

St. John's Collegian

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Szigeti

The Bach *Chaconne* for unaccompanied violin is an immense composition. A series of towering climaxes threaten to negate one another and to destroy the unity of the work. It requires a master architect and craftsman to realize its dimensions and to harness its immensities. Mr. Szigeti was just such a master. We may truthfully say that we have never been closer to Bach.

Preceding the *Chaconne* Mr. Szigeti and Mr. Foldes opened the recital with the Seventh Violin and Piano Sonata of Beethoven. The initial movement lacked assurance on the part of the violinist and a *rapprochement* between violin and piano. It must surely have been due to the obvious fact that this was the beginning. There was no such failing in the remainder of the program. The second movement, considered by many to be the high point of the piece, seemed to us merely hollow Beethoven idiom whose pretentiousness suffered in contrast with the spontaneity and infectious humor of the Scherzo that followed. The Scherzo had a brevity which the Adagio might well have considered. The well intentioned finale was repetitious to excess and even the artists' perceptive traversal of the movement could not succeed in clarifying an apparently inborn confusion.

Beethoven will do this occasionally. It is easy to be fooled by it, but once recognized, one feels the great works that much more. It is almost as easy to be fooled by a Szigeti performance when the work is not one of the highest caliber. This is not often, but in, for instance, the Adagio of the Beethoven, his playing seemed almost a flattery.

Following the *Chaconne*, Mr. Szigeti played the first Sonatina for violin of Franz Schubert. It is difficult to conceive of a more perfect transition from the Bach than to this. We could hardly have been more gently released from the heights—but this, too, is great music. Here is pure delight.

The lack of pretence on Schubert's part, the utter simplicity with which he carries out his intentions serve only to increase the stature of the work. The piece must be played with a style closely akin to that of Mozart, but one which makes a difficult distinction between the two. Which stylistic mastery might be pointed out as one of the chief characteristics of Mr. Szigeti's art—an unfailing ability to distinguish that which is Bach from that which is Beethoven or Schubert, or Debussy.

An encore to the Schubert, Mr. Szigeti played that composer's Rondo from the D Major for piano in a transcription for violin. We still heard Schubert—we are, in fact, still hearing Schubert.

After the intermission, Mr. Szigeti performed Debussy's last composition, the G Minor Violin and Piano Sonata. This is a weird work and a difficult one to grasp. The word transparent comes to mind when attempting to describe this piece—or for that matter, any of Debussy. Is it lasting music or merely novel, and if so, must novelty wear off in time, or can it resolve into something that will endure? It is too early for us to say. We are too close to it. This particular piece still has for us a freshness and charm not often found in the music of our century. As for the performance it was Debussy alone that we were listening to.

The violinist then concluded the scheduled program with three short modern works. First was the "Masques" of Prokofiev from the opera *Romeo and Juliet*. The peculiar whimsy of the idiom was always evident, but again went no further than being idiom. We wanted to chuckle, but we found nothing to chuckle at. There were little more than "effects" in the sounds that the violin produced. Prokofiev can do much better than this.

The "Snow" of Lie, with the double stopped harmonics in the violin was wholly enchanting. Here was "effect" put to use in a piece of pro-

gram music for which one felt no apologies were being made.

Petroushka's Dance was infused with a vitality and intensity one rarely finds in the orchestral performance of the Stravinsky work.

The first encore was the entire *Stempenyu Suite* of Joseph Achron dedicated to Mr. Szigeti and written shortly before the composer's death last April. The first two movements are richly Hebraic, not unlike the corresponding sections of Ernest Bloch's *Baal Shem Suite* for violin. One would like, in fact, to substitute the last movement of the *Stempenyu* for that of the Bloch, which seems a weak finale to a piece whose first two movements tell us in more pungent terms what the first two movements of the Achron say to a less convincing degree. The Achron Finale, subtitled *Stempenyu Dances*, is an incredible thing. It was incredibly played. The syncopated left and right hand pizzicati made one think of Darius Milhaud, the composer who seems alone among serious writers to have captured the essence of the jazz rhythm in a sufficiently compact form. Both Achron and Milhaud have unashamedly explored the medium and come out with some very exciting pieces of music. We heard one of them in the Achron Finale. Whether Benny Goodman had any thing to do with it we don't know, but Mr. Szigeti played more than the notes Friday evening.

The next encore was a transcription of Debussy's piano prelude, "The Maid with the Flaxen Hair." The arrangement does not seem a satisfactory one. The transcriber has broken the thread of the theme, elusive enough in the original, and passed it from violin to piano and back again, such that a necessary consistency of color is destroyed. Mr. Szigeti again deceived us. Debussy wrote nothing as lovely as this.

Next came Fritz Kriesler's Variations on a Theme of Corelli. The composer treats a noble theme with re-

spect, lapsing only infrequently into an unrelated mood. The performance had majesty, without which there is no Corelli.

Finally came the dash of the youthful Beethoven with the Rondo from the E flat Sonata. Here the break away from Mozart is not yet clear, but one feels the stress increasing. It was fitting that a memorable evening be brought to a close by a piece which first, created a link to the initial offering of the recital and second, presented problems of equal importance to both artists. Mr. Szigeti and Mr. Foldes solved them with the sensitivity and insight which we had by that time come to assume. It is a high tribute, indeed, which one must pay to such musicians.

S. G. B.

Backcampus

The much publicized touch-football championship game between Paca-Carroll and Chase-Stone was played off last Saturday to a debatable 7 to 7 tie. Paca scored first, legally, on the old Welch sleeper play and added the extra point on a pass—Haines to Smith. The game stayed this way until the third quarter when Chase-Stone was awarded a touch-down on interference with Maury in the end zone. Harris passed to Robertson for the conversion.

The game on the whole, was quite uneventful regarding spectacular plays; even so private feuds and questionable refereeing kept the contest from assuming epic proportions.

Of the crowd of 20 or 30 that came to watch the spectacle, only a few remained after the half, and these consisted of umpires and the side-line referees. The others mysteriously disappeared—one by one—probably so as not to be seen at the scene of such dubious competition. All in all, the game was hardly representative of one of the great American sports.

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College Meeting

The Dean first explained that this college meeting would be ritual for the older members of the community, but perhaps informative for the Sept. Freshmen. This, however, was not exactly the case as a few of his statements very vividly concerned some of the upperclassmen who are tottering.

He read the circular letter sent to parents which explains that Don Rags have been substituted for numerical grades at this college because a conference between student and his immediate tutors has a great advantage over grades in removing impediments in the student's progress and helping the student to be able to appraise himself. Mr. Buchanan stressed this point, that is, that as the student tells the tutors in Don Rags what he thinks of himself, he will learn not to fool himself.

Orals, Mr. Buchanan went on to say, may conflict with Lab. examinations in some cases. If they do, do not be disturbed, as the instructor in charge of your exam will excuse you for the half-hour that orals require and it is very likely you will be allowed the half-hour at the end of the lab. exam.

He explained that orals have a twofold purpose. Firstly, they are designed to find out what you know, not what you do not know, a check on you for yourself and for the tutors. And, secondly, an oral exam can be a didactic device, if the student ties up for the first time many ideas that he has heretofore toyed with, but never before connected.

Mr. Buchanan said that the best preparation for an oral is a movie. Don't review, don't cram, don't sweat, go to the movies. (This is not a paid advertisement.)

Here the college meeting took a serious turn. The entire college community should be concerned about the Dean's report.

This term, it seems, has been very peculiar. There has been much concern in the faculty circle with regard to the fact that many students are not assuming the responsibility so necessary for the functioning of their community. Too much class-cutting, dorm defiling, too little regard for others' rights. This is not idle talk. The Dean said there would be some

casualties around Christmas which he assured us is not a threat, but a prediction.

W. E. H.

Arts

The desperate tone of the season leads us astray—these Ibsen days even cloud the oncoming vacation to say nothing of the oncoming films.

Pack a lunch and toddle off to *The Iron Major* at the Circle on Sunday. We acknowledge the fact that you won't have to think—and that seems to be the Major's chief selling point. That and the news-reel.

Sweet Rosie O'Grady, starring La Grable of the legs, moves over to the Capitol which is quite a walk away—and that is good.

On Wednesday the big event will be the revival of *In Old Chicago* at the Republic. It was a long time ago that this first occurred and even longer ago that the historical incident it fuses about happened. If memory serves (to use a cliché that we haven't used for some time now according to our Used Cliché Dept.) this was a film not to be missed. It is the kind of spectacle (sorry, no Technicolor) in which Hollywood excels. Tyrone Power is there along with Alice Fay and Mrs. O'Leary's cow (hundreds were tested for the part). Alice Brady,—the Mrs. O'Leary—is, as we recall, excellent. The fire is exciting and expensive as only pre-Pearl Harbor fires could be. Come the end of the war, and there'll be no limit.

Guadalcanal Diary is the film adaptation of Tregaskis' eye-witness account of a lot that happened in the Pacific to the Marines. It has an excellent cast and some rather persuasive scenes but our military friends tell us of a lot that's phony. Certain obvious omissions make it at times a little unbelievable. It is, however, one of the better war-films and has God's gift to the Marine Corps. William Bendis. At the Circle on Wednesday.

At the Roslyn Theatre in Baltimore they are showing *Casablanca*, one of the most pleasing films of all time. We urge you to see it or see it again. On Monday, at the Maryland in that city begins Maxwell Anderson's new play *Storm Operation*.