

# Arctic Chamber Orchestra Rural Hit

By LIBET JOHNSON

The Arctic Chamber Orchestra has just completed its first concert tour of Alaska. Conducted by Mr. Gordon Wright, of the University of Alaska Music Department, the 19 piece orchestra returned home after its highly successful tour of Barrow, Kotzebue, Nome, and Anchorage.

The tour was to have included stops in Juneau and Sitka as well but unfavorable weather conditions made this impossible. The short stop planned for Kodiak Island was also prevented when the Navy refused to issue landing permission.

Otherwise, the tour went according to plan, with three evening concerts and two childrens' concerts in the afternoons.

The concerts were a typical Alaskan mixture of the casual and the classic. With the exception of Anchorage, each performance was comfortably informal, with the audience relaxed and Gordon Wright elegantly leading his orchestra in

his outstanding pair of brown work boots.

The tour is the result of over six months of planning and was financed for the most part by a grant from the Alaska Arts Council and an anonymous eastern foundation.

The intentions of the tour were to offer the experience of formal string music to many who had perhaps never heard it before. It was also to introduce Alaska's resident string orchestra, whose members are from the larger University-Fairbanks Symphony Orchestra, and to hopefully stimulate interest in enlarging the string program in Alaskan schools, which at present is rather undernourished.

The music was received with great enthusiasm at every stop. Although complicated, it was not difficult to listen to. With only three previous rehearsals under their belts, the musicians presented a powerful and impressive performance, equaled only by the delighted expressions on the childrens' faces when they

were allowed to handle and try out some of the instruments after the performances.

Aside from the spirited and extremely graceful conducting of Mr. Gordon Wright, the piece de resistance was the superb and passionate violin duet by Paul and Linda Rosenthal. It would be difficult to resist the magnetic attraction of the two bows, in their magical dance, courting each other in perfect rhythm, well-accompanied by the remaining orchestra.

By the last concert in Anchorage, the music had attained a rich and polished quality. With the success of this first tour of Alaska's own Arctic Chamber Orchestra comes a promise and a challenge for the future.

Let us hope that the new Arctic Chamber Orchestra will not now ride into the sunset on the wake of its recent successes, but will continue to fill a significant gap in Alaska's cultural bankroll.