

Arts & Leisure

Pianist Coop commands respect

Well known and respected Canadian pianist Jane Coop performed Friday at White Rock Baptist Church in an outstanding recital under the aegis of White Rock Concerts.

While rewarding, it was a program that might, in the hands of less-accomplished artist, have lost the traditionally conservative White Rock audience.

Aside from a charming account of Mozart's *Quintet in Eb major (K. 452) for piano and winds*, in which Coop was assisted by David Owen (oboe), William Jamieson (horn), Wesley Foster (clarinet) and George Zukerman (bassoon), Coop challenged the audience with an unrelentingly modern opening piece, and an extended second-half journey through the music of Robert Schumann.

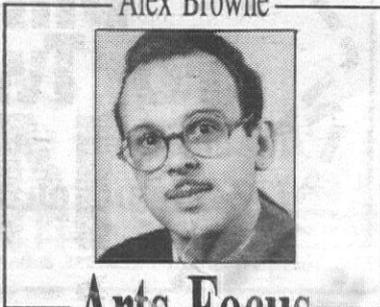
But Coop's hallmark as a performer is command — not simply of her material, and her phenomenal technique, but also of her audience.

It's a combination of respect for the music and respect for the intelligence of the listener — she admitted in a conversation following the concert that she resists the current tendency to spoonfeed audiences (a little Handel, a little Bach, etc.).

She indicated that her recent touring programs have been uncompromising, both from an audience standpoint and also from the demands she has placed on herself.

Yet she commands respect because her tremendous techni-

Alex Browne



Arts Focus

cal skill, and obvious devotion to the music, leaves room for nothing else.

Nowhere was this more apparent than in the opener, Robert Muczynski's *Suite, Opus 13* — an utterly 20th Century piece in all its percussive abruptness, discordant meanderings and cascading notes fleeing headlong from the stigma of traditional melody and harmony.

It was so close to a caricature of modernism, in fact, that it was hard to be in sympathy with Coop's introduction, praising the piece for its "energy, imagination and creativity."

And yet...Coop's extraordinary strength in performance — the expressive space she allows herself to inhabit a piece and make it seem her own spontaneous creation — captured the audience and held it until the last nervous galloping of Muczynski's *Scherzo* concluded with her arms in the air, as if finally freed from a possession.

Again, she proved herself a worthy champion for Schumann — "the arch-romantic composer of all time," as she described him.

Her brief and gentle encore, one of Schumann's *Davidbundler-Tanze*, demonstrated Coop's affinity for the aims of his "League of David" movement opposing the Philistinism of empty virtuosity in his own age.

That criticism could not be levelled at Coop — her tremendous speed and facility during the dazzling runs in the *Variations on the name Abegg*, of *I* always seemed in servchinese the piece, unlike the postmodern-like execution of some contemporary pianists.

It was yet another function of the merging of artist and material; evident, again, in her inspired pursuit of the emotional drama in Schumann's *Symphonic Etudes, Op. 13* — less an execution than an occupation, in which Coop, like an actress, took on each subsequent role and mood in the composer's imaginative development of the theme.

Coop's physically powerful, yet sensitive playing also provided the core of the Mozart quintet, in which she was ably matched by the tonal sensitivity and expressiveness of Owen, Jamieson, Foster and Zukerman; the whole ensemble communicating an experience of utter sympathy and delight.

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