

symphony reviews

This, faithful readers, all three of you, is the last Casserole symphony review this year. Just think, you'll be able to go to a concert without having to worry about the ulcers you're developing reading this stuff the following Friday.

But it's even better than that. Dear Irene Harvie has so much copy that I'm limited to meager 55 lines, so the agony will be short, if not sweet.

First, the last mid-week concert on February 24. The unquestionable highlight of the evening was Manus Sasonkin's *Symphony, Op. 4* conducted by the composer. In a conversation

with Ted Kardash, I learned that this incredible work was written when Professor Sasonkin was only 18. It is work with a tremendous feeling of space and it was a tragedy there were only 400 people there to hear it.

I'm sure that low attendance will kill the mid-week series next year and this is a shame because, with a proper programming and good publicity, it could be a success.

Gloria Richard sang a pleasing selection of songs. I particularly liked her handling of "To this we have come" from Menotti's *The Consul* but I found her voice a little thin on

the high notes and foggy in the mid-range.

The Sorcerer's Apprentice by Dukas was handled with preciseness and Elgar's *Enigma Variations* were enjoyable. It is a pity there is not more space to do the concert justice.

Last Saturday was mixed experience. Liszt's *Les Preludes* (I took that title from the program, and like the worthy directors of our cosmopolitan symphony, I know you understand the French) was played with a lot of guts and drive. Marek Jablonski returned to play Serge Rachmaninoff's technically demanding *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* with nuance and presence, but there seemed to be something missing. And that something was in the work and not in the pianist. *Rhapsody* is too powerful and empty to show off Jablonski's sensitivity properly. It's nice to hear Marek Jablonski in the stuff he's best in when he makes one of his infrequent visits. He is not at his best in

this piece.

The music from Stravinsky's ballet *Petrushka* would have been beyond the symphony's capabilities two years ago, and it was still a challenge to the orchestra's potential last Saturday. The orchestra came away from this work pretty well unscathed. There were breakdowns in the coordination between sections here and there, but when it came to the crunch they were surprisingly professional. Moshe Hammer, sitting in for an ailing Marguerite Marzantowicz, set the standard for some really great work in the violins. I particularly liked their handling of the phrases which start forte and then go into a rapid decrescendo (Bravo!). I could praise the Harlan Green's flute, Don Harris's trumpet, the Horns, and the Woodwinds for hours, but that's all the space there is.

For more opiated stuff on next year's program turn immediately to Page Forum-Five. —Brian Campbell

books

ORDINARY, MOVING by Phyllis Gotlieb. Oxford University Press, Toronto.

The title of this book is the name of a children's game, but it is also a capsule commentary on the book itself. Phyllis Gotlieb takes the ordinary things of contemporary, middle-class life and turns them into beautiful and moving poems.

For her, Belsen and Auschwitz, Russian pogroms and the ceaseless exile of the Jews are not dim, half-forgotten stories: they are here and now, an important part of her consciousness. She can exult in her faith; she can make a joyful noise unto the Lord:

*deafened argument agreement pipul
dishes clapped hands walls clashed cymbals
samovar turned to beaten
gold and the fire rose and bowed
silver in every ember
:and a thousand miles below
:below in his red sty Satan
clashed black wings over ears closed eyes and
shivered in every member:
adonoy echoed
there is no King but God*

But she is acutely aware of the pain and horror of life on earth:

*but do angels ask forgiveness?
and are angels beaten to dust?
are they killed by men and eaten
by pigs in the streets of Berditchev?*

The realization of death cannot destroy Phyllis Gotlieb's delight in life. "For John Andrew Reaney" is a lovely and simple poem which uses at its base the song "Green Grow the Rushes-o". This old song, with its medieval tune and strange lyrics, is the kind of song that seemingly comes from nowhere and exists only because it is handed down through generations of children. Miss Gotlieb infuses new meaning into it, while still retaining its mystery. "Two, two, the lily-white boys/Dressed all in green-o" becomes

*three, three the starwhite petals of the lily
blowing in the wind on a stalk of living green-o*

and the refrain becomes "One is one and God's alone and ever more shall be so."

Not all the poems in *Ordinary, Moving* are works of art. Some of them should have stayed in the coffee klatsch. One poem, appropriately entitled "Nothing", is all about how she can't think of anything to write. Another is a 3 a.m. monologue about her teeth, coffin worms, the general rottenness of life, concluding with the profound statement "and yet I seem to get to sleep". This drivel we can do without.

The last poem in the book, which is the long title-poem, deserves attention for the way in which Miss Gotlieb has used children's rhymes and games to create a world where humour can quickly turn into cruelty, innocent and meaningless little chants become sinister and evil, and where the sing-song rhythm only emphasizes the harsh meaning of the words. Most games that children play are full of rigidity adhered-to rules. Miss Gotlieb has picked this up and extended it:

*ordinary throw the ball against the fence, catch it
moving same thing, don't move your feet laughing
mustn't show your teeth talking
shut, your, mouth*

She has also captured the lack of sentimentality in children, which often extends to callousness. Horrors are stated matter-of-factly:

*back skin, drum belly
little stick leg
Papa paint the sores on
hold your hands and beg*

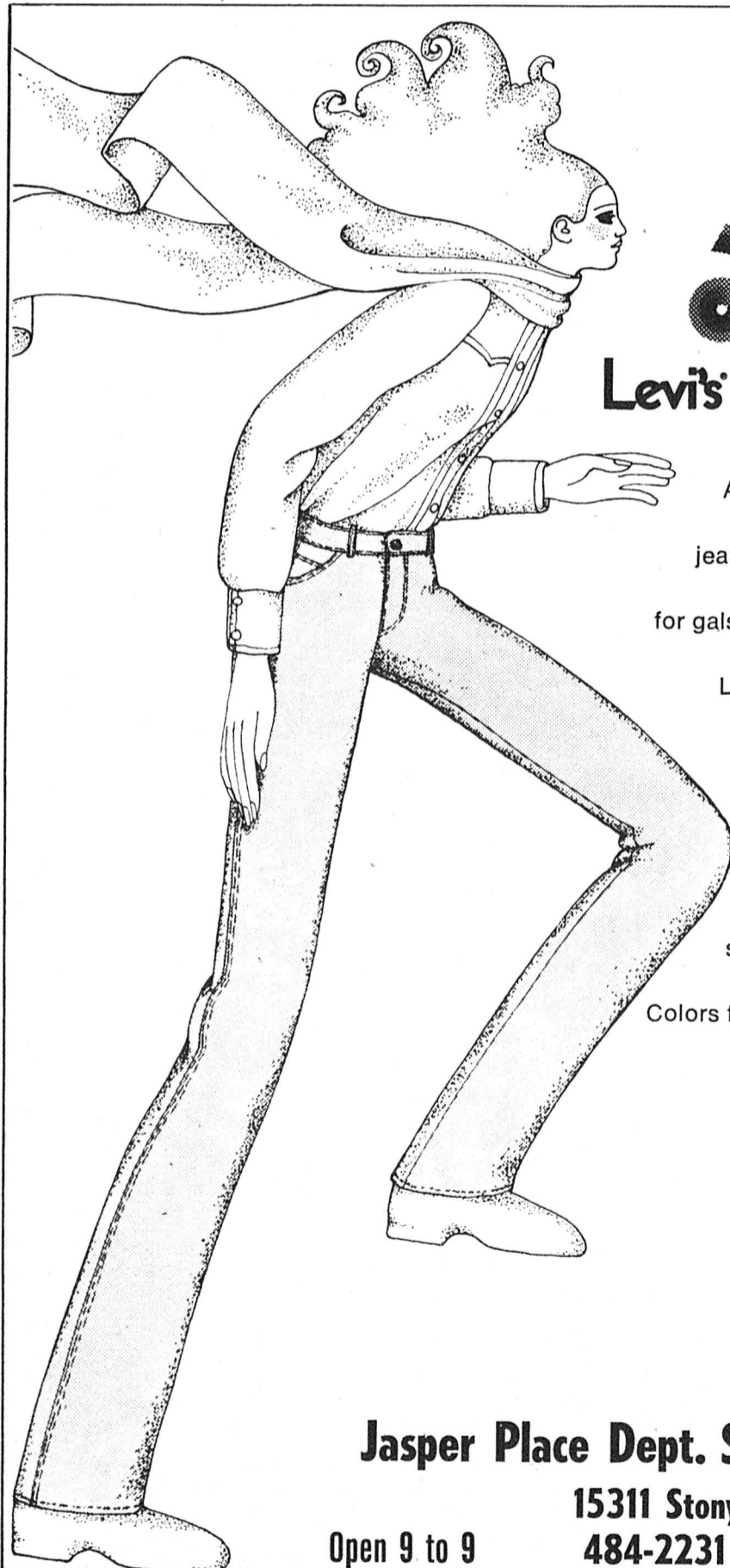
In the midst of it all, her wit can still come dancing through:

*where do you come from, Popoli
in your laplap jockstrap sewn with bead?
I'm growing up in New Guin-ea
under the eye of Margaret Mead*

The last part of the poem is a modernized version of Blake's *Songs of Experience*, a logical conclusion to the simple form of the preceding verses.

Ordinary, Moving is well worth reading; it is a valuable contribution to Canadian poetry.

—Margaret Calder



Levi's for Gals

Authentic Levi's®

jeans, body-shaped

for gals. That exclusive

Levi's look—man

tailoring, front

closure,

patch pockets,

slim straight leg.

Colors from cool to hot,

in 100% cotton.

Levi's for Gals,

what else.

Levi's

Jasper Place Dept. Store Ltd.

15311 Stony Plain Road

484-2231 489-1291

Open 9 to 9