

# The Gateway fine Arts

## warhorses trample audience

An infinitesimal percentage of Gateway readers will no doubt have noticed that the Arts Page did not carry the accustomed Symphony review after the ESO concert featuring Eileen Farrell. I offer no explanation for this fact. But I do include a review of that concert (made up of works by Wagner and Schumann) in this article.

I suppose that some discussion of Eileen Farrell's merits is in order. I was impressed, but not quite as much as the audience (who gave her an ovation even greater than that which they awarded Ruggiero Ricci).

She has a large voice, almost too large for the Jubilee Auditorium; she can be expressive, even powerfully moving. In short, she has all the equipment necessary to give ideal performances of Wagner and Verdi.

Yet I had the distinct feeling (especially in the Wagner "Tristan" excerpt) that she was not at her best. Her voice went from near-inaudibility to such overpowering volume that the orchestra was all but drowned out. In the Verdi arias, though, she was much more satisfactory.

Brian Priestman's interpretations of the works were unexceptionable in every case, and the orchestra was extremely impressive in the Wagner.

Sunday last's symphony concert bore the title "Homage a la France", and consisted entirely of nineteenth-century Gallic warhorses: popular works of Berlioz, Bizet, Dukas, Ravel and Franck.

The concert began not (as has been known to happen) with a whimper, but with a bang. Yes, you've guessed it; Berlioz' "Roman Carnival" Overture, one of the best bits from his Frenetic Period. The orchestra's performance was not without its faults, but rose to brilliance at the final coda.

(The spectacle of Mr. Priestman, driven to Bacchic frenzy in his empathy with the music, and stabbing violently towards the trombones at the last chord, will not soon be forgotten by its witnesses.)

Bizet's "L'Arlesienne" Suite No. 1 was given a solid performance, and "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" a beautifully detailed one. Then, as a sort of balance to gain symmetry, came a stupendously bad performance of "Bolero".

The second half of the concert was taken up by Cesar Franck's Symphony in D Minor, one of the only two Franck works played with any real degree of frequency. Franck is one of those composers whom it is very difficult to classify.

For instance, the D Minor symphony might be judged either as a good symphony that just misses being great by virtue of its numerous musical faux pas; or as a mediocre work with an awfully lot of good things in it. Franck is always surprising you: either by taking a bad tune and developing it very interestingly, or by suddenly turning a very good theme into something utterly banal. These comments apply pretty well to the performance

of the symphony as well.

The audience, needless to say, lapped it all up.

The fact that the Symphony Society has given us consecutive programs of all-German and all-French music suggests some diabolical plan of musical education on its part.

But although the Society has done German music a good service by playing Wagner and Schumann (not ordinarily performed in these parts), they have by and large done French music an ill one.

It is not so much the fact that the composers played last Sunday are not as good as Wagner and Schumann (indeed Berlioz is as least as good), as that those composers were poorly represented. Why doesn't the Edmonton Symphony throw caution to the winds, and do Berlioz' "Romeo and Juliette", or any of the host of great unperformed masterpieces of that composer? Or why not do "Daphnis and Chloe" instead of "Bolero"?

German music-lovers will probably retort that the French are just getting theirs at last, and that it serves them right for having been on the winning side in both world wars.

But I suppose there is hope left. Inscrutable though the Edmonton Symphony Society is, I am sure that they are laboring under quite horrible programming restrictions, and that as soon as they have cast off whatever mysterious shackles now bind them, we will see a veritable musical Renaissance in Edmonton.

Like the Revolution, this change is inevitable: it is only a matter of time. One of its unmistakable signs is the scheduling of Stravinsky's "Histoire du Soldat" for the upcoming Little Symphony concert, February 16.

And if you do not attend you will be labelled for the rest of your life as a revisionist and counter-revolutionary.

—Bill Beard

## miller and oliver bring back sheba

William Inge is NOT a great playwright. Unfortunately in "Come Back, Little Sheba" he frequently gives no indication of being even a good playwright.

He can perhaps be lauded for a sympathetic and often genuine portrayal of some characters; however, he frequently obscures this with stereotyped minor roles and, even worse, with clumsy and artificial dialogue.

The Citadel has performed a feat approaching the miraculous: they have, largely through the excellent performances of Bette Oliver and Fred Miller, transformed this somewhat hackneyed piece of writing into an evening of enjoyable theatre.

Bette Oliver, as Lola, dominates the production. She certainly provides some refreshing humor as she sprawls out on a chesterfield, complacently munching chocolates and listening to her favorite radio program "Taboo-o-o" or as she so obviously attempts to interrupt her chronic boredom by waylaying the postman, the mailman, the telegram messenger—anyone who

is unfortunate enough to stop by her door.

While the humor is much needed in the play, it should not control the performance. Only an actress of Miss Oliver's exceptional calibre has the good sense not to let such humor dominate, not to make the role a mere parody on the neuroticism of the "typical" North American housewife.

Instead, she forces us to see the pathos in Lola's life, the loneliness and meaninglessness of a marriage haunted by a past "wrong", bound together now only by a mutual need to rationalize regrets, and made tolerable only by eavesdropping and peeking on a younger and seemingly more happy couple who are re-enacting her own "mistake" with a callousness she would have been incapable of displaying.

Miss Oliver builds this loneliness into a climatic desperation, into the fear which Lola displays in the final scenes, into a blind and futile response to her husband's need for her, into the hopelessness of her inability to help Doc or change herself.

As the curtain falls on Lola's solution to every problem ("Here, let me fix you an egg") one must acclaim Miss Oliver's performance as brilliant.

Fred Miller, playing Doc, very nearly matches her. He begins weakly: during the opening scenes there seems to be a certain mechanical effort in his frustration.

However, as the play progresses and Doc's regrets and fears become more and more of an obsession with him, as he seeks refuge once more in alcohol, Mr. Miller gives an increasingly dynamic and convincing performance.

He does especially well in the final act where he manages to make the scene in which he returns home drunk into a magnificent climax, in spite of the fact that the dialogue is an odd combination of some of the best and some of the corniest lines in the play. At that moment he takes the play from Miss Oliver's very dominating performance and transforms it into a statement of the loneliness of a woman and her husband.

He and Miss Oliver are an excellent complement to each other's abilities.

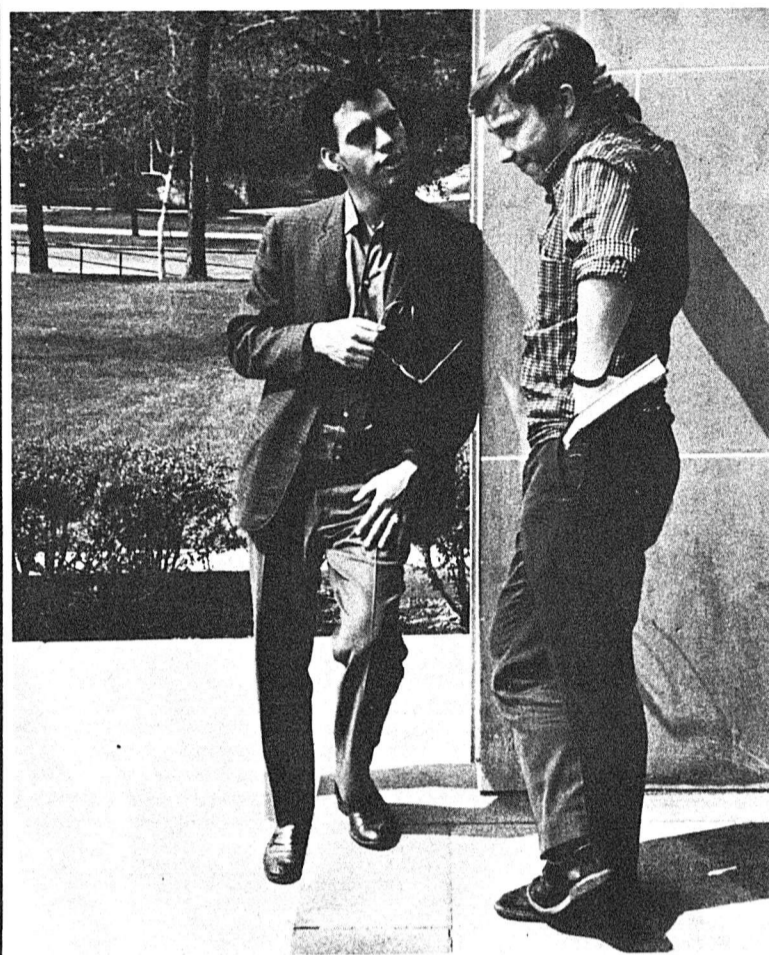
Similarly flattering things cannot be said of Robert Mumford (Turk) or of Bonita Rose (Marie). They are, even during their latter scenes, mediocre.

Mr. Mumford's role has been poorly written—the character of Turk is not at all complex or well-defined. However, in view of the excellent performances he has shown himself capable of, one is justified in expecting a far less shallow interpretation of the role of Turk than Mr. Mumford presents.

His performance lacks conviction and so the character becomes a type of villain one expects to find in bad melodrama.

Miss Rose's performance is no better. Marie is a callously materialistic young woman hiding her deception under a thin veneer of social correctness. She is not, as Miss Rose attempts to suggest, the innocent All-American College Girl.

But the production should not



—D. Sector photo

**SO THEN I SAID TO SARTRE . . .**—In a scene from "Winter Kept Us Warm", an all-student feature film produced and directed by David Sector of the University of Toronto, Doug (John Labow) and Peter (Henry Tarvainen) take up characteristically glib and awkward poses respectively. The film will be shown at 8 p.m. in mp 126, February 10 to 12, by Students' Cinema.

be condemned on the grounds that poor acting seemed to be the chief characteristic of the minor roles, or that it is poorly written. In the case, the excellent performances of leading characters and the use of a well-designed set has more than compensated for other deficiencies in the production.

—Shirley Neuman

frightening unanimity as the best of the century.

Tickets are ridiculously cheap; arrive very early, before the schoolchildren and the English 332 keepers hog the best seats.

Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings, 8:15 at the Jubilee Auditorium, the U of A Mixed Chorus bursts yet once again into full-throated song.

The annual Mixed Chorus concert has practically become an institution, which is a shame; Mr. Eaton and his cast of hundreds deserve better than to become an imposing grey monument like the Senate or the Students' Union.

Various of my friends in the Chorus have been springing out at me from dark alleys and telling me how good the Chorus is this year. And Mr. Beard, who heard the Chorus sing "The Messiah" this year, opines that if the Chorus sings as well as they sang the second half of that work, they will indeed be magnificent.

The program is designed to appeal to all who aren't actually tone-deaf. And the tone-deaf can ogle away.

Not, in short, to be missed.

The week ends, as usual, with the Yardbird Suite's current production, a rather special one: Henry Kreisel, head of the English Department and one of Canada's finest novelists, is reading Oscar Wilde's "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" and his own story "The Travelling Nude".

I seem to have exhausted all my superlatives in dealing with this week's other events. What can I say? That a reading of any Kreisel story is a major Edmonton literary event? That Wilde's poem is without parallel in the English language? That Dr. Kreisel is a very fine reader indeed?

I don't suppose it matters; what I really want to say is very simple. Go down and hear Dr. Kreisel Friday, Saturday or Sunday night. The show starts at 9:30 p.m.

Here's wishing all an exhausting week.

—J. O. Thompson

## this week has four evenings

All of a sudden, the Arts scene is a positive hive of activity. I'm tempted to deliver the regulation cynical warning (Don't Get Stung), but it wouldn't be appropriate; everything that's coming up looks almost frighteningly good. In the following list, events are arranged in order of their occurrence, not necessarily of their importance.

Tonight, Les Petits Chanteurs de Montreal are singing at Alberta College at 8 p.m., as the third item of this year's Jeunesses Musicales program. Non-JMC members are admitted for \$2.00.

Arts page spies who heard the concert last weekend in Wetaskiwin report that the choir sings its 17th-18th century program divinely.

Those of you who swooned over "The Sound of Music" owe it to yourselves to see what a real boys' choir sounds like.

This afternoon and evening, and Thursday afternoon and evening, Olivier's "Othello" is playing at the Odeon.

Presumably everybody has already purchased his tickets, since this is a filmed version of the British National Theatre's production which has been hailed with