Concert fails to deliver the best from its stars

Thunder and ease. This describes the two halves of the Friday night jazz series concert at Meadow Brook Music Festival last weekend. The thunder was provided by the Thundering Herd belonging to Woody Herman. After the intermission, Della Reese eased her way through a 40-minute set of popular songs that was over just as it seemed to be really warming

just as it seemed when you want to real strain. The promise of excitement fell slightly aborder was may have been the suden did not be suden did not suden did not be suden did not suden did not

WOODY HERMAN has a fine young troupe of musicians who have been together for several months without change now and that adds to cohesion and a tight big-band sound. Friday, the Herman band returned to the United States from a six-week tour of Europe that ended in Sweden.

When band members were playing at Meadow Brook it was approximately five o'clock in the morning for them. At times the fine edge one expects from both Woody Herman and his men seemed missing.

During the second half there could have been an exciting exchange between the band and Della Reese, but the Thundering Herd was muffled and relegated to being just a backup band for the singer. Herman did not appear on stage and it could have been any band adding orchestral support for Della Reese.

The opportunity for dramatic inter-play was lost. The concert appeared short, with an easy-to-take but essen-

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Review

tially dull, anticlimactic second half. Herman's hour began and ended in a conventional manner. In between were some tasty bits that deserve mention.

THE CONVENTIONAL opener was Four Brothers." Bob Belden, Gary "Four Brothers." Bob Belden, Gary Smulyn, Fred Tiberi and Nick Mitchell substituted for the original late 1940s sax section that originated this classic

section that originated this classic number:

"Early Autumn," another Herman being to some some an endicore run through. By the third song, Herman turned to a more contemporary composition and helped the band to put some spark into its performance that at times seemed to be sepwalking.

Coreas "La Fiesta" had some of the excitement that was intended, with Woody Herman's soprano sax cetting through the breas and the bass notes of Birch Johnson's trombone bringing it down from the dynamic buildup.

The versatility of the Herman band the some people believe the some people belie

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AMERICATION

1:05, 3:00

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"La Cage Aux

Folles"

(R)

Feather")

with English

Subtitles

1:30, 3:30, 5:30,

7:30, 9:30

'Birds of a

Smulyn's baritone sax alternated with flute and horns. Tibari arranged a ver-sion of "Caravan," the old Ellington standard originally written by trom-bonist Juan Tizol in 1937.

THE BASSON of Their gave the melody an unusual but welcome change-of-pace sound. Birch Johnson helped give the well-worn song some new freshness, as did the soprano sax of Woody Herman.

The third song in this trio of updated arrangements was planist Dave Lalama's arrangement of another Ellington composition. "I Got It Bad and fhat Ain't Good" started with a Lalama piano solo that sounded Dukish at the start but soon veered off into a modern vein.

phone on haritone for the second, and after a rich ensemble section by the unicon saxes, Lalama came back for a piano solo. After a chorus, other members of the ritythm section, Arunmer Bob Leonard and bassict Dave Larce, a picked up the rhythm. The three loped along in a comfortable groovs, swinging until the full band finished off the tune. "Caldonia," another old Woody favorite, gave Herman a chance for some showy clarinet work and a raspy, comic vocal before several energetic solos. Herman came back with a serious, straight-ahead clarinet improvisation that shows when he gets in the mood he can still be thrilling in his soles.

ein. In the final number, a usual crowd
Smulyn joined Lalama at the micropleaser taken from Aaron Copland,

"FANFARE FOR the Common Man" got an uncommon going over that included blazing brass and screaming finish. This almost always brings the crowd to its feet. That it didn't here suggests the absence of an essential quality in the best concerts. This was the high point of the evening. The rest of the program falled to make the program falled to be the program falled to the program falled to be the

Della Reese did her best to whip up the kind of enthusiasm she likes to work with, but it was not to be. Her distinctive pop style and gospel roots resulted in excellent interpretations to

She combines an easy, relaxed yes of humor to sell any type of song. Marsonal style with her own unique sense of humor to sell any type of song. Marsonal style and the self-ground style and the waste of a rousing geopel approach that worked very well. Her set seemed to whiz by and it was hard to believe that "Base on Down the Road" was the last number she would do.

Della Reese is full of life and warmth and this shines through in her singing. She has a good time when she performs and so does the audience. This was a good concert but not one of the great ones this season. The Friday Night Jazz Series on the Oakland University campus near Rochester. This was sustanding performances. This was just not one of them.

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