music...

Beaux Arts Quartet disappointing

By John Montanes

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The concert opened with a delightful Mozart Quartet, K. 458, in G major. The major part of the group became at once apparent: first violin (Charles Lihovee) predominated too much, in both the polyphonic and the essentially homophonic sections. At the same time other players (Stephen Clapp, violin; John Graham, viola; and Bruce Ruggles, cello) while providing a pleasant enough background, failed to bring their instruments sufficiently into prominence when the score demanded it. The more obviously polyphonic sections, such as the fugatos in the last movement, were better; but a more subtle balance in the allegro, for instance, was lacking.

Modern selection

The next work on the program was Anton Webern’s Op. 5, Five Movements for String Quartet. It was Anton Webern’s Op. 5, Five Movements for String Quartet. It was certainly customary nowadays to throw in a modern work to demonstrate a group’s technical proficiency; and this one was less painful than most, despite its decided-ly weird effects. The five brief movements were presented as five fleeting moods, ranging from the playful to the lugubrious.

Inapropos tone

The third offering was Beethoven’s Quartet in E Flat, Op. 127. Here again the tempo was correct, the playing right, but the tone often wrong. Not only was the first violin out of balance again, but there was almost total absence of the clear, flute-like tone which fits Beethoven and Mozart so well in cantabile sections. Instead there was a monotonous reediness which was very unpropitious, and which at times of passion sometimes degenerated into a squeak. This was unpleasantly noticeable in the Scherzo.

These faults, as mentioned above, were all the more noticeable because the other quartets in the series were so outstanding in their tone quality. The audience seemed to agree; their response, while gratifying, was not as enthusiastic as it had been for other performers like the brilliant Hungarian and Borodin Quartets. But the well-chosen Mozart and Beethoven quartets were so delightful that it was impossible to leave the concert completely disappointed.

At the end of the series it might be well to add a word of thanks to the Department of Humanities, which sponsors this excellent series every year, and to say that we look forward eagerly to next year’s schedule.

Looking Back

By Mickey Warren

40 years ago

The absent-minded professor has been the butt of many jokes, but this time the attention was focused on a young assistant. Felix Bardach, assistant in the Mechanical Engineering Department, was so engrossed in Professor Henry G. Pearson’s lecture on the beauties of nature that he forgot to precide a final examination at 2:00.

The class arrived at the correct time for the Testing Materials Laboratory exam. After nervously waiting for fifteen minutes the tension became so great and a relay engineer-nowhere deferred.

The din was so great that Professor Harrison W. Hayford dropped in to see what was happening. After receiving an explanation, he dismissed the class.

The story does not end here, however. At 2:45, Mr. Bardach strutted into building three ir-tending to give the exam at 1:30. He appeared rather distraught when informed that the exam had been cancelled.

30 years ago

“...Testing cream as a summer job was paying Francis A. Oberst’s way through MIT. Oberst, a Course VII sophomore, started during the summer of 1938 testing dairy products for a Charles-town milk company. He modestly said that his tasting ability came naturally, but it produces much profit. He should be an expert by now. He had spent more than 5,000 hours during the summer testing samples from all over the country. In cream alone, he tasted over 6,000 samples (losing $12 pounds while he was doing it, by the way.” Oberst yelled out his signature as the 10:45 bell rang and he ran off for his fall lecture. “My taste in women is as good as my taste in cream.”