

The arts

Guest conductor applauded

This weekend Edmonton Symphony ticket holders were treated to a program of music by Mozart, Hummel, Albinoni, and Mendelssohn performed under the direction of guest conductor Boris Brott with trumpet soloist Martin Berinbaum. The program, although of no exceptional interest, proved to be a pleasant, totally engaging entertainment which - for the most part - demanded little from the listener.

The program opened with a polished, light, and spritely performance of Mozart's youthful *Symphony No. 15 in G major, K. 124* (although the *menuetto* was taken at an overly lively tempo). This symphony, not an outstanding work when viewed within the context of Mozart's complete oeuvre, does - however, possess much charm and exuberance; qualities, in themselves, which are not to be scoffed at. Mr. Brott chose to use harpsichord continuo in this early composition; a practice which is frequently ignored although certainly desirable and stylistically justified.

Martin Berinbaum was first heard in the *Trumpet Concerto* of Johann Nepomuk Hummel. This work - one of the better known concertos for trumpet - is totally unpretentious and appeared, fortunately, to have been approached from that point of view by both soloist and conductor. The sound that Mr. Berinbaum projected was not overly large but rather effectively held back to balance that of the chamber orchestra; while his tone color was smooth, warm, and resonant - unlike the

uncomfortably penetrating, brilliant, and metallic sound one frequently encounters.

Mr. Berinbaum was also heard in a concerto of Albinoni, the so-called *Concerto St. Marc*. Although not an overly avid disciple of Baroque music, I found this work serving as a refreshing acknowledgement of the period (as ESO programming tends heavily towards the classical/romantic repertoire to the point, at times, of monopoly). Here the soloist performed using the higher, more brilliant sounding, and more technically demanding piccolo trumpet; and although Mr. Berinbaum did not escape totally unscathed from the in-

herent pitfalls of the instrument he gave a commendable performance.

Outside of the rather understated storm sequence in the opening movement, the highlight of the evening, however, was the performance of Mendelssohn's *Scottish Symphony*. Here Mr. Brott was given the opportunity to display his conducting talents to the fullest. The tight ensemble, secure intonation, and musical sensitivity and intensity (especially in the slow movement) that he drew from the orchestra could only make one hope that Mr. Brott will return next season.

F.N. Crory

Edmonton makes history

"North from Blatchford Field", an exhibition on the history of aviation from the Edmonton Municipal Airport is now showing at the Provincial Museum of Alberta.

The exhibition has been extended, and will not close until November 30, 1975. Since the photographs, engines and portions of the display have been lent by organizations and private individuals, this is the only opportunity for residents of the Edmonton area to view it.

A handout of "Historical Highlights" has been prepared to list the "firsts" of flights from the Edmonton Municipal Airport. The information was compiled by the Edmonton Air Museum Committee, and Mrs. Jane Weaver (Ph. 454-6723) would greatly appreciate know-

ing of any other "firsts" pertaining to Blatchford Field.

Further copies of the "Historical Highlights" chronology will be available at the Provincial Museum. The Museum is open every day: Monday through Saturday from 9:00 to 5:00, Sundays and holidays from 11:00 to 9:00 p.m. Admission and parking are free, and cafeteria and bookshop services are operating during gallery hours.

Misfits in the making

Studio Theatre's 1975-76 season opened Thursday evening with *The Cave Dwellers*. Except for a few minor problems, mostly technical, the show is a success.

William Saroyan's play is set on the stage of an old abandoned theatre in New York. Living there is a most interesting collection of social left-overs: a former great actress, an old clown, and an ex-prize fighter. The three of them use the theatre as a home and as

all combine to reveal her as the professional she is.

Together Mr. Neville (playing George Bernard Shaw) and Miss Ashcroft bandy their lines about, constructing, construing, and flaunting them with polished artistry. They have presented *Dear Liar* as well as anyone possibly could and yet, and yet ... the script itself is somewhat lacking.

Dear Liar is Jerome Kilty's adaptation of the tumultuous affair of letters that took place between George Bernard Shaw and actress Mrs. Patrick Campbell. Shaw, that great Irish playwright, was an ardent letter-writer, and wrote at least a quarter of a million letters in his lifetime. For some forty years he corresponded with Mrs. Campbell, one of the superb actresses of her day. He was inspired to write "Caesar and Cleopatra" for her; she performed in "Pygmalion" for him.

Dear Liar is an expose of the wit, the wisdom and yes, the trauma of their lives. But it is nothing more than that. The action consists of two performers sitting, reading or writing letters, occasionally standing, flourishing and sitting again. Once in a while someone crosses the stage; the set remains unchanged throughout

the production. There is no message in the play, the playwright relies upon the spark of his real-life characters and the verve of their correspondence to create audience interest.

In fact, the entire play is dependent on delivery, and if it were done by lesser actors it would fail miserably. As it is though, John Neville and Peggy Ashcroft are amply capable of charming their audience into an enchanted stupor. The play rests on this alone, and not unsuccessfully.

Mr. Neville and Miss Ashcroft accentuate an otherwise straight-forward, simply play. The only point in question then is one of theory: is theatre designed to showcase the actor, as is television, or is it designed to highlight the play?

In *Dear Liar* Edmonton theatre-goers will view John Neville at his smoothly calculated best; and in Dame Peggy Ashcroft they will see an actress of such grace and delicacy as will seldom appear here again. The two are sure to delight you with their mastery of language and subtlety of gesture; just beware they don't entirely deceive you as you sit entranced.

Kim St. Clair



John Neville and guest actress Dame Peggy Ashcroft in "Dear Liar"

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a base of operations for their main occupation which is pan-handling.

Into their midst comes a young woman, without work, and without a home. The plot then largely revolves around their present situation, their past and their dreams. At the end of the first act they are joined by a dancing bear, his trainer and the trainer's wife, who has just given birth to a son. Given these characters and this setting, the story is about love, the theatre, honor, life, and a multitude of implications on all of these.

All of the characters are handled quite well, including a couple of outstanding performances. Myles Warren's portrayal of King, the old clown, is the highlight. He seems to have a perfect understanding of the clown's many faces, in particular his deep pride.

Cathy Bruce's Queen is excellent. She comes across with just the dramatic flair necessary for the part, complete with flawless New York accent. Perhaps the only imperfection in the part is that Miss Bruce puts a bit too much bounce into her characterization of an old run-down woman.

Duke (James Forsythe) and the Girl (Nadia Shihadeh) give good performances, but they lack the brilliance of Queen and the King. Perhaps I was distracted by spotty makeup and, in the case of the Girl, poor costuming.

The final set of main characters, the Mother, the Father, and his bear are all good. The Father in particular

caught the circus-like essence of the bear trainer exactly. And of course the bear was hilarious.

On the technical side of things, the set is well planned and presented. It manages to portray an old, cluttered stage without being distracting. Old pieces of scenery, rope rigging and general debris set the stage quite realistically, but at the same time lead the eye toward the action; precisely what a good set should do.

The biggest technical failure of the show is a dream sequence in the first set. Moving from reality to a dream and back again on stage is always difficult, and in *The Cave Dwellers* it didn't quite work. The transition to and from reality is not smooth, and once into a dream it fails to create a totality the non-real atmosphere necessary for the success of the scene. Despite some good acting by those in the dreams, and some excellent use of masks, the scene simply doesn't quite make it.

Of special note is the scene-change technique that director Tom Peacocke chose to use. In Studio Theatre there are no curtains, so any scene changes must be made in front of the audience. In this case reduced eerie sidelighting was used along with music playing while the actors made any adjustments necessary. It worked very successfully.

All in all, *Cave Dwellers* makes for a fine evening's entertainment, and is well worth attending.

Dave Garrett