

## SYMPHONY REVIEW

# All-Contemporary Concert Proves to Be Exhilarating

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Something happened Wednesday night that certainly should be repeated at least once a year — an all-contemporary concert played by the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, open and free to those who wanted to hear it — and many did, for Northrop's main floor was pretty well filled.

This particular program, suggested and conducted by Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, was devoted to works by University of Minnesota composers in tribute to the University's music department, and was under the joint sponsorship of the orchestra and the University Artists Course.

I don't believe I'm chauvinistic in stating that the four composers on the bill represented real class in their different ways; there wasn't a dull moment, all had something to say and displayed the skill of knowing how to make an orchestra eloquently say it. This was an exhilarating evening: nothing far out, to be sure, but nothing feeble or inadequately expressed.

Lothar Klein, now with the University of Texas, opened proceedings with a breezy, blaring conceit titled "Musique a Go-Go" cued to modern dance rhythms and the modern scene generally. I would guess that George Gershwin was its ancestor, for there are touches of the blues as contrast to its razzledazzle, and one noted toward the finish a silken sheath of strings covering the brawl of brass and percussion behind.

Dominick Argento's "The Mask of Night," first introduced by the Civic

Orchestra of Minneapolis (which commissioned it) is a set of variations whose theme goes through five transformations (six in the original) illustrating various lines from Shakespeare on the subject of night. Argento is a versatile craftsman and always effective in realizing his ideas; he has a gift (rare these days) of melody, and his variations, starting with far-off and near trumpet calls, take us from muted nocturnal hush to carnival and back again.

The "Burlesca" variation was a mischievous cap-and-bells affair, and the "Serenade" that followed gave us a most enchanting soliloquy of violas taken up by the violins and then carried on with both twined together. Robert Tweedy's cross-handed timpani solo that violently launched the fifth variation was exciting to watch and hear.

Eric Stokes' "A Center Harbor Holiday," evoking a New England summer day, was an orchestral picture of great charm and humor, opening with dawn sounds, working up to a festive parade section and ending with fireworks and visible flag-waving by orchestra members. It reminded one a great deal of Charles Ives and his melanges of nature and town sounds, and the important tuba role was skilfully done by Thompson W. Hanks.

Paul Fetler's "Contrasts for Orchestra" has become a latterday classic, a lean, lithe, kinetic work, bursting with creative euphoria, and as well built as a bridge. His use of orchestral color is almost tactile: you can feel and taste it. And like the other works on the program, it is fully communicative.