

Fine talent quickly builds a following

By Avigdor Zoromp
special writer

Pianist Jonathan Shames reaffirmed his superb ability and potential in a recent recital at Orchestra Hall.

I heard Shames for the first time less than two years ago, when he appeared as a last-minute replacement on a Nightcap with Mozart program, substituting for another pianist. Even though his role in that program was subordinate to the other instruments, the impression he created was immediate.

Since then he has made some 50 appearances on "Nightcap" and in other Renaissance Concerts.

Moreover, he was the winner in some national competitions — his crowning achievement was his participation in the Tchaikovsky competition in Moscow last summer, in which he was one of only two American pianists who were among the finalists. Shames is now a household name in our area, and his fame is spreading rapidly.

In his many appearances here with Renaissance Concerts, this was his first solo recital. The program he presented underscored his versatility and adaptability to many styles and periods.

THE MOST substantial piece in the first part of the program was Beethoven's "Waldstein" Sonata. Not only did he master the elaborate passages in the first movement, the forceful arpeggios and compound trills in the third movement, but the shape of his phrases was clean and meticulous. His smooth transitions from piano to fortissimo, his well-proportioned crescendos and the natural phrasing underlined the fact that technique for him was no longer a factor.

Pastels open up new paths for local artist

By Louise Okrutsky
staff writer

Jeanne Tennent's continuing fascination with light and mirror images is evident in the works on display at the Rubiner Gallery in Royal Oak.

The 14 pastels on paper are inspired by the changes in scenery near Tennent's summer cabin in Charlevoix. They are included in the Rubiner show along with Suzanne Dalton's fiber sculpture, Edith Sidwell's cast resin sculpture and David Bigelow's clay vessels. The show runs until Dec. 31 at the gallery, 621 S. Washington, Royal Oak.

As in her previous shows, Tennent focuses on light and nature. But the pastels represent an evolution from the acrylics she used in her last show in 1978 at the Rubiner.

Her new work is more abstract. Although the images retain their softness, the colors are stronger. Her lines possess a new boldness as she returns to drawing. In essence such linear work is a return to her training in commercial art.

"I love to draw. I wanted to get into the surface," she said.

SOFT HORIZONTAL lines have played a part in her work already. Much of her work involves mirror images divided by subtle horizontals.

Although she wanted to use lines to give her work a harder edge, she discovered that pencils "really didn't do it for me."

"I wanted to show the softness of

light. I wanted to use pastels but still hang on to that hard edge," she said.

Tennent began applying layers of pastels onto paper. "At a certain point in using pastels, you start putting it on paper. You build color until the powder is too heavy," she said.

Her mixing and building of colors can be seen in the work titled "Beyond the Seasons." Burnt reds of autumn mix with grays and whites of winter's approach. Colors are built up for a glazed effect.

As with Tennent's other works, "Beyond the Seasons" offers her an opportunity to explore the effects of light in a natural setting. Her burnt reds glow with autumn light.

So do the colors used in "In Between," a work which reflects seasonal changes in nature. Inspired by a dreary day in Charlevoix, the painting explores the refraction of light coming in through a window from the west.

"It ALMOST reflects the seasons, too. Fall, winter and spring — they're all related," she said.

It isn't coincidence that the work in this show particularly deals with autumn light. Tennent worked on most of the paintings between late August and late November. They are her first works shown after a four-year hiatus in which she searched for a new direction.

"In the creative process, sometimes you feel too secure in your image. It's very hard to change," she said.

Hours at the Rubiner Gallery are 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday.

The Schubert Impromptu in G Flat Major, which preceded the "Waldstein," provided yet another dimension, characterized by expressive pianissimo. The soft, flowing passages provided a smooth and calm background to the melodic theme that came shining through.

His artistic insight was evident throughout the second part of the program, which consisted of diverse selections by Debussy, Prokofiev, Chopin and Liszt. Debussy's prelude "Des Pas sur la Neige" is yet another example of a piece that doesn't require much in terms of technique, but a great deal of musical ingenuity, which Shames amply provided.

The works by Chopin and Liszt, the most difficult technically, were, nevertheless, executed with inspiration. One thing that distinguishes a gifted and proficient musician from the amateur technician is that even the difficult passages appear easy and natural. The effort is directed towards the music, not towards the technique.

IN THIS SENSE, Shames has certainly proved to be a gifted musician. In Liszt's Paganini Etude, based on the well-known caprice by Paganini, each variation was presented with an individual character.

As an encore, Shames played études by Scriabin and Rachmaninoff, with stylistic and musical insight.

The fact that Shames' performances aren't sold-out yet, due to the fact that the recognition of his talent has been only relatively recent. This, however, might not be the case for long. The opportunity to hear such a great talent for a \$3 ticket isn't going to be there indefinitely.



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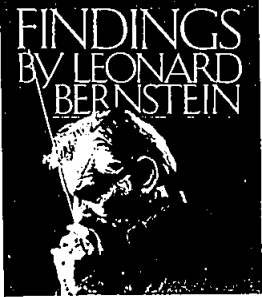
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