

Youth Symphony Shows Maturity

By EARL JONES

Yesterday afternoon's concert by the California Youth Symphony orchestra, under the direction of Aaron Sten, was proof that youngsters respond to high standards and high expectations.

The concert, held in the San Mateo High school auditorium under the sponsorship of the Burlingame High school Parent-Teachers' association, was, in Sten's own words, "a light one," but it included works of a genuine symphonic calibre by von Weber, Holst, Smetena, Bach, and Coates—not a hackneyed rehashing of operetta tunes so often associated with young orchestras. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons for Sten's success with the group; he knows what to expect of young musicians and does not fall into the adult error of underestimating their abilities and interests.

There was precision, balance, and a surprisingly good orchestral tone. The general excellence of the ensemble playing indicated that the youngsters were aware of the relationship of their individual parts to the whole and to the melody, wherever it might be — no small accomplishment. Arthur Ness, a senior at Burlingame High school, was the soloist in a demanding clarinet concerto by von Weber and played with remarkable poise and facility. In short, there was no need to invoke the tired, old cliché—"good . . . for youngsters." The performance stood on its merits.

Here is a wonderful challenge for young instrumentalists; a fine opportunity for beginners to acquire the performance discipline and experience so valuable to the young musician. And here is a community project—more correctly, a

Peninsula project — deserving of much greater interest and support than was indicated by the size of yesterday's audience.

Sten has performed an invaluable service in organizing and directing such a group, capable of playing music beyond the scope of most high school-age orchestras. The wonder of the whole thing is that he has done it in a little over one year, holding only weekly rehearsals, with a group that includes a wide variety of individual abilities. It almost leads one to believe that he conducts with a wand rather than the conventional baton.

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