

Gershwin from page C1

Ravel, Milhaud and Hindemith who attempted to join jazz with the mainstream, Gershwin captured the irrepressible energy of both music forms.

In style and youthful exuberance, many comparisons have been made between Gershwin and Franz Schubert.

But music historians point out that Schubert's prolific output was grounded in the tradition of the Viennese music establishment.

In comparison, Gershwin invented a musical form to fit an emerging America and a nation of disparate ethnic groups. In Gershwin's music, high art meets populism.

From show tunes to classical compositions to American standards, Gershwin's melodies can be hummed, contemplated and studied for their sheer mastery of melody, said Resnick.

"The first half of the BBSO program features as special guest the University Musical Society Choral Union, performing Gershwin classics 'I've Got

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Dream from page C1

ry Month in raising public awareness about the contribution of African Americans in shaping the nation can't be as easily quantified.

The growing debate seems to be whether Black History Month has either become overly ethnic-centric or is the quintessential celebration of diversity.

Clearly, since the days when Carter Woodson founded the precursor of Black History Month—National Negro Week in the mid 1920s—the intent has been to broaden the conception of the American experience.

In the post-Civil Rights Movement era, another form of integration is required—cultural tolerance.

There's a gap in the basic understanding of African American history, according to Kimberly Camp, director of the Museum of African American History.

"People think we went from slavery to Martin Luther King Jr. What happened in-between the slave trade and the March on Washington," said Camp, is a story of the struggle to survive amid overwhelming odds.

"African Americans were co-founders of this country," she said. "Yet no other group has been as marginalized."

Whether we realize it or not,

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paintings, he demonstrates an uncommonly refined blend of Renaissance style, symbolism, 19th-century European realism and a measure of surrealism.

But calling him eclectic is too easy.

In the cyber age where artists are often consumed with appropriations rather than mining their own psychological landscape, Maddox was a restless romantic.

Or in contemporary parlance, painfully honest.

"He didn't try to follow any other painter. He didn't set out to be a type of artist."

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national conferences, curriculum materials, an Internet site and may even fund a national radio program to stimulate a discussion about race.

"Some countries look at us as a successful model of racial relations," said Camp. "But look around, we still have a long way to go."

If there's any wonder about the size of the chasm, think about the racially different responses to the O.J. Simpson trials, the Malice Green beating and the Million Man March.

Laying claim

In a culture where ancient history is sometimes thought of as anything that happened before TV, lectures of African-American history must carry compelling images.

Through February, the historical paintings of Ivan Stewart represent a powerful lesson of the heroic and cultural contributions of African Americans.

In a vast exhibit of 43 paintings at the Southfield Centre for the Arts, Stewart documents the valor of the 9th and 10th U.S. Cavalry, known as the Buffalo Soldiers for their reverence for Native Indians customs. The soldiers patrolled the western plains in the mid-to-late 1800s.

Stewart's other subjects

animals who seem to hold the key to wisdom.

Not all the works reflect the full range of Maddox's technical and compositional mastery. Nonetheless, the memorial exhibit offers plenty of evidence of Maddox's erotic sensibilities that transcend the Old Masters' pleasant depictions.

Yet beyond the analysis of his work, a simple realization cannot be overlooked. Maddox could no longer run away from his

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phere of the fair.

If bigger is better, then why didn't last year's expanded art fair sponsored by the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association meet with a ringing endorsement, or bring in significantly more revenue?

Plenty of questions

At the Monday, Feb. 9, meeting, the commissioners expect White and Common Ground to explain how they plan to further share the wealth from Art in the Park.

Has local politics really sunk to this level? How can an elected board of representatives pressure a nonprofit social service agency to raise more money or else?

If the commissioners' course is prudent, simply ask: On what principle have they based their position?

Could they actually think that if a nonprofit is not located "in" Birmingham, then it's less significant to residents?

If so, think again, commissioners. Last year, 259 Birmingham residents called Common Ground's crisis line, 23 appealed to victim assistance services, and 24 required emergency psychiatric help.

In the commissions' haste to help local nonprofits they've failed to realize how difficult it is for nonprofits to financially sustain themselves.

Rather than help, they've become a hindrance.

And besides, shouldn't the commissioners have their own ideas on how residents, businesses and government can better support Birmingham's nonprofits?

Less politics and parochial attitudes might bring some common sense to the discussion.

Frank Provenzano is an arts reporter for the Observer & Eccentric! Newspapers. He can be reached at (248) 901-2557, or send information to 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, 48009.

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