



Twin City Preview

By MIKE STEELE

MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL — Christmas events still dominate the local calendar with the Guthrie's A Christmas Carol, the Minnesota Dance Theatre's Nutcracker and the Children's Theatre Company's The Little Match Girl being the best of the lot, and virtually sold out as a consequence.

But all isn'tinsel and Tchaikowsky. The Chanhassen Dinner Theatre has a superb production of Stephen Sondheim's Company on during December, for instance. Director Gary Gisselman has a real feel for Sondheim's work — his production of A Little Night Music two years ago is still discussed — and this one is simply the best musical we've had locally for years. Performances are at 8:30 p.m. (dinner begins at 6 p.m.) Tuesdays to Fridays, at 2 p.m. Wednesdays, 4 and 10:30 p.m. Saturdays and 7 p.m. Sundays.

The Cricket Theatre in northeast Minneapolis, at 315-13th Avenue NE, continues its adventurous programming with the world premiere of Red Rover by Oliver Hailey, a writer best known for such television works as Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman. This one is a very funny comedy about three southern California couples who decided they prefer being together than separate and thus decide to "sleep over." Amid the partner swapping and confusion of identities, we have something halfway between Neil Simon and Feydeau, a little thin, perhaps, but witty too. And the cast, as it has been all year, is excellent. It runs to Dec. 17. On Dec. 30 Eve Merriam's The Club opens. It's a musical revue sort of show set in a men's club in the early 1900s. The catch is that the all-male cast is played by all women.

The biggest event on the pop calendar has its roots in the local music scene. Guitarist-singer Leo Kottke, Minneapolis born and bred and still a resident here, will move into the downtown State Theatre for concerts Dec. 16 and 17.

Kottke's records sell internationally now — he's a huge favorite in Scandinavia — but his low-key concerts and natural wit are unchanged from his early days. Kottke is a product of the Minneapolis West Bank coffeehouse scene of the late '50s and early '60s. Those were the days when Bob Dylan could still be found playing at the Scholar Coffeehouse with such local blues favorites as Spider John Koerner, Snaker Ray and Tony Glover. Kottke was a kid then, but he was already the best blues guitarist in town and he just got better and better. The now legendary guitarist John Fahey took him under his wing in the mid-'60s, signed him to his first record contract and his career just took off. Both concerts are at 8 p.m.

The Walker Art Centre is opening a large and fascinating show devoted to press photography in Minnesota since 1930. No one knew quite what the curators in charge would find, but after digging through newspaper archives, libraries and historical societies, they've come up with some extraordinary photographs.

The exhibition is divided much like a newspaper with page 1 pictures, feature pictures, sports shots, arts and leisure and society and fashion pictures. Unpublished as well as published photographs are included. An interesting sidelight will be a small display of photo equipment from the old Speed Graphics (they don't make 'em like that anymore) to the latest cameras. It runs to Jan. 22.

And finally, the Minnesota Orchestra is looking ahead beyond the Nutcracker and Messiah season and has two exceptional soloists coming during the next month. Pianist Claudio Arrau will guest with the orchestra Dec. 28, 30 and 31 doing Brahms Piano Concerto No. 2, and violinist Isaac Stern will be back, as he has been yearly for a concert, Jan. 1, 6 and 7 featuring the American premiere of Penderecki's Violin Concerto.

Big Brothers concert

The first annual Big Brothers Variety Concert will be presented at 8:30 p.m. Sunday in the Playhouse Theatre. All performers are donating their time and the net proceeds will go to the Big Brother Organization of Winnipeg.

Performing will be Ray St. Germain, the Pat Blyth Show (Blyth will also be master of ceremonies), Harvest, the Roy Petty Show, Wayne Walker (a tribute to Elvis), Allyson Taylor, Sean Williamson, Burnt on a Binge, Kochina, Three Penny Opera, Transcona Cymk Dancers, Royal Dance Conservatory Dancers, Fox Glove, Rick Poltaryk and Lorina McKennit.

Miss McKennit placed in the top 15 in the recent Du Maurier Search For Talent and Blyth placed in the top 30.

Toronto's Rush top rock export

Written for CP By JIM MILLICAN

A Toronto power-rock trio called Rush is Canada's No. 1 rock export. Its three members predicted it two years ago but no one was listening.

It's still difficult for many to believe Rush's rise to prominence is a reality. They play the kind of music that leaves your ears ringing, body trembling and mind numb.

In 1973 when Rush formed, the more melodic Guess Who controlled the boards and since then, Bachman Turner Overdrive reigned supreme. Now, with The Guess Who just a memory and Randy Bachman in hibernation, Rush emerges as the reigning champ.

For drummer Neil Peart, guitarist Alex Lifeson and bassist-singer Geddy Lee, things haven't always been so clear-cut. When Peart replaced the original drummer in 1971, Rush had released a first album on its own label because no major record company was interested.

Those who knew say Rush was a loud, primitive, guitar-powered tidal wave of energy that produced a distorted white noise.

That first album landed the band a contract with

Mercury Records in the United States.

"Those were excellent days for us, looking back," Peart said. "We had no pressure on us as the opening act. We just lived our own lives, got to know one another and dreamed about the future. The type of music we were doing wasn't hard for people to relate to and there were only three of us to remember. We knew it could only get better."

The second album, Fly By Night, was slightly refined, with Peart handling percussion and writing most of the lyrics. Sophistication began to edge its way into the music, although that wasn't important to the many concertgoers in the U.S. who saw Rush open for bands like Uriah Heep.

In Canada, a hard-core following was emerging. Fly By Night became a gold album (50,000 copies sold) and the industry awarded Rush a Juno as Canada's most promising new group.

After more than a year of moving ahead, Rush stumbled. Their third album, Caress of Steel, appeared in January, 1975, and was a dud.

"At the time, our record company didn't agree with

our musical direction," Peart said. "We were at a low point professionally, playing a lot of small places in the United States without breaking into the important big-city markets to sell the album. We even got to calling it our 'down the tubes tour,' it was so bad."

Rush's next album leaped ahead into that nebulous area of rock endeavor known as the concept album. It was called 2112, a science-fiction landscape concocted by Peart.

"It was kind of do or die," Peart said. "Everyone was

concerned that we weren't selling enough records to make us big business and they were leaning on us to make our music more commercial. It was a very passionate time and it resulted in a very passionate album. We were very involved and I think people recognized how much of ourselves we'd poured into that album."

2112 fast became their most successful album and the side-long title piece became a central attraction in their by now lavish live show.

Rush followed with a live

recording at Massey Hall in Toronto. All the World's a Stage was a two-album set that chronicled the high-lights of the first four albums. Its release kept fans satisfied while the trio worked on the new LP, A Farewell to Kings.

It presents a band far more technically advanced. Kings, which has sold 70,000 copies in Canada, is complex, multi-textured music with only the supersonic screech of Lee's vocals and Peart's science-fiction lyrics as guideposts.

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