

Wrack n Roll
by Alex Party

In the hands of a skilled and creative musician, a single acoustic guitar is as effective as an entire symphony orchestra. For years European artists such as Andres Segovia, Julian Bream and Carlos Montoya have astounded audiences with the beauty of their synthesis of flamenco, baroque and romantic elements; now a group of young American masters are mixing blues and bluegrass with European techniques to create an entirely new style of acoustic guitar.

One of the first to apply classical knowledge to American folk music, John Fahey, has used the phrase "American classical guitar" to describe the style, but he has also referred to his own music as "primitive". Both are misnomers. The music isn't classical, because it embodies the improvisatory qualities of jazz, and it certainly isn't primitive, being both complex and subtle.

Fahey's music is the most emotionally charged of the three artists under scrutiny. Listening to a typical Fahey piece, one can pick up such a strong impression of mood that one's outlook can be completely reversed for hours. Fahey has been supremely influenced by the country blues guitarists of the American south, but his technique is secondary to the atmosphere of relaxed temporal distortion that he wishes to project. However careful listening reveals how cleverly each song has been constructed and how much control is exerted over each note. Some of Fahey's earlier recordings have been rereleased on a Vanguard special collection, and on that set he is revealed as a stylistic innovator, experimenting with the new forms he invented. His more recent issues on Reprise records are more mature, and use a variety of stringed and brass instruments to add depth and to develop his peculiarly languid, southern sound. OF RIVERS AND RELIGION is perhaps his best offering to date, and it has the stately and majestic qualities of the best of his title subjects.

Leo Kottke is the best known of the three composers and is the only one with a mass popular following. Only John McLaughlin plays acoustic with equal speed and clarity, and I doubt if any non-classical guitarists can match Kottke's right-hand technique. He has primarily been influenced by bluegrass not blues, which explains the speedy edge to many of his tunes. Blues songs are inherently loose and spacey, bluegrass is rhythmically less complex but relies more on intermeshing sounds; therefore Kottke's music is dense and intricate. Leo's best album is GREENHOUSE, on Capitol: a rarity now, but well worth seeking out. MY FEET ARE SMILING [also Capitol] is more common and is almost as good an introduction to the Kottke sound. Although it's a live album, the recording is crystal clear and the performance is flawless. I can think of few records as pleasant to hear.

Peter Lang, who records for Fahey's Takoma records, is perhaps the most intriguing melodist of the school. To the best of my knowledge, he has only issued one complete album [THE THING AT THE NURSERY ROOM WINDOW], which contained some beautiful and fragile classicalisms, as well as a few amazing improvisations on standard bluegrass themes. Lang usually conveys an intense melancholy and is best for reflections and quiet mood music, but his technical prowess is as remarkable as any of the other guitarists.

Takoma records has recently issued an album with four performances by each of Fahey, Kottke and Lang; it's a fine introduction to their styles. Perhaps when Fredericton record stores realize that there is more to the music biz than bubblegum, country and hard rock we'll be able to buy copies here, but if you're interested check out my column next week for a rundown on small mailorder record companies and their services.

The Four Poster

By JOHN LUMSDEN

Friday and Saturday were student buck nights for the play, The Fourposter, a comedy about marriage, written by Jan de Hartog. The cast consisted of two characters, Agnes and Michael, played by Nuala Fitzgerald and Ted Follows, who directed Othello last year. Physically, the play consisted of three acts, each with two scenes, and musical interludes separating each scene.

The play starts in the 1890's and each change of scene represents a time interval of one to twelve years. The interludes were nostalgic numbers such as Daisy, or Who's Kissing Her Now?, but considering the play started in 1890, they missed their mark by a good forty years.

The first scene was the classic sit-com of two nervous newlyweds, with predictable jokes and yuks. The characterization of being

drunk was overdone, and inconsistent, seemingly dead sober at one point, then stumbling the next. This scene was almost Chaplinesque in the abundance of visual humour. The first scene was depressingly like television; the standard yuks, neither demanding or receiving any audience involvement. The picture set required no imagination, and the excellent diction and volume required no effort to follow the play. In the second scene, however, things picked up somewhat. It was one year later, and Agnes was pregnant. Michael is put through the usual nervous father antics, but the humour is sharpened by insight gained from their characters by an earlier fight. From then on, the play steadily improved. Some good dramatic acting drew the audience on edge, involved with some 3-D people, not caricatures in an age-old farce.

The costumes were excellent throughout. They showed no signs of the haste required between rapid scene changes, and seemed to keep in style with the times as the play progressed through the years. Also, the make-up showed the aging extremely well, without any overdone effects. Ted Follow's characterization of the aging Michael was perhaps his best of the night.

The play was entirely set in the bedroom of this one house. It seemed to be a good period work, yet didn't distract from the play. Again, during each scene change, there was rework done to simulate aging. All aspects of make-up, costume and set were excellent, considering the time available during scene changes.

All told, this is a better than average comedy about a subject older than sin; that it could sparkle at all is a tribute to the playwright and cast.

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HEARTS
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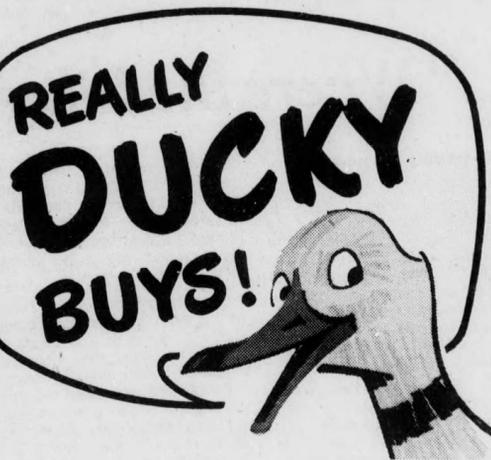


TNB's Othello on CBC

Theatre New Brunswick will be heard nationally on September 24 when CBC Tuesday Night features a 2-hour special broadcast of TNB's "Othello".

"Othello", which was TNB's first venture into Shakespeare, was recorded in the CBC's Toronto studios six weeks after the play finished its two-week tour of New Brunswick. The radio version features the cast which appeared on TNB's stage, with Ron Hartmann as Othello, Diana LeBlanc as Desdemona, and Gerard Parkes as Iago. Both stage and radio versions were directed by Ted Follows.

After its initial broadcast on September 24, "Othello" will be heard again on Thursday, September 26, on the FM program "Encore".



Creative Arts
What is it?

By S. GORDON EMMERSON

Every year the UNB-STU Creative Arts Committee sponsors a number of concerts in the area of fine music and dance featuring world famous artists. All last year I tried to persuade my colleagues at the BRUNSWICKAN to come to at least some of the concerts. Tried, I might add, in vain. No matter. The concerts, which are held at the Playhouse at 8:15 p.m., are always a sellout anyway. I did not think it was possible to out-do last year's terrific line-up, but out-done it is.

Things get off with a bang on Oct. 14 (Thanksgiving Monday) when the Feux Follets, famous Canadian song and dance troupe under the direction of Alan Lund, will give an energetic performance. Following that up, Heen Baba, a Ceylonese dance and drum troupe, will perform on Nov. 8.

Martin Best, who will be playing lute and guitar with the Royal Shakespearean Festival at the Playhouse Sept. 24 & 25 for TNB,

will return to Fredericton for Creative Arts Jan. 14 to give a solo performance. Valerie Tryon, who played in a very successful concert last year with Alfredo Campoli the violinist, will perform on the piano Feb. 19.

On March 1' Anna Wyman will bring her contemporary dancers from Vancouver. Finally, to wind up the season the Walter Baker Memorial Concert will be held April 8 featuring the Borodin String Quartet.

Great, you say, fantastic concerts. How much will it cost? For the student: nothing. You merely take student cards and pick up your tickets at the SUB office, the Arts Centre (Memorial Hall), the residence office, or the STU faculty office. For the non student, a subscription to all six concerts costs \$7.50 per person, \$15.00 per couple, and \$18.00 per family. This has got to be the biggest bargain in town. Similar concerts in larger centres would easily cost 7-15 dollars. Go ahead and take it for granted, but don't miss it!