

P.D.Q. Bach

History's most neglected composer to play tonight

By TODD WOODARD
Campus Reporter

History's most neglected composer, P.D.Q. Bach will bring his show, "The Intimate P.D.Q. Bach," to Texas A&M University's Rudder Auditorium tonight at 8:15 p.m. The concert is sponsored by MSC Opera and Performing Arts Society.

P.D.Q. Bach is a pseudonym used by musician Peter Schickele, and, as one might expect, Schickele's work is not that of the ordinary classical composer.

"The Intimate P.D.Q. Bach" will feature Schickele and his group in what has been called "a hilarious spoof of classical music."

The biography Schickele has prepared for Bach is as outrageous as the music he plays.

Schickele says in "The Definitive Biography of P.D.Q. Bach," that P.D.Q., the last and oddest of Johann Sebastian Bach's 20-odd children, was an unfortunate child.

Bach initiated his son P.D.Q. at age 6. Until then, he referred to P.D.Q. as simply, "Hey, you!"

According to the pseudo-biography, during his life (1807-1742)?, P.D.Q. was particularly inept, succeeding at nothing. Finally, at age 35, he turned to music, a field in which he was to distinguish himself.

He was little-known in his own time, gaining recognition in recent years only because of Schickele's works. Schickele claims to have discovered manuscripts detailing P.D.Q.'s life and works.

The works were discovered at the end of Schickele's pen. P.D.Q. Bach is Schickele's alter ego on stage.

Schickele has a master's from the Julliard School of Music in New York. His work includes not only the Bach spoofs, but writing for the St. Louis Symphony, "Sesame Street," and Oh! Calcutta."

Schickele, 45, began satirizing the seriousness and sobriety of classical music with P.D.Q. Bach in the mid-1960s. Reading about Schickele, it is difficult to say if and where P.D.Q. and Professor Peter Schickele part. Together Schickele and P.C.Q. are comic.

Robert Boone, director of the Singing Cadets, said, "P.D.Q. Bach is long-hair music (classical performers often wear wigs) done a la farce. It is done tongue-in-cheek, satirizing classical music."

Boone said that he was not prepared for his first P.D.Q. Bach concert. "I laughed so hard I ended up on the floor," he said.

He didn't say what the program was, but it might have been "My Bonnie Lass, She Smelleth" and "Serenade for Devious Instruments."

Schickele's show takes off with bargain counter tenor Joh Ferrante, Keyboardist David Oei and stage manager William Walters. Ferrante, Oei and Walters make up the Semi-Pro Musica Antiqua, the supporting cast for Schickele.

The program tonight will be intimate, meaning only Schickele and the Semi-Pro will be on stage. When a symphony or orchestra accompanies the group, the "Intimate" title is dropped.

Programs like P.D.Q. Bach, or symphonies, operas and dances are coordinated at Texas A&M by MSC OPAS.

Richard Stevens, senior industrial technology major and OPAS chairman, said, "It's almost like a cult following. Either you know about P.D.Q. or you don't. The real fanatics seem to have been at college age."

People began buying tickets as soon as they were available, Stevens said.

But P.D.Q. met opposition at Texas A&M, he said. OPAS is a campus and community organization, and some people felt that OPAS should stay with symphonies and operas.

"It's just that we have a variety of people on the program advisory board. Some of the community people don't see eye-to-eye with the students. We wanted to lighten up the program and P.D.Q. was available. "You don't have to understand classical to enjoy P.D.Q.," Stevens said.

Singing Cadet Scott Sullivan agrees. Sullivan said reading the program and listening to the lyrics of "Hansel and Gretel" will be funny.

The OPAS program lists Sonata "Abassoonata" in F major as the first piece. It has movements titled "Allegro so-so," "Andante con moped," and "Allegro assai-nara."

Following Sonata is "Shepherd on the Rocks, With a Twist," for bargain counter tenor and devious instru-

ments, and "Goldbrick" variations. "Twelve Quite Heavenly Songs," a slide show on P.D.Q. Bach's life and "Hansel and Gretel and Ted and Alice" finish the program.

Schickele plays whatever piano is available, exclusively.

During the program Boone said that listeners can expect anything. "He will use kazoo's, faucets, things that will approximate the sounds of instruments. "He takes cans and bottles and mes them sound pretty good," Boone said.

Sullivan has performed P.D.Q.'s, "Throw the Yule Log on Uncle John, for the Singing Cadets and has heard choruses "O little Town of Hackensack" and "By the Leeks of Babylon," which has a refrain, "E-I-E-I-O." Ticket prices are about those of a

movie. Stevens said that the best seats are \$4.30, and more distant zone two and three tickets are \$3.50 and \$2.90.

Much of Schickele's work is a result of Spike Jones and the City Slickers, a group in the 1930s. "They re-

corded 'Right in the Führer's Face' and 'Tiptoe Through the Tulips,'" Boone said.

Some of the inspiration must be self-generated. Schickele often plays a windbreaker, an instrument which looks much like a Christmas-paper

tube. Foghorns, washbasins find a place in P.D.Q. said, "He takes a pipe and a shower nozzle on it to produce tinctive, mellow tone."

"He's trying to prove that hair music can be fun."

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