

Jean conducts with good control

By Avigdor Zarnop
special writer

As the present Detroit Symphony Orchestra concert season is drawing to an end, Kenneth Jean, resident conductor, had another shot at the orchestra leadership after having done so once before this season.

This time, however, it was a scheduled performance, rather than as a last-minute replacement for a conductor who couldn't make it.

His ability and potential as a conductor were manifested especially in the second part of the program, with the complete ballet "The Three-Cornered Hat" by Manuel De Falla.

The first part of the program consisted of the orchestra's first performance of "Musica Humana" by Justin Dello Jolo and the concerto for Cello and Orchestra in D major by Haydn. The soloist in the Haydn concerto was Italo Babin, principal cellist.

Dello Jolo, born in this country in 1954, has already a string of impressive achievements for one so young. The "Musica Humana" was inspired by ideas of the ancient philosopher Boethius (#80-525).

EXACTLY HOW these ideas are depicted in the music is hard to determine from first listening, but the music does seem to portray some good orchestration and writing that is, at least, acceptable.

While it doesn't come off as an exceptionally profound piece, I am inclined to suspend judgment for the time being. The composer himself went on stage to receive the applause.

The Haydn D Major Cello Concerto had its bright moments, but it wasn't smooth sailing all the way.

Babin, of course, is known to our audiences not just for his position as a principal cellist with our orchestra, but through his many appearances here in chamber music events, in which he has demonstrated time and again his keen musical ability.

Many feel, with justification, that he would be capable of sustaining a solo career, had he chosen to do so. This performance didn't turn out to be one of his best. There were some flawed notes in the first and third movements, and several orchestral entrances were amiss.

The tempo in the third movement started excessively slow, resulting in

review

some inconsistencies and clashes between the orchestral sections. But there were many rewarding moments as well, with some carefully phrased and articulated passages.

Babin wrote his own cadenzas, and the one in the first movement, which was about half as long as the movement itself, impressively captured and juxtapositioned the various themes of the movement. The middle movement was very impressive.

THE MOST rewarding piece on the program was the De Falla composition. It featured mezzo soprano Barbara Windham, who didn't fail to capture the audience in spite of her brief role.

Not themes in that composition are very popular and familiar through the abbreviated suite version. Ironically, one of the less familiar aspects is a brief parody based on another popular

theme, that of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

In this performance, Jean presented this ballet as a cohesive, meaningful work. He had complete command and control, producing a colorful spectrum of sounds.

There were many impressive solo passages, including impressive playing by Robert Williams, principal bassoon, whose role is prominent in this composition.

While this work is considered to be light music based on a light theme, it didn't sound like an inconsequential piece. It portrayed De Falla as one of the gifted composers of our century, which he truly was.

This week will mark the last program of the season, when Maestro Gary Bertini will make his last appearance here in his capacity as music advisor.

Opera programs continue

Dr. Jack C. DuBois continues his series of Illustrated Opera Lectures at Somerset Mall through May 23.

The programs, held in the mall auditorium, are open to the public at no charge.

There is no lecture May 9 because of the quilt show. On May 16, "La Forza Del Destino" will be the subject and on May 23, DuBois, will speak on "La Boheme," which is the opening performance of the Met in its week in Detroit.



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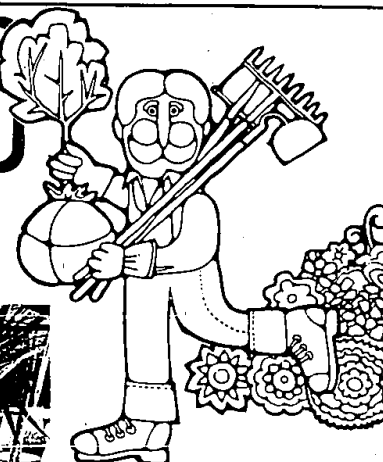
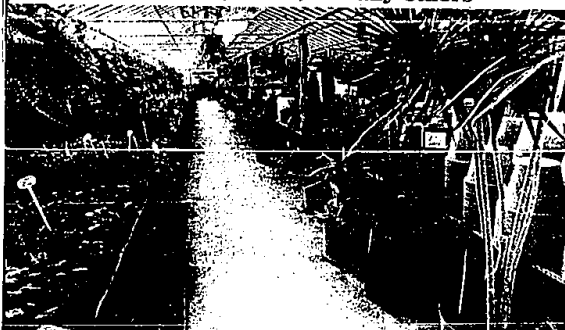
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