

unit one theme

"Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell, Op. 32 (1946,"
by Benjamin Britten was the first number played by the orchestra.
Since this number appears on our ^{one} of our humanity listening tapes,
I chose to make my report on this number because I could listen to
it again and refresh my impressions. This is a distinct advantage
as I found it very difficult to take notes in the dark.

The text defines a fugue as a complex, contrapuntal piece. Since the
title is "Variations and a Fugue on a Theme of Purcell", I presume
that the number is just that--a theme taken from music written by
Purcell and varied and enlarged by Benjamin Britten. *mp*

It is similar to "Bolero" by Ravel, in that Britten has introduced
a main theme and then had the different instruments of the orchestra
play variations of the theme. Britten used sections of instruments
(i.e. the violin section, etc.) more than did Ravel. Ravel used
the individual instruments more in "Bolero". However, often, *(Britten)*
throughout the number, various instruments have "solo" parts here
and there, alone, and in conjunction with other instruments.

I would presume that the form of the number was Theme and Variation.
The violin version of the theme was almost a separate theme in its
complexity, but recognizable of course. Towards the end of the
music, the violins play their theme very rapidly against the counter-
point of the brasses playing the main theme slowly and majestically.

I especially enjoyed his use of the percussion section of the orch-
estra, and I usually don't especially enjoy these instruments.
The percussion section of the orchestra is not mentioned by our
text as one of the "choirs" of the orchestra, but Britten came
very close to making that section of the orchestra a "choir" in
this number. There is one place where the kettle drum (I think)
plays the theme, and although it is played only in rhythm without
pitch, it is very recognizable and is played against the violins.
There is also an interesting section for the triangle and the
xylophone. *you change this
very perceptible*

Since I knew that we would be required to identify the sounds of
various instruments of the orchestra on our test, I was
especially conscious of the entrances (and exits) of various
instruments. It was enjoyable to find them in the orchestra as
they played and try to identify them by sight. (not always successful).
successfully.)

On some of the other numbers of the evening I was not certain that
I enjoyed the analytical method of listening to music--at least it
was analytical for me that evening--because I felt it took somewhat
away from the enjoyment of the music. (Dr. Green assures us that
this will pass as we become more experienced.)

One thing was frustrating. I had listened to the tape before going
to the concert, and had not realized that it was the same number
that the Symphony Orchestra was playing. After listening to the
performance of the Symphony, and then re-playing the tape on side
one, I was disappointed that I could not identify more of the
instruments when listening to side II. Especially is this true of
the woodwinds and brasses. Hopefully, this will come with practice--
like becoming familiar with someone's telephone voice. I enjoyed
the symphony very much. *True at
1st +
not always
necessary or
desirable*

Excellent