

A farewell to Halifax

# Paul Clark, flautist in April 1st performance

by Brad Warner

On Friday April 1st, Halifax flautist, Paul Clarke, bid farewell to Halifax in a recital which proves that this center can produce other things than merely Rose Bowl sopranos. This was not another Dal Music Department's April Fool's Joke. Rather, Paul conducted a rather unique and enjoyable concert which amply displayed his burgeoning talents as well as those of several of his music confreres: Douglas Rech guitarist, clarinetist Bonnie Bernard, bassoonist Meg Helleiner, Sian Iles on oboe, and French horn player Patrick Findlay. Noted Halifax pianist Monique Gusset provided the suitable accompaniment for Clarke as a soloist. The recital was held in one of the newly dedicated performing rooms of the Dalhousie Arts Center, 4th floor.

The concert programme was diverse and interesting, demonstrating the versatility of the flute in various combinations—unaccompanied, a duo with piano as well as guitar, and as a dominant member of a wood wind ensemble. Clarke's programme consisted of: **Divertimento for Woodwind Quintet** by Nevett Bartow; Reynaldo Hahn's **Variations on a Theme by Mozart**; Johann Anton Stamitz's **Sonata in A**, unaccompanied; an **Entr'acte** by Jacques Ibert; a **Pastorale for Woodwind Quintet** by Gabriel Pierne; and Paul Hindemith's **Sonata for Flute and Piano**. In total, it was a cross section of flute music from the late seventeenth century to contemporary times giving an excellent opportunity for Clarke to give a demonstration of his technique, musicality, and showmanship. None of the three was missing.

One might ask the question why Clarke is being presented here in such glowing terms, seemingly without much criticism. The concert was not without flaw, rather it is important to note that Clarke's present degree of accomplishment has been acquired not simply through a natural talent but from a willingness to apply himself with strict regimen to his chosen instrument. Nice sentiments perhaps, a touch of a Horatio Alger in the music trade may be. Nonsense. This was a relaxed informal type of musical evening and Paul Clarke was put to the test along with the talents of his friends.

The first part of the recital consisted of the first four works. Bartow's woodwind **Divertimento** is a relatively modern piece, American in origin. As indicated by the title, its impact on the listener is supposed to be mild and entertaining. It was just so, with none of the raging dissonances that one tries to attribute to all twentieth century music with a diminishing sense of conviction. The wind players and Clarke hardly wavered as they opened the work (as is expected) and in particular, the oboist Sian Iles displayed her obvious skill and sensitivity on her instrument. It's the best sounding oboe I've heard from Halifax, including the so-called virtuosi which are supposed to lie in the local symphony orchestra.

The woodwind quartet also performed in the second part of the programme, Pierne's **Pastorale**, an equally suitable work to show us the potential resting with this segment of Dal Music students. This music originates in the fringes of the post-French Impressionistic school, post-Debussy pre-Second World War. This work was dominated partly by oboe in exchange with flute, bassoon, clarinet and horn. It should be noted here also that this wind ensemble has already made its debut before a much larger Halifax



Paul Clarke

Dal Photo / Grandy

audience this past year, winning attention in the local Kiwanis Music Festival—normally an endemic plague in parochial Halifax, but in the case of the Quintet, they made a most satisfactory impression on foreign-drafted musical adjudicators.

The 7 **Variations on a Theme by Mozart** for Flute and Piano might also be reviewed here with respect to the affect it created as a sort of introduction to Paul Clarke as a soloist. The composer, whose life-span covers the last quarter of the nineteenth century until the end of the Second World War, used a strict classic (neo-classic) structure with suitable modification also reminiscent of the same French school as of Pierne to demonstrate the technique of the flautist in the most flattering terms. It was light in affect with some technical gymnastics.

It is the Stamitz unaccompanied **Sonata** and Jacques Ibert's **Entr'acte** for flute and guitar which established Clark's credibility as an increasingly skillful performer and a bit of a showman with an infamous sense of humour. How would you like to be in concert and have to move your own 'equipment' and still make a satisfactory entry?

But, back to my review.

The Stamitz in question is the 'younger', an adherent of the Mannheim school of music—that is the precursor of Mozart, mid-to-late eighteenth century Germany. The work is in two movements (slow/fast) where the soloist is on the platform, either able to demonstrate a certain delicacy required by the Classic-styled manner of composition. Enough analysis though, Clarke executed the Stamitz with a minimum of error and confidence—leading up to the Ibert **Entr'acte**. The last work was fast moving a l'Espagnole. Douglas Rech is apparently an excellent guitarist in a department that has a surfeit of aspirants of that category. No matter, he and Clarke teamed up to make a flashy end to the first part of the recital.

As the woodwind commitment in the second half has already been reviewed, it was the final work, Paul

recital and typically the fellow came out of the ordeal "smelling like a rose" (so much for old 'withered' catch-phrases). Seriously though, the Hindemith **Sonata** is a different work to perform, the scoring being unique in format in that the integrity of the music rests heavily on the ability of the two 'soloists' to listen to each other with the utmost care. It is awkward. Although the music is surprisingly lyrical for Hindemith, it is a bit of a technical nightmare because there is really no obvious link-up between the parts written for the flute or piano. It is partly a matter of timing and the rest the musicians' mutual ability to understand the overall pattern of the **Sonata**, no mean task. The end result is a truly excellent composition to test the artistic mettle of the flautist. Monique Gusset demonstrated her eminence as a most sensitive accompanist.

Paul Clarke demonstrated that he does have the potential to become a member of the growing guild of Canadian performing artists. In fact, this year he is off to study in Toronto and virtuoso, Robert Aitken—not bad for a local boy, eh! But not too many 'kudos' for you for now. Let's put it this way, you gave a suitable farewell performance to Dal or Halifax...now what else is in store? Don't come back too soon like others who've in the past gone 'west' to make their fortune in a time of musical 'stagflation'.

Oh yes, in the upcoming month there will be a series of student recitals mostly graduation performances from other Dal music students. The **Gazette** will in this final issue include their schedule in Update Calender.

## OPERA As You Like It (Even If You Never Did)

**CURIOUS** about OPERA? Do you want to know the opera stories and how they are written? What the singers are saying? All about the costumes, sets and production?

"OPERA AS YOU LIKE IT (Even if you never did!)" takes you BEHIND the scenes.

**GONE** is the overweight soprano - **GONE** are the complicated stage sets - **GONE** is the confusion of hearing a musical story in a foreign language.

**SEE THE HIGHLIGHTS!** ... Carmen, La Boheme, The Magic Flute, Othello, The Barber of Seville and MORE...

Wednesday - Saturday, April 13 - 16, 8:30 p.m.  
Rebecca Cohn Auditorium, Dalhousie Arts Centre

Tickets \$6.00/5.00 ... Students & Sr. Citizens - \$5.00/4.00. Full orchestration by the Atlantic Symphony.

INFORMATION: 424-2298