

Masked dance-drama staged at The Attic

"The Story of Kencana Wunggu," a masked dance-drama from the island of Java, will be performed at 2 p.m. May 10, 11 and 24 in The Attic Theatre, 525 E. Lafayette, Detroit.

The solo performance is given by Laurie Ross, a resident of Farmington Hills who studied with Ibu Darshi, a 90-year-old dance master for a year in the island country to learn the full repertoire of the Sundanese dances.

She perpetuates the art of the mask dances of Java through performances and classes in International Institute, the first of its kind in the Detroit area.

Her solo performance at The Attic is one of the programs scheduled for the theatre's "Performing Arts Festival" which runs through May 24. The festival performances include mime, musical theatre, drama, improvisational theatre, dance and a special family program.

"THE STORY" of Kencana Wunggu tells the story of a princess who runs away from home to avoid a marriage that had been arranged by her father

and of her exploits in the forest where she has gone into hiding. "This is a lighthearted fable designed to please children as well as adults," Ms. Ross said.

All of the traditional dances from Java are performed with masks representing five main characters and their accompanying masks.

The drama stems from the Ramayana and Mahabharata, two Indian epics. Poems. Movements come out of the folk stories integrated into these poems.

While in Java, Ms. Ross was a member of "Topeng" mask theatre. She studied mime with Leonard Pitt and dance and drama at East Bay Music Center in California and New York University.

Before her return to Detroit for a while she was a performing member with Ramayana Dancers of New York.

Tickets for all performances in the Attic's "Performing Arts Festival" are available by calling the box office, 983-7789.



Laurie Ross will use the mask and character of Tembem for her performance of "The Story of Kencana Wunggu" in The Attic Theatre. Tembem is a female servant, humorous and sometimes silly.

Keyboard concert proves intriguing

By LAURA BUCH

Imagine a 17th century craftsman as he carves the Baroque intricacies of an elaborate altar piece. Some he shapes into ornate scrollwork. Some he carefully glids. Imagine his precision and his attention and his passionate vision, and you will have imagined also something of the Baroque artistry with which Gustav Leonhardt re-creates that era's keyboard works.

In his recent concert at the Detroit Institute of Arts, Leonhardt's performance was imaginative and highly polished, if occasionally a bit confusing.

In the hands of a lesser master, a concert comprised entirely of works for solo harpsichord might prove too much for some modern ears. But Leonhardt draws a wide range of emotion from his instrument. With variety of articulation, he allows his music subtlety as well as power.

Leonhardt's ability to pull out an individual line from its surrounding counterpoint was evident in the Beethoven Prelude and Fugue that closed the concert's first half. Allowing one idea to expand, to sing, and to grow organically into the next, he gave the piece vitality and interest.

Listening to Leonhardt, one becomes intensely aware of music as a temporal art. Each note is exquisitely hung on its phrase in precisely the spot. Leonhardt has imagined it. Each line, each silence

is measured. The effect is of a highly charged musical expressiveness.

IT SCARCELY seems possible for a musician to put too much emotion into his music. Yet is precisely his super-charged expressiveness that at times makes Leonhardt's interpretations confusing. This was the case with some parts of the French suites by Froberger and Couperin.

Stretching a phrase of a Gigue or lingering between notes of a Courante can create a striking effect. Yet in pieces so strongly based on dance, such exaggeration of individual sonorities can also obscure the movement's larger structure.

The Baroque sculptor may lovingly dwell on each scroll of his alter piece. Yet it is not until he steps back from it that he can see how one must flow into the next, that he can create a cohesive and unified work of art.

IN THE COUPERIN SUITE, it was at times easy to become so entranced by the time-stopped "moments" that one lost sight of the rhythms of the dance. Indeed, it wasn't until the more regular strokes of the Sarabande that I finally caught up with the piece.

Thus, after the continuous lush intensity of the program's first half, J.S. Bach's Sonata in G Major offered something of a respite.

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