

Young musicians perform well

By IFAN PAYNE
Music Critic

The soft afternoon sunlight of late fall slanted through the windows and fell upon the features of the young musicians, providing a perfect setting for the music of Robert Schumann, Hugo Wolf and Richard Strauss. For a while All Faiths Auditorium became a mini-paradise for romantic idealists like me on Sunday afternoon during the recital given by tenor, Brent Weber, and French horn player, David McConnell.

But there was also during the nine works on the program plenty to keep the lover of *bel canto* happy, and it was indeed Donizetti — apart from Britten, about whom more in a moment — who provided Mr. Weber with his finest moment of the afternoon.

Now I am not going to pretend that Brent Weber does not have his problems of controlling pitch and of harnessing a tone that keeps threatening to fly out of control, but on the other hand I have heard professional singers, who were paid, deliver less attractive performances of *Una Furtiva Lagrime*. His singing was elegant, stylish and controlled and he communicated a pleasing sense of the musical content of the aria.

In fact, in all the works that he sang, Brent Weber conveyed an engaging feeling for the style of each work. Only in the lack of attention paid to the ends of phrases were his interpretations disappointing.

But to ignore the meaning and control of the ends of phrases is a common fault of almost every young musician. All too many performers seem to want to get off the last note of a phrase or measure as quickly as possible without thinking through the note to the beginning of the next phrase. This characteristic was also evident in the playing of David McConnell, but he had an excuse in that he was playing an instrument which not only produces the loveliest and most eloquent of musical sounds, but is also seemingly the most temperamental and recalcitrant one.

I think that it would be foolish to suggest that David McConnell and his accompanist Julie Shuté did more than sketch in the musical content of Richard Strauss' incandescent *Concerto for French Horn, Op. 11*, but it would be equally as foolish to ignore the fact that it was surely a personal triumph to get through the work in good shape and to have at least conveyed the outlines of the music while

producing some lovely tone and some secure playing along the way.

As the sunlight and shadows crept across the auditorium walls, Mr. Weber and Mr. McConnell were joined by Brett Wolgast for the final work on the program, *Canticle III. Still Falls the Rain* by Benjamin Britten. All three gave a good account of a work that is by turn austere, plaintive, dramatic and always deeply moving.