

Badinage: a new musical combination

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Audience reaction to yesterday's Noon Hour Concert at the University of Guelph was probably similar to that of Arthur Frackenpohl when asked by tubist, Ivan Hammond for a Trio for trumpet, tuba and piano. "You want what?" he is quoted as saying. After thinking about it Frackenpohl decided that it really was "a good idea."

Frackenpohl's resulting Sonata was playing in part two of the program offered by Badinage. Badinage has several meanings: here it is the musical friendship of Stephen Chenette, trumpet, Ivan Hammond and Susan Chenette, piano, presenting what they call "serious fun." This Sonata, written in 1977 is more traditional in expression than several other works heard yesterday. It has a satisfyingly bold opening which develops into a swift rhythmic pattern shared by each instrument. After a contemplative slow movement the work moved towards a flourishing climax. The players' individual voices blended in an integrated tonal adventure.

Six years ago when Badinage was formed there was no music for such an unusual combination. Most musicians do not find transcriptions particularly attractive and so these performers set out to commission works from Canadian and American composers.

Accordingly, the composers featured were new to the audience and the musicians introduced each work with a brief background on the composer and the composition. It was interesting to discover that these composers, as well as two of the performers are, or were as heavily involved in University teaching as in composing. Realistically the opportunities for brass players are limited and the recital repertoire is only just beginning to evolve.

Opening the program was a commissioned work by the Canadian composer Lothar Klein. From his Partita II, Badinage played the Chorale and Alla Giga. The former features the piano in some compelling staccato passages, after which the brass, with slow progressions, grows to a climatic finish. In the Giga the piano first takes the lead and then the musical motif is tossed back and forth, rather

like a group of friends agreeing to disagree in fruitful argument. Here there was little or no blending, each instrument being an individual within the whole.

One of the most expressive works was the lyrical, Morning Song for tuba and piano by Roger Kellaway. Originally written for cello it was rescored by the composer for Hammond's tuba. It evokes a muted awakening with swinging, jazzy rhythms which Hammond and Susan Chenette played with panache. The interest increased with rising dynamics and a hint of dissonance at the close of the work.

In the small world of brass playing, student-teacher relationships are very important. Thomas Beversdorf, Hammond's first teacher wrote Of

Walruses, Cheesecake and Morse Code for piano and tuba. Dedicated to 10 different players, the vignettes range from tonal to atonal with some jazz improvisations. In Nothing Hope was written by Dave Garcia, a student of Ivan Hammond. Described by him as "strange and singable" it gives the piano a very impressionistic role while the brass is fragmented.

Gary Kulesha, now conducting at Stratford, has written two pieces for Badinage. Yesterday we heard his Cadenza and Finale for trumpet, tuba and piano. The emphatic piano part gave Susan Chenette another chance to display her steely-fingered technique. Her affinity for modern music and her ability to cope with its challenges are evident.

Two humorous pieces closed each part of the recital. Animal Ditties I and II consist of Ogden Nash poems with musical interpolations by the American trumpeter, Anthony Plog. Ivan Hammond turned narrator for these short animal thoughts which ranged from the turtle's fertility to the python's ribs.

Different? Yes! It is rewarding to hear new musical combinations and to know they in turn encourage new compositions. If not instantly appealing, it is the sort of combination that makes you listen anew to the instruments while appreciating the possibilities.

Next week another unusual partnership: Coenraad Doemendal, cello and Joel Quarryington, double bass.