Philosophy, in a magnum opus of Olivier Messaien, and a radio talk by Professor G. K. Green on record clubs suggested what has been completely over-looked in these columns hitherto: namely, the importance to the music lover of the phonograph record.

Viewpoints on the value of this mechanical contrivance range from Aaron Copland's unequivocal view that recordings are a corrupting influence to the apparent attitude of most Edmonton concertgoers that they constitute a criterion by which all performances of all music can be judged. Per usual, the true situation probably contains elements of both arguments.

Yet one trend vexes and troubles me. Many contemporary vinyl and tape products make permanent that which by no stretch of the imagination is worth preserving: shallow, unsympathetic, thoughtless performances of hackneyed music. A recording ought to be what its name implies, a documentation for posterity of a unique point of view.

Because I have striven all year to demonstrate that an all-record diet would soon lead to a kind of satiety of perfection, I will now suggest that some recordings are necessary for a rounded musical experience. Copland's objections were not strong enough to prevent him from making superb versions with the Boston and London Symphonies of some of his extended orchestral works, which recordings show him in the same class with Britten and Stravinsky (under whom Copland has just participated in the former's *Les Noces*) as nonpareil interpreter of his own works.

If any of the works by these men retain their interest for future generations, the composers' performances will be as instructive as their far from self-explanatory scores. For those like Ernest Newman who preferred reading the scores, one could cite Vaughn William's dictum that music is an experience in sound. If Ulysses had been tendered a copy of a score to the Sirens' song, the composer claimed, he would not have had to be bound to the mast-head! If nothing else, the disc can provide a superb aural experience.

But it is this contention that it can provide much more, especially in so provincial a centre as Edmonton. From personal experience, I should say that more than half of the music with which I am acquainted came to me not by live performance or by radio and television transcriptions, but by this very recorded medium. Here I do not refer to Gesualdo madrigals, or Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, or Charels Ives' "Concord" Sonata, but to such well established works as Bach organ works, and church cantatas, Handel concerti grossi, Haydn and Mozart symphonies and string quartets and further, dearest reader, for you will have noticed that this list only takes us as far as 1809.

I hope that in this brief article I have done more than expatiate on the very commonplace. The recording provides us with unmatched opportunities to hear music which otherwise, either because of its small appeal in the musical market or the large scale of forces required for its performance, we might have to forego. I end these scratching from the turntable with the plea that the record player not deafen you to the pleasures of such live attractions as the Edmonton Symphony concert, Sunday, March 3.

Japanese Film Portray's War Horrors Vividly

by Bob Pounder

The horror of war is brought vividly to life in "Fires on the Plain," a Japanese picture which the Edmonton Film Society presented Monday. Set in the Philippines in 1945, it tells the appalling story of the trek of a tubercular soldier across the untamed countryside and of the remnants of a division in retreat.

Death is an ever-present element in the picture; it plagues the soldier at every turn on his journey. He arrives at an outpost hospital where the sick and dying lie together on the floors, their only food being a few paltry potatoes. During a bombing raid these men, most of them near death, summon every ounce of energy available to them and crawl pitifully out onto the ground, grasping for life even in the jaws of death. It is a moving scene, and typical of the film. The major problem presented is that of hunger. The soldier has only a handful of food, and a little salt which he has obtained in a village after killing a young girl in a moment of panic and desperation.

Soon all food runs out and he and two others find themselves in a position of near-starvation. He has fought with the idea of eating human flesh and resolved not to, but his companions think otherwise. One of the closing scenes, involving cannibalism, brutal and ugly and revolting as it is, does not disgust to no purpose. It has grown out of the hopeless horror of the picture and reflects the rage felt by its makers at the stupidity of war.

"Fires on the Plain" is taken from a novel by Shohei Ooka and was directed by Kon Ichikawa, who was also responsible for the fine "Harp of Burma." His actors respond marvelously and some of the better jungle and raid sequences are photographed in such a way that even on

the Cinemascope screen a feeling of immediacy and intimacy is achieved. The sight of men dying in the mud can never be pleasant, but it is presented with great sympathy by Ichikawa.

Harshness and suffering are an integral part of the picture. But war is harsh and full of suffering, and war has seldom been dramatized more effectively. We are shown how death becomes meaningless to those constantly surrounded by it. We see that little cheerful bits of conversation persist even when men are living in a hungry hell. It is a sometimes exceedingly violet picture and should be viewed with consideration for the overall effect achieved. If horror can be beautiful, it is beautiful here.

University Symphony

by Elan Galper

The university's orchestra, in its Feb. 21st concert, from a slow start, seemed to improve as the evening progressed. As the first work was played, the Academic Festival Overture by Brahms, the wind section, especially the brasses, seemed somewhat unsure of their intonation. This was quite noticeable, since four French horns and five trumpets were a bit too overpowering for an orchestra of that size, especially if the players "gave it all they had"—with a slightly noisy result.

The next item, The Symphony in G Major, the "Military," by Haydn, was played with gusto. There was room for improvement, however, as the orchestra seemed a bit unsure of the tempi. But it was evident that the players had a great deal of fun playing, and that feeling of enjoyment was communicated to the audience.

The next piece featured two soloists: one was an unknown virtuoso of the camera, and the second was the second year music student, Robert Klose, whose métier is the violin. The work performed was the famous showpiece of bravura sentimental gaudiness, the Concerto in D Major, opus 6, by Paganini (as arranged by Kreisler). Although not a very deep and serious work of art, this concerto is extremely demanding as a violin work, being full of pyrotechnics, double-stopped trills and daring leaps. While the performance of the first soloist was clumsy and ungracious, the latter soloist, Mr. Klose, has given a thrilling rendition which demonstrated well his mastery and superior technique as a violinist. It is a bit saddening that such confident and sparkling playing was not met with an adequate orchestral support.

The tone-poem Finlandia by Sibe-

lius is a relatively old work for the orchestra, since they have performed it before Christmas. In this selection, the brasses manifested some of the control which they seemed to lack in the Brahms.

The overture of "Il Signor Bruchino" by Rossini was executed with delightful gaiety and infectious buoyancy. The spirit of this charming bagatelle was well-expressed and maintained.

The next piece, the highly piquant Dance of the Russian Sailors by Glière, was played with great enthusiasm and with an incisive rhythm. The exotic, colorific score was deftly delineated.

The following work, a Toy Symphony by that incorrigible musical clown Malcolm Arnold, was dedicated to the benefit of a musicians' relief fund—and seems to have done its intended job well. This novel and contemporary excursion into the form of *tour-de-force* originated by Haydn, that of writing symphonies for children's toys, deserves one comment from my pen. This comment I shall take from the work itself, being a quotation from the part of a whistle: "Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"

After the cock-a-doodle-doo's and the laughter subsided, the last work of the evening, Hoe Down from "Rodeo" by Copland, was presented. The rural and raw, unsophisticated flavour of the piece was well-preserved and enthusiastically delivered.

In summation, our orchestra is improving, but there still is need for improvement, especially in the wind section. The string section, as a whole, has improved decidedly since it was last heard.

And next time you go to hear the symphony, dear reader, please do not bring a camera!



THE GREYSTONE SINGERS from Saskatchewan will give a concert in Con Hall on March 1st and 2nd at 8:15 p.m., as part of a musical exchange with U of A's Mixed Chorus.

J.B.: An Attempt To Justify Injustice

by W.B.S.

A major trend in theatre today is the presentation of basic human situations, previously presented in other ages, in a contemporary context. Romeo and Juliette has much impact when played in black leather jackets with knife fights extending into the audience. This audience can see the significance in this situation; whereas duels are more romantic than applicable to a modern situation.

"In 'J.B.' Studio Theatre's latest production, Archibald MacLeish has brought a part of the Bible up to date. The result is effective and certainly achieves a great deal of what it seeks to achieve.

J.B. is a morality play attempting to justify the injustice of the universe. This is a big job. Human suffering and irrational misery are difficult enough to accept for a short period of time, but when this is the entire play difficulties arise. This play begins on a high emotional pitch and tends to increase and increase with no way for the audience to gain a release from this tension. Dr. Mitchell has had her actors throw away too few lines and stress too many heavy lines. This brings out the ponderousness and lack of pace that is a definite potential of this script. Dr. Mitchell has made so little of the few "release scenes," preferring to keep her audience on this high peak. Great laugh lines like, "They don't sound like comforters to me," are underplayed, and as a result almost lost to the audience.

The complex set on such a small stage tended at times to handicap the actor rather than aid him. Instead, as a vehicle for the actors to work in, this set seemed to exist as a foreign entity, all by itself. At one point when 14 actors appeared on the stage, a cluttered situation resulted.

This play is certainly performed well on the whole, but as enjoyable as it was it does not come up to the standard set by previous Studio Theatre plays such as "The Visit."

Why is this? There are two major errors. The first is the continual maintenance of such a high emotional peak, and the second is the failure to realize the tremendous strength and beauty that simplicity offers. To be simple and convincing is very, very difficult. Too, unnecessary complexity of blocking, and complex acting technique, produces an effect of insincerity. And in a morality play this is almost an inherent danger.

However, some excellent acting made for many beautiful moments. The male members of the cast

were far more convincing than the female. Gary Mitchell as the power of temptation was excellent. This was most certainly one of Mr. Mitchell's greatest performances in Edmonton. He was powerful, well-controlled, energetic, and graceful, in both his movement and his speech. A demanding role was met and conquered.

Stuart Carson as god, was Stuart Carson, as God. John Rivet, as "J.B.," took over one half of the first act to develop credibility. At times Mr. Rivet was unsure of himself, such as in the "Luck, that's what it is Mr. Sullivan" scene. Grief tended towards a stereotyped reaction in the beginning of the play.

However Mr. Rivet did enlist the audience's sympathy by the second act. ("Show me the reason, Oh God! show me the reason!") Bud D'Amur showed himself to be a most capable actor, as all five parts he played were accomplished well within the bounds a small part imposes.

Bob Ohlhauser, in his 4 parts, was less outstanding.

The high point in the play was the scene with the three comforters. The most powerful and best controlled performance seen in Edmonton for a long time was given by Ted Kemp as Religion. His physical appearance reinforced his almost perfect control over the situation and the character.

Len Crowther was also effective as a comforter, and Kenneth Smith accomplished the demands of his role, as the third comforter. This scene with these three gentleman certainly brought the play alive.

The female roles were less convincing. Jean Nicholls as "women" tended towards one grief reaction, one pain reaction, and one misery reaction which she used at the appropriate time. Her appearance at the end of the play was not too effective, as she tended to be unsure of herself.

J.B.'s family seemed over-rehearsed and too precise in their reactions.

Please, could Studio Theatre buy new speakers? The voice of God is not too beautiful when it is unintelligible. The lights were effective and sensitively set and operated. My sole complaint with properties is the absence of "terrifying masks," as so much was said about them in the script. In essence this is a good play. Its outstanding performances make it most certainly worth seeing. This is a powerful play; possibly just too much energy and sympathy is demanded from the audience. To make it totally successful.