

Gone to the dogs? Not exactly

By IFAN PAYNE
Music Critic

So the Manhattan Municipal Band held its own annual musical July the Fourth Celebration on July the Fifth in City Park and, truth to tell, did allow the fact that their normal rehearsal day had been a holiday to show now and then...but on a balmy summer evening in the park the impression of the concert was of an affectionate piece of Manhattan that was to be treasured.

Some of the numbers have been played so often over the years that the instruments have them grooved into their bores and they play themselves. Others are not so lucky. A canine critic thought fit to bark at the end of *God of Our Fathers*.

But there were many good things during what is after all a celebration that is an important and integral part of this community.

Trumpet soloist Scott Freeby showed his lyrical qualities with a finely controlled version of *Trumpet in the Night*, with sensitive accompaniment by the band under the direction of Larry Norvell; controlled, that is, until the dog now ensconced in the orchestra stalls tried to join in and threw Mr. Freeby off for a measure or two.

Actually, a short while later, midway through the quiet and movingly

performed *Salvation Is Created*, another monster of the canine persuasion, about the size I'd say of a Dodge Ram Charger, dragged its master on a lead up to the pavilion doors, surveyed the scene for a while, gave a listen to the music and being a more intelligent critic than the other four-legged friend, nodded its head in approval before dragging its master away again.

Baritone Will Robinson was the vocal soloist for a most affecting performance of *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*. It was only right that he received a double ovation, each time from both the audience and the band.

Throughout the years the performance of *America the Beautiful* has received my vote as the best-played work by the Municipal Band, and it pulled it off again this year with a strong performance of Carmen Dragon's excellent arrangement of this most lovely of this country's national songs.

The evening could not be completed before two cyclists rode over the threshold of the packed band pavilion just in time to hear the final number, *Stars and Stripes Forever*. This was encored, which was all to the good, since the brisker second inning was a better performance than the first.

Just as the music was coming to an end, a pigeon fluttered down from its nest in the ceiling and dropped onto the bottom of the roof truss, but luckily dropped nothing else before it fluttered itself off again and the trombones brought the celebration to a suitably rousing climax and another Manhattan memory was added to the scrapbook.



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