

# arts

## Fair start for Chamber Music Society

by F.N. Crory

On Wednesday evening at Convocation Hall, the Edmonton Chamber Music Society opened its 1974-75 season with a recital by the One Third Ninth Trio, which comprises Moshe Hammer (violinist), John Kadz (cellist), and Gloria Saarinen (pianist). The ensemble is based in Calgary.

The program opened with a single movement trio in B flat major which was written in 1812 by Beethoven for his young friend Maximiliane Brentano. According to Beethoven's own inscription on the score, it was designed "to encourage her in pianoforte playing", for which purpose the work was probably successful in that it possesses, a certain, albeit saccharine, charm.

However, for the most part I find it a rather inconsequential piece, decidedly not vintage Beethoven, and relying solely upon a rather disembodied prettiness for its existence. Its inclusion on the program was not only functional, in that it provided an unobtrusive warm-up exercise both for performers and audience, but historical, in that it provided connoisseurs with an opportunity to hear a largely unknown composition of Beethoven. The performance which it received was sufficiently polished as to underscore the rather languid prettiness of the music without attempting to inflate it to epic proportions.

As with Beethoven, I found Ravel's Trio in A minor - the second offering of the evening - to be for the most part an ineffectual and musically unrewarding work, totally lacking in direction and in an ability to sustain interest. The work provides numerous

opportunities for virtuosistic and coloristic displays, and one might legitimately surmise that it was chosen with those objectives primarily in mind.

Although the performance revealed digital fluency, and although it emphasized the bravura aspects of the composition, it seemed to lack any consistent sense of musical involvement, quite possibly because there is so little with which to be involved. The constant sacrifice of affect for effect, which was emphasized - and perhaps even relished - by the performers, is a problem inherent in the work itself; and the resulting disappointment was not entirely due to performance.

The Tchaikovsky Trio Opus 50, also in A minor, concluded the program. From the pianist, Gloria Saarinen, who prefaced each of the two major works of the evening with short - if somewhat strained - lectures, we found that Tchaikovsky wrote the work in memory of the pianist-pedagogue Nicholas Rubinstein.

The opening movement is supposedly pervaded with a sense of death; and the subsequent theme and variations are designed as small vignettes or musical portraits of the various facets of Rubinstein's personality. From this programmatic standpoint the work is a failure. The opening movement (*Pezzo Elegiaco*), although undeniably lyric, possesses sufficient bravura outbursts as to preclude death. As for the variations, they are not so much studies in musical portraiture as they are rather facile musical caricatures, rendered all the more sectional by the decidedly unsynthesized eclecticism: a mazurka in the best manner of Chopin-cum-Godard, a *valse de salon*, an

impersonally pedantic fugato, and an unconvincingly contrived reference to the opening movement.

The evening's performances in general were technically polished but lacked focus and concentration. Mr. Kadz' intonation was occasionally discomfiting and his variety of tonal color was restricted. Balances seemed to favor the piano and violin and at times

completely obliterated the cello line. Mr. Hammer, a former Assistant Concert Master of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, proved to be an excellent violinist but lacking in intensity. Miss Saarinen managed the orchestral-sounding piano parts of the Ravel with ease and a discreet variety of color, although at times she produced textures which were muddy, even for Ravel. She seemed less

preoccupied with phrasing than with color, which did nothing to help the insufferably tedious *Passacaille*. Throughout the evening she became increasingly aggressive in attack, so that by the time she was into the Tchaikovsky, fatigue was showing and a good many notes were missing.

The discerning audience's response was enthusiastic but stopped short of rapture.

## Saison 74-75 du Theatre Francais



Photo by Ken Turner

Theatre Francais d'Edmonton will open its 74-75 season on Friday, Oct. 11 at 8:30 p.m. with Jean Anouilh's *Le Bal des Voleurs* (The Ball of Thieves.) The play is directed by Mme. France Levasseur-Ouimet

and will run until Oct. 20.

Strindberg's *Mademoiselle Julie* and *N'Te Promene Donc pas toute nue* by Georges Feydeau will be TFE's second production starting on Nov. 29. *Bousille et les Juste* by Gratien Gelinas and Diego

Fabri's *Process a Jesus* complete the theatre's season program.

A post-season visit by the Troupe de St. Paul is possible.

All performances will take place at College Saint-Jean, 8406 - 91 Street. For further information, contact 469-0829.

## Cockburn returns



Bruce Cockburn will return to SUB Theatre for two concerts on Tuesday, Nov. 5 and Wednesday, Nov. 6 at 9:00 p.m.

Cockburn will promote his latest album *Salt, Sun and Time* which has just been released.

Tickets for both performances will be available at SUB Records and SUB Information Desk. Admission is \$3.00 for students and \$3.50 for non-students. Make sure that you get your tickets early - last year both concerts were sold out.

## Studio plays 'Sticks and Stones'

Tickets go on sale Thursday, October 17th, for Studio Theatre's opening production of James Reaney's *Sticks and Stones* which commences October 24th at 8:30 p.m. in Corbett Hall.

*Sticks and Stones* is an account of a mid-19th century township in western Ontario, where the furious urgency of getting land, as well as the cruel labor of keeping it, is linked with prejudice and fear. The Donnelly family came to Ontario from Ireland in 1844. Thirty-six years later, they were - in Reaney's words - "nearly annihilated" by their neighbours in a sequence of vicious nocturnal killings. This play is the first part in a projected trilogy of plays about the Donnelly legend, and its events take us only to 1867, the year in which James Donnelly's barn is burned down by persons unknown - the final indignity which results in his vow never to be driven from his land.

Herbert Whittaker, writing in *The Globe and Mail*, has observed that "As we grow more conscious of our heritage, it is interesting that we light on a pack of Irish settlers from outside the throngs of the law-abiding to characterize Ontario's view of itself. Perhaps

we are asserting out North Americanism when we reach back to old disorders for heroes, just as, nationally, Louis Riel was elected to similar status a decade ago."

*Sticks and Stones* will run at Studio Theatre from October 24th to November 2nd, with performances every night except Sunday, commencing at 8:30.

There will also be a single matinee performance on Saturday, October 26th, at 2:30. Tickets are the usual \$2.50 each, and University students are admitted free.

Tickets may be reserved by calling Studio Theatre at 432-1495 or by visiting the Department of Drama located on 112 St. and 89 Ave.

8 pm SUB Theatre

# CONTEMPORARY DANCERS TONIGHT