

CONCERT REVIEWING AS MUSIC CRITICISM

CONCERT REVIEWING AS MUSIC CRITICISM:
NEW HAVEN CONNECTICUT (1984-1986)

By

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Abstract

This thesis discusses features of music reviewing which extend beyond the conventional idea of reviewing as merely assigning grades to musical performances. Despite the constraints of writing for daily newspapers, music reviewing may be understood as a species of the academic music criticism which is typically practiced under the rubrics of musicology and music theory (though rarely assigned the name "criticism"). Special consideration is given to some major recent contributions in the field, notably Joseph Kerman's *Contemplating Music*. An accompanying collection of reviews, published between 1984 and 1986 in New Haven Connecticut, provides a focus for this discussion.

Chapter One explores the influential post-World War Two paradigm of intellectual positivism as it provides a context for understanding both academic criticism and journalistic reviewing. Musical analysis, considered as a highly restricted formalistic criticism, is discussed as an exemplary model of this paradigm.

Chapter Two describes many of the production requirements and constraints of writing newspaper reviews. Topics include deadlines, space restrictions, the formatting of musical terms and titles, editorial choices about which concerts should be reviewed, and the rationale behind various kinds of editing. Chapter Three raises ethnomusicological questions about the role of the critic within the

music community, and discusses the critic's providing a special kind of historical documentation of the musical taste-habits of that community.

Chapter Four outlines some relevant philosophical problems which pertain to gaining critical access to contemporary music and to all musics, and suggests that reviews may nonetheless serve a pedagogical function by discussing performances from a large range of critical perspectives. Chapter Five turns to examine some of these perspectives by way of a number of topics or themes appearing throughout the collection of reviews: acoustics, virtuosity, historical anachronism, politics, biography, interpretive allegiance to the score, and the problematic relationships between words and music. The underlying purpose is to demonstrate how richly a supple journalistic concert reviewing may imitate and aspire to the aims of a sophisticated academic music criticism.

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And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

I am grateful to the Deans of Yale College for permitting me, without hesitation, to take a month's vacation from a busy office to complete this thesis. I deeply appreciate the ample encouragement I have received from the members of my family, from Eléonore Zimmermann, from Peter Hales, from David and Elaine Smyth, and from William Austin. The public and the personal especially converge in my formally thanking my wife Donna for both her editorial assistance and for her proud, unflinching support.

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Chapter One

Music Criticism and the Positivist Paradigm

We cannot yet speak rigorously of an existing professional academic discipline of music criticism. Even the name itself, either as a description of an intellectual orientation to music, or as a more casual description of an assemblage of interrelated questions and concerns, does not enjoy the same kind of widespread acceptance among music scholars as do the terms literary criticism, art criticism, film criticism, etc., among their respective practitioners. In common parlance, what typically goes by the name "music criticism" is journalistic concert reviewing: those generally brief judgments on live and recorded performances which are published in daily or weekly newspapers, or in various non-musicological magazines and journals.

The relatively recent history of publishing articles about music begins with the rise of European journals at the beginning of the Eighteenth Century. Max Graf, in *Composer and Critic*, nominates Richard Steele's English magazine *The Tatler* (1709) as marking the beginning of "modern criticism,"¹ soon to be followed by a variety of new journals in England, France and Germany. In 1722, for example, the German scholar Johann Mattheson began to publish *Critica musica*, a new magazine whose complete title captures with refreshing candour some of the paradoxes which have always attended the

¹ Max Graf, *Composer and Critic: Two Hundred Years of Musical Criticism* (New York: Norton, 1946), p. 41.

criticism of music: *Critica musica, a wholly correct Inquiry and Examination of many partly Prejudiced, partly Silly, Opinions, Arguments, and Objections that are to be found in Old and New, Printed and Unprinted Musical Writings*.² What many of these early music critics took to be their subject matter included a wide range of topics pertaining to music as well as musical performances which they had attended. Certainly the question as to what might constitute "a wholly correct Inquiry" into music was not to be conclusively resolved by Mattheson's journal. Nor has discussion ever ended as to the relationship between such "wholly correct" inquiries (we might call them objective or scientific) and those other kinds of subjective judgments or "Opinions."

Notables from the last century, many of them composers, contributed to a wide range of music journals and newspapers their own "partly Silly Opinions," and some fine insights, on performances and musical trends at a time when musicology and musical analysis had barely begun. Some of the most important figures include Hector Berlioz, Claude Debussy, Eduard Hanslick, Franz Liszt, Robert Schumann, George Bernard Shaw, Richard Wagner, and Hugo Wolf.³

In the 20th Century, it would seem that the generally perceived status of journalistic criticism has diminished in inverse

² Graf, p. 45 (his own translation from the German).

³ For a representative sampling of printed prejudices, see Nicolas Slonimsky, *Lexicon of Musical Invective: Critical Assaults on Composers Since Beethoven's Time*, Second Edition (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1984). See also bibliographic citations under most of these names.

proportion to which professional academic music studies have grown more specialized, sophisticated, and formalistic. By the end of World War Two and throughout the next two decades, the predominant paradigm for most mainstream music studies was one of positivist formalism. This was a new definition of what would constitute a "wholly correct Inquiry" into music which tended to sharply define as appropriate, useful or interesting only those modes of music historiography, analysis and even composition itself that modelled themselves on the hard sciences. The roles of interpretation and value judgments in such a scheme were highly problematic, when they were not entirely ignored. Ten years after the war, for example, one British music critic, Donald Mitchell, blamed the "vacancy" of daily (journalistic) criticism upon the rising ascendancy of just such a positivist musicology:

When one realizes that the 'authenticity' of musicology functions as a kind of substitute for the value judgments that critics have given up making, it is easy to see why so many talents who might have become critics turn instead to historical, textual or pre-classical studies. Musicology offers, by way of relief, a potential series of positives (accuracy, authenticity, and the like) while at the same time not requiring of the practitioner the exercise of that very discrimination which is, or should be, the critic's *raison d'être*; 'authenticity' (of text or work) replaces evaluation. Small wonder then, that so many minds are attracted to musicology; it is the *vacancy* of present-day criticism which has contributed to its massive *extent* and still extending influence.⁴

⁴ Donald Mitchell, "Criticism: a State of Emergency," *Tempo* 37 (Autumn 1955), p. 9; cited in Joseph Kerman, *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 114.

Certainly for many musicologists, theorists and composers, the kind of writing about music which now services the North American newspaper and magazine industries, with few exceptions,⁵ is seen as perpetrating a watered-down mishmash of aesthetics and music history upon an audience untrained to know what they are reading. One of the more scathing articulations of this stance comes from the opening paragraph of an essay written in 1980 by the musicologist Joseph Kerman, "How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out":

As a matter of general usage, the term "criticism" is applied to music in an anomalous and notably shallow way. This is regrettable but not easy to change so long as the usage has the consent of musicians and non-musicians alike. When people say "music criticism," they almost invariably mean daily or weekly journalistic writing, writing which is prohibited from the extended, detailed, and complex mulling over of the matter at hand that is taken for granted in the criticism of art and especially of literature. Journalistic writing about music is posited on and formed by this prohibition. The music critic may accept it grudgingly, keeping a higher end in view, or he may depend on it to hide what may gently be called his lack of intellectual rigor; in any case, the prohibition is central to his *métier*. The music critic's stock-in-trade consists of the aesthetic question begged, the critical aphorism undeveloped, the snap judgment.⁶

⁵ Kerman, in *Contemplating Music* (p. 16) names Virgil Thomson, Jack A. Westrup and Andrew Porter as "reputable" journalistic critics. I would also add B. H. Haggin, among others.

⁶ Joseph Kerman, "How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out," *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 2 (Winter 1980), p. 311. A different version of this essay was originally read at Johns Hopkins University as one of the 1978-79 Thalheimer Lectures in Philosophy, and subsequently published as "The State of Academic Music Criticism" in *On Criticizing Music: Five Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Kingsley Price (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press,

Kerman's harsh judgments can scarcely be dismissed out of hand. Much of the writing which is submitted as concert reviewing is of fairly low quality. Musical performances and famous artists may lure the critic's attention away from considering the compositions themselves or from other related matters. The reviewer may end up offering, in the former Boston critic Michael Steinberg's phrase, "stock market reports"⁷ on the latest international superstars: Pavarotti up 1/2, Charles Rosen down 1/4.

Handing out grades, simply projecting one's own taste in the form of value judgments, without any further discussion, can scarcely be an adequate mode of music criticism even for someone like Donald Mitchell. It is potentially a pernicious practice, an "answers industry," something, however, that docile or intimidated readers may from long practice have been trained to look for in a review. It is, with fairly rare exceptions, what the newspaper ensures is written. And increasingly the pressures of advertising have limited even further the already meagre space which the critic traditionally has had at his disposal. Copy for the dailies must be quickly submitted, without occasion for serious reflection, in time to reach the next day's newspaper stands.

Kerman's essay, however, deserves special and extended attention here for its analysis of the academic context in relation to

1981). The four other essays are by Charles Rosen, Monroe Beardsley, Rose Rosengard Subotnik, and Karl Aschenbrenner.

⁷ From a lecture given in the spring of 1982 to the participants in the graduate program of Music Criticism, McMaster University.

which contemporary music criticism, journalistic or otherwise, inevitably must be defined. If the academic writing done for the professional music journals is not hampered in the same way as newspaper criticism by considerations of time or space, such writing is nonetheless enormously influenced by procedures of music theory and especially an "organicist" musical analysis which, as Kerman's article goes on to explore, might properly be considered itself as music's criticism. As a "less ephemeral, more accountable professional criticism," Kerman argues, and "in conjunction with music theory,"

musical analysis enjoys a relatively long academic history going back to the nineteenth-century conservatory curricula. Today all university as well as conservatory musicians are into analysis. They all have to study it and generally do so with much respect.⁸

Later he writes:

It is precisely because and only because analysis is a kind of criticism that it has gained its considerable force and authority on the American academic scene.⁹

The concept of "organicism" is central to Kerman's argument. Speaking of the philosophical appropriation by later critics of Eduard Hanslick's famous definition of music as "sounding form in motion," Kerman writes:

The vision of these analyst-critics was and is of a perfect, organic relation among all the analyzable parts of a musical masterpiece. Increasingly sophisticated techniques of

⁸ Kerman (1980), p. 311.

⁹ Kerman (1980), p. 319.

analysis attempt to show how all aspects or "parameters" or "domains" of the masterpiece perform their function for the total structure. Critics who differ vastly from one another...still view the work of art ultimately as an organism in this sense...Analysis exists for the purpose of demonstrating organicism, and organicism exists for the purpose of validating a certain body of works of art.¹⁰

The relationship between music and its analysis is described further:

...Analysis, taken in its own terms, is one of the most satisfying of all known critical systems. "...Music has, among the arts, the most, perhaps the only, systematic and precise vocabulary for the description and analysis of its objects": that is an envious quotation from Stanley Cavell [¹¹], a philosopher and critic well versed in music, who knows how more fully one can fix a melodic line as compared to a line in a drawing, or a musical rhythm as compared to a poetic one, or even an ambiguity in harmony as compared to an ambiguity of metaphor. The discipline of analysis has made a very good thing out of the precise, systematic vocabulary which music possesses.¹²

There is an appealing, and beguiling, logic to this notion that because music itself appears to possess a "precise, systematic vocabulary," what better mode of critical inquiry could we devise than a scientific musical analysis which was itself precise and systematic? We may note in passing, however, that the word "vocabulary" as applied to music is by no means a self-evident or non-problematic concept, especially for those scholars exploring the linguistic and semiological features of music.¹³ Certainly, any trans-historic, trans-

10 Kerman (1980), p. 315.

11 Stanley Cavell, "Music Discomposed" in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 186.

12 Kerman (1980), p. 321.

13 One of the leading figures in this field is the Montreal musicologist Jean-Jacques Nattiez. His book *Fondements d'une sémiologie de la musique*

contextual "lexicon" of musical units of significance is bound to fail to offer anything but arbitrary pairings between musical intervals, chords or phrases and their purportedly corresponding verbal labels or descriptions, as for example Deryck Cooke's *The Language of Music*.¹⁴

Two further points suggest themselves as well. First, the envisioned utility of formalist musical analysis as the *best* and most suitable critical approach to music depends upon our willingness to exclude from consideration all those contingent meanings which threaten to encroach upon the absolute autonomy of the musical work. If music theory is understood to employ a purely synchronic analysis of a given work, such anti-autonomist encroachments could include the historical and socio-political context of the work,¹⁵ biographical information,¹⁶ and the relationship between the work and others by the same composer, or by other composers; titles in general, the libretti to operas and other vocal pieces, the composer's

(Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1975) remains the only full-length treatment of the semiotics of music. See also Nicolas Ruwet, *Langage, musique, poésie* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972); David Lidov, "Musical Structure and Musical Significance," Part One of an unpublished monograph for the Toronto Semiotic Circle, No. 1 (Victoria University, Toronto, 1980); and Wendy Steiner, ed. *The Sign in Music and Literature* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1981).

¹⁴ Deryck Cooke, *The Language of Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).

¹⁵ See Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, translated by Mitchell and Blomster (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), and especially some of his flagrantly misguided jazz criticism appearing in *Prisms*, translated by Samuel and Shierry Weber (London: Spearman, 1967).

¹⁶ One subtle yet occasionally wishful study is Maynard Solomon's *Beethoven* (New York: Schirmer, 1977). See also his "Thoughts on Biography," *19th-Century Music* 5, no. 3 (Spring 1982), pp. 268-276.

program notes (or someone else's), and a multitude of commentaries on the work; even, possibly, performances of the work and any history of such performances.

The second point concerns the purpose of musical analysis. Arguably, what raises the status of analysis above the merely mechanical mapping of musical taxonomies is the impossibility (and undesirability) of excluding value from the selective choices which the analyst is making. A "scientific" analysis of a composition which saw as its goal the attempt to exclude all gestures of interpretive judgment would be a useless exercise. Only the literal duplication of *all* the features of a work would satisfy this goal: constructing a map, as it were, whose relation to the original was one inch to the inch. In practice, the analyst evaluates, selects and presents various, but not all, of the work's musical parameters according to a theoretically defensible hierarchy which is intended to elucidate the work, presumably for our greater aesthetic appreciation. This selection process cannot be value-free: the theorist-critic is engaged willy-nilly in some mode of interpretive activity.

Kerman addresses the point "that musical analysts claim to be working with objective methodologies which leave no room for aesthetic criteria, for considerations of value." He admits that more recently:

analysts have avoided value judgments and adapted their work to a format of strictly corrigible propositions, mathematical equations, set-theory formations, and the like --all this, apparently, in an effort to achieve the objective

status and hence the authority of scientific inquiry.¹⁷

We may take the following remarks by composer and theorist Milton Babbitt to be especially representative of this stance:

The notion of analysis...beyond strongly reminding us of the systematic obligations attending our own necessarily verbal presentation and discussion...provides the important reminder that there is but one kind of language, one kind of method for the verbal formulation of "concepts" and the verbal analysis of such formulations: "scientific" language and "scientific" method...It is neither surprising nor singular that, casually and non-controversially, a hypothetical, but cautiously unexaggerated instance of "musical criticism" is cited on the first page of an elementary discussion of language as "sheer nonsense" when "interpreted 'literally.'"¹⁸

Yet, in fact, as Kerman argues, aesthetic questions of value have been assumed: the "masterpiece status" of the work typically chosen is taken "as a donnée." As a result, he concludes that "the true intellectual milieu of analysis is not science but ideology":

...a fairly coherent set of ideas brought together not for strictly intellectual purposes but in the service of some strongly held belief. Fundamental here is the orthodox belief, still held over from the late nineteenth century, in the overriding aesthetic value of the instrumental music of the great German tradition. Of this, the central monuments are the fugues and some other instrumental compositions of Bach and the sonatas, string quartets, and symphonies of Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms.¹⁹

Kerman goes on to extend this tradition into the twentieth century. He speaks of the ways in which the serial and atonal com-

17 Kerman (1980), p. 313.

18 Milton Babbitt, "Past and Present Concepts of the Nature and Limits of Music," *International Musicological Society Congress Report 7* (1961), p. 398.

19 Kerman (1980), p. 314.

posers Schoenberg, Webern and Berg, and later Pierre Boulez and Babbitt, were gradually accommodated into the prevailing ideological framework. He cites with approbation the development of serial analysis ("the most impressive American contribution to the discipline at large"), and he traces the role which organicism has played in the development of the ideology, as well as discussing other relevant philosophical and musicological perspectives.

Kerman's conclusion, by way of his own critical analysis of one of the pieces in Robert Schumann's *Dichterliebe*, is not that any alternative critical modes must *replace* analysis, but rather that we must "find ways of dealing with other kinds of aesthetic value in music besides organicism. I do not really think we need to get out of analysis, then, only out from under."²⁰

If, after so broadly polemical a discussion, some of Kerman's readers were mildly disappointed by the final critical-analytic application of his ideas to the Schumann piece, this may partially have something to do with the inherent limitations of any, even extended, essay. Kerman has been arguing for a more comprehensive and flexible synthesis of historical musicology and musical analysis, in the direction of music criticism, throughout his influential and controversial career. His work elsewhere may help us to fill in some of the gaps. One of the most ambitious, and provocative, summaries of his thinking on these subjects appeared fairly recently

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Kerman (1980), p. 331.

as the book *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology*²¹ and the essay just reviewed usefully prepares our understanding of his ideas there. I shall have occasion to refer to this book later on.

One objective in focusing on this essay by Kerman has been to suggest, as noted, the outlines of the general context in which any discussion of music criticism must surely occur. But Kerman, for all of his idiosyncratic provocations, is not simply a lone voice crying out from the far periphery of an indomitable and established mainstream. His work echoes other important suggestive strategies within at least the past two decades by such scholars as William Austin, Edward Cone, Carl Dahlhaus, Leonard Meyer, Charles Seeger, Leo Treitler, and others²² which suggest that a gradual yet profound shift in orientation has been underway throughout the general musical landscape. It is becoming possible to articulate a much wider and more interesting range of concerns as belonging to the musico-critical domain than ever before.

It is therefore the aim of the following essay, in conjunction with the accompanying reviews (published between 1984 and 1986 in New Haven, Connecticut), to suggest that even journalistic music criticism may be more useful and interesting than is typically assumed (and, unfortunately, than is frequently in evidence). I intend, in other words, to take up the challenge of the opening

21 Op. cit., footnote 4. Two reviews of this book are by Robert Winter, "A Musicological Offering," *New York Review of Books* (18 July 1985), pp. 23-27; and by Erich Leinsdorf, "Culture and Musical Thinking," *New York Times Book Review* (26 May 1985), p. 19.

22 See bibliographic citations under each of these names.

paragraph of Kerman's essay.

For quite aside from offering evidence of the blindness and insight of this particular critic's judgments, this collection of reviews at the very least provides a particular form of historical documentation. It highlights aspects of both the music community under consideration during this period and the journalistic institution responsible for assigning the concerts, editing the review copy, allocating space on the page, and so on. These reviews may thus suggest the general outline of the prevailing relationships that tend to exist between music performances and the news industry. In this connection, this modest anthology may afford a fairly typical instance and example of the responsibilities of the North American critic writing concert reviews during this period for daily newspapers of comparable circulation (about which, more below).

Yet, in my judgment, of equal or greater interest than these historical and socio-political concerns, are the musicological and philosophical considerations raised explicitly and implicitly by this body of work which deal with the nature of music criticism itself. Such considerations range from asking what status the musical composition has in relation to a performance; asking whether certain aspects of the concert should or should not be considered germane to the critical inquiry; and, indeed, asking what one's own role as a critic is supposed to be. Some of these and other questions are suggested by the concerts themselves. In asking them, a critic is serving a pedagogical function for his readers: the uncondescending

discussion of music for the general edification of a curious public is a worthy ideal.

In these regards, my work as a professional reviewer may be seen as a fitting continuation of the critical research, analysis, and inquiry that I did at McMaster within a programme which explicitly raised these kinds of difficult philosophical questions. The best journalistic reviewing may be seen as a species of the kind of music criticism which within the academic environment encompasses the broadest and most sophisticated musicological and theoretical concerns.

Chapter Two

Journalistic Production Requirements

In the fall of 1984, I was hired by the Jackson Newspaper Company in New Haven, Connecticut, as a freelance classical music and dance critic. The present collection of ninety-two concert reviews was published in the two associated daily Jackson papers, the *Journal-Courier* (the morning edition) and the *New Haven Register* (the evening and weekend edition), between October 1984 and July 1986.

My being hired to review dance concerts in addition to music was due in part to my previous experience in both domains as a critic for the *Ithaca Times* in Ithaca, New York (1979-1981). In New Haven it was an honour to work as a colleague with Ernestine Stodelle, the distinguished choreographer and dance critic who had for many years performed professionally with Martha Graham.²³ Increasingly, however, I took on greater responsibilities as a music critic--especially after March 1985 when one of the two other Jackson music critics was fired for loudly heckling a pianist *in recital*. From then on I was in the position of sharing the investigation²⁴ of a

²³ Ernestine Stodelle has published a much acclaimed critical biography of Graham: *Deep Song: the Dance Story of Martha Graham* (New York: Schirmer Books & London: Collier Macmillan, 1984).

²⁴ There was one other classical music critic in New Haven who wrote for an "alternative" weekly newspaper, the *New Haven Advocate*; and one of the Jackson theatre critics occasionally provided short pieces evaluating recent releases of classical music recordings.

very active music community with my brilliant colleague, Mr. Jeffrey Goldstein, and I reviewed only a handful of dance concerts. In the first season accordingly I published seventeen reviews devoted to music, nine devoted to dance; in the second season, sixty-one pieces were about music, only five were about dance. I have chosen to include these fourteen dance reviews (arranged chronologically) as Appendix One following the main collection for two reasons: first, because the fascinating symbiosis between music and dance should be of interest to many musicians; secondly, because there are common themes discussed in the music and the dance reviews, for example Modernism.

Concerning the remaining seventy-eight music reviews, it seemed of limited interest merely to duplicate the chronological order in which they were published. I have thus distributed these reviews among six major sections defined by genre:

- I Orchestral Music
- II Chamber Music (a) String Quartets; (b) Other
- III Solo/Duet Recitals
- IV Vocal Music
- V New Music at Yale
- VI Jazz and Other Musics

In addition, it seemed helpful to differentiate between *local* performers and the *imported* kind (those guest-soloists and ensembles visiting from outside the greater New Haven area). Accordingly, each section begins with reviews of the former, arranged chronologically, followed by reviews of the latter, also arranged chronologically.

These designations *local* and *imported* are included in the heading of

every review, along with the date, the name of the publishing newspaper, the name of the soloist or ensemble, and the newspaper editor's title of the piece.

Writing for both the *Journal-Courier* and the *New Haven Register* was somewhat of a balancing act. Though obviously associated with one another as parts of the same company, and therefore governed by the same editorial policies, the two newspapers were nonetheless somewhat different in character and attempted to reach a different audience.

The *New Haven Register* (founded in 1812), the evening and weekend edition, the more important and "serious" of the two, had a larger circulation and therefore earned the company its greatest revenues. Items of international news were routinely featured along with local issues, and were addressed in the (politically conservative) editorials: evening copy reached the newsstands well in time for the close of the business day. The Sunday edition of the *Register* was massive, with many separate sections on local and international news, business, the arts and entertainment, classified advertising, and so on. The morning paper, the *Journal-Courier* (founded in 1755), had a generally younger staff and a somewhat "breezier" style befitting its attempt to offer a still serious but mildly cheery introduction to the day for businesspeople on their way to work or for those who stayed at home. During the period in which I wrote, the evening *Register* sold 90,000 papers each week and the Sunday *Register* sold 140,000, as compared to the morning *Journal-Courier's*

circulation of 38,000.²⁵ Deadlines were quite different, as was the amount of space allocated for my reviews: I tended to have more room in the *Journal-Courier*. What constituted an appropriate piece for my two sets of editors varied as a result.

Concerts typically began at 8:00 p.m., or at 1:30 or 3:00 p.m. on Sundays. There were occasional 2:00 p.m. Saturday matinees, and there were very occasionally back-to-back concerts on the same day (notably in the case of the Yale School of Music composers' series). I also sometimes had to review dance on the same day as music, though happily not too often. The *Register* would print the review in time to reach the stands by the following afternoon: my absolute deadline was six in the morning, but practically this required my writing the piece directly after the concert had finished--a standard schedule for most evening dailies. I would typically finish composing the piece on the office word processor by two or three in the morning.

The *Journal-Courier* of course had already been "put to bed" by the end of an 8:00 p.m. concert: as the review could not appear until the morning *after* that next morning, my deadline was 3:00 p.m. on the day following the concert. I would either treat them as *Register* reviews and enter them into the computer that same evening, or else type them at home and submit them the next morning or in the early afternoon. (Further discrepancies resulted from the fact

²⁵ These statistics were provided by Angie Riccio, head of the Circulation Department at the Jackson Newspaper Company.

that the *Journal-Courier* only came out on weekdays: the review of a Friday concert written for the *Journal-Courier* would not appear until Monday morning.)

How much room on the page would be allowed for a review was always estimated in terms of the height in inches per total number of 2-inch wide printed columns. One could roughly calculate 35 words per inch. A typical *Register* music review would be between 8 and 11 inches, or between 280 and 385 words in length. Dance reviews (almost always submitted to the *Register*) were usually longer, closer to the length of a typical *Journal-Courier* review of 18-22 inches (between 630 and 770 words). One paradoxical result of these policies was for me to prefer (with some ambivalence) writing for the *Journal-Courier* even while I knew that my *Register* reviews would reach a far wider audience.

However, in the second season, my fellow critic Goldstein and I struck a hard compromise with the Arts editor. In exchange for our being permitted to cover some concerts which had traditionally been ignored by the Jackson company but which, in our judgment, deserved at least a mention (notably some of the performances offered at Yale University, or some of the finer local chamber music concerts), some reviews would have to be very short indeed. A new section in the Sunday *Register* was thereby established which contained two or three reviews at a time, each one usually under 5 inches long (under 175 words): the so-called "Reviews in Brief." These are so designated throughout the collection,

although their modest size might make the appellation seem unnecessary.

Of all the examples of music criticism offered in my reviews, the Reviews in Brief are the most obvious candidates for Joseph Kerman's derisive judgment, cited in Chapter One, that "the music critic's stock-in-trade consists of the aesthetic question begged, the critical aphorism undeveloped, the snap judgment." Although I thought about these concerts in much the same way as all the others (I am not aware of ever printing a snap judgment), and even included at least the names of every composition performed, I nonetheless could not help wondering whether the effort to condense thought into so small a space was not a naive exercise in futility. Could such reviews really have any value beyond that of advertising the performers' names, or of advertising, for that matter, the *New Haven Register* itself, through its critics, as having been "on the scene," as "with it?" ("Yes, we sent our man the critic to attend.") These brief pieces seem exemplary instances of the concert review as a species of news update rather than as a species of genuine criticism. Some of the concerts reviewed were sometimes more than a week old--"old news"--hence our editor's reluctance to consider the scheme in the first place. Certainly these reviews epitomize the inherent tension between these two constant polarities, a theme which will be explored further in the course of this essay.

I was prepared for some of the editorial policies which I encountered. No music examples, of course, were ever printed. The

justification, aside from the cost, was simply that the reviews were intended to be read by a non-specialized audience. On only one occasion did my editor specifically request a slightly more specialized piece in the form of a quasi-musicological description of the history of the Chorale Prelude, to be offered as background context to the discovery, at Yale, of previously unknown preludes by J. S. Bach (No. 49).²⁶ Yet even then I was asked to provide this piece in language most people would understand.

Nor would the paper bother with the "niceties" of diacritical marks. The piece about Béla Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra in relation to Dmitri Shostakovich's Symphony No. 7, "Sidlin takes stand on humanism" (No. 10), though mentioning Bartók's name frequently, showed no accents. The paper thus ignored the chance to indicate to its readers that he was not an American composer, that the rewards of his music were not to be had so blithely, that his musical insights could only be fully grasped after grappling with the cultural distance implied in his foreign name. As for Bartók, so for Camille Saint-Saëns, Isaac Albéniz, Hans von Bülow, Maurice Duruflé, for many other musicians, for all the foreign titles of works, for words like "élan" (No. 31, 41) or "clichés" (No. 35), and for Antonin Dvořák whose name, misprinted large in 24 point type for thousands of readers, appeared in the title to No. 19: "Mueller touch triumphs in Dvorak finale" (sic). As a matter of principle I have consistently

²⁶ Reviews will henceforth be simply designated by the prefix "No.": e.g. No. 49.

restored diacritica to all names and compositions throughout the collection.²⁷

Not only were diacritica missing from the compositions with foreign names, but in general the required form of titles varied greatly. Despite the exigencies of space (a cruel requirement, it seemed sometimes) the *Register* preferred full titles, for example: Josef Gabriel Rheinberger's Concerto No. 1 for Organ in F Major, Op. 137 (No. 19). The *Journal-Courier* editors cared less about my including opus numbers: in one review ("Mehta was explosive," No. 24) they let me get away with simply indicating that a quotation in a piece had come from Beethoven's Seventh. Sometimes, as in both of these examples, they were not placed within quotation marks. At other times they were: see the piece on the Colorado String Quartet (No. 38). Occasionally, the *Journal-Courier* editors italicized the names instead of using either of these practices.

I was less prepared for other varieties of poor editing, egregious cuts, and typographical gaffes. For example, in the printed version of "Concert was a challenge" (No. 5), along with the omission of the reviewer's name, the word "taste" in the third paragraph from the end was *hyphenated* as "tas-te." Other odd hyphenations were sprinkled throughout the reviews (appearing unnecessarily, for example, in the middle of a line which would have easily accommodated the word). As in the case of the inconsistency of compo-

²⁷ Except for diacritical marks and occasional additions noted in brackets, all of the reviews appear here as they were published in the two newspapers.

sition titles, this probably had no worse effect for readers than to make the articles seem sloppy, unprofessional, and more difficult to read. It gave me no great pleasure to see these aberrations printed under my name, but these gaffes were undoubtedly partly symptomatic of editors using their word processing equipment under the typically hectic time pressures of having to put out the paper.

Although none of the Jackson editors ever stooped to cutting copy "Associated Press style"--from the end of the piece as far back as space is required--there were other kinds of cuts which made as little sense. One of the worst cases happened in "Symphony bases concert on traditions" (No. 2): the editor decided to excise an entire paragraph which introduced discussion of the concert's last work, Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 5. The paragraph which *was* printed (third from the end) is thereby lacking its referent. Readers must have been mystified by the reviewer's sudden change of heart. Having just learned that Richard Strauss' *Four Last Songs* received "a strong and sympathetic reading," they suddenly discovered that their reviewer after all "was less convinced by this performance than by the others," whereas these two phrases had referred to different works.

The same thing occurred in a review on Wynton Marsalis (No. 9), if less obvious to those newspaper readers who had no reason to find it strange that William Schuman's *New England Triptych* had received "an appropriately lush, romantic interpretation--if interpretation is the right word for a ponderous collage of surface

effects." The reference, in fact, was to César Franck's Symphony in D minor but, once again, the identifying paragraph had been cut out.

One clue to the editor having used his knife may be found in the one-sentence "paragraphs" appearing throughout the *Register* reviews. (The *Journal-Courier's* more ample space allowed for a more measured, extended writing style.) A good example of the syndrome of the obliteration of paragraphs may be found in "Jazz saxophonist and storyteller provide thought-provoking fare" (No. 74). Of the seventeen paragraphs printed, eleven are single sentences. There is no way to compare my submitted review to the one which was published (I did not usually print a copy after typing the reviews into the computer), but I can only begrudgingly accept authorship for the choppiness and the lack of style or rhythm in the butchered version which was printed as my review.

These "one-liners" may also be an indication, however, of my attempting to manipulate the *Register's* policy of not favouring long paragraphs made up of several sentences. The crucial opening paragraph of a review, for example, would not usually be edited if it were a single sentence. One learned to capture the spirit of a concert, or introduce a critical idea which the concert itself seemed to suggest, *and* provide the news information required, all in a sentence. Here is the opening to No. 27, a piece which touched on the question of performance mannerisms:

Sinuous as an Indian snake charmer, weaving back and forth on Woolsey Hall's stage [location] in an ever-fluid little dance, virtuoso oboist [instrument] Heinz Holliger

[performer] broke all of the rules of professional comportment Tuesday evening [date] when he performed with the renowned Orchestre de la Suisse Romande [ensemble].

Since titles are designed to grab attention, it is difficult to imagine a blander calling card than "Band thrilled listeners" (No. 26), a *Register* editor's title of a piece about the Carabinieri Army Band visiting New Haven on Columbus Day.²⁸ Beyond the triteness of the title, this piece has the distinction of having been butchered more drastically than most of the others which I submitted. As an instructive summary of what I have been describing as "production constraints," I would like to close this chapter with a discussion of two versions of "Band thrilled listeners": the one which was printed in the *New Haven Register* (No. 26) and my final draft, below, which I submitted at the computer after the concert (the rare instance of my printing out a copy). Not one word of my draft was changed in the final version, just many words and paragraphs left out.

Carabinieri Army Band

What follows is the original draft; the passages bracketed in italics were cut for the version printed in the New Haven Register on 14 October 1985.

If Columbus Day offers Americans the opportunity to honor not only that

²⁸ As noted earlier, none of the titles were my own. Many were casually chosen at the last minute to suit the demands of space. One of the most amusing titles was offered by one of the *Journal-Courier* editors, mirroring the prose and parody of an article on William Walton's *Façade*: "Whimsical Walton wit wipes away winter woe" (No. 45). Here the different deadlines and editorial policies of the two papers are relevant: I would probably not have had the time to craft this piece for the *Register*, nor would those editors have printed it intact: too "artsy" for their "serious" publication.

famous Italian navigator who first made his way to these shores in 1492, but also all of those who share his rich cultural heritage, then Sunday evening's concert by the Carabinieri Army Band was the perfect conclusion to New Haven's Columbus Day celebration.

For the mainly Italian-American audience, which nearly filled Woolsey Hall, this was much more than an ordinary concert. *[It was a gala occasion, received with tremendous excitement and frequent standing ovations, and of obviously profound emotional significance for most of those who attended.]*

The 171-year old Carabinieri are the oldest branch of the Italian Army, and its band of 103 musicians is reputedly the finest military band in Italy. *[New Haven was the first stop in a week-long concert tour through New York, Providence, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. Sponsored by the National Italian American Foundation and Italy Italy Magazine, this tour marked the Band's first appearance in America in roughly thirty years.]*

After the Band performed a rousing performance of both the Italian and the American National Anthems, New Haven Mayor Ben DiLieto presented the key of New Haven to Italian dignitary Colonel Francioze saying, "In all of my thirty-seven years of public service, I cannot recall a moment as thrilling as this afternoon's appearance by the Carabinieri Army Band marching in our Columbus Day parade."

Colonel Francioze in turn presented the mayor with an official medallion of the Carabinieri, and gave a short speech in Italian which was translated into English (unnecessarily, of course, for many members of the audience). Other speeches, public acknowledgements and honoraria were offered just after intermission by several officials of the sponsoring organizations, including Mr. Frank Grazioso and Mrs. Theresa DeAngelo.

The concert itself was clearly colored by these official proceedings. Yet probably for the majority of listeners the music signified on a personal level what was being acknowledged publically. It would be a myopic reviewer indeed who did not perceive the relationship between the performance and the greater context of the evening.]

The first half of the program primarily consisted of band arrangements of Italian opera selections from Gioacchino Rossini's "La Gazza Ladra," Vincenzo Bellini's "Norma," Pietro Mascagni's "Cavalleria Rusticana," and Giuseppe

Verdi's "La Traviata." There was also a medley of Italian songs arranged by the conductor Vincenzo Borgia. *[The audience greeted all of these with applause at their familiarity, and there was singing during the last medley.]*

Borgia's conducting style alternated somewhat oddly between pedantically crisp and dramatically romantic. Tempos were maintained with unusual consistency, nearly without momentum at all, except for moments of sudden intensity which would burst upon us without warning. The band at full volume was a force to be reckoned with *[and solos by the E-flat Clarinet, Flugelhorn, Euphonium and Trumpet were especially noteworthy.]*

The second half consisted of a selection from Verdi's "Nabucco," and an excellent arrangement (again by Borgia) of Amilcare Ponchielli's "Dance of the Hours" from his "La Gioconda." The final piece was Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky's "Capriccio Italien" which was inspired by the bugle call of the Royal Italian Corazzieri, an elite corps of the Carabinieri. By this time it seemed the ensemble's energies were flagging, and this reading seemed sluggish, pedestrian.

[As an encore we heard a version of "New York, New York," a kind of tribute to the Band's being in America, and finally their own theme song, the "Call to Order."]

Contextual meanings and strictly musical ones always balance each other in any concert, or so I believe. In this case, it would amount to a kind of snobbish quibbling to only emphasize that this quite accomplished military band did not quite achieve musical greatness, given the clear verdict on the part of the audience--"Bis! Bis!" Encore! Encore! Come again.

A comparison between my longer final draft (18 inches, 636 words) and the printed piece (9.5 inches, 328 words) will not, I think, recommend the former as an especially salient or remarkable review, and this would not be my intention here by including it. On the contrary, the longer version offers evidence of a serious miscalculation as to what the *Register* wanted as a review, and it is this which holds some interest in this inquiry into the nature of concert

reviews.

This was an unusual assignment: it came suddenly instead of having been on the schedule for weeks in advance. One of the *Register* editors telephoned me one Sunday morning to ask if I would cover that evening's concert. He said that he would try to get me about 17 inches of space, but that he wanted something between a concert review and a news story: it would not be printed in the Arts or Living sections, but would begin on the bottom of Monday's front page.

I have no idea who made the final decision to cut the review in half and relegate it to the familiar pages of the Living section. It is easy to see why my somewhat purpled prose, with its unabashed descriptions of the ceremonial honorifics being bestowed during the concert (like the verbatim remark by the Mayor to Colonel Francioze), would not stand as a straightforward *New Haven Register* news story, even allowing for a concert reviewer's "temperament."

It is also easy to see how the copy was edited: for example, the rule of using only the first "theme" sentences of paragraphs (in the original paragraphs 2 and 3), and the quasi-Associated Press rule of cutting the last sentence of paragraphs (in 7 and 8). The editor also eliminated all references to the concert's ceremony (paragraphs 4, 5 and 6), to the fact that the audience began applauding familiar pieces and singing along, to some "especially noteworthy" solos, and to the tributary selections played as encores.

There is genuine cause for concern about such deletions

when, as in this case, the spirit of the occasion itself has been so badly warped. This was a notable Italian band parading and then performing on Columbus Day, for the obvious excitement, pleasure and pride of a large New Haven Italian audience. That these contingent meanings of the music as performed that evening should be so blandly misrepresented amounted to the *Register* not recognizing the Carabinieri's imported heritage, or the editors leaving off the accents.

Surprisingly, the last paragraph emerged unscathed, or at least *intact*. Sufficient damage had already been done to the rest of the review as to weaken its main point, which I finally came to express explicitly at the end: "Contextual meanings and strictly musical ones always balance each other in any concert, or so I believe."

The point here, whether we agree or not with this flagrant proposition of aesthetics, is that such a proposition's providing the underpinning and *raison d'être* for a review is itself an act of music criticism that scarcely meshes with what my editors probably thought concert reviewing is all about. This review may have been a miscalculation as to what the *New Haven Register* would put into print; but the piece also exemplifies the range of concerns which almost all of my reviews, in the name of a flexible and sophisticated music criticism, aspired to embody and express.

The goals of music criticism as I understood them, whether successfully demonstrated in this piece or not, *and* given all of the constraints, may not in fact have been so radically different from those which Kerman has attempted to explore. As he writes, for

example, in a passage in *Contemplating Music*²⁹ which approvingly describes his colleague Leo Treitler's essay on Beethoven's Ninth Symphony:

By criticism Treitler seems to mean a comprehensive interpretation of what a work of art means in all its contexts--a process that is increasingly coming to be known, since Gadamer, even by musicians, as hermeneutics.

Let us observe how closely this mirrors another passage where Kerman describes, in contrast to the attitude held by music analysts, what he takes to be the musicological attitude toward the "traditional canon of music."

Musicologists strive to view this music within its full historical context: a context flooded with lesser music which the theorists ignore, coloured by historical performance conditions different from those we now accept, informed by complex economic, social, intellectual, and psychological forces, and cross-hatched by intertextuality--by the references composers make in one work to another as acknowledged model or unacknowledged influence. Such, at least, is the musicologists' ideal.³⁰

²⁹ Kerman (1985), p. 132 in reference to Leo Treitler, "History, Criticism, and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony," *19th-Century Music* 3 (March 1978), pp. 193-210. Hans-Georg Gadamer is one of the most important contemporary hermeneutic philosophers; his magnum opus *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960), translated into English as *Truth and Method* in 1975 (New York: Seabury Press), influenced scholars across many disciplines. See Richard Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics and Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983).

³⁰ Kerman (1985), p. 72.

Chapter Three
A Critic's Place in the Music Community

To publish in the *New Haven Register*, as already noted, was to reach a larger audience than the one which read the *Journal-Courier*. The weekly circulation figures (evening *Register*, 90,000; Sunday *Register*, 140,000; *Journal-Courier*, 38,000) should be considered within the context of the relevant population statistics. In 1980 the City of New Haven officially reported 126,109 people.³¹ (Between 1984 and 1986 this had probably not increased dramatically.) In 1986 the population of the entire New Haven County was estimated to have reached 788,510.³²

In addition, these census figures probably only partially reflect the large transient populations of undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in various of the local educational institutions, including those enrolled in New Haven's largest and most prestigious one, Yale University. The total Yale enrollment as of September 1986 was 10,569, a little under 50% of whom were undergraduates. (I assume that the New Haven County figures reflect nearly all of Yale's 1,382 full-time faculty members, though not necessarily all of the part-time professors, adjunct faculty, etc.)³³

31 *State of Connecticut Register and Manual* (Hartford: State of Connecticut, 1987), p. 606.

32 *Ibid*, p. 604.

33 These Yale statistics are from *Facts about Yale* (New Haven: Yale University, the Office of University Development, October, 1987), pp. 6, 12.

On such a scale, it would be difficult for even an experienced ethnomusicologist to assess the overlapping varieties of musical taste-groups which between 1984 and 1986 made up the general music community of New Haven County. Even the comparatively small community of listeners who admired some classical music would be tricky to define. Some of these probably attended the ballet and modern dance concerts which I reviewed, and some dance lovers may have been lured into enjoying classical music through its association with dance. Most of those who attended a few of the music concerts which I reviewed undoubtedly admired other musics as well, or enjoyed listening to them more...or would have preferred to be watching television or playing golf. My Jackson colleague Jeffrey Goldstein and I reviewed most but not all of the same concerts: was I the only one, out of the nearly 790,000 people living in greater New Haven, who attended *all* of the concerts which I reviewed? The odds are good that this was so.

It is highly doubtful that all of those who attend classical music concerts charge out to read reviews of them the next day. At the same time, it is probable that some of those 90,000 or 140,000 *New Haven Register* or 38,000 *Journal-Courier* readers would occasionally browse through reviews of concerts they had not attended. Perhaps they had grown accustomed to a reviewer's style. But how many listeners and readers read music reviews? How many composers and performers, for that matter, read the reviews of their

performances?³⁴

If the answers to these questions are not easily forthcoming; if the problems inherent in situating classical music within New Haven's complex cross-cultural music community would seem to suggest that nothing less than a full-scale study, arduously conducted over many years by a team of professional social anthropologists of music, could plausibly begin to suggest answers; nonetheless the enterprise of ethnomusicology need not be irrelevant to an inquiry into the multi-faceted nature of music criticism. (How difficult an enterprise this is, especially when faced with the problem of how "to deal with Western art music in terms of social and cultural history," is discussed by Kerman at length in *Contemplating Music*.³⁵) In fact there is plenty of hard evidence provided by just such a collection of music reviews as is presented here which would substantially aid such a study.

For a music community comprises both its listeners (including its critics) and its performers. To take the pulse of such a community, one may look at the concerts which are being offered, the musical compositions appearing on the programmes, and the local

34 I have no definitive answers here. I received a few brief letters correcting my guess of one of Kiri Te Kenawa's encores. A more substantial letter arrived from pianist Peter Orth's manager, saying what a positive impression my review had had for the performer. Several Yale composers told me that they appreciated the coverage I was giving to their music,

35 Kerman (1985), p. 170 in Chapter 5, "Ethnomusicology and 'Cultural Musicology.'" Kerman writes that though ethnomusicologists have been objecting, with some justification, "that most musicologists pay too little attention to anything outside the strictly musical context they are studying," there have been some notable attempts by scholars such as Curt Sachs, Paul Henry Lang, Friedrich Smend, Edward Lowinsky, Theodor Adorno, and Leonard Meyer.

and imported artists performing them. Of course I could not review all of even the classical music concerts (let alone the other kinds) offered in New Haven between 1984 and 1986, but my sampling is in some instances complete (of the New Haven Symphony Orchestra, for example), and it is certainly representative.

A list of the performing musicians (soloists and ensembles) I was able to review has already been provided in the form of the Table of Contents. A second list of every musical composition mentioned in the music reviews is provided as Appendix Two, the Index of Repertoire. Even a superficial look at these two lists taken together would suggest that a journalistic music critic is in the position to offer some basic historical documentation of the life of a music community to that team of ethnomusicologists conducting their in-depth study. There is no reason to exclude this role from the many roles that a critic may play in the course of publishing concert reviews.

Without going into detail, the following general remarks suggest themselves. The Index of Repertoire, for example, may easily suggest that typically represented within New Haven County were performances of works by composers solidly within the mainstream western tradition. On the following short list of composers represented in concert five or more times, the only generally unfamiliar name is Martin Bresnick, a composer and professor at Yale: J. S. Bach 9, Bartók 5, Beethoven 10, Brahms 12, Bresnick 5, Haydn 7, Mozart 14, Ravel 5, Robert Schumann 6, Richard

Strauss 5, and Tchaikovsky 8.

A slightly longer list of composers represented more than once will feature the again unfamiliar names of Yale composers (indicated by an asterisk). Except for the two jazz names Fletcher Henderson and Thelonious Monk, and (perhaps) a higher number of 20th-century works than might have been expected, this list offers a familiar confirmation that typical repertoire decisions favour the western "mainstream": Albéniz 2, Barber 2, Britten 4, Busoni 2, Chopin 2, Debussy 2, Dvořák 4, Elgar 2, *Elhai 2, Gershwin 2, *Hall 3, Handel 4, Henderson 2, Hindemith 4, Jacob 2, *Klinghoffer 2, *Koehne 2, *Lee 3, *Maw 2, Mendelssohn 3, Monk 2, Prokofiev 3, Puccini 2, Rachmaninov 2, Rossini 3, Saint-Saëns 2, Schoenberg 2, Schreker 2, Schubert 3, Shostakovich 4, Stravinsky 3, Verdi 3, *Wolfe 2, and *Yun 2. Only in the main Index itself will the occasional single piece offer evidence that decisions had been made to choose works closer to the peripheries of the canon, of which the following might serve as examples: John Adson *Courtly Masquing Ayres*, Ernesto Cordero *Fantasia Mulata*, John Dowland *My Lady Hunsdon's Allemande*, Vagn Holmboe *Quintet*, Toshio Hosokawa *String Quartet No. 2*, David Leizner *Dances in the Madhouse*, Mabriano de Orto *Dulces exuvie*, or the traditional Chinese *Incense for the Repose of the Soul*.

Turning to the performing ensembles and soloists themselves, it is no accident, for example, that the New Haven Symphony Orchestra was one of the ensembles for which my reviews constitute a complete record during both seasons, excluding summer concerts

(Nos. 1-14). The prestige of having a full (75-member) symphony orchestra for the city of New Haven (as no doubt for most cities able to boast of a professional orchestra) was explicitly recognized, and supported, by the Jackson Newspaper Company. (As may be gleaned from my criticism of the orchestra and especially of its conductor, this support had little to do with musical quality.) That foundation support from the state and federal governments, expensive subscription sales, benefit concerts, highly publicized in-town special events (such as organizing free concerts for local grade school students), etc., were necessary to keep its operations afloat will not be news to anyone familiar with the costs and politics involved. Orchestral music draws a large audience, as well, so there was never any question for the newspaper that all of the NHSO concerts would be reviewed by both papers.

The comparably prestigious and expensive concert series, the so-called "Great Performers," was treated in the same way by the editors. This series was divided in two parts. Visiting orchestras were featured each season, including the Israel Philharmonic, the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, the Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig, the National Arts Centre Orchestra of Canada, and the Cleveland Orchestra (Nos. 24-31, excluding Nos. 26 and 28). A shorter series of famous musicians was also offered: the Boston Symphony Chamber Players, Alicia de Larrocha, Itzhak Perlman, Cecile Licad, Kiri Te Kanawa, the Vienna Boys' Choir (Nos. 43, 51, 52, 54, 63, 65). All of these musicians but

the first group were on national tours at this time and had included New Haven on their itinerary.

The Connecticut Opera Company (not based in New Haven) was always covered whenever it came to town, though usually by another reviewer: I wrote only one piece on their performance of *The Barber of Seville* (No. 61). The Jackson editors also always assigned reviewers to the local Connecticut Ballet, before it finally folded (see Nos. 82, 85, 87).

"Special" performances by groups like the Carabinieri Army Band (No. 26), or the Cracow Philharmonic (No. 28), which took place in Stamford Connecticut; or of the newly discovered J. S. Bach preludes (Nos. 49-50); a concert by Benny Goodman (No. 77); or a recital by Yo-Yo Ma and Emanuel Ax (a benefit concert for Saint Raphael's Hospital, No. 55): these would go on the reviewing schedule from time to time provided there were no other conflicts and the editors could be convinced of their importance. Concerts by smaller or more amateur New Haven ensembles might be reviewed--the Wall Street Chamber Players (Nos. 39-41), the Brass Ring (No. 46), or the Redeemer Oratorio Choir (No. 59)--but rarely was very much space allocated for such groups.

I have attempted in this rough accounting to give a sense of the newspaper's hierarchical priorities. There were many indications throughout my tenure that concert reviewing was considered an onerous responsibility shouldered begrudgingly by editors who considered their duty done once the NHSO, the Great Performers, the

Connecticut Opera and Ballet had been assigned.

I have also deliberately thus far withheld consideration of all of the concerts sponsored by Yale University. For despite the richly varied and high level of musical activity constantly going on at the University and especially within the Yale School of Music, only Yale's string quartet series (I covered one season: the Tokyo, Ridge, Fine Arts, and La Salle quartets, Nos. 32, 33, 35-37) and its graduate orchestra, the Philharmonia Orchestra of Yale (Nos. 17-19) had been judged by the Jackson editors, before Goldstein and I arrived on the scene, as routinely deserving reviews. It was an uphill battle to receive permission to cover other concerts there as well: the undergraduate Yale Symphony Orchestra (Nos. 20-23); the Franciscan String Quartet, in residence along with the Tokyo (No. 34), or the visiting New York Woodwind Quintet (No. 44); the summertime Starlight Festival which featured the Colorado String Quartet (No. 38), the Empire Brass Quartet (No. 47), a flute and guitar duo, Schmidt and Verdery (No. 56), and Pomerium Musices (No. 66); as well as a variety of other recitals and concerts.

Most difficult of all to put on the Jackson reviewing schedule were the concerts of new music written and performed by the professors and graduate students in the composition programme at the Yale School of Music (Nos. 67-72). Three or four times a year (sometimes in two separate and lengthy programmes on the same day) these twelve or more novice, burgeoning, and professional composers had the opportunity to have their latest works performed

for typically small audiences consisting mainly of their fellow YSM students and a handful of curious others from within the University. Those from outside Yale would very rarely attend such concerts.

For the *Register* arts editor this was at first a classic "no news" situation. He saw no reason to support with a review such events as interested only a minuscule minority (and, worse, a Yale minority), and which featured in any case more of that horrible modern noise. (It is only partly conjecture that his unabashed dislike of most varieties of new music may have influenced his resistance to my idea of reviewing these concerts.) When he finally accepted such arguments as I could provide, the space he assigned for these reviews was dauntingly small: of the six of these reviews which were published between April 1985 and April 1986, four were Reviews in Brief.

Chapter Four

On Gaining Critical Access to Music

The question of what to do about modern music dramatizes an important point concerning the possible roles that the critic may take on vis-à-vis the music community in discussion of all kinds of music. Not only may the critic's work provide an historical record of the community's musical habits and predilections, but it may serve to educate readers by suggesting there are different ways to think about their listening habits and about the music itself. Such a pedagogical role is most obviously called for in the face of a forbiddingly complex variety of 20th-century compositional techniques: forbidding and not easily accessible even to professional scholars and musical analysts. Yet the critic may offer access to a variety of musical works from any era which elude or frustrate typical concert audiences by reason of their apparent inaccessibility.

There is no formula for gaining access to a piece of music, no guarantee that a critic's suggestions will help any individual listener. When the journalistic constraints are particularly severe, when critical reactions to a concert of all new music, for example, must be encapsulated within a particularly small frame, there is every reason to wonder how far beyond mere labeling ("the critical aphorism undeveloped") a review has gone in the name of an imagined accessibility, and every reason to suspect that the work's own rich complexities

will continue to offer a legitimate aesthetic barrier to such "accessibility" as to render the review virtually irrelevant.

Yet the same point may be made of even the most sophisticated analyses of any musical work, although traditionally this has been acknowledged especially for those works which within the mainstream canon (Kerman would say ideology) have been dubbed "masterpieces": that music resists the notion of any single definitive analysis or, for that matter, definitive musical performance. Tastes in music change with history's changes; the significance of familiar musical pieces must be freshly evaluated along with new works which are written or older works which are brought to light (to echo T. S. Eliot's famous 1919 essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent"³⁶). Never have these issues been more acutely felt than in this latter half of this century, confronted as we are by a much publicized pluralism of aesthetic motivations, in contemporary music and elsewhere, in part because of the unprecedented availability of an enormous variety of musics from around the world, from many centuries.³⁷ Faced with the pluralism of musics, some scholars have tried to find critical access through an expanding variety of approaches.

This present state of affairs may well be abhorrent to those

³⁶ T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1932), p. 15. See also Robert P. Morgan, "Rewriting Music History; Second Thoughts on Ives and Varèse, *Musical Newsletter*, 1, no. 3 (January 1973), pp. 3-12; and 2, no. 3 (April 1973), pp. 15-28.

³⁷ Leonard Meyer's analysis of contemporary pluralism in "The Aesthetics of Stability" in *Music, the Arts and Ideas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 170+, continues to be pertinent.

who would hold dearly to their cherished positivist dogmas and for whom the work by Kerman and others--especially that which calls into question the autonomy of the western masterpiece, the inviolate status of the organicist tradition, and the unequivocal prestige of formalist analytical procedures--must therefore be an unwelcome reminder of their own philosophical vulnerability.

The exposure of such vulnerability is not, of course, limited to the domain of music studies. The philosophical upheavals experienced by music scholars are a reflection of profound and radical upheavals occurring throughout Western philosophy itself. Positivist attitudes about music themselves depend upon an epistemological tradition, since Descartes, which would separate understanding from interpretation, science from prejudice--or separate, as we observed the dichotomy in Johann Mattheson's full title to *Critica musica*, "wholly correct Inquiry" from "Opinions." Yet this epistemological tradition has been under attack from a variety of contemporary philosophers. One whom we have already mentioned, Hans-Georg Gadamer, has mounted a critique of features of that epistemology from within the hermeneutic tradition, characterized by Richard Bernstein as follows:

But contrary to that tradition within hermeneutics that seeks to draw a rigorous distinction between understanding and interpretation (and to relegate these activities to different subdisciplines), Gadamer maintains that there is no essential difference between understanding and interpretation. (This claim scandalizes those who think that there is or can be "objective understanding," freed from all

prejudices and not "contaminated" by interpretation.)³⁸

In another passage, Bernstein suggests how deeply such a critique goes to the heart of fundamental Western concepts of rationality.

A pervasive theme in *Truth and Method*, and indeed in all of Gadamer's writings, is the critique of the Cartesian persuasion...The idea of a basic dichotomy between the subjective and the objective; the conception of knowledge as being a correct representation of what is objective; the conviction that human reason can completely free itself of bias, prejudice, and tradition; the ideal of a universal method by which we can first secure firm foundations of that knowledge and then build the edifice of a universal science; the belief that by the power of self reflection we can transcend our historical context and horizon and know things as they really are in themselves--all of these concepts are subjected to sustained criticism.³⁹

Within the scope of this paper I can only suggest, as here, that the most vital questions of music criticism are caught up in this larger drama of philosophical reevaluation which has influenced the criticism of all the arts, and which has caused upheavals as well within the philosophy of science. To choose only one point here which directly affects the music critic, what is the status of the critic's pretention to a specialized expertise about music? Has the critic's knowledge dissolved into mere opinion? One may well ask, after all, whether science or objective inquiry, once emptied of its claim to a universality which would transcend the biased perspectives of its own historical traditions, has not yielded the floor to an anarchistic relativism. It must be emphasized that Bernstein (and, as

³⁸ Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism* (op. cit., footnote 26), p. 138.

³⁹ Bernstein, p. 36.

he reads him, Gadamer) does *not* believe that such a relativism constitutes the only alternative. (This is reflected in the title of Bernstein's book: *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*.) Instead, according to the hermeneutic model, the critic may engage in an active, participatory dialogue with the musical work *from the vantage point of the critic's own traditions*, all the while acknowledging their partiality as well as their vulnerability to those aspects of the work which resist the critic's interpretive appropriations.

To the extent that these developments may affect a reviewer's approach to the interpretation of musical performances, there is reason to see such reviewing as a species of the kind of criticism practiced by academic music scholars who are themselves involved in articulating a variety of anti-positivist strategies. The music reviewer may thereby find support in striving towards a not unworthy ideal: that for any curious readers as may discover the reviews there is value in discussing a wide range of critical topics as may come to bear on actual pieces performed within the music community. An overview of such topics as were actually raised in the published *Register* and *Journal-Courier* reviews will provide the focus of the next and final chapter.

Chapter Five

Reviewing as Criticism

By now the naive conception of reviewing as little more than grading musical performances has begun to give way to an expanded sense of the possibilities inherent in a sophisticated music criticism. Criticism, if not yet a discipline, might at the very least be taken seriously as "an assemblage of interrelated questions and concerns" (as suggested in Chapter One) or, more ambitiously, as "a comprehensive interpretation of what a work of art means in all its contexts" (as Kerman described Treitler's work, cited at the close of Chapter Two).

Performances, after all, are not uncomplicated events. As any critic and frequent concert-goer knows, the acoustics of the hall will affect enjoyment and even judgment of the music. The way the stage or the entire hall's space is used or *must* be used for a piece makes a difference.

A passing remark on a detail of this kind may appear in a review, as one here about Verdi's Requiem Mass: "Separating the trumpets between stage and balcony for the *Tuba mirum* was effectively done as well" (No. 6). The acknowledgement of "barely workable acoustics" and a church's echo which "lasted over four seconds!" may frame a short piece about a splendid concert offered by a fine chamber group which deserved better ("Acoustics fail to frustrate brass quintet's concert," No. 46). The Colorado String

Quartet had to contend with "the occupational hazard of their playing outdoors over the sound of two airplanes, one siren and even a nearby telephone!" (No. 38)

When the Boston Symphony Chamber Players performed in Yale's echoing Woolsey Hall, some of my review discussed the effect this had on their performance (though typically exaggerated by the editor's title, "Cavernous Woolsey drowns fine chamber performance," No. 43), which opened as follows:

It is an obvious enough reflection: Some concert halls are acoustically unsuitable for certain kinds of music. One does not, for example, think of the monumental Woolsey Hall as the most appropriate place for the more intimate varieties of chamber music.

Later, after briefly situating a 1790 Haydn Trio in its historical context, including mention of Haydn's specifically calling for the forte-piano, I described what happened to the Trio when "...to reach the second balcony, the lid on the modern concert grand was up all the way...both the delicacy and clarity required for this piece were disastrously distorted by the hall's booming resonance." Here a comment about acoustics, following the history, reinforces my implication that by using the modern Steinway we had come a long way from 1790.

At the other extreme, there were times when the Woolsey stage was insufficient. For a gigantic performance of Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* (see No. 14), the music director had no choice but to have some of the orchestra seats removed and a special platform constructed.

Woolsey stage has rarely been so packed as for the 1936 Orff work which followed the intermission. The huge mixed chorus swamped the back in four tiers, a large percussion section loomed from one side, timpani were moved to the other side, and the orchestra, soloists and conductor were pushed onto a special platform extending from the stage.

The visual and obviously acoustical effect of such a massing of forces could not help but determine the nature of that evening's concert experience. I considered it my duty to mention it, even if I refrained from sharing the audience's apparent ecstasy:

With such forces, and with the force of the composition itself, it is no wonder that many members of the audience responded at the end with a standing ovation and cries of bravo.

Nor by the end is the criticism unqualified: "If central portions of the work seemed to lag, I thought nonetheless this was often an exciting performance."

Recognition that a loud and powerful performance need not necessarily deeply move us might be considered one of the first steps away from a naive level of aesthetic experience. One way to frame the question is in terms of virtuosity. In different ways the pieces on Alicia de Larrocha, Itzhak Perlman, Peter Orth, and Cecile Licad (Nos. 51-54) circle around the point that their obvious virtuosity was at the service of their (very different) goals of elucidating their musical works. I sometimes could not resist explicitly warning readers against falling prey to the hype of superstardom, the modern equivalent of fainting during concerts by Liszt or Paganini.

[On the "overwhelming response" by the audience to Cecile Licad:] Of course it is always difficult to gauge an audience's enthusiasms--lamentable interpretations, if delivered with pyrotechnical agility, may wow many listeners. (No. 54)

What might have surprised--and even disappointed--some of Perlman's listeners was how much this concert was not the occasion for flashy display for its own sake. (No. 52)

Typically, Larrocha did not perform [Busoni's arrangement of the Bach D Major Chaconne] as a *tour de force*, but, with complete control of the instrument, gave it a sense of architecture one might not have guessed it had. (No. 51)

There was much to admire in Orth's technical facility, but technique was throughout the evening totally subservient to an unusually idiosyncratic expression. [On Liszt's *Années de Pèlerinage*:] Orth overcame superbly the work's considerable technical problems, but once again his focus was on content not on technique. (No. 53)

This last distinction is clearly a short-hand formulation, especially considered at face value and out of context, for any attempt to really separate "technique" from "content" is misleading, jejune: a musician with little technical mastery over the instrument can scarcely progress towards any imagined musical "content." What these passages have in common, however, is the challenge to those listeners disposed to focus primarily on performances, those who would be impressed by "pyrotechnics," to also consider that all performances must be evaluated in relation to the composition.

The relationship between a performance and the composition: alerting readers to this important, thorny, hotly debated topic of music criticism was among the most difficult of all my attempts to expand horizons. The subject virtually demands the

dialectical mode, a sense of balance and symbiosis. One is in deep and treacherous waters to take either of the two intellectually extreme positions which affirms one of the terms as exclusively determining the value of the other. It is as problematic to claim that the composition is a fixed primary constant in relation to which the value of all performances must be judged according to a highly restricted principle of fidelity, as to claim that scores are merely bare suggestions for an infinitely wide range of possible performances which separately define the composition anew, and which must be judged by the aesthetic principles generated in each performance.

In expressing my admiration for Otto-Werner Mueller's conducting of a Schubert symphony (in No. 18), I came closest to suggesting my own intellectual position on this matter:

In Mueller's conducting the Philharmonia, the interplay of allegiances was entirely symbiotic. His interpretive shaping of Franz Schubert's Symphony No. 9 in C, "The Great," was itself profoundly shaped by the score.

In my review, Mueller's concert is framed by a short discussion of a talk given earlier the same week by Klaus Tennstedt on

the delicate and potentially problematic relationship between a conductor's personal concept of a piece and his responsibility to the score.

Despite Tennstedt's repeated assertions that his conception of a work "comes from inside," uninfluenced by recordings or by "that terrible fad of the authentic performance movement," it was clear he did not mean that a conductor should follow any idiosyncratic whim. He said that Wagner, for example, when reorchestrating Beethoven's Ninth, sometimes betrayed a lack of sensitivity to "the style of Beethoven."

There are other hints throughout the body of reviews that this is an ongoing topic of criticism, bound to arise in various contexts (for example in No. 29, speaking of my reservations of Kurt Masur's "oddly disjointed interpretations" of Brahms: "there were plenty of times I thought he was giving us more Masur than Brahms"). But Tennstedt's comment on Wagner leads to a different consideration, the subject of the role history plays in music criticism.

Tennstedt is essentially accusing Wagner of unselfconscious anachronism. During a concert offered by the Tokyo String Quartet (see No. 32), I felt that their reading of a piece by Mozart deserved the same criticism, and that by the end of the concert

we were left with an intriguing paradox. Their readings were fresh, convincing and modern where the Tokyo showed a certain fidelity to two of the works by Béla Bartók and Maurice Ravel, but awkward, forced and anachronistic where they aspired to modernize a third by W. A. Mozart.

Mozart's "Dissonant" Quartet (K. 465), finished in 1785 as the last of the set of pieces which Mozart dedicated to Haydn, received a decidedly robust, passionate reading which sometimes verged on stridency, hysteria. As though the Tokyo were (understandably) correcting the old notion of Mozart as a composer of merely "pretty" music, they seemed to embrace a view of radical modernism that essentially argues against history altogether.

This last description suggests that the conflict between fidelity and freedom which we raised above may have an historical dimension as well. "Arguing against history altogether" is like the performer who would "argue against" the score (just as Tennstedt's dislike of "that terrible fad of the authentic music movement" may be interpreted as

the dislike of that movement's requiring performances to exhibit an historical fidelity, in the name of authenticity). Once again I would take the stance that the historicity of a work (itself not beyond dispute or interpretation) has an important part to play in a performance, but that it cannot in any meaningful sense exclusively determine a performance's value.

Similar points (in No. 37) are made about the treatment by the LaSalle Quartet of works by Haydn and Mozart; and the issue of historical anachronism comes up yet again (in No. 44) in the context of a romantic arrangement and performance of a portion of J. S. Bach's *Art of the Fugue* by the New York Woodwind Quintet. The critic may also sometimes have to explain how musical works themselves selfconsciously incorporate borrowed fragments of earlier pieces, the composer deliberately building a kind of conflict of anachronism into his composition through the use of various techniques of musical appropriation.⁴⁰ (See, for example, Nos. 11 and 24.)

There are, of course, self-evident ways in which the critic must play the role of historian: in providing accurate dates to the

40 In Chapter One I spoke of how composition itself was dominated by the positivist paradigm. The widespread use of appropriation techniques after 1960 may represent a breaking away from the formalist strictures of post World War II serialism. Paul Griffiths calls the use of quotations "a cliché of contemporary music": *Modern Music: the avant garde since 1945* (New York: George Braziller, 1981), p. 200. Chapter 9, "The Aesthetics of Stability," in Meyer (1967), op. cit., remains one of the most comprehensive and discriminating discussions of musical appropriation. See also Zoffia Lissa, "Ästhetische Funktionen des musikalischen Zitats," *Die Musikforschung* 19, no. 4 (1966), p. 364-378 and "Historical Awareness of Music and Its Role in Present-day Musical Culture," *International Review of Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 4, no. 1 (1973), p.17-32.

compositions, or in discussing a work's historical background. So far I have dealt with historical features which have to do directly with performances or compositions, features which most critics would acknowledge as important if not crucial for a full understanding of music. Another critical topic in itself, related though more controversial, has to do with the influence of local or contemporary history on a musical work or its composer, or the relation between music and politics.

In the very first review of the collection, for example, allusion is made to an item in New Haven politics which caused considerable concern, a strike on the part of a clerical and technical union, Local 34 of the A.F.L.C.I.O., against the city's major employer, Yale University. For the 13 weeks of the strike, the New Haven Symphony board decided that the orchestra would not cross picket lines to rehearse and perform concerts in Yale's Woolsey Hall: they rescheduled all of their events to take place in the downtown Palace Theater.

Offering this piece of information in the opening sentence was probably unnecessary, just another way (as discussed in Chapter Three) of offering historical documentation beyond the usual recitation of pieces appearing on music programmes. I was scarcely a disinterested observer, since I was myself determinedly walking those same picket lines: a personal perspective may emerge in the way that I concluded another review which was really about a topic in criticism I shall later touch upon (words and music):

That music is part of a larger human context was evident in the fact that once again the New Haven Symphony chose to honor Local 34's picket lines. The concert was at the Palace and not at Woolsey Hall. (No. 3)

Aside from the criticism that this reviewer may not have been able to resist briefly using the piece for a soapbox, the slightly larger point that musical institutions like the NHSO will adapt to local historical or political pressures can be no great news to anyone. (In no way did it seem to affect their programming.) But what about those compositions which set political texts to music, or which are composed against the explicit backdrop of contemporary political events?

Can a critic ignore the background of war in a piece like Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* when Britten himself did not ignore the ruins of the 500-year old St. Michael's Cathedral as he accepted the commission to compose a work for the new Coventry Cathedral built alongside those ruins? If a critic accepts the war as part of the *Requiem's* background, that need not mean that the political subtext must be fetishized. In a review of a concert of this work (No. 17), which in many respects reads like all the others, I chose a simile to acknowledge the subtext:

Like that modern cathedral standing in the shadow of the war-blasted Gothic ruins, the *Requiem* is a massive architecture of ironic contradictions which presents the devastation of war as a shattering challenge to even the strongest tenets of religious faith.

On another occasion, my describing the actual debate with some friends concerning the success of Krzysztof Penderecki's *Polish*

Requiem--they were by no means convinced--seemed a reasonable way to discuss the work's performance (No. 28). Inevitably politics entered in. After mentioning a particular 12-tone melody which appeared and reappeared throughout the movements, I wrote:

Increasingly it seemed that Penderecki had designed the work's architecture with a deliberately restrained set of materials. My more critical friends argued that this was evidence of the composer's paucity of musical ideas.

But the work attained an unrelenting starkness that, for me, was the persuasive sign, however great the esthetic gamble, that the deep feelings which had inspired the *Requiem* were powerful enough to justify its form. The compositional history of the piece, extending over four years, is inextricably related to political events in Poland. As so often, the interpretive debate over the piece's greatness turned on the issue of how music relates to the outside world.

The tenor of these remarks implies a conception of music criticism broad enough to accommodate various kinds of issues which are believed to be inherent in the concert at hand. Questions of politics, or historical anachronism, or interpretive license comingle with questions about the details of a composition's structure, or the way that third movement was played. The aim is an appropriately balanced discussion of related crosscurrents, not the waving of an interpretive placard which arbitrarily advertises the concert as being about whatever the critic has decided a review should be about.

In practice this is extraordinarily difficult, especially since it is impossible for critics not to have an interpretive perspective which informs their judgments. As noted in Chapter Four, it is probably

better for them to acknowledge the hermeneutic contingency of their perspective upon the musical work in question than to attempt to hide behind some self-aggrandizing pretention to a purely objective expertise. I said as much in a review (No. 5) which flatly admitted my dislike of Rachmaninov's Symphony No. 2:

Among the many responsibilities of a critic is to be fairly honest about the boundaries of his own taste. (This is true for all listeners, of course. But a critic's judgments are potentially more pernicious because of the quasi-institutional status afforded his, sometimes spurious, authority.)

I do not particularly care if I never hear Rachmaninov's Symphony No. 2 again...

Situating oneself within the constant dialectic between one's own rash liberties of judgment and some slavish fidelity to the concert's meanings is only another formulation of the by now familiar hermeneutic dilemma which lies at the heart of all music criticism.

When it came to modern music there is no question but that I deliberately acted as counsel for the defense. Whether challenging audience members to become "adventuresome listeners" (No. 69); or suggesting ways that "even 20th-century music can become a natural and ongoing part of our lives" (No. 15); or making the claim that "the playful and the serious may merge, even in high art. New music need not be dry or stuffy..." (No. 70); I attempted to persuade readers that in modern music, whatever they had heard, there was something for them.

I hate modern music, some people will say. And I invariably think that there are so many different kinds of

new music that there must be *something* out there they would enjoy listening to. (No. 67)

The pedagogical difficulty in making something of the music accessible is not to be underestimated, particularly when, as noted earlier, the idiom is difficult even for trained musicians to understand: the case of explaining about serialism, for example. Charles Wuorinen's Piano Concerto No. 3 received a particularly boorish audience reception when quite beautifully performed by Garrick Ohlsson with the New Haven Symphony Orchestra (see No. 8). If only in parentheses, I had to chide the audience for their reactions: "(To say 'restless' is to be more polite than some audience members were being during this piece.)" But I also attempted to defend the work, in a way that readers could find cause to reconsider it, while still acknowledging its, and their, difficulties:

Admittedly, even for the contemporary music aficionado, Wuorinen's new concerto was a difficult work. It is a brilliantly virtuosic piece composed according to the aesthetic principles of what still remains one of the most radically sophisticated of all modern musical "languages," serialized 12-tone music.

No doubt the ensuing "nutshell" summary of the serialist idiom veered so dangerously close to an oversimplified explanation as to become virtually meaningless (especially as applied to any actual compositions). Perhaps the summary of the work's aesthetic communicated a little more to those who had listened to the concerto.

There have been plenty of awful pieces written in this idiom, either dry and academic or else simply ugly. But Wuorinen's concerto, besides being a marvel of musical craftsmanship, expressed the spirit of a transformed, deeply

appropriated romanticism beneath the overt surface of its sometimes stark modernity. It was a brilliant work, certainly. Repeated hearings would undoubtedly reveal further profundities.

The point about the "further profundities" that could be gained from future hearings seemed to relate to a larger context. As I closed the review:

Sidlin is to be highly commended for airing the piece. But nothing makes up for the lack of hearing modern pieces all the time. In this, the audience is not entirely to blame, for as anthropologists know, people will always react with suspicion to things they consider foreign to them. The hope is that more and more listeners will discover the wealth of music that already exists in their ever-changing modern culture.

To see the problem of understanding new music within the contemporary cultural context simply underlines some of the points discussed earlier on the present pluralist state of affairs, and once again acknowledges the critic's role as a kind of cultural historian. But there is also the suggestion here that the anthropological perspective on cultural inaccessibility, foreignness, the "Other," is relevant and helpful to an understanding of musico-technical inaccessibility. Encountering new music is like visiting a strange land: another of the themes which run through the reviews and which I offer as yet another perspective on the broadly conceived enterprise, as we have been imagining it, of a sophisticated music criticism.

Of course the music need not be modern for it to be new and unfamiliar. After a concert by seven musicians from the Beijing

Central Conservatory, I observed:

They may have been the visitors, honoring their hosts by wearing Western concert garb. But most of us there were tourists, listening intently to incalculably strange sounds.

The wonderful paradox of the evening was to feel released by the joy of hearing music unlike our own and astonished by the mystery of the music speaking so directly. (No. 77)

At one point during the recital, a cross-cultural modernism interrupted the musical unveiling of the musicians' ancient traditions, making matters even more complicated.

Two modern compositions on the *erhu*, a two-stringed fiddle, were oddly less satisfying. The second solo, especially, written by an intellectual who had studied Western music, used a violin-style vibrato. To my ears, it sounded stranger than the strange ancient sounds I was attempting to make familiar.

Sophisticated jazz music may be difficult to understand for those not used to its procedures. A brilliant concert by the Max Roach Quartet was typically performed within a

musical idiom [that] was harmonically and rhythmically complex, requiring considerable concentration, and perhaps some previous exposure, for one to relish its headlong, scintillating beauty.

Yet the music was made accessible by virtue of the kind of democracy this group clearly was. The entire first half of the program, for example, consisted of a Bridgewater composition, "Scot Free," a vehicle for every member of the group to take extended solos. (No. 75)

The notion of *our* being the tourists had come up earlier in my very first Jackson Newspaper review on the avant-garde

Japanese dance/theatre group Sankai Juku (No. 79), and questions were raised about the difficulties in approaching classical ballet or folk-dance traditions in a variety of other dance reviews.

The world of ballet (as that of classical music) may well seem daunting to the uninitiated. Before attending a ballet, the novice might ask: Are not the conventions used to choreograph a piece too sophisticated for me to appreciate properly?...Not necessarily--judging from last night's charmingly accessible performance at the Palace by the Connecticut Ballet. (No. 82)

[On the Ballet Folclorico Nacional de Mexico:] Like an anthropologist visiting a foreign culture, the critic must sometimes be wary of his desire to finalize what should only be tentative judgments. Otherwise, a kind of ethnocentrism creeps in that distorts the genuinely different spirit of the other culture. (No. 83)

With this last warning in mind, I now turn to the final topic of music criticism that will be discussed here, perhaps the most crucial and difficult one of all, the relation between words and music.

It would be far easier for a critic to carry on as though there were no questions worth asking about the enterprise of surrounding music with words. Yet if the critic chooses not to ask such questions, will a kind of linguocentrism creep in "that distorts the genuinely different spirit" of music? In many of his essays Charles Seeger warns us of the "linguocentric predicament" that attends the "musicological juncture," what Kerman describes as the "incommensurability of verbal and musical communication."⁴¹ And at least one music scholar

⁴¹ Kerman, *Contemplating Music*, p. 158. Among his many essays which discuss these questions, see Charles Seeger, "Speech, Music, and Speech about Music" and "The Musicological Juncture: Music as Fact," both in his

and theorist, Hans Keller, on occasion turned away from words entirely as a way to deal with music's meanings. *Music itself as criticism* seems to be the concept behind his Wordless Functional Analysis scores, which are redistributions of formal and thematic junctures discovered in works by Mozart (and others), for example the Clarinet Quintet, K. 581: performable collage-versions of the original, pedagogically designed to help us hear the work's "unities" spread out through all of the movements in disguised "transformations."⁴²

Though possibly a radical response to the linguocentric predicament (Trappist silence, removing words from the equation entirely), Keller's Functional Analysis scores will be seen by most not as examples of criticism, but as specialized projects of music-theoretical analysis. Such analytical projects, for all of their originality and ingenuity, are too limited in their aims to shed light, if at all, on more than a small corner of musical signification. They clearly (if deliberately) cannot go very far towards addressing the wide range of critical concerns which we have been exploring. If these concerns are acknowledged to be fundamentally epistemological, hence verbal, concerns about music; if in other words the linguocentric predicament is here to stay and therefore must be confronted; then one of the most important tasks of the critic will be to explore the ways

extraordinary collection *Studies in Musicology 1935-1975* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1977).

⁴² Hans Keller, "Wordless Functional Analysis No. 1," *The Score*, No. 22 (Feb. 1958), pp. 56-64.

words reflect, define, surround, and manipulate music's meanings, including or especially including the critic's own words.

A critic will discover words combined with music whenever there is a libretto which is sung or spoken (one of the different kinds of encroachments that threaten a highly restricted definition of musical autonomy, as discussed in Chapter One). An example of the latter, rarer case arose in a concert featuring a contemporary piece by Earl Kim, *Cornet*. In my review of this concert ("Symphony concert evokes countless interactions of words and music," No. 3), I tried to place the work within the context of its genre, and to address the question of music and language's "interactions" as well:

Kim's "Tale of Love and Death," based on a Rilke prose-poem from 1899, is neither opera nor song. By combining orchestra and narrator, Kim has situated his piece within the genre that includes Stravinsky's "L'Histoire du Soldat," Copland's "Lincoln Portrait," Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf," and even, as a special case, Schoenberg's "Survivor from Warsaw" (whose narrator must combine both speech and song).

When words are sung, literary meaning and musical significance collude to create a rhetorical whole. Words spoken, however, tend to stand apart from the music, making a full integration between the two more difficult. Kim's solution to the problem of integrating Rilke's intricate and impassioned, nearly expressionistic, poetic text with the music of his orchestra was, by and large, to reduce the music to the role of mere accompaniment

Another piece on the same program, Benjamin Britten's *Diversions*, suggested the ways historically and biographically significant features may influence the music compositional process and our understanding of a performance.

Britten's 1940 "Diversions" opened the concert, a theme and (eleven) variations. Though this music has nothing directly to do with words, there were in fact many words "attached" to the piece and to the performance that greatly affected our appreciation and understanding. Perhaps an astute person, listening to a recording of this piece for orchestra and piano, might guess what most of us in the audience knew from reading the program notes and being present in the hall: the piano part had been written for left hand alone.

Originally commissioned by the pianist Paul Wittgenstein (who lost his right arm in World War I), it was played last Tuesday by the distinguished pianist Leon Fleisher, himself handicapped many years ago by muscle tension in his right arm and hand. To see him play the piece affected our hearing it: his right hand sometimes resting firmly on his leg, or grasping the edge of the piano, his left hand effortlessly performed the part. In both balance and clarity this was a Mozartian performance, enhanced by our knowledge of the "secret program" behind both the composition and the performer.

Another case of such a "secret program" arose in a concert by Zubin Mehta and the Israel Philharmonic of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6. I closed the review of this performance ("Mehta was explosive," No. 24) as follows:

Then in the last movement Mehta gave us the full outcry of Tchaikovsky's despair and ultimate resignation unto death. Long after the last notes had faded (a good 30 seconds) Mehta would not let down his arms, thus forcing a period of silence before the applause. This was of special significance, offering us another way in which "programs" map themselves onto music: the symphony had been dedicated [in Mehta's opening remarks] to the memory of Eugene Ormandy, colleague and friend of Mehta, who had died at the age of 85 that morning.

I said earlier that "there is no formula for gaining access to a

piece of music, no guarantee that a critic's suggestions will help any individual listener." Murry Sidlin, the conductor of the New Haven Symphony Orchestra, broke concert convention one time to offer a long prepared speech, complete with a music example from Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra*, as a way of introducing Dmitri Shostakovich's "Leningrad" Symphony No. 7. Although Bartók quotes the Shostakovich symphony ironically, Sidlin went to pains to explain that Bartók was not criticizing Shostakovich but rather Stalin's repressive regime. At the end of my review of the Shostakovich symphony ("Sidlin takes stand on humanism," No. 10), I indirectly acknowledged the linguocentric predicament, and how there are no guarantees.

For the most part, the audience was conscientiously attentive throughout its great sweep, though some left after the second movement. It was clear from various comments I overheard that at least some of the applause was for Sidlin and the orchestra's stamina, not necessarily for the humanistic message of the work.

This is hardly surprising. Sidlin in his preface had given his listeners a very powerful looking glass, a complex string of metaphors including Bartók's own music, with which to appreciate the symphony. But even his passionate defense of a non-repressive humanism could only carry his audience so far toward an understanding of the music's own complex layers of meanings.

The same is true of all the words we use to come to grips with the rich "complex layers" of music's meanings as they have value for us in our lives. "Of course my words, too, attempt to collude with the music I am describing. All of the other critics in the audience that evening, and anywhere else, must make their own

connections" (No. 3).

Does the consideration of such "connections" to music as I have surveyed throughout this essay lead us to call for a discipline of music criticism in its own right? "Not necessarily," I would cautiously reply, provided that criticism be considered an integral part of a comprehensive and self-critical musicology. Kerman writes, "Positivism is still probably the dominant mode in musicology today" (this is in 1985), yet he goes on to say:

Such intellectual interest as musicology can show today emerges out of several strains of reaction to positivism, and out of attempts, either associated with them or not, to develop a new musicology.⁴³

Certainly whatever developments continue to emerge as capable of defining a "new musicology," ample and flexible enough to satisfy Kerman's hope that music criticism will be taken seriously as one of the discipline's most crucial dimensions, there can surely be no possible return to that earlier unexamined state of naive epistemological certainty. In this regard the present state of criticism--vital, diverse, contradictory, dialectical--appropriately mirrors the plurality of musics and the absence of a contemporary musical mainstream. As the musicologist William W. Austin has written, his work typically exemplifying the difficult ideals of a critically sophisticated musicology, the historian's task is not to offer soothing certainties.

Can a historian...ever provide a new central line of continuity for a group of people, national or professional,

⁴³ Kerman (1985), p. 59.

comparable to a traditional "mainstream"? I think not. History is a critique of traditions--a poor substitute for a wanted tradition. Historians do well, in my view, to confess their alienation and to propose their various lines of continuity as available alternatives for individual use. Stravinsky says "the disappearance of the musical mainstream" is the primary historical fact about 20th-century music.⁴⁴

Situated as we are within our critical perplexities, I can do no better than to offer as an "alternative" perspective these final haunting words of another of Austin's essays:

What is music? Music by itself cannot answer. But the question is not addressed to music--indeed music cannot listen. We who listen can answer; we must, we do answer, by words and by our various ways of combining words and music. Unlike the birds and crickets who make in every generation the wordless music encoded in their genes, we are responsible for music, for the meaning of music and for the constant renewal of meaningful music. Endowed with freedom to explore all sound, we make some sound into words and music. When we are lucky, we make some music out of our words, out of our freedom, out of our very perplexities.⁴⁵

44 William W. Austin, "Ives and Histories," *Sonderdruck aus Bericht über den internationalen musikwissenschaftlichen Kongress* (Bonn: Bärenreiter, 1970), p. 301.

45 William W. Austin, "Words and Music: Theory and Practice of 20th-Century Composers," in *Words and Music: The Composer's View; A Medley of Problems and Solutions Compiled in Honor of G. Wallace Woodworth and A. Tillman Merritt By Sundry Hands*, ed. Laurence Berman (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Department of Music, 1972), p. 8.

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1 **Journal-Courier: 11 October 1984**
 New Haven Symphony Orchestra

LOCAL

NHSO opens season with fine performance

Tuesday evening, honoring Local 34's picket lines, the New Haven Symphony Orchestra sacrificed the generous acoustics of Yale's Woolsey Hall and presented the opening concert of its 91st season at the Palace instead.

The change did nothing to dissuade an elegantly attired audience from filling the hall, and the evening had all of the splash and sparkle of a grand opening gala.

All of the ingredients were there for an impressive offering: the world premiere of a commissioned work for the City of New Haven, Connecticut composer Arthur Welwood's "Thresholds for Orchestra"; a renowned New York pianist, André-Michel Schub, joining the orchestra in Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21; and a grand finale of Mahler's tremendously demanding Symphony No. 5.

After conducting the orchestra and audience in a somewhat extravagant version of the national anthem, acknowledged by boisterous clapping, Murry Sidlin turned to "Thresholds," written in celebration of the chartering of New Haven. Composed in a restless though unaggressively modern idiom, the six-minute work moved through various contrasting episodes to a large and exuberant tonal climax, at the end, whose affirmation seemed, I thought, too suddenly upon us, insufficiently prepared. By the end of the evening, I wondered if this were not symptomatic of much of what we had heard.

With the piano lid raised on the modern grand, accompanied by an orchestra somewhat larger than Mozart's, Schub delivered a sensitive, alert and cleanly phrased performance--he is clearly an accomplished musician. Even so, there was a subtle way in which the collaboration lacked the wit and intimacy of this classical work's 1785 origins. In the first movement, Sidlin's Allegro maestoso was more restrained than majestic. The third movement rondo might have been more playful. The second movement was beautifully light, however, its gentle triplets never restraining the forward motion.

After intermission, it seemed that with the gigantic late-Romantic Mahler Fifth, Sidlin was in his element. He is clearly of that distinguished tradition of romantic conductors that includes Wagner, Hans von Bülow, Richter, Furtwängler.

One might even observe a showman's instinct there--as when, at the end of the first movement, Sidlin turned to cue the low strings for two notes *pizzicato*, and then,

without looking, cued the timpani off to his side with a flourish. And at the rousing triumphant finale of the work and the concert he suddenly lurched forward to nail that last punctuating chord.

What makes Mahler's symphonies so difficult to perform well--and to sustain--is that the music cannot emerge as an endless series of dramatic episodes, but must be communicated as part of a troubled yet magnificent architecture. Sidlin, in any given local passage, seemed to be exhorting his instrumentalists to play at the height of their expressive powers, which they did. Yet it seemed symptomatic that some of the highly forceful climaxes came out of nowhere, or that transitions between sections of a movement were sometimes unconvincing.

For all of this, the orchestra played extremely well, brass and winds in particular, and the third movement was the triumph of the evening. Gala atmosphere or no, Tuesday's concert showed how professional and spirited New Haven's own Symphony Orchestra can be.

2 Journal-Courier: 25 October 1984
New Haven Symphony Orchestra

LOCAL

Symphony bases concert on traditions

In one way or another, each of the musical works on Tuesday evening's New Haven Symphony program looked back affectionately to older traditions and affirmed the importance of the past as part of the ongoing present.

The ninth variation from Elgar's "Enigma Variations" provided on this occasion a special tribute to Lawrence R. O'Brien, a recently deceased member of the Symphony's board. It was a beautifully played homage which the audience, clearly moved, received in dignified silence.

Then many of the orchestra members left, leaving a Haydn-sized orchestra on stage for Prokofiev's 1917 "Classical Symphony, No. 1 in D Major." It is difficult not to still be charmed by this justly popular, delightfully elegant work, filled with lovely

melodies, which appropriates various conventions of the Classical period.

Prokofiev's imitation of Haydn is apparent throughout the symphony, both in form and detail, and it is true that the work predates some of the neo-Classicism of Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Hindemith, Bartók and Piston. What has made Prokofiev's symphony a classic, however, is that this is no slavish or academic enactment of an earlier mode, but remains to this day a fresh and witty work in its own right. It is filled with idiosyncratic harmonic surprises and carefully integrates 20th-century techniques of suspense and interruption.

The third movement, modeled on Bach's music more than Haydn's, has some of the funniest moments. Twists in tonality expand the old dance form of the Gavotte, there are strange trills in seconds by the flutes, and the bassoons at one point perform a wonderfully indecent *glissando*.

The *molto vivace* of the last movement may have been conducted just too fast enough to result in some sloppy tonguing by the brass, a few shrill notes scrambled for in haste by the flutes, and an overall ensemble playing that wasn't quite tight enough. But these observations are not intended to overshadow Murry Sidlin's directing the entire work with energy, aplomb and taste.

Dark minor chords announced the change from the clean lines of the Prokofiev to the murky, restless romanticism of Richard Strauss's "Four Last Songs" using poetry by Hesse and Eichendorff. Soprano Lucy Shelton gave a sensitive and moving performance to this densely orchestrated final composition. Once or twice dominated by the orchestra in her low register, at least from my seat in the balcony, her high notes floated above it with complete assurance, and her singing was perfectly in tune despite the constantly shifting harmonies. It was a powerful performance of a difficult work.

For the 84-year old Strauss, it constitutes in its own way a reaching back to the roots of his own early career. There is even an allusion to his earlier "Death and Transfiguration" in a horn motive at the very end. The typically romantic yearning for a way to discover in the great tensions of the world a transcendent whole is particularly poignant in these final four songs.

Even so, I felt that a sense of peace had already been achieved by the third. The last song sounded like a coda, with its slow tempo and initial pedals preceding the singing; and its long wafting diatonic chords seemed strangely ponderous, maybe even sentimental, after such searching. The very ending was marred by a sloppy attack, but for a piece that must express a certain intimacy with such orchestral forces, this was a strong and

sympathetic reading.

I was less convinced by this performance [*of Mendelssohn's "Reformation" Symphony No. 5*] than by the others. Attacks and cut-offs were sloppier; the timpani rolls in I and IV were loud but very stiffly, even affectedly played, and lacked true resonance. But beyond this, I wondered whether this earliest of compositions on the program, appearing last as it did, wasn't being affected by what we had already heard and that, as a result, it came off somewhat stolid and conventional.

Finally, what for Mendelssohn must have been profoundly resonant about Luther's hymn, as a German Jew having converted to Christianity only 10 years earlier, for me was merely a familiar tune, culturally and historically distant in a way, I suppose, that is inevitable the wider the gap grows. Must there be such a gap?

Such are the questions, anyway, that occurred to me as I heard these works by artists intensely conscious of incorporating their strongest influences from the past.

3 **Journal-Courier: 15 November 1984**
 New Haven Symphony Orchestra

LOCAL

Symphony concert evokes countless interactions of words and music

Words and music interact in countless ways.

On Tuesday evening, the New Haven Symphony Orchestra was honored by the presence of soprano Phyllis Curtin, former head of the voice department at the Yale School of Music, in a performance of Earl Kim's contemporary work "Cornet." But unlike Lucy Shelton in her collaboration with the orchestra several weeks back, Miss Curtin didn't sing a note. The words she enunciated so impeccably and so dramatically were spoken, into a microphone.

Kim's "Tale of Love and Death," based on a Rilke prose-poem from 1899, is neither opera nor song. By combining orchestra and narrator, Kim has situated his piece within the genre that includes Stravinsky's "L'Histoire du Soldat," Copland's "Lincoln

Portrait," Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf," and even, as a special case, Schoenberg's "Survivor from Warsaw" (whose "narrator" must combine both speech and song).

When words are sung, literary meaning and musical significance collude to create a rhetorical whole. Words spoken, however, tend to stand apart from the music, making a full integration between the two more difficult. Kim's solution to the problem of integrating Rilke's intricate and impassioned, nearly expressionistic, poetic text with the music of his orchestra was, by and large, to reduce the music to the role of mere accompaniment.

Sometimes the music degenerated into little more than sound effects, "word paintings" of the images being read. "A bugle!" Miss Curtin declaimed, and a trumpet was heard. "Drums, drums, they rumble, rumble!"--and, lo, the sounds of timpani and snare. Later, a sardonic Mahlerian waltz appeared, and the music seemed, more interestingly, to move out of synch with the words. But by the end, hearing the sounds of war and the last line "He beheld an old woman weeping," I couldn't help feeling that this work had been too precariously balanced between hysteria and bathos for me to feel that profoundly moved.

Britten's 1940 "Diversions" opened the concert, a theme and (eleven) variations. Though this music had nothing directly to do with words, there were in fact many words "attached" to the piece and to the performance that greatly affected our appreciation and understanding. Perhaps an astute person, listening to a recording of this piece for orchestra and piano, might guess what most of us in the audience knew from reading the program notes and being present in the hall: The piano part had been written for left hand alone.

Originally commissioned by the pianist Paul Wittgenstein (who lost his right arm in World War I), it was played last Tuesday by the distinguished pianist Leon Fleisher, himself handicapped many years ago by muscle tension in his right arm and hand. To see him play the piece affected our hearing it: his right hand sometimes resting firmly on his leg, or grasping the edge of the piano, his left hand effortlessly performed the part. In both balance and clarity this was a Mozartian performance, enhanced by our knowledge of the "secret program" behind both the composition and the performer.

As for the final work on the program, Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony, I had the same complaint I have had before: In Murry Sidlin's conducting there is no overabundance of long-range architectural strategies; sometimes I feel the music's conducting him, not the other way around. We come up suddenly to a great climax, but we are there because it has suddenly appeared on the page, not because, for a long while, we've been heading there.

The program notes raised the old and difficult question of the relation between Tchaikovsky's biography and the music, not easily resolved here. What would seem clear is that the better musical performance makes clearer the connections.

Of course my words, too, attempt to collude with the music I am describing. All of the other critics in the audience that evening, and anywhere else, must make their own connections. That music is part of a larger human context was evident in the fact that once again the New Haven Symphony chose to honor Local 34's picket lines. The concert was at the Palace and not at Woolsey Hall.

**4 Journal-Courier: 21 January 1985
New Haven Symphony Orchestra**

LOCAL

Baroque Ensemble pays a fine homage to Bach

As many music lovers are aware, 1985 marks the tricentennial anniversary of the birth of one of the greatest composers of all time, Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750).

Last Saturday evening at the Palace, a thirty-piece ensemble drawn from the New Haven Symphony Orchestra, the Baroque Ensemble, performed the complete set of the six Brandenburg Concerti. The group's generally clean and graceful interpretation of these familiar masterpieces may be included among the celebratory performances by orchestras, choruses, and chamber groups all over the world who, by the year's end, will have paid homage to Bach's extraordinary genius.

Brandenburg No. 5 began the evening with a brisk Allegro. Violinist Paul Kantor and flutist Adrienne Greenbaum, as members of the concertino, nicely traded off their phrases. Linda Skernick's harpsichord playing seemed at first somewhat hesitant, her articulations between phrases exaggerated, but her performance of the fantasia Bach uses to interrupt the flow was suitably wild.

The string section had some tuning problems in the first movement of No. 3, which followed, but Kantor and Skernick gave a good performance of the lovely Largo duet which followed, and the last movement was a bouncy 3/4.

In No. 1, three oboes, bassoon, two horns and violin make up the largest ensemble of all the Brandenburg concertinos. Kantor faltered briefly in the Adagio, but the oboes and bassoon were excellent, especially in the trio of the final movement. As for the horns, their parts are more treacherous for being so very high and exposed than the most demanding passages in, say, a Mahler symphony; the playing here was less than perfect, though hardly disastrous.

There are only six strings, plus continuo, in the Sixth Brandenburg, and there are no violins: violas take the top part. Marvin Warshaw and Janet Lynch, the violists, gave a moving performance to this most intimate of all the concerti.

Greenbaum and Marjorie Shansky, flutes, were excellent in No. 4.

Finally, in Brandenburg No. 2, we heard Jeff Curnow play piccolo trumpet, the modern version of the old valveless trumpet Bach wrote for, required to hit those extremely high and difficult notes. Curnow, of course, is no Maurice André; but if his playing seemed inadequate in the first movement, he pulled off his part by the end, earning applause from both the audience and the rest of the orchestra. One of my favorite movements, the Andante, was beautifully played by Kantor, Greenbaum, Skernick, Harry Bartocetti on oboe, and cellist Steven Thomas.

Murry Sidlin's conducting throughout the evening was very light; sometimes (especially in the slow movements) he stopped altogether, simply allowing his instrumentalists to play. Except for the ritards at the end of movements, he tended to conduct measures not subdivisions, giving rein to the music's own forward flow.

A charming theatrical gesture provided by the NHSO was to have on stage a handsome sofa and matching armchair, two endtables with a vase of flowers and a candle, and three Oriental rugs. The reason for these props? I thought they emphasized the music's intimacies.

5 Journal-Courier: 21 February 1985
New Haven Symphony Orchestra

LOCAL

Concert was a challenge

Tuesday's New Haven Symphony Orchestra concert certainly was an evening of contrasts. It challenged its listeners to be supple enough to accommodate and respond to very different tastes in music.

First was the beautiful but difficult contemporary work for string orchestra by Martin Bresnick, *Wir Weben, Wir Weben*, ('We're weaving, we're weaving'). Then the Bulgarian-born pianist Juliana Markova performed in the youthful Piano Concerto No. 1, Opus 10, by Serge Prokofiev. Finally, after intermission, the NHSO presented Sergei Rachmaninov's sprawling Symphony No. 2, Opus 27.

It is to conductor Murry Sidlin's credit that he included Mr. Bresnick's work on the program. 'Championing the cause of modern music' may, for some, be best left as an abstraction, not actually endured in performance. But I found this particular modern piece to be powerfully inspired and subtly written.

Scored for twenty-one strings, often directed to play as solo instruments, much of *Wir Weben* creates a dense texture of overlapping melodies. Technically, much of the interweaving is a kind of aleatory counterpoint. The players receive the conductor's downbeat, which begins a given section (calculated in minutes and seconds), and then they freely repeat their strictly notated phrases over and over until they receive their next signal.

Sidlin's right arm imitated a great clock, sweeping slowly around, for each of these sections. What was necessary for the musicians was also a way, I thought, to make the music accessible to the audience.

One of the most beautiful moments came when the orchestra dissolved into a mere quartet, and the music hauntingly alluded to and incorporated harmonies of an earlier age, especially those of late Beethoven. While the musicians did not always play completely in tune, I thought it a decent performance of a challenging work, and Sidlin directed his ensemble with sensitivity.

I confess that I did not much enjoy the remainder of the concert.

The Prokofiev concerto was written when the composer was twenty years old, still a student at the Moscow Conservatory. It does not have, of course, the stature of many of his later works. But it was nonetheless a fresh and exciting composition when it

burst on the scene, at Prokofiev's graduation recital, in 1911.

Most of that freshness and vivacity were missing the other night. The main problem was one of balance. From where I was sitting in the orchestra section of Woolsey Hall, it was very difficult to hear Markova play the piano, except when she played alone. (This observation was unfortunately confirmed by friends seated in the balcony.) I had the sense of watching someone who was constantly struggling to be heard; what sound I did hear come from the piano seemed strident.

Among the many responsibilities of a critic is to be fairly honest about the boundaries of his own taste. (This is true for all listeners, of course. But a critic's judgments are potentially more pernicious because of the quasi-institutional status afforded his, sometimes spurious, authority.)

I do not particularly care if I never hear Rachmaninov's Symphony No. 2 again. The New Haven Symphony's performance of it did little to change my mind, either. I think that the piece received the kind of schmaltzy performance it deserves.

Such superciliousness is properly offset by the several people I overheard after the concert who exclaimed how much they had loved the symphony. I mused how complex are the taste-groups that make up any community of listeners.

6 **Journal-Courier: 10 April 1985**
 New Haven Symphony Orchestra

LOCAL

Noble spirit moves NHSO

Giuseppe Verdi's "Requiem Mass," that sumptuous tribute to Verdi's great hero Alessandro Manzoni (probably the most brilliant Italian writer of the 19th century), attracted a good deal of controversy in Germany and elsewhere after its premiere in Milan, one year after Manzoni's death, on May 22, 1874.

Hans von Bülow responded to the premiere with an article for the prestigious music journal, the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, where he called Verdi's "latest opera in church vestments" a monstrosity.

On the other hand, Brahms bought and studied the score, and declared it a work of genius. Not until 1892 would von Bülow admit in a letter to Verdi that he had been initially distracted by political considerations, but had been profoundly moved from hearing a second performance of the Requiem years later.

Indeed, today, much of the hostile criticism it received seems anachronistically political in nature. Among other things, the Requiem was perceived as an inappropriately dramatic setting of its sacred texts, highly symptomatic of Verdi's unabashed sympathies with the liberals of his day.

By now it seems difficult not to admire this huge choral tapestry, powerful and changeable as the weather, alternately touching and stern, intimate and terrifying.

And though Verdi was no ardent Catholic, and the Requiem is a concert mass never intended to be part of an ecclesiastical service, yet there is no denying the utter sincerity of Verdi's particular kind of spiritual vision. It is surely one of the great scores in the sacred repertoire.

In the light of these considerations, I found Tuesday evening's performance of the Requiem by the New Haven Symphony, the more than 100 voices of the Cornell University Chorus and Glee Club, and four professional soloists, to capture splendidly the work's noble spirit.

The orchestra performed with conviction and excitement during the loud, dramatic passages, with sensitivity and restraint during the limpid, nearly Mozartian ones. The incredible *Dies irae* passage, with its cannon shots on the bass drum and its plummeting violins, was appropriately frightening during each of its several returns. Separating the trumpets between stage and balcony for the *Tuba mirum* was effectively done as well.

While lacking, of course, the maturity and resonance of older voices, Thomas Sokol's Cornell chorus demonstrated its good blend in the opening *Requiem* and a surprising power in the *Sanctus* and, especially, in the final climax of *Libera me*.

I had admired mezzo-soprano Cynthia Clarey when I heard her with the Tri-Cities Opera a few years ago, and my impressions were confirmed Tuesday night. She has a lovely, lyric high register. Her voice floated in *Quid sum miser*, and her clear tone was haunting in *Lux aeterna*.

Clarey sang a lovely duet with soprano Nicole Philobosian in *Recordare*, whose voice is a larger instrument but, for much of the evening, lacked the mezzo's finesse. Philobosian did best when she opened up in the final movement of *Libera me* (though she faltered briefly on an extremely soft and high note).

Bass Thomas Paul had a firm, rounded tone and gave poignant, dramatic readings of *Mors stupebit* and *Confutatis*. The singing of tenor Curtis Rayam, in contrast, had a somewhat tremulous quality, especially in the high register, which took some time for me to adjust to. But there was an intensity to his *Hostias et preces* and his *Lux aeterna* that I found moving.

Tuesday's Requiem was dedicated to the suffering victims of the African famine. I thought it a gesture that so profoundly compassionate a man as Verdi would have appreciated.

7 **Journal-Courier: 17 October 1985**
 New Haven Symphony Orchestra

LOCAL

NHSO is off to a fine start in Woolsey Hall

I rather enjoyed Tuesday evening's Woolsey Hall concert by the New Haven Symphony Orchestra. With the exception of parts of Aaron Copland's Symphony No. 3, and especially its finale, this was a solid and eminently musical beginning to the orchestra's new season, its ninth year under the baton of Murry Sidlin.

Of course the NHSO is no New York Philharmonic, and Sidlin is no Zubin Mehta. But these are invidious comparisons if one believes that one of the prerequisites for enjoying a performance is to accept a group on its own terms, and if one takes pleasure in hearing live concerts because it is usually possible to listen *through* a performance to the composition itself. With composers of the caliber of Copland, Johannes Brahms and Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky, the effort to do so is amply rewarded.

In what has become an annual tradition at the beginning of each season, Sidlin led the audience and orchestra in the National Anthem; there was scattered applause. A reading of Brahms' "Variations on a Theme of Joseph Haydn," Op. 56A, captured the spirit of the work by integrating Haydn's playfulness and Brahms' grandeur. Syncopated rhythms in the finale were sluggish at times, and the strings labored over an ascending passage in the seventh variation, but the performance was true to the portrait of Brahms as a romantic

classicist.

The centerpiece of the evening was Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto in D Major, Op.35, featuring the extraordinary young violinist Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg. She has received some critical press for being somewhat the *enfant terrible*, overly casual when she is not playing and, at the other extreme, prone to making elaborate facial expressions when she is.

One could see where this nearly punk image has developed from, but it didn't bother me. And her playing! It was brilliant and ravishing by turns. More than a few times during the work's progress she played with a wild fierceness that pushed the orchestra to the limit of its own capabilities. Sometimes, indeed, there were two tempos at once.

But even more impressive and exquisitely beautiful were the moments she played *very* softly, producing a fragile tone that expressed the work's deepest and most tragic intimacies. Her heightened sensitivity to every note made the orchestra's entrances afterward seem painted on the broadest canvas.

The Copland symphony followed the intermission. It began very well, Sidlin choosing a brisker tempo than Leonard Bernstein's (on the only available recording of this work), which clarified admirably the structure of the first movement. The low brass were excellent in the second movement, and the final stretto powerful.

The long third movement, however, was unconvincing. It is very difficult to inject the proper sense of long-term inevitability into a movement that constantly threatens to dissolve into a mere sprawl of episodes. After what is already a hefty stretch of music, Copland brings in the theme from his earlier "Fanfare for the Common Man" and expands the movement further. This may be the fault of the work, not Sidlin's or the orchestra's, despite revisions that Copland provided in 1966, but I think not. The musicians' energies seemed to be flagging, and the audience grew restless.

Even so, though it is not my favorite Copland work (not of the stature of the "Piano Variations," for example), I was grateful to the NHSO for allowing us the chance to wrestle with its odd complexities.

8 Journal-Courier: 30 October 1985
New Haven Symphony Orchestra

LOCAL

Audience doesn't appreciate NHSO's fine presentation

Modern music hasn't died, but a lot of people probably wouldn't mind if it did.

The end of the 20th century is only 15 years away. Most Americans have had to adjust to enormous changes in their technology and culture, and many have learned to enjoy the changes. But even the minority who enjoy classical music at all have difficulty appreciating this century's classics, let alone its newest compositions.

These by now commonplace reflections were inspired by observing--and hearing --the restless audience during Tuesday evening's performance by the New Haven Symphony Orchestra of a recent work by Charles Wuorinen, his Piano Concerto No. 3. (To say "restless" is to be more polite than some audience members were being during this piece.)

Other works accorded a more generous reception included a charming performance of Mozart's Symphony No. 5 and a more fragmented but forceful one of Antonin Dvořák's Symphony No. 8.

Admittedly, even for the contemporary music aficionado, Wuorinen's new concerto was a difficult work. It is a brilliantly virtuosic piece composed according to the aesthetic principles of what still remains one of the most radically sophisticated of all modern musical "languages," serialized 12-tone music.

In a nutshell, this musical idiom (most often associated with Arnold Schoenberg) is the paradigm of total democracy. Every note, in principle, is treated as equal. The audible result is of a kaleidoscopic recycling of musical pitches whose relationships to one another are no longer governed by the usual laws of Western harmony, but rather by the exigencies of the piece's gradually unfolding structure.

There have been plenty of awful pieces written in this idiom, either dry and academic or else simply ugly. But Wuorinen's concerto, besides being a marvel of musical craftsmanship, expressed the spirit of a transformed, deeply appropriated romanticism beneath the overt surface of its sometimes stark modernity. It was a brilliant work, certainly. Repeated hearings would undoubtedly reveal further profundities.

Murry Sidlin and the orchestra gave what was essentially a *tour de force* performance of their difficult parts, conducting as well as playing. As for pianist Garrick

Ohlsson, for whom the concerto was written, he dominated the score, and the Bösendorfer piano brought in specially, with fantastic clarity and sheer virtuosic aplomb.

The piece could not have reasonably had a more conscientious and brilliant counsel for the defense of its difficult style. Sidlin is to be highly commended for airing the piece. But nothing makes up for the lack of hearing modern pieces all the time. In this, the audience is not entirely to blame, for as anthropologists know, people will always react with suspicion to things they consider foreign to them. The hope is that more and more listeners will discover the wealth of music that already exists in their ever-changing modern culture.

9 Journal-Courier: 14 November 1985
New Haven Symphony Orchestra

LOCAL

Trumpeter Marsalis masters jazz, classical performance

These days the name of Wynton Marsalis has considerable drawing power. Presumably the hook of Tuesday evening's concert by the New Haven Symphony Orchestra was the occasion to hear the acclaimed young trumpeter perform two early trumpet concerti by Franz Joseph Haydn and Johann Friedrich Fasch.

Given the worldwide attention that Marsalis has received in recent years as a jazz *and* a classical trumpet virtuoso, another hearing of the popular Americana piece "New England Triptych" by William Schuman (which opened the concert) or César Franck's mammoth Symphony in D-minor (which concluded it) could scarcely compete in the same way as News.

Winner of two Grammy Awards for classical and jazz recordings for two years in a row (in 1983 and 1984), Marsalis has been heralded as extraordinary, not only for his technical achievements, but for his moving back and forth between two idioms still considered somehow radically dissimilar.

The 24-year-old has been quoted as saying he began classical training "because so many black musicians were scared of this big monster on the other side of the mountain

called classical music. I wanted to know what it was that scared everybody so bad. I went into it and found out it wasn't anything but some more music."

Listening to his jazz recordings (for example, the best-selling "Think of One" for Columbia), one is impressed by his economy and precision, his sensitivity to his ensemble, as well as by those virtuosic runs he tosses off so easily. The big question before the NHSO concert was what jazz would there be, if any, in his playing classical music?

His work with jazz showed itself primarily in that same sensitivity toward the other musicians. He listened carefully, blending perfectly, as though the orchestra were a small combo. His supple approach to rhythm, too, suggested his jazz playing. Not, of course, that he played eighth-notes as dotted figures, but one had the impression he was attempting to give a more leisurely than metronomic feel to the music.

Unfortunately, Murry Sidlin in both concerti tended to push the tempo. I felt Marsalis, as a result, was not allowed to take the time he needed. In the final movements especially, both soloist and orchestra had to struggle to keep together.

There may be complex socio-cultural reasons why Marsalis has mainly turned to early examples of classical music. But it would be exciting to hear him perform any of the modern trumpet concerti by Alexander Arutunian or Henri Tomasi. However, he is reportedly thinking of leaving classical music for a while and devoting the next few years exclusively to jazz.

In the rest of the concert, the orchestra sounded very good in every section, with the exception of David Fein's stiff timpani playing, which I have always found difficult to admire. The second movement of the Schumann was especially beautiful, though in the third movement, Sidlin could not quite keep the group together.

For Sidlin fans, the work [*Franck's symphony*] received an appropriately lush, romantic interpretation--if interpretation is the right word for a ponderous collage of surface effects. The work, in fact, lacked precisely the kind of musical sensitivity that Marsalis has demonstrated links the performance of both classical and jazz music.

10 Journal-Courier: 12 December 1985
New Haven Symphony Orchestra

LOCAL

Sidlin takes stand on humanism

Tuesday evening, in an unusual departure from the accustomed concert presentation by the New Haven Symphony Orchestra, Murry Sidlin temporarily traded his conductor's baton for a music scholar's research notes.

He introduced the only work of the evening--Dmitri Shostakovich's massive "Leningrad" Symphony No. 7--with a prepared speech and a music example from Béla Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra.

In the Concerto's brief fourth movement, Bartók sardonically alludes to the main theme of the symphony's first movement. Sidlin's purpose was to point out the reference but also to correct the notion that Bartók was criticizing Shostakovich. Rather, as Sidlin went on to argue, Bartók's movement was a critique of Stalin's repressive system, a "compassionate and tragic expression of the shackles of freedom."

Shostakovich wrote most of the symphony in 1941 while Leningrad was under seige by the Nazis. Stalin subsequently used the symphony for propaganda purposes as a symbol of resistance to German fascism, and this characterization spread throughout the West as well. Reading from the composer's own later reflections, Sidlin argued that the work in fact an attack against repression of all kinds, Stalin's as well as Hitler's.

The implication was that, appearances notwithstanding, Bartók and Shostakovich were unified by a common humanistic spirit. Sidlin concluded his address with a reading from the Psalms (recommended by Shostakovich as a way to help audiences understand his symphony) whose last words were "brethren in unity."

The pedagogical sincerity of Sidlin's attempt to teach his audience a way to appreciate Shostakovich's huge composition was no more to be doubted than the musical sincerity with which he conducted the work. I thought that both the introduction and the performance lacked the sophistication which the questions that Sidlin raised and the piece itself deserve. But Sidlin is nonetheless to be applauded for raising the questions, for airing the difficult work, and especially for taking a moral stand as a musician and as a man.

Bartok's [sic] movement was a critique of Stalin's repressive system, a "compassionate and tragic expression of the shackles of freedom."--Sidlin

There were many beautiful moments in the piece. Adrienne Greenbaum's flute playing was superb throughout, as was the playing by other soloists from the winds and brass. The first movement's long menacing crescendo was effective, but the other movements lacked its built-in momentum, which, as usual, Sidlin could not quite provide. Only at the end, with the final arrival of major tonality, did the performance reach toward grandeur, but this was after an hour and 20 minutes.

Played by even the greatest orchestra in the world, this work's drama would be difficult to sustain. The concentration required is in many ways greater than that required by other long works--Beethoven's Ninth or even the first act of a Wagner opera.

For the most part, the audience was conscientiously attentive throughout its great sweep, though some left after the second movement. It was clear from various comments I overheard that at least some of the applause was for Sidlin and the orchestra's stamina, not necessarily for the humanistic message of the work.

This is hardly surprising. Sidlin in his preface had given his listeners a very powerful looking glass, a complex string of metaphors including Bartók's own music, with which to appreciate the symphony. But even his passionate defense of a non-repressive humanism could only carry his audience so far toward an understanding of the music's own complex layers of meanings.

11 Journal-Courier: 23 January 1986
New Haven Symphony Orchestra

LOCAL

Pieces full of borrowed material

First on Tuesday's New Haven Symphony Orchestra program was "Prism," an effective, interesting work by Jacob Druckman, composer and chairman of composition at

the Yale School of Music. Written for the Baltimore Symphony in 1980, it is one of those pieces which borrows from music already written.

Back in December, the NHSO had aired Shostakovich's "Leningrad" Symphony, which borrows from Bartók's "Concerto for Orchestra." [*Incorrectly reversed here! Bartók borrows from the symphony: see No. 10.*] In fact, the list of modern composers who have appropriated past music in making new pieces is huge: composers as different from one another as Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Webern, Boulez, Berio, Stockhausen, Davies, Crumb and Cage.

Older musicians who have similarly reworked previously composed material include Bach, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, Liszt and Tchaikovsky. The need to wrestle with past musical influences is a recurring feature in the history of Western music.

In "Prism," Druckman used fragments from three operas based upon the Jason and Medea myth. Quotations from Marc-Antoine Charpentier's "Médée" (1694), Francesco Cavalli's "Il Giasone" (1648) and Luigi Cherubini's "Médée" (1797) were interpreted, refracted (hence the title) and incorporated within a sometimes playful, often fiercely modern idiom.

Procedures for incorporating the old and new material varied throughout the work. Periodic loud sound washes, featuring a huge percussion section, interrupted the fairly festive, Allegro spirit of the first movement's Charpentier fragments, played exclusively by a small rear-stage string ensemble.

In the slower second movement, the full orchestra would sometimes take up the Cavalli material, yet this became subverted by menacing brass chromatics, or distorted by other instruments wavering the pitch.

After an electrifying opening to the fast third movement, it became clear that the music quoted was [historically] much later, and the entire movement gained a restless urgency as a result. Three romantic crescendoes were thwarted or expanded at the cadences, and the work closed with a fury of repeated notes played by full orchestra in a style not far from Stravinsky's Rite of Spring.

Murry Sidlin conducted the work with conviction and the delicacy required, and the orchestra played very effectively. The percussionists had a great part, and brought it off marvelously. Unfortunately, the rest of the program lacked the same kind of immediacy.

Lynn Harrell was featured guest cellist in Tchaikovsky's "Variations on a Rococco Theme" and Richard Strauss' "Don Quixote." Harrell's tone, while capable of a

plaintive intimacy, more typically sounded somewhat cold and steely. It was also difficult to judge the sincerity of his playing, if one can use that term. He provided us with many of the usual expressive bag of tricks that cellists learn at one time or another, but they seemed like effects.

I certainly enjoyed the Tchaikovsky better than the ponderous Strauss. In Don Quixote, despite many interesting moments of orchestration and harmony, I couldn't help feeling (again) that this is a hopelessly self-indulgent work, striving for some unrealisable place of having it all. By contrast, interestingly, Druckman's "Prism" seemed to be about the impossibility of total recuperation, which spells the difference between Straussian romanticism and the modern place I, at least, can resonate to more easily.

12 Journal-Courier: 21 February 1986
New Haven Symphony Orchestra

LOCAL

New Haven Symphony flops in concert

Like an umpire, credibility at stake, a reviewer has to call 'em as he sees 'em: Tuesday evening's concert by the New Haven Symphony Orchestra was pretty much a bust.

The world premiere of David Diamond's Concerto for Flute and Orchestra, commissioned by the NHSO and featuring world-famous flautist Jean-Pierre Rampal as soloist, attracted a capacity audience to Woolsey Hall.

Written in a conservative idiom reminiscent of American music from the '40s, the work may have found favor with those who find it difficult to appreciate more adventuresome fare. Others may have enjoyed simply watching Rampal execute his difficult solo part.

But though Diamond's conservatism is utterly authentic and, taken on its own terms, not without both vitality and lyricism, the Concerto's musical materials seemed insufficiently varied and developed to justify the work's ambitiously large-scale form. Worse, not all of the inherent problems of writing for solo flute and full orchestra had been

solved. One could watch Rampal, but it was often difficult to hear him play.

Part of the problem was simply that Rampal did not project out to the hall with sufficient power, even when the orchestral texture supporting him was fairly lean. Conductor Murry Sidlin did a decent job controlling balance as best he could; but the composer may have miscalculated, especially in the last movement, how much power any flautist could have mustered.

I wondered how much would be lost having a violin part play the flute part: much of the solo writing seemed generically treble-voice, not necessarily idiomatic to the flute itself. Another possibility would be to amplify the flute, though it is somehow difficult to imagine Rampal playing *electric* flute, for all of his dabblings with jazz music.

Roumanian composer George Enesco's "Prelude in Unison" (from Suite No. 1 for Orchestra, Op. 9), which opened the program, is a seven-minute piece consisting of a single melody played by strings. There is no vertical harmony at all except for a few chords arpeggiated across the four strings, and the emergence of timpani, hugging a pedal point, about halfway through.

This unison song needs singers who are breathtakingly beautiful, and the NHSO strings have a way to go. It didn't help that Sidlin conducted this at high-strung intensity. His asking for passionate expressiveness in every measure had the opposite effect intended.

As for the final work, Arnold Schoenberg's orchestration of the Brahms G-minor Piano Quartet, it is difficult to describe how grotesquely conducted a performance this was. Schoenberg's score is both an act of homage to Brahms, and a way of linking himself to the composer he defended as Progressive, through deliberate anachronisms and subtle modernizations of the Brahms material.

Sidlin conducted the work like a West Point band leader on [the drug] Ecstasy, or as though the piece involved cartoon forces of good and evil out of a score by John Williams.

13 Journal-Courier: 20 March 1986
New Haven Symphony Orchestra

LOCAL

NHSO concert fails to inspire

The 25-year old Ukranian pianist Sergei Edelmann played Tuesday evening with the New Haven Symphony Orchestra in a performance of Johannes Brahms' great Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 83. Judging from this performance alone, I would not be disposed to give Edelmann the kind of rave review N. Y. Times critic Donal Henahan bestowed on him: "an enormous pianistic talent."

It is not that Edelmann's considerable training and genuine musicianship were not in evidence. In the first two movements especially, there was no mistaking the Soviet-style emphasis on pianistic power which he had clearly absorbed. And in the last two movements he showed a musical sensitivity and restraint that transcended sheer technique.

Fair enough, one might say, since the Brahms score itself requires a fairly forceful declamation of musical material in the first two movements, a singing *cantabile* tone in the third, and a light touch in the final rondo.

Unfortunately, despite these considerations, Edelmann's grimly relentless pounding in I and II resulted in a nearly savage, apocalyptic Brahms that would be difficult to defend as inspired interpretation. (There were also handfuls of mistakes.) And although I warmed to his playing in III and IV, he did tend to rush the tempi. Sometimes it seemed he was playing a solo piano recital rather than a concerto.

Conductor Murry Sidlin tended to successfully follow Edelmann's tempo quirks, and the orchestra's balance was good. The french horns played their notoriously tricky, exposed parts inconsistently: when they were on, they were excellent. Principal cellist Steven Thomas played the third movement's solo parts beautifully, as he did earlier in Samuel Barber's Symphony No. 1, Op. 9.

The Barber work, collapsing four typical symphony movements into one, was given a passionate reading that was completely true to its spirit. It is, without reservation, a noble masterpiece which deserves even greater attention than Barber's deservedly popular "Adagio for Strings." It is to Sidlin's credit that Tuesday's performance was the second since the 1983-84 season--he is getting this piece heard.

Among its pleasures is the marvelous orchestration. Low winds and low brass solidly produced their great growls. Strings were initially harsh, but gained a warmth as

the piece progressed. The counterpoint in the scherzo was exciting, vivid, clear. And the final passacaglia reached its stern, unflinching conclusion with great conviction and force.

It was a pleasure to hear Franz Joseph Haydn's Symphony No. 104 in D Major, which opened the program, but it was a case of hearing past the fairly lack-luster performance to the composition itself. The piece was played by a reduced orchestra with harpsichord (now a common practice), but the piece's classical transparency is deceptive. It is a difficult work.

Sidlin's conducting was undistinguished. An oversensitive, finicky introduction; a reading of the second movement that could not convincingly unify Haydn's radically quixotic changes in orchestration, modality, or form; a leaden minuet; and a final movement whose off-beat accents were sometimes emphasized, sometimes not--these flaws accumulated too persistently to acclaim Haydn's genius as greater than Barber's, maybe even than Brahms'.

14 New Haven Register: 16 April 1986
New Haven Symphony Orchestra

LOCAL

NHSO ends season on powerful note

Beethoven's "Piano Concerto No. 3" and Carl Orff's "Carmina Burana" proved to be an impressive finale to this season's New Haven Symphony Orchestra Woolsey Hall series.

The young Brazilian pianist, José Feghali, gold medal winner of the seventh Van Cliburn competition, soloed in the Beethoven. And for Orff's huge ode to spring, the NHSO was joined by soloists and by the Yale Glee Club, directed by Fenno Heath.

On the second movement of the Beethoven, Donald Francis Tovey wrote it is "one of the great independent symphonic slow movements, reaching the climax of Beethoven's powers of solemn expression in his first period, and indeed quite in keeping with all that he found to say in his second."

While Feghali's playing of this movement was extremely sensitive, and he

carefully followed conductor Murry Sidlin at every moment, there were times the pianist came dangerously close to giving us a caricature of sensitivity. *So* solemn, *so* sad, he seemed to say.

One of his favorite pianistic techniques was to wait before playing the next note, to deliberately ritard the beat for emphasis; he caught up later. This typified his playing in the other movements as well, and it made for a paradoxically clear, classical restrained but also occasionally fussy performance which sometimes dragged on musical momentum. Yet, at other times, he offered a sparkingly light treatment.

Sidlin maintained a good balance, and generally coaxed more fire from his orchestra than from his soloist.

Woolsey stage has rarely been so packed as for the 1936 Orff work which followed the intermission. The huge mixed chorus swamped the back in four tiers, a large percussion section loomed from one side, timpani were moved to the other side, and the orchestra, soloists and conductor were pushed out onto a special platform extending from the stage.

With such forces, and with the force of the composition itself, it is no wonder that many members of the audience responded at the end with a standing ovation and cries of bravo. The Yale Glee Club members were obviously well rehearsed and gave a superb rendition. Their diction (in both Latin and German) was excellent.

Baritone William Sharp had an expressive, well modulated voice which was occasionally overpowered by the orchestra when his range was low (as in No. 11). He gave an intense interpretation later when he was required to sing falsetto. Tenor James Clark had only one solo passage, and it was extremely difficult for being very high. He met the challenge with excellent projection, but his falsetto was somewhat strained.

Soprano Judith Caldwell's voice tended to be on the light side, and her range was not quite up to the heights of No. 23. Her singing in "Amor volat undique" was lovely.

If central portions of the work seemed to lag, I thought nonetheless this was often an exciting performance. The ending especially, with its great tam-tam surges (electrifyingly played by Patrick Smith) had all of the awesome power the work deserved; timpanist David Fein played with sensitivity throughout.

15 **Journal-Courier: 14 March 1986**
Orchestra New England

LOCAL

ONE concert is touching, substantial

One of the appealing aspects of Wednesday evening's Orchestra New England concert in Battell Chapel was the way it suggested that even 20th-century music can become a natural and ongoing part of our lives.

As their interesting program proved, not every concert must emotionally exhaust us by confronting us with the searing intensity of extremely complex and difficult works. Nor need a concert be all fluff, either.

For the sizeable audience who stopped by Battel, ONE's program of mostly modern works nicely balanced substance and accessibility. As a human-sized event dropped into the middle of a busy week, as a way to find some comfort from the cold rain falling outside, this was nourishing fare.

Béla Bartók's "Divertimento for String Orchestra," written in 1939 shortly before the start of World War II, was conducted by James Sinclair in a clean, energetic manner which brought out the work's dialectic between dance-like lyricism and uncompromising severity. As in many late-Bartók works, it seems that pure innocence is too fragile a defense against darker forces being expressed, and that innocence must evolve by the end of the piece into a tougher kind of humanism.

The strings played out much of this struggle expressively, though theirs is not a particularly warm sound, and there were occasionally brittle, tremulous passages in the high register. But the second movement was particularly moving, its muted beginning rising to a fierce climax, then dying back to a resolution on a quiet major chord.

Soprano Dawn Upshaw then sang Mozart's concert recitative and aria "Bella mia fiamma...Resta, o cara!" (K. 528). She invested this challenging, tragic music with great emotional intensity and presence, perhaps even more than Dame Kiri Te Kanawa had done a year ago at the Shubert [c.f. review No. 62]. Upshaw's intonation was as impeccable as at her recent American premiere of a Franz Schreker work [c.f. review No. 22], but she produced an appropriately heavier, darker tone quality.

It is no surprise that Upshaw's beautiful, powerful singing has won her many distinctions, including the 1985 Naumburg vocal award, and bookings at the Metropolitan Opera. Next season she will sing at the Met in Mozart's "La Celestina Di Tito."

Charles Ives' "Washington's Birthday" (1909) had something in common with the structure of the Bartók second movement. Quietly shifting chromatic lines lead to a climax, then die back down. But the climax is typically Ivesian--a barn dance, complete with fiddle tunes, and a "Good Night Ladies" farewell.

Percussionist Christopher Rude played an off-stage xylophone at the beginning (an Ivesian touch we could expect from Sinclair, who has edited lots of Ives' music). Then he stepped forward in his tuxedo with a red bandana around his neck to play Jew's harp for the barn dance section. Neither instrument was consistently audible over the sound of the ensemble, but Ives himself would have enjoyed the sounds fading in and out.

A marvelous, touching performance of Samuel Barber's 1948 "Knoxville: Summer of 1915" concluded the program. Using passages from a text by James Agee, this is a piece of nostalgia which nonetheless completely avoids the threat of sentimentality. Upshaw, perfectly enunciating the words, gave a light, affectionate and well modulated performance.

Part of what made this so effective was Sinclair's conducting this with a certain simplicity and restraint, not as an "artsy" piece gushing sentiment. French horns and the oboe/English horn player were particularly fine, though woodwinds in general played sensitively as an ensemble.

The program covers read "ONE is TEN"--the ensemble has entered its tenth year. Both audience response and critical acclaim has encouraged Sinclair to schedule an even more varied and ambitious season for next year. New Haven music lovers have good reasons to let ONE become almost as familiar as the weather, fair or foul.

16 Journal-Courier: 11 April 1986
Orchestra New England

LOCAL

Brey earned an ovation in ONE performance

Both a distinguished world premiere and an excellent young guest soloist were featured on Wednesday evening's program by the Orchestra New England at the Palace

Performing Arts Center.

Yale faculty composer Martin Bresnick's "ONE," commissioned and named for the orchestra's 10th anniversary season, was aired for the first time. And cellist Carter Brey performed in Dmitri Shostakovich's deservedly popular Cello Concerto No. 1 in E-flat, Op. 107.

The concert opened with Haydn's "Surprise" Symphony, No. 94 in G. Not surprisingly, given the size of the chamber orchestra--7 strings and 2 each of flutes, oboes, bassoons, trumpets, horns and timpani--the music had a clean, transparent texture. Of course, a thinner texture demands an even higher level of intonation, and through much of the Haydn the players' pitch control was imprecise.

James Sinclair offered us his usual taut, tasteful conducting (without, however, giving one the sense that there are any great risks being taken--it is a paradox of his musical elegance). The first movement was gracefully formed. He took the immediate repeat of the opening melody in II even softer, to prepare for Haydn's famous surprise--a sudden loud chord and timpani exclamation point (as the story goes, in order to wake up sleeping audience members).

I thought the third movement fared least well. It is a fast Minuet with many repeats, but it sounded ragged in spots and the frequent repetitions could have accommodated an even greater range of contrasting emphases. An unfortunate horn passage only slightly marred the vigorous Allegro finale.

For the Bresnick work, only a few more instruments were added to the Haydn set-up: 2 clarinets (one doubling on bass clarinet), 2 trombones, and vibraphone. (A flugelhorn substituted for one of the trumpets.) In one movement, about 12-15 minutes long, this piece might be offered as an example of "postmodern impressionism." But such a label would not account for the subtlety of both its rhythmic and tonal features, disguised beneath a surface of apparent simplicity.

On the surface, the music generated great sound washes through the use of repeated notes and recycling pitches. But rhythmic asymmetries converged at unpredictable places by being mapped onto a consistent meter in seven.

An early diatonicism gradually melted into increasing chromaticism, but then unisons would suddenly emerge out of the texture like road signs. And as the final high harmonic of the bowed vibraphone note faded away into silence, like the single note of the work's opening measures, at least one other explanation for the work's title suggested itself. Bresnick, like a modernist Pre-Socratic philosopher, was celebrating the Flux as

One.

The Shostakovich concerto was composed in 1959 and dedicated to Mstislav Rostropovich. It was easy to picture/hear the great cellist performing the work as this young Yale School of Music graduate, Carter Brey, performed it. In fact, Brey took first prize at the Rostropovich International Cello Competition in Paris, and was called by R. "one of the best cellists of the new generation."

Certainly this was an excellent (if not breathtakingly brilliant) performance. In the first movement's sublimated military march, Brey adopted a deliberately steely tone, maintaining an edge to his sound. In the touching second movement, however, he played *espressivo* with a more rounded and restrained tone.

He met the challenge of the movement's remarkable cadenza, which begins in the low register but soon climbs higher with a kind of desperation, and which mixes bowed and plucked notes together. Some very close intervals played in double stops were a little rough, but the final movement was superb, and nicely paced by Sinclair.

Though the audience may not have known it, this was his first public performance of the Shostakovich concerto. One might say he doubly deserved their enthusiastic applause.

**17 Journal-Courier: 15 April 1985
Philharmonia Orchestra of Yale**

LOCAL

Shaw performance was musical magnificence

Through the great glass wall in the rear of the modern Coventry Cathedral in England one may see the skeletal ruins of the 500-year old Cathedral of St. Michael's, virtually destroyed with the rest of the city of Coventry during a massive German bombing operation on the night of November 14, 1940.

The site was the inspiration for Benjamin Britten's "War Requiem," composed in 1962 for the rededication of the new building. Like that modern cathedral standing in the shadow of the war-blasted Gothic ruins, the Requiem is a massive architecture of ironic

contradictions which presents the devastation of war as a shattering challenge to even the strongest tenets of religious faith.

Britten's score juxtaposes Latin texts from the Mass for the Dead with eight English war poems written by Wilfred Owen in 1917, and it calls for enormous choral and orchestral forces. Saturday evening, in the first New Haven production of the work since 1966, even the great space in Woolsey Hall seemed humbled, if not dwarfed, by the scope of Britten's conception.

Robert Shaw, Music Director of the Atlantic Symphony Orchestra, led the 233 voices of the combined Yale Glee Club and New Haven Chorale, the 82-member Philharmonia of Yale (twelve of whom formed a separate chamber orchestra), 32 sopranos from the Trinity Boys Choir, and three soloists: soprano Lorna Haywood, tenor Seth McCoy, and baritone Brent Ellis.

From such a large ensemble one might expect an unrelentingly loud piece of music, a huge dramatic canvas painted in bold strokes. In fact, Britten's score contains many quietly orchestrated passages of great intimacy. And the profound drama of the work ultimately derives from the ironies created by Britten's moving back and forth between three main subdivisions of his ensemble.

The chorus and full orchestra were responsible for delivering the religious texts of the Requiem Mass itself, sometimes joined by the soprano soloist. The Trinity choir provided an even more ethereal version of their role, (in Woolsey, effectively singing from the second balcony). The third group, made up of chamber orchestra and tenor and baritone soloists, performed Britten's moving, anguished settings of the Owen poems.

The cross-ironies of Britten's purpose were evident from the start. When the sound of chimes accompanied the opening chorus singing "Requiem aeternam" in hushed tones, then replaced by the boy's choir, this had all the mood of a church. But the chimes became contaminated by the tenor's opening phrases, "What passing bells for those who die like cattle?/ Only the monstrous anger of the guns."

The trumpets of the "Dies irae" became the bugles of the baritone's "Bugles sang, sadd'ning the evening air." In the Offertorium, the tenor and baritone, singing a savage version of the Abraham story, are interrupted again and again by the choir's pious version from the Mass--"let St. Michael bring them into the holy light."

As Peter Hawkins wrote in the program notes: "...the texts are intentionally at cross purposes with one another--the Mass a celebration of God's mercy, the poems a judgment upon Him." Musically, Britten expresses this thematic tension through the

recurring use of the tritone, the most dissonant and unstable of all the intervals. It reappears again and again as a juncture of unrest; but it also appears within a kind of motto-progression which ends resolving to a major chord.

The most powerful of all the climaxes is reached in the final section, with the return of the *Dies irae*. This is followed by the longest of the Owen poems, sung by tenor and baritone over the quietest of accompaniments. If the work had stopped here, we would have left in despair.

But then the choir, the chorus and the soprano join together with the full orchestra for the first time. The final "Let us sleep now" of the Owen poem is for the first time in synch with the final "May they rest in peace." Then the final Amen brought the motto-progression in again, the resolution to the major tonality having gained from all that preceded it. And to hear those over-250 voices, humming, grow quieter and quieter into the final silence is an experience not quickly forgotten.

It was a magnificent and highly musical performance. Shaw knows this score very well, having conducted it many times before, and was able to fashion both a convincing structure and elicit some excellent playing in the details.

Tenor Seth McCoy was agile and accurate in his pitch, had excellent diction, and brought intensity to his part. His tone quality was slightly pinched, but this turned out to be not inappropriate to the poems he was singing. Baritone Brent Ellis had a richer, more resonant instrument. He was particularly moving on his solo during the *Sanctus*. Soprano Lorna Haywood has a lovely high register, clear as a bell over the rest of the ensemble. Her solo in "Libera me, Domine" was very beautiful.

The Philharmonia Orchestra performed at the peak of their playing, with concentration and subtlety. The chamber orchestra perfectly accompanied the Owen poems. Both chorus and choir performed well, their *a capella* sections well-blended, and their fiery moments confident and powerful.

How lasting an effect any work of music can really have upon our lives is a real question. Whether the pacifist Britten hoped to change people's actions, I don't know, but this work is not easily dismissed or forgotten. Shaw's own comment is that the arts are humanity's lodestar: "The more deeply such works can lead us into ourselves, the more completely we can return to one another." This is not the message of war.

18 Sunday Register: 10 November 1985
Philharmonia Orchestra of Yale

LOCAL

As usual, Philharmonia enlivens music

The exemplary qualities of a good conductor--complete command over the orchestra, attention to the smallest nuances of musical expression, attaining a balanced sound--are merely prerequisite achievements for as great a conductor as Otto-Werner Mueller.

Mueller, conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra of Yale on Friday evening in Woolsey Hall, once again demonstrated to the capacity audience the lucidity of his long-range, architectural conceptions, how masterfully he relates each part to the whole. But the greatest of these virtues, to borrow from St. Paul, is his profound love of the music he conducts.

At Sprague Hall earlier in the week, at a question-and-answer session with another great conductor, Klaus Tennstedt, musical director and principal conductor of the London Philharmonic, one of the themes to emerge was the delicate and potentially problematic relationship between a conductor's personal concept of a piece and his responsibility to the score.

Despite Tennstedt's repeated assertions that his conception of a work "comes from inside," uninfluenced by recordings or by "that terrible fad of the authentic performance movement," it was clear he did *not* mean that a conductor should follow any idiosyncratic interpretive whim. He said that Wagner, for example, when reorchestrating Beethoven's Ninth, sometimes betrayed a lack of sensitivity to "the style of Beethoven."

It may have seemed that Tennstedt's intellectual position was less than entirely rigorous. (This impression was aggravated, I think, by his generous, charming desire to speak in the foreign language of his audience, rather than to give over a translation of his German to the interpreters at hand.) Yet ultimately our interest in a conductor's attitude toward a work arises from what he does in concert.

In Mueller's conducting the Philharmonia, the interplay of allegiances was entirely symbiotic. His interpretive shaping of Franz Schubert's Symphony No. 9 in C, "The Great," was itself profoundly shaped by the score. Dignity, nobility and power were communicated by Mueller's refusing to acquiesce to this great work having been played, and recorded, many times before.

It is a long piece that uses many repetitions of its material. As late as 1939, Sir George Grove suggested Schubert might have cut some of his music. And though Robert Schumann spoke of this symphony's "heavenly length," Donald Grout dryly writes that it would be less heavenly were it not for the beauty of its melodies. Yet in the second and third movements especially (which require several repeats), Mueller's tempos were moderate; and the finale was typically majestic, as though a headlong rush would vulgarize Schubert's own magnificent conclusion.

Violist Barbara Hamilton gave a sometimes haunting and luminescent, sometimes overly restrained, introspective performance to Béla Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra and Viola, a nearly tragically introspective work. Begun while Bartók was seriously ill, and completed by a student after he died, this is not, for all of its technical difficulties, a flashy virtuoso concerto. Hamilton was sensitive to the work's lonely lyricism, if not so much to the various musical attempts made to transcend it.

Mozart's Overture to the opera "The Impresario," which opened the concert, was elegantly shaped by Mueller, and given a transparent and lively account by the orchestra. The Philharmonia played exceedingly well throughout the evening, and it is to their credit, as well as to Mueller's, that so many people come to hear them perform what are often, as on this program, demanding works. The point is that the spirit of the music is always brought to life.

19 Sunday Register: 23 February 1986
Philharmonia Orchestra of Yale

LOCAL

Mueller touch triumphs in Dvořák finale

Since Otto-Werner Mueller, music director of the Philharmonia of Yale, brings a depth and seriousness to everything he conducts, the opening piece on Friday's program, Gioacchino Rossini's Overture to "William Tell," was not presented as a flashy crowd-pleaser.

The clear proportions of the overture's four-part structure, the seamless

transitions between sections, and the attention paid to precise declamation at every instant, restored the work to its 1829 charm and brilliance. One might say that the overly-familiar appropriations by advertising and by the Lone Ranger television series were in this performance utterly obliterated.

Though the flute had intonation problems, and Emmanuel Lopez's opening cello solo was little more than accurate, the strings were light, trombones were especially forceful and Linda Relyea's English horn solo was beautiful.

There was, nonetheless, throughout the concert less concentration, finesse and panache shown by the orchestra than in other concerts this year. One reason might be Mueller's having been out of town for a week of rehearsals.

Josef Gabriel Rheinberger's Concerto No. 1 for Organ in F Major, Op. 137, featured Yale professor Thomas Murray playing Woolsey Hall's great Newberry Organ. This conservative, 19th-century work is scored only for organ, string orchestra and three horns. Murray exquisitely filled in the orchestration with the resources of the organ's varied palette.

Unfortunately the composition itself is hardly exquisite. Stolid, a little plodding in its development of material, and without much contrast in texture or length of phrases and periods between organ and orchestra, this piece may have demonstrated the qualities of German academicism that made Rheinberger a famous teacher, but it scarcely urged us to reconsider him as an adventuresome or inspired composer.

The great work of the evening was the last, Antonin Dvořák's Symphony No. 7 in D minor, Op. 70. Inspired by both Brahms and Beethoven, this dark masterpiece remains one of Dvořák's most deeply integrated and idiosyncratic compositions.

Though the orchestra was sluggish in the first two movements, its sound lacking its usual sheen and presence, the turning point came in the third movement. Here Mueller gradually transformed the character of the scherzo and trio into a poignant, not quite desperate transition to the finale.

The whole work acquired an urgency and seriousness from that point on, and also retroactively invested the previous music with a greater sense of inevitability. The great surprise at the *very* end of the piece, the final cadence suddenly moving to major, was delivered with a power it could not have had without these long-range preparations. However we describe that fierce, troubled, final triumph in Dvořák's score, Mueller and the Philharmonia delivered it with no holds barred.

A final note: In recent concerts by various groups, I have heard what can only be

described as fairly insensitive timpani playing. It was a pleasure to hear the finely honed performances, in the Rossini and the Dvořák, by graduate percussionists Leah Albrecht and Terrence Farmer.

20 Journal-Courier: 3 February 1986
Yale Symphony Orchestra

LOCAL

Violist Kugelman gets well-earned 'Bravo!'

Saturday evening, Leiff Bjaland conducted the Yale Symphony Orchestra in a concert featuring Paul Hindemith's "Der Schwanendreher" with viola soloist Margaret Kugelman.

Principal violist and a junior art history major at Yale, Kugelman gave a highly accomplished performance, from memory, of a difficult part. The bravos shouted out by some of Woolsey Hall's listeners were well deserved.

Unusually precise intonation and well-wrought phrasing were in evidence throughout the piece. If in the first two movements her tone seemed slightly on the dry side, her delivery carefully precise but not daring, Kugelman particularly rose to the difficulties of the tricky last movement. With a more deeply expressive tone, she beautifully worked the transitions from her cadenzas back to the orchestra and followed with assurance the frequent changes in tempo.

Scored for a chamber orchestra of twenty, this is a difficult but charming, lyrical work spared Hindemith's occasionally dry academicism. Bjaland successfully overcame the piece's problems of balance and continuity, and, despite occasional tuning problems, the group played with spirit and finesse.

It may have seemed the most difficult work on the program. Certainly the opening piece, Carl Maria von Weber's Overture to "Oberon," is straightforward enough. Luckily Bjaland resisted any temptation to indulge in romantic sentimentalities: this was a warm, clean and lively performance, not flashy, but satisfying, and showing off the strings to fine advantage.

Yet more difficult than the Hindemith, by my reckoning, was the final work: Jan Sibelius' Symphony No. 1 in e minor, Op. 39. Someone once observed he wrote prose, not verse. Whatever organicist classical ideals Sibelius inherited (especially from Beethoven), these are deeply imbedded within a form which has little to do with classical symmetries.

The form evolves by way of contrasts and sudden tangents. The problem is how to conduct it with an overarching design that prevents performers and listeners alike from becoming exhausted from all the fresh starts and stops.

This was an effective, respectable reading, though not without its problems--the timpani here, as elsewhere, were too loud. Bjaland gave the music space but resisted flab. Ultimately the performance paid Sibelius the compliment of engaging us in the work's surprises, which, surprisingly, are still freshly disconcerting.

21 Journal-Courier: 28 February 1986
Yale Symphony Orchestra

LOCAL
[PREVIEW]

Yale Symphony celebrates at Carnegie

Carnegie Hall is not a bad place to celebrate important anniversaries.

This year the Yale Symphony Orchestra has come of age. Its 20th season will be commemorated in a concert composed of entirely contemporary music in Carnegie Hall Monday.

Monday evening's program features the American premiere of Viennese composer Franz Schreker's orchestral song cycle "Vom Ewigen Leben" (Of Eternal Life), based on poems by Walt Whitman. Soprano soloist will be Dawn Upshaw, the young first prize winner of the 1985 Naumburg International Vocal Competition.

The Schreker performance has been coordinated with a major retrospective of concerts and exhibits sponsored by the Austrian Institute in New York.

And the Yale Schreker Archive, an important collection of autograph scores, letters and photographs, is already on display at the Yale Music Library.

The other works on the Carnegie Hall program include Paul Hindemith's "Symphonic Metamorphoses on Themes of Carl Maria von Weber," Dmitri Shostakovich's Symphony No. 6, and Ferruccio Busoni's "Berceuse élégiaque," composed as a memorial to the death of his mother.

As music director and conductor Leif Bjaland explained, a program of exclusively 20th-century music is especially appropriate for this auspicious occasion, since the Yale Symphony has been consistently performing modern works all along. Typical fare in more recent years includes Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring," the difficult Dallapiccola "Variations for Orchestra" and Gunther Schuller's "Seven Studies on Themes by Paul Klee."

In 1973, on tour in Austria, the YSO presented the European premiere of Leonard Bernstein's "Mass" at the composer's request. It was filmed in Vienna by the BBC, and broadcast frequently throughout Europe. The group has made other tours over the past two decades to France, England, Wales and, last year, to Eastern Europe.

Back in 1965, it would have been difficult to predict how distinguished these 20 years would be. A modest group of undergraduates simply got together to read through orchestra scores.

Luckily they attracted the unflinching support of then-chairman of the Yale music department William Waite. Richmond Brown was the first conductor, followed by John Mauceri, the one who set into motion many of the distinguishing features of the organization.

Bjaland, the last of three directors since 1974, feels strongly that the Symphony should continue to attract young conductors who will bring fresh ideas to the organization. Bjaland will be leaving after this season to take up the post of Exxon Arts Endowment Assistant Conductor for the San Francisco Symphony. Though the Carnegie concert will not be his last one with the YSO, performing there symbolizes the affection and respect he has gained during his stay at Yale.

A preview of the Carnegie program will be aired in New Haven Saturday, March 1, in Woolsey Hall at 8 p.m. For those not able to make it to New York, attending it could be a way to wish the Yale Symphony well in their next 20 years.

22 New Haven Register: 3 March 1986
 Yale Symphony Orchestra

LOCAL

Yale Symphony Orchestra falters

Saturday night's Woolsey Hall concert by the Yale Symphony Orchestra also doubled as a run-through for tonight's 20th anniversary concert in Carnegie Hall.

It was an ambitious concert, beginning with Paul Hindemith's 1943 "Symphonic Metamorphoses on Themes of Carl Maria von Weber." Conductor Leif Bjaland's basic strategy in conducting this work's melding of romantic and modern appeared to reside in emphasizing contrasts.

The stormy opening and conclusion of the first movement was set against the quieter middle section folk-like material. The second movement's wild scherzo, surging round the orchestra like a tiger chasing its tail, contrasted with a syncopated fugue as trio. But the final climaxes of both the second and fourth movements were unconvincing.

Ferruccio Busoni's "Berceuse élégiaque," written in 1909 after the death of his mother, is a beautiful elegy whose late 19th-century texture and harmony requires the most perfect intonation and transparent voice-leading to be effective. This somewhat muffled performance, blurring the work's inner voices, was only somewhat redeemed by a beautiful ending--soft tam-tam notes and a roll as the strings faded to silence.

The high point of the evening was clearly the Franz Schreker song cycle, "Vom Ewigen Leben" (1927), based on two poems by Walt Whitman, and featuring soprano soloist Dawn Upshaw. What a beautiful voice, what singing! From the first notes she effortlessly projected out through the hall, it was obvious we were hearing a world-class singer at the start of an important career.

She sang close intervals, a chromatic scale for instance, with uncanny nuance. For wide leaps, her voice floated. She used a delicate vibrato when she wished to emphasize, but didn't if she didn't want to. Intonation was perfect, which in the context of Schreker's lush and restless quasi-Wagnerian score was no mean feat. And her high A was breathtaking.

Though there were occasionally imprecise attacks by the orchestra members, and a saxophone part that stuck out like a sore thumb, this was an admirable and sensitive American premiere. The idiom, of course, is not to everyone's liking. Nor is it any longer Whitman speaking in his own voice, by the time he has been translated into German and

into so German a medium. Yet, to my ears, it is a beautiful and fascinating work.

The 1939 Symphony No. 6 by Dmitri Shostakovich concluded the program. The first movement *largo* slumbered, and intonation was poor (unisons and octaves badly out of tune). Bjaland conducted this brooding reverie like a dirge. The next short movement was lighter, wilder, but the final *presto*, apparently intended as a bravura rush, rushed almost out of control.

Except for the Schreker, this was hardly a performance worthy of Carnegie Hall. Whether Bjaland and the orchestra will display there the refined musicianship they are capable of, I leave to the judgment of the New York critics.

23 New Haven Register: 21 April 1986
Yale Symphony Orchestra

LOCAL

Yale Symphony Orchestra presents fine finale

Once again the Woolsey Hall stage was packed for Saturday evening's Yale Symphony Orchestra production of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9. Even with stage extensions, there was barely room for the orchestra, four soloists and a mixed chorus of more than 125 voices from the Yale Glee Club and other singing groups.

There was more ample room for the performance of Arnold Schoenberg's eight-minute masterpiece, "A Survivor from Warsaw," which opened the concert. It featured Michael Wager as narrator and 13 men from the glee club.

The presentation of these two magnificent and difficult works was clearly intended to be a symbolic occasion on many levels. For one thing, this final concert of the year--the YSO's annual benefit concert--marked the ambitious conclusion of Leif Bjaland's tenure as director. He begins next season as music director of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra.

And then, in what was either a complex gesture of bipartisanship or an extravagant case of *non sequitur*, we were to read the following dedication in the program: "This concert is dedicated to departing President A. Bartlett Giamatti. In keeping with the

spirit of universal brotherhood embodied in this evening's program, we also dedicate this performance to those fighting the unjust and cruel system of apartheid in the white supremacist government of South Africa."

Starting 22 minutes late, Bjaland conducted a refined and powerful performance of Schoenberg's 1947 score. Though at times insufficiently amplified, Wager recounted with just the right mixture of disoriented hysteria and grim anger the Nazi abominations in the Warsaw ghetto. He did not experiment much with Schoenberg's *sprechstimme* (1/2-spoken, 1/2-sung). And though the men in the chorus could have been stronger in their lowest register, their singing of the Jewish hymn "Shema Yisroel" at the end was filled with fierce exultation, and was deeply moving.

And then Beethoven's "Ninth." Certainly all of the musicians deserved the resounding applause and full standing ovation which they received at the end. The stamina and concentration alone [which is] required to navigate the work's deep waters is considerable, but rarely did their energies flag. Beyond that, there were plenty of times one simply forgot [that] this was a mainly undergraduate orchestra. Tuning was especially good throughout.

Special orchestral highlights included a beautiful horn solo in the second movement, excellent clarinets and winds in III, strong cellos and basses in the recitative passage at the beginning of IV.

Bass soloist Robert Briggs offered a strong, expressive performance. Tenor Jerold Siena brought dignity to his distinguished singing, beautifully reaching his very high notes, though a few times he failed to adequately project. Karen Holvik, soprano, and Korby Siena-Myrick, mezzo, were well in control of their parts, though the latter's voice was sometimes muffled. The chorus, of course, was *loud*. The singers were also well prepared by directors Fenno Heath and Marguerite Brooks, and sang with spirit or delicacy as their part demanded.

Bjaland, who conducted from memory, offered an interpretation that was typically clear, cohesive, sensitive. Forward motion was maintained; balance was generally good. His reading had its (defensible) quirks: in I, an extreme ritard before an accelerating coda or, in II, a rushed trio. The very final 21 measures sounded perfunctory. (Less defensible was his not repeating the fugal exposition in II.)

Despite the high quality performance [that] this was, I thought it missed the tragic undercurrent of Beethoven's psychic struggle which makes the Ninth's conclusion so exalted, triumphant, sublime. Much of the struggle is contained in the counterpoint, but

Bjaland chose instead to give a bouncy feeling to much of the fugal material in II and parts of IV. Similarly, Beethoven's radical, self-questioning adjustments by semi-tone in II were often ignored.

Schoenberg, after all, offers his "Survivor" as a warning, however fierce the final exultation. And though Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" was recently played to commemorate Martin Luther King, or last year to support the second arrest by members of Yale's Local 34, the fight against apartheid has a long, probably bloody, way to go before it reaches any grand finale.

24 Journal-Courier: 13 March 1985
Israel Philharmonic

IMPORTED

Mehta was explosive

Woolsey Hall's 2569-seat capacity was nearly reached on Tuesday evening during an exciting, often breathtaking concert by Zubin Mehta and the Israel Philharmonic.

Musically, as one of the world's foremost conductors, concurrent Music Director of both the Israel and the New York Philharmonic Orchestras, Mehta has considerable drawing power. Yet musical considerations often overlap with other kinds of meanings. I could not help but also feel that for the large number of Jewish listeners in the audience this must have been an especially inspiring event.

Israel composer Tzvi Avni's *Programme Music* (1980), in three movements, opened with string pizzicatos and percussion. A certain jazziness became more jerky and frenetic, led into some very fast orchestral swirls, then suddenly was stopped by a loud, hard timpani note.

The second movement featured the plaintive qualities of the english horn, supported at first by harp and the low register of the piano, and later by a high string choir playing modulating glissandi. These were interrupted by sharp reports on drums and vibraphone, but the section ended very quietly.

The final movement set separate tonal sections at war with one another, over an

insistent martial rhythm. Then the surprise--a quotation, slightly distorted, from a tense passage in the last movement of Beethoven's Seventh [Symphony]. This was wiped out, but it returned a little later, only to disappear as the music very slowly evaporated into the air.

Why the Beethoven fragment? It offered its own programmatic clues to the kind of tense, sometimes mournful piece this was which refused, nonetheless, to give in to chaos or despair. Its status was as suggestive and, perhaps, misleading as the titles of the movements: Machine Game, Reflections of a Broken Mirror, Dilemma.

Violinist Uri Pianka gave a marvelous performance of the Saint-Saëns Violin Concerto No. 3, his tone richly resonant, his technique sparkling. Throughout the work he produced for the most part an exceptionally sweet tone. But he was also up to the stormy ending of the first movement, with its double stops and very fast playing.

Mehta was an exemplary concerto conductor. He appeared to be following the violinist at all times, but in fact was constantly directing the entire ensemble with great sensitivity to every nuance. It was in the last work on the program, however, that conductor and orchestra together performed at the height of their considerable power.

Mehta conducted with such explosive power, depth of feeling and musical insight as to make even so old a warhorse as Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6 (Pathétique) at times a revelatory experience. Warhorse indeed!, as though we should ever become so complacent as to write off a too-familiar masterpiece.

Tempos tended to be fairly brisk, but the playing was so good that nothing was lost in clarity. The first movement was taut and tense, the brass at the very end producing as huge and terrifying a sound as is required in parts of Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*. Mehta created a very supple 5/4 in the second movement; the third's conclusion was an amazing study in the build up of tension.

Then in the last movement Mehta gave us the full outcry of Tchaikovsky's despair and ultimate resignation unto death. Long after the last notes had faded (a good 30 seconds) Mehta would not let down his arms, thus forcing a period of silence before the applause. This was of special significance, offering us another way in which "programs" map themselves onto music: the symphony had been dedicated to the memory of Eugene Ormandy, colleague and friend of Mehta, who had died at the age of 85 that morning.

25 Journal-Courier: 22 April 1985
Netherlands Chamber Orchestra

IMPORTED

Parkening shows his virtuosity on guitar

Classical guitar virtuoso Christopher Parkening--of whom Andrés Segovia once said, "he is one of the most brilliant guitarists in the world,"--performed with the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra on Saturday evening at the Shubert Performing Arts Center.

Parkening performed the Concerto in D major for Guitar and Orchestra by Antonio Vivaldi. Then he took the stage alone for a collection of five works for solo guitar.

His Ramirez guitar was gently miked, making it possible to hear the most delicate nuances of his sensitive playing. In the middle Largo movement of the Vivaldi, while the strings played slow-moving chords as accompaniment, Parkening gave an intimate performance of the *espressivo* melody, treating individual notes with a slight vibrato or a percussive ping.

In the two outer Allegro movements, Parkening demonstrated his complete command of the instrument, with his liquid scales, as well as his keen sense of musical balance, deferring to the ensemble when his role was no longer soloistic.

In the first of the solo guitar pieces, John Dowland's "My Lady Hunsdon's Allemande," he kept its two voices utterly distinct, effortlessly injecting expressive ornaments from time to time, and ending with a flourish.

The charming and difficult "Variations on a Theme by Mozart" (from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's "Magic Flute") by Fernando Sor was brilliantly executed. A modern arrangement of the Shaker hymn "Simple Gifts" (popularized in Aaron Copland's "Appalachian Spring"), and "Danza" by Luis Pippo, were offered as encores.

The Netherlands Chamber Orchestra, under the direction of Spanish-born Antoni Ros-Marba, proved to be just as virtuosic as Parkening. This 30-piece ensemble demonstrated throughout the evening extraordinary clarity, homogeneity, and a unified attention to every musical detail.

In both the Suite in F major from George Frederick Handel's "Water Music" and the Symphony in D major by Joseph Haydn, Ros-Marba's conducting balanced a strict economy of gesture with supple tempos and an unusual range of dynamics. The early

Haydn symphony, a late-Baroque work, was in spots a trifle too decorous for my taste. But its Andante was haunting, featuring muted strings in a minor key.

After the relatively early classical music they had performed, it was startling to hear the lush and stormy David Zinman arrangement of Peter Tchaikovsky's "Souvenir de Florence," originally for String Sextet (Opus 70). But the Netherlands brilliantly expressed its highly varied and technically demanding romantic idiom, and with an excitement that never for a moment muddled their wonderful clarity and finesse.

26 New Haven Register: 14 October 1985
Carabinieri Army Band

IMPORTED

Band thrilled listeners

If Columbus Day offers Americans the opportunity to honor not only that famous Italian navigator who first made his way to these shores in 1492, but also all of those who share his rich cultural heritage, then Sunday evening's concert by the Carabinieri Army Band was the perfect conclusion to New Haven's Columbus Day celebration.

For the mainly Italian-American audience, which nearly filled Woolsey Hall, this was much more than an ordinary concert.

The 171-year old Carabinieri are the oldest branch of the Italian Army, and its band of 103 musicians is reputedly the finest military band in Italy.

The first half of the program primarily consisted of band arrangements of Italian opera selections from Gioacchino Rossini's "La Gazza Ladra," Vincenzo Bellini's "Norma," Pietro Mascagni's "Cavalleria Rusticana," and Giuseppe Verdi's "La Traviata." There was also a medley of Italian songs arranged by the conductor Vincenzo Borgia.

Borgia's conducting style alternated somewhat oddly between pedantically crisp and dramatically romantic. Tempos were maintained with unusual consistency, nearly without momentum at all, except for moments of sudden intensity which would burst upon us without warning. The band at full volume was a force to be reckoned with. The second half consisted of a selection from Verdi's "Nabucco," and an excellent arrangement (again

by Borgia) of Amilcare Ponchielli's "Dance of the Hours" from his "La Gioconda." The final piece was Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky's "Capriccio Italien" which was inspired by the bugle call of the Royal Italian Corazzieri, an elite corps of the Carabinieri. By this time it seemed the ensemble's energies were flagging, and this reading seemed sluggish, pedestrian.

Contextual meanings and strictly musical ones always balance each other in any concert, or so I believe. In this case, it would amount to a kind of snobbish quibbling to only emphasize that this quite accomplished military band did not quite achieve musical greatness, given the clear verdict on the part of the audience--"Bis! Bis!" Encore! Encore! Come again.

27 **Journal-Courier: 7 November 1985**

IMPORTED

Orchestre de la Suisse Romande

Holliger charms audience with brilliant performance

Sinuous as an Indian snake charmer, weaving back and forth on Woolsey Hall's stage in an ever-fluid little dance, virtuoso oboist Heinz Holliger broke all of the rules of professional comportment Tuesday evening when he performed with the renowned Orchestre de la Suisse Romande.

It hardly mattered. His reputation as one of the supreme living masters of the oboe is completely deserved. Listening to Holliger play the solo part to Richard Strauss' "Concerto for Orchestra," I felt I had simply never heard the oboe before. He coaxed a consistently rounded, never pinched tone from the instrument, even in its highest register. From his extraordinary technical facility and the lyrical musicality of his phrasing, to the subtlety of his dynamic range, this was a remarkable performance.

It is a curious thing about musical mannerisms. We in the West (though not, for example, in Java) have traditionally expected our classical musicians to manifest a certain dignity, if not stiffness, befitting what is still sometimes unfortunately labeled as "serious music." Yet if a performance is truly expressive, then we can accept any number of

gyrational exaggerations from a Holliger or, a few weeks back, a Nadja-Salerno Sonnenberg.

The same point might be made of a new composition as well. Holliger has also studied composition with Bartók, Kodály and Pierre Boulez. After the Strauss, Holliger conducted the orchestra in a performance of his own 1985 "Tonscherben" (tone-fragments, tone shards), inspired by the death of his poet friend David Rokeah.

Although, on another occasion, I might be tempted to defend the compositional genre this piece falls into, this particular work was a canvas of mannerisms, inadequately unified by any musical expressiveness of the kind that Holliger had just so powerfully exemplified. Though there were moments I felt lured into the piece's structurally static, anti-teleological space, Holliger's use of string glissandi and harmonics punctuated by percussion cracks seemed an assemblage of gimmicks. Unfairly, on the basis of this one composition, Holliger the composer seemed to have absorbed the special effects not the musical profundity of his great teachers.

The orchestra itself, conducted by Armin Jordan, was the epitome of solid European musicality, always perfectly in tune, well rehearsed, yet somehow too civilized, urbane and decorous for my taste. In the opening work, Maurice Ravel's 1912 orchestral arrangement of an earlier piano piece, "Alborada del gracioso" (the jester's morning-song), Jordan gave us Spanish flavor from a restrained northern climate. The work lost both its fire and its lush romanticism in translation.

In the final piece on the program, Antonin Dvořák's Symphony No. 7, the sound of the orchestra, and especially the brass, reminded me most of the Boston Symphony in the '60s under Charles Munch. In the first two movements especially, Dvořák's long movements were given what was no doubt intended to be an essentially classical interpretation, crescendos and forte sections never upsetting the carefully balanced structure. Even for Brahms, whose influence runs through the work, this might have been dangerously stolid. For Dvořák, it seemed pedantic, long-winded.

Only in the final two movements did Jordan's constant search for an over-riding musical serenity make way for a robustness and vigor which finally allowed the orchestra to give a sparkle to its otherwise merely very accomplished playing.

28 **Journal-Courier: 27 January 1986**
Cracow Philharmonic

IMPORTED

'Polish Requiem' sparkles in Penderecki performance

It was certainly worth ranging farther afield than usual to drive down to the Stamford Center for the Arts last Friday evening to hear Krzysztof Penderecki's "Polish Requiem." The composer was on hand to conduct the Cracow Philharmonic, four soloists, and the hundred voices of the Choral Arts Society of Washington.

Unlike the recent New York performance, which also included Shostakovich's Sixth Symphony, the Stamford program was given over entirely to the Requiem. It lasted a little over an hour and a half, without intermission.

Certainly the sheer breadth of the work, the conscription of so many musical forces, including a huge percussion section requiring seven musicians, and the intensity of Penderecki's compositional idiom were impressive, at times nearly overwhelming. For performers and listeners alike, this was a difficult and demanding work which required a high level of concentration for its interpretation and assimilation.

Like other works whose esthetic aspirations and pretensions are so overtly in evidence, it was difficult not to admire the dark magnificence of the composer's far-reaching conception. Yet, that said, the question remained how successful on a more intimate level, how *great* a work, the Requiem really was.

Among my colleagues who were there, opinions differed. Did the musical material justify the composition's length? Was Penderecki breaking new ground in this work, or merely recycling musical ideas better expressed in some of his other works? With some reservations, I ended up acting as counsel for the defense; but the criticisms expressed by a more skeptical judgment had their own plausibility.

It is true that compositional features appearing in Penderecki's earlier works, or in other 20th-century classics, were in evidence here. Knotty, interwoven chromatic lines sung by the chorus would appear over pedal points sustained by the timpani or low strings, generating an ambiguity of tension. The so-called "wedge technique" appeared throughout, singers and instrumentalists beginning in unison but expanding outward in both directions.

Occasionally the chorus was instructed to whisper or, on the words "Christe eleison," to shout. Words were given special accents, or broken up by rests of silence: "con-fu-ta-TIS ma-le- (rest rest) dic-TIS." One particular 12-tone melody reappeared again

and again and again.

Increasingly it seemed that Penderecki had designed the work's architecture with a deliberately restrained set of materials. My more critical friends argued that this was evidence of the composer's paucity of musical ideas.

But the work attained an unrelenting starkness that, for me, was the persuasive sign, however great the esthetic gamble, that the deep feelings which had inspired the Requiem were powerful enough to justify its form. The compositional history of the piece, extending over four years, is inextricably related to political events in Poland. As so often, the interpretive debate over the piece's greatness turned on the issue of how music relates to the outside world.

Commissioned by the Solidarity union, Penderecki wrote the "Lacrimosa" in 1980 to commemorate the victims of the Danzig uprising ten years earlier. The "Agnus Dei" was written on the night of May 27, 1981 after the news of Cardinal Wyszynski's death was released earlier in the day, and it was presented as part of the burial services.

The "Recordare" is dedicated to the Polish monk Maximilian Kolbe, canonized in October, 1982 for his substituting for another prisoner at Aushwitz. It begins with a Polish church song, "Swiety Boze," (appearing elsewhere) which was sung in Polish. The remainder of the score was completed in August, 1984.

Other of Penderecki's works suggest the portrait of a composer whose music is deeply allied to his social-political conscience: for example his "Threnody," dedicated to the victims of Hiroshima, and "Cosmogony," commissioned by the U.N. for its 25th anniversary. Though a social conscience does not, of course, ensure great art, these works do suggest a relevant context in which to interpret the Requiem.

As for the performance itself, only the bass soloist Malcolm Smith really distinguished himself on a part that required, like the other three solos, the power of an operatic voice. Soprano Mariana Nicolesco, contralto Jadwiga Rappe and tenor Henryk Grychnik were unable to project sufficiently. The orchestra played moderately well, although the Stamford Palace's, gently said, *dry* acoustics did nothing to help their sound. The chorus was excellent, having premiered the work in Washington under Rostropovich.

It was ultimately a treat to hear a new work by Poland's greatest living composer. Penderecki, who taught at Yale University from 1972 to 1978, will receive an honorary degree this week from the Yale School of Music.

29 **Journal-Courier: 6 March 1986**
Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig

IMPORTED

Clarity permeates all-Brahms program

The warm sound of the strings, and an overall orchestral clarity (despite Woolsey Hall's notoriously muffling acoustics), were hallmarks of the Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig which performed an all-Brahms program Tuesday evening.

Music director Kurt Masur conducted the Brahms "Double" Concerto in A minor for Violin, Cello, and Orchestra, Op. 102 and, after intermission, Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68. Compared to most American symphony orchestras this East German touring ensemble was moderate in size. (Fifty of its members remained in Leipzig.) The Brahms we heard, as a result, was generally lighter and more transparent than in many contemporary performances.

Missing was the heavy, powerful brass sound we may have grown used to in America. A beautiful french horn solo in the final movement of the symphony had a brighter, rather than darker sound.

And the sound of the woodwinds had the thin, more breathy and brittle sonority typically produced by European players. The flute was wispiest, its tone seemed unsupported. The oboe, with its constant vibrato, sounded like a butterfly was fluttering inside the instrument--no doubt an acquired taste.

In the concerto, I preferred cellist Juernjacob Timm's sensitive, warm performance to violinist Christian Funke's hyper-expressive one. But again, this was not a fullbodied, deeply resonant sound that Timm produced and there were moments he was difficult to hear.

Despite the positive features of the concert, I found by the end that I could not wholeheartedly share the audience's obvious and vocal enthusiasm. The Gewandhaus simply did not strike me as a 1st class orchestra. The question is whether they're 2nd or merely 3rd class--I think they're probably in the former category, but there were times that I was not sure.

As the evening progressed, for example, intonation grew increasingly flat, especially in the woodwind section. Attacks were ragged nearly every time the brass played as a choir. Timpani was particularly sloppy during an important climax in the symphony's last movement.

But my deeper reservations about the concert had to do with the oddly disjointed interpretations of both works which Masur fashioned at the podium. Though Masur looks a little like Brahms--he's a big bear of a man, bearded--there were plenty of times I thought he was giving us more Masur than Brahms.

Tempos were curious in the concerto. The first movement was taken at a *very* moderate Allegro: Brahms' rests, as a result, were quite long and the movement became divided up into little sections. Why? The second movement was faster than Andante, its lovely melodies rushed through. The last movement reverted to the style of the first.

In the symphony, various odd effects conspired to create a rather quirky interpretation: a sudden, dramatic dying back after the first movement's recapitulation; or a weird effect in the third, like a stereo's balance knob being jerked back and forth. Masur conducted the last movement as though he were only interested in the "important" or "meaty" material, as though everything else was peripheral.

30 Journal-Courier: 1 May 1986
National Arts Centre Orchestra of Canada

IMPORTED

Galway performance princely and charming

Tuesday evening, in the penultimate concert of the Merrill Lynch Great Performers series, James Galway proved himself a prince of flautists and an able conductor in performance with the National Arts Centre Orchestra of Canada.

With a charming and gracious stage presence, Galway gave wonderful readings of two Classical Period flute concerti, Karl Stamitz's Concerto in G, Op. 29 and W. A. Mozart's Concerto in D, K. 314 (originally written for oboe). Galway opened the concert conducting G. F. Handel's "Water Music" and concluded it with Mozart's Symphony No. 36 in C, K. 425 ("Linz").

His flute playing was phenomenal, especially as compared to the abysmal performance by Jean-Pierre Rampal a while back. [c.f. review No. 12] Galway was a master of changing tone qualities on his gold flute, and by the end of the evening we had

heard quite the variety of different effects. Every part of the instrument's range was different.

A purely rounded tone contrasted with one with a slight edge to it. In the lowest register the sound was surprisingly brassy. Extremely fast, virtuoso runs were sometimes played with brilliantly clear staccato tonguing. At other times the fluid swoop was perfectly legato. And his softest moments were simply haunting.

All of this could add up to flashy technique, but his genuinely sensitive, obviously highly experienced musicality went much deeper into the music than merely "fine chops" implies. Whether as soloist or as conductor, Galway injected an alert momentum into the music which was neither strident nor affectedly self-conscious. For these classical works, his way of bringing to life the formal proportions of each movement, without a loss of dignity or decorum, was appropriate and admirable. As a result, these were generally fresh readings of familiar pieces.

There were parts of the Handel and of the Mozart symphony where I thought the music lagged, lost its spark. And I was not always convinced by a typical tick Galway seemed afflicted by: to lead a very slightly accelerating phrase to its end, then put the brakes on with a sometimes exaggerated ritard.

The 45 orchestral members were themselves excellent. For an orchestra of this size (half of a typical symphony orchestra today), every member must play perfectly in tune, with a careful ear to the whole sound. Strings were well balanced and expressive, woodwinds were wonderfully lyrical, and the two horns, trumpet and timpani produced an excellent timbre and blended perfectly. This Ottawa orchestra should be even more highly acclaimed.

As encores, Galway played the Allegro from J. S. Bach's Suite No. 2 in B-minor at a breakneck pace which robbed him of none of his clarity, and a lovely piece which sounded like an Irish folk song. This last ended with a very soft slide up to the final note, played with a tantalizing charm, and a twinkle in Galway's eye, which pulled the house down in thunderous applause.

The final Great Performers concert, concluding an excellent season, will be on May 13 with Christoph von Dohnányi conducting the Cleveland Orchestra.

31 **Journal-Courier: 15 May 1986**
Cleveland Orchestra

IMPORTED

Cleveland gives series a brilliant conclusion

Christoph von Dohnányi conducted the Cleveland Orchestra Tuesday evening, bringing to a magnificent and elegant conclusion this season's Great Performers series in Woolsey Hall.

From the opening measures of Hector Berlioz's "Overture to Beatrice and Benedict," it was evident that we were in for an evening of wonderful music. Brass, woodwinds and strings immediately distinguished themselves as superb members of this clearly first-class orchestra. And Dohnányi conducted with an economical precision that did not straightjacket his delicately expressive style.

The orchestration of this overture to Berlioz's final work, an *opéra-comique* modeled after Shakespeare's "Much Ado About Nothing," has been described by the great musicologist and Berlioz expert Jacques Barzun as "filigree work, tonal pointilism which acts upon us like champagne."

It was true. Under Dohnányi's careful balancing of musical forces, the overture sparkled with considerable panache without, however, ever sprawling into a drunken spree. And this was true of the entire evening: Whatever exuberantly Dionysian moments occurred, these were moderated by Dohnányi's Apollonian spirit, which insisted on clarity at all times.

The result might have been a series of dry, cerebral interpretations. But instead the music acquired a refinement and elegance that was extraordinary for the range of works the Cleveland played. The Berlioz overture, Felix Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 4 ("Italian") and even Peter Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6 (Pathétique) were all shaped by a unifying interpretive style.

The first movement of the Mendelssohn was full of life, *élan*. The second movement was serene, a model of beautifully shaped phrases. In the third, we had the chance to admire some great horn playing, though it was not until the Tchaikovsky that the brass section's real power would emerge.

The fourth movement was particularly restrained and sophisticated. Dohnányi allowed Mendelssohn's melodies to circulate around the orchestra against a quiet background, carefully maintained; but he built into the music a long, very gradual

crescendo that perfectly prepared for the movement and the work's buoyant conclusion.

The surprise of the evening was that "warhorse," Tchaikovsky's "Pathétique." Lists somewhere must attest to its being one of the most frequently performed classical symphonies. Its inclusion on any modern program presents the special challenge of transfusing fresh blood into a very familiar work whose generally doleful, lugubrious spirit resists transfusion.

Yet the Cleveland's performance brought a dignity to this piece that somehow managed to avoid the typical pitfalls of expressing the music (especially the last movement) with a kind of cloying tragedy. And though the work is definitely a showcase for an orchestra's finest talents and technique, I never had the sense Dohnányi was using Tchaikovsky to show off how fast or powerfully his musicians can play.

Yet how they played! The violins performed the first movement's main theme with an exquisitely silky quality that avoided the near-sentimentality of Zubin Mehta's determinedly passionate conducting of the Israel Philharmonic last spring [c.f. review No. 24]. The woodwinds were gorgeous in the second movement, as elsewhere.

And the brass--this was extraordinary playing, both in the climax of the first movement and throughout the third and fourth movements. The third movement was so exhilarating, in fact, that the audience broke the typical concert convention of remaining silent until the end of a piece by bursting into spontaneous applause.

One of the things that made the last movement so noteworthy was Dohnányi's conducting it with fluid tempos regulated to the intimate expression at hand. In contrast to Mehta's sobbing bombast, Dohnányi offered a reading that in its gravity and poise was even more moving.

II CHAMBER MUSIC

String Quartets

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32 Journal-Courier: 3 October 1985

LOCAL

Tokyo String Quartet

Tokyo String Quartet offers a paradoxical performance

With a group as distinguished as the Tokyo String Quartet it is not enough to sit back and let the music waft across the room. Nor is it easy--the music doesn't tend to waft, more often it explodes. The Tokyo's intensely concentrated performing style provokes us to take seriously their performances as modern interpretations of whatever music they play.

But in the case of the group's Tuesday evening concert in Sprague Hall, played to a capacity audience, we were left with an intriguing paradox. Their readings were fresh, convincing and modern where the Tokyo showed a certain fidelity to two of the works by Béla Bartók and Maurice Ravel, but awkward, forced and anachronistic where they aspired to modernize a third by W. A. Mozart.

Mozart's "Dissonant" Quartet (K. 465), finished in 1785 as the last of the set of pieces which Mozart dedicated to Haydn, received a decidedly robust, passionate reading which sometimes verged on stridency, hysteria. As though the Tokyo were (understandably) correcting the old notion of Mozart as a composer of merely "pretty" music, they seemed to embrace a view of radical modernism that essentially argues against history altogether.

It was symptomatic, for example, that none of Mozart's repeats in the first movement's sonata form were observed. The crescendo and acceleration at the end of that movement nearly got away from the group, so hard were they pushing its momentum. In the otherwise poignant second movement, musical passages suddenly exploded fiercely upon us, violently disrupting the musical form. Only the final movement was up to this treatment; but the final impression of the work was of an intimate genre, the string quartet, having been treated symphonically: a mismatch, like hearing Horowitz play the clavichord.

It is tempting to compare Bartók's String Quartet No. 2 (1915-17) and Ravel's Quartet in F (1902-03) by using their respective relationships to World War I as a reference. To the extent that it is possible to understand a work of art in relation to society and its political upheavals, Ravel's quartet seems typically *fin de siècle*. Its overt lyricism, optimism and serenity are perhaps undercut by a restless impulse toward greater thematic invention and rhythmic complexity. But it is an essentially romantic score, unaware, so to

speak, of the cataclysms which lie ahead.

Bartók's quartet, on the other hand, written while the war was raging, mirrors its anguish. This is not to say that the war is the quartet's program, but that Bartók needed to find a musical vocabulary adequate to deal with the calamity it represented. As a result, there is a nearly constant dialectic between the piece's fragile, lyrical melodies and its powerful, percussive effects.

The Tokyo did justice to both of these scores by allowing them to speak from their own historical moments. The Ravel's first three movements were delicately, sensitively performed, all the nuances left intact. Only in the last movement did the group return to the overtly dramatic style we had heard used for the Mozart, and here it worked because of the contrast. As for the Bartók, the Tokyo was alert to its constant interplay between light and dark, hope and despair, and gave a brilliant and convincing reading.

In fact, the Ravel ended the program. Its placement, no doubt, was intended to offset the emotionally traumatic effects of the Bartók quartet. But the snippet which the Tokyo chose to play as an encore was an oddity: the Minuet from the great A-minor Quartet by Franz Schubert. It lacked the polish of the other works we had heard and, sounding its plaintive cry in the minor mode, struck me as somewhat lost in its disembodied state.

33 Journal-Courier: 24 March 1986
Tokyo String Quartet

LOCAL

Tokyo Quartet let music speak for itself

A program by the Tokyo String Quartet, postponed from an earlier date because of illness, was presented last Thursday evening in Sprague Hall. The concert opened with the finest performance of any work I have heard the Tokyo play--Beethoven's String Quartet in F, Op. 18, No. 1.

Completed circa 1800, this is the second quartet Beethoven wrote (though it was placed first in the set of six quartets which constitute Op. 18). Although the Tokyo have tended to interpret relatively early quartets (by Mozart and Haydn especially) in a radically

anachronistic style which "modernizes" the music, on this occasion the group allowed Beethoven's own adventurous modernity to speak for itself.

The short opening motive with its melodic turn is Beethoven at his most concisely declamatory and rhetorical. The motive is repeated no fewer than 104 times throughout the movement (!), and this creates a structural cohesion which as much points forward to later Beethoven works as backward to the monothematicism of sonata structures by Beethoven's teacher Haydn.

The Tokyo, not needing to emphasize the motive's every appearance, attended to the subtle balance of tensions implicit in the movement's form, fashioning it with brilliant clarity and dramatic power.

If parts of the Adagio sounded almost like the intimate confessions from the late quartets, this was because of the Tokyo's occasionally extraordinary delicacy and restraint, interrupted by bursts of desperation. The short, fast Scherzo movement was given an impish, but not demonic, treatment. And the final Allegro had a perfect sweep to it from beginning to end. Definitely a five-star performance (though criticism is much more than assigning grades).

The one-movement work which followed, String Quartet No. 2 by Toshio Hosokawa (born in 1955), reminded one audience member of "Japanese ghost stories and kimonos rustling."

The persistent chromaticism throughout its slow-fast-slow structure suggested to me the doleful keening at a wake, interspersed with plucked notes of various kinds (damped or with full vibrato) and with other specialized string techniques. The piece ended with extremely high harmonics so softly played we were transfixed by the silence. The work could scarcely have received a more sympathetic and brilliant performance.

The last piece was Robert Schumann's String Quartet in A minor, Op. 41, No. 1, composed with his only other two quartets in 1842. Even the Tokyo's distinguished playing could not warm me to this strangely pallid piece, episodic, imitative, and verging on gentile sentimentality. As an encore, the group played the finale to Haydn's Op. 20, No. 4--a fine headlong rush, cleanly articulated, with its surprisingly sudden, quiet, final measures.

34 Sunday Register: 15 December 1985 *LOCAL*
Franciscan String Quartet [Reviews in Brief]

Quartet was well received

A small but appreciative audience attended the Dec. 7 Sprague Hall concert by the Franciscan String Quartet. Its young members--Wendy Sharp and Julie Kim, violins; Marcia Casidy, viola, and Margery Hwang, violoncello--study with the Tokyo Quartet as Wardwell Fellows in residence at the Yale School of Music.

Occasional lapses of intonation proved irrelevant to what was a satisfying recital of great energy, advanced technique and, especially, an all-encompassing musicality. Both Franz Joseph Haydn's Op. 20 Quartet in D and Johannes Brahms' A-minor Quartet, Op. 51, No. 2, received spirited readings whose internal musical contrasts were nicely articulated. Both Finales were bravura performances, but not in the least sloppy.

35 Journal-Courier: 6 November 1985 *IMPORTED*
Ridge String Quartet

Ridge String Quartet hits a season high note

The Ridge String Quartet came to Sprague Hall earlier this week, and even through a flu-numbed head--yes, even we grades-dispensing reviewing machines are prone to the usual human frailties--I knew they were at least a "9." This fresh young group struck me as one of the most musical that New Haven has seen for a while.

The adjective "musical" may be shorthand for a host of tired clichés, but occasionally it still earns the right to enjoy a special currency.

The first piece they performed, for example, was by the American avant-garde composer Terry Riley, "Sunrise of the Planetary Dream Collector." A single movement, roughly 12 minutes long, it could be described as four simultaneous monologues amiably cooperating with one another. Each of the four instruments played its own melodies, with

varied repetitions, over a nearly constant gently undulating pulse of 16th-notes. The entire piece was in one key.

A different group might have turned this dreamscape into either a boring escape or a modernist nightmare, but the Ridge's loving attention to every phrase gave the piece life without bragging about its modernity. Their approach created a warm and seductive meditation. It was, in a word, musical.

From Riley's esthetic of anti-architecture, the group turned to that great architect, Beethoven, and played his 1809 Quartet in E-flat, Op. 74. Although the musicologist Joseph Kerman has described this work as "a rather marvelous piece written at a time when the composer could not fully concentrate, a work of consolidation rather than of exploration...not one to raise deep questions and great issues," the Ridge Quartet brought out the work's latent radicalism.

Without disturbing the work's essentially classical proportions, the Ridge emphasized certain features which Beethoven was to develop in his late quartets: motivic compression, and the blurring of foreground and background boundaries. Development and coda passages were played with a kind of raw desperation, the music striving to expand past its own limitations. Yet this was not a fierce stridency seeking after effect for its own sake, as sometimes we hear from the Tokyo Quartet. There is nothing glib or slick about the Ridge's musicality.

And this even extended to what is not even a very interesting piece, Tchaikovsky's String Quartet in D, Op. 11, with which they concluded the program. That the Ridge could deliver the showier movements without a lot of fuss, and play the Cantabile slow movement in a touching way that somehow avoided its own inherent sentimentality, was once again a tribute to their musicality.

36 **Journal-Courier: 10 April 1986**
Fine Arts Quartet

IMPORTED

Quartet creates warm, original sound

An excellent concert by the Fine Arts Quartet was presented Tuesday evening in Sprague Hall. Dmitri Shostakovich's String Quartet No. 1, Op. 49 opened the program. Claude Debussy's Op. 10 Quartet in G-minor concluded it. Between the two works, Yale Professor of Clarinet and Chamber Music, and Associate Dean of the School of Music, Keith Wilson, joined the group in an equally fine performance of Mozart's Clarinet Quintet in A, K. 581.

Though the original Fine Arts Quartet was founded in 1946, the present ensemble is made up of musicians who only fairly recently became members of the group: Wolfgang Laufer (violoncello) in 1979, Jerry Horner (viola) in 1980, Ralph Evans (1st violin) 1982, and Efim Boico (2nd violin) in 1983.

Their former involvements vary, from the Hamburg State Opera Orchestra and Philharmonic (Laufer) to the Vermeer Quartet (Horner) and the Tel Aviv Quartet (Boico). Evans studied at Yale, then won the Tchaikovsky Competition in 1982.

Despite their disparate backgrounds, and their relatively short time together, these four musicians played as a seasoned quartet. Blend was excellent; their overall sound tended to be warm, sometimes even fairly lush. Ongoing slight variations of rhythm and tempo were integrated and communicated by the group as a whole. Even while their individual styles of playing varied, one never sensed a conflict of esthetic purpose.

If one had heard Shostakovich's first string quartet when it was premiered in 1935, it would have been difficult to guess how important the genre would be for the composer throughout the rest of his life. (Many critics have spoken of the Soviet composer's 15 quartets as contexts, outlets, for a more personal expression than he dared create in writing his symphonies or operas.) Even for 1935 it is conservative, hardly on the level of brilliant achievements by Bartók, Schoenberg, Webern and other 20th-century masters (or later Shostakovich).

Yet the Fine Arts Quartet revealed its appealing originalities. The diatonic first movement has its share of surprises, these were properly integrated. The strangely compressed middle movements were nicely etched: II emerged as a wan, melancholy miniature, III was elegant. IV was wilder, and at the end of it the group gave a

marvelously synchronized ritard (slowing down) as dramatic preparation for their bravura conclusion.

Mozart, who loved the clarinet, would have loved Keith Wilson's rounded tone and sensitive performance of the familiar quintet. Wilson blended perfectly with the strings, showing that he knew when his part was foreground or background. He offered special touches along with typically clear phrasing throughout. In the second movement, he produced a beautifully quiet, far-off tone that was extremely touching. In the second trio of III, he gave the music an effective rhythmic lift. In a slow descending chromatic phrase in IV, Wilson treated each note separately.

The strings, for their part, gave Mozart a not displeasingly romantic treatment--in the first trio of III, especially, the music could have been Schubert's.

Except for the conclusion of the Shostakovich, the opening of the Debussy showed the Fine Arts Quartet at their fiercest. In general this work received a steady, expressive, but not flamboyant interpretation. Rhythms, in particular, were subtly expressed throughout. The third movement Andantino was suitably delicate, slightly vaporous, the finale perfectly paced.

Can one tell anything about a group from their encores? In this case it was neither Haydn nor Bartók, but the last movement of Dvořák's Op. 96. After the Debussy, it sounded almost naively straightforward in harmony, rhythm and form. But playing it, the Fine Arts Quartet showed the range of their warmly sympathetic treatment of the literature.

37 **Journal-Courier: 25 April 1986**
LaSalle Quartet

IMPORTED

LaSalle ends series on rich, fascinating note

An exciting and often provocative concert by the LaSalle Quartet, Tuesday evening in Sprague Hall, brought to a conclusion this season's series sponsored by the Chamber Music Society at Yale.

The LaSalle has been internationally acclaimed for its superior performances (and

recordings with Deutsche Grammophon) of the complete string quartet literature by composers of the Second Viennese School (Arnold Schoenberg, Anton Webern, Alban Berg). They have presented (and recorded) the world premieres of music by many other important contemporary composers.

As ardent champions of new music, commanding both a brilliant technique and an intellectual probity that invariably converge in their sophisticated interpretations, the LaSalle has been an indispensable feature of contemporary culture. The group is easily one of the top 10 active quartets in the world today.

With this reputation, it was no surprise that two of the four works they played the other night were given scintillating, richly modulated performances. One was an infrequently performed early gem by Anton Webern, his "Rondo for String Quartet" (1906, without an opus number). The other was the last quartet, No. 6, by Béla Bartók, completed in 1939 and generally considered to be one of his late masterpieces.

The Webern was given a marvelous performance, every nuance in place. Its witty, sophisticated encapsulation of late 19th-century harmonic and thematic techniques, verging on atonality, was perfectly expressed. As for the Bartók, this was one of the finest performances I have ever heard (recordings included). From the glassy phrases in harmonics to the boisterous, sardonic effects in the "Burletta," this was beautifully achieved.

The other two works, however, were not of this century: Franz Joseph Haydn's "Quartet in D" Op. 71, No. 2 (1793) and "Three Fugues from J. S. Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier, Part II" K. 405 (circa 1796) arranged for string quartet by W. A. Mozart, with original introductions ascribed to Mozart. (The parts to the three Bach/Mozart pieces, still unpublished in their complete form, were obtained by the LaSalle from a microfilm owned by the Austrian National Library.)

The LaSalle's presentation of the Haydn and Mozart works constituted something of a paradox. The three four-voice Bach fugues (No. VII in E-flat, IX in E, V in D) were given a nearly expressionistic flavor. Tempos were quite brisk in the first and third; articulations in all three were often savage.

Mozart's introductions, often prefiguring motivic fragments in the fugues, were fascinating as examples of Mozart's desire to reflect his deep devotion to Bach's counterpoint. But classical style modulations and various other post-Baroque devices irrevocably separated his music stylistically from the Bach fugues. The LaSalle made no attempt to approach a performance style close to Mozart's, and so their rough-hewn,

modernistic mediations were thus anachronistically twice-removed from the original Bach fugues.

Many of the same comments apply to the Haydn. The *very* loud final chord of the second movement was symptomatic of an aggressive air of provocation that seemed deliberate. The second repeat in the first movement was ignored.

Most noticeable of all, however, was the LaSalle's tuning in both the Mozart and the Haydn. It was very strange, extremely non-idiomatic. Is it possible that their playing so much contemporary music, especially non-tonal music, has affected their hearing of earlier works? Were they playing as though every pitch were equal in the Haydn, as though it were a serialized work by Schoenberg?

It doesn't seem a convincing explanation, particularly since neither the Webern nor the Bartók are serialized works, and since their [the Quartet's] pitch control in both [pieces] was exquisite. The end result was a paradox of modern provocation, whose contradictions continue to elude this reviewer's systematic appraisal.

38 New Haven Register: 16 July 1986
Colorado String Quartet

IMPORTED

Colorado String Quartet exhibits fine artistry

The four young women who make up the Colorado String Quartet played an excellent concert Tuesday evening, bringing to a beautiful conclusion this summer's Starlight Festival series.

Violinists Julie Rosenfeld and Deborah Redding, violist Francesca Martin and violoncellist Sharon Prater demonstrated both technical facility and keen, intelligent musicianship: the result was an extremely integrated and cohesive ensemble.

But one must say more. They were not just good, they defined a particular style of interpretation--no doubt what won them, three years ago, both the Naumburg Award and first prize at the Banff International String Quartet Competition. In Tuesday's selection of modern, classical and romantic works, the Colorado's playing integrated poised

simplicity and passion. The effect was a kind of sweet brusqueness.

Igor Stravinsky's "Concertino For String Quartet," which opened the program, sneaks in with a typical Stravinsky joke: a perfectly standard rising scale passage which suddenly resolves to an unstable chord, and then erupts into a texture of syncopations.

The quartet's performance of these fast, offbeat accents was lucid, tightly synchronized. Yet ethereal and transparent was the middle section's quieter moments, as well as the quiet coda which Stravinsky adds to suddenly change what would have been a hammering conclusion. The shape of the whole piece was completely convincing.

Though the first two movements of W. A. Mozart's "Quartet No. 23 in F Major" K. 590 were played with a touching lyricism, the quartet giving every note its due, I thought perhaps these faltered at times from a break in concentration. (It was partly from the occupational hazard of their playing outdoors over the sound of two airplanes, one siren and even a nearby telephone!)

But in the minuet they found their stride with a sometimes daringly brazen treatment. And the final allegro, with its dramatic interruptions and rich modulations, was masterfully interpreted, its tempo and character of dramatic finality perfectly expressed to retroactively knit the other movements into a coherent whole.

Felix Mendelssohn's "Quartet in D Major" Op. 44, No. 1 concluded the concert, and it was probably the Colorado's greatest achievement of the evening. Their playing simply sparkled. Mendelssohn's longer phrases elicited a broader fluidity than we had heard in either the Stravinsky or the Mozart. The musicians were experts to the slow crescendo.

The two middle movements were gorgeous; the audience seemed transfixed. The beautifully soothing main theme of the third movement was sharply contrasted with music of desperation, and here the quartet risked overexaggeration. But once again, in that complex synthesis of checks and balances that operates in any extended composition, the final movement's triumphant conclusion made it all work.

Taking risks was part of what made the Colorado's performance exciting. It is easy to see why one Washington Post critic dubbed the group "brazenly passionate." But if that suggests these four superb musicians are merely "*enfants terribles*," it misses the subtler sensitivity to deeper musical concerns which should surely win them ever more distinguished careers.

39 Sunday Register: 3 November 1985 LOCAL
Wall Street Chamber Players [Reviews in Brief]

Chamber group charming

Thursday night, the Wall Street Chamber Players performed a charming, challenging program of pieces by Max Bruch, Sergei Prokofiev and Johannes Brahms.

The four short romantic movements from Bruch's larger Op. 83 cycle composed in 1910 for clarinet, viola and piano had the beauty of faded tapestries, surprisingly uninfluenced by the chromaticism of a Wagner. Prokofiev's 1924 Quintet for Oboe, Clarinet, Violin, Viola and Bass, Op. 39, was a startlingly adventuresome work, saturated with modern irony. The Brahms Trio for Piano, Violin and Horn, Op. 40, offered a classic conclusion.

Highlights include violist Marvin Warshaw's lovingly shaped phrases, violinist Paul Kantor's crisp approach, a Prokofiev passage featuring Jim Andrews' wonderfully jazzy pizzicato bass. Paul Clive brought wit to his difficult oboe part. Both Tom Hill and Kaitilin Mahony, on clarinet and horn, had troubles with their high registers but produced hauntingly sweet music elsewhere. And pianist Virginia Weckstrom nicely balanced her dual roles as accompanist and soloist.

40 Sunday Register: 24 November 1985 LOCAL
Wall Street Chamber Players [Reviews in Brief]

Wall Streeters impressive

Clarinetist Frank Tirro, dean of the Yale School of Music, joined a string quartet from the Wall Street Chamber Players in a small, charming recital Nov. 17 at the British Art Center.

British composer Gordon Jacob's 1942 "Quintet for Clarinet and Strings" was played first. Its unaggressively modern, sometimes exotic romanticism almost paralleled

the huge romantic lion paintings by George Stubbs that dominated the wall behind the musicians.

Violinists Paul Kantor and Artemis Theodos, violist Marvin Warshaw and violoncellist Steven Thomas performed with the conviction and sensitivity of an established quartet. Tirro blended with them less felicitously (there were real balance problems in the Scherzo), but he demonstrated a fine sense of phrasing and musical form. The group gave a fine reading of the fun Theme and Variations movement at the end.

A somewhat densely textured work in the classical style concluded the recital: Viennese composer Johann Hummel's 1808 "Quartet in E-flat for Clarinet and Strings." Here Tirro's undistinguished tone detracted from an otherwise lively performance. Though the Andante was more long-winded than lyrical, the final Rondo brought the recital to a spirited close.

41 Sunday Register: 30 March 1986

LOCAL

Wall Street Chamber Players [Reviews in Brief]

Wall St. Chamber Players are well-balanced as usual

The Wall Street Chamber Players has the knack of always offering well-balanced programs. Thursday night's concert at 53 Wall St. was no exception.

Ernst von Dohnanyi's 1904 "Serenade in C," Opus 10, was an accessibly charming, witty five-movement work, filled with melodic invention and great variety. Paul Kantor (violin), Marvin Warshaw (viola) and Steven Thomas (cello) performed it with full-bodied tone, sensitivity and élan.

Maurice Ravel's wonderful 1925 "Chansons madécasses" (Madagascan Songs) featured baritone Richard Lalli, accompanied by Thomas, Adrienne Greenbaum (flute/piccolo) and Virginia Weckstron (piano). Lalli, his intonation [pitch] better than his French accent, sang expressively the first and last of these three songs as miniatures of a nearly erotic exoticism. "Aoua!," the second song, was delivered full voice as a stormy, even angry, protest against white domination.

43 **Journal-Courier: 2 May 1985**
Boston Symphony Chamber Players

IMPORTED

Cavernous Woolsey drowns fine chamber performance

It is an obvious enough reflection: Some concert halls are acoustically unsuitable for certain kinds of music. One does not, for example, think of the monumental Woolsey Hall as the most appropriate place for the more intimate varieties of chamber music.

Tuesday evening's program in Woolsey by the Boston Symphony Chamber Players had mixed results. The opening Trio in G Major by Franz Joseph Haydn (Hoboken XV, 15--not 25, as listed in the program) fared the least well.

Unlike many earlier Haydn trios, which call for keyboard (harpsichord or piano), violin (or flute) and violoncello, this 1790 work specifically requires piano, flute and [violon]cello. By this time, Haydn had grown increasingly fascinated by the sonorous nuances between loud and soft possible on the still relatively new fortepiano, and was composing accordingly. He probably chose the flute over the violin for its greater homogeneity.

But in Woolsey, to reach the second balcony, the lid on the modern concert grand was up all the way. And, in the end, both the delicacy and clarity required for this piece were disastrously distorted by the hall's booming resonance.

Tempos were appropriately paced, and the trio traded phrases with the kind of sensitivity we might expect of such seasoned players as pianist Gilbert Kalish, flutist Doriot Anthony Dwyer and [violon]cellist Jules Eskin.

The second work, by the American composer Wallingford Riegger (1885-1961), his 1952 Concerto for Piano and Woodwind Quintet, Op. 53, worked better in the hall than the Haydn [had]. Written in a non-doctrinaire, freely atonal idiom, its virtuosic demands were amply met by Dwyer, Kalish, Ralph Gombert (oboe), Harold Wright (clarinet), Sherman Walt (bassoon) and Charles Kavalovski (horn).

One really has to list all of their names in a review, they are such fine musicians. The Riegger sextet was a fine showcase for their rhythmic precision as ensemble members and [for] their obvious mastery of their instruments.

The last piece, however, was a treat: Beethoven's Septet in E-flat Major, Op. 2. The addition of strings to clarinet, bassoon and horn managed to cut through the muddy acoustical space for the first time that evening.

Malcolm Lowe (violin), Burton Fine (viola), Eskin, and Edwin Barker (double bass) were perfectly integrated with the other three players. The piece is a marvelous collection of good tunes, varied formal procedures and idiomatic writing. It was a delicious performance.

44 **Journal-Courier: 13 November 1985**
New York Woodwind Quintet

IMPORTED

Quintet gave Bach a romantic interpretation

The Chamber Music Society series at Yale continued Monday night with performances by the New York Woodwind Quintet: Samuel Baron (flute), Ronald Roseman (oboe), Charles Neidich (clarinet), William Purvis (horn) and Donald MacCourt (bassoon).

The renowned pianist Gilbert Kalish joined them for the last two works on the program. Perhaps his name had special drawing power because, for a wind ensemble concert, Sprague Hall seemed unusually well attended.

The Quintet opened the concert with three fugues from J. S. Bach's *Art of the Fugue*, BWV 1080, orchestrated for them by Baron. Originally written without any specification for instruments, Bach did make an arrangement of No. XIII for two harpsichords, and most of this set may be performed on a single keyboard. Modern transcriptions of the work have been written for orchestra by Wolfgang Graeser, and for string quartet by Roy Harris.

Baron's arrangements paid particular attention to changing tone color. And while he did not attempt so radical an orchestration as Anton Webern's of the *Ricercar* from the *Musical Offering* (radical for Webern's breaking up Bach's phrases into fragments by continually changing the instrumentation), Baron brought a variety of colors to the fugues which gave them an added romantic density and warmth.

These were fairly romantic interpretations in any case, with subtly fluctuating tempos and a lush tone throughout. By the end of the evening, it was clear that these are

basic features of the group's performing style. The surprisingly precise articulation they gave to the last Bach fugue, taken at a very fast pace, was proof of their technical achievement.

"Quintet," by Yehudi Wyner was next, composed for them in 1984. It was a one-movement, neo-tonal composition reminiscent perhaps of Paul Hindemith's music, if less harmonically adventuresome. The NYWQ managed to give the work's amiably meandering quality a certain inevitability, moving with force to the final climax, before closing with falling tenths.

W. A. Mozart's Quintet in E-flat, K. 452, would have been more satisfying had there not been a certain disjunction between Kalish's and the group's approach to Mozart. Kalish, clearly directing from the piano, played as though this were not a group collaboration but a concerto for piano. His playing was dramatic, public, where their playing seemed lyrical, intimate, and he pushed the tempo continuously in the first movement. Then, at other times, their roles were reversed. The ensemble was more together by the last movement, but there was something high-strung about the final result.

The final work was another, excellent Baron arrangement. Brahms' Quartet in G-minor, Op. 25, for piano and string trio was rewritten for sextet, Kalish at the piano again with the whole Quintet. This was generally a success, though it took a while for me to adjust to the change in orchestration; it was not an attempt at Brahmsian orchestration (just as the Bach pieces were not attempts to write as Bach might have done).

In the final Rondo, Kalish took a very fast tempo, which was difficult for the group to synchronize with: the result was a kind of buzzing. The ensemble was too large, perhaps, compared with the original quartet, for a certain degree of finely honed collaboration. Even so, the movement was very exciting, ending with a magnificently bravura rush just at the limit of everyone's capabilities. For neo-Brahms, this was fairly convincing.

45 Journal-Courier: 4 March 1986
Berkeley Chamber Players

LOCAL

Whimsical Walton wit wipes away winter woe

As a marvelous antidote to the winter grumbles and woes of world-weariness, a lively and charming performance of William Walton's "Façade" was offered Friday in the lecture hall of the Yale Center for British Art.

The concert was well attended. The audience was clearly amused by the sparkling, tongue-in-cheek performances by reciters Brenda Lewis and Alvin Epstein, reading Dame Edith Sitwell's ornately satirical poetry, and by the small ensemble playing Walton's music--the Berkeley Chamber Players, directed by Yale sophomore Alexander Platt.

The 21 Sitwell pieces that Walton used for this "Façade" set (there is a later suite of 8 poems which Walton published as "Façade 2" in 1977) are ingenious gems of British poetry.

Anyone who finds delight in the wit and whimsy of the English language must admire these Sitwellian revels in rhythm and rhyme. By her subtle manipulation of assonance and alliteration, lush burlesque images collide.

Her poems are admirably suited for setting to music, as some of her titles indicate. There's a Foxtrot:

Old Sir Faulk / Tall as a stork / Before the honeyed fruits of dawn were ripe, would walk...

There's a Waltz:

Daisy and Lily / Lazy and silly / Walk by the shore of the wan grassy sea...

Other poems are named Polka, Valse, Popular Song, Scotch Rhapsody, Country Dance, Hornpipe, Tarantella, Tango-Pasodoble.

Lewis and Epstein gave perfectly enunciated, highly modulated readings, sometimes nearly singing the words. They never tripped on a single syllable, even during the devilishly tricky poems [which] they had to read very fast (like patter-songs from Gilbert and Sullivan).

Despite a few rough articulations, the musicians provided a solid accompaniment to the readings. Walton's music, for all its well-crafted amusements, does not have the sophistication of the poetry. I might have been better persuaded to believe conductor

Platt's claim (in his program notes) that "Façade" stands alongside Schoenberg's "Pierrot Lunaire" or Stravinsky's "L'Histoire du Soldat" as an early 20th-century landmark, had his own directing been less decorous, the music more exotic and wild.

Short vocal selections by Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gordon Jacob opened the evening's focus on British music. Unfortunately soprano Katherine Harris' wide operatic vibrato and heavy emphases were ill suited to these modest but lovely works which need only a straightforward declamation to be nicely effective. To make matters worse, her voice was badly distorted by being unnecessarily amplified.

Still, the featured work, "Façade," was a delightful reminder not to take so seriously the dogdays of winter.

Tra la la la la la La la! / See me dance the polka' / Said Mister Wagg like a bear.

46 Sunday Register: 25 May 1986
Brass Ring [Reviews in Brief]

LOCAL

Acoustics fail to frustrate brass quintet's concert

Despite the barely workable acoustics in St. Mary's Church, the Brass Ring's concert on May 20 was distinguished by some excellent performances of ancient and modern music. Together since 1981, this brass quintet of former Yale School of Music graduate students has justly earned a growing reputation for its varied repertoire and sensitive, utterly professional musicianship.

Tuesday's program nicely contrasted five Renaissance madrigals, four "Courtly Masquing Ayres" (1611) by John Adson, Danish composer Vagn Holmboe's 1961 "Quintet" Op. 79, and Jan Koestsier's 1974 "Brass Quintet" Op. 65. Trumpeter Frank Covey joined the Ring for Andrea Gabrieli's 16th century "Kyrie" and for Oskar Bohme's Russian romantic masterpiece, the "Trompeten-Sextett" Op. 30.

The players were equally adept at performing sprightly Renaissance rhythms, the modern syncopations in the Holmboe, the long lyrical lines of the Gabrieli. The final

movement of the Koetsier, difficult and fast, was given a spectacular reading. The Boehme opened with less assurance, but gained momentum and had a strong ending.

Unfortunately, the echo in the church lasted over four seconds! As the Brass Ring played, harmonies inevitably melted into each other. For a chamber group as fine as this one, it is good news that they will perform next year in Battell Chapel.

47 New Haven Register: 25 June 1986
Empire Brass Quintet

IMPORTED

Quintet charms crowd under stars

The Starlight Festival concert series opened Tuesday evening with the same group that concluded the series last summer. The Empire Brass Quintet played outside in the Yale Law School courtyard to a large, enthusiastic audience.

French hornist Tom Hadley only recently joined the group, but he blended in perfectly with trumpeter Timothy Morrison, trombonist Scott Harmon, and the original Empire members--trumpeter Rolf Smedvig and the extraordinary tubist Samuel Pilafian. These young musicians showed the polished virtuosity, excellent intonation and charming stage presence that have earned them recognition as one of the two or three top brass groups in North America.

It was a program clearly chosen as light summer fare performed under the stars. All but one of the works were transcriptions or arrangements. The classical pieces featured on the first half received light, crisp readings, full of forward motion and well balanced sonorities. Trills and other ornaments were clean, not fussy.

Baroque pieces by Scheidt ("Canzona Bergamosca") and J. S. Bach (selections from three cantatas) led into Mozart's "Rondo from the Horn Quintet in E-flat." Except for tell-tale cadences in the middle, the brass arrangement of Debussy's "Girl with the Flaxen Hair" could almost have been a blues ballad. Ravel's "Valse Nobles et Sentimentales" was nicely syncopated. A slightly uneven performance of Handel's "Overture to the Royal Fireworks Music" concluded the first half.

The popular, jazzy second half opened with the Spanish music of Mendez' "Jota" and "La Virgin de la Macarema," both featuring Smedvig's elegiac and sensual trumpet playing. The Empire played schmaltzy, sometimes thin arrangements of numbers from Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess" and Bernstein's "West Side Story" with sass and exhuberance.

An astonishing tuba solo was featured on Porter's Dixieland piece "Leader of the Big Time Band," as well as later in some of the encores. A wistful brass composition, Chesky's "Central Park Morning," demonstrated how sensitive their blend is. Herbert Clarke's "Carnival of Venice"--a virtuoso showpiece for trumpet--was expertly managed by Smedvig.

Encores included "Ain't Misbehavin'," some Dixieland arrangements and Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever." It was difficult not be charmed by all of this foot-tapping music played with such panache, but I would also welcome hearing the Empire Brass play some of the challenging brass compositions written in this century.

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48 New Haven Register: 11 February 1985 LOCAL
 Steven Greene & Susan Merdinger

Greene, Merdinger join for two-piano recital

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Darius Milhaud, Camille Saint-Saëns and Igor Stravinsky were joined together on Saturday afternoon in an excellent recital for two pianos. Steven Greene and Susan Merdinger played with a completely synchronized attention to the music, with charm, and, at the end, with bravado.

The repertoire of music for two pianos is uneven; but it has its share of beautiful music, not only its share of oddities. The Mozart D major sonata, K. 448, which opened the concert, is a gem.

Written for one of Mozart's Viennese students, this 1781 work has a sunny disposition compared to the dense, chromatically troubled Fugue in C minor--the only other complete work he wrote for two keyboards.

But the sonata is also filled with surprises. The performers showed us how well Mozart knew how to exploit the two pianos' capacity for overlapping dissonance, as in the ascending scales, split between both keyboards, in the first movement, or in the major/minor conjunctions in the second.

The tempo of the first movement was more careful than *spirito* and was somewhat heavily executed (in part the result of being played on modern pianos). The ending of the second movement seemed strangely unprepared, unexpected. But the grand, nearly symphonic proportions of the last movement were well-expressed, and the playing sparkled.

Milhaud's *Scaramouche*, completed in 1937, is a playful, jazzy essentially silly piece unless understood within the context of Milhaud's prolific, polymorphous musical imagination. Like all of the pieces on the program, it was well-rehearsed, but I would have enjoyed an even wilder performance, especially of those marvelous cross-rhythms in the *Brazileira* section.

After intermission, the two young pianists revealed an unusual maturity in their interpretation of the great Saint-Saëns "Variations on a Theme by Beethoven."

Not unexpectedly, these variations require a considerable range of pianistic technique, which Greene and Merdinger amply demonstrated. They also successfully integrated the variations into a coherent whole.

Finally an arrangement by Victor Babin of Stravinsky's *Petrouchka* concluded the program. Technically demanding, and performed with bravado and sensitivity, the piece nonetheless (like so many arrangements) had an irksome, shadow-like status. It could not possibly capture the rich resonances of the fully orchestrated ballet.

Graduate students at the Yale School of Music, Greene and Merdinger are finalists in March for the Westchester Conservatory competition. If their recital is any indication, there is every hope they will shine.

49 Sunday Register: 17 March 1985

LOCAL

J. S. Bach organ preludes [PREVIEW]

What you'll hear in today's program

For those who will be listening to today's performance on Connecticut Public Radio (2 p.m. on 89.5 FM), a few "program notes" and explanations may be helpful.

What, in fact, is a chorale prelude? What may listeners expect to hear?

The chorale-prelude was developed by 17th-century German composers as a way for the organist to introduce a hymn (or chorale) which would then be sung, generally without accompaniment, by the congregation of the Lutheran service.

Initially these were fairly short arrangements, but gradually the practice developed into an autonomous compositional genre in its own right, acquiring greater complexities along the way. It is possible, therefore, to distinguish [between] short and long forms of the organ prelude, based on whether the melody is complete or incomplete; whether there are musical interludes inserted between the hymn's phrases; and whether the composer has set one or more verses of the chorale.

Danish organist and composer Dietrich Buxtehude was highly influential in the development of the form, and it is generally agreed that it reached its culmination in the 45 chorale preludes of Johann Sebastian Bach's "Orgel-Büchlein" (although later 19th- and 20th-century composers, Brahms and Reger and Distler among others, continued to experiment with the genre).

This newly discovered set of Bach preludes has been judged to be from fairly early in his career.

The recital will be divided into two parts. In the first half, Harvard University organist John Ferris will play 16 of the preludes; then Charles Krigbaum, Yale University organist, will perform the remaining 17.

Yale School of Music concert manager Carl Miller suggested that it might be appropriate for at least some of the tunes to be presented in their simple forms before the more embellished versions of the organ arrangements--in effect reversing the typical liturgical practice. The performers were quick to agree. And so it was decided to introduce the first chorale of each half of the program by a trombone quartet, and then every three or four chorales by settings sung by the Yale Bach Choir. The settings themselves are not by Bach, but were chosen deliberately because they come from the same earlier period as the organ preludes themselves.

50 Journal-Courier: 18 March 1985
John Ferris & Charles Krigbaum

LOCAL

Bach concert covered a variety of techniques

As the guests began to arrive in Battell Chapel Sunday afternoon, the hall acquired all of the excitement and splendor of a state occasion.

After the considerable attention and advance notice this modern premiere of 33 organ preludes by J. S. Bach had received, the mood of anticipation was intense. The newly renovated Battell looked bright and lovely, and the microphones hanging in the air, which were to broadcast the concert nationwide over Public Radio, emphasized the great event this was.

Finding any music by Bach is deliciously Important News. But as the concert progressed, I could not help but feel that the sociohistorical excitement of the occasion was perforce required to hang in balance with sober musicological judgment (neither, however, cancelling the other out).

The program was divided into two parts, Harvard University organist John Ferris playing the first half and Yale University organist Charles Krigbaum the second. Their playing was quite different, leaving us with different impressions of their respective portions; yet, with a few exceptions, none of these early preludes were remarkable in themselves. The concert, by the end, seemed to be more about the repertoire of compositional techniques enjoying currency during Bach's formative years and his ability to absorb such techniques, than about his genius evidenced in a collection of masterpieces.

The variety of such techniques is nonetheless interesting. Sometimes the hymn tune would begin in one voice, then be joined canonically by a second and a third. The ensuing counterpoint would either play itself out in this way to the end, or serve as an introduction to a subsequent harmonization of the chorale with little or no embellishment.

Sometimes Bach began with the four-voice harmonization itself, but then used one of the melodic motives as the basis for writing interludes between each of the chorale's phrases. Other arrangements featured fast, rippling accompaniments, where the melody of the hymn was difficult to discern.

What gradually became apparent, however, is that much of the writing was either insufficiently daring to provoke much interest (as when the harmonies were in simple thirds or sixths, or used non-varied sequences for filler); or else strangely sketchy and even sometimes awkward (the music filled with cross-relations, or the texture suddenly dissolving to a single line at the end). Or, perhaps more accurately, perfectly fine preludes would contain some of these flaws, showing evidence of their early chronology.

Of course it is impossible at one hearing to completely distinguish every chorale prelude's relative merits. And hearing so many works in a row is bound to be somewhat numbing, esthetically. For this reason, the program was nicely broken up by some fine singing on the part of the Yale Bach Choir, who introduced every three or four preludes on each half. And each half began with some equally fine trombone playing by the Slide Chamber Players, made up of 3 graduate students and a graduate from the Yale School of Music.

Ferris's playing was either faltering or fussy, his phrases strangely mannered, his tempos inconsistent. Krigbaum, by contrast, offered us clean, well disciplined performances which were ultimately more musically convincing.

51 Journal-Courier: 29 April 1985
Alicia de Larrocha

IMPORTED

Larrocha drew her listeners into the music

For a virtuoso pianist, Alicia de Larrocha projects a remarkably unassuming manner. In the simple way she walks on stage, in her brief curtain calls and, especially, in her manner of playing the piano, there is nothing of the superstar relishing the adulation of her fans. Her attention is upon the music and, so, she draws our attention to the music as well.

Some musicians are chameleons, they impersonate styles. By emphasizing surface features, and playing 'in the manner of' whichever composer it is, they tend to accentuate the historical discontinuities between, say, the Baroque master J. S. Bach and the great Romantic composer Robert Schumann.

But Larrocha, who played a program of Bach, Bach/Busoni and Schumann at the Palace Theater last Saturday night, entered deep into the music past any cozy categories of historical dissimilarities.

Instead, she brought out the ways in which the different pieces operate from within the same tradition. Perhaps most radical about her approach (which does not announce itself as radical at all) was its way of suggesting that music transcends its own historicity.

Bach's Fantasia in C minor and his 'Italian' Concerto in F major were first. The contrapuntal lines were astonishingly transparent, and every Baroque ornament was not only in place but given expressive meanings dependent upon the context. In the slow movement of the Concerto, Larrocha's sophisticated and supple sense of rhythm was remarkable for its dramatic poignancy.

At the same time, she constantly adjusted how loud or soft the music should be, and was not afraid of *crescendos* or *diminuendos*. This was hardly the 'metronomic' performance of a Ralph Kirkpatrick. Larrocha never played a repeated section exactly the same way, and ultimately all of these carefully chosen nuances helped to create a deeply convincing sense of form.

Ferruccio Busoni's monumental piano arrangement of Bach's Chaconne in D minor, originally for solo violin, is a great, sprawling turn-of-the-century homage to one of Busoni's most revered composers, along with Franz Liszt and Beethoven. It has moments

of Beethovenesque power, and is filled with Lisztian technical challenges.

Typically, Larrocha did not perform it as a *tour de force*, but, with complete control of the instrument, gave it a sense of architecture one might not have guessed it had. And, for all of its exuberant and moody pianistic excesses, she clarified its contrapuntal lines, making plausible Busoni's link as a composer with J. S. Bach.

Two Schumann works concluded the program: The Novelette in F-sharp minor, and the Phantasie in C major. These are intimate works typical of the Romantics' obsession with the interplay between light and dark, stern and playful moods.

Once again, like the Busoni, these might have lapsed into episodic moments tendentiously linked together. But, as throughout the evening, Larrocha clarified the contrapuntal lines and synthesized the parts into a whole. For the 400 or so people who came to hear her, there could scarcely have been any doubt that she is one of the greatest living pianists in the world. Perhaps the greatest of all.

52 Journal-Courier: 5 December 1985

IMPORTED

Itzhak Perlman

Perlman performance lacks verve

It is hardly surprising that for Tuesday evening's concert by Itzhak Perlman nearly all 2,695 seats in Woolsey Hall were filled. The 40-year-old Israeli-born violinist has an international reputation as a virtuoso performer of the first rank.

What might have surprised--and even disappointed--some of Perlman's listeners was how much this concert was not the occasion for flashy virtuosic display for its own sake. Performing with pianist Jonathan Feldman, Perlman had plenty of opportunity to show off. Instead, he demonstrated that his reputation is well deserved not merely for what is obviously a prodigious technical facility, but for his rapturous tone and his incandescent musical sensitivity.

It seemed as though Perlman was incapable of producing an ugly sound. The nuances of his expression were so finely honed that every phrase, nearly every note,

sounded differently emphasized. A rarefied, intimate atmosphere was created on stage from the start. The effect was of watching two music lovers perform chamber music in their living room.

Ironically, the attention that Perlman gave to coaxing from his violin the greatest possible expression at every moment tended to mitigate against long-range coherence. Musical momentum, drama, suspense were somehow missing from most of the works on the program.

Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-1736) was mainly influential during his short life as a composer of comic opera. The first piece on the program, "Sonata No. 12 in E Major," was taken from his collection of 14 sonatas for two violins and keyboard (Feldman incorporated the second violin part into his piano playing).

Essentially a light sprite of a piece in three movements, played without a break, this sonata received a generally successful reading. In the second movement, Perlman occasionally gave a small romantic *glissando* (slide) to the notes for added expression. But he also tended to push the tempos somewhat capriciously, especially in the last movement, so that piano and violin were not always in synch.

The first movement of Beethoven's "Sonata in D Major, Op. 12, No. 1" reached its conclusion, but how we had gotten there was simply not clear. The music at any moment was quite beautiful, but formal boundaries, if not ignored, were made subsidiary to the music at hand.

The second movement, a theme and variations, offered a marvelous and successful occasion for the players to trade roles with each other--first Perlman, then Feldman taking the main melodic material, as the other played accompaniment. Like so much else on the program, the final Rondo was played with a nearly chaste restraint, eschewing a flashy ending, yet clearly informed by a deep affection for the music.

Igor Stravinsky's "Pulcinella" for small chamber orchestra premiered at the Paris Opera on May 15, 1920; scenery and costumes were by Picasso. It is most often cited as an example, *par excellence*, of the kind of reworking of older styles that has been labeled Neoclassicism in 20th-century music. The music itself was culled from various scores by Pergolesi, but the subtly modern orchestration is entirely Stravinsky's.

In 1932 Stravinsky made two arrangements of the earlier work, a cello-piano version--on which he collaborated with Gregor Piatigorsky--and a violin-piano version with Samuel Dushkin, both of which were renamed "Suite Italienne." Perlman and Feldman performed the latter of these in a manner that underemphasized the

"Stravinskification of Pergolesi" so apparent in the original. The piece emerged as much closer to the real Pergolesi we had heard at the beginning, having lost some of its bite.

Last on the program was Richard Strauss' "Sonata in E-flat Major, Op. 18," which Strauss wrote in 1887 when he was only 23. A longtime favorite of Heifetz, this piece has yet to become one of mine. For Strauss it is a relatively classical work, but it was easily the most overtly romantic piece on the program. Here the lack of musical drama in the performance was most sorely felt.

Fire, élan, the willingness to risk the impetuous headlong flight might have done wonders. There were times Perlman attempted it, and Feldman seemed to resist. In the last movement, as a result, they were not completely together.

It should be observed that Feldman, whose playing I greatly admire, was contracted only in the last month to replace Perlman's longtime accompanist, Samuel Sanders. It is not that Feldman's technique or, certainly, his musicality are not up to performing with Perlman. But perhaps the kind of intuition necessary to follow Perlman's often whimsical expressive changes can only really grow with greater experience.

As encore--with an amusing introduction about finding the score in Vienna--the duo played Steven Foster's "I Dream of Jeannie." Predictably, it was sweet, not schmaltzy. Then followed the one showpiece and crowd-pleaser of the evening, "Introduction and Tarentella" by another internationally famous violinist from the the 19th century, Pablo M. M. Sarasate. Perlman tossed it off from memory as though he were some kind of virtuoso fiddler. Itzhak who?

53 Journal-Courier: 24 March 1986

IMPORTED

Peter Orth

Pianist Orth gives fresh vision of music

Starting late in an extremely overheated Sprague Hall, pianist Peter Orth played a program of Beethoven, Brahms and Liszt Saturday night to a near-capacity audience.

There was much to admire in Orth's technical facility, but technique was

throughout the evening totally subservient to an unusually idiosyncratic expression. In the manner of the controversial Glenn Gould (or, to pick an earlier case, Wanda Landowska), Orth stretched and shaped the music like taffy.

Phrases were sometimes interrupted to emphasize a musical detail. The slightly too-long silence was one of his most valuable allies in creating dramatic tension. A typical gesture we saw again and again happened just after a chord of a phrase had been played: Orth's hands raised above the keyboard waiting intuitively for just the right moment to play next. The result was a wild, unpredictable disjointedness that was utterly deliberate and whose primary esthetic purpose was to elucidate the score in a radically new way.

Such fascinating contradictions made the first movement of Beethoven's Sonata in G Major, Op. 31, No. 1 emerge as a gnarly essay grown in on itself. In the Adagio, Orth used some sophisticated pedalling to distinguish individual notes, contrasting (even in the middle of a phrase) a warm tone with a totally dry, short sound. One never knew what was going to happen next. He played the third movement Rondo with such rhythmic suppleness that the music sounded unmeasured.

Brahms' F-minor sonata, Op. 5, written when he was only twenty (1852-53), is a large, romantic piece made larger by an intermezzo inserted into the typical four movement structure. Opening with grand flourishes, and filled throughout with cruder versions of tonal and rhythmic articulations than Brahms was to achieve later, the piece probably informs us more about where Brahms came from than about where he was heading.

Instead of emphasizing the latent gush of this work, Orth performed it as though every musical moment were a difficult achievement. Internal compositional contradictions were brought out. Even the turn at the end of a trill was deliberately postponed because of the new key it led into. The rhythms of the scherzo took on an almost ragtime quality, so energetically did Orth focus on the syncopations.

Concluding the program was Liszt's suite of nine evocations, "Années de Pèlerinage." Orth overcame superbly the work's considerable technical problems, but once again his focus was on content not on technique. The very fast, double octave scales in "Orage" (Thunderstorm), for example, were given a high-voltage performance, yet none of the dramatic shape of the movement was ignored. And, as he had done all evening, the very final chords of various of the pieces were allowed to die away on their own, granting a warmly luminescent, subtly mysterious quality.

With some lingering reservations, I ended up admiring Orth for his audacities.

Like the Russian formalist poets at the turn of the century, Orth made strange the familiar. He is the kind of musician one wants to hear play almost anything at all--not because one will agree with his interpretations, but because they are informed by a genuinely fresh vision that is not really about quirkiness but about looking deeper into the music.

54 Journal-Courier: 3 April 1986
Cecile Licad

IMPORTED

Enchanting concert had virtuosic merit

I, for one, was enthralled and enchanted by the Woolsey Hall concert performed Tuesday by the Philippine-born pianist Cecile Licad. Judging from the overwhelming response she received at the concert's end, I was not alone.

Of course it is always difficult to gauge an audience's enthusiasms--lamentable interpretations of works, if delivered with pyrotechnical agility, may wow many listeners. In this case, however, one sensed that the audience's warmth was a response to more than the near-virtuosic skills which the 25-year-old Licad has developed (no question about it) and amply demonstrated.

An early middle-period Beethoven sonata opened the concert: No. 18 in E-flat, Op. 31, No. 3 (1802). In a beautifully sculpted first movement, Licad used small, intimate, romantic pauses to contrast with flashes of hard playing. (At the beginning of the development, especially, we sensed how much power could be unleashed.) The fast second movement scherzo was incredibly light.

The third movement, one of Beethoven's beautiful *cantibles*, is all about octave displacements--the melody skips around through different registers--but Licad sewed it seamlessly. And in the last movement, over all of the stormy *presto* passages, Licad presided with an implacable calm. Her emphases were by restraint.

Compared to the recent radical dissections of Beethoven and others by pianist Peter Orth, Licad's playing might well have seemed too tame. Some might have wished she dig in more. For me she achieved formal balance within and across movements, and

an intimate particularity of feeling at any given moment. I felt the influence of one of her teachers, Rudolf Serkin.

Clarity, a certain restraint, a scintillating technique which never effaced feeling continued to characterize Licad's playing of both Maurice Ravel's 1917 "Le Tombeau de Couperin" and the Op. 10 Chopin Etudes (composed 1829-32). Neither composer was caricatured in the process, and many moments were simply magical.

As encores, perhaps as acknowledgement of the audience's delight, she played two familiar works: Brahms' Hungarian Dance No. 5, and the great Chopin G-minor Ballade. The last was perhaps the darkest work of the evening. It gave us a chance to hear a more tragic utterance come out of that piano than the strangely Olympian, always touching poetry we had been hearing all evening.

55 New Haven Register: 2 June 1986
Yo-Yo Ma & Emanuel Ax

IMPORTED

Ma, Ax are exquisite in benefit performance

The Hospital of Saint Raphael was privileged to have cellist Yo-Yo Ma and pianist Emanuel Ax perform for its benefit concert Saturday evening at the Shubert Performing Arts Center.

The two distinguished musicians offered intimate, passionate readings of music by Schumann, Beethoven and Rachmaninov in support of St. Raphael's projected Infant Apnea Center and its existing Sudden Infant Death Syndrome program.

Tuxedos, laced gowns and evening elegance set the tone for this benefit affair. An elegant basket of red roses had been placed at stage left. Yet once Ma was seated with his 18th-century cello, and Ax at the Steinway grand, their own style of musically elegant eloquence took over.

From the beginning of the first of three of Robert Schumann's "Fantasy Pieces," Op. 73, it was clear why Ma and Ax have enjoyed their now frequent collaborations. They were completely in synch with one another; their instruments spoke as one voice. Their

musical temperaments seemed closely allied: uncommon sensitivity to the slightest nuance mixed with a certain wildness.

In the second, the musicians whimsically traded off sprightly phrases, leaning over toward each other to catch entrances. On occasion Ma, not for the last time during the evening, showed he was not afraid of letting his cello sound barely above a whisper. The third fantasy, dramatic and tempestuous by contrast, was the hardest of the three and sounded less completely fused.

Beethoven's "Sonata No. 3 in A Major," Op. 69 was the masterpiece of the evening--not surprising from musicians who have already released the Volume 2 set of Beethoven cello-piano sonatas on CBS, and will shortly record the first set. From the completely controlled shifts in texture, articulation and mood, to the clearly conceived long-range musical architecture, this was an exemplary performance.

In the development of the opening allegro, Ma effected a brilliant shift from some wild, very fast bowing to a high note played very softly. The "sneak in" to the recapitulation was wonderful, and Beethoven's penultimate ending was beautiful. In the scherzo, for all of Beethoven's off-center syncopations, the two musicians gave an essentially unruffled performance which made serene what is often performed as a bag of tricks.

In the short introductory adagio, Ma showed how beautiful a tone he can produce in the service of exquisite expression. Then the two musicians gave a spirited reading of the final Allegro vivace which, for all of the fast notes they played, had nothing to do with showing off their technique, everything to do with honoring and probing to the depth of Beethoven's glorious music.

Rachmaninov's "Sonata in C minor," Op. 19 concluded the program. It is a long, late-Romantic work in four movements whose most profound moments cannot, for this listener, achieve the grandeur of the Beethoven sonata. Yet Ax and Ma managed to express with utter sincerity its lush, dramatic qualities without resorting to schmaltz.

Particularly fine was their tensely poignant playing of the Andante with its audacious, nearly modern mix of major and minor. Throughout the work, even the most difficult of the composer's piano figurations proved no obstacle to Ax's own prodigious technique, nor to his sensitivity. Inner voices were nicely etched in parallel to Ma's singing lines.

Certainly the concert was a wonderful example of music supporting a deserved cause. But beyond such considerations, all [of] the Saint Raphael's guests and patrons

were privileged indeed to experience music minted so far above common currency.

56 New Haven Register: 9 July 1986
Rie Schmidt & Benjamin Verdery

IMPORTED

Flute, guitar duo exhibits mastery

A warmly, unpretentiously delivered program of flute and guitar music was featured Tuesday night in the third Starlight Festival outdoor concert. Despite contending with gusts of wind and the sounds of birds, planes and sirens, flutist Rie Schmidt and guitarist Benjamin Verdery lost none of the intimacy of their collaboration.

They might have been playing in a room of their house for friends. It didn't seem they were trying to dazzle us with technical feats, but were just playing music they liked. In fact, much of the music was technically quite difficult, and there were some brilliantly scintillating moments.

I didn't care for the first piece, Napoleon Coste's "Consolazione, Romance": too pretty. Its slightly insipid legato flute phrases over steady guitar arpeggios (with few harmonic surprises) exemplified the worst misperceptions about flute/guitar music--but which the rest of the program beautifully corrected.

In J. S. Bach's "Sonata No. 3 in E Major," which followed, Verdery was not merely accompanying Schmidt, but slightly sped up his phrases in the middle, helping to make their collaboration a breathing, flexible thing. Even so, the two faster movements sounded breathless.

"Elégy" and "Gigue" from François Donjon's set of "Etudes for Solo Flute" were beautifully articulated by Schmidt. The first's fast arpeggios never dominated the slower-moving melody, and the final thematic return, *sotto voce*, was exquisite. The second, a study in octave displacement, sounded as though two flutes were playing.

"Fantasia Mulata," a new piece written for the duo by the Puerto Rican composer Ernest Cordero, combined jazz and Spanish flourishes with modernist effects like rapping on the guitar's soundboard, or sliding up an unplucked string for a quick whistle. The

flute had a haunting refrain, and the two instruments beautifully complemented each other.

After intermission they played a transcription of four of Manuel de Falla's "Seven Popular Spanish Songs," a straightforward, lyrical performance. Then Verdery soloed on Isaac Albeniz's "Torre Bermeja" and "Cordoba," extremely tough pieces whose challenges Verdery overcame with great sensitivity and panache, though at times with less than the total fluid mastery that he might have wished.

In all three of these last compositions it was intriguing to consider how close to, or how sublimated from, Latin folk music each one is. The Albeniz are probably closest to improvised guitar music, but even so are clearly heightened distillations of indigenous gestures. The de Falla pieces marvelously pretend to be simple songs, the craft is concealed. During the Cordero fantasy, it was difficult to judge whether the compositional style was unifying folk and modern-classical musics, or contrasting them deliberately.

The final work was American David Leizner's 1982 "Dances in the Madhouse," in many ways the most effective and relaxed of Schmidt and Verdery's collaborations, allowing them lots of play for rubato and individual emphases. Schmidt gave an eerie, sad performance in the third movement on piccolo, played completely without vibrato.

Their encore was Jacques Ibert's "Entr'acte," a French piece but with a Spanish flavor once again.

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57 Sunday Register: 27 October 1985

LOCAL

Marilyn Newman [Reviews in Brief]

Newman recital moving

Like the final line of a poem that illuminates all that has come before, the final "Amen" at the end of mezzo-soprano Marilyn Newman's recital in Center Church Oct. 20 highlighted a recurring theme of the concert. In Benjamin Britten's "Abraham and Isaac," Op. 51, in much of Edward Elgar's cycle "Sea Pictures," Op. 37, and in some songs by Henry Purcell, she sang of faith and simple piety.

Newman sang with the conviction that follows careful preparation. Yet her voice seemed better suited to the direct declamation required of the Elgar set than to the dramatically florid, stylized writing of the much older Purcell songs. Her high range was tremulous, and sometimes unsupported, except when she touched lightly on the notes, as on the words "slumber-song" in the first Elgar song, and elsewhere.

For the Britten canticle, Newman was joined by tenor Jack Litten (who had also solidly accompanied her on harpsichord and piano), with Norman Hall somewhat cautiously playing piano. Litten's strong tenor voice as Abraham complimented Newman's Isaac, and I thought this the most fervently moving of all of the pieces we had heard that day.

58 Sunday Register: 9 March 1986

LOCAL

Austrian music recital [Reviews in Brief]

Music Library presents Austrian composer's work

Part of the current revival of music by Austrian composer and teacher Franz Schreker (1878-1934) [c.f. No. 21 & 22], a concert of works by Schreker, his students and contemporaries was presented March 2 in Center Church, sponsored by the Yale Music Library.

Most effective were the first two works. William Braun elegantly performed Hans-Klaus Langer's 1959 piano suite, "Six Portraits." Schreker's lush 1909 "Five Songs for Low Voice" was accompanied nicely by Braun although somewhat unevenly sung by baritone Richard Lalli.

Berthold Goldschmidt's rather conservative String Quartet No.2 (1936) received an only adequate reading by the Franciscan Quartet. Three songs by Alexander Zemlinsky, performed by Braun and Lalli, were more conservative still. Soprano Constance Beavon, accompanied by pianist Donald Pirone, offered an emotional performance of three songs by Erich Wolfgang Korngold, but her sound seemed unsupported, her tone pinched in the high register.

Ignace Strassfogel accompanied Lalli at the piano in four of his recently composed settings of poetry by Edna St. Vincent Millay. The poems' sentimentality was mitigated by the music's genuine religious feeling. Concluding the program, Donald Pirone banged his way through Karol Rathaus' 1946 Piano Sonata No. 4, an unattractively aggressive work which Pirone had memorized.

59 Sunday Register: 30 March 1986

LOCAL

Redeemer Oratorio Choir [Reviews in Brief]

Choir's work expressive in lovely Duruflé Requiem

Maurice Duruflé's Requiem, Opus 9, performed Friday evening by the Redeemer Oratorio Choir, is a lovely, lyrical work whose slightly muted quality nonetheless expresses a deeply felt Christian faith.

Compared with other requiems (Verdi's, Britten's, even Mozart's) there are only a few really tense and stormy moments. And even these scarcely suggest there is a mortal struggle involved in finding the peace of a beatific devotion.

Despite some of the typical technical problems of any community chorus (attacks, intonation, unsupported tone), the choir sang expressively and was alert and responsive to director Anne Hicks' sensitive conducting. Musical momentum never lagged. Particular

high moments included the "Liber aas de ore leonis," the ending of the "Pie Jusu," and the final measures of "In Paradisum."

Bass soloist Howard Foster had a very expressive, deeply resonant voice, also capable of quietness. Soprano Julia Blue Raspe's solo formed an arc, opening in the low register with simple beauty, mounting to a high note, nicely sustained, before dropping back down. She was accompanied by violoncellist Owen Young. And June Wachtler's harp added special interest throughout the work. Organist Walden Moore, in both his registration and playing, offered a sinuous and subtle background to the choir's heartfelt singing.

60 Sunday Register: 13 April 1986
Yale Camerata [Reviews in Brief]

LOCAL

Camerata offers program of German Romantic music

A delicious program of choral music by Franz Schubert, Johannes Brahms and Robert Schumann was presented by the Yale Camerata in Marquand Chapel on April 5. Marguerite Brooks sensitively conducted the thirty-one member mixed chorus in a rich, representative selection of German Romantic works for voices alone, or a little stiffly accompanied at piano by organist Timothy Smith.

From the exciting antiphonal effects of Schubert's "An die Sonne" to the unusual voice-leading in Brahms' "Fünf Lieder," Op. 104, or the canonic entrances over an elegiac, noble beat of his "Nänie," these pieces were exemplary models of the best compositional craft of the period. Three epigrammatic Brahms songs from Op. 44 were like German haiku. Schumann's "Vier Gesänge," conducted more freely than Brooks by Laura Lee Fischer, but with less nuance, was an effective, suggestive set.

In general the singers performed with admirable concentration, expression, excellent diction, attacks and cutoffs. Their single greatest failing seemed to be insufficient breath control, their sound required greater support.

61 New Haven Register: 27 January 1986
Connecticut Opera Company

LOCAL

"The Barber of Seville" is found lively in English

Saturday evening brought a lively production of Gioacchino Rossini's "The Barber of Seville" to the Shubert Theatre. Singers from the Connecticut Opera, accompanied by the Hartford Chamber Orchestra, presented this popular Italian comic opera in English to a large and enthusiastic audience.

Musically it was not a brilliant nor scintillating performance, but there were some fine moments by members of the generally youthful cast.

Baritone Scott Neumann had a strong voice as Figaro, though with a sometimes tremulous vibrata at the top of his range. His opening aria, "Largo al factotum," was nicely achieved, and throughout the evening he brought charm and vitality to his role.

Tenor Jeffrey Carney, as Count Almaviva, had a somewhat less powerful instrument than Neumann's, and his high notes were occasionally forced. His opening serenade was out of tune, but he quickly recovered, and his singing was especially good in the second act. He and Neumann played their slapstick routines together very well.

Karli Gilbertson's Rosina was a nicely coy portrayal which never distracted her from delivering some of the more sophisticated singing of the evening. The opening number of Scene 2, "Una voce poco fa," is a traditionally famous test of any soprano's technique, and she lit on the scales and arpeggios with the lightest touch. Her recovery off of the highest notes was quite effortless.

The comic bass roles of Basilio and Doctor Bartolo were given just the right measure of pomposity by Thom King and Thomas Hammons, respectively. Mezzo Sondra Kelly's Berta aria toward the end of the opera had a rough, husky quality which was not displeasing. David Tisbert's Fiorello tended to be inaudible.

The orchestra, conducted by Music Director Doris Lang Kosloff, was quite good, its intonation, phrasing and balance excellent. Kosloff managed to convey the music's strangely comic classicism with great finesse and control.

Whatever reservations I might have had, I admired the high spirits and easy camaraderie which the cast brought to the performance. Slapstick routines accumulated delightfully, and most all of the stage business was well executed (with the exception of a recalcitrant scrim which kept partially raising then clanging to the floor).

I suppose I would rather have heard the opera in Italian, but I am not one of those purists who insist operas must always be sung in the original language. (It was an unfortunate oversight that the translator was not listed on the program, nor any biographical information on Hammons).

Mainly I see no reason not to make a work like "Barber" accessible to those for whom the Italian would prove to be a sufficient reason not to experience the opera at all. It would be even better if afterwards all those who had enjoyed the piece could hear it in the original.

62 New Haven Register: 6 March 1986
Yale Opera Department

LOCAL

Music school's 'La Bohème' triumphs over limitations

The prejudice that only international class, expensive, full-production opera performances are worth attending was disproved last night in the first of two performances of Giacomo Puccini's "La Bohème," played to a full house in Sprague Hall. The second concert will take place Friday at 8 p.m.

Working within fairly drastic limitations of space, equipment and personnel, the Yale School of Music Opera Department presented an admirable production of Puccini's popular Italian opera. Directed by Tito Capobianco, the performance featured some strong and talented singers, an effective chamber orchestra, nifty stage direction, and some beautiful and ingenious rear-stage drops.

The result was that, against the odds, Sprague was successfully adapted to accommodate our willing suspension of disbelief. New Haven in 1986 faded, and Puccini's musical tale of love and death in the Latin Quarter of the 1830s was brought to life.

It is true that this was a reduced version, notably in the exclusion of the music requiring full chorus (especially in Act II). Even had there been the singers for it, there would hardly have been room on stage. But the absence of the chorus parts was

compensated by a greater economy of action, and by attracting further attention to the lead singers.

It was unfortunate that José Shenkner, playing the poet Rodolfo, had come down with a cold prior to the concert, for he has a beautiful lyric tenor voice. In the first act it was still possible to tell [that] this is a strong voice as well, though as the evening progressed he was forced to hold back. Hopefully by Friday's performance he can give full power to his obviously considerable talents.

Baritone Jay Taylor created a marvelous role as the painter Marcello. His acting was nearly as good as his powerfully resonant, well-articulated singing. Philosopher Colline was played by the bass David Pittsinger, who provided a strong foundation during some of the male quartets, and gave a moving aria in the last act when he decides to sell his overcoat to get medicine for Mimi.

Baritone David Corman gave a somewhat slapstick quality to his role as musician Schaunard. His accurate singing carried a little less strongly than some of the others. Bass Joe Oechsli played well his two comic roles as the landlord and as the pompous counselor who Musetta briefly dallies with, but his tone seemed unsupported.

Soprano Jill Soltero as Mimi (to be replaced Friday by Carole Fitz-Patrick) had an emotionally powerful, slightly husky voice with moderate vibrato, which got even more beautiful as the evening progressed. (An irony of Puccini's score, never to be resolved, is that one of Mimi's strongest solos occurs as she is dying.)

Soprano Carla Cortner, Musetta, had a bright instrument where Soltero's was dark, but she could generate just as much power when she wanted to. Her coy, manipulative role was appropriately acted; her famous Waltz Song shimmered.

One of the important reasons the performance held together so effectively was due to the supple, sensitive conducting by Scott Bergeson, leading the fine chamber orchestra of school of music graduate students. And Anne Sheffield's set was lovely, especially the ingenious three-way backdrops, nicely lit by Michael Chybowski.

Director Capobianco had some of the players bring the action into the aisles, partly to solve the problem of space, but probably also just for fun. I somehow doubt Toscanini would have permitted such a modern breaking of the boundary between stage and audience when he conducted the first "La Bohème" in Turin, February 1, 1896.

63 Journal-Courier: 26 November 1984

IMPORTED

Kiri Te Kanawa**Kiri Te Kanawa sings in Schubert**

Once in a great while, we may hear a concert so technically accomplished and emotionally uplifting that even our finest superlatives seem crude by comparison. Saturday evening's recital at the Shubert by soprano Kiri Te Kanawa was easily the most exquisite concert New Haven has seen for a very long time.

One of the most highly acclaimed lyric sopranos in the world--a 'superstar' by all of the usual standards--Te Kanawa's presentation was unusual for being the epitome of charming and stately graciousness.

This was no pretentious display of mere pyrotechnics (which, of course, is not to say was beyond her technique to produce). Instead, in a well-rounded program of song spanning three centuries, Te Kanawa sang each of the pieces with warmth, sensitivity and integrity, and with an extraordinary purity of tone.

Accompanied by the excellent pianist Martin Katz, Te Kanawa opened the evening with three arias from George Frederick Handel's *Atalanta*, *Agrippina* and *Rinaldo*. The first, stately and slow, immediately introduced what was to be a hallmark of the evening: long, deliciously hovering notes, delivered with finesse. The second was a sprightly Allegro, and the last was a dramatically effective performance ranging from full outburst to very softly sung despair.

Mozart's *Bella mia fiamma*, K. 528, not often performed [I was mistaken here], is a song composed as tribute to his father's death. It has a complex dramatic structure, and some extremely challenging and daring harmonic progressions in the middle. Te Kanawa was uncanny in her finely-tuned discriminations of pitch, and the song as a whole was utterly convincing. I could easily have heard it a second time.

Five middle-period songs by Richard Strauss rounded off the first half. All of these are fairly tricky, both rhythmically and for their wandering tonal adventures, but Te Kanawa beautifully impersonated, one might say, their spirit of restless romanticism. The first especially is very difficult, requiring the singer to sustain an ever-growing intensity which is not resolved until the very end. Katz proved how professional a musician he is when, after a page of the score repeatedly refused to turn, he played the last few pages from memory.

Four lovely and haunting songs by the French composer Henri Duparc seemed restrained and elegant after the Strauss. Once again, the soprano proved herself equal to the change in style. *Extase* communicated a strangely internalized ecstasy. *La vie antérieure*, based on Baudelaire's poem, was suitably mystical and voluptuous, Duparc's use of augmented chords anticipating Debussy.

Te Kanawa's recording *Songs of the Auvergne* has been very popular since it was first issued not long ago. She concluded the program with six folk songs (notable for being highly crafted arrangements), the first two of which were from the Auvergne. First a bit of comic interaction between singer and pianist; then a ballad where, for the first time, she showed us how really quiet and yet focused is her under-the-breath (*sotto voce*) singing. A version of 'Danny Boy' was remarkable for its understated simplicity, even sincerity, and the other folk songs were a charming close to the program.

It was not the end of the evening. We had the chance, finally, to hear Kiri Te Kanawa the opera singer. Besides another, short Auvergne song, the audience at the Shubert was treated to a breathtaking performance of Puccini's 'O mio babbino caro' from Gianni Schicchi, and, at the very end, a virtuosic aria from (I believe) Ponchielli's *Gioconda*, which was delivered at full volume, with all the stops pulled out!

As a final note, in what other hall in New Haven could so distinguished a singer as Kiri Te Kanawa have performed so effectively? Only the Shubert has the kind of acoustics which can accommodate both the intimate recital and the operatic singing we heard. Plus, of course, the hall's elegance appropriately accommodated so elegant and extraordinary a musician as Kiri Te Kanawa.

64 Journal-Courier: 20 December 1984
Waverly Consort

IMPORTED

Christmas concert was a rare event

Ah yes, the countless contradictory rituals of the season are upon us.

'Shopping for Christmas' has by now become a pun: We can shop around for the

Christmastime we want to have. Which performance of Messiah or Nutcracker or Supergirl shall we attend? Which of the three Dickens stories shall we watch on TV? It is the season for acquisitive appetites to quiver before the banquet, bloated to accommodate all extremes, sacred and secular. And yet it still is a time for simple generosity to quietly speak, *sotto voce*, under the clamor.

In this context, it was a rare and special pleasure to attend the Waverly Consort's 'The Christmas Story' at the Palace, Tuesday evening. Music from the Middle Ages, culled from a variety of sources, was stitched together into a liturgical drama. A Prologue and Epilogue framed the story which included the Nativity, the Magi, Herod's court, the Adoration, and the Slaying of the Innocents.

The assembling of musical pieces from France, Italy, Britain and Spain, spanning five and a half centuries, was the Consort's own creation. But the musicological seriousness with which they sought to recreate the older styles could hardly be disputed. (A professional citation of music sources was included in the program.)

The pieces were all sung in Latin, accompanied by such early instruments as recorder, shawm, psaltery and vielle, as well as cymbal, drums and tambourine. Decked in colorful costumes, the thirteen players, interchanging roles and instruments, presented their holiday pageant with warmth and energy. There was, however, a deliberately stylized austerity to their presentation, reinforced by what were, after all, strange and exotic sounds.

In the Procession of the Prophets, from an 11th-century source, solos alternated antiphonally with chorus, the instruments supported them with the harshness of perfect fourths and fifths. Ornaments by the singers, second time around, were inserted judiciously. The Conductus which followed, sung very quietly *a capella*, was a beautiful moment, as were all the times the ensemble sang alone (a later Kyrie, and a Sanctus). Their blend was very fine, intonation good, their phrasing relaxed and natural.

The group's countertenor, Larry Lipnik, had a good range, but at times his highest notes were forced or strained. David Ripley gave us a marvelous Herod, his pride and fear communicated both through his singing and acting. Jennifer Lane's Rachel was subdued at first in her grief over the slaughtered children, her attention seemed to be paid more to the music's line. But this allowed her to express more vehemence later, before she was consoled by Susanne Peck's light soprano singing.

The concert only lasted an hour long, but I felt the audience to be restless without their intermission. We had participated in a different kind of holiday ritual, whose power

clearly derived from the Waverly Consort's own love for these old musical texts, delivered with directness, simplicity.

65 Journal-Courier: 19 December 1985
Vienna Boys' Choir

IMPORTED

Vienna Boys' Choir unsatisfying

Mixed impressions at Tuesday evening's Woolsey Hall concert by the Vienna Boys' Choir left me dissatisfied, with a strange aftertaste in my mouth. It was like eating something very sweet which hadn't quite been cooked. Even a lot of sugar could not quite mask the inert state of some of the concert's ingredients.

It is not that there wasn't much to admire in the highly disciplined musical training which these twenty-two young boys of 10-14 years old had evidently acquired. Their on-stage comportment was almost unnervingly professional. Musical entrances were generally precise. Consonants at the end of phrases were more succinctly articulated than by some professional choruses. And the boys sang the entire concert from memory, including several pieces in English.

On several occasions we heard that particularly haunting, bell-like tone in the mid-to upper-range of a young boy's unchanged voice, focused yet rounded, which makes a boy's choir so special.

As a group, this fluctuated. But it was there in a skillful, poignant solo aria from Handel's "Messiah," in a lovely a capella trio version of the Christmas carol "Hir-tenterzett," and in several of the solos throughout the choir's performance of "Wiener Leben," a one act operetta by Johann Strauss.

Programming itself should have been a recipe for success, with a little something for every taste. Two small motets by 16th-century composers Dietrich Buxtehude and Johannes G llus, the Handel aria, an "Alleluja" by Michael Haydn (Franz Josef's brother), and the modern "Missa Brevis" by Benjamin Britten all preceeded the Strauss on the first half. After intermission, the choir sang seasonal carols in German or English or both (a

verse in each language), with three encores.

Certainly it would have been difficult to find anything more Viennese than the Strauss operetta. A fluffy little melodrama with a happy ending, it was complete with costumes, some of the boys playing girls' roles, and with spoken dialogue delivered in English. This was a smooth-running production, obviously well-rehearsed.

But somehow, for all of these surface possibilities, and despite the built-in charm of watching young children show off their considerable training, on musical grounds alone the concert was unsatisfying.

One serious drawback was director Ernest Raffeisberger's piano playing. He accompanied the choir for most of the short works, and [for] all of the Strauss, yet [he] virtually never used the instrument for anything but accompanying. It was like muffled static, a little behind tempo, contributing no musicality in its own right. His conducting, too, seemed affected: he would give a small pause of indeterminate duration before every single verse.

The choir was fairly consistently sharp on the carols they sang on the second half, their tone often forced elsewhere. Blend varied. I was disappointed. They may have been tired, New Haven being near the end of their 6-month tour. Or the regimen of their training may have taken the place of encouraging a more natural singing. I would rather not believe a third alternative: that the Vienna Boys' Choir have become a more than musical institution, that their appearance at this time is but another aspect of the commercialization of Christmas.

66 New Haven Register: 2 July 1986

IMPORTED

Pomerium Musices

Pomerium Musices gives life to Renaissance music

Pomerium Musices (Garden of Music), an excellent a capella mixed chorus specializing in Renaissance music, was featured on the second of the Starlight Festival concerts Tuesday evening in the Yale Law School courtyard.

The group was missing its director, Alexander Blachly, who founded Pomerium in 1972, and so numbered a baker's dozen: five sopranos, two altos (including countertenor Christopher Trooper), four tenors and two basses. But the singers swapped parts for some of the selections, and formed smaller groups as well: a trio, five quartets, a quintet and an octet.

Such flexibility was but one of the ways this group met the challenge of bringing to life their program of 15th- and 16th-century music, in Latin and Italian, by Netherlands composers who had moved to Italy. At their best (which was most of the time), the chorus sang with superb intonation and sensitive expression, and a marvelously flexible sense of rhythm and phrasing. Their tone quality tended to be rounded, and appropriately without vibrato, though in the highest registers the sopranos' tone was sometimes pinched.

The music itself was haunting, moving, rapturous, and even strangely accessible for being more than 400 years old--though perhaps it is not so strange considering that the human voice is the most basic and emotionally direct of all the instruments.

Of course, to be afforded access does not erase the difference between that music and our own. The harmony, for example, was filled with surprises. Some extraordinary final cadences sounded in Guillaume Dufay's "Ecclesie militantis" and Mabriano de Orto's "Dulces exuvie."

Another fascinating feature was the setting of classical texts. There were four songs based on Book IV of Virgil's "Aeneid" by Adrian Willaert, Jacques Arcadelt, de Orto and de Rore, and a setting of Petrarch's "Mia benigna fortuna" by de Rore. Lighter fare was offered in Josquin Desprez's famous "Scaramella" and Willaert's "Un giorno mi prego."

Because the concert was outdoors, amplification was an unfortunate necessity which tended to skew the group's balance.

But luckily, by what turned out to be a benevolent quirk of the weather, it began to rain before the last two pieces. The group went inside to the auditorium's resonant and intimate acoustical space, and we were treated with the joyous and perfectly blended strains of music by Orlando Lassus. A short encore--a 14th-century British setting of "Ite Missa Est"--by its own strikingly different techniques, beautifully framed the entire concert.

V NEW MUSIC AT YALE

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67 New Haven Register: 17 April 1985

LOCAL

Various performers

Modern works by Yale students, faculty aired

I hate modern music, some people will say. And I invariably think that there are so many different kinds of new music that there must be *something* out there they would enjoy listening to.

Attending two separate concerts Monday of new works by Yale students and faculty only served to reinforce my terrible prejudice that there is some interesting, strangely effective, sometimes quite original and beautiful work being done in the field of musical composition. I did not enjoy equally all of the 14 works by the 12 composers represented on the combined programs. But what a range there was of drastically different styles, esthetic motivations, musical influences.

There were duets. Richard Vi Sung Lee's "Ariel and Caliban" for two harps impersonated Shakespeare's respectively blithe and heavy spirits. Fingernails drawn across the strings, thumping the soundboard, and harmonics were not gratuitous effects; but there was little tension or even counterpoint between the two instruments.

Another Lee duet, for two violins, "The White and Walk of Morning," juxtaposed to greater advantage quasi-Bartókian yearning in the two-part writing with very high notes, gently wavering, which seemed to aspire to a kind of transcendentalism.

Victor Bloom's "Duet" for piano and violoncello was a kind of punk/ classical hybrid. He acknowledged as much in the program--"Demolition '85/ I know, I know"--and sat at Sprague Hall's piano in a blue jumpsuit. Extremely quiet, long-held notes on the [violon]cello introduced new sections that tended to mix aggressive, rambunctious swipes across the cello's strings with huge clusters in the piano's low register. Not a pretty piece, yet there was an authenticity to its obsessed determinism.

Michael Torke's quintet, "The Yellow Pages," was closer to a jazzy rock style than punk. It was also, of all the pieces, most clearly influenced by the gradually modulating rhythmic and harmonic patterns found in the music of Steve Reich or Philip Glass. Torke effectively modulated through closely related styles as well, presenting us with musical puns. The ending was an amusing anticlimax, a couple of plucked notes on the strings.

David Colwell's "Chorale" for brass quintet (intended as a middle movement to a

yet unwritten work) was a short, lush and conservative lyric vaguely reminiscent of Aaron Copland.

Julia Wolfe's "On Seven Star Shoes," performed by an excellent wind quintet, was an extremely idiomatic and charming work. Its form seemed deliciously ambiguous. Was this a complex rondo or a single texture with modernist interruptions?

Composer-in-residence Nicholas Maw had two works performed: the "Flute Quartet" (undated) for flute and three strings, and his 1973 "Personae" for piano solo. The first was in three extended movements, lyrical, dramatic, sometimes virtuosic, filled with contrasting material. Certainly it was as well-crafted as Wolfe's quintet, but I thought it glib at times and ended up admiring her accomplishment more.

Comparing "Personae" to the other work for solo piano, Professor Jonathan Berger's 1983 "Landarico," one could see that they both had absorbed highly sophisticated influences from the modern piano literature (for example, Copland's "Piano Variations" and George Crumb's "Makrokosmos" sets). In each, structural coherence was created through the gradual transformation of a limited number of motives, but whereas Berger achieved a fragile affirmation, Maw's increasingly quixotic contrasts made for a piece that would not give up its secrets easily.

Peter Mueller's Quartet attempted to express a highly absorbed late-Romanticism, but structurally it never quite managed to transcend being a series of episodes of extended tonality. It shared a focus upon minute and asymmetrical fluctuations of material and texture with Michael Klinghoffer's trio "Also Sprach Heraclitus." The members of the trio wore earplugs in order to hear a click-track (like a metronome), against whose regularity they could play their syncopated rhythms.

And there was singing. Sungh-yun Yun set parts of Psalm 130 for soprano and quintet, contrasting impetuous flurries with long held notes, aspiring to the expression of an exalted faith. We heard two arias from An-Lun Huang's Chinese opera "Yue Fei" (to be premiered next year in Beijing, China), which, without the benefit of its eventual orchestration, sounded much like some sketches from a strangely cross-cultural score by Giacomo Puccini.

Last to be mentioned in this long article, but I think finest of all the works, we were treated to four extraordinarily beautiful "Rilke Songs" by Julianna Hall. With Hall at the piano accompanying soprano Karen Burlingame, the world of Arnold Schoenberg's "Pierrot Lunaire" was juxtaposed with the nearly-intact, then gradually distorted, Chopin E-major Prelude. These songs were intimate, melancholy, haunting. Not as

adventuresome as other works on the program, they nonetheless belong as legitimate modern heirs to the great tradition of German lieder.

Strong praise? Perhaps. Let other listeners, even those who thought they hated all that modern stuff, choose the works they enjoyed to listen to more.

68 Sunday Register: 27 October 1985

LOCAL

Various performers [Reviews in Brief]

Originality fills Bluebeard

The first Yale Composers concert on Monday night in Sprague Hall featured a concert version of "Blue Mass," an opera/musical based on the life of Barron Giles de Rais, or Bluebeard, which had played the week before at the Yale Dramat.

An impressive collaboration between graduate students of the Schools of Music and Drama, and even borrowing three fine soloists from the Trinity Boys Choir, "Mass" impressed me more for its uneven but distinguished musical score than for its interesting yet incompletely honed dramatic conception.

The central figure of Bluebeard was not only overburdened but also made schizophrenic by a symbolic schema that would not decide, as composer Robert Elhai told me a few days later, whether this rapist and murderer of young boys was a Hitler or a Jesus. Apparently the audience was to decide. What ultimately emerged, for all of Bluebeard's clammy religious/sexual obsessions, was the weirdly sympathetic portrait of a man misguided in his search for transubstantiation.

Elhai's music, mainly orchestrated by Ted Allen for 11 instruments, had the flavor of Kurt Weill's "Three Penny Opera" or "Marat-Sade." The momentum and intensity of the composition, through all of its varied numbers, was fairly consistently maintained, and admirably performed by the chamber orchestra. Some of the singing weakly projected into Sprague, except for Aloysius Gigl's Bluebeard. But the final result was of an ambitious project that, for all its flaws, showed considerable talent and originality.

69 Sunday Register: 15 December 1985

LOCAL

Various performers [Reviews in Brief]

New music bold, charming

The variety, daring, charm and vitality of the Dec. 9 concert of new music by Yale composers reaffirmed the salutary importance and pleasure which new musical works may offer to adventuresome listeners.

It was an eclectic collection of pieces: Yale's student composers are exploring widely different idioms. Ted Allen's "Foreman Variations," for three singers, three brass players and piano, was a bold, many-layered, expressionist rondo with effective echoes of Kurt Weill and Stravinsky. Pianist Ronald Squibbs was excellent. Graeme Koehne's "Miniature" had a subtly restrained exoticism featuring a sinuous flute part (beautifully performed by Philip Dikeman) accompanied by clarinet and string quartet playing a single F-major chord in and out of focus.

Julianna Hall's "abstracts," a setting of seven poems by e.e.cummings, whimsically captured the poet's self-conscious modernism. It sometimes veered dangerously close to a rarified, hothouse estheticism but this was mitigated by the dramatic projection of soprano Karen Burlingame. Two very short brass fanfares by Richard Lee, essentially interval studies, opened each half.

The two faculty works were very different as well. The Piano Trio by Leon Kirchner, composer-in-residence this fall, was a densely contrapuntal work which mixed serial and other contemporary procedures to express a sometimes dark, vibrant romanticism. I admired best of all Martin Bresnick's "Just Time," unusual for having the french horn play only its natural overtones--a difficult task beautifully executed by Dan Culpepper. In a context of slightly barbed diatonic clusters, the horn generated shifting phases of consonant and dissonant intonation with the players of an excellent woodwind quartet.

70 Sunday Register: 9 February 1986
 Various performers [Reviews in Brief]

LOCAL

Composers' presentations combine seriousness, fun

The playful and the serious may merge, even in high art. New music need not be dry or stuffy, as reaffirmed by the third Yale Composers recital Feb. 3 in Sprague Hall.

Robert Suderburg, MMA '60 and faculty member at Williams College, wrote his 1972 "Night Set for trombone and piano" as a wild Ivesian triptych mixing jazz and circus band riffs, singing, strange noises, and abstract writing reminiscent of Debussy's "Footsteps in the snow." The piece easily could have accommodated an even less careful performance by trombonist Maureen Horgan, MMA '84, and the composer on piano.

Visiting Australian composer Graehme Koehne received a distinguished reading of his 1979 "Twilight Rain" by pianist Clipper Erickson. This piece brilliantly flirted with the boundary between tonal and non-tonal harmonies. Similarly, the succinct first movement of Sun-Yung Yun's String Quartet No. 2, wonderfully played by the Franciscan Quartet, grafted Bartókian modernism onto the tonal resources of late Beethoven.

Michael Klinghoffer's quintet, "Le mythe de Sisyphe," paid a tense, moody tribute to the famous existentialist essay by Albert Camus.

Yuri Ito performed brilliantly on piccolo in Professor Martin Bresnick's charming, Zen-like "High Art" (1983) for piccolo and *toy* piano.

71 Sunday Register: 6 April 1986
 Various performers [Reviews in Brief]

LOCAL

3 at Yale introduce music for viola, keyboard, voices

New music by three Yale composers was aired in Sprague Hall on March 31. Graduate students R. V. S. Lee and Robert Elhai had first performances of, respectively, "Scena con vechii pensieri" (Scene with old thoughts) and "3 movements for viola and harpsichord." Professor Martin Bresnick's 1985 "Two Choral Songs" was commissioned and performed by the Connecticut Hebrew Chorale.

The Chorale, a local amateur group, gave an enthusiastic, respectable run-through of the songs. But these technically difficult pieces would challenge the agility and pitch-control of even a professional choir. In "Roshi, Roshi," harmonic clusters are created by overlapping, contrapuntally complex melodies. "Began Katan" merges a long unison tune with marvelous antiphonal fragments in cross-rhythms. These both deserve performances able to convey Bresnick's sophisticated lyricism and deep humanity.

Solo violinist George Stelluto offered an effectively abstract, if somewhat dead-pan reading of Lee's epigrammatic piece. The "old thoughts" in the title makes veiled allusion to the composer's reworking of the old opera form of the *cavatina*. Recurring passages of slow, sustained notes forced various fast flurries to emerge as hectic asides in an implacable, extended meditation.

Elhai joined violist Eric Koontz in what was an appealing, often amusing collage of Baroque and contemporary gestures. The instruments traded sonorities: the viola's plucked strings in II sounded like the harpsichord's lute stop in I. Koontz gave a warm, expressive performance; Elhai focused our attention on his work's undermining its own pastiche.

72 **New Haven Register: 16 April 1986***LOCAL***Various performers****Composers present works in informal setting**

One of the nice things about Yale Composers concerts is the air of informality which attends the serious listening to lots of new music. Chairs, pianos, recording microphones are casually rearranged between pieces. Music stands are carried on and off stage while people quietly talk about what they've just heard.

It makes for congenial listening, which is just as well: a new work deserves a special concentration and flexibility. Monday saw nine new Yale works performed at Sprague Hall (in a pair of concerts at 4 and 8 p.m.) exhibiting a wide range of compositional idioms and esthetic goals.

Toward one end of the spectrum, informality was written into the music. Deniz Ulben's "Lapsus Linguae" (slip of the tongue) was a self-thwarting chorale that kept getting interrupted by long silences, mistakes, ordinary noises, and by the interactions between the somewhat quarrelsome personalities enacted by the members of a brass quintet. (It was reminiscent of Charles Ives' "String Quartet No. 2.") Its "formless form" might have worked better had the chorale material being deconstructed been clearer from the outset.

More radical in its controlled aleatory was "Signalling" by faculty composer-in-residence Eric Salzman. Eight musicians improvised various sounds (including talking) according to hand gestures ordered spontaneously by the conductor, Martin Bresnick. A wavy hand elicited murmurs, another signal requested short repeated fragments, another one urged a virtuosic solo. The fascinating process (not far from Salzman's inspired political collage "Nude Paper Sermon") lasted, in this case, six minutes, 43 seconds.

A third theater piece was Julianna Hall's "Masques," another of her poised, witty song miniatures, this time a setting of two poems by Paul Verlaine for soprano, piccolo, cello and piano. There were props: a chair, a table with a mask on it. Toward the end, the performers moved around and off the stage. Much of "Masques" suggested the musical and theatrical gestures of George Crumb. Spoken and sung portions were dramatically delivered by Karen Burlingame.

A virtuoso double bass solo, "Vaganza!," written by John Opferkuch and marvelously performed by James Andrews, combined hard and soft plucked notes, slides,

and harmonics in a relatively free form. An excellent reading of another vocal work, Julia Wolfe's "Song at Daybreak," was sung by the Yale Camerata with piano, clarinet, cello and percussion. Here I felt the influence of Steve Reich's beautiful "Tehillim" (and parts of Stravinsky's "Symphony of Psalms").

Wolfe's lyricism contrasted with the somewhat sterner setting of an e.e.cummings poem by undergraduate Charles Kroengold, "Night's Loose Sack." Opening with an extraordinary solo by Burlingame, this piece flirted with a sophisticated romanticism and contained some strong ideas.

Sterner still was a strange piano and clarinet duet, "Di Vivere," by Yale graduate Chester Biscardi. Despite fast flurries, its basic pulse was slow, preturbingly implacable. Keith Johnson's "Music for Violin and Marimba" (played with piano) had a strident beginning, a lyrical center, and a surprisingly lush finale (using altered dominant ninth chords).

Tom Gerou's "Fantasy" for solo piano was an appealingly restless, florid piece in one movement. Robert Maggio's "Distant Mirrors" received a sensitive performance by Ken Freed, violin, and Marc Teicholz, guitar. Despite its surface buoyancy, there was a tragic undercurrent which was moving.

VI JAZZ & OTHER MUSICS

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73 Sunday Register: 3 November 1985

LOCAL

Mitchell-Ruff Duo [Reviews in Brief]

Mitchell-Ruff marvelous

For a Mitchell-Ruff jazz concert there is never any need for a printed program. As fans of this extraordinary duo know quite well, one of the charming delights to look forward to is the amusing way Willie Ruff introduces each of their tunes: "Mr. Mitchell can't resist playing you the following."

The humor of this affected formality toward someone Ruff has played jazz with for more than 30 years--they are the oldest jazz group still together [without any changes in personnel]--is but one of the ways they create complete rapport with their audiences.

Friday night's concert in Sprague Hall was no exception. The group's energy, elegance, joy, power and humor were completely infectious, and there was more than one standing ovation.

[Dwike] Mitchell's prodigious piano playing has not only been influenced by the blues, spirituals and mainstream jazz styles but by Liszt, Chopin and Debussy as well. His mastery of these and other idioms was evident in the precipitous and effortless shift from one to another. Ruff, when playing bass, supported these changes with the intuition honed of their years together. Until the last encore, he avoided the typical walking bass accompaniment, choosing instead a more varied, sophisticated counterpoint. His french horn solos were invariably elegant meditations, achieving a gorgeous tone except for a few instances of deliberately strident barnstorming blasts.

74 Sunday Register: 11 May 1986

LOCAL

Allen Lowe & Tom Flanders

Jazz saxophonist and storyteller provide thought-provoking fare

One of the many happy results of the revitalization of State Street is to be found at

977 State--the Showplace Gallery.

This small, charming space opened on March 3, 1985 to establish (as a sign inside tells us) "a permanent space dedicated to promoting the arts." It has been rented since for community art exhibits and, more recently, for concerts of folk and jazz music.

Friday night saw the fifth in a series of informal concerts sponsored by Cliff Furnald and David Schwartz of WYBC radio's "Heritage Program" in collaboration with the Upper State Street Association. Featured performers were Allen Lowe, jazz saxophonist, and Tom Flanders, a native American storyteller and folk singer.

Lowe opened the program with unusual solo improvisations on classic jazz tunes by Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, Dizzy Gillespie and others.

With all rhythmic and harmonic accompaniment missing, Lowe's improvisatory gifts were put to the test. Yet, whether he played his Selmer Mark VI tenor sax or his Conn alto, Lowe met the challenge with a series of passionately delivered and structurally intricate variations on the classic tunes.

In the fast bebop pieces--Parker's "Moose the Mooche" or Gillespie's "Groovin High"--Lowe adopted a rhythmically precise, hard-driving style.

In the slower ballads, like Monk's "Round Midnight," the rhythmic pulse was more relaxed, the shape abstract, the expression more intimate. Especially beautiful was Lowe's own mournful homage "Goodbye Dickie Wells," written for the recently deceased Count Basie trombone player.

Lowe offered interesting historical information after each tune. He obviously knows a great deal about jazz. He has taught it, and has also organized an upcoming jazz symposium at the Educational Center for the Arts on Saturday and May 18 [next Saturday and Sunday].

Despite the musical differences, Lowe and Flanders both sought to inform their audience about the cultural heritages they were keeping alive.

Flanders, an Eastern Cherokee--or, properly, a member of the Ahni Yuhn Wiya tribe--presented a variety of songs, stories and ruminations derived from and inspired by the native American culture all across the United States.

Flanders introduced his program by speaking of the need for all of us to know our roots: "If you don't know where you're from, you're not anywhere now."

He told an Alaskan Creation story with Raven as the Trickster who releases the stars, moon and sun from the bags of an envious god.

Later, playing a small flute--"used to woo fair maidens"--he led into another story

about a shy man who has to prove his courage and manhood. On the level of what it is to be human, his roots and ours converged.

The central image of his performance was the circle, the most important instrument his round Indian drum--"the heartbeat of our people."

A 500-year-old war chant, used later at Wounded Knee to inspire courage, was powerfully delivered full voice in a high falsetto and accompanied by the drum.

Flanders also showed the audience two traditional dances, the rabbit dance and the circle dance from the Southern Plains, again regulated and inspired by the drum.

Flanders ended with two songs, accompanied by guitar, which showed a more bitter side to his general optimism: a talking blues about drowning in his own excrement, and Patrick Skye's tragic "Ira Hayes."

75 New Haven Register: 22 Sept. 1985
Max Roach Quartet

IMPORTED

**Max Roach delivers sonic storm;
 Drummer extraordinaire's quartet dazzles crowd**

It is easily said: The Max Roach Quartet on Friday evening took Yale University's Sprague Hall by storm. For two hours they commanded the space with the authority of their extraordinary seriousness, sophistication and technically prodigious musicality.

With the recent deaths of both Jo Jones and Philly Joe Jones, Max Roach, at 60, is indisputably one of the greatest jazz drummers in the world. His 40-year career is a map of connections with the finest musicians in the history of jazz--Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Coleman Hawkins, Miles Davis, Duke Ellington, Benny Carter, Stan Getz, Charles Mingus, Clifford Brown, Dexter Gordon, J. J. Johnson.

With these credentials, Roach might well seem intimidating to musicians of a younger generation. Yet the three fabulously talented young artists who collaborated with Roach in Sprague were obviously inspired to greatness themselves: Cecil Bridgewater on trumpet, Odean Pope on tenor saxophone, and Tyrone Brown on fretless electric bass.

The absence of a piano was refreshing.

The concert opened with a couple of immediately fascinating and elegant drum solos. Setting the pulse with bass drum and high-hat cymbal, Roach created asymmetrically phrased structures carefully, lucidly, defined by pockets of silence. His drumsticks came together midflight between phrases in a gesture not unlike a prayer. It was to become a characteristic and profoundly moving gesture, an homage to silence, to the peace of spirit behind even the most frenetic and aggressive playing.

It is true that much of the music of the evening was set at a driving pace--this was generally "hot" jazz (if that label is still useful). The musical idiom was harmonically and rhythmically complex, requiring considerable concentration, and perhaps some previous exposure, for one to relish its headlong, scintillating beauty.

And yet the music was made accessible by virtue of the kind of democracy this group clearly was. The entire first half of the program, for example, consisted of a Bridgewater composition, "Scot Free," a vehicle for every member of the group to take extended solos. It was a study of contrasts, whose overall form was constantly being articulated by Roach's own uncanny intuitions.

The trumpeter's playing tended toward long, fluid melodic lines; whereas the saxophonist favored both more abstract and intensely personal expression. He later eventually explored multiphonics (producing more than one note simultaneously). The bassist often produced an extremely wide vibrato which resembled a sitar, or else raced up and down the fingerboard in fantastic runs.

As for Roach, he exemplified the paradox that, with so many drums and cymbals to choose from, the secret of effective playing is economy. (If you use all of your resources all of the time, you're quickly used up.) For one entire section, he only played brushes on the snare, only later adding a cymbal.

"Round Midnight" opened the second half, a relatively short version, during which Bridgewater quoted from another Thelonious Monk composition, "Epistrophy." A latin tune followed, featuring Roach's most brilliant solo of the evening, seamlessly constructed.

This was followed by the old chestnut "Summertime," offered however as a kind of tribute to the beginnings of jazz--with the spirit of "St. James Infirmary," of "Motherless Child," of the blues. The trumpeter used only his mouthpiece at the end, creating a comic variation on the hand-held wa-wa he had used at the beginning. For an encore, Roach took his high-hat to the front of the stage and gave the audience a virtuoso etude. He received a

standing ovation.

A final note: Max Roach and his quartet appeared because Roach became a Duke Ellington Fellow at Yale in 1972 when the great jazz french horn player and scholar, Willie Ruff, first inaugurated the great Ellington Fellowship series. Roach, earlier that day, gave a workshop-demonstration to New Haven school children, and his presence marked the beginning of this new 1985-86 season. The concert was not merely a virtuosic display, but a living example of the kind of learning that greatness inspires.

76 Sunday Register: 17 November 1985

IMPORTED

Odetta [Reviews in Brief]

Odetta spiritually uplifting sans God

Legendary folksinger Odetta delighted nearly 200 people in Sprague Hall Friday night. Having been honored as a Duke Ellington Fellow at Yale in 1972 with 40 other distinguished black musicians, Odetta was for the fourth time fulfilling her side of the bargain--to periodically offer concerts to New Haven public school children and to members of the Yale-New Haven community. Earlier in the day she sang to sixth-graders at the Roberto Clemente school.

She has an extraordinary voice. Whether playing her guitar or singing a capella, she moves effortlessly from a loud commanding cry to the softest, highest notes imaginable--a huge 5-octave range in all. But it is the range of feelings she shares, her sorrow for the disenfranchised, her sense of humor and political realism, her unwavering belief in people's basic humanity, that makes her concerts so powerful and spiritually uplifting.

She never said the name of God. But she got the audience to sing familiar children's songs with her many times, transforming the concert hall into the shared space of a community. And in the final encore, as though to make vivid her hope that we too could see ourselves as God's children, she left the stage while all of Sprague resounded with the strains of "Amazing Grace."

77 *Journal-Courier*: 10 December 1985

IMPORTED

Benny Goodman

Goodman brings taste of history

Delighted jazz enthusiasts packed Woolsey Hall Sunday evening for an historic concert by clarinetist Benny Goodman and his band. The return to New Haven by so legendary a musician would have been exciting anyway. But what made this appearance particularly moving was the possibility that for the ailing King of Swing this might prove to be his farewell performance for New Haven jazz fans.

The Louisiana Repertory Jazz Ensemble played on the first half of the program as "warm-up band" for a jazz audience that scarcely needed warming up at all. This superb septet from New Orleans (clarinet, cornet, banjo, trombone, bass, piano, drums) does more than just play Dixieland jazz. Combining their own personal experience with extensive musicological research, they try to play it as it once was played.

Clarinetist Frederick Starr (scholar, and president of Oberlin College) served as narrator in what turned out to be a kind of mini-history of early jazz. He charmingly introduced tunes that illustrated the various influences on jazz from the brass band, the West Indies, hymns and spirituals, and, of course, [from] the blues. Then the group performed pieces from two of the greatest Dixieland composers, Jelly Roll Morton and King Oliver.

If not as spontaneously brash or deliberately rough as, say, the Preservation Hall band's performances, these were not merely dusty historical reconstructions. From the very first drum introduction, the spirit, not just the authentic style, of Dixieland was there, and the audience members were soon tapping their feet.

After intermission the history lesson in a sense continued. As the Benny Goodman band set up, we moved into the next great jazz era of Big Band swing. Five saxes, four trumpets, three trombones, piano, guitar, bass, drums (greatly expanded) replaced the septet. With the great clarinetist playing solos and directing the group, the band played arrangements by the great jazz orchestrator Fletcher Henderson.

"I Would Do Most Anything For You," and "King Porter Stomp" were among the first tunes. Then singer Carrie Smith came on to sing a Bessie Smith song, "Pig Foot and a Bottle of Beer," and to lead the audience in a version of "Ja-Da."

This was an excellent band, though many were too young to have grown up with

the style of jazz they were performing. All the more to their credit. One thing was clear: the respect they had for their famous leader.

Goodman himself was still incredible to watch and listen to.

Watching this now white-haired musician lean back in his chair, one foot raised, to wail with the band, or to send a quiet solo to the top rafters of Woolsey, in his old, favorite style of jazz, was to think the years had rolled away and at the same time to know they hadn't.

78 New Haven Register: 25 February 1986

IMPORTED

Beijing Central Conservatory

Chinese musicians enchant Sprague Hall

China came to Sprague Hall on Monday night. Presently in the middle of a U.S. tour, seven superb musicians from Beijing's Central Conservatory captivated their audience with nearly two hours of music played on traditional Chinese instruments.

They may have been the visitors, honoring their hosts by wearing Western concert garb. But most of us there were tourists, listening intently to incalculably strange sounds.

The wonderful paradox of the evening was to feel released by the joy of hearing music unlike our own and astonished by the mystery of the music speaking so directly.

A series of solo pieces, showing off each of the instruments, was interspersed with ensemble works.

The *qin* was first, a seven-stringed zither. Based on notation from 1423, this Classical School piece used sounds not unlike those of an Appalachian dulcimer (though gentler). Slides, hammer-ons, harmonics, and a pedal drone were all employed.

Then the *qin* was played opposite a membraned cross flute, the *di*. Ornamented unison (heterophony) prevailed. The rhythm was more regular than in the preceding piece, but sinuous speeding up and slowing down was built into the pulse.

The dramatic, virtuosic military school [Military School] piece which followed,

played on the *pipa* (a Chinese lute), was in many ways the high point of the evening. Complex melodic counterpoint alternated with very fast flamenco-like strumming. (Behind the musician performing with such expression and power stood two Steinway grand pianos and a harpsichord, like awkward behemoths of Western musical technology.)

Flute-like, but huskier, was the *xun*--a clay ocarina, like an egg with holes, modeled after one discovered in a tomb 3,500 years old. A mouth organ, the *sheng*, supported its long melodies with eerie, shimmering harmonies: "Incense for the Repose of the Soul," an example of Taoist folk music.

Two modern compositions on the *erhu*, a two-stringed fiddle, were oddly less satisfying. The second solo, especially, written by an intellectual who had studied Western music, used a violin-style vibrato. To my ears, it sounded stranger than the strange ancient sounds I was attempting to make familiar.

The first ensemble pieces featured most of these instruments plus a four-stringed guitar, the *ruan*, and percussion--a drum, four tuned bells, temple blocks, a pair of wood blocks. In its answering phrases and rhythmic vitality and syncopation, it was like hearing Chinese jazz (though without any improvisation).

The last ensemble works were played with percussion alone (hand-cymbals, small gongs, and the drum). Aside from overlapping rhythmic patterns, variety was created through damping procedures.

Thunder over the lake, answered by the clapping of many hands.

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79 *Journal-Courier*: 17 October 1984*IMPORTED***Sankai Juku****Sankai Juku enchants**

Tuesday evening's chilling and fascinating performance by Sankai Juku launched a new season of dance at the Shubert Theater, and perhaps a long-awaited dance renaissance for New Haven as well.

On tour throughout North America, having just performed at the White House, Sankai Juku is one of the leading Japanese avant-garde dance companies. But it was we in the audience who found ourselves tourists in a strange land.

The trancelike, mythopoeic world conjured up in the seven scenes of the single, extended work of the evening, "Kinkan Shonen" ('The Kumquat Seed'), was haunting and disturbing in its alien, uncanny otherness. In the post-War dance-theater tradition of Japanese Buto, the five men of Sankai Juku had shaved their heads and were dusted white over their often nearly naked bodies. Austere, slow-motion gestures mixing with a kind of expressionistic intensity of feeling conspired to create a paradox of ritual and immediacy.

The paradox was further intensified in the third scene, which explored "the vanity of nature." One of the troupe came on clutching a live peacock, then released it onto the stage in a flurry of feathers, where it could roam at will for the next 40 minutes. In fact, it barely moved at all, as though it too had mastered the rigors of Buto; or not until one of the troupe, marvelously impersonating a kind of Zen monk, suddenly jumped for it, causing it to leap into the orchestra pit. Having a live bird on stage was itself a Zen move. The truly unpredictable nature of its presence--was it about to fly?--operated in a strange kind of tension with the carefully artificial ceremonies.

He was a Zen monk because his sense of humor extended to everything: to the silly bird, to his own dwarflike body, sometimes, it seemed, to members of the audience itself for indulging in the "vanity" of taking themselves, even Sankai Juku, seriously. His was a creaking laugh, however, and there was suffering in his enactment as much as a sense of the absurd.

Other esthetic tensions, from the spectre of war to an expression of male sexuality, were as marvelously integrated as the various fragments we heard on the soundtrack: from bagpipes and drums to electronics, [from] an arrangement of Dvořák's 'New World' Symphony [or] rock 'n' roll with harmonica and conga drums to a cut off

Miles Davis's "Kind of Blue" album.

Technically, the control and stamina of the troupe was extraordinary. 'Kinkan Shonen' has had the time since its 1978 premiere to mature, to gain in both finesse and daring. Experts in the huge repertory of gestures that falls under the general semiotic rubric of "dance," Sankai Juku ended their evening with one gesture that was particularly touching--a waving goodbye, slightly stylized, but linking them with the audience in a way that was almost personal.

80 Sunday Register: 2 December 1984

IMPORTED

Alvin Ailey Repertory Ensemble

Ailey dancers give sassy Palace performance

The news that the Alvin Ailey Repertory Ensemble was coming to New Haven clearly got around because Friday night's concert at the Palace was sold out.

Under the artistic direction of Sylvia Water, this energetic company of 11 talented young dancers, trained at the Ailey school, the American Dance Center in New York, presented three dance works. Their hybrid styles of jazz dance, modern, and some African dance were obviously representative of Alvin Ailey's own special contribution to the landscape of modern dance. But neither "Icefire," "The Road of the Phoebe Snow," nor "Colony" had been choreographed by Ailey himself. And where the dancing sparkled, the pieces themselves showed less than Ailey's brilliant shine.

I personally admired Fred Benjamin's "Icefire" the best. Choreographed to the contemporary jazz of Pat Metheney and Lyle Mays, this three-part work featured all of the six women and five men of the company. Like the lighting projected on the background scrim, which changed from cool blue to rose to a red-orange, this piece moved from ice to fire. It accumulated a momentum of passionate affirmation and joyous exuberance.

The music's repetitious, gently swirling, overlapping phrases in the first section was mirrored by seven of the dancers moving in and out of sync with one another. The dancing from the start, and throughout the piece, was all about extending, upwards,

outwards. Nothing was constricted, tense or tight.

The second part was constructed as a series of duets, accompanied by music with a more regular pulse. One particularly lovely pose, perfectly executed, earned the audience's spontaneous applause: one of the women stood balanced outward on a man's thighs, like a ship's figurehead. What was interesting about these exclusively heterosexual duets (particularly when one woman, coquettishly, broke in on one of the couples dancing) was the way in which a vague narrative resonance began to shape itself within the context of a piece that was essentially abstract. The unabashed enjoyment of their bodies' sensual expression by the Ailey dancers probably only emphasized what is a part of the inevitable meanings we associate with a man and a woman dancing together anyway.

In the last section, things really heated up. A faster samba required even more precise dancing; subdivisions in the music were captured in the dance. By this time all eleven dancers were swirling on stage, performing with obvious pleasure all of the dance combinations culled from the jazz-dance repertory of gesture. Then it all ended, all of them in a group on the floor, pulling back slowly away from the audience.

Right from the beginning of Talley Beatty's "The Road of the Phoebe Snow" it was clear that this was a very different piece indeed. A pulsing green to red to green background eerily illumines the body of a woman outstretched on stage, surrounded by nine sweatshirt-clad dancers. She is carried off. The music is fast, rather violent, the first in a collection of Big Band compositions by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn.

An urban landscape, in other words, whose quite explicit narrative turns out to have more than a little in common with that 1957 composition by Leonard Bernstein, "West Side Story." The gestures of this piece were tense, claustrophobic. Finger-snapping, collisions between the dancers, a barely restrained level of violence led up gradually to a final rape scene. Then the piece returned to the beginning.

There was some very hot dancing in this throughout. But its effectiveness was somewhat marred, for me, by the easy comparison most everyone there must have made with the Bernstein piece. I have no way to know for sure, but I assumed the presence of the interracial couple in the narrative was specifically dictated by the choreographer.

Finally "Colony," a futuristic piece by Bill Gornel that used electronic musics by Vangelis and Ashra, concluded the program. It seemed to me more disjointed than the other two had been, even though its place in the concert effectively dispelled the somewhat sombre mood we'd just experienced. This was in many ways a return to the exuberance of the first work. But there was something forced about the dancers' smiles this time round.

And I thought by the end it was more a potpourri of gestures than having the clarity of a well-designed choreography.

Nonetheless I walked away agreeing with a woman I overheard after the first piece: "They have such *sass*--I love it!"

81 Sunday Register: 16 January 1985

IMPORTED

Mazowsze

Mazowsze dance at the Shubert

The Shubert was packed to the rafters last night for a charming, infectiously high-spirited evening of dancing and singing by the Polish folk dance troupe Mazowsze.

The audience was clearly delighted, judging from the hearty applause at the end of each piece and even occasional clapping along with the music. For at least the two hours that we were there, the bitter New Haven cold was forgotten, our spirits thawed by the gaiety and warmth of this unique company.

By the end, Mazowsze had earned a standing ovation.

Accompanied by a pit orchestra (and occasionally by a handful of musicians up on the stage), the company performed a series of highly varied vignettes, samples of their rich folk heritage, collected and adapted from 12 regions throughout Poland.

The authentic folk costumes, some of them antiques, were dazzling and constantly changing. Every single number required a new set of costumes for both the men and the women, and all of the selections of both 50-minute sets were performed consecutively without a break. (According to the program, Mazowsze's 100 dancers and singers would have made by the end of the evening 1,000 costume changes!)

The women wore brightly colored skirts with beautifully embroidered blouses or were decked in chiffon dresses, their hair up in a circular braid. The men wore tunics and boots, or *kakkis* with bells; at the start of the second half, the men appeared in officers' full dress uniforms. There were caps and hats and shawls, brocades and velvet borders.

Among the highlights of the evening, there was a marvelously boisterous carnival

scene. Men appeared with funny noses; others wore a horse's head, or costumes of a frog and a stork. There was a kind a whirling dervish of a confetti monster, rolling about like a big shaggy dog, and a couple of burlap-sack people with faces painted on both sides. The audience couldn't stop laughing.

There were mazurkas and polonaises, on the one hand, and more acrobatic numbers on the other, the men incorporating staves, or chairs, or axes. A later number had some rather imaginative stage business with the interweaving of two separate sets of garlands, held by both the men and women.

The troupe proved amazingly adept at using the Shubert stage, though it was easy to imagine them in a great field, at a wedding or a village festival. There was an obvious dazzle to their performance, with the constant shift from one piece to the next and with the costumes. But much of their expertise was hidden behind the appearance of effortlessness, obviously a result of carefully rehearsed synchronization of movements.

Of course, there was not the slightest allusion to the Solidarity union or to the present state of political anguish in Poland. Instead, this was a performance that was all about Poland as a rich repository of folk traditions and a place of joy, energy, and swirls of bright colors.

82 Sunday Register: 17 February 1985
Connecticut Ballet

LOCAL

Adroit Connecticut Ballet draws viewer into the dance

The world of ballet (as that of classical music) may well seem daunting to the uninitiated. Before attending a ballet, the novice might ask: Are not the conventions used to choreograph a piece too sophisticated for me to appreciate properly? And, because ballet demands *such* precision and control, must not a performance be perfect if it is to entertain at all?

Not necessarily--judging from last night's charmingly accessible performance at the Palace by the Connecticut Ballet. For the ballet's first repertory performance of the

season, it cleanly and adroitly presented two large-scale works and two smaller pieces in a manner that drew the spectators into the world of dance.

"Suite de Scarlatti," choreographed by artistic director Robert Vickrey, was a study of energetic symmetries. Danced to the slightly overorchestrated arrangements of Scarlatti keyboard music by Vincenzo Tommasini, this five-movement work featured the somewhat unusual combination of three male and six female dancers. All the possible permutations of nine were explored, in a spirit that mirrored the music's own stately decorum, Italianate warmth and energy.

If in the first two movements, set to fast tempos, the dancers displayed an infectious joy, lightness of spirit and precision timing, the third movement's Andante was introspective, even slightly wan.

The fourth movement, to an earlier choreography by dancer and critic Ernestine Stodelle, was a small gem of a solo. Its humorous stylizations were reminiscent of *commedia dell'arte*, the humor, though, depending on the regularities of the music. Up on point, Lynne Watt Gibson came flatly down at the music's cadence; or, motionless, a flick of the wrist coincided with the music's downbeat.

Half mime, half doll, Lynne Watt Gibson delivered her performance nicely tongue in cheek, ending it with the classic joke of all dancing: She pretended to lose her balance.

The last movement began with a fugue, each entrance calling forth new dancers, then moved into an even faster section that called from the dancers a greater kind of virtuosic abandon. All in all, this Vickrey work was well balanced and sharply conceived.

George Balanchine's 1953 work, "Valse Fantasie," featured Gibson and Noble Barker as leads, supported by four female dancers. Barker's solos were subtle, rather than projecting great dramatic presence, despite the challenging demands of the part.

It is a curious work. This homage to the ballet waltz, all clean lines and a kind of condensed lyricism, seemed to barely acknowledge the restless romanticism of Mikhail Glinka's orchestral score.

Bruce Wells' "Madrilene Pas de Deux" was superbly danced by Robin Welch and Ake Pakarinen. This was a piece in the Spanish style, accompanied, not surprisingly, by Jules Massenet's ballet score to "Le Cid."

The dancers were well matched. Welch, associate director of the ballet, demonstrates extraordinary suppleness and grace, and she projects at all times a sheer love of ballet. Finnish-born Pakarinen showed power and charisma. Of all the evening's

works, this was the most overtly sensual, and it played upon varying modes of coy rejection and heated abandon. It meant to be dazzling, and it dazzled.

Concluding the program, the entire troupe performed "Konservatoriet," by the great Danish-French choreographer August Bournonville. This 1849 masterpiece was the most ambitious work on the program. It was also the most exposed.

Purporting to take place in a ballet conservatory classroom, without the convenience of scene shifts, we watched all the dancers run through many different combinations of movement. What makes the work so charmingly effective is the Degas-like informality of the dancers *not* dancing at any given moment, so that there is a wonderfully maintained tension between the fiction of the classroom and the fact of this being a live performance.

It was well delivered, and there were not a few moments of *tour de force*.

Nothing about the performance served to intimidate. And even if a critic may feel ambivalent about providing "advertisements" for cultural events (because criticism can be so much more), it is a pleasure to recommend the Connecticut Ballet.

83 New Haven Register: 26 March 1985
Ballet Folclorico Nacional de Mexico

IMPORTED

Palace hosts ballet troupe

Sunday night, the national folk-dance troupe on tour from Mexico, the *Ballet Folclorico Nacional de Mexico*, brought an evening of exuberant spirits and bright costumes to a generally enthusiastic audience at the Palace Performing Arts Center.

This dance concert was not unlike the one performed by the Polish dance troupe, the Mazowsze, a few months back. A series of short vignettes, with colorful costumes and a few props, were danced to indigenous music performed on stage (and sometimes on tape) to illustrate the variety of a national cultural tradition.

Like an anthropologist visiting a foreign culture, the critic must sometimes be wary of his desire to finalize what should only be tentative judgments. Otherwise, a kind

of ethnocentrism creeps in that distorts the genuinely different spirit of the other culture. For reasons difficult to analyze, I felt less charmed and less excited by *Folclorico de México* than I had by Mazowsze; yet these reactions should not be construed as hard and fast conclusions about a concert I visited, so to speak, as a tourist.

Certainly there was variety in the range of different scenes and in the gay costumes that accompanied each one. There were rural dances, the men and women barefoot and sporting white embroidered shirts and skirts; and urban dances, the men dressed up in deerskin jackets and the women in green and pink.

There were a couple of ritualistic enactments. In one, the men wore huge headdresses and capes with mirrors, which sent circles of light around the walls. In another, the men wore red and gold costumes and great plumed semi-circles on their heads, like a peacock's fan, blue on one side and rainbow colored on the other. These were sometimes stately, sometimes frenetic dances that relied on formalized patterns of symmetry.

In another scene, one of my favorites, three bare-chested men depicted two hunters and a deer, who eventually is shot by bow and arrow. Notwithstanding its stylized primitivism, this dance came closest to the kind of abstract "pure" movement we associate with ballet or modern dance.

Courtship and marriage were common themes throughout the evening. There was even the obligatory macho ritual of two men fighting over a woman, though this dance was curiously divided between stylization and real physical violence. Near the end of the concert, we witnessed some fairly extraordinary rope tricks, a man swirling a lasso round him, jumping, dancing through it.

The most common style of dancing, however, involved some loud and rhythmic tap-dancing that accentuated the off-beat accents of the music performed on stage. Impressive for demonstrating how well the ensemble could synchronize their patterns, this was nonetheless a simpler kind of dancing than grew up alongside American jazz, or than we've seen on film by Fred Astaire or Gene Kelly. Even without making the comparison, I was sometimes bored.

The band of musicians was usually composed of two trumpets, four violins, three guitars (including a large acoustic six-string bass guitar), and sometimes cymbals and bass drum as well. Despite its zest, I thought the music fairly repetitious. On the other hand, there was a truly wonderful moment when a trio stepped out by themselves to play guitars and a kind of adapted harp on wheels. The harp player was extraordinary, picking bass

notes with his right hand, florid melodies with his left.

84 Sunday Register: 21 April 1985
Joffrey II

IMPORTED

The Joffrey II Dancers explore some modern movements

Most every professional ballet company has its own school, and occasionally we may attend a dance concert featuring the best of its aspiring apprentices.

During the Christmas season, for example, Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker Ballet" affords young dancers (often children) the crucial experience of performing before an audience. To enjoy such a performance probably requires that we restrain our highest critical standards. To expect the achievements of a Nureyev would be frustrating and disappointing.

In the case of ballet-master Robert Joffrey's organization, there is a group which falls between the Joffrey Ballet School and the fully professional Joffrey Ballet itself: the Joffrey II Dancers.

Originally formed in 1969, the company attracts the finest young dancers (between 16 and 22 years old) from America, England and Canada. They train in New York and then spend four to six months a year on tour. When they are promoted to the Joffrey Ballet, or another company, new dancers take their place.

The Joffrey II performed a program of four works on Friday night at the Palace and, while not quite on the level of the Ballet, were an alert and charming troupe whose technical and artistic accomplishments deserved the fullest critical attention.

All but one of the pieces were examples of modern ballet. In the first, Choo San Goh's 1979 "Momentum," the costumes immediately alerted us to the work's modern flavor. Five pairs of dancers wore white tights with colored, diagonal stripes running the length of their bodies. They were at first huddled in the middle of the stage, but then they broke out of their circle to generate a series of imaginatively asymmetrical dance episodes.

The music was from Serge Prokofiev's Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra

(1911). Repeating motives--some fast steps on point at important junctures, or a hand movement mirroring the music's arabesques of melody--linked the dance with the music in a way that was clearly "classical." The final tableau duplicated the opening's group of dancers huddling, in the same way that Prokofiev brings back his opening theme.

But the classical was held in a state of tension with modern elements. During a wonderful *pas de deux*, the woman dancer is actually stood on her head--only to *gracefully* swoon out of it.

Especially good were the two main pairs of dancers: Jennifer Habig and Geoffrey Rhue, Johanna Snyder and Patrick Parsons.

Tensions between modern and traditional movements were explored even more overtly in Lance Westergard's "Double Duets," choreographed in the last year to composer David Koblitz's "Saving Graces."

Here, two male dancers dressed in casual-chic (tan pants, white shirts and thin ties), dance opposite a man and woman dressed in black velvet tops over black tights. Visually, it was an obvious (but effective) metaphor for the two different styles, but as the piece moved on, the styles overlapped more and more. If initially the two pairs ignored each other, by the end they had all danced with one another; the two "moderns" had given each other ballet lifts, the two "traditionals" had occasionally burst into a modern lyricism.

Alexander Sukonnik and Douglas Vlaskamp (in tan) and Cynthia Giannini and Joseph Schnell (in velvet) brought just the right kind of light touch to this work to make it really interesting. Overstated, it would have been obvious and banal.

French composer Leo Delibes's 1876 "Sylvia," originally a grand mythological "ballet-pantomime," was appropriately the inspiration for a very amusing, almost sci-fi work choreographed by Ann Marie De Angelo in 1982 called "In Kazmidity." As the notes explained, Kazmidity is a feminist kingdom inhabited by the souls of unfulfilled ballerinas who capture young mortal men to teach them the everlasting Freedom of Dance.

Here was modern ballet at its most parodistic. From beginning to end, it pokes fun of all of the traditional ballet movements. Dancers stumble into one another, start an elegant gesture only to distort it *en route*. The main narrative--teaching this poor mortal klutz how to dance ballet--was occasion for many gags.

And yet the klutz (Jeffrey Neeck) learns, since Johanna Snyder, as Queen of the Kazmites, is the one teaching. Her ballet is superb, and, by the end, so is his. It is to the credit of the company that this never quite dissolved into mere slapstick. Throughout all of the farce, the timing was clean, the dancing filled with challenges.

Only in the fourth, truly classical piece, the "Coppelia Pas De Deux" by K. Sergeyev and Hans Meister (also to music by Delibes), did I feel there was a lack of sufficient experience on the part of the dancers to express the kind of grace and depth required. Habig and Neecks gave a somewhat tense performance, which did not, however, mar the overall impression of the Joffrey II as a fresh, professional company engaged in exploring different aspects of modernism.

85 Sunday Register: 12 May 1985
Connecticut Ballet [Feature]

LOCAL

A 'Noble' future for Ballet

Transitions may be difficult but important periods of self-assessment and growth, whether for an individual or for a performing arts organization.

The Connecticut Ballet Company is entering its own period of transition. From the comments made in a recent interview by two of the key players, Robert Vickrey and Noble Barker, it seems likely that the Ballet will be strengthened by the challenge of meeting its upcoming changes.

Artistic Director Vickrey, and Associate Director and prima ballerina Robin Welch, his wife, founded the company 13 years ago. Since then, they have devoted their energies to building the company's repertory and teaching in its ballet school. Now their trajectories are set for Omaha, Neb.

Their duties there will not be so different from what they have already been doing in New Haven. Come August, Vickrey will take on the joint responsibilities of Artistic Director of the Omaha Ballet and Director of its school. Welch will continue her choreography, dancing and teaching as well.

According to Vickrey, the Omaha Ballet is made up of nine women and five men (the same as the present Connecticut company) and is similar in orientation and style to New Haven's. But Omaha itself is a city of 800,000 people which receives fairly strong funding for its arts organizations. It has its own opera company and symphony orchestra.

As we talked, Vickrey was clearly excited by the prospects of his new adventure. But he also said, in his gentle and understated way, that it had been "a difficult decision to make." Then he went on to paraphrase George Bernard Shaw's famous dictum that everyone should shake up his life every eight years or so. "In my case," he added wryly, "I guess I'm overdue for a change."

The Connecticut Ballet's transition is also being shared by choreographer and dancer Noble Barker. He has agreed to become its Interim Artistic Director for one year, during which time a search committee will interview various candidates for the permanent position. Barker may himself apply, depending upon, I gathered, how much time administrative responsibilities might take away from choreography.

Barker has been with the Ballet for eight years, and he has choreographed eleven works for the company. He has also taught ballet at Yale for five years; his teaching there will be curtailed to one class a week, but he will continue as Faculty Advisor to the Yale Dancers.

I asked him the obvious question, what changes did he wish to bring about? He replied, discreetly, that a year was not enough time to make many changes, and that much depended upon the Board. Even so, he wouldn't mind seeing some more contemporary directions explored to balance the more strictly classical work that has been the focus in recent years.

His own choreography has been modernist in orientation. "36/GRID/25" was featured on Connecticut Public Television in 1981, and it is on the upcoming final repertory weekend of the season, this Friday and Saturday. Works by Balanchine, Bournonville, and Bruce Wells are also featured, as well as a piece by Peter Anastos to be danced as a kind of farewell performance by Robin Welch.

Vickrey had remarked how natural it was for Barker to take charge. "He is completely capable, a popular and interesting choreographer, and a great teacher," he said. It would seem, then, that the Connecticut Ballet's upcoming transition is in part a strengthening of its own tradition. For the rest, time will plot its own trajectories.

86 Journal-Courier: 16 May 1985
Lee Lund Jazz Company

LOCAL

The arts are flourishing for Milford residents

Seeing the jazz dance choreographies by Lee Lund, performed last Saturday night in Milford, was like viewing live performances of the latest, hottest music videos. The costumes often tended toward sophisticated punk; the music was a sampling of today's top jazz and popular artists--Prince, Irene Cara, Chaka Khan, Sheena Easton.

This is not surprising. Lund, professional dancer, choreographer and teacher, besides having performed in many television and movie productions, has been for the past eighteen months choreographing for several nationally broadcast music videos.

She herself did not perform. But her work unmistakably demonstrated that a keen, fresh energy shapes a style which is the result of her assimilation of the latest repertoire of movements from jazz dance, as well as of certain features of modern dance and ballet.

Sassy, sexy, hot or cool, her works were often busy but rarely chaotic. Entrances on and off stage were interestingly varied, and she enjoyed the effect of suddenly freezing the action at the end of a piece. Particularly effective were "La Cage," "Chaka," and the final three works on the program which suggested a cross between a female Michael Jackson and a character from the movie *Liquid Sky*.

Lund's modern dance pieces were less interesting, I thought. Pat Kelly's duet, to music by Laura Nyro, worked better as a fable of a poignant encounter. And while some of the dancers were quite fine indeed, all of them were better at providing fast, precise movements than difficult positions of balance and restraint.

The occasion for these performances by dancers from the Lee Lund Jazz Company (formed last year and based in Milford) was a long, ambitious program sponsored by the Milford Fine Arts Council. Other choreographers were featured besides Lund, and community musicians and actors added their talents. The entire show, produced as a kind of cabaret, lasted from 8 to 11 p.m. with only one intermission.

Choreographer Charles Brown's "Drum Suite" was an astonishing and powerful African dance work, wonderfully performed by Brown and Paul Hall. Hall and Debi Perkins collaborated in a swinging, tongue-in-cheek trio of jazz dances based on music by Duke Ellington and Fats Waller.

In general, technically, the music fared less well than the dance. The Sound of Freedom Chorus, a community group of young adults directed by Jean Kuchma, had successfully memorized their parts to four pop/rock pieces with saccharine lyrics, their enjoyment making up for their apparent lack of musicality. The audience did not seem to mind, applauding vigorously at the group's final "God Bless The U.S.A."

Soprano Carol Santo Nabatoff put enthusiasm into her performances of Helen Morgan songs and, later, George Gershwin tunes. Her voice had a strong high register when she opened up. Kuchma accompanied her stiffly on the first batch; Linda Coletta did much better late in the evening, but by then the audience was restless.

Collating Scott Joplin, Claude Debussy's "Golliwogg's cake-walk" and some tricky Paul Desmond tunes would have been interesting had Patricia Neznec not succumbed to a bad case of nerves in the performance. (There was also something particularly disquieting, in the midst of such vibrant dance, about watching someone read jazz, poorly, from a score.)

A special note must be made of the outstanding collaboration between lighting and costume designers. All in all, whatever amateur foibles were there with the really professional accomplishments, it is clear that community involvement in the arts is flourishing in Milford.

87 Journal-Courier: 20 May 1985
Connecticut Ballet

LOCAL

Modern ballet pokes fun at the classics

A quintet of mainly modern ballet works made up the Repertory III program of the Connecticut Ballet, on Friday and Saturday at the Palace Performing Arts Center, and brought to a close their 1984-85 season.

What makes ballet modern? We were offered various suggestions.

George Balanchine's "A La Française" (so named because of the light French music by Jean Françaix) was perhaps the most obvious example of how ballet can poke fun

at its classical origins, thereby defining itself as modern.

Its contemporary narrative involves two Sailors and a Girl (with a ponytail), and a Dandy (all in white, with a tennis racquet) who steals the Girl. Then, suddenly, like an hallucination, a Sylph appears, dressed in full ballerina costume on point, who steals the man. When he dances with her, she proves to be totally aloof, and disappears.

This structure is repeated, with variations (such as the Sylph's throwing off her costume to reveal a bathing suit), leaving the Girl alone at the end shrugging her shoulders.

The message is clear enough: A modern girl just can't dance with a guy who chases after aloof, classical purity. But, of course, Balanchine's wit and his light touch, nicely communicated by the performers, are what make the work transcend so reductionist a synopsis.

Two other pieces, choreographed in the past few years, were played with the overt formality that happens when you require your dancers to dress up in tuxedos and evening gowns.

Peter Anastos's "Footage," set to popular band music of the '40s, tended to be more tongue-in-cheek than Bruce Wells's "Midnight Dances." In the first, the collaboration between Robin Welch and Ake Pakarinen never consistently caught fire, although her dancing showed its usual deft charm. As a result, the piece lacked the kind of brilliant sheen that might have made it more than the short, amusing duet it seemed to be.

"Midnight Dances," for three duets, was set to piano music by Sergei Rachmaninoff and given a fine live performance by Cameron Grant. Here, the formality of the dress and the opening (and final) movements was offset by an increasing romanticism. The dancers threw themselves into it with fervor. What made this modern wasn't spoof, but abandon.

Auguste Bournonville's 1842 "Napoli Divertissement," using the entire company, began as a formal piece, with lots of solos or duets played straight to the audience. But as it evolved, the dancers played to themselves, and there was an informality composed into the choreography. Tambourines and clapping were incorporated into the piece.

Noble Barker's revised "36/GRID/25" (originally choreographed in 1981) calls for six dancers to perform with six moveable metal structures, over and around a 16-square grid. The music was by Brian Eno.

It was a modern work beyond its flavour of mathematics and technology, and modern in a way the others were not. Its mode of expression might be summed up by adapting Archibald MacLeish's famous phrase: "A dance should not mean, but be." For all

of that, I thought it was an interesting way to demonstrate how dance may make anything, even metal structures, an extension of movement.

88 Sunday Register: 24 November 1985
Hartford Ballet [PREVIEW]

IMPORTED

Christmas favorite at Shubert

From all reports, New Haven is in for a treat with the imminent arrival of the Hartford Ballet's production of "The Nutcracker."

Filling the vacuum left by the recent demise of the Connecticut Ballet Company, the Hartford Ballet will present six performances of this popular holiday show next weekend at the Shubert Performing Arts Center.

One of the reasons for Nutcracker's popularity is, of course, the music by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Finished in 1892, "Casse-Noisette" (if not quite on the level of his ballet masterpiece "Swan Lake") is one of the Russian composer's most lively and delightful scores.

In two acts, it is filled with marvelous tunes, masterfully orchestrated--from the "exotic" Russian, Arab and Chinese dances to the "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" and the "Waltz of the Flowers." It is also the first Western classical composition to feature that silver-toned instrument, the celesta, a set of bells hooked up to a keyboard.

Another reason is the story itself. The ballet is based upon a Dumas *père* adaptation of the fairy tale by German author, composer and illustrator E. T. A. Hoffman. It is a spectacle of fantasy and magic: children's toys come to life, a war breaks out between troops of mice and toy soldiers, and, in the second act, an enchanted castle is the occasion for many varied kinds of dances and a romantic *pas de deux*.

Along with musical offerings of Handel's "Messiah," the annual presentations of Nutcracker are a sign of the holidays right around the corner for thousands of young-at-heart throughout the world. What makes this particular production unusual is the collaboration between Artistic Director Michael Uthoff's choreography and Thomas

Munn's elaborate special effects.

The Hartford Ballet uses sophisticated backdrops, rear-screen projections and other kinds of mechanical devices to create various stage illusions. Snow falls, the Christmas tree grows on stage. One of the characters, Madame Renier, is a puppet twenty feet tall. As one of the members of the technical crew who toured with the Ballet last year put it, "This production goes back to the original spirit of Hoffman--magical and sometimes slightly creepy. It's not as sanitized as some versions."

Uthoff breaks with standard procedure by having the young Clara not just watch the proceedings in the enchanted castle but join in as an older Clara, transformed by Dr. Drosselmeyer's magic cape. This may seem heretical to some devotees of the work, but we may expect this change, with other aspects of the choreography, to work well in the context of the whole.

Uthoff has been acclaimed as one of the country's most innovative choreographers, synthesizing classic and modern ballet techniques in unusual ways. As he said in an interview last year, "We admire the old and cherish the new." As for Munn, his work has included "Billy Budd" with the New York City Opera, and many works with both the Netherlands and the San Francisco Operas.

It is usual for dance companies performing *Nutcracker* to use many dancers, including children. (This is undoubtedly one of its perennial appeals, especially for parents.) The Hartford Ballet is no exception. Besides the twenty full-time dancers with the company, and ten apprentices, one hundred and thirteen young initiates of the Hartford Ballet School will take part in the show.

Although they sometimes perform the Tchaikovsky with a live orchestra, for these particular concerts the company will use a taped version of the entire ballet. Luckily, the Shubert has an excellent sound system (unlike a dismal one I once heard in Ithaca, New York a while back which made the music sound like muzak at rush hour on a New York subway).

The Hartford Ballet has traditionally taken *Nutcracker* on tour. Besides the concerts in New Haven, the company will present six performances in Rochester, seven in Syracuse, and 11 in Hartford itself.

The performance schedule at the Shubert is as follows: Friday, Nov. 29 at 8 p.m.; two performances on Saturday, Nov. 30 at 2 and 8 p.m.; two on Sunday, Dec. 1 at 1:30 and 8 p.m.; and a special show for students on Monday, Dec. 2 at 10 in the morning.

Tickets are on sale at TicketWorld. Or you may call either 562-5666 or 1-800-

228-6622. As many know already, as you will discover if it's your first time, Nutcracker is a festive plum to usher in the holidays.

89 Sunday Register: 1 December 1985
Hartford Ballet

IMPORTED

Hartford Ballet's 'Nutcracker' magical

Like a Christmas carnival, the Hartford Ballet rolled into New Haven Friday night for the first of five performances of *The Nutcracker* at the Shubert Performing Arts Center. Two more performances at 1:30 and 8 p.m. will be shown today, with a special show offered for students Monday at 10 a.m.

Earlier reports of the ballet's lively production had not been a lie. Dr. Drosselmeyer's magic cape, which transforms a wooden nutcracker into a life-size dancer, later into a prince, worked on the audience as well. For a couple of hours, all of us entered a children's world of swirling colors, funny and scary characters, exotic dances and the spirit of Christmas.

Much of the magic was due to Donna Granata's wonderful costumes and to Thomas Munn's extraordinary set, lighting and projection designs. From the ambiance of a well-to-do 19th-century drawing room (complete with candles and chandeliers) to the varied moods of the second act's famous national dances (Spanish, Arabian, Chinese and Russian), the costumes and sets helped create worlds in miniature.

As for Munn's rear-screen projections and use of multiple scrims, these soon became the ongoing cause for fresh anticipation--what would happen next?

A snowflake on an opaque blue scrim glistens and begins to turn. The scrim becomes transparent, snow begins to fall, and we are watching people pass in front of the window of a great house through which a Christmas tree beckons. The first scrim rises--we are in front of the house. Then the walls and window turn out to be a second scrim, *it* rises, lights come on and children enter: we are in the room itself.

With this special adaption of the introductory slow zoom borrowed from cinema

(one immediately thinks of both Walt Disney and Alfred Hitchcock), Munn ingeniously rolls his viewers right into the world of "Nutcracker." Throughout the performance Munn's sophisticated use of lights and special effects created a kaleidoscopically changing space, not merely background color. The wonder was how well these marvels were incorporated into the whole.

Michael Uthoff's choreography held a careful and charming balance between formal spectacle and a certain mischievous informality. Unlike some stylized, well-scrubbed productions, the children were choreographed as children are at Christmas--full of high spirits, somewhat rambunctious. And when a harlequin puppet and two dolls are briefly given life by Dr. Drosselmeyer, their own awkwardness (even their falling over) was choreographed into their dance.

Exits were ingenious. A waiter takes a sip of grog off his tray before leaving the stage. Dr. Drosselmeyer rides a grandfather clock across the stage during one of the scene changes.

There was occasion, of course, for the more leisurely unfolding of formal symmetries. The conclusion of Act I used 12 women dancers *sur pointe* and two mixed couples in somewhat tight formations. Best of all was the extended variety of the famous "Waltz of the Flowers" in Act II (also one of the longest musical passages).

Jeanne Tears Girior showed exquisite timing in her dancing the role of the (magically transformed) older Clara, unobtrusively supported by Jonathan Bauer as the prince. A brief solo by Bauer, with some tricky mid-flight turns, later showed his talents to greater advantage. Their grand *pas de deux* concluded with a dramatic swan dive, although it was choreographically less ambitious than in some productions.

If not the most breathtaking, the choreography was admirably adapted to the talents of the performers, and in general the Hartford Ballet showed a high level of technique and great charm. Other fine dancers included the lead woman dancer in the Arabian dance, and John Moody as the Nutcracker Doll. Roland Roux, not given all that much actual dancing, had a spooky but kindly presence as Dr. Drosselmeyer.

Mainly it was a pleasure to see the Shubert stage come alive with this festive fable. The magic worked up to the very end, when suddenly the older dancer disappears and there Clara is as a child again, asleep with the toy nutcracker in her arms. The prince kisses her hand goodbye, Drosselmeyer looks out at the audience, and the lights fade to a single snowflake glistening on an opaque blue scrim.

90 New Haven Register: 31 January 1986

IMPORTED

Alvin Ailey Repertory Ensemble

Alvin Ailey ensemble enlivens Palace

The Alvin Ailey Repertory Ensemble performed a trio of dance pieces Thursday evening at the Palace Performing Arts Center. For reasons unknown, the most recent work, "Basic Strategies IV" (1985), was replaced by "Icefire"--a work which the company performed at the Palace only a year ago.

It opened the program. Choreographed by Fred Benjamin, "Icefire" is a fluid ensemble piece, nice to warm up with, which in its generally easygoing movements mirrors the gently overlapping jazz melodies of its soundtrack music by Pat Metheny and Lyle Mays.

The lighting designed for its three sections helps to convey the piece's progression from ice to fire. A blue backdrop, with purple side curtains, changes to cranberry in the second section, then to a fiery red in the third. Similarly the music progresses from a cool, mellow opening to a hot samba by the end.

Relaxed, playful and sensual by turns, this performance showed off some fine dancing by the company, but I remember last year's as a sharper, more passionate and exuberant version. The piece's ending still proved effective: the 11 dancers settling to the floor in a huddle, leaning back together, as the music reached its final extended cadence.

A more substantial and interesting work followed a moderate intermission, a new production restaged by Mari Kajiwara of Alvin Ailey's 1970 "Streams." Following the eight parts of a contemporary musical suite by Miloslav Kabeláč, this work emerged as a stylish, modernist landscape.

One of the more intriguing aspects was how dance and music had equal status here. They were unfolding together but their traditional relationship (dance *set* to music, or music *accompanying* dance) seemed to have been deliberately avoided. It reminded me of the even more daring collaborations between Merce Cunningham and John Cage, succinctly separate pieces joined together by nothing except their simultaneity.

The music, composed exclusively for a large array of percussion instruments (especially marimba, vibes, gongs, timpani and bells), was somewhat overamplified in the hall. But even at a less aggressive decibel level it would easily have held its own, projecting an ominous, abstract interior world interrupted by sudden jarring musical

surprises.

The dance created its own dark, even sombre, eclectic interior space. Barefoot in leotards, 14 dancers filed on slowly in a long diagonal line, each one dancing something different, taking different moments to pause, then move on--a complex interplay of asymmetrical events.

A strong duet was followed by a solo with an Oriental flavor. Another solo began in ballet, but erupted into a quick frenzy. Some very fancy balancing off-center was the motif of another section. The company concluded the work with African gestures, head low, arms curved down like wings, then up, reaching for unseen spirits.

After another intermission came Ailey's "Blues Suite," a 10-part piece with '30s costumes. Accompanied by some wonderful blues selections, this was alternately sassy, despairing, angry, funny and poignant. Essentially this piece is a series of stylized street scenes, breaking into pure dance, which was interesting in part for being classic Ailey from 1958.

The audience clearly enjoyed this most accessible and overtly charming of the three pieces. I thought that beneath its surface was as much of Ailey's serious, brilliant, eclectic presence as in his "Streams."

91 Sunday Register: 16 February 1986

IMPORTED

Nutmeg Ballet Company [Feature]

Russian teaching methods lift state ballet to new heights

The spirit of Agrippina Jacolevna Vaganova is alive in Torrington, Connecticut.

That may not mean much to most people. But tell ballet dancers that, and they will stop short in mid-jeté at the news.

Mme. Vaganova was the extraordinary Soviet dancer, teacher and director (in 1934) of the Leningrad Ballet School, one of the greatest dance schools in the world. It was later officially renamed after her.

And her rigorous eight-year curriculum--written up and published as "Funda-

mentals of the Classical Dance"--became the requisite standard for all ballet students in the USSR. Russia, of course, has consistently produced some of the finest ballet dancers in the world.

Maybe Torrington is beginning to as well. In recent years, national and even international attention has focused on the Nutmeg Ballet Company and on its 1971 founder and teacher, Sharon Dante. In a studio looking onto Torrington's Water Street, Dante teaches the Vaganova Pedagogy and has recently graduated students who completed all eight years.

One of her students, Victoria Mazzarelli, in July 1984 won the only gold medal given at the New York International Competition. She is presently dancing with the Basel Ballet in Switzerland. Another student, Kimberly Nicol, has just received an award from the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts.

An article about Mazzarelli just appeared in *Dancemagazine* which heralds her as "a star ascending," and which acknowledges with obvious respect her gifted teachers Dante and Donna Bonasera. Some other students have gone on to dance professionally, or at schools like Yale and NYU. Articles on Dante and the Nutmeg have appeared in *Dance Teacher Now* and in *Connecticut's Finest*: the word is getting out.

Next weekend dance fans can go to Torrington to see for themselves the result of all the Leningrad training. The Nutmeg Ballet is offering a Repertoire concert on Saturday, Feb. 22 at 8 p.m. and on Sunday the 23rd at 2 p.m. in the Warner Theatre. (For ticket information, call 482-4413 or 482-7375.)

It was said of the great ballerina Anna Pavlova that her technique was always carefully subordinated to the poetical inspiration of her dancing. Though mastering a technique cannot guarantee a lovely performance, it would appear that the reincarnation of A. Vaganova in Sharon Dante has a good chance of inspiring her students to reach beyond technique to poetry in motion.

92 New Haven Register: 28 February 1986

LOCAL

Barbara Feldman & Dancers

Modern dance returns to city

Last night Barbara Feldman & Dancers offered the first of four performances this weekend at the Educational Center for the Arts. What a pleasure to see modern dance again--in New Haven it is all too much of a rarity.

Founded in 1981, the company now includes Feldman, Margi Caplan, Tom Haskell, Amy Kennedy-Wooten, Suzanne Serviss and Fran Smyer-Dubrow. They presented four works all choreographed by Feldman, and the last two were premieres: "Sisters" and "Chant of Saints."

Accompanying the first were readings and live music by Kalpana Devi-Schreiber and Jahmes Anthony Finlayson. And the last work featured a commissioned composition by Dwight Andrews, four movements orchestrated for jazz quintet and string ensemble.

A short taped portion of a show all about sisters, from N[ational]P[ublic]R[adio]'s "All Things Considered," served as prelude to seven vignettes performed by the women. Mixing dance and light political theater, "Sisters" inventoried some of the confining roles which women may inherit.

If it was a study in frozen affectations and amusingly satiric enactments (the dancers in pastel nightgowns), it also allowed moments for them to express an almost luminescent innocence, in slow motion turning away from the audience, alert and curious.

Best of all was Feldman's solo, using the only props of the evening--a girl doll seated center stage in a little chair. A scary kind of lullaby was sung with kalimba accompaniment, as Feldman circled round, then succumbed to the doll's magnetic power. Yet at the end, balancing on the back of the chair which was tilted slightly off the floor, Feldman beautifully suggested an image of poised tension which subtly undercut the threat of regression and overidentification.

"Chant of Saints" was a more directly joyous work, both in the music and dance. Andrews' composition, effectively contrasting then integrating the strings and jazz quintet, implied there is struggle implicit in any prayer. Similarly, the circle created by all the dancers at the end was hard-won over the intermittent defection by some of its members.

Feldman's choreography here, as in the other two works, depended on the motivic repetition of movements, recycled asymmetrically. This was especially apparent in

the first work "Slipping By" and in "Aerie" (both 1984). The integration of different individual styles, the collaborative feel to the performances, made for a charming concert and interesting modern dance as well.

The program will be offered tonight and tomorrow at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 3 p.m. The ECA is on the corner of Orange and Audubon streets.

APPENDIX TWO: INDEX OF REPERTOIRE

The following index provides reference to all musical compositions mentioned or discussed in the music reviews. Composers are listed alphabetically, followed by an alphabetized list of their compositions, and followed by the review number(s). If an arrangement or orchestration is the composer's, this is indicated by "Arr." or "Orch." preceding the title. In parentheses after the title of the work may appear "(arr.)" which indicates someone else's arrangement of the work. After the title in brackets { } may appear the names of different ensembles which performed the same work.

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