Gershwin from page C1

Ravel, Milhaud and Hindemith who attempted to join jazz with the mainstream, Gershwin cap-tured the irrepressible energy of

oth music forms. In style and youthful exuber

in style and youthful extuer-once, many comparisons have been made between Gershwin and Frans Schubert. But music historians point out that Schubert's prolific output was grounded in the tradition of the Viennese music establish-ment.

ine vienness music establishment.

In comparison, Gershwin invented a musical form to fit en omerging 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

gram features as special guest the University Musical Society Choral Union, performing Gershwin classics "I've Got

Rhythm," Embraceable You, and a medley of "Its Wonderful," Someone to Watch Over Means and Rhapsedy in Blue.

Before intermission, the BBSO will perform a piece from "An American in Paris," which Resnick calls an American masterpiece.

The second half of the program is dedicated to what may be the most well-known American opera, "Porgy and Bess."

It wasn't until the mid 1980s, bowayer, that the green was per-

It wasn't until the mid 1980s, however, that the opera was performed by the New York Metropolitan Opera.

Shortly after composing "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off" and "A Foggy Day in London Town," Geralwin died of a brain tumor. He was 38.

e was 30. In an often-quoted remark on In an often-quoted remark on Gershwin's passing, novelist John O'Hara observed, "Gersh-win is dead, I don't have to believe it if I don't want to."

Not many people have had to believe it, either. Especially since the music is alive and well.

Dream from page C1

ry Month in raising public awareness about the contribu-tion of African Americans in shaping the nation can't be as

shaping the nation can't be as casily quantified.

The growing debote scens to be whether Black History Menth has either become overly ethnocentric 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-Givil Rights Movement era, another form of integration is required – cultural tolerance.

gration is required - cultural tol-crance.
There's a gap in the basic understanding of African Ameri-can history, according to Kim-berly Camp, director of the Museum of African American History.
"People think we went from slavery to Martin Luther King Jr.

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.

Action of the struggle to survive
amid or the struggle to survive
amid or the struggle to survive
amid overwhelming odds.

Action of the survive
said. "Yet no other group has
been as marginalized."

Whether we realize it or not,

everything is viewed through a color lens. We can't get to the other issues until we get through issues of race.

Role of the arts

Apparently, for the first time in three decades, an American

in three decades, an American president concurs.
Last fall, President Clinton initiated a forum on race with a town hall meeting in Dayton, Ohio. With the administration in a political quagmire, however, its unclear what the next step will be for the initiative.
Attending the annual Renaissance Wackend with Clinton over New Year's weekend, Camp asked the president: What role could the arts play in a national discussion about race?

"He said people should see the arts as an opportunity to learn about other cultures, who said. Camp was later told by Clinton insiders, however, that it was a question he hadn't thought about before. But that doesn't mean the museum isn't moving shead. With a \$975,000 matching grant from the Kellogg Foundation, the museum will set out over the next three years to appeal to a more diverse, multiappeal to a more diverse, multi-cultural audience.

The nearly \$2-million budget, according to Camp, will create

national conferences, curriculum materials, an Internet site and may even fund a national radio program to stimulate a discus-

sion 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

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 Malico 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

inages.

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

In a vast exhibit of 43 paint-In a vast exhibit of 43 paintings at the Southfield Centre for the Arts, Stowart documents the valor of the 9th and 10th U.S. Calvary, known as the Buffalo Soldiors for their reverence for Native Indians customs. The soldiors patrolled the weatern plains in the mid-to-late 1800s.

Stewarts other subjects

include the first African American to graduate from West Point, Henry O. Flipper, Tuskegee pilots, black cowboys as well as blues and Jazz musicians.

"We want to be part of mainstream American history," said

stream American history, said Stewart, who also travels to schools donning a calvary uni-form and performs the role of

Henry Flipper.
"We'd like to see black history colebrated 365 days a year," he

said.

Several of Stowart's paintings invoke the historical reenactment motifs of Frederic Remington.

Other paintings distinguished by a melodic swiring skies stand along Albert Bierstadt's 19th-century compositions of the Arcadian plains.

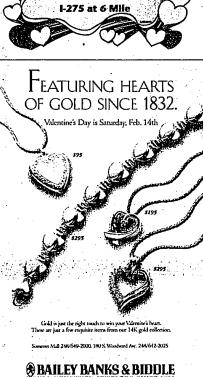
It isn't an American painter, but a social crusador who puts Stowart's work in historical perspective.

For inspiration, Stewart often recalls the vision of American Nogro abolitionist Frederick Douglass:

"Those who fight the battle of America may claim America as his country and have his claim respected," write Douglass.

As Black History Month instructs, it's a claim as diverse as the people mingling in a melting pot of cultures.





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Romantic from page C1

pointings, he demonstrates an uncommonly refined blend of Renaissance style, symbolism, 19th-century European realism

nd a measure of surrealism. But calling him eclectic is too

But calling him eelectic is too casy.

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

Or in contemporary parlance, anifully honest.

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

Cry for myth

The tendency upon learning

that Maddox committed suicide is to search his paintings for clues of his imminent self-destruction.

That, too, is simplifying his work and his life. For Maddox lived and painted within a mythic dimension, a world beyond superficial appearances.

To know Maddox is to face the seeming hopeless wanderings of a romantie's heart. "Martin's work is internal, not external," said Fleming. "It's not about contemporary life but a common psychological life."

Among the common images are women who appear as seductresses and saviors, winged horsels, ethercal oceans and small

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animals who seem to hold the

animals who seem to hold the key to wisdom.

Not all the works reflect the full range of Maddox's technical and compositional mastery. Nonetheloss, the memorial control was a substitute of Maddox's crotic sensibilities that transcend the Old Masters pleasant depictions.

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

obscasions.

In "Addiction," Maddox portrays a blindfolded man with his hands and feet tied. The naked man sits at the edge of an open sea while two maidens and a fish await his imminent fall.

"He told me that 'Addiction

was his most autobiographical painting," said Fleming. Unfortunately, the mythic rep-resentation became inseparable from Maddox's life.

Conversations from page C1

phere of the fair.

If bigger is better, then why didn't last year's expanded art fair sponsored by the Birming-ham 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?

else?

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

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 psychi-

atric help.
In the commissions' haste to the commissions naste to help local nonprofits they've failed to realize how difficult it is for nonprofits to financially sus-tain 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 non-profits?

profits?
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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