

Pinnock presents original, MTG's "West Side Story" overcomes poor acoustics

THE ENGLISH CONCERT

Directed by Trevor Pinnock
Jordan Hall, November 14

By JONATHAN RICHMOND

LIGHTNESS, ELEGANCE, AND ZIP: these were the keywords for the extraordinary concert given by Trevor Pinnock and the English Concert last Friday night in Jordan Hall. The program — with works by Purcell, Bach, Telemann, and Vivaldi was carefully constructed to show the Concert in all its moods.

Pinnock's band began by presenting Purcell's *Incidental Music for "The Faerie Queene"* as an essay in magic. The *Overture* danced with a refreshing airiness. If by the end of the *Hornpipe* anyone in the audience was not yet under the Concert's spell, the seductive oboe solo in the *Air: "If Love's a Sweet Passion"* or the boisterous ensemble playing in the vibrant *Monkey's Dance* denied any further escape from enchantment.

Trevor Pinnock next played solo harpsichord in Bach's *Harpsichord Concerto in D minor*, BWV 1052. His performance was electric, tensions explored to the utmost with clarity and poise. Pinnock's organic relationship with his ensemble made for the perfect blend, the velvet textures of the tutti combining idyllically with the excitement coming from the harpsichord.

There was plenty to be enjoyed in Telemann's *Concerto in B flat for three oboes and three violins*. The conversations between the two solo trios during the open-

ing and closing *Allegros* was witty, the oboes raspy throated and crotchety, the violins more haughty and restrained. The sublime oboe playing in the *Largo* created a substantial filling to fit between the two coarser-cut outer movements.

Vivaldi's *Concerto in G minor*, Op. 3, No. 2, was stylishly done, but the most interesting work of the evening was Bach's *Suite No. 4 in D*, BWV 1069. As a general rule British schoolboys never grow up, and, while music stands were being rearranged, Pinnock couldn't resist bounding on stage with an impish grin to tell everyone about the interesting hack he had played on the piece. There would be no trumpets, he said, but instead the string and woodwind "choirs" would be repositioned to fill in the absent brass and provide a better-defined contrast than can usually be obtained.

Pinnock was as good as his promise: it sounded as if the Concert were performing a newly-composed work. Fresh insights — previously lost in the mushy background of traditional Bach playing — darted into the foreground. Pinnock's reference to "choirs" reflects his respect for each "voice" in the orchestra: virtuoso playing on oboes was met by a silken response from the strings; the balance between them was a joy.

But it wasn't quite time to go home. The oboes still had a thing or two to tell the violins. In a brief Telemann snippet, played as an encore, they snorted rudely at their colleagues on the other side of the stage. The musicians could hardly stop themselves from laughing, and the audience was sent away extremely happy too.

WEST SIDE STORY

MIT Musical Theatre Guild.

In Kresge Auditorium.

Remaining performances Nov. 20, 21, and 22 at 8pm.

By SUSAN LANDSMAN

THE MUSICAL THEATRE GUILD succeeded in delivering an entertaining performance of *West Side Story* in Kresge despite acoustical dampening.

As the lights rose on an angular set dominated by grays and browns, and the orchestra clamored in musical conflict, the Jets and the Sharks broke into a well-choreographed rumble that established the kinetic quality of the show.

Tony, played by Michael Laroche '90, entered with a naive gentleness that contrasted with the rivalrous chaos of the gangs. Laroche surmounted the acoustical problems with a clear, well-modulated voice that could be heard over the orchestra. Other actors were sometimes hard to understand.

The urban Romeo and Juliet met with a radiant innocence during the tensely comedic dance at the gym. Laroche and Anna Napolitano '89 as Maria conveyed the vividness of love at first sight and their ignorance of the hatred surrounding them.

The tender harmony of Tony and Maria is broken by Tony's vengeant killing of Bernardo, Maria's brother. Napolitano was convincing as Maria in her affirmation of her love for Tony, as was Laroche in portraying Tony's feverish remorse. As the two hugged desperately on the balcony, the dance of Tony and Maria hinted skillfully at the impending tragedy, separating them to exit at opposite ends of the stage.

Tony, thinking that Chino has killed Maria in anger at their love, invokes the dark side of the fate that he anticipates at the beginning of the play and shouts wildly for a similar death. Chino shoots him just as he sees Maria alive and is about to embrace her; he dies in her arms. Laroche and Napolitano's last few notes of harmony end the suspense and the play with tender sadness. Napolitano deftly translates this into cutting hysteria, while the rival gangs are driven into reconciliation.

The leads all performed with an energy and intensity that lent strength to their characters. Strong-willed Anita, played by Shari Hall, bantered with the menacing Bernardo, Stephan Driscoll. Tracy Smith darted about as Riff with a hostile, yet subtly affectionate manner, while Officer Krupke and Inspector Shrenk were played to the maximum harshness of their characters.



Lisette L. Lambregts

Philip Glass program at Berklee is a mixed musical experience

PHILIP GLASS ENSEMBLE

Program of works by Philip Glass.
Berklee Performance Center,
November 15.



The Philip Glass Ensemble, led by Glass himself (far right).

By JONATHAN RICHMOND

ON Saturday night the Wang Celebrity Series took a courageous step from their normally conservative track and presented the Philip Glass Ensemble at the Berklee Performance Center. The first part was a mixed experience. The opening number, the "Prelude to the Köln Section" from "the CIVIL warS" was as adrenal as it was virtuosic; the trance-like theme was hypnotic.

The complex fabric of *Dance #9* from an untitled Twyla Tharp Dance Piece was interesting, and Dora Ohrenstein's spiky soprano added effect, but interest flagged after a few minutes when the piece had exhausted its novelty. The same was true of *A Descent into the Maelstrom* which quickly became tiresome, despite notable saxophone playing. Enjoyment was not aided by the numbing volume of the amplification.

The second half was better. An excerpt

from *Satyagraha* was especially gripping, its stream-like flows surrounding and massaging the psyche. The exhilarating forcefulness of one particularly intoxicating passage was reminiscent of *Carmina Burana*. And while the music was clearly avant garde, it was clear that Glass used a number of well-established traditional devices to add power. The use of a *da capo* repeat, for example, helped make for an overpowering climax.

Façades was more reflective than the other works on the program, and saw some skillful saxophone playing. The peace was soon disturbed, however, with the start of "Funeral," an excerpt from *Akhmaten*. Its proportions were massive, but a skillful mixing of musical elements of a varied nature sustained the attention. "Space ship" from *Einstein on the Beach* was done as an encore. Its roller coaster effect was magnetic. While penetrating bass kept the listener within the music's grip, subtle contributions to the work's overall complexity — such as a gentle flute — made sure that there was plenty of intellectual interest.

Pleasing Baroque strings with Musica Antiqua

MUSICA ANTIQUA KÖLN

At Jordan Hall, November 8.

Part of the Charles River Concerts Series.

By JOSEPH L. SHIPMAN

MUSICA ANTIQUA, based in Cologne, is a leading advocate and prominent representative of the recent trend to perform early music on original (or near-original) instruments, as part of a wider commitment to faithfully reproduce the sound, style, and artistic intentions of that repertoire. One of their specialties is Italian violin music of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and this concert gave a sample of that.

The first half of the concert featured music by Gabrieli, Fontana, Legrenzi, and Albinoni, spanning over a century. All of the pieces were sonatas for two to four high strings (violin or viola) and *basso continuo*, which consisted of cello or harpsichord.

Albinoni's name will sound most familiar to the average concert-goer. His piece, a sonata in D minor, was the most modern chronologically and stylistically — it seemed the most emotional of the works and employed the greatest range, with three markedly different movements. This is not to imply that the earlier works were simple or superficial; they did not attempt colorful emotional effects but were just as intricate and interesting.

The Gabrieli and Fontana sonatas were both richly textured and difficult, with a variety of sonorities. Goebel's violin technique is idiosyncratic, but he made the lead voice sound smooth and easy. The three pieces by Giovanni Legrenzi included an early example of a string quartet which sounded almost classical. It was not until the Albinoni sonata, though, that the group really seemed to hit their stride. The violins played beautifully and excitingly, and each movement sounded fresh and original.

The second half of the concert was supposed to begin with a piece by Vivaldi, but at the last minute Goebel announced the substitution of a sonata for solo violin and continuo by Veracini. Goebel played this virtuoso piece well, although I found his mannerisms slightly distracting. Harpsichordist Thierry Maeder stood out here. I was sorry to have missed the Vivaldi, as this work was not too memorable.

The final selection was a long, interesting, and energetically-played concerto for four violins and *basso continuo* by little-known Leonardo Leo.

The group seemed a bit listless and disorganized during the first part of the concert. A couple of players appeared to lose their places, and at one point in the Legrenzi quartet Goebel brought the whole group to a stop and started over. Jet lag may be the explanation. (I don't know if this had anything to do with the substitution at the beginning of the second half.)