

MUSIC

A block for Chamber Players?

By JOHN KRAGLUND

Although the Chamber Players of Toronto will be taking part in various programs during the next few weeks, the organization, under the leadership of Victor Martin, completed its own subscription series with Saturday's concert at Concert Hall, Edward Johnson Building. But after saying that the capacity audience was the final evidence that the orchestra has enjoyed a successful season, one must still wonder just what that indicates.

It should indicate that the Chamber Players are rapidly taking the necessary strides to fill Toronto's obvious need for a first class chamber orchestra. That is not really the case. This ensemble gives the obviously numerous fans of chamber music a chance to hear generally acceptable performances of works that are not otherwise available in our overcrowded season.

However, it is not yet a first class ensemble—a fact that would not be particularly important if the group did not seem to have encountered an artistic block. In other words, it has not shown any significant improvement over the season. Indeed, it seemed to take step backwards, but that could be attributed to the

choice of an inadequate soloist.

Spanish guitarist Miguel Rubio may be as gifted a performer as his biography indicates, but in this instance he left the impression he had not had time to prepare his repertoire.

Giuliani's Guitar Concerto, Op. 30, is exceedingly familiar because it is one of the few concertos available to guitarists. It is not a great work but it has sufficient sparkle and melodic charm to delight the ear and command a measure of attention. Some of the charm was present in fragments of Saturday's performance, but it was scarcely enough to keep the listener awake. And in the Vivaldi Concerto in G, for Guitar and

Violin, it is no exaggeration to say that if Martin had appeared as lone soloist, without the guitar, the loss would not have been noticeable.

The Chamber Players gave precise, vigorous readings—without much dynamic variation—of Samartini's Sinfonia in F and Mendelssohn's B minor Symphony for Strings. Neither is an especially memorable score, but they served well enough respectively to open and close the program.

But the featured work took the Chamber Players into more exotic territory. It was the premiere of Lothar Klein's Passacaglia of the Zodiac, commissioned by the ensemble through a Canada Council grant. Klein, who conducted the composition, explained in his program notes that despite its programmatic title, the piece is of purely musical intention. One might add, that despite the program note, the results are purely mathematical.

I suspect one could decipher the zodiacal relationships with the aid of a detailed chart, or a small computer. As neither was available, it was necessary to content oneself with admiration for his marvellous interweaving of the 14 strings, each a soloist.