

Local

Cracked classical music of P.D.Q. Bach entertains Aggies

By TODD WOODARD
Campus Reporter

Rappelling down from the Rudder Auditorium balcony, Professor Peter Schickele made his Texas A&M University debut Wednesday night.

Schickele brought his "Intimate P.D.Q. Bach," a hilarious spoof on the solemnity of classical music, before a crowd that was packed in to see the MSC Opera and Performing Arts Society presentation.

"Intimate P.D.Q. Bach," despite the title's implication, is not a one-man show. Schickele portrays the wild-haired discoverer of a vast collection of composition by J. S. Bach's youngest, most-neglected and strangest child. But Schickele is not alone.

He is joined by stage manager William Walters, keyboard man David Oei and tenor John Ferrante in a program that contained as many puns as there was music.

In describing the four periods of his fictitious composer's life, Schickele said P.D.Q. Bach went through a hosed, or brown-bag period, spanning much of his life.

But the audience broke up when Schickele said Bach skipped his next period, and remained in stitches when Schickele reminded them that that was no laughing matter.

Schickele's dress was a laughing stock by itself. Orange Brogans, tattered and dirty black pants, a shirt tucked in one side, and a threadbare set of tails completed the image of a professor from the University of Southern North Dakota at Hoople.

The zany costume combined with his description of Sonata "Abasoonata" as a strange, dramatic, incoherent, dumb piece brought two grey-haired women to hysterics. One lost her glasses in the dark; the other was in fits of laughter for almost a minute.

Oei, a black belt in piano, joined Schickele in Sonata for only the end of the piece. Schickele played both piano and bassoon simultaneously. He played the piano with the bassoon, and with his rear. He also managed to use his hands.

In the second piece Falsetto tenor John Ferrante sang high-pitched lyrics with accompaniment. Schickele feverishly whirled a long white tube to produce the strangest sound ever to grace a concert hall. During "Shepherd on the Rocks, With a Twist" he used a trombone, a trombone fitted with a bassoon mouthpiece.

"Goldbrick" variations put the lights out. Oei played piano while Schickele turned the music. Oei claimed he couldn't see the music, so announcer Walters brought out a floodlamp with soon burned out. He brought several light sockets, two of them took out the lights. When he plugged in still another socket, the podium exploded. As the concussion passed and the smoked cleared, Oei played on, lights or no. It was an unilluminating experience.

The one liners, "I can't drink beer all day and keep it to myself," "the timely death of P.D.Q.," "designing underwear for Frederick the Great," "bearded girls don't get proposed to everyday," P.D.Q. described as "a pimple on the face of music" brought howls from the crowd. But even good humor can be overdone.

After the intermission some people left, and the humor was not as wrenching. What elicited deep laughs at first got less volume at last. Slapstick is great in small doses, but P.D.Q. was too much of a prescription. Even so, the show was enjoyable and the audience responded with a standing ovation. P.D.Q. is certainly worth sore sides, too long or not.



Peter Schickele and John Ferrante sing "Twelve Heavenly Songs" to the accompaniment of David Oei on piano. Schickele brought his classical music parody show "P.D.Q. Bach" to the Texas A&M campus Wednesday night. The Opera and Performing Arts Society sponsored the show.

Staff photo by Paul Childress

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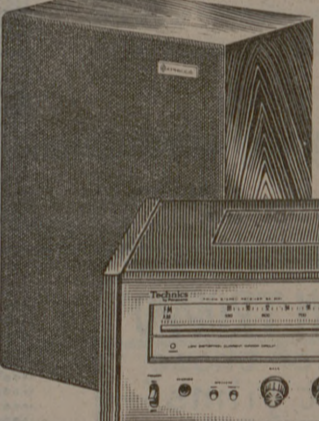
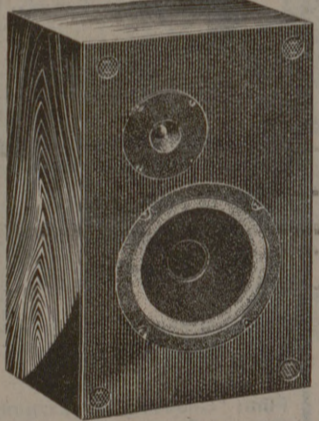


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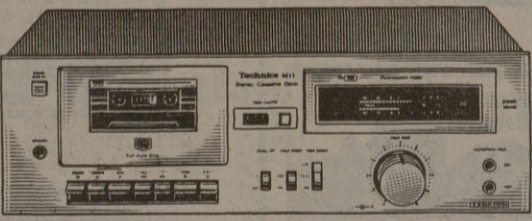
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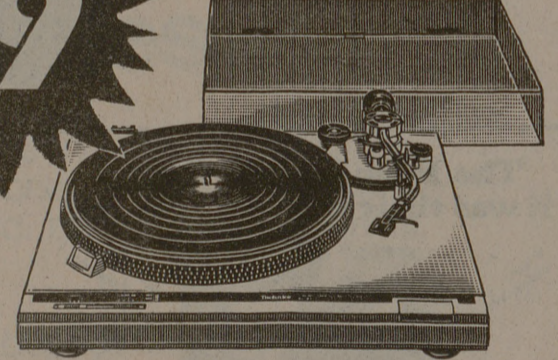
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