

I Musici falls below listener's expectations



wine
Richard Watson

Here's a price guide for sparkling wines

Probably no other style of wine induces buying "labels" rather than wine than the sparkling stuff, or "champagne" as the British used to call it. And because we are entering the holiday season when 75 percent of our annual sparkling-wine consumption occurs, it's time to play consumer advocate.

First, the broad relative classifications of dryness: "Sec" and "Demi-Sec" are the sweetest (this would include the Spumantes), Extra Dry is next, Brut is very dry (usually around .02 or .04 percent sugar residue), and finally (and there is no universal term for total dryness) "Natural" or some other esoteric name, but there is usually little of this around.

Pricing rounds indicate you pay for the status of the label, the kinds of grapes in the bottle and, increasingly, the degree of dryness of the wine. As with many other kinds of wine, people advocate dry but drink sweet.

When buying sparkling wine it is well to recall that only a select few have the experience and palate to enjoy the beautiful, yeasty, delicate dryness that comes from a Tattling or a Pol Roger. If you have guests who do, by all means buy it for them. They are valuable friends worth courting.

Taxed as it is (about double over still wines) and hard to make well, sparkling wine is expensive. And while we all feel a sense of largesse at this time of year, gear your purchases toward the sophistication of your audiences.

Here are some recommendations:

UNDER \$5: Andre and Cribari in the \$3 range, with Le Domaine at \$4.50, are acceptable. All are Californian. For

New York State Pol d' Argent is a reasonable and somewhat tanger selection.

IN THE \$5-7 RANGE: Three Spanish entrees dominate here. Flexidene is probably best (they offer Cordon Negro, Brut and Extra Dry). Delapierre and Odomia also are fine wines. All are best buys.

In the domestic group, Almaden, Masson and Christian Brothers offer good value from California. From New York, Gold Seal and Great Western are preferred over Taylor. Chateau St. Julian Vidal Blanc from Paw Paw is an excellent wine, crisp and yeasty.

UNDER \$10: Korbell and Hans Kornell of California represent good value and from France Grazier & Meyer Brut is truly excellent and Kitter is worth the money.

UNDER \$20: Moet et Chandon White Star remains a favorite and Furrer is most dependable. Pol Roger Brut 1971 and the issue from Gosset are sound values and the Perrier-Fouet and Co. wine, while a bit sweet, is decent. Domestically, Domaine Chandon is the sparkling wine of California, either its great Brut or its elegant Blanc de Noir.

ABOVE \$20: You're on your own. To serve sparkling wine, chill thoroughly by plunging the bottle in a snowdrift (preferred), placing it in the refrigerator for three hours or the freezer for one-half, or using an ice bucket for 45 minutes.

Please, please don't use those awful saucer-shaped glasses. Use flutes or tulips for the bubbles can climb long and slowly.

"Champans" of all kinds deserve the best.

By GENE BARNES

The Chamber Music Society of Detroit recently hosted I Musici, that legendary Italian ensemble that is so well-recorded and critically acclaimed. As completely agreeable as it might have been, the concert at Orchestra Hall failed to live up to expectations.

Despite program notes stating the contrary, I Musici hasn't kept in touch with modern scholarship, especially regarding embellishments to be employed in the performance of Baroque-era music. Apparently, they have been quite caught resting on their laurels and in a word, their approach is now quite old-fashioned.

The D Major Concerto Grosso of Corelli, which opened the concert, was given a restrained and even performance, projecting a surprisingly solid wall of sound, considering that there were only 12 players on stage.

This was followed by the Four-Violin Concerto in B-flat Major by Vivaldi. The soloists, culled from the ensemble, complemented one another nicely and when two would play together, their phrasing matched perfectly.

J.S. Bach's First Harpsichord Concerto rounded out the first part of the concert. Soloist Maria Teresa Garatti was unbelievably bland, her rendition coming nowhere near any of the many spirited recordings now available of the work.

Her playing was reminiscent of Wanda Landowska, the earlier pioneer responsible for the modern-day resurgence of the harpsichord. Like Landowska, Garatti used retards frequently, which, with Bach, tend to foul up the flow.

The second movement was the driest, because her playing was so totally devoid of the proper embellishments. The accompaniment from the remainder of I Musici wasn't much more inspiring than she was.

Following intermission, I Musici's leader, Pina Carmirelli, was the

solist in the Locatelli Violin Concerto in D Major. This was a real virtuoso piece, with plenty of work in the highest registers. Sadly, it demanded more exacting intonation than Carmirelli could supply.

The final work, Bottesini's delightful Grand Duo Concertante for Violin and Double Bass, was

given a splendid, humorous performance by soloists Pasquale Pellegrino and Lucio Buccarella. It is revealing to note that the work wasn't Baroque, but late classical era music.

The next concert under the auspices of the Chamber Music Society will be a recital by violin superstar Itzhak Perlman on Monday, Dec. 8. As of this writing, the concert is nearly sold out.

Plan for U-D winter term

If you have resolved to begin or complete your college degree in the New Year, now is the time to begin planning for winter enrollment at the University of Detroit.

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