thune — confused action

theatre review by Kevin Gillese

***ne* by Rod Langley. Playing at the Citadel's tor Theatre until April 23.**

his play doesn't have heart and I think that's an givable flaw in a drama about one of Canada's — he world's — greatest humanitarians, Dr. Norman une.

Bethune *was* a man of heart — a heart so big it drew way from the upper-class genteel medical circles etroit and Montreal to immerse himself in relief of ring wherever he found it.

Bethune, whose surgical and tubercular-research won him fame throughout North America, me an ardent communist in the 1930s and orted the republicans in the Spanish Civil War, nizing a blood brigade which brought him inter- nal acclaim and saved thousands of lives.

After Spain, Bethune went to China to assist the nts in the fight against Japan and the subsequent unist revolution. There he taught crash-courses d medicine and helped organize medical relief for hinese. A slip of his own scalpel caused a blood ion that killed him before the revolution ended, e had become one of its heroes and a man revered ao Tse-Tung himself.

But to stage a play worthy of the courage and nity of the man Bethune requires much more than less script and cluttered staging spooned up by itadel and playwright Rod Langley.

John Neville, let it be said at the outset, is very good imes inspiring — in his role as Dr. Bethune. When livers a speech Bethune made before a Montreal o pleading the merits of the Russian revolution a mother in childbirth — is she not ugly, bloody, beaten, but is she not beautiful and heroic?") e's strength in acting and Bethune's courage in ecome inseparable.

But unfortunately, Neville can't hold the show alone. In addition, playwright Langley confuses the action with so many flippant minor characters that often Neville/Bethune can't even get a word in edgewise. Add to this the jarring use of intrusive moveable stage props which serve only to distance the audience further and you get a show that should be sent back to the books before ever being offered to Edmonton audiences.

The show is not *that* bad of course, since it is a Citadel production and certain of the professional polish pulls the show through, no matter what. Compared to what it should be, however, *Bethune* is a disgrace.

If the Citadel had staged this play with only five wooden boxes for props (instead of trellises falling from the ceiling and left and right wing stages moving on and off the main stage), and if the Citadel had cast the show appropriately and stayed well away from fake Russian and Chinese and Spanish accents, and if director Keith Digby had paced the first hour of this two-and-a-quarter hour show with some life and action, *then* the show would have been a good one.

It still would have been incongruous, of course, since Bethune's speeches could have easily been directed towards the Citadel's black tails-and-tie audience as to the people on stage. And it would have been mis-written, as well, since it would still have the toss-off funny lines that everyone could laugh at without having to face up to the inequalities that Bethune was talking about.

But at least the show would have given us a moving rendition of the life of a truly great Canadian, a humanitarian who gave his life up to the Chinese peasants because he believed in their revolution. And that, at least, would have rewarded all the good intentions of those on the Citadel staff who had the audacity to stage this type of drama in the confines of Edmonton's own luxury theatre.

anist and symphony exhilarate

music review by J. C. La Dalia

One of the year's most exhilarating musical events place this past weekend when Gary Graffman, ist, performed with the Edmonton Symphony estra.

The entire concert was highly successful, thanks to on Streatfeild, Associate Conductor for the Van- er Symphony, who conducted with rare aplomb. opening work, Haydn's 85th Symphony (nicknam- 'La Reine") was played with bright and firm rol In the first movement's development on all strands could be heard with x-ray clarity. precision and balance of most passages in the nd and third movements was notable. The last ement was taken fast, but not at whirlwind pace. result was a very satisfactory performance.

Mozart's great d minor piano concerto (no. 20, K. followed. When Mr. Graffman performed the aikovsky First here in 1973 it was my first rience in Jubilee and so I attributed much of his ty to the hall. Hearing him again, however, I am e that in the intervening years no other pianist has his clarity and presence. His tone tends to be large heroic, which is not always appropriate in Mozart, cially in the second movement where more warmth bloom are wanted. But I'm not sure that isn't lee's fault, with its dry, overbright acoustics.

Over-all it was a beautiful performance. Graffman's dling of the cadenzas was very exciting, and atfeild's conducting was excellent. The outburst in second movement's middle, wherein the piano sionately exclaims to cascades of woodwind notes splendid. The last movement had the proper ultuous tragic weight until finally reconciled by the ty march which ends the work.

After intermission Mr. Graffman played the ofiev First Concerto. Here Jubilee's acoustic was ctive, as the composer uses the piano as a ussive instrument. In Graffman's hands the fre- nt toccata passages were galvanizing. Being but 15 utes long, the work readily sustains interest in its nately glittering and swooningly lyrical moments. fman is one of the work's foremost exponents and a responsive and more-than-prepared orchestra result was visceral music of the first order. The seum crowds should have been there! Not since a Cherkassy played the Tschaikovsky Second has onton heard anything like it.

The last work, Grieg's *Peer Gynt* Suite No. One, uld have been an anti-climax. Instead, because of Streatfeild's intelligent and well-judged response to work it was most affecting. "Aasa's Death," played muted strings, was a summing up of all our string ion has accomplished this year. Because atfeild shaped it with care for maximum effect there probably not a dry eye in the house. "Anitra's Dance" was handled with well-coloured delicacy, and "In the Hall of the Mountain King" grew to a really manic climax.

At the risk of gushing I must say the ESO is fortunate to have a guest conductor who is so musically solid and unpretentious and with whom our orchestra seems to work so well. His solo bows were well-deserved and both players and audience responded enthusiastically.

Recommended recordings: Haydn's 85th is best served by Bernstein and the N.Y.Phil. in a set of the complete "Paris" symphonies (82-87) on 3 Columbia records. The Mozart Concerto K. 466 is beautifully played by Alfred Brendel, conducted by Neville Marriner on a Phillips record which includes the K. 491 concerto. Graffman's reading of the Prokofiev First is on Columbia, with the Third Concerto (Szell, Cleveland Orch.) However if you're a Prokofiev fan Ashkanazy's set of all five concerti with Previn and the London Sym. is superb (3 lps-London). Grieg's complete *Peer Gynt* is warmly played by Barbirolli and the Halle Orch. (Angel).

Bsst's pltnum misses

by Kevin Gillese

Bissett, Bill *Plutonium Missing* **(Intermedia Vancouver 1976), 71 pp. $2.95 paper.**

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