

14C(XT-88,S,F-7C,Re-6C)

## New season opens with superb concert

By Patricia Beach Smith  
special writer

Counterpoint is contagious. Sunday's American Artist Series concert proved that, with performances of Beethoven's Trio, Opus 70, No. 2; Shostakovich's Quintet, Opus 57; and Brahms's lustrous Trio, Opus 8.

All of the selections on the opening concert of the series' 12th season were superb examples of the composer's art — and they were performed accordingly as superb examples of the performer's art.

Unfortunately, the audience somewhat reflected the blustery weather outside and gave a cold reception. No matter, the pipers played on, providing warm respite from the arctic swirl.

TWO NEW additions to the AAS family of performers made outstanding contributions to the success of the concert.

Inna Nedorenko, violin, and Glenn Mellow, viola, helped make the playing of the Shostakovich work a rousing success. The first movement, with its driving, pulsing force and gorgeous harmonies, led to a stunning violin duet, which began the fugue of the second movement.

Gradual introduction of the three remaining voices in the counterpoint led to a magnificent quintet. The third movement was robust 20th century fare which, following the thoughtful fugue, was a welcome short, simple link to the fourth movement.

It was reminiscent of the fugue with its appealing duet for the cello and violin in its opening measures. At times this movement was banal, as if the composer had run out of things to say, but fortunately, the final movement was a total contrast — pure finale music in a very positive mode.

The conclusion to this excitingly performed work was almost whimsical, and certainly a surprise.

THE TRIO, Opus 8, is full-blown Brahms — work of such dimension and sensitivity that one wonders why it isn't performed more often. The performance of this work by the "old hands" of AAS, Linda Sneed Smith, violin; Joann Freeman, piano, the series' guiding force, and John Thurman, cello was remarkable.

Ms. Sneed Smith played more forcefully than in the other two works,

### review

partly, one is sure, because she and the other performers had had time to literally warm up on the Beethoven and the Shostakovich.

The lush elegance of the first movement of the Brahms was passionately played. As described by Ms. Freeman, the scherzo appeared indeed "fiendishly difficult," but only minor mistakes belied an otherwise perfect reading.

In the third, adagio movement, the tempo was positive, with more beautiful counterpoint on the menu. A brilliant finish was provided by the playing of the allegro movement. Altogether, it was a thrilling segment.

THIS BRILLIANT finish was in contrast to the beginning of the concert. The rendering of the Beethoven Trio wasn't an impressive start. The room was too cold, and neither the players nor the audience appeared ready for the basically tedious work.

Actually, one supposes the work is a tad too cerebral for a frozen lot to comprehend. And it appeared to be not yet in the hands of the performers either.

However, the seeds of what was to come, the challenging and exciting counterpoint that sparked the afternoon, was evident also in Beethoven's Trio. The allegretto movement was full of lovely melodic motifs, all made for contrapuntal conversation — like two proper ladies chatting at the same time.

IN THIS second movement, the skill of the performers began to bloom. In the finale, the only movement with real movement, the pride of professional,ism finally showed.

This work is especially subtle with its intertwining of voices, all sharing the same melody at one time or another in different shapes. The blend of the instruments gave it special appeal and that could only have been accomplished by the fine players who comprise this series' roster of musicians.

The next concert of the season is Sunday, Feb. 7, at 3 p.m. Performing will be the Emmanuel Wind Quintet playing a Michigan premier.



STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer

Starbuck, "The Rainmaker" (Tom D'Agostino), tries to convince Lizzie (Lynne Marthey) she is beautiful in her own way. In addition to the benefit, regular performances of "The Rainmaker" will be presented by the Birmingham Village Players on Friday-Sunday and Jan. 22-23. The box office phone is 644-2075.

## Benefit offers comedy

The Friends of Oakland County Welfare Rights Organization will host a special performance of the classic romantic comedy "The Rainmaker," as its fifth annual Theater Benefit.

The performance will be staged at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday by the Birmingham Village Players at the playhouse, 752 Chestnut, at Hunter in Birmingham.

Friends of WRO is holding its this year's benefit two months earlier than usual. Spring performances by the players have been musicals for the last two years, and WRO wanted to have a change, to a dramatic production.

Benefit tickets may be purchased by phoning 646-3094 or 644-1429. Tickets are \$8.

"Even if we sell every seat in the house, we will raise just enough money to keep our incoming and outgoing telephone lines in our Pontiac office open for a year," said Marguerite Kowalski, budget director for Friends of WRO.

"And these lines are vital links between the client community, the Welfare Rights Organization and the Department of Social Services. Incoming calls have increased to over 1,000 per month since the federal budget cuts in social services went into effect Oct. 1, 1981."

The Oakland County Welfare Rights Organization was founded in 1969.

Until last month its headquarters were in an old school next to St. Vincent Church in Pontiac. But escalating heating costs caused the church to close the aging building. The office is now upstairs at 100 N. Saginaw in Pontiac.

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