

Bluegrass musicians entertain with traditional, balanced style

In the late '30s and early '40s, bluegrass music first began to seep out of the Appalachians and Ozarks, spreading slowly across the country, building a small but appreciative audience.

In the forefront was premier showman Bill Monroe, who, with his Bluegrass Boys, spread the gospel of the hills throughout the land. Also present at the creation were the Stanley Brothers, Carter and Ralph, who hailed from the hills of southwestern Virginia. Masters of the guitar and five-string banjo, respectively, the brothers with their group, the Clinch Mountain Boys, specialized in a balanced, non-flashy style laced with genuinely moving gospel hymns.

The sound of bluegrass has changed a lot since then, especially in the last three or four years. Scruggs-style banjo picking has gradually edged out the older clawhammer style, instruments have begun to sprout electronic pickups, and

group managed to radiate an infectious spirit of enjoyment that bears no trace of self-consciousness.

Stanley is by no means a showy banjo picker, allowing his sidemen ample opportunity to show off their skills. He is an able Scruggs-style picker, but also maintains his skill with the older clawhammer technique, which he uses effectively.

Group punctuator

Rather than make his sound a constant irritation upon the ear, he instead serves as a punctuator for the group, adding just the right touch of spice when needed.

Center of attention for the evening was fiddler Curly Rae Kline. Seemingly a born fiddler, he kept the crowd in stitches with his clumsy but high-spirited attempts at dancing.

Several slow, unaccompanied gospel songs were included in the evening's selections. The lack of perfect smoothness in the voices added to the poignancy of the hymns, and served to emphasize the strong links that connect fundamentalist religion and hill music.

It is unfortunate that a few members of the audience found themselves inspired to clap, stamp their feet, and generally make nuisances of themselves during one of these religious songs. But, a few like these will be found in any crowd, and I extend my thanks to those of the audience who took it upon themselves to show these noisome folk the error of their ways.

Most vigorous response

The selection that drew the most vigorous response from the audience was a marvelously jumpy version of "The Orange Blossom Special." The fiddling took the spotlight in this number, providing both the chugging beat of the train and its wrenching, drawing whistle note. Seldom is the fiddle played with such a good effect, and even less often does an audience support it so well.

Stanley's concert was pure delight, reservations about the audience aside, and the Concerts Committee deserve a double round of thanks, for having brought Stanley here, and secondly for having kept the price of admission down to a dollar. Seldom is so much enjoyed by so many at such a reasonable price.

David Ware omelet

some of the younger, less respectful guitar players have taken to using (heresy!) finger picks in place of the traditional flat plectra. The sound has acquired more bass boost and treble bite, while the vast, comfortable middle ranges have somehow vanished.

Fine exhibition

This driving, amplified bluegrass has become de rigeur for today's audiences, and so I suspect that a fair number were surprised by the performance put on Friday night by Ralph Stanley and his Clinch Mountain Boys in the East Campus Union. Clad in neatly pressed suits and ties, Stanley and the Boys provided a fine exhibition of what traditional bluegrass music can be.

Lacking brother Carter, who died in 1966, the group has gone through many changes of personnel since the '40s, but the emphasis has remained the same: competence, balance, and a genuine feeling for the music beyond simply "getting in the swing of things". In addition, the

Harpist, brass quintet to play

Two unusual compositions for harp and brass quintet will highlight the Nebraska Brass Quintet concert 8 p.m. Tuesday in Kimball Recital Hall.

Guest harp soloist, Janice Dunkley, will perform "Music for Scrimshaw," three pieces by William Schmidt and a concertino by Rayner Brown with the quintet.

Dunkley, who teaches harp at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, has performed with the New York City Ballet, Paramount Studios and several symphonies.

The Brass Quintet comprises music faculty members Dennis Schneider, David Kappy and Vernon Forbes and advanced students Steve Erickson and William Buntain.

Buntain arranged the opening number on the program, DeWaert's "Vezossi Angelli." The quintet also will perform works by John Wilby, William Walton, Giovanni Gabrieli and Coperario.

Prof. Quentin Faulkner will play the organ for the quintet's first use of organ and brass instruments.

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