

table talk

Chef's Fest again sells out its buffet

THE 2ND annual Chef's Fest was a sold-out success, with 300 ticket buyers and 25 special guests jamming the Community House in Birmingham for the recent mid-week buffet luncheon.

Rick Harrison, representing the Midtown Cafe, was co-chairman with John Wood of Machina Enterprises, for the non-profit event sponsored by the Birmingham-Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce.

"Any excess funds will go back to the restaurant chefs to help defray costs," Harrison said. Tickets at \$7 per person were modestly priced, considering the selection of appetizers, salads, entrees and desserts served up by the participating chefs from eight area restaurants.

Fillet of sole with a brandy sauce, prepared by Chef Mike Russel of 220 Merrill, typified the gourmet quality of the dishes, which leaned heavily toward fish and seafood this year.

Mussels along with terrines and pates, all from the Loire Valley, were the Midtown Cafe's very special offering. Archibald's did scrod en casserole with shrimp and scallops New England.

A few of the restaurants taking part stuck with the tried and true. For example, some of the meat dishes available were from Peabody's, again providing tasty baby ribs and petite prime rib sandwiches.

Veal frangelico from the Kingsley Inn was another delightful entree.

Separate buffet tables were provided for each restaurant, so diners could take their pick. It seemed everyone lined up for the Machus salad, however. More fresh salads were Lebanese-style, from the Phoenixia.

At dessert time, the ample table of cakes and tortes from Machus had most diners finishing their meal with a sampling of several — whipped cream available as extra topping, if desired.

While many enthusiasts were suggesting the Chamber of Commerce turn the event into a profit-making one, Harrison explained that the chamber's by-laws, at least for his committee, don't permit fund-raisers.

THE MEATING Place in Orchard Lake is planning a very elegant tasting party and has a few places still available. The palate pleasures begin at 7 p.m. Tuesday at "vignoble du Cognac," where three French cognacs will be sampled.

J.A. Smith, of a cognac distillery in France, will bring crystal glasses to taste three types: VS, cognac that is a minimum of 5-7 years old; VSOP, a minimum of 15-20 years old; and Cordon Bleu, a minimum of 30-35 years old.

Smith will serve the wine in small, slender glasses that may not be as familiar as the conventional brandy snifter.

He also will give a slide presentation and show movies telling how cognac is made.

The tasting is \$15 per person. An a la carte menu for a regional dinner will be priced from \$9.75 up to "outrageous," said Rick Harrison, who manages the various restaurants owned by Bruce Cameron.

The party is so chi-chi that many people are planning to bring their own glasses for the tasting and some guests are coming in black tie.

For women who prefer a light aperitif to stronger brandy, there will be Pireau des Charentes, a 10-year-old mix of cognac and unfermented grape juice.

For reservations, call 851-0060.

BROADCASTING personality Jack McCarthy had a table set up in the lobby at the Community House where he sold copies of his new cookbook at the recent Chef's Fest.

The popular and personable McCarthy, who has gained TV food fans through his "Friday Feast" on Channel 7, autographs copies of "Jack McCarthy's Restaurant Recipes" when he is on hand to sell his book.

Now in its second printing of 5,000 copies, McCarthy's classy book has already sold 10,000 copies.

— Ethel Simmons

Piano, ballet team up delightfully

By Mary Jane Doerr
special writer

There is something about ballet and piano that compliment each other. Is it the definite notes of the piano that combine with the movements of the ballerina? Or is it merely a long tradition that continues to be followed?

Dancing to a full house Friday evening at Southfield-Lathrup High School, the Contemporary Civic Ballet performed a classical ballet that brought elegance to Beethoven's Concerto No. 5 (the "Emperor").

Pianist Ruth Burezyk provided a sensitive interpretation that was backed by the Oakway Symphony Orchestra under the baton of its music director and conductor, Francesco Di Blasi.

The regality of Beethoven's composition was matched by the 21 members of the local ballet troupe and the choreography by its founder Rose Marie Floyd. Floyd grouped the dancers in numbers of three or four or as solo or duos.

HER GROUPINGS followed the various melodies of the second and third movements of the piano concerto. The expressive hand movements symbolized the trills and runs of the piano.

The ballet began with a solo ballerina dressed in pink against a plain blue backdrop. The men were costumed in gray and silver. As the ballet moved with the music through the various repeats and embellishments from the quiet adagio to the rondo, Floyd increased the number of dancers on the stage.

She matched the traditional sidestepping movement of the dancers with the rondo theme of the third movement, successfully expressing the emotional qualities that fill the music.

Just as the ballet began with one dancer, it ended in a circle that increased and fanned out intricately into a classical position that filled the stage with all of the dancers.

As a concerto, "the Emperor" can be tricky for a pianist. There are many repeats, and it takes a great deal of creativity for a pianist to keep it interesting for the audience.

IN THIS CASE, Ruth Burezyk was aided by the

review

exquisite visuals of the ballet. Nevertheless, her performance was expressive and captivating. She varied her interpretation of the melodies to give added interest each time they were reintroduced.

Anyone who has heard the "Emperor" performed by a musician who does not understand the emotional qualities in the music knows how easily the music can turn into a finger exercise.

The evening began with the Overture of "Candle" by Bernstein. This reviewer enjoys Bernstein more as a conductor than as a composer, and certainly "Candle" on Broadway was no success. However, the overture served as a nice opener for the concert.

Debussy's "Nuages," meaning clouds, was beautifully interpreted by the Overture of "Candle" by Bernstein. This reviewer enjoys Bernstein more as a conductor than as a composer, and certainly "Candle" on Broadway was no success. However, the overture served as a nice opener for the concert.

Barbara Grover added interest with her English horn solo, backed by the orchestra and concertmaster Emily Austin, violinist Judi Bennett and cellist Jacob Becker.

If sounds could be seen, Debussy's music would

show up on a painter's canvas undoubtedly as impressionism. The motion of clouds, in this case, are represented by sounds echoing through the orchestra.

IF IT HADN'T been overshadowed by the impressive performance by Burezyk and the Contemporary Civic Ballet, Vittorio Giannini's "Symphony No. 2" might have had a more profound effect.

The composer was a teacher of Di Blasi's, and it is assumed that the reading was close to what the composer intended. The relatively modest work was very contemporary in some sections such as the third movement, yet in the second movement the melodious tunes seemed far from contemporary.

Best description of the work comes from the names of the first two movements, "energico" and "elastico."

The orchestra was at its best during the lively Beethoven concerto. The melodies were beautifully echoed through the different sections, and Di Blasi's tempo benefited both Burezyk and the Rose Marie Floyd Ballet Company.

Final concert of this season will feature Ralph Votapek, the first Van Cliburn International Piano Competition Gold Medalist, on May 22 at Orchestra Hall in Detroit.

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