

Entertainment/TV

Beyond good intentions

By Harry van Vugt
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The scene shifted to the University of Windsor's Ambassador Auditorium from the usual Art Gallery of Windsor Wednesday night.

But the purpose remained the same — to showcase Canadian music, this time in a concert featuring the University of Windsor Wind Ensemble and University of Windsor Singers in sundry combinations.

It was as if this latest concert in the Largely Canadian Chamber Music Series intended to refute that Canadian music is flinty across the board.

Keys, by U. of W. Music School faculty member Jens Hanson, for instance, is a smilingly festive work that opened the concert on an optimistic note under the felicitous baton of Wayne Jeffrey.

Then Rainy River by Christopher Weait, with its grass roots appeal, seemed even farther removed from the musty studio of a cerebral theorist.

And though one could either be nauseated or entranced by the meandering minimalism of Michael J. Baker's *In Paradisum*, it was also instantly comprehensible.

Personally, I find minimalism wears thin, with monotony setting in long before I'm supposed to have entered a trance-like state.

But Baker's *In Paradisum* is at least among the more attractive of this repetitive species that I've heard. Its finale, for instance, has a reposeful tenderness that almost recalls Ravel in one of his enlightened moods.

THE CONCERT also featured The Spell of Times Long Past, Nancy Telfer's sentimental setting of sentimental verses of W.F. Hawley, Archibald Lampman and Duncan Campbell Scott. Jeffrey gave way to Richard Householder in the conducting assignment on this vocal work.

If the Telfer featured ragged singing on occasion, the University Singers and

Largely Canadian Chamber Music Series, Wednesday, Ambassador Auditorium

company came back with a vengeance in a piece that made the most telling impression of the night, Lothar Klein's "lyrical essay," *Orpheus*.

This is not a work for the faint-hearted — not when it deals with the gruesome *Orpheus* legend, in which Euridice vanishes and *Orpheus*'s severed head ends up floating down a river. But Klein has treated the violence with some rigor, in a composition in which the torment is graphic yet contained within a ritualistic framework.

The composer, who was in the audience, is sometimes reminiscent of Igor Stravinsky and Carl Orff in a work that

has a powerful impression. And that power was confirmed in a performance that brought together the University Singers and Chamber Winds, narrator Charles Fantazzi, tenor Lawrence Nuckolls and soprano Carolyn Grimes, all under the baton of Jeffrey. Nuckolls in particular was wrenching in conveying torture, while Jeffrey, a tower of power all night, led a stirring dramatic performance.

If there were occasions when this concert had some technical flaws — woolly singing, fuzzy ensemble, here and there — there was seldom a dearth of eagerness. And often, as in the Klein, the results went well beyond good intentions.

The series resumes March 5, with Jeffrey, horn, and Paul McIntyre, piano, returning to the Art Gallery of Windsor.