

Mia Anderson review

Blessings continue to flow from the Canada Council. Last Friday night Barry Thompson in cooperation with the touring office of the Canada Council presented Mia Anderson and her one-woman show, *10 Women, 2 Men and a Moose* at the Jubilee Auditorium. The audience could have been larger but they managed to fill most of the main floor of the mausoleum. Mia Anderson fulfilled her part of the bargain by filling the cavern with warmth, grace and appreciable skill depending on little other than herself and Canadian literature for inspiration.

One person shows have a high mortality rate when they are performed in such overwhelming spaces as the Jubilee. The demands on the performer are simply incredible. The soloist has no where to turn for help and has naught to depend on except their skills as an entertainer in order to embrace the audience and their skills as a communicator to sustain the excitement and

interest of the audience for the whole evening.

The whole affair can be an endurance test if everything doesn't go according to plan. Mia Anderson pulled the whole affair off with aplomb. She carried the evening and her audience with marvellous assurance, placing her faith in her material and her ability to communicate the excitement that she finds in that material. It wasn't a bat bet as it turned out.

Not that the evening wasn't flawed. Miss Anderson did get off to a rather bad start. When the houselights dimmed and the stage was finally lit to reveal a solitary figure ensconced on the most minimal of structuralist sets it became evident that she was going to have to work like hell to make things work. She began with a sombre rendition of P.K. Page's *Stories of Snow* that made me shudder. Only a few words reached me on the sidelines. These words had neither volume or feeling. I sensed that I might possibly be present at an embarrassing

disaster.

It was with considerable delight that I then watched Miss Anderson cast off the frostbite of formalism and technical articulation as she sailed into a delightful reverie of renditions of poetical vignettes from the works of Canadian authors, all women except for Brian Moore and Michel Tremblay. Having left the embrace of winter she embraced her audience with a display of her talents that was only slightly short of virtuosic.

The audience sitting on the sides of the house lost some of her words but little of her charm or wit. It was a shortcoming that one might well expect in such a hall but it was a shortcoming none the less. Still, for the most part she held her audience with a beguiling raptness in her work. She takes delight in the colouring of a gauche joke or the poignancy of a fragile, feminine moment or the fury of a housewives Coronation Street Saga.

The first half of the show was a skillful blend of moods

and temperament in which she demonstrated her capabilities and induced a comfortable feeling in her audience. It was a feeling that she was to rely on in the second half when she delivered one passage as an older woman with a touching stillness that did not quiet her passionate intensity.

The crowning achievement of the first half was Miss Anderson's rendition of Ethel Wilson's short story *Till Death Us Do Part* which came to us like a message from innocence, flushed with poignancy and eloquent in its simplicity. On the lighter side my personal favorite was Elizabeth Snowden's *Buckingham Palace*. Miss Anderson's impersonation of Queen Elizabeth has made it impossible for me to ever listen to the Queen again without being reduced to hysterical giggles. It was a truly regal moment of regaling.

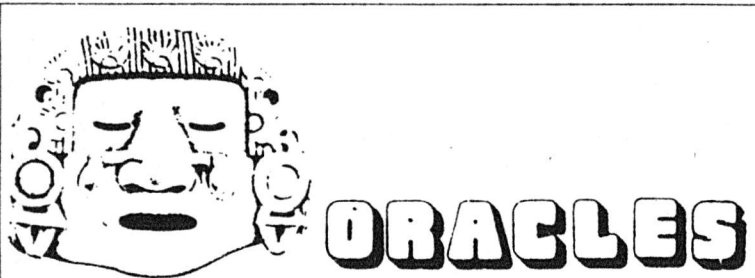
The second half of the program was a more serious venture that she has concocted from the works of Brian Moore,

Marian Engel and Margaret Laurence. The characters of the ladies were splendid in their fullness and resounding with the life that Miss Anderson breathed into them. How reassuring to know that our literature is populated with such human and moving characters. How dismal to realize that Miss Anderson must search novels for characters befitting her talents as an actress.

Miss Anderson's *10 Women, 2 Men and a Moose* is a gem of an evening. It is a gift burnished with talent and an irascible wit tempered by humanitarian insights into the quirks of womanhood. It is a gem whose glow is somewhat dimmed in an immense theatre but what a light it sheds. It illuminates some obscure corners of our literature and its place in this country's heart and mind. Thank you Mia Anderson.

The moose? I'll be damned if I'll tell you. You should have gone and heard for yourself. You'd never believe me anyway.

Walter Plinge



theatre lives

Child's Play by Robert Marasco and directed by Richard Ouzounian. Opens at the Citadel January 5 and runs to February 2, 1974. This production stars John Neville and Vernon Chapman.

Have You Any Dirty Washing Mother Dear? written by Clive Exton and directed by Warren Graves. Next at Walderdale Playhouse, nightly at 8:30, January 15 thru 26 inclusive. Tickets at the Bay Box Office or phone 424-0121 for reservations. Do it now or you'll be out of luck.

L'Effet des Rayons Gamma sur les Vieux-Garçons by Paul Zindel, translated and adapted by Michel Trambly. Directed by Jean-Marcel Duciaume at Theatre Francais d'Edmonton, 8406-91 rue. Feb. 1, 2, 3, and 8, 9, 10th. Students \$1.25. Tickets at the door or phone the box office at 467-3626. En francais.

dance

The Royal Winnipeg Ballet Company will be at the Jubilee January 31, February 1 and 2 with their production of the *NUTCRACKER*. Student prices are in the \$3.00-\$5.50 range. A classic more talked about than performed. This is your chance to get caught up and find out what all the talk is about.

easy on the ears

The University of Alberta String Quartet will be in the College St. Jean student lounge, Wednesday, January 30 at 12:30 p.m. Admission is free.

Johnny Shines sings the blues. Wednesday, January 30 at SUB Theatre. 8:30 p.m. Tickets: non students, \$2.00, students \$1.50 at the door only.

poetry reading

Friday, February 8. Gail Fox will be reading from her works at the Edmonton Public Library.

Edmonton Film Society presents the classic western comedy "Destry Rides Again" starring Marlene Dietrich and James Stewart. 8 p.m. on Feb. 4 in Tory Lecture Theatre. Season ticket to the comedy series is now \$3 for students. Also on the program: a thrilling chapter from the 1934 serial, "Vanishing Sadow"

Abstract paintings by ten "new" Canadian artists, five from the East, five from the West. Although each finds personal solutions, they are unified by a common fascination with colour and surface. The artists are David Bolduc, K.M. Graham, Paul Hutner, Daniel Solomon, of Toronto; Milly Ristvedt of Shanty Bay, Ontario; D.T. Chester of Regina; Robert Christie of Saskatoon; Harold Fiest of Calgary; and Anne Clarke-Darrah and Graham Peacock of Edmonton. At the Edmonton Art Gallery.

At the ESO

At first glance, it looked like another "ho-hummer".

At first glance, that is, the program for the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra's Saturday evening concert seemed inconsistent with the rest of its efforts this season.

The requisite mixture of familiar and less familiar works, the requisite solo piece guaranteed to dazzle (there were two, in fact) were all available to the symphonic consumer.

Even though the ESO programmers were somewhat "daring" in having two local artists perform the solo numbers, it seemed like they had covered their tracks well by having them perform works by Chopin and Handel of whose even the least smug listener would have pretensions about understanding.

But the first glance proved to be more than naive, and the concert proved to be very compelling, more, paroxically, for what it failed to achieve than for what it was able to achieve.

If all this seems more than a little obtuse, it is because one piece in particular had an immensely disturbing effect upon me, one which I have not yet really been able to sort through. Ernesto Lejano's reading of Frederic Chopin's *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 2 in F Minor, Op. 21*, one of the most admirably unconvincing solo efforts heard on the concert stage this year. When I left thy concert, I was fully prepared to pan his performance, not for the occasional moments of technical sloppiness which he suffered through more than I did, but rather for the bitterness that one feels when the spiritual possibilities of the music remain unrequited.

My appreciation for his playing increased as I sat back and tried to understand why it had left me in such a disjointed state. Now, it seems clear that Lejano had discovered something profoundly important in this Chopin Concerto and came within a breath of being able to communicate that to his audience. The disappointment was that he pointed towards a "something" which was very much more than he was able to elucidate. The consummation was not forthcoming.

His performance, then, was "admirably unconvincing"

because of what he attempted to do with the Chopin. Anyone expecting the same romanticism from this concerto as they may find in Chopin's first work for piano and orchestra would have been disappointed. It is a far more introspective work. It seemed as if Lejano, in the subdued manner in which he approached the work, tried to focus on some of the more profound nuances that Chopin's piece expresses. But profundity has a way of lapsing into the scholarly if it does not find eloquence of expression.

This is not to say that Lejano's performance was particularly poor since that was not the case. His second movement, marked *Larghetto*, heard some decidedly celestine passages which exposed remarkable control and yet sparkle. Part of the problem with his first and third movements were the difficulties which he and Hetu had with establishing tempo, Hetu being somewhat insensitive to Lejano's rubato in the first and overbearingly rapid in his choice of tempo for the third.

No, the performance was not poor - it was just disappointing because his interpretation promised more than he could provide.

The ESO's principal violist, Nicholas Pulos gave the second solo performance of the evening with the *Concerto for Viola and Orchestra in B Minor* which has been attributed to Handel. The piece itself is straightforward and compelling and though it provides challenges to musician, it posed none of the grey-area problems of interpretation which the previous piece produced. Pulos was able to get a very rich, plush tone from his viola and was more than capable of handling with poise all of the passages demanded of him. His work on the G and D strings, where the characteristic sound of the viola is found, was decidedly more pleasing than when he moved into thy higher portions of his instrument's register.

The first movement, marked *Allegro moderato*, was written for this high register and I found the tone that Pulos achieved somewhat crusty. He gave his instrument the very lyric voice it needed to be grateful to the second movement, and it was in this movement that his sense of

phrasing was most strongly revealed.

The third movement gave Pulos a chance to display the agility of which he and the viola are more than capable.

With the performance if Igor Stravinsky's *Pulcinella: Suite for Small Orchestra (after Pergolesi)*, the ESO proved to its audience that it has quite at home in the music of one of the most demanding of orchestral composers. *Pulcinella*, which finds Stravinsky at his sardonic best, is a challenging work for any orchestra to produce because it must for the most part retain a character of genteel witticism at the same time as it moves through complex tempo, meter, and dynamic changes. Aside from the rather comic toe-tapping that went on amongst the musicians, the ESO managed to pass through the change convincingly.

Oboist Robert Cockell gave his laconic licks to the opening movements of the piece in a manner which left no doubt as to the composer's intentions.

Principal bassist Peter March and trombonist Malcolm Forsyth gave the evenings show-stopper in the Duetto with Forsyth playing some hilariously obscene trombone riffs and with March answering with some comic high register work on the bass.

There were moments when the orchestra did not seem to flow well together, but these were forgivable considering the pleasing passages which surrounded them.

Stravinsky reared his musical head twice in the same program when the ESO opened with Francois Morel's *Esquisse pour orchestre*, op. 1. This Quebec composers work contained some outright thefts from Stravinsky, especially the ostinato passage heard in the clarinet and bassoon and echoed in the low strings.

Were it not for the lush playing of flautist Harlan Green and the crisp playing by the strings, this piece would have had trouble sustaining interest because of the composers lack of originality.

Allan Bell