

Kottler dispels myth of old age

By Avigdor Zoromp
special writer

The Detroit Symphony's guests last week were two distinguished Russian-born talents. They presented us with another sample of their country's rich musical heritage. Both of them have chosen our country as their homeland.

Guest conductor was Maxim Shostakovich, who made his debut with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra last season, when he presented an entire program consisting of works by his celebrated father, Dmitri Shostakovich.

THIS TIME, OTHER composers also were featured. The only non-Russian composition was the Second Piano Concerto, in F Minor, by Chopin.

The pianist in the Chopin Concerto was Mischa Kottler, who has been a prominent talent in the Detroit community for many years. His performance underscored the fact that musical ability can transcend age barriers, as well as international boundaries.

Kottler, who has reached his 80th birthday, provides one of the strongest cases against those who have the misguided notion that one should retire after reaching a certain age.

HIS PERFORMANCE of the Chopin Concerto was not just an adequate performance for an 80-year-old. It was a profound statement and testament for all ages. Kottler's playing was characterized by both brilliancy and deep, reflective insight.

He had a complete technical command most of the time, even though there were some isolated flawed notes, the most serious occasion being in the third movement, before the coda.

This, however, is preferable to a flawless performance without a profound musical approach, which this concerto requires. One can very seldom hear the second movement with a comparable sense of beauty.

THE ONE WEAK point in this composition is Chopin's own deficient orchestration. While some performances provide a better cover-up of this deficiency than this one, there is no way to redeem it completely, as far as the orchestral aspect is concerned.

It is best appreciated for what it is — an magnificent composition highlighting the piano, the only important instrument in Chopin's works.

Following a rousing, standing ovation, Kottler obliged by playing as an encore a Rachmaninoff arrangement of a theme by Kreisler.

review

Maestro Shostakovich wasn't outdone when it was his turn to shine. He opened the program with the Prelude to Khovanstchina by Mussorgsky, a short piece which brought forth the tender, reflective side of this composer.

THE CONCLUDING WORK on the program was the Symphony No. 1 by Shostakovich, which was the most extensive orchestral work on the program. The first of the 15 symphonies by the composer, it is a profound and mature piece, composed when he was only 18.

Maestro Shostakovich captured superbly the many contradictory moods of that composition. Like several of the composer's other works, it combines playful and satirical elements with tender, expressive and melancholic textures, as well as some gushing and turbulent segments.

THE PIANO, used as a non-solo instrument, took the lead in the second allegro movement, which has the form of a scherzo.

The coda in the last movement is preceded by an unusual impromptu solo. The energetic and spirited performance of this work deserves the highest acclaim.

To be sure, not everybody is in complete agreement as to the ability of Maestro Shostakovich as a conductor. Some musicians criticize his baton technique, and I am not sufficiently competent to judge on that matter. But those who feel that he is merely an exponent of his father's music are seriously underestimating him.

While so far this was the major ingredient of his programs here, there is no doubt in my mind that his talent is much more universal.

ANYBODY WHO CAN present so impressively, as Shostakovich compositions we've heard so far, no matter what baton technique he uses, should do well with almost any major composer.

This week there will be a chance to prove this assertion, when Maestro Shostakovich will conduct works by Debussy, Franck (Symphonic Variations) and Berlioz (Symphonie Fantastique). Hopefully, those who had reservations about his ability will be eating their own words. As for me, I am a very busy scholar.

"Fail Safe" (1964), 9:30 a.m. Sunday on Ch. 4. Originally 111 minutes.
"Ferdie" director Sidney Lumet directed Henry Fonda and Walter Matthau in this "what if" tale of a runaway SAC plane on a bombing run over Moscow. Realism — or a very good impression of what might happen if such a scenario ever unfolded — is the key to the well-made, suspense yarn.
Rating: **\$2.95.**

"Going in Style" (1979), 8 p.m. Sunday on Ch. 4. Originally 95 minutes.
Director Martin Brest's "Going in Style" may be the best film ever made on the subject of old age — not because it's preachy or thematically significant but because it captures the melancholy, the sense of uselessness that often accompanies the "golden years." George Burns, Art Carney and Lee Strasberg

Encore screens classic

The film "Paths of Glory" will be shown by Cranbrook P.M./Encore Cinema at 8 p.m. Monday-Tuesday, April 25-26, at Cranbrook Institute of Science, 500 Lone Pine, Bloomfield Hills.

Tickets at \$5 for adults and \$3 for students and senior citizens, are available at the doors included in admission are the film and its commentary, an open discussion and gourmet dessert with coffee served at 7:30 p.m.

Filed in 1930, "Paths of Glory" concerns the anti-human aspects of wars. The 87-minute, black-and-white film is directed by Stanley Kubrick and stars Kirk Douglas as a man of peace who answers his country's call to war.

Discussion moderator will be Cranbrook School of faculty member Dr. Frederick Roth.
Cranbrook P.M./Encore Cinema each year presents a series of films generally unavailable elsewhere in the area.



Second runs Tom Panzenhagen

WHAT'S IT WORTH?
A ratings guide to the movies

Bad \$1
Fair \$2
Good \$3
Excellent \$4

star as three senior citizens driven to robbery by the boredom and desperation of retirement.
Rating: **\$3.10.**

"Melvin and Howard" (1980), 9 p.m. Sunday on Ch. 4. Originally 95 minutes.
Paul LeMat stars as the unassuming Melvin Dumar, who, according to Oscar-winning screenwriter Bo Goldman,

is the rightful heir to billionaire Howard Hughes' fortune. Jason Robards has the minor role of Howard, but it's Mary Steenburgen who steals the show as Melvin's wife in this humorous, poignant slice-of-midwestern-life film. Steenburgen won an Oscar for best supporting actress; Jonathan Demme is the director, and the real Melvin Dumar appears as an airport lunch counter clerk.
Rating: **\$3.**

"Klute" (1971), 1:30 Monday night on Ch. 7. Originally 114 minutes.
"Sophie's Choice" director Alan J. Pakula directed Jane Fonda and Donald Sutherland in "Klute." She plays a New York City hooker and he an investigator looking into the disappearance of a visitor to the Big Apple. The film is well acted — Fonda won her first

Academy Award — but lacking somewhat in genuine suspense. Roy Scheider and Jean Stapleton co-star.
Rating: **\$2.00.**

"The Heartbreak Kid" (1972), 2 Wednesday night on Ch. 4. Originally 104 minutes.

Elsie May directs her daughter, Elaine Berlin, Charles Grodin and Sybil Shepherd in this off-beat tale of a man who meets another woman — the perfect woman, he thinks — while on his honeymoon. Grodin is perfectly silly as the coming husband, Berlin is equally overbearing as the pestering wife and Shepherd delightfully blank as the pre-"10" 10. Eddie Albert is also wonderful as a distraught father.
Rating: **\$3.25.**

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