

Small in stature but...

# Gary Graffman excites

by Brad Warner

Internationally acclaimed United States piano virtuoso, Gary Graffman performed last Thursday night at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium. Graffman, small in stature but immense in stage presence, managed constantly to surprise and stimulate his audience throughout the evening.

His technique is unbelievably

empathy. The audience literally "hung on to every note" and were most appreciative.

The Graffman concert programme was as follows: Schubert's Sonata in C minor, Op. Posthumous; Brahms' entire Variations on a Theme of Paganini, Bks. I&II, Op. 35; the Prokofieff Sonata No. 3 in A minor, Op. 28; and, three works by Rachmaninoff —

Graffman caters to the music itself, not to a concert-going elite. If the above works are foreign to you it really doesn't matter. You don't have to know the repertoire of every single composer, for that matter the composer's name, to enjoy what was offered. I think the trouble is that people are shy of a so-called "classical" concert simply because they aren't familiar with that kind of music. Rest assured that excellent performers such as Gary Graffman will usher you into this different kind of listening frame with the minimum of "pain." Don't equate this kind of music, let alone the concert programme under review, with cultural snobbery. That is the great problem with Dalhousie and Halifax audiences in general. They pass up trying something new (and reasonably priced), but continue to flock to "popular", overpriced performances at the Cohn. Consequently, the Graffman concert, although spectacular, was underattended. Next time readers, try it — a concert such as this — you might like it.

The Schubert work, **Sonata in C minor**, is one of three published after his early death at the age of thirty-one. It is a work seldom performed but well worth hearing when you do. Schubert, an early Romantic composer, displays certain stylistic characteristics in the Sonata — a sort of musical signature. The work is very melodious and bears very involved extended modulations in each movement which are typical of the composer. It became apparent during the performance that the musical material requires a strong pianist's interpretive powers to maintain the C minor Sonata's in-

tegrity.

The Brahms's **Variations on a Theme of Paganini** is a musically lighter work, the emphasis being mainly upon the technique of the performer. It might sound liquid and fast-moving (almost simplistic) but, in fact, it is technically difficult to execute. Brahms took one of the violin virtuoso, Nicolo Paganini's more popular caprices — technically difficult for the violin, and created a bravura work which required the utmost strength, stamina and coordination from any pianist. Graffman masterfully undertook the entire two books of the Brahms Variations. We were all sorry when, on its completion, we had to break for intermission. Yet, all of us needed a rest ... especially the pianist.

Graffman returned to play the Prokofieff single movement **Third Sonata in A minor**. Really, there is not much one can say about this work that is not positive as well as the quality of the pianist's interpretation of it. The Third Sonata is bright, lyrical, and technically challenging. It served to be a suitable re-entry to the mood of the first section of the concert.

It is the final section of the concert which bears my regard and acclamation. The Rachmaninoff works are merciless for any pianist. You have to be as accomplished technically and musically as the composer was himself to render the music with due justice. All are beautiful, all are technically exacting. Graffman had the artistry to bring out the best character of the closing works in the most dramatic fashion without overacting. The audience was caught up in the fantasy that the composer and his interpreter, Gary Graffman created for them.

We were not disappointed in any case.



Gary Graffman impressed a most appreciative audience with his fine piano technique.

comprehensive. This all-encompassing skill coupled with a genuine feel for the repertoire was greatly in evidence. Graffman uses no airy flourishes or any other theatrical pretence. He merely strides across the stage, seats himself before the piano and immediately begins to play marvellously. The concert programme was diverse and unusually difficult but Graffman demonstrated his art with great precision, control and

two Preludes from Op. 32, No.'s 5&8; Barcarolle; also, Three Etudes Tableaux — Op. 39, No. 5, Op. 33, No. 2 and Op. 39, No. 4.

Those persons who don't normally attend any sort of "classical" concert truly missed out on a performance which was exciting and not difficult to listen to.

The Gazette says

thank-you to

photographer

Tom Mooney

and the best of luck

in the future

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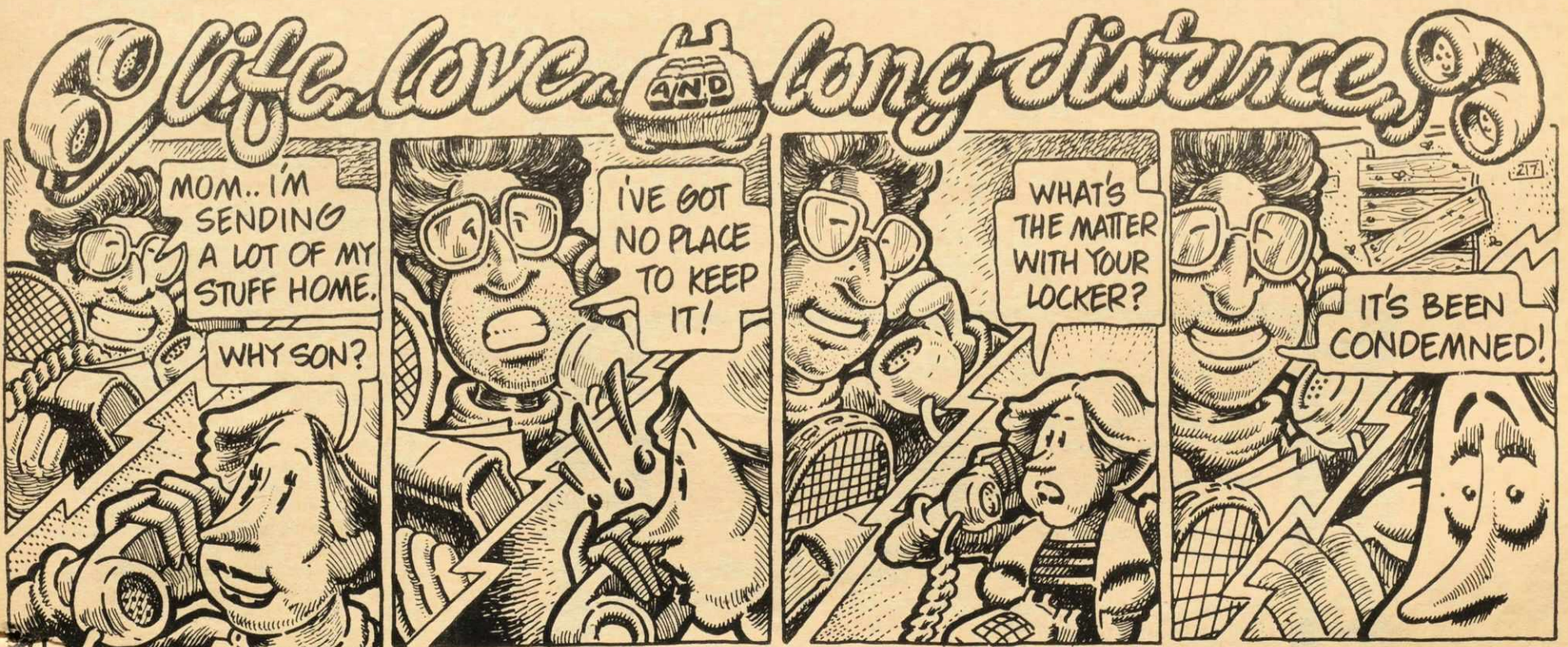
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