

## British madness

by P.E. Schindler, Jr.

*And Now For Something Completely Different*. . . is one of the great unrecognized comedy masterpieces of our time. The quotation on the LSC posters, "the greatest film ever made, anywhere, by anyone, at any time" is a true reflection of my opinion of the film.

I saw it two years ago in an obscure art theater in New York City, and fell in love with the hysterical antics of Monty Python, who gained fame in England for his television show — *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. He is best known in America for his comedy albums, which include *Beethoven, Symphony No. 2 in D Major*. . . *Another Monty Python Record, Monty Python's Previous Record, and The Worst Of Monty Python's Flying Circus*.

The film uses a unique combination of humorous graphics/animation to make some tasteless jokes, and live actors to handle the rest. No cow is too sacred, no situation too incredible to escape Monty's roving eye. If you liked the records, you'll love the film.

Walking mailboxes, dead birds nailed to perches, grainy black and white films of clandestine rendezvous on a TV game show, and caricatures of the British military and aristocracy dot the film in profusion. The jokes come in riotous barrages (and mostly defy transcription, which is why there are none of them here), leaving the film-goer only instants to recover between one and the next.

You'll like it.

## Virus vs. 11th House

by Bob Reina

Although people generally disagree concerning their beliefs in the Deity and the netherworld, I'm sure everyone who say Larry Coryell at Paul's Mall last month agreed that some supernatural being was out to get him. Moreover, I'm

still trying to figure out how a concert where everything went wrong turned out to be one of the best concerts I'd ever seen.

It started out as a normal set. Coryell emerged (brandishing two guitars), closely followed by Mike Mandel on keyboards, Mike Lawrence (who recently replaced Randy Brecker when the latter joined up with Billy Cobham) on trumpet and fluegelhorn, Danny Trifan on bass, and Alphonze Mouzon on drums. They opened, curiously enough, with "Rocks," a composition by Randy Brecker. It's a shame that this piece, the tightest and most musically complete of the band's repertoire, never made it on their newly released album; it's also unfortunate that Brecker didn't write more for the band. The band then proceeded with Mouzon's "The Funky Waltz," a low-key and somewhat oversimplified piece that was appropriately brief.

Coryell's "Theme for a Dream" followed, and it contradicted the belief that soft ballads with weak rhythmic lines, that are usually designed for "studio reproduction," fail to come across in concert.

Coryell then deviated from the standard program and introduced Mike Mandel, "untitled and unaccompanied." Finally, Mandel stepped out from the shadows and exhibited his true ability. After establishing a foundation of electronic "pounding surf" effects, he departed on an improvisational whirlwind on piano; soon the synthesizer began pounding a rhythm allowing a heavier display of piano riffs. In a comical electronic parody of Schoenberg's *Sprechsaug*, Mandel began thrashing about while reciting "Nixon ist eine grosse Scheisskopf." Concluding with B.B. King guitar riffs on the synthesizer and an amazing construction of chord progressions from random note sequences, Mandel received his deserved ovation.

Then the trouble began. The band returned onstage, sans Mike Lawrence. Coryell apologized for the trumpet player's sudden illness but reassured that the band would continue without him. The subsequent rendition of Mandel's "Joy Ride" seemed a bit empty without trumpet, but succeeded nevertheless. An unbelievably tight uptempo version of Wolfgang Dauner's "Yin" followed, which ended the set spectacularly.

As would be expected, the lack of trumpet forced Coryell to adhere to a more improvisational framework for the second set. The band opened with an

extended-jam medley of Mouzon's "Tamare" and Mandel's "Adam Smasher," leaving Coryell alone on stage afterwards. Coryell executed an incredible free form solo, utilizing complex chord harmonics and other seeming physical impossibilities, which made his recorded solo of "Gratitude" seem like Mel Bay Book Two by comparison.

The band returned onstage, this time without Danny Trifan. Coryell whispered something to Mandel, who replied, "What, am I going to play bass, too?" After introducing a drum solo by Mouzon, Coryell announced that the band would perform "Birdfingers" (Coryell's most technically demanding piece and a near impossibility without trumpet). Mouzon's solo was impeccable and, at times, seemed like it was expanding to a larger musical form. Coryell and Mandel returned to the stage (still no Trifan) and proceeded to attempt "Birdfingers."

In an amazing feat of virtuosity, Coryell played guitar, trumpet, and piano parts simultaneously, with Mandel playing bass on synthesizer. It sounded fine and was reminiscent of the old Coryell 3-man-band days. Apologizing for Trifan's virus, Coryell seemed flustered, but Mandel seemed to be enjoying his new role. They ended the concert with Mouzon's "Right On, Y'all" and "The Eleventh House Blues," the latter being an amalgamation of straightforward blues and Coryell antics. The jamming got pretty heavy (and sounded a bit like Cream at times) when Coryell's E-string "caught the virus." (What else could go wrong?) Demonstrating his remarkable ability to switch guitars in less than four measures, Coryell allowed no loss of continuity.

Remarkably enough, the concert was a tremendous success. Although some of the pieces were not performed in the original form, the reduced size of the band forced Coryell to spend most of his time improvising. Throughout the 3½ hours of the concert, he exhibited astounding versatility, always introducing difficult, but tasteful, riffs with no repetitions. At times, in a tongue-in-cheek fashion, Coryell would introduce bits and pieces of well known compositions. During the concert, one hears "In the Hall of the Mountain King," John McLaughlin's "You Know, You Know," and even "Layla." In fact, the concert ended in a torrent of Hendrix feedback.

I am thoroughly convinced that Larry Coryell is the best guitarist alive today,

and if the Eleventh House remains intact and attains the notoriety it deserves, others may well agree.

## Books for spring

by Kathleen Burke

With the coming of lazy afternoons and paper deadlines, it is sometimes necessary to sit under a tree and escape with a book. If you haven't yet entered the mythical village of Macando in Marquez' *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (Avon Books, \$1.95), you are about to experience an extraordinary journey. Gabriel Garcia Marquez' chronicle of the brutality and nobility, passion and gentleness of life in this Latin American village is at once uproariously comic, moving, and wise. A re-reading of Kenneth Grahame's classic, *The Wind in the Willows*, (Charles Scribner's, \$6.00, and also available in paperback) is a consummate spring delight — quite in the same league with kites and forsythia. Ratty's comment on purpose in existence — "Believe me, my young friend, there is nothing — absolutely nothing — half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats." — makes one want to head immediately for the Charles and the nearest sailboat. In the hardbound edition, Ernest H. Shepherd, the illustrator of *Winnie-the-Pooh*, has produced new watercolor drawings of Ratty, Moie, Toad, and Co., which are delightful.

T.H. White's *The Once and Future King* (Berkeley Medallion Books, \$1.25), the whimsical and powerful re-telling of the Arthurian fable which inspired "Camelot," is another joy. Also, often neglected, but a charming and witty masterpiece is Arthur Ryder's translation of Indian folk tales, *The Panchatantra* (University of Chicago, \$3.45). And it seems almost an insult to Pan to let spring pass without delighting in James Stephen's retelling of Celtic fairy tales, *A Crock of Gold* (Collier Books, \$1.95). Of course, it is also time to contemplate Thoreau's serene voice in *Walden* (Signet, \$.75). While sitting under that tree, you might also bring out a copy of Wallace Stephens' *The Palm at the End of the Mind* (Vintage, \$2.45), and rejoice in sun, poetry, and books, who, like people, are to be appreciated and loved.

## Classical Things Stephen Owades

The MIT Choral Society ended its season with a performance of Hindemith's *Apparebit Repentina Dies* and Bruckner's *E Minor Mass* in Kresge on May 5. John Oliver led a strong performance of the Hindemith, with particularly fine playing from the brass ensemble. The chorus was occasionally covered by the brasses, (an almost unavoidable problem in this piece unless the chorus is extremely large and powerful), but its singing was precise, well-enunciated, and on pitch. A small organ was used to help the chorus (there is a great deal of otherwise unaccompanied music), and it was rather obtrusive in the quiet passages. This is a powerful and intense piece, and the performance by the Choral Society showed it off to good advantage.

The Bruckner *E Minor Mass* is rather old-fashioned in style, and is written for chorus and wind ensemble. This piece does not have the strength and distinction of Bruckner's later large choral works (such as the *Te Deum*). The use of the large Kresge organ to support the chorus helped exaggerate the already murky texture of the writing, swallowing up the distinctive sound of the chorus and instruments.

This season has seen the MIT Choral Society improve a great deal, both in terms of sound and adventurousness of repertoire, and this program was a fine climax.

The MIT Concert Band marked its twenty-fifth anniversary with a performance on May 4 in Kresge under its long-time conductor, John Corley. The program consisted of Andrew Kazdin's *Marche Baroque*, Vaclav Nelhybel's *Symphonic Requiem*, Richard Strauss's *Suite in B flat for Thirteen Winds*, and Richard St. Clair's *Double Concerto for Two Pianos and Wind Orchestra*.

The *Marche Baroque* was written while Kazdin was a student at MIT and a member of the concert band. It is rather noisy and effective in a "pseudo-modern" way, but the opaque scoring betrays the composer's relative inexperience (Mr. Kazdin has gone on to become Executive Producer for Columbia Masterworks). The performance did not help to clarify things, being itself murky and imprecise.

Vaclav Nelhybel's works tend to feature a characteristic wide-spaced, open chordal sound, which was much in evidence in the *Symphonic Requiem*. The opening movement, entitled *Preambulum*, was especially powerful and effective; the *Motet* had some pitch problems (common in slow music for wind ensembles); the *Passacaglia* seemed the weakest section overall; and the *Cantata* made clever use of a baritone soloist (Dale Macurdy) and

an offstage brass ensemble (conducted by Bill Grossman). The performance was very good, with a fine contribution from Mr. Macurdy.

A small group opened the second half of the concert with the Strauss *Suite*, an unpublished work. On the strength of this rendition, the world has not been neglecting a great masterpiece, but the playing was so spiritless, muddily, and out-of-tune that it could have destroyed a much finer piece.

Richard St. Clair wrote his *Double Concerto* for the Paratore brothers, who perform frequently in the Boston area as a duo-piano team (they have played the Saint-Saens *Carnival of the Animals* innumerable times with the Pops). This new work (premiered at this concert) features a lot of showy and effective writing for the pianists, but they were often submerged by the overly loud and thick sound of the band. Mr. St. Clair's program notes were incredibly detailed; being, in fact, a complete detailed analysis of the score. The imprecision and muddiness of this performance did not help to make all of the interesting features that he pointed out evident to the listener; the last movement fell apart to such an extent that it had to be stopped

and restarted in the middle.

The Concert Band has for many years encouraged and commissioned the composition of new music for winds, and has always set a difficult task for itself by performing extremely complicated contemporary scores. John Corley's dedication to the cause of original music for band has made the MIT Concert Band an important influence, not only on the MIT music scene, but on the world of music at large.

The MIT Schola Cantorum will sing *Old C* by Paul Earls and portions of the Monteverdi *Mass* in the building 7 lobby next Tuesday (May 14) at 8 pm. The Earls piece is an unusual treatment of the traditional doxology "old hundredth"; the Monteverdi was performed complete by the Schola in its fall concert. Both pieces should benefit from the resonant acoustic of the building 7 lobby (much like a large cathedral), and this represents a welcome attempt to escape the acoustical difficulties of Kresge.



The MIT Symphony Orchestra will perform the Beethoven *Pastoral*, along with Ravel's *La Valse* and Haydn's *Sinfonia Concertante*, at its final concert on Saturday, May 18, at 8:30 in Kresge.



Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony* as interpreted in Disney's *Fantasia*