

Academy Strings has grown

by Pat Hughes

For those of you who can't remember the last time you went out and really enjoyed a string ensemble performance, here's your chance: it's called the Academy Strings.

The unit now known as the Academy Strings found its beginning about seven years ago. Norman Nelson, who now conducts the Strings, felt a need for a separate string corps; he wanted to give the players a chance to develop music written for strings which was previously unexplored due to constraints of time and schedule. The initial group was a small, intimate one, composed of only fourteen members and no conductor. Interest in the group grew and grew until, two years ago, the need for a conductor became imperative. Enter Nelson as conductor, and behold, the Academy Strings.

During the past couple of years, the group's popularity has increased, and its membership has risen accordingly. Presently, the group consists of twelve first violins, twelve seconds, five violas, eight cellos, and four double basses; forty-one members in total. About seventy percent of the members are students at the University who receive course credit for playing with the Strings. The other thirty percent is composed of former St. Cecilia Orchestra members, as well as some people from the community around the University. The group's numbers are steadily increasing, so much so that Nelson feels he will soon have to start limiting membership. He describes himself as "becoming more selective," and imagines that "only the best" will be further added to the group.

The Academy Strings schedule is consistent, if somewhat unusual. During the first two-thirds of the term, the Strings are a unit unto themselves, rehearsing and performing music intended for strings only. In the last third of the term, the Strings unite with the Chamber Winds and the Chamber Brass to rehearse and perform a final concert as a full orchestra. The same schedule will be re-

peated in the second term with the exception of the addition of a chorus for the third performance, conducted by Leonard Rataslaff.

Aside from performing during the winter

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session, the Academy Strings have a busy summer ahead in '88 as well. The Strings hope to travel to Europe for a number of performances during the last two weeks of June 1988. The group is planning to play at several Canadian embassies around Europe, including those in Paris, The Hague, and Geneva. The trip culminates in a final performance at Canada House in London on Canada Day.

"And then to the beer," says Nelson, who will be conducting the Strings in Europe.

Academy Strings performances in the near future include one on Thursday, November 5, at 8:00 p.m. in Convocation Hall. The group will be playing Shostakovich's Chamber Symphony for Strings, as well as the Introduction and Allegro for Strings by Elgar. Also on the program are selections from Donal Michalsky; and from Charles Gounod. The Strings will be joined by special guests The Chamber Winds.



17 Seconds rocked at the Oktoberfest

Photo: Rob Gibson

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