

Heath Brothers Quintet do it again

by J.H.R. Flashman

Last Wednesday, the Heath Brothers Quintet returned to Edmonton for what threatens to be an annual concert. If the reception afforded the band has any bearing on the matter, the Heaths should look forward to next year.

The substantial crowd that filled the Provincial Museum Auditorium stomped and clapped their way through nearly two hours of standards and originals by the Heath band.

Smoothness is to be expected from a pair of performers with 70-odd years of collective experience, and Percy (of MJQ fame) and his younger brother Jimmy, accompanied and abetted by the incredibly deft Stanley Cowell and backed by percussionist Akira Tana and new addition guitarist Tony Purrone, play very smooth jazz.

A personal commitment to a Jean Renoir film kept me away from the first set, but I am told that the highlight of the

show, as it was of last year's, was Cowell's piano solo. Stanley handles the keys brilliantly, and I thought it a shame he wasn't allotted more solo time in the second set. Cowell and Purrone did trade licks on a Cowell composition called 'Equipoise.'

Purrone has a guitar style which really doesn't fit into the structure of the Heath band, but this may be a good thing. He plays it a bit raw and choppy (though not carelessly), and I think time may prove his addition to have been worthwhile.

A spirited encore featuring Cowell on thumb-piano showed the Heaths at their strongest. The improvisational content of a Heath Brothers concert may not be as great as some jazz fans would desire, but the ensemble is tight, the sound is pleasant, and everyone seemed to be tapping their feet.



photo Ray Giguere

The Heath Brothers Quintet left a packed house smiling last Wednesday at the Museum Auditorium.



photo Ray Giguere

Percy and Jimmy Heath displayed the usual standard of excellence that Edmontonians have come to expect from their live performances.

Cassilly's Otello shines

by Peter West

Verdi's *Otello* is a powerful, emotionally charged opera which must work dramatically if it is to work at all. With a good *Otello* most of this is possible, and Richard Cassilly was certainly able to do everything the role demanded of him in the performance last week at the Jubilee Auditorium. Cassilly was powerful from his opening notes and showed great diversity of voice as well as a wide emotional range. In contrast, Gilda Cruz-Romo as Desdemona was too heavy for the part and was not impressive in the early scenes, though her last scene was very moving indeed. Lago as played by Ryan Edwards was adequate but lacked dramatic conviction except in the Oath Duet he sang with *Otello*.

Overall this was an impressive production with definite good and bad spots. The chorus work was particularly uneven, with a bad opening scene - lots of noise, and much of it tuneless - but a fine banquet scene, very cleverly staged. The garden scene was again well staged, though the set might have been designed by Salvador Dali. Movement and staging were purposeful throughout the opera, pointing to sound production and the

facilities of the Jubilee Auditorium were used well.

But how suitable is the Jubilee for opera or other dramatic performance? Its acoustics seem to have a certain muddiness to them, so that much of the richness of the voices were lost to those of us sitting in the rear of the theatre. There were some occasions when a forte from the orchestra made the auditorium ring, but these were all too few, and I wished I could hear more of the orchestra, which played with zest and spirit. The worst of the Jubilee is that the audience seems to be so far away from the stage: perhaps some minor engineering whiz could modify the auditorium to bring the action closer. While the problem was not enormous last week, it might become so with smaller-scale opera. Has the Edmonton Opera Association experimented with other theatres? It might be interesting to try.

In the meantime the EOA is to be congratulated for mounting such a successful opera. Doing so in a city this size is no mean achievement. I wish I'd seen the *Aida* they did - to judge from *Otello*, it must have been spectacular.

Maggie and Pierre comes to SUB



photo Ray Giguere

Linda Griffiths as Pierre ...

Linda Griffiths has a unique, vibrant talent. She is one of the several consummate writer/performers that mark the coming of age of Canada's indigenous Collective Theatre Movement.

Griffiths spent the entire summer of 1979 researching *Maggie & Pierre*. Griffiths read books and interviewed people who knew one or both of her protagonists. She spoke to media people who had interviewed them over the years. Her notebooks began to burst with three versions of each Trudeau happening. At this point, she began to work with Paul Thompson.

"... He's been far more than a director. We would work together for four to five hours daily debating what to put in, what to leave out, and how to shape it ... Together we hit upon the idea of 'Henry'. He's a composite of several Ottawa newsmen I talked to ... It was important to meet Trudeau. A press contact gave me the idea of wrangling an invitation to the Governor-General's Reception ... Trudeau took a chance on me. He was trusting and spontaneous and I wish never to betray that trust. I had hoped to meet Margaret too, but I never have. I do feel however, I understand the

person she is, and that this fantasy I have fashioned, with Paul's help, is sympathetic to both Margaret and Pierre Trudeau ..." (In July '80, Margaret Trudeau attended a performance at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre. Her reaction to both Linda and the show was positive.)

"... A love story with significance beyond the personal story has evolved. It is a metaphor for the country, and human relationships. I show the changes in these two people and in the world's way of looking at things over the eleven years. In this respect, I would call *Maggie & Pierre* an 'allegory for our time' ... I started each segment with a theme in mind, then I let my fantasies fill in the details, the conversations, the juxtapositions ... Although this is indeed a fantasy, I haven't tried to hide what I am doing. I have written to both of them in detail, outlining my intentions. I see no reason to call it anything but what the story is: *Maggie & Pierre*.

Griffiths and Thompson bring their work to SUB Theatre for a ten-day run beginning Thursday, December 4, and closing on the 14th. Tickets are available at the HUB Box Office, Mikes, and Eatons.



... and as his alter ego, Maggie.