

Brass and harp combine for one superb concert

By Patricia Beech Smith
special writer

How would one describe music for brass and harp? Unusual? Impossible? Imperial?

How about heavenly? Ah, the perfect word to describe Sunday's American Artists Series concert at Kingswood School Cranbrook. Heavenly.

On the surface, it seemed impossible. And even the performers — the Annapolis Brass Quintet and harpist, Heidi Lehwalder — allowed as how the combination was unusual. In retrospect, however, it is hard to believe only three (count 'em) composers ever considered the combination seriously enough to compose music for such a delightful and interesting coupling.

One supposes the proficiency of the players contributed mightily to the success of the concert. The Annapolis Brass Quintet is a superb brass ensemble and Lehwalder has matching dexterity, artistry and accomplishment on her instrument. Perhaps the combination of instruments as well as the very entertaining portions of the program where Lehwalder and the Quintet played separately, would alone have justified coming in out of the rain for an afternoon.

BUT THERE WAS more — the Midwest premiere of Robert Starer's Annapolis Suite for Brass Quintet and Harp (premiered for the world just two weeks ago at Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.) and Lehwalder's performance of Five Dances, composed by her late mentor Carlos Salzedo, for starters.

The Starer work, commissioned for the Quintet, shows beautifully why the combination of brass and harp is so enticing. It is a very difficult work which required all the discipline and artistry each performer could muster.

It was hard to believe that Sunday's concert was only the third collaborative concert of the Quintet and Lehwalder, considering how harmoniously they played.

The first movement of the Starer work, allegro mar-

review

ziale, was indeed a martial piece, but for thoroughly modern heroes with jazzy sensibilities.

The second movement, presto leggiero, was expectant, syncopated — scintillating. Movement three, larghetto, was inquisitive and other worldly with the brass instruments all muted.

More questions flew by in movement four, molto allegro and allegro, where there seemed to be a courtship routine in progress. The lento, poco allegro fifth movement was more sober. And the final movement, in allegro risoluto, as promised, resolved the work in very proclamatory tones.

The entire work is music for outer space episodes — full of images of worlds beyond our own. And yet, somehow, it manages to maintain contact with American musical heritage that is completely recognizable.

LEHWALDER's performance of Salzedo's elegant Five Dances, was another highlight of a concert that had few dim moments. These dances showed how Senor Salzedo must have had a much gentler imagination than many of his contemporaries.

The segundilla movement contained exquisite melodic material. This was certainly music for hot places — places where the music can float on gentle warm breezes. The intimacy of the harp matches that of its cousin, the guitar and one can imagine this repertoire being played on that instrument as well.

A very welcome work on the program was "Music For Scrimshaw," composed in 1959 for Brass Quintet and Harp, by William Schmidt of California. The appropriate combination of the harp (resembling those early, maidenly, carved bowsprit of ships of yore) and the brass, representing the majesty of the water, waves and old seadogs, was exhilarating.

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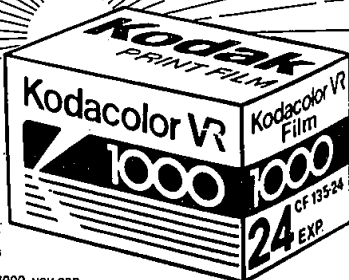
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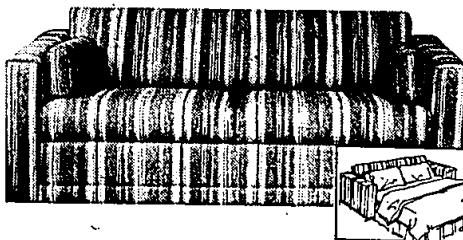
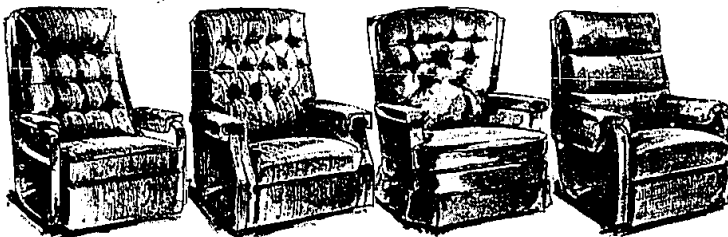
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