

Thursday, March 4, 1982

Staples to perform Tchaikovsky concerto

By Tim Richard
staff writer

"Softer. The last part — it's got to be light," says violinist Gordon Staples to the Oakway Symphony Orchestra.

Staples, Conductor Francesco DiBlasi and the orchestra were rehearsing the final fireworks of the Tchaikovsky Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, one of the monumental works for that instrument.

The crowd-pleasing final movement is so rousing that orchestra members want to play loudly.

"It can't be loud or they won't hear the fiddle," says Staples.

DiBlasi agrees. Though he stands on a podium with the soloist on one side and the orchestra spread out in a 180-degree arc in front of him, DiBlasi can tell how it will sound in the last row of an auditorium. "Piano," he repeats to the orchestra, referring not to the keyboard instrument but the Italian musical word meaning to play softly.

IT WILL COME together by 3 p.m. March 14 in the auditorium of Southfield-Lathrup High School, 12 Mile west of Southfield Road.

The program will open with Weber's overture to "Der Freischütz," closing

with Schubert's "Unfinished" Symphony and Ginaster's Prelude to the Creole "Faust."

The Tchaikovsky concerto has come to be associated with Staples, whose full-time job is concertmaster of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. "I've played that piece more than any other concerto," said Staples, who will give a repeat performance soon when DSO visits Battle Creek.

"I make it part of my daily routine," he said. "I get different sections into my fingers each day."

"It's physically taxing. The first movement, from the cadenza on, is all fiddle playing. The first movement is a big endurance feat. Pyrotechnical."

Staples will cut some measures in the final movement, measures that are probably redundant. "They're standard cuts, all sanctioned by Tchaikovsky."

"The only time you play it all the way is if you're trying to prove something or impress somebody."

During a rehearsal break, a listener noted that Jessica Heifetz makes more cuts in the final movement than (say) Nathan Milstein. Staples nodded: "I make about the same cuts as Heifetz."

WHEN DOES a young violinist begin learning the difficult Tchaikovsky con-

certo? Before or after the Brahms, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Wieniawski and Paganini concertos?

"It doesn't matter," said Staples. "You need a very sound background in the material before starting any of them." He rattled off a list of scales and exercise books a violinist would need to master before tackling the major virtuosos concertos.

"Some instruments you can learn in six years. Violin, it takes six years just to stop the scratching."

"You have to start young," he said.

Staples held up both hands, stretching back his thumbs. The left thumb stretched back about 20 degrees further than the right.

Staples started the violin at 6. By 14 he was performing as a staff soloist on the CBC network. He was concertmaster (first-chair violin) with the New Orleans Philharmonic before coming to the DSO in 1955.

YOUTH The subject gets Staples waxing enthusiastic, non-stop.

"It's great for every kid to study an instrument. Develops good work habits. It's like learning another language."

"Most kids are not into heavy thinking before the age of 12. An instrument can get them into something heavy."

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Detroit Symphony Orchestra Concertmaster Gordon Staples stretches the left thumb as he plays the violin. Staples, a Bloomfield Hills resident, will appear as soloist with the Oakway Symphony Orchestra on March 14 at Southfield Lathrup High School.

'Man for All Seasons' glows at Meadow Brook

Performances of "A Man for All Seasons" by Robert Bolt continue through March 21 at Meadow Brook Theatre on the Oakland University campus near Rochester. For ticket information call 377-3300.

By Helen Zucker
special writer

Meadow Brook Theatre's production of Robert Bolt's "A Man for All Seasons" is a marvel. Director Charles

review

Notle and the entire cast have got a firm grasp on the complexities and moral ambiguities that lie at the heart of Bolt's imaginative, intelligent play.

"A Man for All Seasons" is the smoothest production of the year. The cast is letter perfect. Exits and en-

trances, the moving of minimal props are nearly invisible. The joints fit and the play moves, seamless and whole, toward the inevitable end. It's totalling engrossing theater.

Donald Ewer is tremendously effective as The Common Man. As More's servant Matthew, as a ferryman, jailer, plain citizen looking for a few shillings, Ewer is both diligent and deliberately looking the other way when it serves his purposes.

Ewer is light as air, on his bowed

legs, everywhere and nowhere at the same time.

BOOTH COLMAN is quite wonderful as the troubled, stubborn Sir Thomas More. Colman changes believably from happy Chancellor to sick prisoner who longs to "go to God." Yet his values never change. Colman makes us believe in "that part of man that is himself."

Will Love is very strong as the Duke of Norfolk, More's good friend who

begs More to consent to Henry VIII's marriage to Anne Boleyn in the name of "fellowship." Love makes the Duke's pain at More's sentencing poignant.

Carl Schurr is positively evil as Thomas Cromwell, the rising man of the hour. Cromwell's final argument on different kinds of silence is powerfully rendered by Schurr.

Phillip Locker is a thoroughly revolting Richard Rich, climber extraordinaire. You want to throw orange peels at him. A.D. Cover as the conspiratorial

Chapuy, the Spanish ambassador, breathes intrigue, malevolence and lies.

Andrew Barnicle is delightful as young Will Roper whose opinions change by the hour. Roper marries More's daughter, but Barnicle gives us a husband and newly appointed lawyer whose opinions are as strong as ever.

HIS LOYALTY to More and daughter Meg seems to override all and makes Will endearing.

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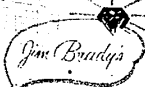
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