

Romaniacs at the Cohn

Ethno-fusion blend of humour, music

by Steven Slater

If you had been born into a musical family, which in its infancy had been broken up and scattered across another continent, how would you go about finding your lost siblings?

This was the question posed by Steffi Romaniac at the start of the Romaniac's portion of Symphony Nova Scotia's Pops Concert last Friday night at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium. His answer was to join a country band and alter their music to suit his East European background in the hope that as the band toured North America his brothers would recognize the sound and be reunited. Thereupon, The Romaniacs gave a spirited East Meets West interpretation of Country & Western to demonstrate the point. Unfortunately, Steffi continued, it didn't work. Later though, at a wedding in Climax, Saskatchewan, the brothers were introduced to each other and reunited! Since then, sometime in 1985, the brothers — Steffi on mandolin, guitar and vocals; Myron on violin, synth and cymbals; Yanos on bass and world map; and Zalmir on guitar — have been forging an intriguing blend of humour, musical talent and travel information, which they call ethno-fusion. Steffi claimed that their appearance with Symphony Nova Scotia resulted from a Romaniacs appearance on CBC's Morning-side, during which they appealed to any other errant family members to call them. According to Steffi, the entire Symphony N.S. called.

The outcome was a wonderful evening. The Symphony warmed up the audience with Smetana's "Dance of the Comedians". Guest Conductor Howard Cable dedicated this to Maritime Tel & Tel as it is a piece frequently used by figure skaters! They continued

with pieces by Armus Jarneselt and a movement from Haydn's 104 Symphony. These were charmingly played, introduced and explained by Mr. Cable.

The Symphony took a rest for a while when the Romaniacs came out, partly due to the lowering of a large map of the world between the two groups. As Steffi described the band's history and journeys and the world origins of their material, brother Janos would point or whack out the locations on the map. After a couple more songs by themselves, the map was raised and the Symphony assisted the Romaniacs by highlighting some of the more stirring passages when appropriate.

Throughout the rest of the evening, each member of the group got to display their considerable musical expertise. While Yanos tended to play deadpan behind the others' antics, he stepped into the spotlight for a lengthy bass solo intro for "Paint It Black". The Romaniacs made this melancholy Rolling Stones song into a lively Gypsy romp which I'll never hear the same again! While also re-interpreting other assorted classics such as "Moscow Night", the band also showed a flair for original tunes. The most moving was undoubtedly "Toronto, Mia Belle Metopoli", an Italian ode to the beauties of Toronto. This was sung in Italian with an English translation by Myron that brought much laughter. As The Romaniacs explained in an interview before the show, they had moved to Toronto until they were famous enough to leave! They now work out of Vancouver.

They are a lively band, prone to jumping in unison and also to audience participation. They taught us, with some assistance from the Symphony to shout *Hoy!* on cue and also to clap,

weep and moan. The show ended with a band from two explosive charges on the final *Hoy!* This seemed to catch some of the more staid Symphony audience by surprise, but everyone seemed to leave amused and enlivened. The crowd applauded long and loud, bringing the band back for a couple of curtain calls.

During the last year The Romaniacs have been around the world, featured frequently on CBC Radio and television and have also released an album, "Set the World on Fire" on their own label. The future includes plans for a live album, much more touring and possible a TV series. Their inventiveness and verve

will take them a long way. Their album conveys their style and music admirably and for those who have not heard them live it is an excellent place to start. Congratulations are in order for Symphony Nova Scotia for bringing their delightful kin to town and hopefully the next reunion is not too far off!

'Last night I had the strangest dream'

by Kirsten Nichols

Last night I had the strangest dream,

I'd ever had before.

I dreamed the world had all agreed to put an end to war. I dreamed I saw a mighty room, the room was filled with men, And the paper they were signing said they'd never fight again.

And when the paper was all signed and a million copies made, They all joined hands and bowed their heads and grateful prayers were prayed.

And the people in the streets were dancing round and round, While swords and guns and uniforms were scattered on the ground.

— Ed McCurdy
copywrite 1955 Almanac Music, Inc.

Ed McCurdy's dream is shared by many people all over this planet who worry about its continued existence. Most university students at this time of year are worried, but the nuclear arms race and the environment are not top most in their minds. Exams and term papers crowd out those thoughts.

I know this feeling and spent the last two weeks suffering through the frustration of it. I mean, there is nothing you can do... give it your best shot and hope your prof is on the same wavelength. Frustration ends up percolating through your life or mine at least. I end up feeling that there is nothing I can change and maybe there isn't about school, but I can influence the path the world takes away from its own, and our own destruction.

"I" is one person, as the pronoun suggests, but there's many "I's" out there. Each of us gains from our involvement in the peace movement. The feeling of empowerment is incredible. Suddenly you get the feeling that what you say, or write, counts. You make the difference and you do.

The cry that 'I am only one person' does not hit at the truth of the matter, for a crowd of millions is the coming together of individuals. If each dismissed the idea of attending a lecture, rally, ceremony or march because he/she was

only one person, there would be no such events. Therefore politicians would continue doing what they wished, instead of what we wish.

The other often heard comment is "I don't know how to get involved." The actual purpose of this article is to solve that dilemma and tell you what is going on. This is not a complete list, there are always meetings and fundraisers going on. Groups would appreciate your input. For more information on particulars of meetings and such, the phone book and the International Education Centre of Saint Mary's University are two of the most helpful resources. The I.E.C. also puts out a monthly calendar of events which is very helpful. On to the listing...

May 4-6 EDUCATING FOR A PEACEFUL WORLD: A Conference for Educators and Youth is being held at Henson College. It starts Thursday at 6:00pm with the opening of the Peace Fair.

Peace education wasn't in my curriculum. My curriculum gave me the skills to make me a productive member of society, but the idea that the world itself might stop producing was never discussed. I remember how I felt when I discovered the idea of war and the astounding fact that people actually killed each other and were even finding better ways of doing it, each and every day. I was scared. No one told me I could make a difference. Hiding under my blankets could save me from monsters, but who was going to save me from nuclear weapons? I couldn't answer that question then, and I can't now, but I can act on it, and will by participating in this conference. For more information on the conference contact Henson College.

June 5 is WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY. The details of what is going to happen aren't final—watching the harbour might be advised.

The week surrounding July 1st is another time to keep your eyes on the harbour. Green Peace will be in town to start their tour of the Eastern Seaboard. If you thought that Halifax, Nova Scotia had nothing in common with New York, New York or Boston, Mass., you were mistaken. All three are continually paying their "membership dues" to a very

select club. In fact, the only membership requirement is to put your population in danger by allowing nuclear armed and nuclear powered vessels into your harbour. Green Peace is calling for Nuclear Free Seas and drawing attention to the fact that we are all in danger. Details will be posted. It should be an interesting week. Events will be centred on both the ecological and the nuclear dangers.

8:15am, AUGUST 6, 1945, civilization was blown into the nuclear age with the dropping of "Little Boy" on Hiroshima. I've sat here for the last ten minutes rereading that statement. Why, oh why such destruction? It did end World War II, but people are still dying from its effects. The hibakusha, survivors of the blast, are growing older and suffering from more and more complex conditions. Their children also fear the future and what diseases it may bring them. We have not only polluted a population, we continue to destroy the environment and the economic system. According to statistics reviewed and found to be true by the U.S. Senate staff, not exactly a 'peacenik' grow group, it would take 300 megatons of firepower to destroy all the large and medium-sized cities of the world. On the planet at the moment there is over sixty times that. We are capable of destroying the world sixty times over and yet we develop new weapons, as people starve.

August 6, 1989 will be a day to think about those facts. Tell the politicians that you can't live with those facts because they are more than likely to get you killed. Celebrate the hope there is for the future of this planet.

THERE IS HOPE. On August 6 you will see it in the eyes of the child you help to make a paper-crane and the determination you feel to insure that that child lives his or her life in freedom and peace. You become determined that child will not live his/her life as a hostage to nuclear weapons. Become part of the hope. Get involved, please. Your life may depend on it. Hiroshima Action Committee can be reached at 466-4738. Leave your name and number and you will be contacted. We need you.

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