

Kingston Trio engages older crowd

By **Garaud MacTaggart**

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The Kingston Trio was created in 1957 and became one of the biggest groups from the folk revival of that era, following in the steps of the Weavers and the Almanac Singers and preceding Bob Dylan, Joan Baez and the rest of the 1960s-era folkies.

They also tended to sing less political material than their predecessors or successors, unless one wishes to call “M.T.A.” — a tune about a fare hike on the Boston transit system and the poor soul stuck without enough change to get off the train — a protest anthem.

Their arrival on the scene, just before kindred spirits like the Limelighters and the New Christy Minstrels, helped make folk music a commercial product and transformed a small group of clean-cut, collegiate guys playing upbeat songs on acoustic instruments into the biggest act in the music business.

None of the band’s founders are still touring, but George Grove has been with the group since 1976, making him the current longest-serving member of the trio. He and his band mates, Bill Zorn and Rick Dougherty, carry on the tradition that began more than 50 years ago.

When the Kingston Trio took the stage of Kleinhans Music Hall on Saturday night, they were playing to a full house, with a fair number of people probably remembering the group from the days of their youth. That was acknowledged by Zorn when he announced, “. . . We’ll be singing a lot of songs that you’ll remember — if you’re older.”

When the trio jumped right into “The Road to Freedom” you could see smiles on the faces of the audience and after a joke-laden interlude the musicians transferred their attention to “M. T.A.” and voices from the crowd came chiming in on the chorus.

The same kind of back-and-forth between musicians and fans occurred throughout the performance. Woody Guthrie’s “This Land Is Your Land” and “Jamaica Farewell”

(complete with what Zorn called “calypso banjo” from Grove) were sing-along vehicles for the audience .

Grove wrote or co-wrote most of the orchestral arrangements played by the Buffalo Philharmonic, but the balances between trio and orchestra proved a little difficult to manage, although that didn’t seem to bother the listeners.

Where the BPO shone was in the first half of the concert, when they performed a few short pieces by film composer John Williams (“Liberty Fanfare” and a suite from the movie “Far and Away”); Gioachino Rossini (the Overture to “The Barber of Seville”); and a medley of themes billed as “The Great American TV Westerns.” They whipped through the scores with plenty of panache and conductor Stuart Chafetz was entertaining when setting up the pieces for the audience.

Concert Review

Kingston Trio

With the Buffalo Philharmonic

Orchestra. Part of the Pops Series. Saturday evening in Kleinhans Music Hall,
Symphony Circle.

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