

CABRILLO FESTIVAL

It's Quite A Bargain

By LEWIS KEIZER

SAN JUAN BAUTISTA — Where but the Cabrillo Festival can you hear Dave Brubeck live for only \$8.50? And in a beautiful setting like Mission San Juan Bautista? Probably nowhere, for the Cabrillo Festival continues to be the best musical bargain of the summer.

This year's San Juan Fiesta Day featured an afternoon concert of Brubeck's La Fiesta de la Posada, with the master himself at the piano. He was joined by El Teatro Compesino, the San Mateo Masterworks Chorale, and members of the Cabrillo Festival Orchestra under the competent direction of Galen Marshall.

Featured soloists were Luana de Vol, Soprano, Daniel Parkerson, Tenor, Marc Accornero, Baritone, and John Miller, Bass. These four were featured also in the evening concert, Dvorak's Requiem.

The afternoon had begun well, with performances by Bill Wright's excellent Reed Street Brass Quintet and an exhibition of Flamenco guitar and Spanish dancing. The green lawn of the Mission was covered with picnics and sociable groups drinking wine in the warm sun. Others milled through the historic buildings or explored the antique shops of San Juan Bautista.

An unforeseen delay in the concerts was caused by an extra Mass that morning, throwing the afternoon concert back an hour to 4 o'clock, and the evening concert back to 7:30, but no one seemed to mind.

The Brubeck concert began with a children's chorus staged at the rear of the church. After singing to the accompaniment of guitar, they burst forward laughing and streamed through the audience to the sanctuary, where to hooting, hollering and mariachi-like marimba music they constructed La Posada, the traditional Christmas nativity scene. When this was finished the chorale and soloists appeared.

La Fiesta de la Posada was not conceived by Brubeck as a magnum opus, and it is not a great piece of music. It was intended to honor and memorialize the wonderful Mexican traditional Christmas that so many of us Californians have learned to love, with its song, fireworks and pinata. This it does, and in great style with masked dancers, marimbas and jazz.

The 15 segments of the piece, which last for just under an hour, follow the Christmas story, but not in order. For example, the equivalent of the Magnificat follows the visit of the three wise men. Other parts of the Mass like the Gloria are interspersed among traditional folk music done up Brubeck style.

The whole thing was vintage '50s Brubeck, and couldn't have been written by anyone else, even to the extent of including Brubeckian piano and jazz rhythm section improvisations tacked on as a kind of jazz commentary at certain points, such as the glorious God's Love Made Visible.

As a matter of fact, after the performance of this, the next-to-last segment, the audience rose to its feet in wild applause. The work ended with the children following the swinging pinata back to the rear of the church, and many in the audience taking photographs of the scene.

I heard no complaints about the fact that only those in the front third of the church could see the dancers that appeared from time to time, although people in the rear would furtively rise long enough to get a glimpse then quickly sit, hoping they had not offended the person behind. Although the Brubeck piece would have been better on a stage, it was so perfect for the Mission setting that everyone was pleased.

After people left the church they were entertained again by the Spanish dancers, ticket drawing results, and finally by the Reed Street Brass Quintet.

Bill Wright's local group has improved year after year, and is now one of the better brass groups performing. The final piece they played was one of the finest yet most innovative brass compositions I've ever heard, yet not familiar to me. I asked Bill who wrote it, and was amazed to hear that the three-section work had been written by Steve Wilson, trombonist with the group and instructor at Cabrillo College. I predict we'll be hearing a lot more from this promising composer who, as I understand, is working on a project to produce a record.

The evening concert was sheer excellence — truly a high-point of the season. As I stood on the Mission lawn contemplating the white fog that partially

blanketed the nearby hills giving the illusion of slowly moving snow. I recalled that the requiem Mass form had always been a means for great composition. The passion of Christ, such as we find in Bach's St. Matthew's Passion, which was the instrument for Mendelssohn's revival of interest in the music of Bach, had been humanized by the great 19th Century composers as part of their everyman's requiems. Mendelssohn, with his mystic philosophy, Verdi, with his drama and passion, and now Dvorak, with his sublime spirituality.

The work returned to a chromatic four-note sequence signifying birth, life and the return to origins. It was conducted by John Nelson, who did a marvelous job. The music is straightforward and lies easily for orchestra and chorus, but Nelson took this as his strating point and transformed it into a masterpiece of performance and nuance. Davies did well to send us such talented conductors in his place!

There are still tickets available for the Cabrillo Festival concerts. Don't miss them!

MATINEES DAILY APOTOS TWIN <small>Rancho Del Mar Center, Aptos</small> ENDS THURSDAY	MATINEES DAILY APOTOS TWIN <small>Rancho Del Mar Center, Aptos</small> ENDS THURSDAY	MATINEES DAILY APOTOS TWIN <small>Rancho Del Mar Center, Aptos</small> ENDS THURSDAY
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