

by Ross Rudolph

It has been claimed that there are only two kinds of music: the good and the bad. Rossini, for one, felt that the latter category subsumed only the boring kind. Those who were interested, and not basking in La Notte's "conjugal bankruptcy" (so described in the Film Society's blurb), had a unique opportunity to judge for themselves the quality of some selected works of the renowned Canadian composer, Miss Violet Archer (sic!), now resident at the University of Alberta. I hope I may be excused from pronouncing a life-or-death judgment on what was heard once, for the first time, without benefit of scores, for such opinions usually tell more about reviewers than reviewed, and I am reluctant so to expose my foibles publicly. Instead, I wish to report the result of an illuminating discussion with the composer.

Modern Music

When asked whether she was not dispirited by students' apathetic or hostile view of modern music, Miss Archer replied that the attitude is born out of youth's musical circumstances. Modern music grows on one (somewhat like fungus), and when it is difficult to hear live performances of contemporary music, no taste or liking for it is cultivated. Miss Archer feels that the local symphony has achieved a prodigious amount in its young life, but expresses regret that its programmes do not more fully represent our times. The symphony is not solely at fault. Why do not instrumental instructors introduce their malleable charges to the sounds of their age when his music could become second nature of them? Why, say, would not piano instructors make more use out of Bartok's variegated and variously fascinating Mikrokosmos?

From this reference, and from the prominence of a portrait of the great Hungarian composer in her studio, it came out that Miss Archer had briefly studied with Bartok, who apparently was not particularly interested in teaching. On the other hand, Paul Hindemith, another of this century's great musical minds, was an inspiration at Yale. ("Inspiration" may seem a strange word to use in reference to this supposedly "cerebral" master, but Miss Archer doubts the authenticity of the anecdote in which Hindemith's statement that the artist must first be a craftsman with regular working hours was greeted with Klemperer's riposte that the music sounds accordingly.)

Perhaps as a result of this background, Miss Archer does not write twelve tone music, though she acknowledges here indebtedness to it for its handling or development of its material. She is interested in all aspects of musical creation and spoke with especial pride of her participation in a symposium on modern music in 1961 at the University of Colorado in which electronic music was seriously considered.

Canadian Music

What about Canadian music? National schools of music, she feels, grow up unobtrusively as a result of a whole welter of endemic influences, one suspects both natural and social. The primitive, ritual character of the second of the three songs setting Biblical texts would be alien to any European writer. For many reasons, the development of Canadian composition has proceeded unevenly, and though it was never explicitly stated, one suspects that even without the aid of a geography course, he could locate the least developed stratum. Instruction in music can be exhilarating here because

of the amount of work there is to be done. Though progress may be glacial, results will finally be seen, the composer feels sure. Miss Archer responds to challenges, and offhand I cannot think of a more formidable one. Now it is up to the students.

When speaking of her music, Miss Archer often uses the word "unpretentious". The three duets for two violins that eased the audience into the meat of the programme were exemplary of that claim, and when Miss Archer drew the parallel with Beethoven's Bagatelles, the emphasis was on the work and not the composer. The composer's attitude towards the chosen Biblical texts prevented the music's overpowering the words, detracting from them, and in fact the music enhanced the aura of ritual which she finds in these passages. Though the Piano Sonata is an early work, Miss Archer apparently does not disown it; but in the same way that one could not divine the Schumann of the C Major Fantasy in the Abegg Variations or the Chopin of the F Minor Ballade in the Variations on La ci darem la mano, it was difficult to find the composer of the fine Piano Trio in the rambling first movement of the sonata. But what a trio? It was commissioned as a representative Canadian work for the first Inter-American Composer's Congress, and is worthy of that honor. Balance is at times a problem, but the finale has real momentum and sweep. If modern music needs repeated exposure, I hope that Miss Archer will be here for some little while to help disseminate it.

Field Day With Bach

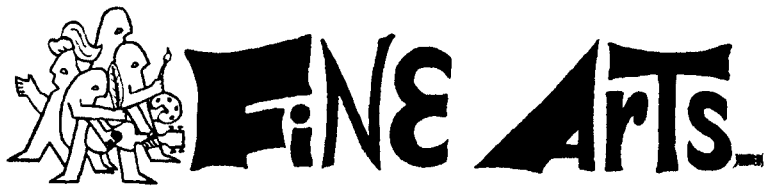
Bach will be having a field day when on Sunday, December 16, and Tuesday, December 18 student forces will participate in performances of three incomparable masterpieces: the Christmas Oratorio, the Fifth Brandenburg Concerto, and the C Major Concerto for two Keyboard instruments. Admission free. Do NOT miss this for love or money, for love of music or lack of money.

Boredom is a dangerous subject for an artist to tackle, especially so if he is a cinematic artist, for unless his creation is infused with at-boring. Michelangelo Antonioni, the Italian renowned for "L'Avventura," has taken on this task in "La Notte," which was presented at the Edmonton Film Society on Monday evening.

It is a brilliant film in so many ways. Continuity is loose, whereas individual scenes are specific in minute detail, a combination which is strangely compelling here. It concerns a day and night of plodding monotony in the lives of a fashionable couple of Milan. The man, a writer, is played by Marcello Mastroianni with the same quiet skill which he displayed in "La Dolce Vita." His wife is portrayed by Jeanne Moreau, the gifted French actress who did so well as the perverse monster of "Les Liaisons Dangereuses."

They are a sorry pair in "La Notte," caught in a marriage which has crumbled before their eyes while they stood back and calmly watched the process. The illness and death of a friend who had great faith in both of them brings about a realization of the sickness in their tedious lives. But they are immersed so far in boredom and indifference that the effort to break away from it is too great, and the conclusion finds them trying to make love in a golf course sand-trap.

They move through Antonioni's



ARTS CALENDAR

Choral Concert—University Music Club

R. Eaton conducting
Sunday, Dec. 16, 3:00 p.m.
Convocation Hall

University Orchestral Society

A. B. Crighton conducting
Tuesday, Dec. 18, 8:30 p.m.
Convocation Hall

Christmas Box Concert

Edmonton Symphony with Edmonton Ballet Company
Dec. 26, 3:00 p.m.
Dec. 27, 7:30 p.m.
Jubilee Auditorium

with carol and concerto . . .

Due to the success of past Christmas concerts, the University Music Club is planning two performances this year.

The first, scheduled for Sunday, Dec. 16 at 3:00 p.m. in Con Hall, will feature the Music Club's 250-voice Choral group under the direction of Richard Eaton, singing Bach's Christmas Oratorio, Scarlatti's Christmas Contata, as well as traditional carols.

Instrumentalists with the University Symphony, conducted by A. B. Crighton will perform in Con Hall at 8:15 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 18. Bach's Two Piano Concerto, Beethoven's 1st Piano Concerto, and the Brandenburg No. 5 Concerto, in addition to selections from Grieg's Peer Gynt Suite and Sebelius' Finlandia will be presented. All performers are students.

'La Notte

by Bob Pounder

beautifully photographed picture like two handsome zombies in search of some non-existent pleasure. They wander (and the camera dutifully follows) through scenes which are technically superb but which sorely lack a spark of originality. The all-night party at the house of a wealthy industrialist becomes episodic in the extreme, and although the tedium of their movements is real enough—indeed, it is scrupulously set forth—it does not demand anything from us, and it is difficult for us to respond.

The hero shows no endearing traits, his wife is the epitome of self-disgust, and that's all. These people do not demand our attention. They are beyond the point of caring. They are shells, and this is the only aspect of them that we are shown. For the viewer, it is like trying to gain insight into the overall scope of a cathedral by looking at one of its windows. To say that Antonioni does not want us to identify with the couple is not enough. How can any aspect of life be portrayed without awareness and involvement?

But the technical brilliance of the film must once more be emphasized. The camera work is impeccable throughout, and the acting style suitably indifferent. We shall not soon forget Jeanne Moreau as she appears in "La Notte," for she conveys a clinical sadness and self-pity which are absolutely frightening. If only we could feel sad with her.

Intrigue and Exercise with Workshop

by Jon Whyte

Tuesday evening at Studio Theatre was not a delight. It was an invigorating example of intellectual and entertaining theatre which gave the audience a challenge it would rarely meet on Broadway.

The Stronger by Strindberg, a tour de force for one actress, or a dialogue by one person, was respectfully performed by Lee Royce and Sharon Service. The speaking role Lee did not crescendo to the point which I thought it should have. It reached its climax too soon and she was left fighting with an orchestra of emotions she could not conduct. The play itself is an interesting exercise and one I am glad to have had the opportunity to see.

Purgatory by W. B. Yeats, a verse play directed by Ken Smith, is a difficult play to produce and a difficult one to understand even when one has time to read it in the comfort of the armchair. Smith is to be commended for the selection of such a bewildering play. I had expected him to be defeated by it but he almost succeeded in conquering it. I doubt that any production could be completely successful, that all meanings of the play could be communicated in one or a dozen productions. Yet I doubt anyone left the theatre completely confused.

The major production of the evening was The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui by Bertolt Brecht, directed by David Murray of the Department of Philosophy.

A double hooked satire directed at the Nazis and the American gangsters of the Depression, the play is alternately startling and humorous. The fantasy—or is it reality—intrigues us, then disgusts us. Typical Brechtian techniques.

Murray's direction did exploit these techniques more than adequately. Alberto-Hitler was diabolically fascinating. Gori-Goering was evilly enjoyable. The play moved rapidly, more rapidly than did Galileo, the last Brecht play we had to chance to see. As Herr Ui surged to power the tempo increased. There was never any feeling of lag.

Criticisms are few. I felt the parallel story of the cauliflower trust and the Nazi destiny was clear enough that the slide panels which related the two need not have been shown. Maybe all of the specific comparisons would not have been understood, but I found the explanations a distraction.

Studio continues to give us top notch theatre. We are grateful.

U of A Radio Concert

On Dec. 16th, at 2:00 p.m., CKUA will present a program of contemporary organ compositions played by John Lewis, 2nd year English student here. Mr. Lewis will be heard from McDougall United Church and will be playing the three manual Hill, Norman and Beard instrument which was built for the church in 1956. The works chosen represent a period from the turn of the century to the present and feature such well-known composers as Henri Mulet, Louis Vierne, the Canadian Healey Willan, Olivier Messiaen and a number of American and English composers.

The program is the first in a series of six entitled "From the Performing Arts" produced by U of A Radio.