

# Mime's magnificent Marcel Marceau

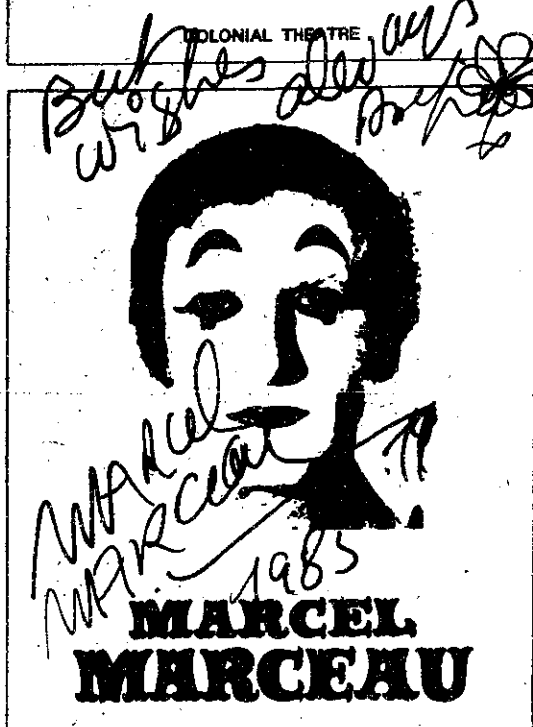
Marcel Marceau, at the Colonial Theater until Sunday.

For Technical reasons not of my making, I arrived at the Colonial Theater when the first half of the performance was almost over. I had missed some of Marceau's classic numbers such as, *Walking Against the Wind* and *The Bureaucrats*. I was fortunate enough, however, to catch the end of *The Seven Deadly Sins*.

The first half of the show finished with *The Mask Maker*. In this famous skit, Marceau plays an artisan mask maker who tries on the masks he produces. He flirts with the idea of trying them on and off, alternating a sad mask with a happy mask. The tragedy of his struggle is funny at first, but eventually stirs some deeper feelings within us — perhaps the same feelings we use to change our own masks. The initial humor shared by the audience turned into an almost eerie stillness. Marceau's ability to disassociate his bodily movements from his facial expression is astonishing. The "style pantomimes" of the first half ended with numerous crashing encores.

The show's second half featured *Bip*, the

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renowned clown character created by Marceau in 1947. The audience's enthusiasm was well received by Bip, who appeared in his usual attire: white dungarees, gray striped pullover and the battered, beflowered opera hat.

In *Bip as a Skater* Marceau's body control leaves one both in admiration and full of laughter. Marceau could be described as a veteran of pantomime, but his coordination and range of motion are as youthful and extensive as his spirit and creativity.

Judging by the copious laughter and applause, the audience's favorite number was the classic *Bip Plays David and Goliath*. Marceau's one-man team would have us believe there are two actors on stage. We all know, of course, there is only Marcel Marceau with all his resonating energy one moment as David, soon after as Goliath. The exquisite and sophisticated nature of Marceau's humor emerges at the end of the skit, when upon taking his bow as Goliath, Marceau calls David to come and take his bow simultaneously.

The last number, *Bip in the Modern and Future Life*, lacked the vitality and zest which characterized the rest of the perfor-

mance. At the end of the show, after some considerable time spent lingering back stage, (and after obtaining an autograph; WOW!) I learned that there had been some problems with the lighting, which had greatly displeased Monsieur Marceau.

In all honesty, as a member of the audience, I had not noticed any. Unquestionably, Marceau was thrown by the slight technical hitch, and as a result could not keep the audience enamoured with his last somewhat metaphysical skit. I suppose he felt the atmosphere was all wrong. At one point it seemed as though he was staring at the light panel backstage to verify the gravity of the situation.

The final hitch did little, if any, damage to the performance of the master mime. The evening was well worth the somewhat prohibitive prices (for students that is).

Marceau began his own legend in 1946 when he enrolled as a student in Charles Dullin's School of Dramatic Art in Paris. Since then his talent has graced every corner of the globe. He will be in Boston until Sunday night.

Don't pass it up.

Corrado Giambalvo

## Two Against One no Massacre

The Golden Palominos Present "Two Against One" in concert at the Boston Shakespeare Company, Saturday, Feb. 23.

The "power trio" — a bass/guitar/drums grouping — is as old as rock and roll itself. In the hands of Elvis Presley, Scotty Moore and Bill Black, the trio represented rock at its most basic, most vital level; when utilized by Jimi Hendrix, Noel Redding and Mitch Mitchell, the trio explored the farthest reaches of the genre.

At its best, the trio served as a vehicle for the presentation of brilliant musicians (Cream, for example); at its worst, it served up bombastic gentility and egotistic soloists (Rush and E.P. come to mind). Variations on the trio have been attempted — keyboard or saxophone in the place of the guitar — but the guitar remains the pre-eminent voice of the power trio.

The trio is also the foundation of jazz, where the bass/drums/soloist format has



launched and maintained the careers of jazz's most stellar talents. Recently the trend in jazz trios has been to support collective improvisation, where no single solo voice is predominant. Air and Boston's own The Fringe are leaders of this trend.

Fred Frith, progressive rock guitarist extraordinaire and prominent member of the New York avant-jazz axis, in 1980 formed Massacre, his own "power trio." Bassist Bill Laswell and drummer Fred Maher, both from the pioneering jazz ensemble Material, joined Frith in his venture.

Massacre was meant to recapture the raw energy of early rock and roll, and infuse it with the creative sensibilities of improvisational jazz. It succeeded admirably with its two recordings: the album *Killing Time* and one side of Frith's *Speechless*. Massacre was incorporated in 1983 into a larger band, the Golden Palominos, founded by drummer Anton Fier.

This historical background is necessary to understand the context of last Saturday's performance and the highly qualified title "The Golden Palominos Present 'Two Against One'." Only three of the eight or nine Palominos — Frith, Laswell, and Fier — performed, but since Fier was drumming in Maher's place, the ensemble couldn't fairly represent themselves as Massacre.

Representation aside, what we heard on the BSC stage was clearly a Massacre performance: a series of structured pieces interspersed with bouts of free improvisation. The group culled the pieces from the *Killing Time* record, characterized by

short chromatic riffs, odd time signatures, and high-energy solos.

Two Against One treated us to new renditions of "Killing Time," "Legs," "Aging With Dignity," "Corridor," "Bones," and "Surfing," plus "Conversation" from Laswell's *Baselines* album. The pieces unfortunately were recognizable only to those who had heard them from the recording because of a gross sound imbalance — Laswell's bass completely overpowered Frith's guitar.



The free improvisations, apart from suffering from the same sonic difficulties as the set pieces, were a disappointment. Frith, who has an incomparable approach to producing sound from the guitar — utilizing feedback, bowing the strings, and placing objects on the strings, was given little time to explore new possibilities. While Fier provided the perfect percussive foil to Frith's antics, Laswell's bass kept



crashing the party, treading on the toes of Frith's solos with loud atonal bursts of bass feedback.

What finally undermined the performance, however, was the inclusion of three middlebrow, heavy metal excursions, introduced by Frith as "our psychedelic number." One of these tunes might have been regarded as a joke, but three pointed out all too clearly Two Against One's basic problem: They had succumbed to the ego displays that have ruined all great power trios.

While Fier, Frith, and Laswell are all outstanding musicians in their own right, they could not completely abandon themselves to the collective spirit that propelled Massacre's brilliant first performances. Two Against One was indeed an apt name: Frith and Fier against Laswell, but none came out the winner.

David G. Shaw

## Menuhin reveals quintessential Mozart

Yehudi Menuhin plays Mozart's *Violin Concertos Nos. 3 & 5* and conducts the *Bath Festival Chamber Orchestra*; Angel 4AE-34409.

The smash hit release of 1985 turns out to be a recording from 1962. The tape which will bring a smile to the most Institute-jaded face was recorded by Yehudi Menuhin at his prime, and has now been digitally remastered by Angel. The performance speaks eloquently by itself, but the openness of the digital sound adds an extra dimension of communication which warrants the recording's place in everyone's Walkman.

The first movement of Mozart's *Violin Concerto No. 3* opens with a huge burst of energy. The orchestra — under Menuhin's baton before he takes up his bow — builds up an enormous sense of anticipation creating music of both elegance and wit. Then Menuhin enters and develops his opening theme with supreme intensity, yet sweetness too. The orchestra plays in close touch with Menuhin, the remarkable grace of the accompaniment highlighting the playfulness of the soloist caught in Mozartian joy.

Menuhin takes off into a cadenza of darkness and light, loneliness and fullness that is quintessentially Mozartian. The orchestra returns for a stunning drive home to the end of the movement.

The *adagio* opens gently with a penetrating introspective beauty. Menuhin's violin produces a concentrated sound that wends its way through a silken orchestra lost as in a dream. The listener, too, can easily become lost in the movement's pure serenity.

The concluding *rondo* has a rhythmic thrust to it, transporting us to the end of the piece with an infectious gaiety.

The determination of Menuhin's entry to the *allegro aperto* of Mozart's *Violin Concerto No. 5* is matched by its free-flowing dance-like quality. In Menuhin's playing we see a glimpse of the unfathomable Mozart: Child-like on the surface, but with myriad complexities underneath. The *adagio* continues in like vein, an overwhelming grandeur conveyed with refreshing simplicity.

Both Menuhin and orchestra provide a sensational finale in the *tempo di menuetto*. At first there is a questioning, plaintive touch to the solo music; the orchestra then takes on a drone-like quality, the soloist flying free above.

The most demanding of difficulties are produced with the utmost facility; each phrase gives pause for careful consideration; the work ends leaving the mind clear and sparkling to contemplate on the eternity of Mozart.

Jonathan Richmond

