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Program offers unusual mix of instruments

By JOHN KRAGLUND

It is not unusual in Toronto to attend a concert featuring, as soloist, one of the following musicians: Victor Martin, violin; Vladimir Orloff, cello; Robert Aitken, flute; Paul Brodie, saxophone; Christopher Weait, bassoon; John Wyre, timpani; Antonin Kubalek or John Hawkins, piano. To gather all of them for one program seems not only nearly impossible but highly impractical.

Yet these and several other well-known musicians were all taking part in yesterday's concert at the EJB Concert Hall. This is one aspect of the University of Toronto Faculty of Music's Scholarship Fund series—of which this was the last—that sets it apart from most other musical events in the city. The performers include artist-teachers as well as senior students, mostly in ensemble rather than solo roles.

Another asset is the variety of music that is featured, for it generally includes works that are talked about much more than they are performed. Yesterday's example in this category was Darius Milhaud's *La Creation du Monde*, one of the most successful of the jazz-influenced works by leading European composers which came out just after the First World War.

Milhaud's jazz was of the New Orleans variety, by way of Harlem, and was composed for a ballet set in French Africa. The result was a highly dramatic score that has the flavor of authentic jazz, despite many traditional compositional techniques.

Yesterday's performance, conducted by Ezra Schabas, captured most of these elements, despite lots of stylistic clarity in the excessive volume of climaxes and a tend-

ency to lose vitality in slow sections.

It was an experience also to hear Canadian-born composer Henry Brant's *Angels and Devils*, for solo flute and an orchestra of three piccolos, five flutes and two alto flutes. Among its memorable aspects was the solo playing of Aiken, especially in the second movement, with much shrieking in the accompaniment and the indication that *Angels in the Mind* (first movement) are not nearly as much fun as *Devils in the Mind* (third).

But having heard it once, I can wait a long time for repeats. Eardrums can stand only so much vibration. Still it did not spoil the humor of Betty McBurney's arrangement of *O Canada* for the same forces.

The rest of the program was devoted to saxophone, showing Brodie and Kubalek in good form for a Hindemith *Sonata* and the Brodie Saxophone Quartet at home with madrigals arranged by Paul Harvey and a Glazunov Quartet. Lothar Klein's *Six Exchanges for Soprano Saxophone* (a premiere) are probably excellent studies. If they were intended to win my approval of the soprano saxophone, they were a failure.

The principal reason for attending Saturday's concert by the CBC Festival Chamber Orchestra at Eaton Auditorium was to try to get firsthand some idea of the development of Viennese-born conductor Hans Bauer. It was more than a decade ago that the young musician, who had started his career as a violin-

ist and several years before had made his home in Guelph, attracted considerable attention in the Toronto area, conducting the Toronto Symphony and the CBC Symphony Orchestra.

In recent years, aside from occasional CBC broadcasts from distant places, like Vancouver, we have had to be content with regular reports of Bauer's European successes—in Vienna, Munich, Hamburg and so on. So the big question was whether he had actually fulfilled his early promise.

Unfortunately, like one of two pieces by Charles Ives, Saturday's concert left us largely with *The Unanswered Question*. Bauer coped well enough with the material at his disposal, but the program was definitely not a conductor's program, nor of Bauer's choice. How much of his craft can a conductor reveal in a one-hour program of five pieces, the longest of which would probably have sounded much the same without a conductor?

The one exception was Schoenberg's *Chamber Symphony, Op. 9*, the final work of the evening. It was an example of the composer's early efforts to break with romantic tradition in his search for a new musical language.

Bauer revealed a sensitivity to the demands of the score, achieving and maintaining the requisite balance between the romantic harmonies and the sometimes startling dissonances of the score. In other words, the performance had the sort of clarity and vitality that makes musical sense of a non-symphonic one-movement symphony. If there was anything missing it was a dramatic intensity that might have indicated a more probing personal involvement.

Still, a conductor can be ex-

cused for becoming a bit phlegmatic in this kind of program, which included two of Ives' least exciting compositions. The Pond was new to everyone, but its calm one-minute length scarcely gave the audience time to settle into the seats before it was finished. And *The Unanswered Question* requires brighter acoustics than those at Eaton Auditorium if the questioning trumpet is to attract any more attention than the droning string orchestra.

Bauer also maintained commendable order in Stravinsky's *Ragtime for 11 Instruments*, the only really joyful piece in the concert. This was given an appropriately angular swinging interpretation which suggested the conductor had inspired good cooperation from his players in rehearsal.

As for Brian Cherney's *Seven Images for 22 Players*, the premiere of a CBC commission, it indicated Bauer is still able to count. Like many new works, it favored the technique of having something not very interesting emerging from something less interesting. It also favored the do-whatever-you-please sections composers substitute for ideas. In short, a nothing-new work.

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