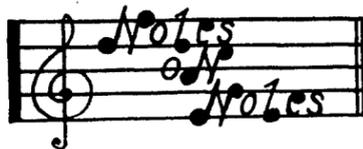


THE TRUTH ABOUT FANNY

by Phillip Silver



by Ross Rudolph

The occasion of the final column in this series is time for an assessment of the overall balance of such a venture. And if the ledger shows a final deficit of unfulfilled projects, abortive suggestions, and wild critiques this auditor will always account the sorest lack as the total absence of controversy over so many contentious issues.

I am well aware of some students whose claim to know and appreciate Music is at least as valid as my own who disagree even rabidly with many of the conclusions reached herein. If they have the courage of their well founded convictions, why didn't such views find their way to the Fine Arts editor, or at least to the letters page?

Even more important than an evaluation of this effort at a musical column is a general review of its purview. The musical scene in Edmonton is incomparably more promising than it ever was even five years ago. Why? Because Edmonton has been extremely fortunate in the settlement here of a number of gifted instrumentalists and singers who bring with them, besides their abilities, an enthusiasm for music that exceeds mere professionalism, a vision (if the term hasn't been completely devalued by Canadian politics) of excellence that transcends present capabilities. The University and its community have added greatly to the interest and its momentum. Monday evening's recital will be too early to judge, but such an event under the aegis of our composer-in-residence bodes well for the "Alberta school!"

There are a number of obstacles that must be overcome if musical life in Edmonton is ever to amount to anything. Provincialism is most understandable in a centre so physically removed from well established meccas of art and learning. But these are not the Middle Ages. News no longer travels by camel, nor do developments know national or regional bounds. We are graced by an international air terminal, but the influences seem to remain at twenty thousand feet. Complacency is another fatal attitude; few cities have so little to be complacent about. The two outlooks are moreover related in the taste that apparently dictates local programmes.

Here is a rub. The classic chicken and egg priority has some relevance to the question before the house; viz, the elimination of the noxious attitudes of Edmonton audiences. If the local music organizations (Symphony, chamber music) permit their programme choice to be prejudged by popular opinion as they see it, there is little hope to alleviate the present condition. These groups are leaders; they should not abdicate their responsibility. Audiences and especially students have a duty by and to the twentieth century. The immense cumulative store that is our heritage makes the task of being a literate musician at once more difficult and more rewarding. But as in other things we cannot shirk realities, so in the realm of art we cannot turn back the clock, though I don't want to imply any sui generis aesthetic quality to novelty.

The Boston Symphony under Koussevitsky's regime must have been a fascinating, if unsettling, orchestra; but the result of a conductor who ferreted out new and worthy music was, at least for a time, the most receptive audience in North America. And while Edmon-

ton could not possibly ever hope to aspire to that class, at least we could take a lesson from such a centre as Louisville, Kentucky (population less than 400,000) whose policy towards contemporary music is a model for a continent.

How do things look on balance? The scheduling of Beethoven's Choral Symphony at the last Edmonton Symphony concert may be symptomatic. In one way the undertaking is laudable; the strain of resources to the utmost will challenge our forces as never before. In another it is slightly foolhardy, to exactly what extent we can only tell after the concert. Here too is a question of priority; to perform the Choral Symphony or to build an ensemble capable of doing it justice?

The local music scene, as I have indicated, is showing signs of improvement. Let us give every credit where it is due. We tender our thanks to the musicians who make our pleasures, even equivocal ones, possible. What this corner must in future provide is the factual material to judge how a situation can be improved. Let us unite against self-satisfaction and mediocrity.

"Edmonton," to end where we began, is no excuse for garbage.

Honorine, but a poor imitation of Tugboat Annie. This character has a depth and humanity that was never approximated. Vic Bristow as Escartifique was also a mere shell of a character. Sherrill DeMarco as Fanny was quite good although both her character and voice quality could have been softer and more youthful. Bud McKeen as Fanny's lover, Marius, was easily the most believable person in the show. In addition to his strong voice, Mr. McKeen is gifted with a fine sense of dramatic values. His last scenes with his son were truly absorbing.

The two leading roles, Panisse and Cesar, were played by Alan Carney and Max Clark, respectively. This writer felt that both these gentlemen failed to give their roles the age required. Mr. Clark achieved a great deal of truth in his role and brought a tender humor to the evening. This writer was put off at first with Mr. Carney. He seemed to have too much of the music hall about him. However, as the performance progressed, he mellowed into an almost believable character, but he did fail in building the role sufficiently to elicit our complete sympathy at the death of Panisse.

The dance sequences were handled quite well and with enthusiasm, particularly the wedding-dream scene. The show was colorfully costumed, at times with very little taste. The sets were not so overpowering as Light Opera sets have been, but they did detract from the actors on occasion. Effects such as the ship leaving harbor are spectacular, but the long set change before dulled its impact.

In any event such gimmicks cannot make up for poor performances. This writer would suggest that instead of placing emphasis on and investing in such devices, the musically excellent Light Opera should concentrate on the development of more believable and original dramatic work.

ARTS CALENDAR

Edmonton Symphony Concert

Beethoven's First and Ninth Symphonies
Sunday, March 24, 3:00 and 9:00 p.m.
Jubilee Auditorium

Recital of Original Compositions

Bachelor of Music Students
Monday, March 25, 8:30 p.m.
Convocation Hall

Robert Wagner Chorale

Celebrity Concerts
Friday, March 29, 8:30 p.m.
Jubilee Auditorium

Music Students Give Recital

No one will complain of the Recital of Original Compositions by Bachelor of Music students of Professor Violet Archer to be given in Convocation Hall on March 25 at 8:30 p.m. that the choice is hackneyed. The programme will include songs composed by Ethel Johanson, Marilyn Ohlhauser, and Nadia Olynyk. A Suite for Violin and Oboe by Robert Cockell will be followed by part-songs by Neil Moran, Andrew Sawatzky, and Pat Colvin. Next in the recital will be songs by Pat Colvin, Suzanne Gibson and Andrew Sawatzky and part-songs by Ethel Johanson, and Suzanne Gibson. The recital will close with a performance of a group of three songs on poems from the Chinese by Robert Cockell. An additional novelty in the form of Ernst Toch's *Geographic Fugue* will be offered.

Stratford Features Shakespeare Again

Two of William Shakespeare's most challenging dramas, and his most robust farce, along with a re-staging of last summer's highly popular production of Rostand's "Cyrano de Bergerac," will be presented during the Stratford Festival's 11th season.

The season will again run for 15 weeks, from June 17 to September 28.

The three Shakespearean plays are "Trollus and Cressida," "The Comedy of Errors," and "Timon of Athens."

The third, "Timon of Athens," will join the repertoire on July 29.

Thank You

This year has been the first that Gateway has devoted a special section to fine arts on and about campus. The Fine Arts page was made possible only through the faithful efforts of the students who contributed. To them go thanks for what we hope has been an informative, stimulating—even enjoyable—addition to Gateway.