

Singer best in opera selections

Youthful zest and enthusiasm were the key, (pardon the pun) "notes" of the Cranbrook Music Guild's annual Young Artists' Concert earlier this month at Cranbrook House.

Performing were Meredith Parsons, mezzo-soprano from Traverse City and recent winner of the Detroit Grand Opera Association's 1979 Lang Scholarship, and pianist and composer Norman Boehm, a University of Michigan student. Boehm was the Cranbrook Music Guild's Brewster Scholarship Awardee for 1979.

Miss Parsons is at her best with operatic selections. Her performance of Donizetti's "O Mio Fernando" from "La Favorita" was an appealing close to her program. She has a hefty voice which has some years to mature to its full potential. Even so, she sings with well-learned technique and confidence when she is sure of her music, as she was with the Donizetti.

Her voice is already a very large instrument which would appear better suited to the opera stage than chamber music, such as she began her program with, Rossini's "La Regina Venetiana" is a charming set of songs, but Miss Parsons' voice isn't light enough to carry the nuances of the music through the almost coloratura-like passages and long pianissimo phrases.

BOTH THE ROSSINI AND DEBUSSY'S "Melodies" are difficult music which a well-trained singer like Ms. Parsons can handle, but emotionally they seemed too light-weight for her. The Debussy "Il pleure dans mon coeur" was beautifully sung, however.

The contemporary art songs she sang were also in the very difficult class. Technically, they were well sung, but again, this reviewer was longing to hear the singer perform music with a longer line, bigger, if you will. Fortunately, she did tackle the Donizetti after intermission, as well as Bizet's Habenera from "Carmen." Both were much more engaging than the art song selections had been. But one of the problems with opera sung in recital setting is that it always seems like a caged lion — lonesome in this case. Miss Parsons is an obviously a good actress and her diction is superb, but protocol prevents one from using too much acting when in concert. Thus, so much of Bizet's magic is lost in recital.

The Donizetti fared better because it is of a much more serious nature and doesn't need dancing to set it off. Altogether, the program was a tremendously difficult one, and it was well done by this young singer. Her accompanist, Barbara Wimmunc, was excellent, although there appeared to be some uneasy moments at the beginning of the program.

BOEHM, ON THE other hand, exhibited no lack of confidence during his portions of the program. He is an excellent pianist, but confuses the issue with a great deal of emotionalism. In his performance of Mozart's Ten Variations on a Theme of Gluck, K. 455, this was especially disconcerting. His pedaling was over-Romantic and smudged the innate purity of Mozart.

Grieg's Ballade, Opus 24, was better suited to Boehm's florid style, and it was well-played enough to take second place to his best-played piece, his own Sonata for Piano which he composed in 1976. Boehm's sonata is highly imitative, verging on the Hollywood movie music genre. It's an entertaining work nonetheless and was magnificently played. The music is somewhat too facile to be very interesting, but it is a perfect vehicle to exhibit its composer's elegant playing style.

Boehm's performance of the Mozart was practically flawless, aside from the pedaling and some overwrought dynamics.

The Young Artists' program at Cranbrook House are usually among the most interesting of the music guild sponsors and this was a typical presentation. Both Miss Parsons and Boehm appear to be headed toward challenging careers.

Group helps survivors cope with their grief

By SHIRLEE IDEN

What do you say to a grieving mother, brother or wife?

And what might they say to you?

If you're talking to Betty Rabaut or Teddy Kelm, they'll tell you they're coping. And it's because they do talk about their loss and share with others who have faced tragedy.

The two Southfield women are active in a support group called "Good Grief" which assembles at 8 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month. The meetings are in the teachers' lounge at St. Bede School.

And if you could eavesdrop at such a gathering, you might find 12 to 18 persons quietly sharing, perhaps crying, but trying hard to go on and find meaning in life.

Four years ago, Betty Rabaut might have said: "It was an afternoon in May and I was grocery shopping. As I drove into the driveway with my packages, I had a terrible premonition that something had happened. A neighbor ran over to say they'd take me to the hospital, that something had happened to Paul."

Paul, the Rabauts' eldest son, had taken a year off from school after graduation from Groves High School. He estab-

lished his own painting firm and was doing independent contracting when tragedy struck.

"He was moving an aluminum ladder when it was hit by lightning," Paul was electrocuted," she said.

TEDDY KELM became a widow when her husband died unexpectedly more than four years ago.

"My husband was just 55 years old. He had a heart attack on the operating table after going in for a simple heart catheterization," Mrs. Kelm said.

Though one family lost the husband and father and the other a son and brother, Mrs. Rabaut points out that in grief management, there are always basic similarities and stages one goes through.

She didn't learn this by herself, but by seeking understanding.

"About four months after Paul died, Rev. Robert Welkart, who lives in Chelsea, Mich., did a workshop on grief and I heard him," she said.

"It put things in perspective for me. I could place myself in the stages of grief that he discussed. I invited him to come to our parish and he did."

Immediately eight people signed up for the St. Bede session.

"Except for summer,

we meet each month," she said. "It isn't always the same people. They come and go. Some return at the anniversary of a death."

Mrs. Kelm became active in the group six months ago and says it's never too late to receive the kind of reassurance "Good Grief" can offer the bereaved.

"EVERY month at Providence Hospital they have a program for parents who have lost children," Mrs. Rabaut said. "It's hard to go to these program yourself, you need someone, but there is value in going."

The St. Bede meetings are informal rap sessions. "People share with us the loss of a child, spouse or husband," Mrs. Kelm explained.

"If they can, they tell what happened and how they feel about it."

It helps people to know there are stages of grief, Mrs. Rabaut said. "It's normal and knowing that is comforting."

She said some people cry and they feel free to cry. "We empathize with them," she said.

"It's a small group and maybe that's why they do talk and share," added Mrs. Kelm.

"We'll try to keep our group under 20 so people

have that chance to share."

Some grief problems are long term, and understanding the mechanics of the grief process can be helpful.

Mrs. Rabaut's four children, Mary, 21, Patty, 19, Jeanne 17, and Tim, 14 did not all respond to their brother's death in the same way.

"One daughter really can't talk about Paul too well," she said. "The other daughter shares quite freely and the younger two have always talked about him easily. My husband, Paul and I try to speak of him often."

MRS. RABAUT is currently the fulltime religion education coordinator at St. Bede. In addition she attends St. Mary's at Orchard Lake where she will earn an MA in religious education. She holds a BA from Michigan State University in education.

"I went back to school within the last few years," she said. "I started volunteering and worked up from that to professional work at the church."

Mrs. Kelm and her three children, Sharon, 26, David, 22, and Rick, 14, have lived in Southfield 12 years.

Quinty she offers: "Following my husband's death, my son David has

decided he wants to be a doctor."

What both women have in common to understand is that grief is the normal and natural process by which people make a healthy adjustment to any significant loss in life such as death or divorce.

Stage one is shock, denial and disbelief and can last from an hour to a week. Then comes emotional release by tears, cursing, working it out.

A third stage can occur whereby physical manifestations happen with the bereaved feeling the symptoms that deceased had and not sleeping or eating.

Then depression and detachment may bring the blues and subsequent loss of meaning, even a potential for suicide. A guilt stage involves questioning about involuntarily and may include real guilt and unreal guilt.

Then, anger and rebellion often erupt, and irrational hostility. A seventh stage of grief is idealization of the deceased, the feeling that only the past was perfect and the future holds little.

The eighth stage begins the realization that the past had its faults and the future may not be so bad. Then new patterns evolve with the bereaved reaching out to new careers, new associations.

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