

Script hinders Brel musical

By MINDY McADAMS
Daily Collegian Staff Writer

The show is a collection of songs by Jacques Brel, loosely held together by a '60s theme and six performers. The songs are great, the performers do well, but the show is, at best, fair.

The Kern UnCommon Theatre and University Resident Theatre Company's presentation of "Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris" was severely limited by a script which attempts to bind 23 unrelated songs together with little plot. The show was also limited by the small stage in Kern Building even though director Elizabeth Hamilton made a valiant effort to keep the performers constantly moving, dancing or pantomiming.

The script's feeble attempt to create characters was luckily handled by two talented performers, Vicki Lee Wohlbach and Scott Edmiston. Wohlbach has one of the brightest, most expressive faces I have ever seen. In "Timid Frieda," she acts the part as the others sing. Looking hopeful and a bit scared, she sticks her thumb out to hitchhike. Her eyes widen as the first car passes, then her face sets in determination as she looks for the next car.

Edmiston's face is as expressive as Wohlbach's, although not as radiant. Together they gave the show its best moments. Both have mastered the surprised stares and sly smiles that bring humor to their songs.

There is tremendous musical variation among the songs, played by pianists Brenda Lee Harsch and Janice Wilson, and they share a quality common to songs written for musicals — you catch yourself humming them. And the lyrics

usually tell a story. "Fanelle," sung by G. Brian Kaufman, who has a beautifully resonant voice, relates a love affair that ended when the girl found someone new. The story takes place at a beach, and percussionist Marcy McGuigan's brushes imitate sounds of the ocean.

About one-third of the songs are love songs, which is part of the reason why a plot doesn't work; it isn't easy to connect seven separate love songs in a 90-minute show. In "Madeleine," a story about going to the picture show and eating french fries at Joe's, the performers ham it up with pantomime. In his solo "Mahlde," Samuel Smith sings "she's come back to me" with a sincerity that prevents us from thinking the lyrics are sappy.

The '60s flavor surfaces in songs like "The Bulls," which is also beautifully choreographed. The three men play maltese, using their jackets as capes, while the three women — Wohlbach, Peg French, and Debra Thompson — stand behind them on steps (the only horizontal element of the set), mocking adoration of the men.

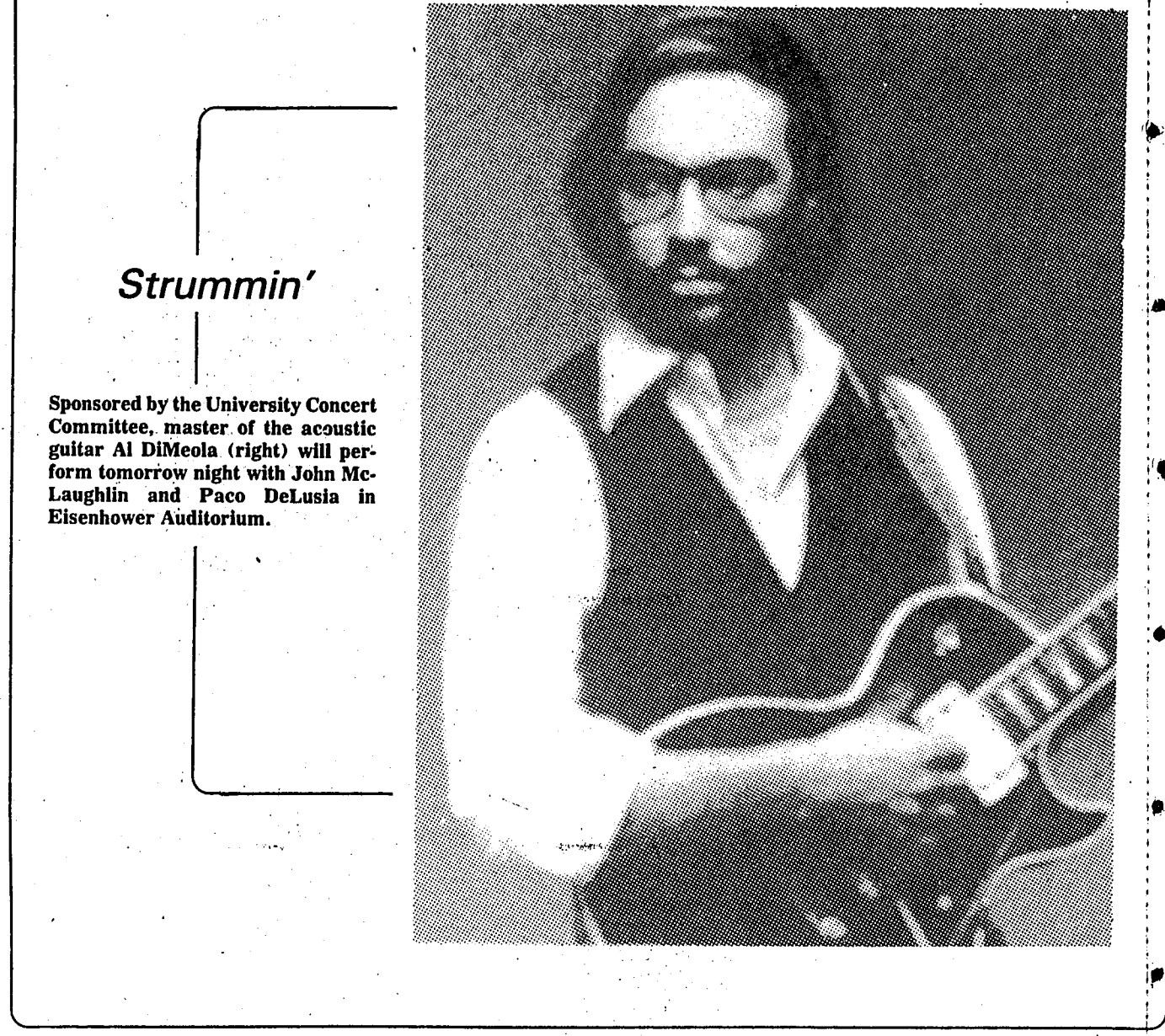
"On Sundays, the bulls get so bored when they are asked to suffer for us... to die for us," the men sing while twirling their capes. At the end, the men imitate the final sword-thrusts to the bull. They cry out names of war-ravaged cities, ending with "Saigon!" as their arms move from a sword-grip to a rifle-grip position. Their own words stun them, and they stare in horror at their "rifles."

Other songs reflect Brel's hatred of the Vietnam situation — lyrics like "Sons of the thief, sons of the saint... all are songs written for musicals — you catch yourself humming them. And the lyrics

Everything would have been fine without the artificiality imposed by the attempt to make this a play instead of a musical revue. Some members of the audience chuckled when one performer prepared to sing a solo and the others automatically sat rapidly at his feet. At the end of "Amsterdam" (a beautiful song with no place in the alleged plot), G. Brian Kaufman's voice rises frantically (is he freaking out or what?) and the other men rush forward to subdue him. They actually wrestle with him; it seems rather silly.

"Carrousel" is a song that works well in all respects (although it too has no place in the "plot"). The lyrics are a sort of sound-poem that, with the music, imitate calliope rhythms. One by one the performers, while singing, form a human machine that moves to the rhythm. The last performer to join must take several running starts before he manages to break into the tight, precisely moving group.

When "Carrousel" ends there is a sudden blackout. Unfortunately the lights come back and there is one more song. "If We Only Have Love" has lyrics like "we'll kiss with our eyes and laugh with our tears," and all the performers join hands and look like they've accomplished something marvelous. At the end of a dramatic musical, it might have been a good scene. But nothing was learned in this show; nothing was offered but some very good songs and nice performances. That would have been plenty for a fine show, but writers Eric Blau and Mort Shuman (who also wrote the English lyrics) were not content to leave well enough alone.



Strummin'

Sponsored by the University Concert Committee, master of the acoustic guitar Al Dimicola (right) will perform tomorrow night with John McLaughlin and Paco Delusia in Eisenhower Auditorium.

the daily collegian arts

Monday, April 6 18

Gewandhaus: a paramount performance

By SCOTT H. McCLEARY
Daily Collegian Staff Writer

The Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig won the hearts of everyone in Eisenhower Auditorium Friday night with their charm, sparkle and infinite energy.

From the first notes to the last, it was a paramount performance.

The program, featuring Mendelssohn's "Overture to Ruy Blas," Schumann's "Symphony Number One in B-flat, Major" and Beethoven's "Symphony Number Seven in A Major," was carefully planned and precisely delivered.

Mendelssohn wrote the featured overture for a play based on the book by Victor Hugo. The work was written in Mendelssohnian style, that is, it took him about a day to finish it.

From the opening, the horns and strings showed exciting intonation. It was evident from the first that the orchestra knew how to play energetically without playing loudly.

The orchestra demonstrated they could handle the fortes when the music called for it — when Mendelssohn let the subdued energy of the piece break loose at the end of the work.

With well-defined dynamics and an

almost mechanical accuracy, especially in the staccato passages, the orchestra played the piece cleanly and with very little apparent effort.

Schumann removed the working title ("Spring Symphony") from his first symphony, but the images of the end of winter and the beginning of spring remain.

The first thing noticeably different about the Schumann work was the appearance of the woodwinds, and they were well worth the wait.

The flowing, lyrical style of the oboe soared over the masterful building of the entire orchestra in the first movement. The horns seemed a little weak here, but they still lent the right colors to the movement.

The second movement, Larghetto, originally titled "Evening," brought to mind warming spring evenings. Graceful strings and instrumentation to evoke the emotions dissipated the last lingering chill of winter.

The most interesting instrumentation of the evening occurred in this work when the oboe and horn provided a graceful passage repeated several times throughout the movement.

The Scherzo, "Happy Playmates," was energetic with a string refrain revolving around the tri combinations.

The final movement, "Height of Spring," poured forth sweeping energy. It was a delight to see so many artists playing so hard at once. The orchestra played as if Schumann had written 75 concerti to be played together.

The cello and horns deserve special mention here. The cello, with the basses, provided the driving energy behind the finale, and the horns showed excellent tone control in solo passages where it was needed most.

The first movement of the Beethoven highlights the winds again. They showed good intonation, and played an important part of a marvelous exchange between the flutes and strings.

The second movement, with its theme starting out in the low strings and winding its way up through the orchestra, evidenced the intense energy that characterized the entire evening's performance.

The clarinet was also featured in this movement, providing a refreshing break from the canonic presentation of the first theme.

The Trio movement of this symphony is one of Beethoven's best-known movements, with its intense rhythms underlying sweeping dynamic changes.

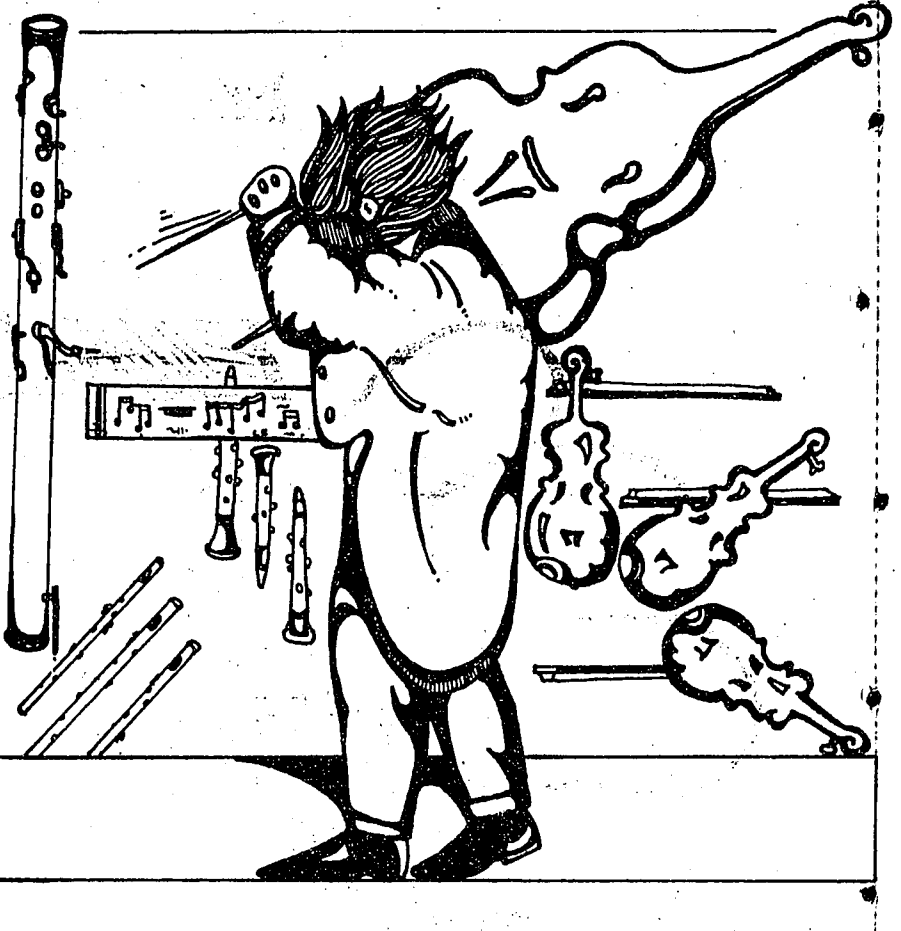
In the middle of the movement, we see visions of the Ninth and its Fanfare of Horror with a supreme presentation of timpani, brass and strings.

The finale parried the rest of the evening with intensity and ease in the fast, difficult passages leading to the end of the work.

The final swirling climax, telegraphed as only Beethoven can tell us he is done and wants to move on, exploded after gracefully crescendoing.

Audience reaction to the orchestra pleaded for an encore. And they played an encore — a Hungarian Dance by Brahms.

If anything bad could be said about the performance as a whole, it would have to be the lack of spontaneity that seemed to mark some of the performance. But in all fairness, the concert could also be seen as a group of old friends who play very well together getting together to play some very cheerful old favorites.



The Friendship Fire Company Barbershop Quartet (above) clowns around preparing for the Festival of Harmony, April 10th and 11th at the State College High School. The Nittany Knights (right), boasting of more than 30 members, will also perform at the Festival.

Nittany Knights preserve the old-time barbershop

By MIKE HEIMOWITZ
Daily Collegian Staff

From throughout the Centre Region they come, ranging in age from 20 to 80. Some are professors, many are local businessmen, a few are retired and two are students. One is even a barber. And they all love to sing. The tie that binds them is the Nittany Knights, a local barbershop chorus group.

The Knights have entertained audiences in the area since 1962 with their old-time barbershop harmony. The group's 18th Annual Festival of Harmony is coming up April 10th and 11th at the State College Area High School. The performance highlights the Knight's yearly calendar.

In addition to their own performance, this year's Festival will feature two guest quartets, the Friendship Fire Company and Vaudeville, both from Alexandria, Virginia.

Dave Kibler, an associate professor in the University's civil engineering department, has sung for the Knights since 1975 and acts as the group's publicist. Kibler said the Friendship Fire Company does not sing in the strict barbershop style.

"Their emphasis is on entertainment. They do a lot of antics and routines that are non-barbershop related. They've been putting on shows up and down the East Coast since 1971," he said.

The second guest group, Vaudeville, follows more of the pure barbershop style. They placed first in the international preliminary quartet contest for the mid-Atlantic district which was held last month in Philadelphia.

"The emphasis of Vaudeville is not as much on humor as barbershop style. They don't come on with crazy outfits and emphasize jokes. They're just the barbershoppers in the audience," said Kibler.

Barbershop harmony's deepest roots reach back as far as fifteenth century Europe when all barbers were musicians and barbershop was covered with musical instruments for use by waiting customers or the barbers themselves. This practice caught on and at the turn of the century it developed into its present form in the United States.

The Nittany Knights are one of 800 local chapters of the national Society for the Preser-

vation and Encouragement of Barbershop Singing in America, also known as SPEBSQSA. The society, which was founded in 1938, counts among its members almost 40,000 men in the United States and Canada. SPEBSQSA is the largest all male singing organization in the world.

Joe Malafarina, the Nittany Knight musical director and choral director at the Bellefonte Middle School said, "barbershop is unique four part harmony a cappella, which means there is no accompaniment, no band."

The four parts of barbershop harmony are tenor, lead, baritone and bass. The lead carries the melody. The tenor sings the high harmony above the melody and the bass forms the foundation. The baritone fills in the notes between the tenor and bass. Kibler said that the Knights have 12 or 13 basses, ten leads, five baritones and three tenors.

Barbershop songs usually have simple melodies stemming from the turn of the century through the thirties and they contain standard themes, explained Malafarina.

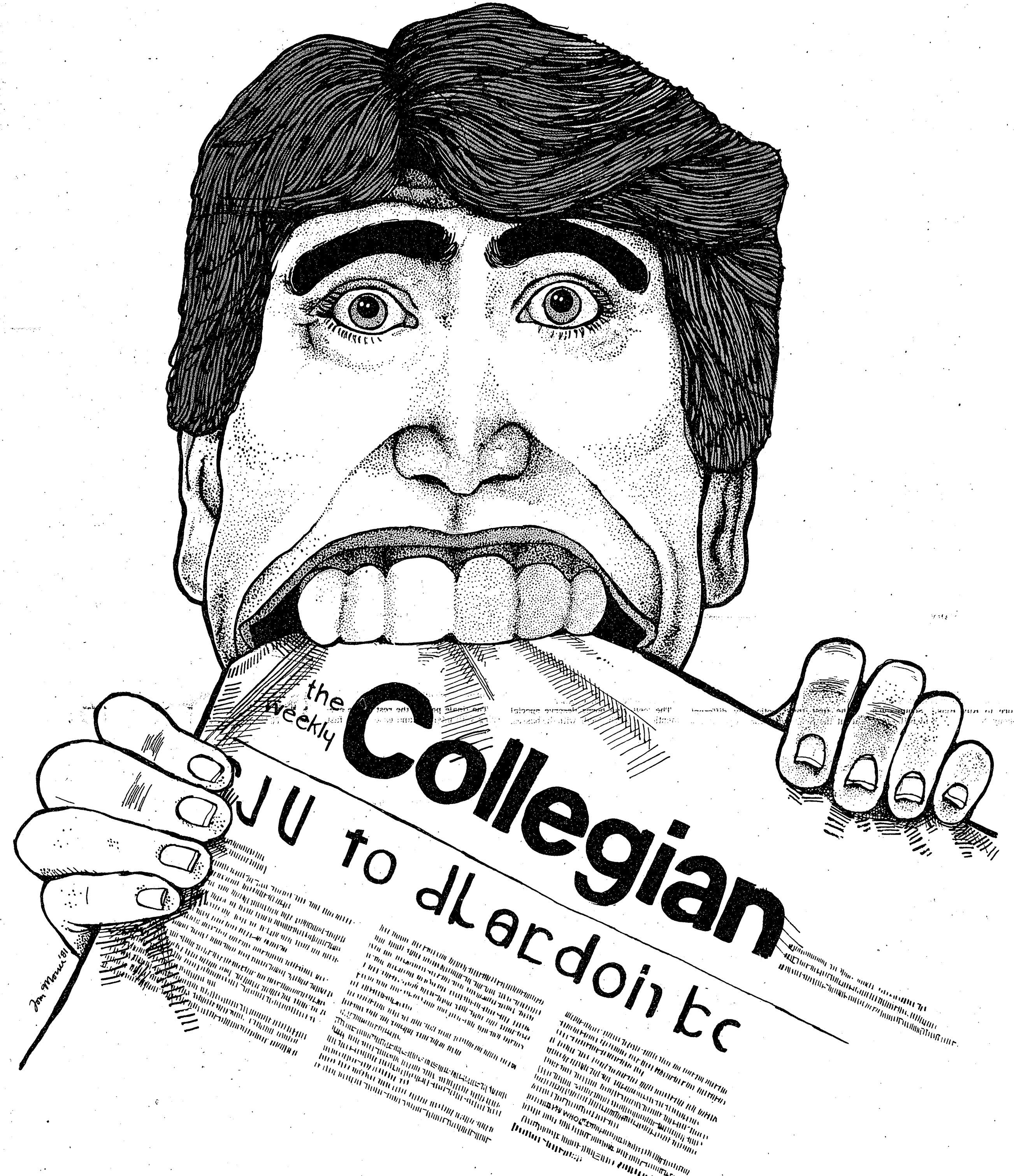
"Love songs, (songs about) girls, nostalgia for the 'good old days,' and (songs about) 'down south'" are common themes found in barbershop songs, he said.

Judging by the practice I attended last Wednesday, the show later this month should be quite a treat for the audience. The 33 voices of the Knight's active members blend together beautifully. The lack of instrumental accompaniment is not noticeable as the voice is the instrument in this kind of music.

Malafarina guides the group firmly, but in an easygoing manner. The men are in light, joking moods and full of exuberance and enthusiasm. They move from one number to another quickly, stopping only to make minor adjustments in a note here or a note there. It's obvious that a lot of hard work goes into making the group's performance as perfect as possible.

The proceeds from the Festival of Harmony will go toward the Institute of Logopedics headquartered in Wichita, Kansas. This national charity is dedicated to teaching those with speech and hearing handicaps.

The Flavor of PENN STATE



STILL HUNGRY? Enter our contest!

If you're still hungry, you'll want to enter THE WEEKLY COLLEGIAN contest. We're giving away \$100 in prizes including a \$50 gift certificate to VICTORIAN MANOR Restaurant and a \$50 gift certificate to IGA supermarket. And with prizes like that, you won't stay hungry for long!

WE'RE NOT SELLING FOOD...

But we are offering THE WEEKLY COLLEGIAN. For the next two weeks, a series of four ads will appear in THE DAILY COLLEGIAN. All of them will have something to say about THE WEEKLY COLLEGIAN and your chance to win \$100 in prizes. So when you see these four ads read them carefully. You'll be surprised how flavorful THE WEEKLY COLLEGIAN really is — you might even want to send a subscription to a parent, friend or alumnus. But you don't have to buy a subscription to enter the contest. The contest is just our way of saying "thanks" for considering.

IT'S EASY TO ENTER!

Just clip a nd save two coupons from any of the four different ads that appear in THE DAILY COLLEGIAN during the next two weeks. The ads

will be labeled FLAVOR 1, 2, 3 and 4, so you'll want to taste all the flavors. Once you've saved the two coupons, fill out the entry forms and drop them in the contest entry boxes located at 1) Our table on the Hub ground floor April 15, 16, and 17 2) 126 Carnegie Building anytime between 4 p.m. ENTRY DEADLINE: Monday April 20, 1981 by 4 p.m.

DRAWING DATE

The contest drawing will be held at THE DAILY COLLEGIAN office on Wednesday April 22, 1981. The first name chosen will have his choice of either prize. The second name chosen will win the remaining prize. The winners do not have to be present at the drawing.

THE FLAVOR OF PENN STATE

THE WEEKLY COLLEGIAN is the flavor of PENN STATE. It condenses the best of sports, news, features and campus events into one issue. If you're interested in subscribing, please come to 126 Carnegie Building and fill out a subscription form. If you want to know more about the contest, give us a call at 865-2531 or speak to and office represen-

tative at 126 Carnegie Building. But remember, DON'T STAY HUNGRY FOR LONG — ENTER THE WEEKLY COLLEGIAN CONTEST.

THE WEEKLY COLLEGIAN CONTEST

The Flavor of PENN STATE

Please enter me in THE WEEKLY COLLEGIAN CONTEST

I would like to subscribe to THE WEEKLY COLLEGIAN and please enter me in the contest.

(Please enclose \$12 — one year — \$22 for two years)

name _____

address _____

city _____ state _____ zip _____ phone _____

student non-student class of _____

Make checks payable to: Collegian, Inc. Mail to: 126 Carnegie Bldg, University Park, PA 16801