

L I T E R A R Y . . .

Glee Club's "Evicoms"

By TONY BIDWELL

Apparently the public is, to resort to an old proverb, "twice shy." That the Dalhousie Evicoms was not as successful as it should, and could have been was quite apparent; and there is a good reason for its failure. The fault lies, not with the Glee Club, which had worked wonders under the circumstances, but with the Student Body. Surely among the more than 1500 students at Dalhousie there is considerable talent hidden away—enough to enable the Glee Club to do better than it has. All praises are due to those who did contribute, but why are there no more? This is not good enough for Dalhousie.

A glaring example of the apathetic attitude of Dalhousians toward their organizations is the Concert Orchestra. Frank Padmore and the members of the orchestra deserve unreserved credit for the work that they have done. Starting from scratch, many members learning their instruments for the first time, they have made truly remarkable progress. However, there is still a serious shortage of players; the violin section in particular is weak. Most of the few players that have had the courage and good heart to play are as yet afraid to play into their violins and make a noise, so that they tend to be drowned in the brass and wood wind sections. As it happened, the regular concert master was not present for the concert, but his place was ably filled by Frances Saulnier, who, although rather uncertain in her solo numbers, did a very fine job of leading the orchestra, and who is to be highly commended for her perseverance and hard work in helping Mr. Padmore in his difficult task. With help from the student body the orchestra can and will become a first class organization.

The concert Orchestra played four selections, of which the Russian melody, *Two Guitars* and *The Pilgrims' Chorus* from Wagner's *Tannhauser* were the best. The playing was more even on Saturday night, and the orchestra kept together better.

The group that has made most progress is the Chorus, ably and vigorously directed by Geoffrey Payzant. Their selections were well sung, particularly the difficult *In Praise of Neptune* by Campien and German, and *Little David*. The first tenor seemed to be having difficulties in *Drink to Me Only*, and the occasional full throated roars that emanated from the bass section were rather startling. The chorus from *Trial By Jury* was a little ragged at times, but showed great promise.

Several solo vocal selections were heard during the evening. Very commendable was Eileen Cantwell's performance of Schumann's *Ich Grolle Nicht* from the song cycle, *Dichterliebe*. The rendition of *One Fine Day* from Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* was disappointing. Beryl Farmer's voice is much too querulous and small for the almost Wagnerian roles of Puccini, lacking the power needed to put across that difficult music, and she seemed to be having marked differences of opinion with her accompanist. The performance of "Ah, Je V'heur V'hivre" from Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet* and the Bach-Gounod *Erveh Merier* would have been good had Jean Parker allowed her quite pleasant voice to escape, instead of confining it within the limits of her teeth and letting it escape only by way of her nose. We were favoured with a hearty rendition of Zucca's hacknied showpiece, *I Love Life* by Theresa Monaghan.

Mary Lou Christie's performance of the first movement from Mozart's *Sonata in A major* was clear but spiritless, being little more than a succession of notes. The performance of the *Turkish March* rondo from the same sonata



Van Allen and Liszt

was vedy muddy and thick.

The Dalhousie Dance Orchestra was somehow able to slip in to complete the evening's assortment. They played Thornhill's *Snowfall*, (appropriately enough, for the Gym was icy), and then proceeded to thaw us out with a modern "adapation" of Massenet's *Elegve*. Indubitably this orchestra is a very fine one, and the music that they play is very danceable, but they were definitely rather more than out of place on a concert stage. The effect produced for the audience, shivering on hard, closely packed chairs in the Gym, was ludicrous.

The program was brought to a resounding close by a very fine performance of Liszt's *Spanish Rhapsody* by Neil Van Allen, who played very well in spite of the difficulties of a frigid Gym and a miserable excuse for a piano.

It seems a pity that Dalhousie, or Halifax, for that matter, cannot afford a decent piano for its visiting and local artists. The abomination that was used in the Gym is a serious handicap to the performers, since it is far too small to fill the Gym properly, or to give fullness and tone to the music played on it. It was not even in tune for the performance on Friday night. Even if Dalhousians do not rate a tuned piano, it is a direct insult to an artist to ask him to play on it. It is certainly time that a good piano was produced, and used.

The general effect was not good, since it was not Dalhousie's best effort, and until more college-spirited Dalhousians lend a helping hand to the development of the various projects offered them, and until they learn to take seriously that which is offered to them seriously, Dalhousie will never be able to make a good showing.

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Silent Night

The new man—he had been with the unit only two days—licked his dry lips and listened. In quiet undertones interspersed with long drags on a cork-tipped English cigarette a young lieutenant from Vancouver was explaining to the assembled NCO's and men the plan for that night's operation. The reinforcement stirred as he felt the eyes of his Corporal on him. Perspiration stood out on his forehead and cheeks. He was aware that he was an outsider to these men—they were not trusting him and yet knew that in the night's happenings his actions could well spell their doom. He had been sent to their section to replace a hardened veteran of five weeks' experience in action. The fact that he had reverted from the rank of Sergeant to get into the war meant nothing to them. All that held their interest was his ability, to handle the Bren. Not just anyone could do that, they said. It took guts they murmured as they whispered to each other and watched him—Only the Corporal and Lance Corporal were listening to the young lieutenant.

The officer got up from his seat on a COMPO box and walked across the floor of the barn to where a map was pinned on the side of a wagon. On the map, marked "Nijmegen 6SW" the officer pointed out the locations of the night's activities. "You pass through the Chaud's here" he said, stabbing at the map with his finger, "you can get there in the carrier but after that you'll have to walk and carry the mines in relays. Put the Bren down here" he said, indicating a spot on the map which was perilously close to the wiggly blue lines which indicated the presence of German positions.

The new man felt the undercurrent of doubt in the group as interest revived in them at mention of the Bren gun. He knew only too well that once they got between the Chaudiere Regiment and the Germans he was their only defence from patrols. Busy at their work of laying mines they could easily be wiped out by a fighting patrol before they realized that the Gerries were on them. The reinforcement licked his lips again and lit a cigarette. Poor cigarettes, these Woodbines, he thought.

In what seemed to him a very short time they were bowling along the dark silent road. Most of the men were drinking rum from two large bottles that were usually carried in the vehicle. The new man wanted a drink. Someone shoved the bottle at him and said "Have a shot Bud, you'll probably need it." Eagerly he tipped up the bottle and drank of the strong fiery liquid. He felt it burn as it slid down his throat and settled as a warm lump in his stomach. He would have liked to take another drink but he wasn't yet familiar with the code of these strange, silent men who made up part of Canada's Third Division. He passed the bottle on and took a firmer grip on the Bren.

Their pace slackened as they approached a cluster of houses at the top of the hill. "Where the hell are we going?" he wondered. The carrier stopped. He heard the Corporal's voice, "turn left here and drive up to the top of the hill." In a cold flat voice the driver replied "End of the line, Thompson, I ain't driving this hate-wagon up on no hill—remember what happened last time." "OK — OK", said Thompson, the Corporal. Pointing to a barn he indicated that the driver should stay there for the night with the carrier and raising his voice he told the men to follow him on foot.

They reached the top of the hill and were challenged by a sentry who was hidden in the doorway of a dug-out. The newcomer felt that he would like to get into a nice safe dug-out but he kept on walking with the rest. Flares occasionally lit up the valley as they descended into it. Mortar bombs burst in intermittent popping sounds. The rattle of a German Spandau kept up an incessant barrage on his nerves—a Vickers gun answered in evenly-spaced intervals. Haphazard bursts of machine-gun fire passed over their heads like groups of hell-bent hornets. The reinforcement shifted the weight of the Bren to his other hand and recalled certain words of the Charge of The Light Brigade. "Into the valley of death" he muttered to no one in particular. Finally as they reached the floor of the valley the Corporal indicated that he was to set up his Bren under a topsy turvy haystack and keep his eyes open.

The work of laying the mine-field went on. Minutes ticked away like hours. The cold seeped

into his bones and the fear of making a mistake crept into his mind. Every shadow became a man bent on destruction. Then he saw something concrete. As a flare lit up the snow-covered terrain he distinctly saw a group of men dive to cover behind a bush. Or was it imagination? The Corporal appeared out of the gloom as the flare died away. "The job's done—come on home" he said. The new man swallowed the lump in his throat and said "Wait!" Instinctively the Corporal knew that something was wrong and dove under the haystack. "What's up" he enquired? A flare went up and the nervous soldier pointed. There were the dark forms, almost on top of them. His instant reaction was to fire the Bren at them. He did.

Sound and fury washed over him in great waves. Flashes of light and violent explosions seemed to surround him. As he fired a cool hand kept handing him fresh magazines. Someone screamed and the screams receded into a series of gurgling moans which finally ceased. All was quiet. Another flare went up and he saw the dark corpses in the snow. "Come on, lets get out of here before they start to drift the mortars in", said the Corporal. He picked up his Bren and ran, following along the line of an old fence. They reached the safety of the sentry's dugout and stopped for a breath-

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