

ESO STRIKES AGAIN!

The Edmonton Symphony Orchestra kicked off its 20th anniversary season this past weekend with a concert that I can only describe as strange. Not awe-inspiring or bad or heroic or anything—just, well, strange.

This was most noticeable in the choice of music. Of the four pieces chosen (Tchaikovsky's "Romeo and Juliet"—*Fantasy Overture*, Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder*, Ravel's *Don Quichotte a Dulcinee*, and Elgar's *Enigma Variations*) only one, the Ravel, was truly (well, vaguely) representative of the bulk of the composer's works.

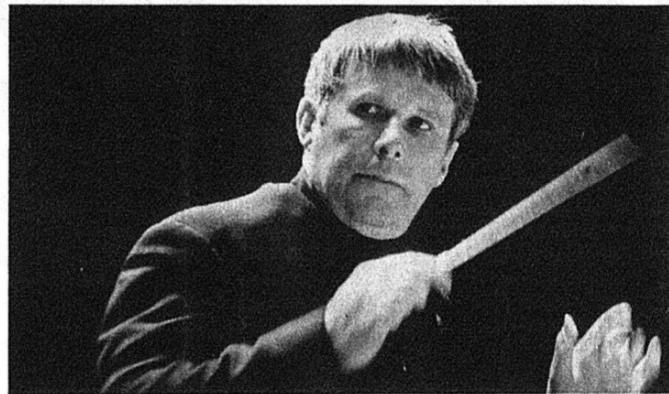
Tchaikovsky's *Fantasy Overture* is remarkably free, except for an uncomfortably gooey adagio middle section, from the romantic shlock that usually accompanies any of his popular musical essays on love (*Sleeping Beauty*, *Nutcracker Suite*, et al.)

It has about it a truly tragic feeling that is magnificently heightened by the restraint the composer exercised through much of its score.

Mr. Leonard used this restraint and seemed to be trying to keep the orchestra as if on the verge of a secret.

Unfortunately, apparent uneasiness on the part of the woodwinds in the opening choral seriously affected the mood of the rest of the piece. And, as I complained last year, the small string section (19 violins, 7 violas, 5 cellos, and 4 basses) simply cannot produce the volume necessary to inject what should be overwhelming passages with the passion they require.

Oh, for a fairy godmother to wipe out the symphony's debt and give them the money they need to live up to their increasingly high potential!



Lawrence Leonard

... piloting the twentieth

The *Kindertotenlieder*, like the *Fantasy Overture*, is again not representative of the bulk of the composer's work. Mahler, as popularized by the boring, repetitive and over-orchestrated *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, is characterized by a maximum of instrumental doubling and a minimum of harmonic complexity. *Kindertotenlieder* is subject to neither.

It is a sensitive, restrained and emotionally charged piece for operatic baritone soloist and orchestra. The writing is complex and intricate with lines appearing, changing and weaving together in some exceptionally fine patterns.

Bernard Turgeon (a home grown boy of which Edmonton can be justifiably proud) did a fine job of bringing out the hollow sorrow voiced in these four poems, written by the German poet Ruckert on the death of his two daughters from scarlet fever and arranged for orchestra and operatic baritone by Mahler in 1902.

His phrasing was complete and sure and his volume control was great. Seldom did the orchestra seem to get completely into the mood of the piece, however. They seemed to suffer

continually from that Sunday afternoon malaise which grips everybody, musician and layman alike.

The Ravel was good standard (well maybe a little more rhythmic than usual) Ravel and Turgeon and the orchestra seemed to be rather enjoying it.

The *Enigma Variations* was probably the highlight of the concert. Written by Edward Elgar (author of various Poms and Circumstances and other light classics of the British school of musical blah), it, also, is uncharacteristic.

The variations each constitute a character sketch of one of Elgar's circle of friends. They range from the light and humorous to the stormy and dark. Upon hearing one cannot help but remark that Elgar had a truly strange circle of friends.

The orchestra did a very nice job and were technically without serious problems. But again, the subdued atmosphere of the preceding three pieces could not be shaken off.

There are still some season tickets left and they are a good deal. Watch Thursday's Gateway for a full story on the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra's 20th anniversary season.

Film Festival Bombs

Underground films. Andy Warhol. Skin. Bush. Soup cans and all that. Right on.

A crock of shit!

I am, of course, referring to the fiasco which took place Saturday night at 6:30 and 9:30 in the SUB theatre. I'm not suggesting that whoever labelled the thing an 'underground film festival' be strung up by the heels from the nearest lamp post—although that wouldn't be such a bad idea either—but I am suggesting that the Student's Union be more careful in the future about the kinds of frauds that it allows to be perpetrated in its theatre. For the Underground Film Festival held last Saturday was nothing but one big rip-off from beginning to end.

The so-called festival began with a short educational film entitled 'Sparky the Colt'. In the context of an underground

festival the film was cute, if not camp. The simplicity of the dialogue (geared for grade one) and the terrible photography managed to manipulate one or two chuckles from the audience. The only trouble was the 'Sparky the Colt' was the high point of the evening. What followed was even worse.

To mind comes one particularly nauseating short entitled, 'Be-in'. Dull, repetitious, corny, its only redeeming quality was a few dull, repetitious, corny shots of old Al Ginsberg doing his thing. At the end of it, my wife (she's a nice straight girl from Calgary) turned to me and whispered, "So much for the Pepsi Generation!"

But the worst was yet to come.

Adding insult to injury, some clod in the projection room interrupted the 'festival' to

announce that there would be no more films until the people smoking up in the balcony put out their cigarettes. The last time I heard that line was at a health film in junior high. The unfortunate part was that the people up in the balcony did put out their cigarettes and the 'festival' continued.

By the time the final film came around (another educational film, this time in French), the theatre was half-empty. The only thing that kept the rest of us there was the faint hope that all that had gone before was some terrible joke. It was terrible, alright, but it was no joke.

An evening of old soap commercials would have been more entertaining.

—W. N. Callaghan, Jr.



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