

Tribute to the King

by Steve Slater

On Saturday night, the Black Student Association of Dalhousie and the Cultural Awareness Youth Group of Nova Scotia presented an evening dedicated to the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. entitled *The Dream Continues*. The occasion was a celebration of King's birthday, now a holiday in the U.S. The CAYG also put on the play with the same title. The CAYG was founded in 1983 by a group of high school students and concerned adults interested in fostering education, career, and cultural development for Black youth in Nova Scotia. Judging by the play, they should be very successful.

The evening was introduced by emcee Robert Upshaw and then proceeded with two gospel songs by the East Preston Youth Choir. They were followed by a short speech by Rev. Donald Skeir, who outlined the importance and relevance of Martin Luther King for society today. He stressed that King believed in non-violent change brought about by people demanding and acting for those changes. Skeir emphasized that while much has improved, a great distance remains to be travelled.

A buffet supper was served, prepared by an army of volun-

teers and enjoyed by everyone. After the meal, Mathew Symonds, a graduate student at Dal, sang two songs. His singing started plainly and then soared and swooped to some fine heights and called forth a number of 'amen's and much applause from the audience.

Next, Four the Moment took the stage for three songs. They are a four-woman vocal group who have been performing since 1982. Interested in Black history and contemporary social reality, they do both music by others and material written by and for them. They started with an interpretation of Langston Hughes' poem "Dream Variation". The song affirms the dignity and beauty of being Black and looks forward to the passing (soon!) of oppression. The last line, "nothing lights a fire like a dream deferred", vividly highlighted the hopes of King's declaration that he had a dream of an America where justice and liberty prevailed. Carefully rehearsed harmonies resulted in stunning effects on this song. Their next was "Betty Blues", based on a poem by George Elliott Clarke about a mother of six who was murdered by her husband last summer here in Halifax. This was introduced by member Delvina Bernard as a

warning that the local community has important issues within itself to come to grips with. They finished with a song about South Africa. Each song was sung and performed to great effect, and the audience was enthusiastic in showing their appreciation.

The play "The Dream Continues" followed. Using excerpts from King's speeches (acted by Jeremiah Sparks) and reminiscences about King by his friends and narration by Sherry Jackson, the cast provided a moving portrait of Martin Luther King as idealist and activist. King's appearances were limited to excerpts from his speeches and most of the rest of the scenes were basically monologues. Around these, detail was filled in by the narrator and chorus/congregation, made up of the gospel group Sonlight. Fervor was the dominant emotion, mixed with anger and reverence. While all the cast did well, Donnalee Sparks as Rosa Parks, by refusing to give her seat on a bus to a white person as required then by law in the American South, provided the focus for King to forge his faith and social conscience into an effective civil rights movement. Rosa's remembering of this incident was one of many highlights in the show. In one hour they managed to convey

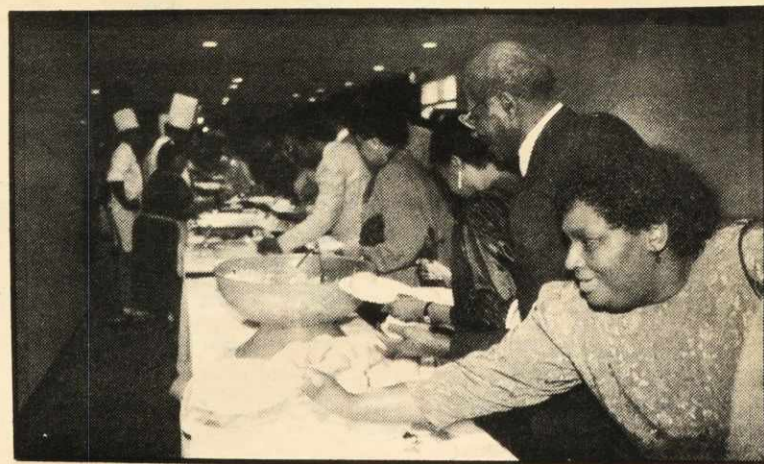


PHOTO: PETER COSTWELL

Serving a feast fit for a King.

the substance of what King stood for and means to us. Their success was amply demonstrated by the standing ovation the cast received at the end.

All in all, the entire evening was a great success and a tribute not only to Martin Luther King, but also to the organizers.

Like a breath of Rare Air the old becomes new

Rare Air — pied pipers of the 20th century ?

by David Amirault

I have never been and still do not consider myself a great fan of the art of bagpiping. In fact, I believe the sound of a poor bagpiper is the most irksome sound known. At the Pub Flamingo a short while ago, however, much to my surprise, I witnessed one of the most impressive musical acts I have ever had the pleasure to see, Rare Air. I would like to make it clear at this point, however, that this was not a standard pipe band but a group of musicians who have transcended the strict classical structure of pipe playing and have developed it into a unique style which they call 'bagpipe fusion'.

The group, founded in 1978, consists of Grier Coppins (Highland bagpipes, whistles, Breton bombarde, synths), and Patrick O'Gorman (Highland bagpipes, flutes, Breton Binou koz). These two perform traditional pipe music as well as an intricate exchange of melodies and counter-melodies which creates the band's unique fusion sound. The other two members, Dick Murai (guitars, bass, percussion) and Trevor Ferrier (roto-toms, snare drums, clay drums, shakers, bells) make up the impressive rhythm section. This is not

just due to the fact that they are two of the tightest and most fluid players you could ever imagine — they are as melodic as they are rhythmic. Ferrier's roto-toms, for instance, are tuned to the scale of the pipes and are played musically, like a mallet instrument. Murai, as well, uses many chords and often carries the melody on his bass (which is somewhat unconventional). He also uses a slap-pop style, accompanied by the synthesizer, to achieve a danceable funk sound.

Rare Air combines all this talent into an effective unit, and, with a great sense of stage humour, creates a spellbindingly entertaining performance. The

band says its biggest problem is getting people to turn out for their performances — "once they're there, we have no problems". Judging by the crowd's reactions to the band when they played the Pub Flamingo recently, I don't doubt it for a moment. If you ever get the chance to see them, you won't be disappointed.

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