

Brahams concerto ably showcases violinist's talent

By Arvidor Zaromp
special writer

Last week's guest conductor at the Meadow Brook Festival was familiar to those who attended the festival during the previous season. Korean-born Myung-Woon Chung, whose fame is on the rise, had made a very memorable and favorable impact a year ago, and

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he didn't disappoint his audience on this occasion either.

The guest for Thursday's performance was also familiar to regular con-

cert goers. Israeli-born violinist Miriam Fried had been in this area not so long ago. During the regular season she appeared with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in a performance of the Haydn Violin Concerto in C Major.

At the time, I had the distinct feeling she was wasting her talent on the composition which isn't considered among the top in the violin repertoire. This

time she performed a much more attractive work — the Brahms Violin Concerto.

ONE CHARACTERISTIC of this magnificent composition is that in spite of its frequent performance, its appeal never seems to wear thin. The last live performance of the Brahms Concerto that I have heard was, incidentally, by

another Israeli-born violinist. It was during the special Gala performance at the beginning of the last regular season with Itzhak Perlman playing the solo part.

Last Thursday's performance was much more indicative of Fried's true potential. Her broad and rich tone quality, combined with profound expressiveness, was present throughout. Her phrases were melodic and clean. The buildups toward the extensive peaks were sincere and convincing, without undue impulsiveness.

The rendition of the tenderly inspired second movement was truly awesome and heavenly, which is an unusual sensation for somebody who doesn't believe in heaven. The forceful final movement was so exuberant and hypnotizing that seemingly all motion and breathing ceased.

One might be tempted to say that even the passing airplanes remained suspended in mid-air with their engines off, but that would be slightly too optimistic.

The first half of the program featured two more Br's, except that the first of these was Berlioz, rather than Bach. The Overture to "Benvenuto Cellini" received a vibrant and lively treatment, which Maestro Chung commenced immediately, when he had hardly placed both of his feet on the podium, and before the murmur of the crowd had subsided. The loud and vigorous opening bars, however, made their message amply clear.

ANOTHER MAJOR composition on the program was the Symphony No. 2 by Beethoven. While among Beethoven's nine symphonies none is unpopular, the second is the least frequently performed. In this respect, its scheduling was a good choice, since most of the others can use a little rest.

While this work might be somewhat inferior to some of Beethoven's other symphonic efforts, one can derive a tremendous pleasure from its youthful themes, especially if one tries to shut out the numerous prior exposures and attempts to absorb it with a fresh mind, to the extent possible.

Chung's performance was certainly fresh, without taking the music for granted. With the exception of some instances in the first movement, in which the converging orchestral lines failed to focus properly, the performance, as a whole, was extremely precise.

It was stylistically authentic, highlighting the right mixture between the late classical style and the more intense dramatic force that would play a greater role in Beethoven's future compositions.

The final movement, for example, has a certain playfulness in it, with the unorthodox emphasis on the dominant in the first theme. An over-dramatic approach here would be out of place and it is better reserved, as it was, for the ending, when the theme is reaffirmed in the tonic.

Myung-Woon Chung conducted a separate program on Sunday, which is reviewed elsewhere in this section.

Chung shows himself to be gifted conductor

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Guest conductor Myung-Woon Chung concluded his visit here last Sunday with a program of lighter selections. This designation, to be sure, is relative.

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the best Ravel we have heard this season, in which several Ravel works have already been played, with a couple of additional ones still to be performed during the final weeks of the Meadow Brook Festival.

This particular composition presents some serious challenges. While inspired by the style and period of the French composer Couperin (1808-1733), it actually commemorated more recent events of Ravel's period and was dedicated to friends who lost their lives during World War I.

The Ravel composition was probably WHILE presenting some ancient

forms and rhythms, it features Ravel's unique impressionistic harmonies and orchestration. In this performance, Chung reconciled these elements successfully, yielding an elegant and pleasing performance. The performance also was enhanced by the light, cool breeze that rustled through the trees and occasionally scattered some of the pages.

The Symphony No. 2 by Tchaikovsky, titled "Little Russian," is one of his neglected works, as is the fate of his first and third symphonies. The title is derived from the Crane theme in the last movement, which is a folk song from Little Russia.

ALTHOUGH one can uncover some flaws in the composition in comparison to the three latest symphonies, it has an undeniable charm. The first movement

in this performance lacked some sharpness and tended to be chaotic on occasion. Subsequent movements were more cohesive.

The final movement, with its famous theme interacting with a secondary theme, provides for nostalgic yet youthful elements. In some portions, especially towards the end, it substitutes decibels for true ingenuity, but it has an abundance of good nature and high spirit.

This wasn't overlooked by Maestro Chung, who proceeded with an ecstatic and hilarious performance.

During his visit, Chung proved to be equally adept with a variety of musical styles. In this, he has established himself to be a most gifted and talented conductor.

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Pianist Steve Johnson was lured to the singing group from the Glenn Miller Orchestra in 1973. He left two years later for various stints with the Lettermen, the Mooters and the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra and rejoined the Modernaires in 1977.

PAULA KELLY, Jr., is the daughter of Paula Kelly and Hall Dickinson, founders of the Modernaires. As a teenager, she sang with her two sisters in a trio, which appeared on the "Dean Martin Show" and toured for several years.

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