

## arts

## Liona Boyd draws encore

By Les Sheldon

Acclaimed Canadian classical guitarist Liona Boyd performed in the Students' Union Theatre on Friday, November 5th. The diverse audience was treated to a refreshingly open, honest, and brilliant performance.

The mood of the concert was set as Liona Boyd appeared on stage. The lack of excessive frills in the performance confirmed that the artist had come to perform, and not to hide behind her act. Her honest and friendly manner shone through as she introduced each piece before it was played. The silent, attentive audience was, in a word, spellbound.

The program provided an enjoyable mixture of classic and contemporary pieces. Miss Boyd performed numerous pieces originally written for guitar, as well as some originally written for other instruments. These were transcribed for guitar by herself and other noted artists.

The contemporary compositions were, for the most part, impressionistic in nature. Perhaps the finest of the modern pieces was *Fantasy for Guitar* by Milton Barnes. Based on the Indian legend of the *Silver Birch*, the composition described the natives and forests of northern Ontario. In a unique combination of tone, rhythm, and percussive effects, the work described the villages of the northern native. The focus then turned to a harmonic description of the northern land's lakes, shores, and forests.

*Chrysalis*, written by Suzie Kowza, a past student of Miss Boyd, was the most impressionistic of the contemporary pieces. It consisted of sporadic melodic phrases with most of the performer's attention devoted to achieving special effects and tonal variations possible only with a concert guitar in skilled hands.

Another contemporary piece, *Flight*, by Robert Feuerstein, was an allegro piece with a continuous two string trill demanding a high degree of technical merit to be successfully performed. The colorful description of action and intermediate restfulness created a number of portraits in the minds of the audience.

The traditional compositions were mainly of the romantic school. Their flavours were varied — some selections from Spanish and South American composers, others from French

composers, and still others transcribed from works by noted composers for various instruments such as harpsichord and lute.

The most beautiful of the traditional pieces was *Una Lagrima* (A Tear) written by the Argentinian composer Caspar Sagreras. In rhapsodic and tremelic phrases, the work (describing an intensely emotional event), called for great skill and interpretation on the part of the artist.

*Sonatina* was one of two pieces offered to the audience as debut performances. Its unique form, consisting of three movements, allowed for the inclusion of impressionistic and romantic phrases in the same work. The successful integration of the two opposing forms was left to the skill of the artist — a role in which Miss Boyd has no apparent equal.

Italian born composer Domenico Scarlatti whose *Sonata*, allowed Liona Boyd to create two opposing moods within the same composition. The first, a thoughtful and passive mood, was contrasted with the joyous, dancing mood of the latter portion of the work.

The program closed with a traditional ending *Asturias*. Written by pianist Isaac Albeniz, this piece is thought to describe the Moorish influences felt by the composer in the Southern villages of Spain. This melodic and pensive work provided an ideal conclusion to the concert which had created such an intimate rapport between artist and audience.

The thunderous applause drew an encore, for which Liona Boyd chose *El Colibri* (flight of a hummingbird). This contemporary piece, written in sixteenth notes and spanning the neck of the guitar in leaps and bounds, served only to deepen the audience's appreciation of her great talent.

Miss Boyd is not new to concert performances, as evidenced by her great artistic merit and ability to establish an intimate rapport with her audience. Playing in the Olympic benefit concert last spring with Gordon Lightfoot led to a summer tour with him. Although she was not billed for the first concert, her acceptance was apparent as soon as she was introduced.

Performing for audiences varying from universities to auditoriums to concert halls would pose a problem for many artists. Liona Boyd solves the predicament by playing what she

likes while at the same time trying to preserve a balanced program.

Miss Boyd supplements the world guitar repertoire by transcribing compositions written for other instruments for use with guitar. She maintains that, for the most part, theoretical difficulties are rare and are usually solved easily. She believes that transcribing often adds to the work, especially for pieces written in past centuries. Liona Boyd is able to combine tonal variations, modulation, and other effects possible with a guitar with the simple beauty of pieces written for lute, harpsichord, and similar instruments.

Miss Boyd's concern for artistic expression is evident in any selection she plays. Many masters for the guitar have pronounced preference for the manner in which the strings are plucked. She utilizes both sides of the fingernails, believing that each style has its merit and place.

Liona Boyd's first album has been very successful. Its Canadian sales have far exceeded those of other Canadian classical albums released. It includes work by a wide range of composers: Spanish, South American, German, Italian, and French. Her second album, just pressed, and soon to be released, was both produced and performed by herself.

Although her records are not an instant commercial success, as is unfortunately the case with all classical music released in Canada, Miss Boyd believes that she is making great inroads by introducing guitar in its classical

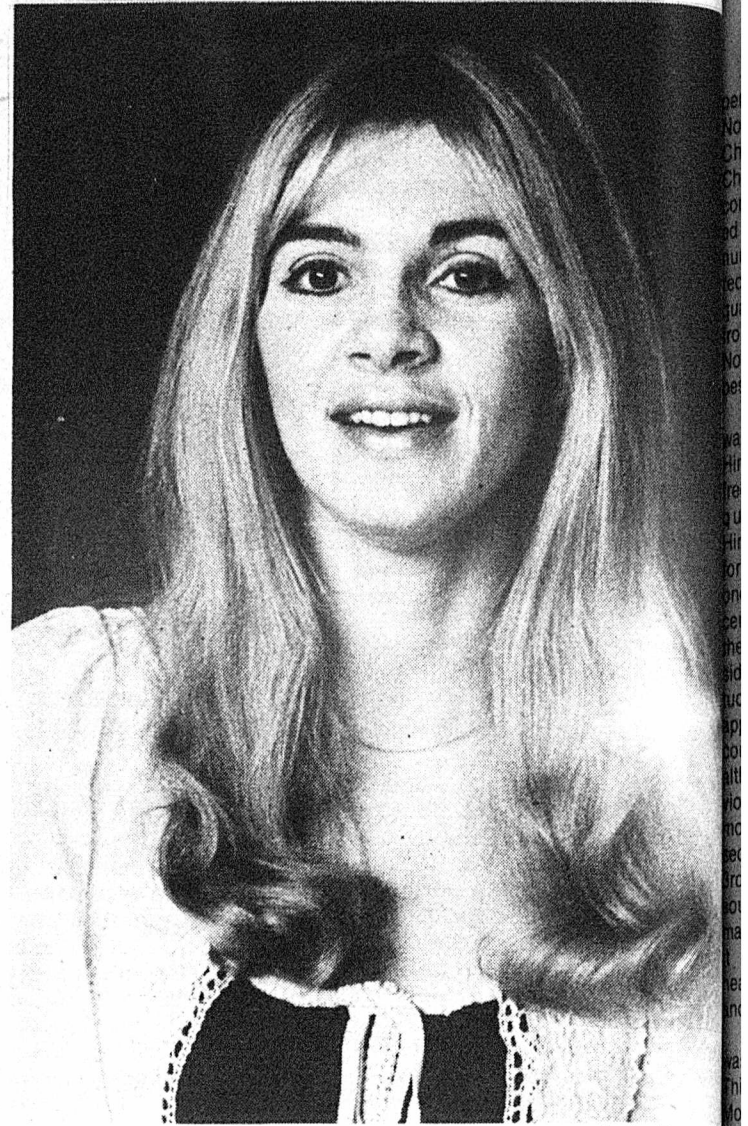


photo Beno John

form to a great number of people.

Liona Boyd's performance was that of a true artist. It was with great skills and artistic expression that she performed

the task at hand. Yet, at no time did she lose the intimate rapport with her audience — the distinguishing feature between concert artist and a performer.

## Theatre company avoids challenging repertoire

by Alan Filewod

Northern Light Theatre's current production of Peter Shaffer's one-act comedy, *The Public Eye*, is almost beyond criticism. Modestly produced in modest circumstances to modest ends, one is barely able to fault it — not because the production, directed by James DeFelice, is without faults, but because the immediate production values are overshadowed by larger considerations. And while one usually may be expected to pass by those considerations such as why this particular play was selected by Northern Light Theatre, in this case I feel that it is necessary to examine them.

*The Public Eye* is an engaging and witty item about an accountant who hires a private detective to determine the extent of his wife's fidelity. Shaffer wrote the play in a cathartic attempt to explore the problems caused by lack of communication and mutual discovery in his own personal relationship, and as such the play was conceived of as a moral comedy. But Shaffer was unable to control the play's development, and in the end he loaded the action with an awkward Orphic motif. As it stands, *The Public Eye* is a schizoid character sketch of a manic Greek private dick who 'cracks wise' and solves the dramatic problem by virtue of his superior insight and wisdom.

Ont is at a loss to decide whether the character of Julian Christoforou is meant to be a parody of Chandler's Philip Marlowe or a revitalization of Cocteau's Angel Heurtibise. Traces of satire are evident throughout the play, but they are directionless and never developed. The moral, a surprisingly facile statement that a relationship can only be sustained by constant re-discovery, is crudely manipulated.

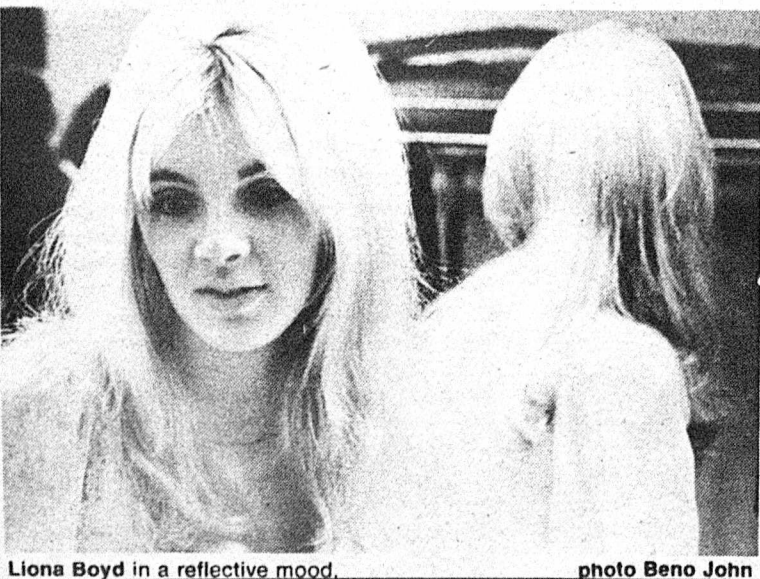
It is easy to discern that Shaffer has locked his idea into the wrong form, and one has only to compare this production with Carol Reed's feature-film version to see that the one-act play is really a compressed and distorted screen-play. Shaffer has attempted a dramatic version of Chinese foot-binding, and while he has achieved a certain amount of grace, one cannot but help notice the limp.

Given these short-comings, the play is still an enjoyable theatrical diversion. The more significant problem lies in the reason for its selection by Northern Light Theatre. It may seem unjust to criticize artistic director Scott Swan for choosing a play which is readily available in a superior version on film, but in the end it is Swan who is doing himself an injustice. Northern Light has built its repertoire on the common presumption that since a theatre's first task is to develop

an audience, one must give the public what they want.

But how many times have audiences in this country been subjected to insignificant plays because the theatrical management considers them the bait the public will swallow? The logic is fallacious, for a theatre develops the audience it deserves, and too easily becomes trapped in specific formula. The argument, as anyone who has worked in a small company well knows, is that a theatre must survive, and if necessary, must admit a slight degree of artistic prostitution to do so. But in fact, a company's foremost commitment must be to its artistic vision if one exists, and only secondarily its survival. There are a great many groups in this country who have managed to develop an original and provocative repertoire in the face of impending economic collapse.

The Northern Light Theatre is a company of great potential and worth, but I fear that unless Swan dares to take risks, the company will survive only as a lunch-hour alternative to television, without even the vague amount of challenge and controversy that television occasionally provides. Ideally, the production of a play should justify its inclusion in the repertoire so far this year. Northern Light has been unable to justify — not to its corporate self, but to its audience — these second-rate plays.



Liona Boyd in a reflective mood.

photo Beno John