

Concert planned

The New York Renaissance Band, five musicians who specialize in early music on authentic instruments, will give a concert at 8 tomorrow night in the recital hall of the Music Building.

The group, in residence here with the Pennsylvania Orchestra, will conduct the Institute for Renaissance Instrumental Music as a continuing education service. The group's repertoire emphasizes dance and instrumental literature for Renaissance winds, drawing on the music of four centuries.

Members of the group are Lucy Bardo, Allan Dean, Ben Harms, Sally Logemann and Ben Peck, a guest artist for the University residency.

Free tickets are required for admission and are available at the door, beginning at 6:30 tomorrow night.



New York Renaissance Band

New album a good debut

By GEORGE OSGOOD
Collegian Arts Writer
MCA 2217: Byron Berline and Sundance.
Pleasant surprises from the record industry are few and far between. When a new band cuts its first album, there's invariably a lot of promotional hype from the releasing company and a dismal-sounding disc that fails to back it up. "Byron Berline and Sundance," a new release from MCA, cuts through all the hype and comes through beautifully; truly a pleasant surprise.

record review

But it's not really that much of a surprise, considering the personnel involved. Berline, formerly of Country Gazette, Bill Monroe's Bluegrass Boys and Stephen Still's Manassas, put the band together. He's a massively talented performer who has worked recording sessions with the Rolling Stones, Bill Wyman, Ian Matthews and the Band. He has won the National Fiddling Championship three times and plays a mean mandolin, too.

Dan Crary, who plays acoustic guitar on the album, has a doctorate and teaches music at Cal State Fullerton. Skip Conover, of Country Gazette, plays

dobro and Dallas Taylor, of Manassas and CSN&Y fame, is the drummer. Not a bad starting lineup, and the rest of the band are very competent musicians in their own right.

Although the band members were drawn mainly from the flourishing southern California bluegrass community, their music transcends pure bluegrass and is better described as a fusion of bluegrass, country-rock, and R&B. Berline and his boys make extensive use of bass guitar, acoustic guitar, precise banjo and juicy pedal steel, along with Berline's contributions on the fiddle.

All but the last of the 10 cuts are at least good, and some are simply excellent. "Sweet Wanoni," a Bill Withers tune, is among the best. Its intricate four-part vocal harmonies are outstanding, and about halfway through there's a super banjo solo by John Hickman and a distinctive rhythm guitar riff by Allen Wald that make the song exceptional.

Another high point is the instrumental "Storm Over Oklahoma," a track that shows the band's technical skill to be awesome. An acoustic guitar lead by Crary starts out soft, mellow and downbeat and matures into a rollicking cowboy stomp backed by banjo, dobro and excellent fiddle from Berline. Over dubbing of Hickman's banjo part is in-

teresting and enhances the tune's effectiveness.

Seven of the album's songs were written by bassman Jack Skinner. His lyrics are well thought out and refreshingly free from cliché and pretention.

The album, simply titled "Byron Berline and Sundance," has only one sore spot—the last cut just does not go along with the slick, tightly-knit image created by the first nine songs. "Locomotive" appears to be the band's first attempt (and, with any luck, their last) at a real hard-rock in the Blue Oyster Cult-Slade style. And the band seems uncomfortable with it; the playing is just a little less vital and Skinner's otherwise pristine lead vocals seem to lose their edge and degenerate into a series of screams, shrieks and groans that are better left to Robert Plant of Aerosmith's Stephen Tyler.

"Locomotive," though, can't really hurt the band's first album. The overall quality of the record is too much to allow that. Technically, the album is superior, with excellent mixing and staging throughout.

"Byron Berline and Sundance" is a cohesive hybridization of Pure Prairie League, the Earl Scruggs Revue, and Poco. They appear free from affectation and produce a clean, original, appealing sound.

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