

BOBBY BROWN of the Cape Breton Symphony and the Scottish Accent wish to thank everyone in Scotland for the wonderful reception they received on their recent tour and were delighted at the warmth and friendliness of the hundreds of people they met.

Having said this, I, as editor, was one of those who had the opportunity of witnessing these fantastic musicians when they appeared at the Gaiety Theatre, Ayr.

The show opened with the David Ross Scottish Dance Bnd, plus Charlie Cowie on fiddle and that fine Scots singer Linton Mc-Millan. This was just to get the audience in the mood, which was quite unnecessary, for as soon as the band started the magic spilled over. This was no rumble them up music. This had agility, lift, life itself. Here was a new dimension in the traditional music and one that was thoroughly appreciated.

Robbie Shepherd, who was compere, warned us at the beginning what to expect, but even so we were still taken unawares. The main difference that was immediate was that there was no band chord to start with, just a tinkle on the piano and off they went. It was the same at the end. There was no end chord, just a sudden stop—most effective.

During the whole night there was no music to be seen, it was all in the head. This left the players to express themselves freely, which they certainly did and it came across.

Along with the band was a young lady, Cathy Frazer and even when she was not playing piano or singing, she was enjoying the music, swaying and keeping time. She must have heard the music a hundred times over, yet there she was enjoying it as if for the first time.

Having mentioned Cathy, it is time to mention the band. First the leader, 17-stone Bobby Brown on piano and accordion; Cathy Frazer, piano and singer; Steve Ozorak, accordion; Paul Langley, bass guitar; Fred Collins, drums.

That is the Scottish Accent section, who usually play for Scottish country dancing.

The Cape Breton Symphony consisted of four quite remarkable fiddlers—John Donald Cameron, Buddy McMaster, Sandy McIntyre and last, but certainly not least, Wilfred Gillies. Not only are they extraordinary musicians, they are composers too.

The first half was terrific, but that was just a warm-up. In the second half they stepped up a gear and at the same time they brought comedy with it. Sandy wanted to sing all night, but was not allowed to, until, eventually, Bobby let him dance the clog dance, Canadian-style. He showed the intricacies of the steps.

Then out stepped tall, lean Wilfred Gillies and with his fiddle literally doubled the speed of the dance. Never have I seen such speed and dexterity in one man. This act brought the house to its feet. There had to be an encore. So there was and it ended with everyone dancing the clog dance. Even Robbie Shepherd had a go. Well done, Robbie. Well done, Bobby Brown. Well done every one of you. You let us see how to enjoy our music all over again. We have learned a lot from you and I hope we can catch up with you. Bon voyage and haste ye back.

PS—A tip from Wilfred Gillies, fiddler, read a new piece of music over and over again before you start to play. Play it over slowly, getting faster and faster. Maybe after 100 times you will spot something you missed. Having sorted it all out, practise without the music until it is perfect. You then join it to another piece of music that you already know. When you come to hate the piece you know you have got it beat—Editor.