Three local shows:
Of blood, bloody good, and bloodletting

The Opera Company of Boston presented Marchesi’s The Vampyre, conducted by William Fred Scott, October 31. Boston audiences, feted by Wellesley Tupelos. MIT Logarithytns, Tufts Berkeleybushes, and MIT Cheraillaries, November 1. The Boston Classical Orchestra presented the opening concert of their season, November 5. The orchestra, conducted by William Fred Scott, played magnificently in this Halloween performance of The Vampyre. on stage, though, performance was mixed-quality. The Wall beautifully sang the role of Emmy. She was effective, too, in bringing across all feeling of apprehension and the onslaught of inevitable fate. The Vampyre (Ellis) (perhaps a bit oversubscribed) savagely, chooses to partake of a drink of blood off-stage. Though he has an affinity for the beverage, song-cloud, Ellis showed a nice predilection for sang-froid in his act. Calmly determined to suit your mood, but in the three virgins to overcome, he certainly had a sinister presence. In the end Vampyre only got to two virgins, though Pamela Kuderlin sang so appallingly as (the saved) Malvina that I would have preferred him to have succeeded in doing away with her at an early-stage in favor of letting us hear more of Wall. James Atherton I was a bit stiff as Abury, but sang well enough. Sarah Cukleff’s production as a whole was perhaps not quite up to the Company’s usual standards, but the audience was not exactly in an over-serious mood, and we all got a giggle out of the show.

The following night, November 1, I attended a rather different sort of entertainment: the Boston Songfest, held at MIT, 10-250 was well-parked with a receptive audience of MIT students and guests, and the enthusiasm of the audience was well-rewarded. The Wellesley Tupelos started the ball rolling with an amusing and entertaining series of numbers; they weren’t perfect musically, but I don’t think they needed to be.

The Logarithytns once more presented their own rather special brand of humor; their version of “Arise Ye Sons of MIT” is fast becoming something of a classic; a hallmark of their necessary but innocent wit. Musically, the Logos were a bit down on their previous concert, though they have recently acquired new members, and with a little more practice should soon regain their air of ensemble.

The Tufts Beelzebubs were the highlight of the evening. Partly in drag, their sophisticated act was hit and “Radiation Baby” brought the house down. This noteworthily, they showed remarkable versatility, and got a sensitive and beautifully sung rendition of “The Honey, Honey Banks of Loch Lomond.”

The MIT Cheraillaries ended the program, on top form. A well-balanced and vocally colorful group, they were a pleasure for both ear and soul. “He’s a Swell Guy” remains a hot favorite. Throughout the goings-on had jokes were recreated, and everyone moused and laughed; we all felt happy at the end.

My final report is a less happy one. The opening concert of the Boston Classical Orchestra’s first full season, given in Faneuil Hall on November 5, was unsatisfactory. Conductor F. John Adams has stood his aim as the creation of a truly “classical” orchestra after the style of Haydn’s London ensemble. His attempt to do this was clear in the performance, but the discipline he has evidently imposed in attempting to achieve a sonority “clear yet mellow, smooth, dark and luminous” has unfortunately given, the sound a mechanical formalism that stifles it. Yes, the violins were remarkably smooth; yes, the winds did blend well with the strings. And there were some passages of music that were utterly classical and retained, but on the whole the concept is not as new working. The concert started with Haydn’s Symphony number 92. Unhappiness marred the entire performance. Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto number 4 worked far better (though this is not, of course, a “classical” work). Luc Letzowska, solo violin, played well, and the orchestra sank back into an adequately competent continuous support. But one felt that Adams was trying to get the effect Munchinger succeeds in producing with his Stuttgart orchestra—a sound smooth and organic which because of its nature can take a slow pace—and was missing the mark. Hawthorne also pervaded the final work, Mozart’s 39th Symphony, in a feline, superhuman performance, as the listener awoke from his slumber only when the tamburo popped his ear drums or a number of the brass section mistuned. The indulgence came close to torture.

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