

Ehrling, Rampal excel in 20th century works

By Avigdor Zarembo
Special Writer

Feelings and emotions usually run high when Slatan Ehrling is concerned. Having been music director of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra for 10 years, 1963 to 1973, the Swedish-born maestro has acquired his share of fans as well as detractors.

Whatever one's feeling about Ehrling might be, one has to admit that his formidable presence cannot be dismissed or ignored. This season he is scheduled here as a guest conductor for two programs.

The first of these, presented last week, turned out to be impressive. It featured celebrated flutist Jean-Pierre Rampal, who played the solo part in the seldom-performed Nielsen Flute Concerto.

ONE PECULIAR aspect of this program was that it featured exclusively 20th century compositions, without some of the negative feelings normally

associated with that period by many classical listeners.

The reason for the successful acceptance was that the two other works on the program were the "Fountains of Rome" by Respighi and the Symphony No. 3 by Rachmaninoff, which are two well-known orchestral masterpieces of our century. In addition, the high quality of the performance matched the quality of the musical content.

The "Fountains of Rome" is a well known symphonic poem, depicting four of the fountains of the city with which the composer was so fascinated. While most listeners might have heard it through the many available recordings, few of these, if any, can match the impact of this performance.

The various moods and atmospheres of these fountains were so authentically depicted, that one could almost envision their actual shape. This, however, doesn't imply the rejection of an actual trip, if offered.

The Nielsen Flute Concerto, better known among professional flute play-

review

ers, is certainly not part of the standard repertoire for listeners. Following this listening, it became evident that this is indeed a substantial composition for the instrument.

There are, of course, some of the better known flute concerti that I would consider musically more profound. But if one wishes to get away from the banality of the standard outstanding works of that form, this was indeed an excellent choice. Moreover, when Jean-Pierre Rampal happens to be the soloist, then the performance is bound to be hard to surpass.

RAMPAL CAPTURED rather well the conflicting moods of the concerto. His playing ranged from sombre, contemplative passages to delightful and

charming presentations, never sacrificing musical depth to mere virtuosity.

The orchestra was equally adept. In the duel between the flute and the trombone, which is one of the features in this composition, the audience came out the winner.

The profound orchestral scope of Rachmaninoff's Third Symphony is, of course, a well established fact. Presenting the work convincingly, however, is a formidable task that can never be taken for granted.

Maestro Ehrling and the orchestra proved to be equal to the task, turning in a most impressive and pleasing performance. The orchestral sound was balanced, rich and encompassing. The buildings from the tender, nostalgic phrases to the forceful, resolute peaks was inspiring.

THE FINAL movement features one of the most impressive fugues by the composer. Its performance is a challenging test that Ehrling and the orchestra passed with flying colors.

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