

MUSIC

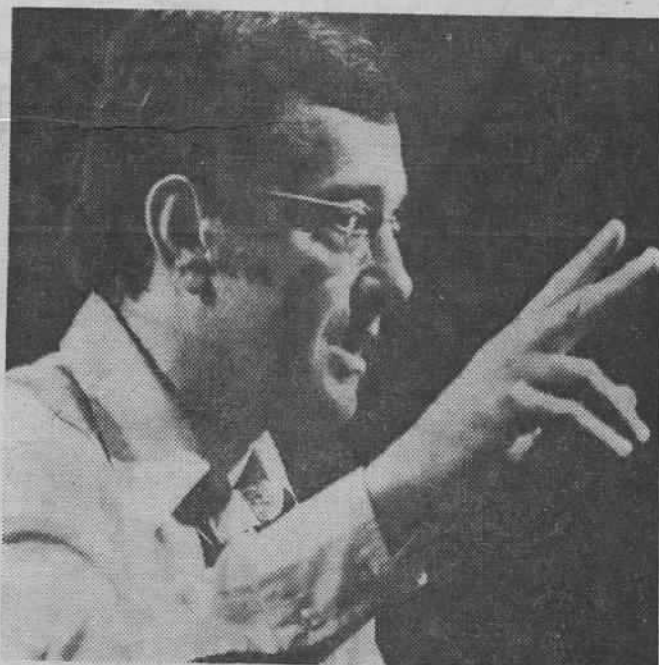
A continuing onslaught on ears

By JOHN KRAGLUND

Usually when one complains about programs devoted entirely to twentieth century music, it is about a single concert in the middle of a season. It seems the CBC decided this was not a fair test of the digestibility of modern music. At least that is the impression given by the current CBC Toronto Festival, which continued its onslaught on contemporary music and on the ears and patience of the regular concert-goer in last night's program at the Mac-Millan Theatre, Edward Johnson Building.

The event was not without its attractions, especially for those who like very large orchestras with an excess of percussion. A more obvious appeal was the Toronto debut of Romanian composer-conductor Marius Constant, who conducted the CBC Festival Orchestra. And then there was the inclusion of Penderecki's *Capriccio for Violin and Orchestra*, for its Canadian premiere with Lorand Fenyves as soloist.

However, the actual event demonstrated that the main things worth shouting about were Gyorgy Ligeti's *Atmospheres* and Constant's ability to sort out the complex scores and to achieve a measure of clarity. But even this ability seemed to be somewhat in doubt by the time he got around to the Canadian premiere of his own *Chaconne et Marche Militaire*. As for the rest of the concert, it again sounded too much like what



Marius Constant: debut with CBC Festival Orchestra.

was heard last week—or was it the week before?

What probably made Ligeti's *Atmospheres* especially engrossing was the fact that the composer's exploration of orchestral sonorities seemed to be rather an exploration of curious dissonances whose subtle changes resulted in a restless quietness, shattered occasionally by the intrusion of piercing flute and piccolo crescendos or the blaring of brasses. But these interruptions emerged as almost unbearable emotional outcries, and that may explain the difference between Ligeti and

the other composers: he had something emotional to express and did not refrain from expressing it.

According to the program notes, Lothar Klein had something similar in mind in his *Design for Percussion and Orchestra*, which was premiered at this concert. Just what that something was never became clear, for his dynamic contrasts failed to make any musical or emotional point other than to prove that the rest of the orchestra can be just as noisy as the percussion and that even the most active percussion section can give the impression it is going nowhere in particular.

Penderecki's use of the violin as a sort of high-frequency electronic communicator, faintly heard through the static of the rest of the orchestra, was interesting for the listener but must have been frustrating for the performer. Fenyves, however, took full advantage of opportunities to display his artistry in brief solo passages, like the one that seemed to grow out of a percussion part.

Charles Koechlin's *Les Bandar-Log* (after Kipling) might prove fascinating if one had an opportunity to chart the action in detail. As it turned out, it merely seemed long. And the Constant piece achieved impressive sounds, but arrived too late and made little sense.