Pavilion could be home for Smith's concert band

review

By TIM RICHARD

It's time to stop hinting and whispering.

Dr. Leonard B. Smith's band needs a new home. The city of Southfield, with its new civic center Pavilion, must rank as the candidate to beat.

That was abundantly clear after Friday night's concert opening the 2,000-plus seat hall.

There was great significance that the printed program and speakers repeatedly referred to the "Leonard B. Smith Concert Band" rather than the "Detroit Concert Band," as it has been known for the last 35 years.

THE BAND used to have an office in Ford Auditorium. It was shouldered out by the Detroit Symphony.

The band's summer programs, though underwritten by the Detroit parks and recreation department, received promotion from the city's press agents. It handled its own PR.

The band wasn't invited to take part in the Detroit Bicentennial Week celebration of 1976.

The band's Belle Isle concerts were repeatedly delayed by rock groups which refused to abandon the bandshell on schedule. Crowd control was never adequate. After last summer's "blue van" incident, Smith moved all concerts out of Belle Isle.

It's no secret the band is considering a suburban location. Its dream, however, of a drum-shaped building with all facilities including an auditorium is probably unrealistic, given today's construction prices.

THE CITY of Southfield should seize this opportunity to woo Smith's band to the city of "education, commerce and culture."

Mayor Donald Fracassi notes the Pavilion was "not designed as an auditorium but as all all-purpose facility. We look forward to more concerts, theatrical productions and art shows."

The Pavilion needn't be the only place the Smith band plays, nor should it be the only group performing there — any more than the symphony is the only group using Ford Auditorium.

But the Pavilion could be the basis of the Smith band's concert operations.

One of the many vacated school buildings would be an excellent candidate for the band's offices, mailing room, instrument storage place, uniform storage quarters, library and rehearsal room.

THIS IS NOT to suggest that the Pavilion is a perfect auditorium — yet.

A defective microphone made the mellifluous baritone voice of narrator Mike Whorf sound as if it were coming through a mud slide.

Something about the acoustics — whether it was a microphone or a riser — made the brass sounds overwhelm the lovely soprano voice of Imogene Bird, a highly seasoned performer who should have been audible.

There are doors that could have cut off the main room from the corridors. They weren't used but should have been. The result was that the band's echo fluttered through the halls like an unwanted *fledermaus*.

At least two drinking fountains gave only the barest trickle of water.

BUT THOSE are minor flaws which can be corrected by mechanics and a little experience.

What's important is that the big items are in place.

The hall is big enough to handle a band audience, even at $6 to $8.50 prices.

Police handling of traffic flow was efficient without being officious.

Parking is ample, free and convenient to the building.

The location — Evergreen just north of Northwestern — is close to the population center of southeast Michigan and convenient. It will be even more accessible if and when I-696 is completed.

The coat check operation was fast and convenient, far better than most halls of any size.

The band wouldn't have to schedule around school plays and graduations, as it might if it played in a high school.

Most important of all, the band would be close to its audience, and that audience showed it appreciates a classical concert band.

THIS CONCERT was somewhat heavier than the "interesting and varied program" Smith usually presented at Belle Isle and the State Fairgrounds.

The brass was all there, of course, but this setting was particularly good for hearing some of the subtler sounds. There was an oboe duet in Strauss' "Die Fledermaus" overture. There was a piccolo solo by Ervin Nichols in Sousa's "The King of France."

Beautiful Baby contest voting administered by The Gathering Place

All senior adults who visit The Gathering Place on Thursday and Friday, May 1-2, will be offered one vote in choosing the area's most beautiful baby, in the contest sponsored by Farmington Area Jaycettes.

The Gathering Place is located in Mercy Center on 11 Mile Road, east of Middlebelt. Guests are asked to enter from Gate 4.

"The rules are all set up," said Loretta Conway, director of senior adult activities. "It will be a very simple procedure. The baby pictures will all be on display. Guests will mark their ballots and these will be turned back to the Jaycettes for tallying."

All contestants will be judged on beauty alone from photos submitted in conjunction with the contest promoted to urge infant safety in automobiles.

THE CONTEST is now in its second year in cooperation with the Jaycettes' Buckle Up Babes (BUBS) program which loans out General Motors Love Seats on a rental basis for infants from birth to 9 months of age.

The seats have been proven to be the most effective in cradling an infant in protection of a crash.

Deadline for entries must be postmarked no later than April 22 and sent to Baby Beauty Contest, 22731 Brookdale, Farmington 48024. Photos must be at least wallet size and be accompanied with the child's name, parents' name, address and phone number, and the child's birthdate.

Babies must not be older than 18 months to be eligible.

First prize is a GM Child Seat, for the child older than nine months. Second prize is a $35 gift certificate and third prize is a $25 gift certificate, both from Richards Boys and Girls Wear.

Babies who are children of area Jaycees or Jaycettes are not eligible for the competition.

Theater games prepare youth for acting careers

Sally Sawyer, director in residence for Family Players of West Bloomfield, brings an eight-session class for youth to Farmington Community Center. The sessions run from 4-5 p.m. on Mondays, beginning April 14.

"Theatre Games for Children" is open to all youth between 8-12 years of age.

"The improvisations used prepare kids who want to go on stage or make a career in theatre," Mrs. Sawyer said, "but it also helps them just relate to people of all ages and in a number of circumstances.

"If we'd only turn off TV our kids would start thinking again," she said, "and these sessions will go a long way toward developing their imagination."

Mrs. Sawyer has written two prize-winning plays and has taught Creative Dramatics for tots in ArtStart.

Most recently, two members of her company won awards as best supporting actress and best supporting actor in competition among community theatres in the Detroit Metropolitan area. Family Players chose a segment of its most recent production, "Cinders" for the competition.

Fee for "Theatre Games for Children" is $20.

Registrations are being taken now by calling the center, 477-8404.

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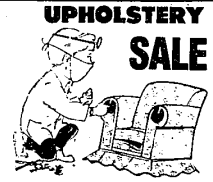
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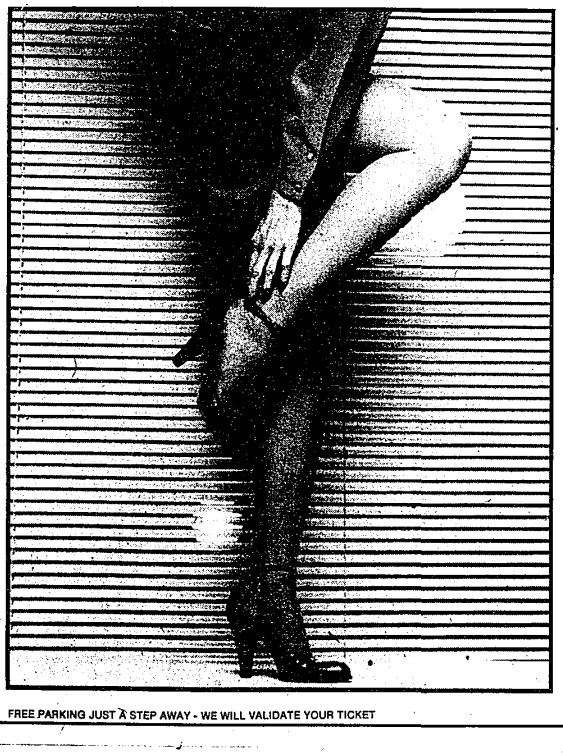
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