

'New' Ehrling seen in part of concert

By GENE BARNES

Former Detroit Symphony Music Director Sieton Ehrling chose four diverse but nevertheless strikingly compatible works from the late-Romantic and early-Modern repertoire for his single concert with the DSO last weekend.

The opening piece was the Prelude to Act I of Wagner's "Lohengrin," that emotional, quasi-religious incantation of the Grail ethos.

The violins had a difficult time determining Ehrling's beat during the opening section, which featured rough phrasing and plenty of jumping of guns. Only midway through the piece did the musicians finally get their act together, and the confused, fragmented rendering at last began to coalesce.

But, of far greater concern was the ever-growing perception that the old, cold Ehrling had returned, the Ehrling of 10 years ago who distressed so many listeners with his abrupt, heartless readings of the 18th and 19th century masters. (He had been displaying increasing warmth every time he had visited since leaving the directorship in 1973.)

In the Wagner he was, to be sure, not rushing it by any means, but he simply was unable to surface any genuine tenderness in a work that demanded it.

THIS QUALITY CARRIED over, unfortunately, into the next work, the longest one on the program, the Fourth Symphony of Jean Sibelius. Ehrling was surprisingly business-like in this one, eyes glued to the score and concentrating on delivering a concise beat with appropriately concise cues.

And the orchestra responded as though it had not previously rehearsed the piece and was sight-reading through it, never terribly enthused nor impressed by it.

review

While the Fourth is one of Sibelius' most marvelous efforts, the work is problematic in that it is almost impossible to enjoy on first hearing. And Detroiters had not heard it live since 1925.

It could be then that the members of the orchestra too were not yet sufficiently able to appreciate some of the unique, motive development going on as the work progressed, so important to any understanding of what Sibelius was trying to say.

Or, perhaps they were not yet able to value that pervasive primeval gloom, with its ominous overtones that never quite became overt. Suffice to say, Ehrling's reputation as the prime interpreter of Sibelius was tarnished by the performance.

The two works that followed the intermission came off much better.

The first, Tchaikovsky's *Overture-Fantasy "Romeo and Juliet,"* had only two minor flaws. One was that a few winds were just perceptibly out of tune with the rest of the orchestra, dirtying the tone somewhat.

THE OTHER FLAW was inherent in the music. Tchaikovsky's bridges between the major sections are weak, obvious and clumsy. But this flaw is counterbalanced by a great strength, the work's unrivaled emotional extroversion, capped with an insightful bittersweet ending, which cites the opening scene-setting music and which therefore says in effect, "This tragedy will recur."

Friday evening and Sunday afternoon, the symphony goes Pops, with Mitch Miller conducting and Detroit's own star violinist, Ami Kavafian, as the featured soloist.

Senior men in Southfield slate drug talk Nov. 19

Senior men of Southfield have organized a group which meets at 1 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month.

The meetings take place in the "Bright Spot" at McDonnell Towers, 24400 Civic Center Drive in Southfield.

Since formation, the group has grown to a membership of 60 men.

At 1 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 19, they will hear Kathy Martin, a pharmacist at Providence Hospital. She will show a film and discuss the "Wise Use of Drugs."

The talk focuses on concerns of senior citizens regarding the medication they take.

A holiday program is planned for the Dec. 17 meeting. Entertainment will be provided by the Madrigal Singers of Southfield.

Refreshments will be served. Anyone interested in participating in the men's club activities may do so. Membership is open to all men living in the Southfield community who are 62 years or older. Dues are \$5 for the year.

For more information contact Judy Samson at the Southfield Senior Adult Center at 354-9352.

Stats justify drink at 21

Drunken driving by drivers aged 18, 19 or 20 decreased significantly in Michigan after the legal drinking age was raised from 18 to 21 in December 1978.

The finding is one result of a current University of Michigan study of 1978 and 1979 breath test reports furnished the U-M Highway Safety Research Institute (HSRI) for analyses. The data included the breath test results and age of the drivers arrested and tested by police.

The study, sponsored by the Office of Highway Safety planning, Department of State Police, is being conducted by Lyle D. Filkins, research scientist at HSRI.

"Compared to 1978," says Filkins,

"the numbers of 18- to 20-year-old drivers who were arrested and tested for drunk driving during 1979 decreased significantly. For 18-year-olds, the decrease was 3 percent. For 19-year-olds, it was 9.2 percent. For 20-year-olds, it was 5.4 percent."

"This is in sharp contrast to increased numbers of arrests and tests during 1979 of drivers in all other age groups — a 21 percent increase over the total for 1978. The increase for drivers aged 21 to 23 was 22.4 percent."

Under Michigan law, drivers with a blood alcohol content above .070 percent are presumed to be driving while impaired by alcohol, says Filkins.

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