Robert Palmer has successfully returned to Boston

By Claudia Perry

Robert Palmer gave Sunday's sell-out crowd at the Orpheum Theater what they wanted as he performed, strutted and sang for nearly two hours. Palmer, whose rhythm-and-blues-styled crooning is best suited to a small audience, dispelled the myth that he was unable to hold a large house. Unfortunately, the sound system didn't have as much success.

The sound problems were minimal for one of Palmer's most memorable numbers, "Stewart's Sound," which was sung with perfect pitch and dynamics. The Ensemble's preview concert, last Wednesday at noon in Lobby 7, gave the impression of a group needing only minor touching-up. This was not the case for the Ensemble's second appearance by Leon Woo. Flanked by two talented but as yet under-rehearsed french horns, the "Fanfare" was rescued by an authoritative line in the trombones which put the piece back together and carried it to a good, if not great, conclusion.

The Symphony's "Good Morning" from Purcell's "Fairy Queen" alternated between a fair Allegro and painful Adagio. The first movement was a great improvement on the Copland, until it reached a fugal passage demanding a precision which wasn't present. The Ensemble's musical sophistication was better throughout, with technique clearly the limiting factor. Following movements showed spirit and a masterful interpretation hamstrung by innumerable minor technical errors.

The Ensemble demonstrated excellent taste in their admittedly difficult program. The "Nonet for Brass," an aggressively-modern twelve-tone work, was entirely out of context in Sunday's program. It was killed by the solo tuba, who seemed to be struggling with every new note.

The french horns continued to demonstrate fine interpretation, although their technique remained merely adequate. Once again, it was the trombones which saved the piece with a supporting line that easily carried the faltering higher brasses. The MIT Ensemble, unusually enough, had obviously mastered the difficult rhythms and intervals common to twelve-tone works. They just couldn't play it, which was frustrating for those on stage and in the house.

Buxtehude's "Fanfare" opened the concert's second half with some of the evening's best sound. The following "Chorale," however, was full of flaws that just had no place in an otherwise fine performance. The French's "Fanfare" was rescued by an authoritative line in the trombones which put the piece back together and carried it to a good, if not great, conclusion.

The encore ended an evening that showed two of the finest English performers recently seen in Boston. Robert Palmer's triumphant return and Al Stewart's impressive first appearance made for a night of rock that should long be remembered.

Brass Ensemble's interpretations good, practice needed

By Peter Coffee

Sunday's concert by the MIT Brass Ensemble demonstrated excellent taste in music, a thorough understanding of the material, and a general inability to perform their admittedly difficult program. The concert was a baffling mixture of excellent sound and ragged technique. The Ensemble's preview concert, last Wednesday at noon in Lobby 7, gave the impression of a group needing only minor touching-up. This was not the case for the Ensemble's second appearance by Leon Woo. Flanked by two talented but as yet under-rehearsed french horns, the "Fanfare" was rescued by an authoritative line in the trombones which put the piece back together and carried it to a good, if not great, conclusion.

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