

# Quintet's music free of cliches

By Lois Moody

Citizen correspondent

If one were to believe all the rave notices about the latest genius to emerge in contemporary music, one would quickly be up to one's eyebrows in geniuses.

Extravagant claims are commonplace but true genius is rare.

We might just have one in the person of trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, who performed with his quintet in the NAC Opera on Tuesday evening.

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## Music review

Wynton Marsalis Quintet

NAC Opera

Tuesday evening

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Much has been made of his musical maturity (he has just turned 22), performing credits with some of the leading figures of the jazz world and ability to perform in both classical and jazz idioms.

But what is most impressive is that he still considers himself very much committed to the learning process and that he has yet to develop an identifiable style.

What Marsalis has developed is thorough professionalism. His music for this performance was refreshing, challenging and free of cliches. It was the work of musicians who have something to say.

For those who came expecting the typical program of jazz and ballad standards there were surprises.

With the exception of one standard in each program segment, and a Thelonius Monk tune, the group worked primarily with original material — one song by pianist Kenny Kirkland and the rest by Marsalis himself.

Most of the material performed last evening was drawn from Marsalis' most recent recording, *Think Of One*, including the distinctive Monk tune that gives the album its title.

The Marsalis originals, extended tunes built on airy, dream-like themes, shifting rhythmic figures and counter-rhythms, were developed in suite-like fashion in the improvisations of each soloist.

The music seemed to move to a strong inner pulse, regardless of shifts in dynamics. It was the kind of writing, and playing that sustains interest with ease.

Each Marsalis composition was complete in itself, yet each seemed to lead naturally to the next. This sense of form is arguably the most impressive feature of his composing and programming.

The playing of each musician was consistently exciting, although an imbalance in the sound left Kirkland at a disadvantage.

Much of the solo spotlight was shared with brother Branford Marsalis, but attention was also focussed on bassist Chirnett Moffitt and drummer Jeff Watts.

Talented as each member of this group is, it is Wynton Marsalis who attracts the closest attention. Whether you look for technique, tonal quality, improvisational skill, feeling or sense of direction, he has it within his grasp.

On all counts, this was one of the more personalized and stimulating jazz presentations to come our way in recent times. You'll be hearing more from Marsalis.