

FITZ-GERALD

thursday, july 6, 1967

fitzgerald house

NOTES ON MEADOW BROOK

The first week of the Meadow Brook concerts provided several pleasant surprises for the listener.

To start with, Sixten Ehrling and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra took it upon themselves to put a Beethoven symphony on the opening night program. On several occasions I have had the mischance to hear Ehrling attempt to do Beethoven. It always seems to be an agonizing experience--for Ehrling as well as the audience. My most vivid memory of this fate was last summer when the Detroit Orchestra did a reading of Beethoven's Third (the 'Eroica'). Although the second movement is supposed to depict a funeral dirge, the entire symphony sounded that way. With this memory still fresh in my mind, I looked to the opening night with a little more than fear--possibly horror. Looking back on it now, the opening night performance is a pleasant memory. Ehrling and the Orchestra did an excellent job of interpreting the fine points of the generally light, lyric Sixth ('Pastorale') Symphony. Ehrling's usual faults with Beethoven--a heavy-handed, strict, and unyielding style--were only present in the second movement. Other than this minor flaw, the Beethoven was excellent. I especially liked the extra falir of the piccolo, piercing its way through the entire orchestra in the fourth movement.

The second pleasant surprise also occurred during the first concert. The guest artist for the opening week was Nisha Dichter. Although he is not well known, his appearance here last week indicated he will be soon. As a fitting finale to the first concert, Dichter and the Detroit S mphony performed Rachmaninoff's 'Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini.' This number is definitely of the Romantic variety, with its use of the large arcehstre, loud brass and percussion, and grandiose tome predominate. Dichter displayed a knowledge of exacting technique in the more difficult passages, while also showing a sensitive side in the intervening contrasting passages. The overall effect was powerful, grand, almost overpowering, and Dichter's efforts were well-rewarded with a standing ovation and numerous curtain calls.

On Saturday night, Ehrling decided to show off the improvements in his orchestra. Frist he surprised everyone with Schuman's 'American Festival Overture.' This piece is written predominatley for strings. The Detroit Symphony has been notorious for its weak, sloppy strings. Well, it was shown Saturday that there are some guts in the string section--a definite improvement. They played with

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precision and confidence instead of the usual muddy and timid sound that was often the case.

Secondly, in the Moussorgsky piece, 'Pictures at an Exhibition,' the Detroit brass was put on display. Although there has never been any problem hearing the brass section, their ability to play the more difficult passages that arise in the repertoire used to be nil. A lot has happened since last summer. The Detroit Orchestra acquired a new trumpeter from the Chicago Symphony, and he is now the leader of the brass here. This new feature was definitely in evidence with the performance of the Moussorgsky. The difficult trumpet parts were played well, the brass choir passages contained a new depth of sound, and were much more refined.

The only real disappointment of the first week was the Beethoven 'Piano Concerto No. 1,' with Misha Dichter as soloist. Although the piece was well-played from a technical standpoint, the musical expression was somewhat lacking. It seems as though Dichter's youth showed in this number. He looked nervous, and his playing was shallow and hesitant. Perhaps it was just a bad night but I tend to believe that the romantic numbers, such as the Brahms of the previous night, are easier tomorrow than the lyric Beethoven.

--Spencer Lopley

STUDENT LIFE COMMISSION

Slowly the results of the Commission on Student Life's hearings are being distributed to students. If a body, such as the Commission, is to be judged by the quality of its work, I must say that I am disenchanted with that part of the Commission which formed the Committee on Student Participation in Decision Making and Fund Allocation. The recommendation submitted to the Chancellor for approval and distributed to students for the first time in middle June, makes several propositions of questionable merit.

Basically the Committee recommends the following:

a) A Control Board, having slightly more influence than the House of Lords, with the sole power of rejecting a proposed activities budget three times before being overruled by the Allocations Committee. The Control Board is to be composed of two members of Dorm Council--including the chairman--and two from Commuter Council, the chairman of the Allocations Committee and two students elected at large.

b) the Allocations Committee, composed of one Dorm student, one Commuter student and three students elected at large, has the responsibility of formulating and presenting to the Control Board for approval a student activities budget. Once rejected by the Control Board, the Allocations Committee could override the veto simply by repassing the same budget two times.

c) the third committee of the proposed structure is the University Activities Planning Committee, which plans and coordinates campus activities. This committee is to be composed of two Dorm students, two Commuter students, one Inter-Club Council representative

and two students elected at large.

Elections are to be held simultaneously to maintain interest, but in the event vacancies remain after elections a complicated procedure has been established to fill the remaining positions. It is conceivable that a period of weeks may elapse before vacancies would be filled and committees could function normally.

My first objection to the structure outlined in the report is that the Control Board is to include the Presidents of Dorm and Commuter Councils. While it is certainly true that these Council heads are already overworked and should be spared frustrating responsibilities on a powerless board, I feel there is yet a more compelling argument against this section of the report.

Oakland activists have long been concerned with the student apathy toward campus affairs. Conceivably, this apathy could be lessened by maximizing the opportunities for students to participate in student government. This cannot be done if, as the Committee recommends, we continue the present policy of heaping appointment on the same persons. In reality, the Control Board presents an opportunity for new students to become involved in student government and should not be regarded as an arena reserved for the heads and members of other groups.

While the above is a factor weakening the effect of the report, I feel there is a more serious criticism which may be leveled at the proposed structure. On each of the three committees which together compose the Student Activities Board, the report calls for a guaranteed number of seats for Dorm and Commuter students. I can see no justification for the hypothesis that each group of students, regardless of their political power, should be represented. If Dorm or Commuter students cannot elect their favorites to office, perhaps the defeat would be a valuable lesson which could result in more vigorous interest in the Activities Board. Furthermore, the report itself envisions the eventual formation of campus political parties to sponsor candidates for these offices and then provides that the seats should be apportioned, some to Dorm students and some to Commuter students. It appears that the Committee is establishing an ideal of vigorous interest in the Activities Board and then establishes a system which encourages the traditional Oakland apathy.

It was my impression that the Commission on Student Life was formed to explore solutions to the problems which have plagued Oakland Student government. In contrast to this ideal, the Committee on Student Participation in Decision-Making and Fund Allocation has outlined and recommended for approval a structure which enshrines the forces which have been, at least in part, responsible for the problems of student non-participation. The Committee might have been better advised to have explored new ideas which could have included more students in activities planning.

--Ron Kladder

THOUGHTS ON MEADOW BROOK

Summer is upon us and so is Meadow Brook. The once-serene O.U. campus has become a home for 400 music students, any one of whom is capable of making enough noise all by himself to disturb the

entire place. Many of them play tennis and, since there are only four courts, things sometimes get a bit tight behind the IM building. The Gold Room is reserved all week, and Robert Shaw has a free office in the OC. Some of the more obnoxious music students insist on humming along with the Detroit Symphony during a concert, and naturally all of them feel qualified to argue the merits of each work--usually in the middle of the next one. At least one professor has been asked to leave his classroom by a Meadow Brook instructor. Various student groups have been forced to throw practicing studentnets out of their offices. All of this is not to mention the primary problem, namely the Meadow Brook students who insist on practicing in Anibal from 8am to 11pm. And above our campus, from the flagpole, flies the blue and white Meadow Brook flag.

Some of these problems undoubtedly arise from simple misunderstandings of the situation at O.U. Such problems are quickly and easily solved. A few of the others, like the Gold Room and tennis courts, might arise during the course of the semester anyway if there were more students here. And in every group there are a few obnoxious people; the instructor mentioned above, and her humming charges, show that the Meadow Brook School of Music is no exception. Many of the difficulties, however, seem to stem from lack of communication between the O.U. administration and the hierarchy of the music school. This lack of communication is pointed up by the fact that the administration felt it necessary to send a memo to the Meadow Brook students and faculty informing them that there were real live university studentnets on this campus, too. Anibal was not intended as a practice area--the rooms were to be used as studios by the music school faculty. Numerous memos to this effect were sent out but the practicing went on. Signs were put up in the dorm asking the students to be a little more considerate--and, to everyone's great surprise, two days later the practicing stopped. (This, of course, may also be because one day after the signs went up Mr. Appleton, Mr. Peterson, and Mr. Collins, Dean of the music school, went over to Anibal and personally requested the practitioners to leave.) The students themselves had nothing to do with the flag and, as far as the higher-ups are concerned, long may it wave. This brings us to the point of this article--who is responsible for the lack of communication which causes many problems?

Certainly not the students themselves. When Wilber Kent, Assistant Dean of the School of Performing Arts, makes a speech--as he did last year--about the 'artistic temperament' of the music students and their general superiority over the O.U. students, a false impression is created in the minds of the students. They can, and do, believe what they hear.

The Meadow Brook administration? In some cases, yes. As Festival time rolls around, these people find themselves under increasing pressure and often tend to do what seems expedient at the time, only to find later that their temporary decisions have created lasting problems. As an example, there is some doubt whether the music school administration told its faculty to lock their studio doors in Anibal. If these doors had been locked from the beginning, no students would have been able to practice there.

There is only one group left--the university administration. All communication errors cannot be blamed squarely on them, but let

us look at some examples. First, few students are aware that the Meadow Brook program is absolutely necessary for the summer operation of the university--as are Upward Bound and the NDEA French Institute. Without the additional monies brought in by these programs, Oakland could not stay open for the Spring semester. Second, the basis for many decisions--who lives where, who eats where, what flags fly from the flag pole, etc.--are seldom communicated to the students. Perhaps this should be the job of Dorm Council, but in fact they are often ignorant of the facts too. Lastly, an adequate job of preparing the incoming Meadow Brook students for life at Oakland University obviously has not been done. These people must be informed that there are regular students on this campus, students who must sleep and study. This should preclude any nocturnal song-fests or early morning concerts. It would also go far to eliminate the attitude of 'ownership' prevalent among the music school students. In short, it is unfair to blame many for the mistakes of a few--especially when the few are O.U. administrators.

---Mike Vitale

Our recently adopted critic sent us two letters this week. His second is as follows:

A wonderful thing happened at the Pavilion Wednesday night. The Meadow Brook Orchestra, under the direction of James Levine, presented their first concert of the season.

One almost always is hesitant about such orchestras as Meadow Brook's. The players are young and generally not used to the difficult music and limited time for preparation. Another reason is that the performers come from varied musical backgrounds and have their own ideas about how the music should be played. It takes someone with a clear, transmissible knowledge of music and an enormous amount of leadership to mold all of the players into a coherent group. James Levine accomplished this feat last night.

The Orchestra had to overcome many of the hardships that plague opening nights--from collapsing instruments to disintegrating music racks. It was gratifying to see how well the musicians coped with those minor catastrophes. Anyway, the program itself was impressive. After the opening piece, Overture to "The Bartered Bride," the main part of the first half of the concert was presented--Bartok's Concerto for Orchestra. This wide open 20th century work displays each of the instruments of the orchestra in some kind of solo part. Although a few of these open passages were a little ragged, the overall effect was one of freshness and vitality. The reading as a whole was exceptionally well done.

Because of the difficulty of Brahms Symphony No. 1 in C Minor--both musically and interpretively--I did not expect this nearly perfect performance, one of the most exciting and beautiful I have ever heard. Mr. Levine had complete command of his group as he helped to breathe life into one of the more difficult symphonies ever written. The total effect was stunning and the Orchestra received a well-deserved standing ovation for their work. A special note of praise must go to the concertmaster for his superb effort during the solo passages in the second movement.

If this is only the beginning, wonderful things will happen Wednesday night this summer at the Pavilion. Meadow Brook, glad you are here.

---Spencer Lepley