

...Church accountant satisfied

# Audience responds to intense Quartet

by J.C. LaDalia

The Melos Quartet Stuttgart performed Wednesday evening, Nov. 3, at the First Presbyterian Church, in the Edmonton Chamber Music Society's second concert of the season. Established in 1965 this quartet has won a number of European awards and recorded the complete Schubert quartets for DGG, which, aside from tours, is the means by which American listeners would know them.

The first work of the evening was the *Third Quartet* of Hindemith (1922) one of the most recently performed of modern quartets. Certainly, of Hindemith's seven essays in this genre it is the only well-known one. It is a very lively work with a certain aggressive *panache*, but the Melos played it with considerable sauvage. Their sumptuous tone was immediately apparent. All four players were in complete and balanced control, although there were a few solo phrases in the 2nd and 3rd movements which were not quite as sure. The march rhythms of the 1st movement (Ruhige Viertel) sounded more Gallic than German in this performance. Indeed, it was an unusually warm-hearted approach to this work, and it worked beautifully.

The second quartet we heard was Mozart's *G Major, K. 387*. This is the first of the six quartets Mozart dedicated to Haydn and it is a masterpiece. While the Melos played it beautifully from a technical point of view, and their full sound was a pleasure, their interpretation struck me as a bit too stolid. There was no shimmer of humour or lightness, and therefore no contrast between the second and third movements, although one is an *adagio* minuet, (functioning as a scherzo, albeit not the friskiest possible) and the other marked *andante cantabile*.

Thus the delicate seriousness of the 3rd could not make as powerful an impression, nor did it build in a sustained manner. The last movement, played in a large-scaled, impassioned style was excellent. The second violinist, Gerhard Weiss, played his solo passages with unflinching beauty and pathos. Following the intermission we were informed that the non-efficiently-distant applause and raked voices, heard with considerable annoyance throughout the music, were emanating from the church's basement because the church had booked two different events for the same evening. No one was satisfied with the result, except possibly the church's accountant.

The program's final event was the first of Brahms' three quartets, *opus 51, no. 1*. While most of much of Brahms' chamber music, especially those works with piano or clarinet present, I find the string quartets greatly overrated and am surprised to find them turning up on nearly every program the Chamber Society offers us, as if they were unquestioned masterpieces. They aren't; they aren't even in the same class with Beethoven's middle quartets, or the best efforts of Dvorak or Mendelssohn, and they are certainly not weighty enough to sustain the second half of a concert.

I assume our Society has made a good choice in choosing the program and I look forward to

their becoming more adventurous (the Szymanowski last season I regard as sheer good luck, probably chosen instead of some "modern" piece actually written in our lifetimes!) In the event the Brahms was played more satisfyingly than I have ever heard it. *Tempi* were finely adjudged, especially the 3rd movement, often taken at a lugubrious pace which sinks it immediately. In the Melos' reading the movement didn't appear interminable until it was nearly over. The passionate conviction with which the Melos played raised the work beyond the salon music level to which it sometimes sinks.

The hushed and intensely responsive audience brought the quartet back to play an encore, the first movement of Mozart's *d minor quartet, K. 421* the second of the 'Haydn' quartets. This was played with just the *elan* which had been missing from their previous Mozart, and was perhaps the most perfect moment of the evening.

**Recordings.** The Melos has recorded none of the works heard on Wed., but they can be heard on the complete Schubert quartets, (set of 7 LPs, D99) and two records from it are available singly: the first 3 qts. on one

record, and the 12th and 14th (*Death and the Maiden*) on another. They have also recorded the six Cherubini qtz. (3LPs) which are almost unknown and therefore particularly welcome. But perhaps their most appealing release are three Guitar Quintets of Boccherini, with Narcisco Yepes, guitarist (also on DGG). The only recording of the Hindemith presently available is a traditionally hard-driving version by the Fine Arts Qt. (who surfaced here for a February concert). It is paired with Ernest Bloch's beautiful 5th qt., and is well worth acquiring (Concert-Disc). As a single record the Mozart K.387 is available (with the d minor) as performed excellently by the Guarneri Qt. on RCA. A more radiant rendition, however, is by the *Quarteto Italiano*, in a 3-LP set on Philips which includes all six 'Haydn' quartets.

The Brahms is available cheaply on London Stereo Treasury paired with the other op. 51 qt. They are played by the Weller Quartet, and very well too. More searching accounts are from the Cleveland Quartet (RCA, 2-LPs), or again, the *Italiano* who plays all three Brahms and the three Schumann on a Philips 3-LP set.

## Book Beat

# Reporter pro-police

by Kevin Gillese

Charbonneau, Jean-Pierre, *The Canadian Connection* (Optimum Publishing, Ottawa, 1976) \$12.95, 542 pp.

It's not easy reporting on organized crime in Canada.

Jean-Pierre Charbonneau, a 23-year-old crime reporter with Montreal's *La Presse*, found that out the hard way when he was shot at in his paper's newsroom, threatened repeatedly, and forced to accept police protection.

Charbonneau, who studied criminology at l'Universite de Montreal before becoming a reporter, began to specialize in reporting on organized crime infiltration in Canada (particularly in the Montreal area) and became more and more closely aligned with the various sectors of the police force (RCMP, municipal cops and Drug Enforcement Agency personnel) who have been trying to stem the influx of organized crime and the international drug trafficking that came with it.

The police work did no good. They have never been able to stop the flow and it's unlikely they ever will. But by aligning himself that way, Charbonneau fell prey to the one pitfall evidenced in the book - he is very, very pro-police everywhere in his book.

Nowhere in Charbonneau's book does he ever mention police activities which might overstep the boundaries of the law. Everyone knows infractions and abuses occur - naturally enough, since it is, in effect, a "war"

between police and organized criminals.

But why aren't they reported on? Simply because they are his contacts and in the touchy world of police reporting, if you burn your contacts, you lose most of the valuable stories.

So *The Canadian Connection* always portrays the cops as the good guys and the robbers as the bad guys. But that's not to say the book is bad - far from it. *The Canadian Connection* is an exhaustively-researched, scrupulously-documented, thoughtful piece of writing on a subject which has had little, if any, analysis previously given to it in Canada.

Charbonneau not only provides extensive coverage of the more mundane "administrative" techniques used by organized criminals to smuggle drugs, murder opponents and outwit police officers, he also writes with a tight, lucid, bright style.

An enormous number of bizarre situations and sleazy underworld figures are detailed in the book - including the Catholic priest who doubled as a heroin dealer, the previously unexposed Montreal underworld leader Vic Cotroni and his activities, the bloody gang of wars of the sixties in Montreal - and the non-fiction works reads more like such fictional Mafia works as *The Godfather* and *Honor Thy Father*.

The work is a good one and what Charbonneau sacrifices in objectivity he appears to make up for with attention to detail and well-crafted writing.

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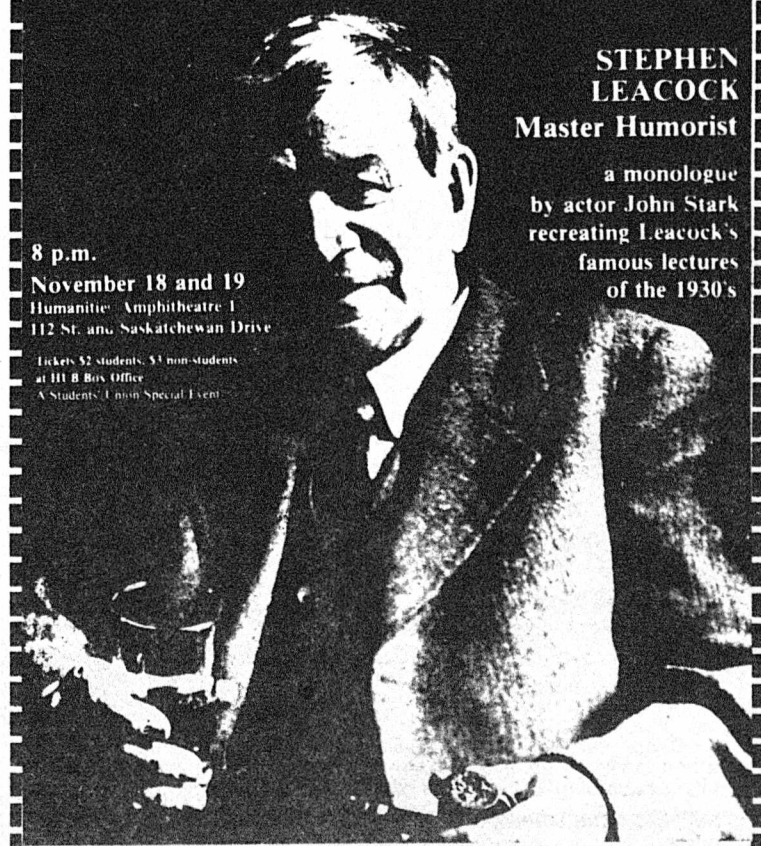


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