

Pianist talks about the delights of chamber music

By Corinne Abatt
staff writer

It takes only a few minutes of conversation for Flavio Varani to make a strong, convincing case for chamber music.

Specifically, he was speaking about the upcoming concert by the President's Trio in Oakland University's Varner Hall at 8 p.m. Jan. 17.

"This," he said, "is the most entertaining kind of classical music because each instrument is individual and more attention is paid to the character of the work as it fits the character of the players. . . . I grew up on that sort of music making. I spent eight years with the Newport Music Festival."

For this concert the musicians will be trio members Misha Rachlevsky, violin; Glenn Mellow, viola; and Kevin

Plunkett, cello; along with guests Joseph Striplin, violin; Stephen Molina, double bass; and Varani, piano. Varani, a member of the Oakland University faculty, wants these kinds of concerts become habit-forming. He emphasized that the trio, formed just last year and sponsored by the university, is "not kid's stuff." It represents an extremely high level of musicianship and illustrates the university's commitment to the performing arts, he said.

SCHUBERT'S Trout Quintet, one of three pieces on the program, offers Varani an opportunity to perform the kind of music for which he feels he is eminently qualified. Not only is his temperament suited to romantic music, the piano, he said a romantic instrument. "Good pianists," he said, "are ro-

mantic people. The piano is a heroic instrument, a leader instrument played against an orchestra." "The Trout," he said, "is the stereotype of great chamber music. It was written during a summer vacation. The man who commissioned it was an amateur cellist. It was performed by one double bass, one cello, one violin, one viola and Schubert at the piano."

"The piece is a quintet, which usually has four movements. Schubert added an extra one, a variation on the Trout song. "It is fun with music, summer music, filled with melodies, and continuously the joyelling is there in the background. The happy life, the good life is there."

As he spoke, Varani mentioned the sophistication of the great subtle harmonies and changes of keys in un-

expected places. Schubert, were he living today, would be considered a primitive — a Gerwahnin, or a Villa Lobos, Varani said. The pianist said the Jan. 17 program includes "a wonderful Brahms Sonata (for cello and piano) and a Rossini Sonata (for violins, viola and double bass) that sounds like a fantastic choice." The Brahms, Varani said, is the complete opposite of the Trout. It is philosophical instead of light and happy, "always dark and deep." He said his challenge is to clarify in the Brahms sonata what could easily become blurred because so much of it is written in the lower registers.

Varani's enthusiasm for music is as infectious when he talks about it as

it is when he is on stage performing. For him it is an all consuming passion and it touches almost every moment of his life.

He is now working on memorizing Gershwin music for concert performances. In preparation for concerts with the Battle Creek and Mt. Clemens symphony orchestras in March, he said, "My Christmas gift to myself was to memorize Gershwin's Concerto in F. It is so beautiful, it is a masterpiece of piano literature. Every year of my life I learn one major piece of work. Next year it will be a Mozart concerto."

Varani said that while he is from Brazil originally, he feels completely comfortable playing Gershwin and American jazz or the Trout quintet which is really about the Austrian way of life. He has lived in Austria, knows

the cities and the countryside, has visited the churches, heard the yodelers, listened to the music and savored the food and wine. Likewise, he has lived in many American cities and traveled widely throughout the United States. "I'm a wonderful traveler," he said. "When I get to places, I want to find my music — walk in the hills, eat the food. Once you visit a baroque church in a German town, you understand Bach."

Other concerts in the President's Trio series at Oakland University will be Feb. 19 when Jonathan Shames, piano, will appear with the trio and March 18 when Donald Baker, oboe, will be the trio's guest artist.

Tickets are \$4 or \$3 for Oakland University students and senior citizens.

Save calendar room for a treat

Just about this time of year families have noticed that it's difficult to hold home gardeners "down on the farm." The first indication of the annual unrest is the time spent looking at garden catalogs and colorful travel folders.

The Williamsburg Garden Symposium is the plum of the season. For 36 years, gardeners nationwide have been meeting at this 18th-century American heritage center to hear speakers from England and North America. The symposium will be held March 29-31 in Colonial Williamsburg, Va.

This year the distinguished flower arranger from England, Mary Pope, will greet the guests in the Bruton Parish Church. Here guests, as they watch her arrange flowers, will sit in the pews labeled in honor of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry or others.

Chinese gardens and many other highlights will be included with a visit to the Gloucester daffodil area. Meetings with authorities will help all who attend with their garden interests. There is a 5:45 a.m. bird walk, early risers plus a talk by one of my favorites of



down to earth
Alice Burlingame

many years, Dr. Marc Cathey, new director of the U.S. National Arboretum, Washington, D.C. His presentation will be "What's Happening in Horticulture." There also will be an opportunity to visit historic area gardens.

So, check your calendar for the treat of a lifetime. Your columnist has attended many times. Do consider adding a couple of days in Washington, D.C., to see the new wing of the Smithsonian and maybe greeting your congressman, who can give you credentials for the White House (this privilege has to be arranged in advance).

To the inquiry about whether it is possible to grow herbs as houseplants, the answer is yes. It's a treat to walk

up to your potted mint and give it a pinch in midwinter. A few leaves taste good in salads. Furthermore, chives, burnet, catnip, hyssop and rosemary will grow indoors, too. They like a sunny window.

I buy garlic at the fruit market, break it up and plant the sections in small pots for sharing with friends to use as "snips" for salads, toasts and soups.

Costmary is another herb you can grow in a pot. It is known as the "Bible Leaf" as it was used as a bookmark in early days. It has light green leaves nearly a foot long. The flowers are small and yellow. Outdoors it will grow five feet high, so place it at the back of

the herb garden in partial shade. The leaves taste minty.

Hyssop (listed above) has dark green leaves with blue flowers. It makes a handsome hedge outdoors. Cut it back after the flowers appear. It likes partial shade, and you can divide a plant or make cuttings.

Hyssop has a good, full, spicy taste. As you forge ahead with your garden notebook for '82, remember if space is tight, vegetables don't always have to be in a vegetable garden. For instance, herbs can be a border for a flower garden. Strawberries (I saw miniature strawberries used last year in a prize garden in Ann Arbor), eggplant and lettuce also can be used.

May I suggest you visit your local library and take out a couple of garden books? These will give you a chance to study garden design ideas to help give your home garden placement a boost. Our streetside gardens often take a backseat — many times overgrown plants need to be pruned and thinned and a new accent added.



'Winter Glo'

Alumni Mothers of Catholic Central High School stage its second annual "Winter Glo" at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 20, in the school at 14200 Breakfast Drive, Redford. Working toward the event are Mayrose Heffernan (left) from Farmington Hills and Rosemary Boles, a resident of Farmington and alumni advisor for the group. Tickets are \$4, at the door.

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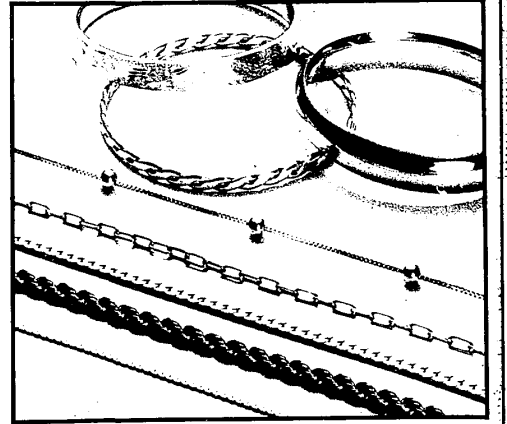
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