

Ex 7-2-73 orig 214

FOUR MUSICAL OMENS FOR THE FUTURE

“CLASSICAL” music tends to take a back seat at the best of times in Trinidad, and particularly so at this time of year.

A review of the first concert of the Recital Club -
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EXPRESS DRAMA CRITIC

terms, successful performance of Richard Strauss' "First Horn Concerto," rather than risk disaster in the bold, stormy grandeur of the music's youthful vision.

It does not have the same mass appeal as physical jerks at a pre-Carnival fete, or an evening of phallic worship at the tents.

Faure's says: "The happy drinkers with their cheerful songs celebrate the wine and beauty, the joyous music

mixes with their laughter and is dispensed in the air . . . but alas, in my heart is a terrible sadness."

Then, the good omens. The programme was an adventurous one. True, we started with Handel arias; but at least they were not from the "Messiah." We had Satie and Ravel, French composers not often heard these days, beautifully played by Gillian Nathaniel. We had the "Horn Concerto," and some Faure songs, one of which was quoted above. Hopefully, future programmes will follow this challenging trend.

As a song of

Which being so, the small community of musicians and music-lovers tends to complain, either that it is very hard to get hold of decent performers, or that they themselves have little opportunity or incentive to perform except at the Music Festival.

Damaging

Secondly, it will be obvious to many that the piano is not a good substitute for the orchestra, or even, in truly "classical" music, for the harpsichord. The piano does some rather damaging things to a Handel aria, let alone to a Strauss concerto (though Alma Pierre's accompaniment to this was good).

Complaints

These complaints have given rise to the formation of a new Recital Club, through which, month by month, local musicians will be able to perform for an appreciative audience.

Maybe this recognition will induce players to concentrate on works written with original piano accompaniments rather than on transcriptions, and, even better, to begin forming trios and quartets so that as much music as possible can be heard in its original form, rather than through the medium of piano tone.

The first meeting was held last Saturday night at Diego Martin, and attracted a crowd which was, in view of the alternative attractions on a Saturday night, quite large. Since this should be just the first of a long series of good recitals, it would be pointless to go into any detailed criticism of the performances.

Difficult

But four points emerged

28
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pointless to go into any detailed criticism of the performances.

But four points emerged from the evening, four omens for the future; three good ones, and one bad.

To take the bad one first: it was a rather timid concert. Practical difficulties may have been the main reason for this, but still a great deal of the music was too cautious, too polite.

Power

The accompaniment for both the singers — David Reid and Hugh Blackman — was so restrained that neither soloist seemed to feel free enough to express the real power of his songs, to open up his soul as well as his voice; this inhibition, together with a lack of dynamic variety, undermined some of the fine effects which both singers achieved.

The same was true of Francis Pau's horn playing, which, quite understandably, opted for a careful and, on its own

Difficult

Finally, since nobody knows everything about music, there is a great deal of learning to be done, and Hugh Blackman showed us how this can be achieved. Any music is difficult to get hold of at a first hearing, and if the themes or sections can be identified beforehand, the listener has something to grasp; the work then has more meaning, gives more of itself. This sort of introduction to a piece is far more valuable than conventional programme notes; and, with a serious audience, the pleasure of listening to music can be increased tenfold by a sensible speaker and a few illustrations.

Maybe the club would consider devoting some of its time to aiding music appreciation: an introduction, for instance, to musical structure and form. Meanwhile, of course, more elementary things can be learned: not clapping between movements, for example.