

musickers

In some lounges, the music is consumed by the clatter of the silverware, the whir of the blender or the ring of the cash register. The notes are relegated to the background, intended more to stimulate the stomach than the mind.

Pianist Larry Natwick, half of a duet that plays each week Monday through Wednesday at Biederbeck's, says he's experienced that banishment from center stage and was concerned about the possibility when he first took the job.

"It's working out a lot differently than we expected. The crowds have been very receptive. Obviously it's changed not having a drummer. But, we haven't altered our repertoire. We made up our minds that we wouldn't fall into the trap of becoming animated muzak."

Still, Natwick and his partner, bassist Andre St. James, don't dominate the atmosphere of the basement club. It's possible to talk above the music and Natwick admits that the temptation is to change the music when the audience is inattentive.

"There's a tendency to become more introspective if you play where people aren't listening. But we can keep it challenging and still communicate. New material is always good as is dealing with tunes in new keys, new times."

The duo works without drums, and, while admitting that it changes things, Natwick says the lack of cadences doesn't hamper the music.

"Most of the rhythm is implied. Our timing is strong enough that we can

take it out and people will still be tapping their foot, even though there's nothing sustaining the line."

In fact, Natwick contends the smallness of the group allows for greater flexibility.

"We can take it out a lot easier without having to worry about other people. The other night we played almost a whole set just leading each other into different tunes rather than breaking them up.

"We're supportive of each other; it's not just a piano with bass accompaniment. It's two musicians working together. Some tunes I don't even solo on, but just back up Andre."

Natwick says he was concerned about more than the audience response when considering the Biederbeck's job.

"It's easy, especially in a small town like this, to just please the audience and fall short of the goals you should be setting for yourself. There's not that many groups to see and the audience won't place heavy demands on you — there isn't as much pressure to develop. So the musician has to sort of play for himself, be his own worst critic."

Natwick and St. James don't play many original pieces, a situation Natwick promises to change. Still, he explains that doing other people's music can be rewarding.

"But I hope to never fall into the syndrome of taking another's tune and trying to do it exactly the way some other performer's done it. The challenge is to be creative within whatever form you're working with —



Larry Natwick and Andre St. James

stretch it as much as you can."

And Natwick dismisses concern that the music might get too elastic for the audience.

"The sophistication is there. Just relating on the emotional level, good jazz music has always been there, and it always will be, no matter how outside it gets. Consider the World Saxophone Quartet. These four players are very avant-garde, very free with their music. But the people who saw them in Portland described them as very entertaining. Whether you were into that kind of music or not, you had to enjoy it. There was a lot of energy."

Those interested in listening to Natwick's energy should stop by Biederbeck's Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday between 8:30 p.m. and 12:30 a.m.

By Glen Ozonewood

Eugene Opera sponsors S.F. opera company

The Western Opera Theatre, the touring affiliate of the San Francisco Opera, is coming to Eugene. In its fourteenth year of touring operatic productions in English, the company is presenting one performance of Johann Strauss Jr.'s *Die Fledermaus*.

Die Fledermaus, composed in 1874, is a whirl of mischief, disguises, mistaken identities and memorable melodies in waltz time. Its story is full of familiar characters — the philandering but jealous husband, the wronged but flirtatious wife and the intriguer who sets up the entire farce.

Sponsored by Eugene Opera, *Die Fledermaus* performs Sunday at 3:30 p.m. in the South Eugene High School Auditorium. Ticket prices are \$7 and \$5 for reserved seating, \$2 for senior citizens and a limited number of free tickets for full-time students with valid identification. Reduced senior prices and free student tickets are made possible through a purchase by the City of Eugene using room tax funds. Further ticket information may be obtained by calling 485-3985 or 485-3983. The box office is located in the Eugene Opera offices, 115 West 7th Ave.

The company is also seeking ushers. Duties will include approximately one hour of service in exchange for free admission to the opera.



hear
and
now

Robert Webb, peerless entertainment editor, has not written the weekly Hear and Now Staff Box, so how can he complain about folks not meeting the Thursday before publication deadline? I mean, here it is, Monday night, and he's talking some trash about "having the proper stimulus..." So, I (Sally Oljar, the lowly copy-editor) had to do it myself. Designer Jerril Nilson and erudite apprentice Erzsi De'ak didn't even help, but then, they do the creative work around here.



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