

M.U.N. Little Theatre
Saturday, 3 November 1984
at 8:00 p.m.

NEIL VAN ALLEN

Sonata in C major, K.330

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

Allegro
Andante Cantabile
Allegretto

Sonata (1942)
First North American Performance

Malcolm Arnold
(1921-)

Allegro ma non troppo
Andante con moto
Alla Marcia

INTERMISSION

Pictures from an Exhibition

Modeste Moussorgsky
(1839-1881)

Promenade
The Gnome

Promenade
The Old Castle

Promenade
Tuilleries - Children Quarrelling at Play
Bydlo - An Ox Wagon

Promenade
Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks
Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle - A Rich Jew and a Poor Jew
The Market Place at Limoges
Sepulcrum Romanum: Con Mortuis in Lingua Mortua
The Hut of Baba-Yaga
The Great Gate of Kiev

NEIL VAN ALLEN is a Canadian. His studies took him from Dalhousie University to Toronto where he studied with the great piano teacher Alberto Guerrero, thence to England and France to work with Sydney Harrison, Yvonne Lefebure, and Nadia Boulanger.

In 1961 he was awarded the Commonwealth medal for performance, an award inaugurated by the late Sir Arnold Bax when he was "Master of the Queen's Music", and the Silver Medal of the Worshipful Company of Musicians in London. In 1963 he was appointed Professor at the Guildhall School of Music (London) where he stayed until 1977. In 1971 that institution recognized his services and talent by making him a Fellow of the Guildhall School of Music - a high honour limited to 100 lifetime members. In September 1977 he was appointed Associate Professor in the Music Department of Memorial University of Newfoundland.

He has performed extensively as recitalist and as soloist with orchestra in both Europe and North America, and has given many broadcasts for both C.B.C. and B.B.C. First performances include works by Poulenc, Weinzweig, Whittenberg, Skalkottas, Dello-Joio, Hovhannes, Josephs, Standford; the last two composers having dedicated piano sonatas to Mr. van Allen.

Piano Sonata (1942) North American Premiere

M. Arnold

Although Malcolm Arnold is probably best known to the wider public through his more than 80 film scores, including "The African Queen", "Inn of the Sixth Happiness" and "The Bridge on the River Kwai" (for which he received an Academy Award), his major output has been in the realm of concert music. He has written 7 symphonies, 10 concertos, 2 operas, 5 ballets, much choral, chamber and solo music.

The first performance of a work, especially when the composer is well known, is always a somewhat "nervy" one for the performer whose responsibilities to the composer are many. For both performer and audience it is an occasion which mixes anticipation and apprehension. In the case of the Malcolm Arnold's *Piano Sonata (1942)* written when he was 21 years old, an additional air of conjecture may surround it. Why has it not been performed until now? The World Premiere was given in England only 5 months before its North American premiere. Apparently Mr. Arnold had some personal doubts about the piano writing itself. These doubts have proved to be unfounded - it is fluent and effective and even at that early stage in his career, strongly oriented to his own eminently recognizable musical style. His music is particularly gratifying to play. As a composer he has even now little sympathy with many of the contemporary trends and as a result his music speaks directly to the audience in terms which although neither facile nor meretricious are easily understood. It is strong structurally, and like Poulenc (to whom he has been compared from time to time) it has much melody and wit as well as harmonic complexity.

Arnold is a composer who, although he uses elements of folk and "pop" music, has not become a particularly "nationalist" composer - he has successfully divorced himself from the sort of music which one might term "Anglo-Bucolic".

The first movement of the *Sonata* is in traditional Sonata form, the second movement a Romance of somewhat "bluesy" tendencies and the last movement is a lighthearted little march with some melodic shocks and witty harmonic surprises.

Pictures from an Exhibition

M. Moussorgsky

In 1874 Moussorgsky visited a posthumous exhibition of paintings, drawings and sketches by his friend Victor Hartmann. He was moved by this to write a series of illustrations in music for the piano, transcribing as it were, visual impressions into musical ones. For sheer imaginative brilliance and emotional scope it is well nigh impossible to find a parallel any place in music.

The piece opens with a *Promenade* - a theme which is used to portray the viewer of the exhibition moving from picture to picture, sometimes with alacrity, sometimes ruminatively. This theme is repeated (in different guise) between various pictures, and achieves a kind of metamorphosis in the *Con Mortuis* section. The music stands by itself without the necessity of relevant description apart from the titles, but it may be of interest to know roughly what the pictures themselves were like.

The first one, *Gnome*, shows a somewhat malevolent and malformed dwarf hobbling along on his misshapen legs. The *Old Castle* with a Troubadour singing outside its walls might well bring to mind Richard Coeur-de-Lion's faithful servant Blondin singing outside the fortress imprisoning his master.

It is easy to visualize in *Tuileries* the children quarrelling at play and being firmly but affectionately admonished by their nurse, after which, inevitably they begin again to quarrel.

Bydlo is a traditional Polish ox-cart, a ponderous two wheeled vehicle (which in Moussorgsky's representation would appear to have a square wheel!) The *Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks* is a sketch for a Ballet production showing chicks dancing about in their half-broken shells.

One of the most vivid of Moussorgsky's visions is that of *Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle* - the smug and wealthy Jew displaying his riches with a somewhat oleaginous pride, then the whining self pity of the poverty stricken Schmuyle ... then the two Jews joined in simultaneous bragging and complaining.

The *Market Place at Limoges* is a picture of harridans haggling over their wares with varying degrees of violence in what could be pretty well any market place - even up to present day. The *Sepulchrum Romanum* is self-explanatory - a man with a lantern in a dark tunnel surrounded with the bones and skulls of those long dead. In the second section of this piece "with the dead in a dead language" the Promenade theme makes its final appearance.

Baba Yaga was the most evil of witches in Russian folklore, and she lived in a house on fowls' legs. In this bizarre conveyance she travelled to perpetrate her evil deeds - perhaps the antecedant of our present day mobile homes, trailers, etc.!

The *Great Gate at Kiev* is the culmination of this highly organized tour. One can visualize the triumphal gates, the clanging of victory bells, the ecclesiastical processions - a conglomerate picture of pomp and pageantry and glorification.