

Parker's music, performance fascinating

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Music Critic

As the man said, "If music be the food of joy, play on!"

Well, if he did not say precisely that, after the recital in All Faiths Auditorium on Thursday evening, it was clear that the bard might just as well have said it that way.

West coast music came to this Midwest town decked out in all its finery during Craig Parker's feast of trumpet. If the announced program had promised much in the way of variety and novelty beforehand, it was clear when Dr. Robert Edwards, accompanying Mr. Parker, walked onto the stage bearing a piccolo trumpet that the event would more than fulfill the promise. And so it turned out.

Musically, the first half was fairly uneventful, though the sprightly and lyrical trumpet playing, and the shapely and well-scaled piano and organ accompaniments of Robert Edwards more than held the interest. But the tone of the evening had already been set when Mr. Parker announced that Steve Charpie's *Intrada* took longer to talk about than to play, a comment that turned out to be an all-too-accurate observation concerning the approximately eight-second-long work.

There then followed a fascinating

introduction to Leopold Mozart, "a composer who pursued naturalism with a vengeance," and tales of dog yelps and boxes of ammunition and a pointed reminder to the audience of Leopold's admonition to Wolfgang Amadeus not to keep the company of musicians for they are an obnoxious lot.

Musically, though, the first half of the recital did contain one work of more than passing interest in the *Rondo Scherzoso* by the contemporary Welsh composer, Alun Hoddinott. Most definitely scherzo in style, the work is a joyful and jovial one, full of rhythmic vitality tinged with hints of ethereal Celtic harmonies. This fine work was given a spirited and convincing performance by Mr. Parker and Dr. Edwards.

The recital took on quite another aspect with the opening chords of Herbert L. Clarke's *The Southern Cross* which sounded like the dramatics of an accompaniment to a silent movie. After a trumpet flourish, the music melted — oozed might be a better word — into an Edwardian sentimental ballad and thereafter sprinted through half a dozen stylistic quick-changes. The work was performed by both Craig Parker and Robert Edwards with panache, the pregnant *luft pausen* of Dr. Edwards being particularly ef-

fective.

Mr. Parker's excellent introduction to Elliott Schwartz's *Jet Piece*, an introduction that had to do with elevators and twelve stories and a conductor who was an elevator operator and somehow this all made sense, prepared the audience well — no, set up the audience well — for the musical and theatrical tour de force that was to follow. *Jet Piece* is an aleatory composition during which playing the notes is almost the least of the performer's concerns. It is a truly virtuoso work that is a rich environmental as well as musical experience. *Jet Piece* allows the fun back into music and brings also the sense of participation in music-making for audience and musicians both. Like many similar compositions, it is a work that brings back into the recital hall creative music-making as a public activity; and oh! how dead and dull the music of Papa Mozart now seemed!

Hurray! for Messrs. Edwards, Cochran, Flouer and Parker. Bravo! to the four of them so ably showing that there is a great deal of difference between being funny and not being serious, for *Jet Piece* was both funny and serious, and also allowed us to hear that Robert Edwards might have a hidden talent as a harpist as well as a drummer.

The performance of Anthony Plog's *Animal Ditties* was hindered by the too reticent microphoning of Jack Flouer, but the performance did allow us to hear that this is a delightfully attractive work.

Craig Parker did himself a disservice when he reminded the audience of the controversy over "whether Olivier Messien was a major minor composer or whether he was a minor major composer, but that there was no doubt about the fact that one Craig B. Parker was a very minor minor composer."

Not so. The trumpeter, who performed his own *Nocturne*, writes most pleasant music that could bear rehearsing; and that takes not a little talent.

The recital ended with another witty work, *Dance Variations* by Brian Israel. Where, I wondered, was all this enchanting music during the past several decades when humorless academicians turned their backs on Harry Partch and Lou Harrison and gave us instead the sterility of their serial computations? *Dance Variations* is a joke, but an exquisite joke.

Craig Parker thoroughly deserved the confetti that he poured over himself, and those for whom this last comment means nothing missed a riot of fascinating music and performance.