

# films: Saul Bass

A NOTE

By DAVID GIFFIN

The human eye is remarkable. It can examine the minute; comprehend the vast. Through the lens, its range is extended from the microscopic to the interstellar. It can appreciate the universe.

Saul Bass is one of those who has recognized the potential of the human eye. He concentrates his camera lens on one small aspect of existence and turns it into a facet of universal experience. He is a film-maker from whom exciting things can be expected.

The development of wide-screen techniques was of immense importance to the film industry. The new lens systems were capable of recording a wider visual field than the human eye could take in. When printed, the image was compressed to a width that was capable of being seen at one "eye fixation". A whole new visual world was opened up, which has only recently begun to be explored. The consequences are enormous.

I first heard of Saul Bass in connection with the film WALK ON THE WILD SIDE. The only part Bass played in its production was the photographing of the background footage against which the titles were filmed. The camera focusses on a black cat (the film was in black-and-white, by the way) and simply follows the cat

in its wanderings, but the manner in which camera angle is altered and scenes are intercut is both striking and memorable. Bass is one of the new generation of moviemakers who recognize that the process doesn't end with recording the image on film, but is largely the result of careful editing afterward. The good film is more and more the product of the film laboratory, and not of the location or set.

The Kodak company engaged Bass to produce a film for exhibition at its pavilion in the New York World's Fair. The result, a colour short of about thirty minutes running time, is truly exciting. It's titled simply THE SEARCHING EYE, and deals with a small boy's growing awareness of the world about him. The film's setting is the coast of California. As the film unfolds, the images contract or expand to fill the screen with colour as Bass' camera explores what is for him the fascinating world of nature. He convinces the viewer of his love for both nature and his medium. The audience is caught up and carried away by the sheer exuberance of the visual technique. With the Fair's close in the autumn of 1965, it is to be hoped that the Kodak company will make the film widely available. It illustrates with consummate artistry that the cinema is a genuine art form, and that Saul Bass is a true artist.

# Sunday At King's: Frank Dazzles

By BRUCE MORRISON

The distinguished young American pianist Claude Frank gave a recital at King's on Sunday, his program consisting of works by Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin-Liszt, Chopin and Liszt.

Mr. Frank is a specialist in Mozart, whose works he has played with enormous critical acclaim in the leading musical centres of the world, (London, Paris, and New York). Thus, the sonata in F major K. 332, showed the greatest pianistic sensitivity and finesse. The scale was small, but always clearly defined, nor was there any element of that "dresden china" insipidity that so often passes for good Mozart playing.

The opening theme had an unforgettable suavity and elegance, and the last movement was as sparkling and witty as could be wished.

Similar characteristics led to a supreme illuminating and perceptive reading of Beethoven's "Waldstein" Sonata. The scale was again small, and the pianist by-passed the immense symphonic sweep and recreative urgency noted in recent performances by Richter, Haaser and Arrau. But his finger work was invariably impeccable, the most complex semi-quaver passage-work being spun off with an enviable employment of "perle" fluency. The adagio was as eloquent and sensitive as any performance heard by this writer,



but so intent was Mr. Frank on expressing the theme of the allegretto with as minutely a grained pianissimo as possible, that several of the right hand semi-quavers became inaudible.

But this was a small price to pay for the thrill of hearing the ascending and descending octave work of the prestissimo delivered as faultlessly executed glissandi (instead of the customary, though less satisfactory wrist octaves).

The whole reading left little to be desired, and the pianist's by now conspicuous sense of tonal beauty was apparent from beginning to end.

Schubert's III Klavierstucke, Op. posth are rarely played, and the hands of a less gifted practitioner than Claude Frank, they would no doubt appear repetitive and discursive, but on this occasion, every phrase sprang to life, and there seemed little to choose between this performance and a recent and unforgettable one by Sviatoslav Richter. The E-flat major allegretto is probably among the most inspired ideas ever committed by Schubert to the keyboard (though Mr. Frank later admitted to me that he likes the strange rhythmic

ambiguities and syncopations of the final allegro best of all). A more acutely sympathetic reading of all three works could scarcely be imagined.

"My joys" (curiously referred to as "Mes Joies" in the program, presumably for the more fashionably inclined members of the audience), is one of the six arrangements of Chopin's songs made by Liszt. Decked out with the odd furbelow and cadenza, (that at once betoken this particular transcriber), it makes a thoroughly attractive work. Frank appeared entirely at home in its decorative charm and emotional effusiveness. He then showed himself equally successful in the Chopin waltz number 1 in E-flat major (not opus 1, as stated in the program, it is in fact opus 18). The urbane, sophisticated elegance of this elusive music proved well within the pianist's apparently limitless scope, his sense of nuance and delicately shaded rubato even bringing the illustrious Arthur Rubinstein to mind. The recital concluded with the Liszt Hungarian Rhapsody No. 11. The work, though mercifully short, is a farrago of pianistic fatuities, ranging from aimless quasi-cymbalam effects to a tune (it cannot under any circumstances merit anything so dignified as the title of "theme") of hilarious (though unintentional) vulgarity. This latter, has not the faintest connection with the rest of the work, and has the effect of taking one, most disturbingly, quite by surprise. Again the playing was beyond surprise, showing a stylistic distinction that the work scarcely merits. Semi-quaver passage work, chromatic double-thirds, and dizzying arpeggio work, were delivered with an effortless mastery and fluency. It would be very interesting to hear Mr. Frank in the very greatest works of Chopin and Liszt (say, the latter's B minor sonata, or the ballades and etudes of the former), instead of the merely tantalizing glimpse he gave us here, of his powers in romantic music.

There can be no doubt that Claude Frank belongs to the pianistic elite of the younger generation. He is a supremely gifted artist, the wonder being that in an age abounding with players, who can deliver shoals of notes with the maximum of speed and noise, his quiet authority, lack of ostentation and fine-grained sensitivity, remain quite uninfluenced by his many flamboyant though relatively worthless colleagues.

## Halifax String Quartet

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Due to the cold-blooded efficiency of the printer this article, which was to have appeared on page four of the Features Supplement, was lost and replaced by a publicity release which Mr. Morrison was not responsible for writing. We apologize to Mr. Morrison and those who would have preferred to read the review last week.)

The Halifax String Quartet gave a recital at King's on Sunday, November 15. They divided their program into two halves, the first by Mozart (Quartet in D major, K. 449), and the second by Tchaikovsky (Quartet in D major, opus 11). The Quartet, whose members are culled from the Halifax Symphony Orchestra, demonstrated that they are at any rate capable of some measure of technical security and a limited sort of musicianship (which is more than can be said of the ridiculously debilitated orchestra from which they emanate). But such limited capabilities, whilst producing something occasionally worthwhile in the Tchaikovsky, were hardly sufficient for the profound beauties of the Mozart work. The "adagio" had some semblance of feeling, the final "allegro" considerable verve, but the "minuetto" was spaceless, and the opening "allegretto" oddly negative in effect. Mr. Silverman's intonation left a good deal to be desired, and that blend of refinement and strength that is the hall mark of all great Mozart playing was conspicuous by its absence.

Tchaikovsky fared, understandably, rather better. The work, though one of the best of his works, exists on an altogether lower plane than the Mozart. In the famous "andante cantabile" a hitherto unsuspected sense of style and musicianship was displayed, but there was no need for Mr. Silverman to indulge at this point in a reprise of affected, swooning fortamenti. The demonic "con fuoco" side of the scherzo was left largely to the imagination, nothing near the verve and urgency of the music being achieved. However, in the "Finale - Allegro giusto", the playing was considerably more musical and controlled.

As an encore we were treated to "The Bonnie Banks of Loch Lomond" in an absurdly elaborate arrangement by Christian Kviens (whoever he may be). Attempted profundity when deriving from so trivial a centre is an altogether unfortunate thing, but the players entered into their task with considerable zest.

The concert suggested, as a whole, that despite the best intentions, this group of players needs far more disciplined rehearsal, together with a more vital pronounced musicianship, if the heights of, say the Mozart Quartet, are to be suggested let alone fully mastered.



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