

Charlie Byrd is 'past it'



by Andrew Gills

Charlie Byrd, a squat, bald American with an illustrious history in jazz guitar, gave a predictable concert Tuesday night at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium.

Byrd's name is well-known because he has always been a

technician, a guitar player other guitarists study and occasionally worship. In fact, I noted a couple of them in the intermission Tuesday night who said they couldn't believe what they were hearing from Byrd's trio, his Spanish-looking acoustic guitar backed by bass and drums. I found Byrd's concert very easy to believe, however.

Byrd is typical of the acts Halifax can afford to host, with our paucity (an excellent word in this context, no?) of concert halls. Byrd has outlived his period of influence and improvisation. He no longer leads the acoustic jazz guitar field. I imagine that Philadelphia's Earl Klugh, the new acoustic jazz star, uses most of Byrd's classic moves in his dressing room to warm up. If Byrd is past it, he can be had at a lower price than can the new players. Halifax concert promoters

have always to be on the look-out for bargain prices because the only concert halls we do have are tiny.

If all the above explains Byrd's presence at the Cohn Tuesday, I still can't explain to myself his choice of material. George Shearing, whose piano concert at the Cohn in December should have been taped for loop playing on CFDR in Dartmouth, nearly made me laugh when he broke into "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas" as his encore. Byrd pulled the same type of move early on. His first set included Morris Albert's "Feelings" and the cinematic horror "You Light Up My Life". What these tunes have in common is their heart-rending commerciality. Morris Albert is a real talent, but "Feelings" somehow is the sort of Brazilian tune that goes over the edge. It becomes so languid after

the first twenty seconds that I usually look to see if the guy playing it is grimacing. Byrd could have picked less commercial tunes by Albert, but instead attached some merit to the sales figures "Feelings" achieved.

The second half of the show may have been an improvement on the first. I am not sure. I was certainly prejudiced against the concert by the time of the intermission. Basically, I can't stand to think that here I am, giving a panning to such a great name in jazz. Still, pannings are what they are: if I had seen Byrd in a jazz club - say Pepe's, with the cover charge increased to the five dollars the Cohn cost - the diagnosis would have to be different. In the American cities where Byrd does most of his work, he is playing in clubs. Here in Halifax we have to head out to the concert hall, even for what is club entertainment in the wealthier regions. I remember John Lee Hooker's blues show in 1975 was just the same sort of disappointment Byrd was.

Valentines Day

by Gregory J. Larsen

A day of hearts and kisses,
but I received none of these.
Valentines cards everywhere,
with secret messages,
none did I see.

Smiling comments here and there,
but none for me.

Nudges and giggles,
not one received...

I looked around and I saw, and I perceived
what Valentines Day meant to everybody,
feeling some how excluded,
yet some how free.



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by Cheryl Downton

Is a good musician controlled by his instrument and the music he plays, or is he / she the controlling force? When Boris Belkin plays his violin there can be no doubt as to who is master.

Belkin, a Russian born artist now living in Israel, performed with the Atlantic Symphony Orchestra at two recent concerts. Usually the Tuesday night performance is a copy of the previous evening's work, but this time the weather-people caused a change. Due to a heavy storm several ASO musicians and their instruments did not arrive, and this forced a major revision in the scheduled programme. From Monday's highly acclaimed, emotionally and musically exciting Concerto No. 1 in D Major for violin by Prokofiev, Belkin switched to Mozart and violin Concerto No. 5—an uninspiring, basically 'blah' piece of music.

One could almost dismiss the blandness of this Mozart Concerto through Belkin's enviable proficiency—if ever a mediocre Mozart selection has come alive, Belkin is the right person to assign to the task. Belkin takes full command of the music and lovingly extracts all that his instrument has to offer. Nothing remains idle. His entire body moves with the music, exuding contagious energy and undaunted enthusiasm. Mozart arising from the coldness of near

Master takes command



death has never been so warmly revived.

Belkin's magic touched even the lacklustre ASO, and this combined with conductor Victor Yampolsky's continued efforts to spark the orchestra with a new life and vitality gave even the most ardent ASO critics new hope.

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