

Arrau capitivates symphony audience

Last weekend saw the return of Lawrence Leonard to the podium of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra following an absence of some weeks during which local music-lovers had the privilege of hearing programs by three fine guest conductors.

The entire concert was devoted to the music of Beethoven, something which appears to be growing into an annual event and tradition with our music makers.

The program opened with the Coriolanus Overture, a concert overture composed in 1807; the work being more of a character piece portraying a musical portrait of the legendary Roman general, Gaius Marcus Coriolanus, rather than serving as an overture to any incidental music which may have been composed to accompany the play of the same name written five years earlier by Heinrich Joseph von Collin. The orchestra showed that it had lost little if any of the precise ensemble which it had gained from working with the guest directors. However, I felt that the reading lacked something in terms of vigor or vibrancy. Perhaps the tempo may have been minutely sluggish—a factor which could cause any music by Beethoven to sound expressionless or even inorganic, regardless of how much expression or dynamic contrast showed through. There were minor problems with intonation both in the strings and the brasses as well as difficulties with tone quality and balance. At times the woodwind melodies were

distinctly overshadowed by the string accompaniments—something which should never occur within the transparent textures of Beethoven's orchestrations. However, before I begin to sound harshly critical, I would like to qualify my remarks by stating that Beethoven happens to be one of the most difficult composers to interpret well both technically and musically.



The highlight of the evening came with the appearance onstage of the Chilean concert pianist Claudio Arrau. Edmontonians obviously hold him in very high esteem as shown by the thunderous ovation he received before he even sat down at the piano. And well they may have felt that way for many still remembered the unforgettable performances he gave of the Brahms B-flat Concerto during last season's series—hardly more than a year ago, as a matter of fact. This time he entertained us with the last of Beethoven's five concertos for piano and orchestra—"The Emperor". Entertained is really hardly the word to those who nearly filled the auditorium to capacity to hear him again; captivated might indeed be a better description, for Arrau's technique, musical interpretation and poise are truly that. His playing is very intimate with those listening; to him, each person is an exclusive audience of one; each individual is experiencing his own personal moment of

dedication from the master. And his control of the dynamics can only be described as superlative—exploding fortes and fortissimos contrasted with pianissimos so delicate that his hands seem to float in space more than caress the keys as they do.

The orchestra proved itself again to be the masterful accompanimental vehicle that it can be where soloists are concerned. Maestro Leonard left Arrau in total control of the direction that the musical expression would take, and the performance was enhanced because of it.

Arrau played the opening flourishes of the Allegro with candour as well as the obvious nobility which endowed the work with its rather pretentious designation of affection; "Emperor". The Adagio un poco mosso which followed was extremely serene and very beautifully performed, and the slow drawn out close heralding the theme of the rondo finale to follow only added to the musical tension of the moment. The agitated yet vigorous Allegro ma non tanto proved to be the climax of the entire evening.

The immediate ovation which thundered in the hall seemed to cry out for an encore, but alas, we were not to be so honored.



I looked forward with anticipation to hearing a most enjoyable rendering of

Beethoven's Seventh Symphony in A Major as a fine conclusion to a wonderful evening, but I was not to be fulfilled in my desires. For some reason, the orchestra seemed to have lost the spark that had been fired during the concerto and as a result the symphony began rather ponderously. Inner voices were sloppily played, especially by the strings and as in the overture, the balance between the strings and woodwinds was often poor. I was most appalled by the apparent lack of concern for the intonation in some places as well. The Vivace of the opening movement was bright in disposition but lacked clarity in the inner parts and some very beautiful chromatic passages were lost due to overly exuberant fortes and accents.



The Allegretto, a refined and stately theme and variations, was very well played I thought—a redeeming feature at this point. Great care was taken not to distort the dynamics and articulations were clear and precise. I was a bit disappointed by the seemingly timid sound from the second violins during the highly imitative development section, but then I have never really been impressed with the quantity of sound produced in that hall by any orchestra, with or without a shell. As a result, I attribute that phenomenon to the natural acoustical conditions of the auditorium.

The scherzo proved to be an excitingly played movement—what there was of it, that is! It passed like a whirlwind and unfortunately, very few of the repeats (a tradition of performance where minuets and scherzi are concerned) were made. I seem to never hear enough of the movement at any time and heard even less then.



The Allegro con brio finale, dubbed by Richard Wagner as "the apotheosis of the dance" was exciting as it could be, but obviously the concert had been overshadowed by the phenomenon whom many had come again to acknowledge and revere, Claudio Arrau. Of his performance and the effect which it had upon the audience I could never speak enough of, so overpowering had it been. Perhaps I am just a little bit prejudiced in his favour.

P.S. For those who really love masterful piano playing, Philips has just released new recordings of the Brahms Piano Concerti with Arrau as soloist with the Concertgebouwe Orchestra of Amsterdam conducted by Bernard Haitink. They will have to make do as reasonable facsimiles until he is invited back again to play the real thing.

Jerry Ozipko

EDUCATION STUDENTS

The following arrangements have been made in order that you may meet with staff to plan your course of studies for 1973-74. Please report to the room specified at 3:30 p.m. on the date listed below according to your specialization and year of studies in 1973-74. All rooms are located in the Education Centre.

	ROOM NO.	TUESDAY, MARCH 20th	THURSDAY, MARCH 22nd	TUESDAY, MARCH 27th	THURSDAY, MARCH 29th
ELEMENTARY					
Art	423	All years			
Early Childhood Education	254	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	
English	327	Second year	Third year		Fourth year
French	213	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	
Mathematics	380	All years			
Music	475			All years	
Physical Education	277	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	
Science	380		All years		
Social Studies	315	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	
Special Education	129	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	
SECONDARY					
Art	413	All years			
Biological Sciences	359	All years			
Business Education	456		All years		
Drama	327			All years	
English	176	Second year	Third year		Fourth year
French	218	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	
General Science	221	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	
German	218	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	
Mathematics	128	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	
Music	465			All years	
Physical Education	203		Third year	Fourth year	
Physical Sciences	221	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	
Slavic Languages	218	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	
Social Studies	303	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	
INDUSTRIAL ARTS	170	All years			
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION	170		All years		