

'It's how I play that I care about'

By IFAN PAYNE
Music Critic

Andre-Michel Schub sat back relaxed and comfortable in an open-necked rugby shirt and tweed slacks as we talked amongst shrouded harps in McCain Auditorium on Tuesday morning.

He is a delightful person to talk with, even though he gets interviewed, in his words, "an incredible amount."

He would love to turn the tables on his interviewers. "Sometimes it is more interesting to ask the questions."

For one whose career has lately been surrounded by publicity, he is frank about his ambivalence towards the press. He does not seek the publicity, and how much he gets interviewed "is partly a question of how much time I have. Column space

is unimportant to me, its how I play that I care about."

"Ultimately it is not what people do or say (about me), but what I take home with myself. That is, how well I played."

On the other hand he fully realizes the importance of staying in the public eye. After all, he admits, "publicity does result in concerts."

Schub has no wish to become a public relations phenomenon in the manner, for example, of Luciano Pavarotti.

"There only are three or four people in the world who started out as (classical) performers and musicians who function in a realm that transcends classical music."

Would he, then, turn down an invitation to appear on *The Tonight Show*?

He grins.

"Maybe not, but I would not look for it. To me, artistic growth is the most important thing."

The conversation turns to the life of the travelling virtuoso and the glamorous image some people have of the jet-setting international musician.

"If people knew what it was really like," says Schub, "they would be shocked. The only thing really glamorous about the life is the actual playing...and that's only a small percentage of the time."

Discussion turns to the sameness of motel rooms the world over, the similarity of hotel foods, the view of the same motel parking lot from every window.

"You look at an itinerary like mine — London, Amsterdam, Paris and so on...it looks glamorous...but with the tight schedules and with the jet lag, you often get very little time to see the cities themselves."

Thereafter the conversation ranges almost as broadly as his itinerary: piano repertoire, stylistic differences, performances on original instruments, old pianos versus new pianos, the markings of Beethoven, why he does not play the music of Bach, his favorite pianists, recordings (I promise him that I will state for the record that he disagrees with me and that he likes the sound of the piano on his recordings, "But," he admits, "I haven't listened them on

good equipment outside of the studio playback'), pianos, piano maintenance, and auditoria. Clearly, for all his wariness concerning interviews, he loves to talk and is a fascinating, softspoken conversationalist.

Finally, he expresses surprise at the richness and variety of the performing arts programs organized by Doreen Bauman and her staff. He is full of admiration.

"I didn't realize the scope of what goes on at McCain. I am amazed at it."

Then it is time for him to leave. He has yet another interview to face, this time on the radio.

He gets up to leave, still feeling that he would have preferred to have been asking the questions.

Unfortunately for him, I was the one who wielded the notebook and the pen. It gives one a distinct advantage in these situations.