

Opinion

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Music maestro: It gives us hope

IT'S IMPORTANT, this art business, that is. Without it we would be, as a society, far less.

You've got to remind yourself of that once in awhile. The arts are important.

We forget, of course. Many of us are "too busy" worrying about the all-important career, the paycheck, the mortgage and the nouveau-stress seminars telling us how to cope.

You tend to worry a might when reading in a business book on interviewing that a person should never admit to anything classical — like reading, painting or playing an instrument. Stick to the safe stuff, a boss can relate with, like golf and softball.

Don't want to seem like a sissy, you know.

IT'S SICK, that kind of thinking. Some time back a guy named William Blake told us that "nations are destroyed or flourish in proportion as their poetry, painting and music are destroyed or flourish."

Nothing lofty about that statement. Folks worried about making big bucks or moving up the corporate ladder might want to pay attention to such talk.

Despite the struggle the arts have in our society, a future does exist for classicism in America. And a big part of that future rests right out here in suburban Detroit.

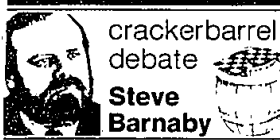
Funny thing about America: New York and California do all the bragging while middle America produces the beef. We really ought to learn how to brag a little better.

This past weekend I had a demonstration of that beef. I went to see a performance of the Livonia Youth Symphony.

Wait now, keep reading. No doing music parent here. I'm going to talk about kids all right, but not my own. That undoubtedly will be reserved for another column. I'll give you ample warning.

I went to see the Livonia Youth Symphony perform because the music is good, and I'm continually impressed with the quality. I also get shivers down my back watching kids enjoy playing classical music.

It also shows there is hope — for all of us.



crackerbarrel debate
Steve Barnaby

Unfortunately, far too many persons who hear about the youth symphony think "recital" and mentally yawn it off.

I know how those people think. I, too, was skeptical on first hearing about the youth symphony.

But hear the youth symphony perform just once and you'll feel different.

PARENTS WHO foster this program have done their best in recruiting top artists to lead their children. The symphony's music director is Yakov Kreizberg — a fellow originally from the Soviet Union. He studied at the Leningrad Conservatory before coming to the United States. Heavy duty, this Kreizberg.

Since coming to the United States he has won the Eugene Ormandy Scholarship Award for Outstanding Musicianship and was a Leonard Bernstein Conducting Fellow.

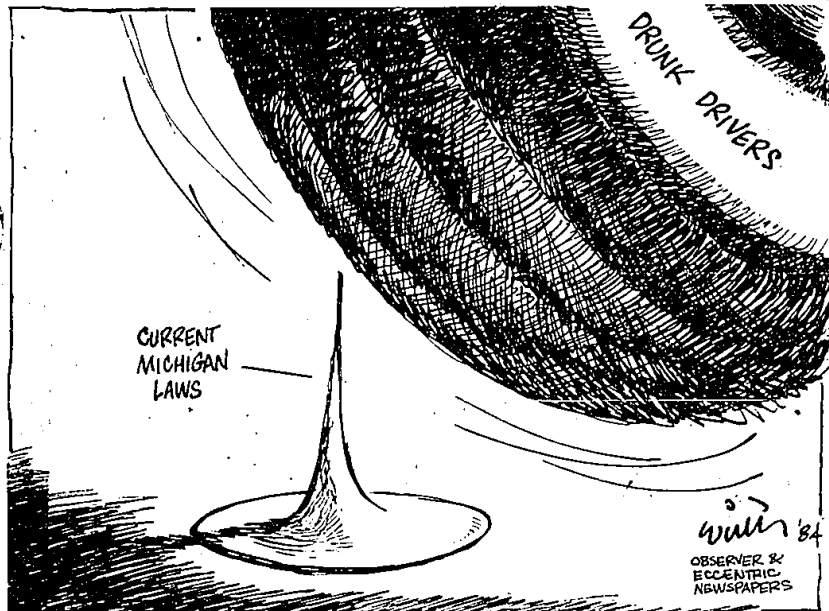
Working with Kreizberg is Harvey Felder, who is in his second season as conductor of the concert orchestra. Felder has whipped the concert orchestra into good enough shape to be a close second to the more experienced symphony orchestra.

And working with the the novice string orchestra — which sounds far from novice — is Janita Hawk, who instructs at both Madonna and Ladywood.

One suggestion — the group should change its name.

While its roots may be in Livonia, the symphony has outgrown its boundaries and now includes membership from all over metropolitan Detroit. A name change would aid in spreading the word and building the group's credibility.

Small thing maybe. But when you're involved in helping the nation flourish, it might be more important than you think.



Drunk-driving toll drops

ON A TYPICAL Saturday morning, I passed through a busy intersection on the way to the library. When I got out of my car, I heard a loud pop — it sounded like a firecracker — at the intersection. Looking back, I could tell an automobile accident had taken place.

I gave the incident little thought until I picked up Sunday's paper. A news story said a man had been killed — my former neighbor. He had followed me through the intersection by two minutes. A woman had failed to stop for a red light and had hit the side of his car.

Shaken, I realized I had come close to being the victim.

I DO NOT KNOW if the reckless driver had been drinking. Perhaps not, since it was in the morning.

But national safety experts estimate that more than half of the people killed in auto fatalities are victims of drunk drivers. That means drunk driving accounts for approximately 26,000 deaths every year.

Among many people appalled by the devastating effects of drunk driving, the most visible group is MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving). A national organization with many local chapters in Oakland and Wayne counties, MADD is a rare group because it has achieved results.

Pressured by MADD and other groups, the Michigan Legislature has approved



Nick Sharkey

several measures to crack down on drunk drivers. Next week will be the first anniversary of these laws, which went into effect March 30.

The laws call for suspending a driver's license for six months for a first conviction of drunk driving. In addition, they permit on-site preliminary breath tests so a police officer can determine if he has "reasonable cause" to arrest a driver.

Several other programs were started in Wayne and Oakland counties, including patrolling high-accident-rate areas with special alcohol-enforcement teams.

RESULTS ARE GOOD.

According to the Traffic Improvement Association (TIA) of Oakland County, 1983 traffic deaths in that county were the lowest in 21 years — 111 in 1983 compared to 151 deaths in 1982.

TIA reports the following cities had traffic-fatality decreases in 1983 compared to 1982: Bloomfield Hills, 1 (from 2); Birmingham, 0 (from 2); Farmington

Hills, 10 (from 13) and Southfield, 2 (from 11). Troy stayed the same with 10 fatalities in each year.

Several communities went up from 1983 compared to 1982, including: Beverly Hills, 1 (from 0); Bloomfield Township, 9 (from 0); Lathrup Village, 2 (from 1); Rochester, 1 (from 0); and West Bloomfield Township, 3 (from 2).

TIA also reports that the number of fatalities involving alcohol in Oakland County was down 33 percent from 1982.

Nevertheless, more must be done. MADD chatters try to stop alcohol-related traffic deaths by seeking tough enforcement of laws and educating drivers with drinking problems.

Local volunteers like Canton's Ralph Shufeldt have devoted many hours to monitoring court cases to make sure drunk drivers are punished. But after a while, even the most enthusiastic volunteer can run out of time.

"We need to find people who have the time to devote to court monitoring, such as retired people or housewives," he said.

A SADD (Students Against Driving Drunk) chapter also has been organized to reduce teen drunk driving.

Those wishing to find out more about MADD should call 476-8344.

When we are behind the wheel of a car, there's little we can do to protect ourselves from other drivers. I was reminded of that on Saturday morning.

Tax-cut momentum is on the downside

"MOMENTUM" IS a word much in vogue these days. Analysts apply it to both the Hart presidential campaign, especially of two weeks ago, and the Mondale campaign, of late.

The momentum for recalling Democratic state senators who voted for the much-maligned Michigan personal-income-tax increase last year was almost monumental just a few weeks ago.

Former senators Phil Mastin of Pontiac and David Serotkin of Mount Clemens were right in the path of the momentum and got washed out to sea by 12-foot waves.

But now it appears that the momentum has died down, and the waves of the recall movement are merely lapping at the edges of the shore.

MOMENTUM FOR a Republican-sponsored tax cut began building as the recall drives were peaking.

Republican legislators began clamoring about the need for a tax cut now, to mollify the good and overburdened wage earners of Michigan.

Instead of waiting for the personal-income-tax rate to recede on schedule — from last year's 6.35 percent to 6.1 percent this year, 5.35 percent in 1985, 5.1 percent in 1986 and 4.6 percent in 1987 — the new Republican majority led by John Engler of Mt. Pleasant talked about a cut-back to 4.6 percent immediately.

The political nature of the tax cut talk was underscored by the fact that the bill's chief sponsors were the two newest GOP senators — Rudy Nichols of Waterford and Kirby Holmes of Utica.

That is the rate the state income tax was at before Gov. Blanchard came into office and engineered a "temporary" increase to 6.35 percent.

MANY WERE willing to bet that certainly the Senate, dominated by Republicans since the recalls, and the House, full of legislators fearful of re-election chances if they voted against a cut, would be quite willing to cut the tax rate, cut the budget, cut whatever was necessary to cut



Bob Wisler

cape being felled by recall fever.

Gov. Blanchard may have slowed the momentum by publicly saying that he would be in favor of a slight tax decrease ahead of schedule — moving the 1985 decrease forward to Oct. 1, 1984.

And now it appears that Republican senators will slow the momentum even more. State Sen. Harry Gast, new Republican chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, said in a newspaper story Sunday that Michigan can't afford a large tax cut.

Gast, a long-time conservative from rural Berrien County, introduced a bill in December to cut the rate to 5.35 in October and to 4.6 percent in 1986.

THAT A Republican of Gast's conservative bent and importance is against a large tax cut at this time is important. It signals that there are Republicans whose experience an wisdom are such that they will not bend to the capricious winds of political momentum and temporary political advantage.

It would be indeed ill-advised and short-sighted to try to take advantage of the present political situation and in the process get the services that the public has come to expect from state government.

Gast's contention — that a large and immediate tax cut would put the state in a hole the same size that the state just emerged from — is true.

Any attempt to lop off large portions of the state budget without concurrent plans for dealing with the problems caused by such actions would be in the long run a disastrous course for the state and could be personally disastrous for any number of unfortunate people.

Mackey points the finger

CECIL MACKEY, the lame-duck president of Michigan State University, appears to have his faults as a politician and administrator, according to the reports from East Lansing.

But one must toast the man's ability to cut through the rhetoric and get to certain essential facts about the deterioration of public support for public universities.

Mackey was on the stump with Harold Shapiro of the University of Michigan and Dale Stein of Michigan Technological University last week. Their audience was the Economic Club of Detroit.

Their twin messages: Public universities are an important factor, albeit not the controlling one, in whether Michigan ever achieves an economic turnaround, and in the last five years, state support of the major research universities has been eroded.

WHY WE'RE paying enough in the way of taxes, aren't we?

We the public faced up to a temporary 1 percent personal income tax boost, then a temporary 1.75 percent rate boost. Smokers are paying more cigarette taxes. Drivers are paying more gasoline taxes to improve the roads.

Those of us on alumni mailing lists are being told our heavy support is essential for the survival of our alma maters, and meanwhile another \$100 million drive is



Tim Richard

starting. Many corporations are matching employee gifts.

So why are we bombarded with statistics about how Michigan is falling behind in its support of public research universities?

MACKEY — AND so far only Mackey — has put his finger on it. Defense, medical care and welfare are siphoning off money which used to go to the universities.

One could argue with him about defense, which is a federal government function, while education is a state responsibility.

Medicare and welfare are lumped together in the Michigan state budget under a category called "social services." Since passage of the state income tax in the early 1960s, social services has grown from 12 percent to 40 percent of the budget — steadily. Education has shrunk from 52 percent to something like 28 percent of general fund state money.

In other words, the tax money is there.

What Mackey is saying is that the universities aren't getting it.

UNFORTUNATELY, the other leaders of education aren't saying it.

My own opinion is that Michigan's educational leadership, Mackey excepted, is too afraid of its liberal constituency to point the finger at Medicare providers and the welfare lobby for diverting public money. They're afraid of looking like Scrooges.

There has been an explosion in the numbers of people going on welfare. Our public programs and private pensions have reduced the proportions of old people who need welfare. What we are seeing, to use the jargon now in vogue, is the "feminization of poverty."

A few days before Mackey spoke, the National Center for Health Statistics reported that in 1980, only 4 percent of American children were born out of wedlock. In 1970 the figure was 10.7 percent. By 1981 the figure was 18.9 percent.

Add to those non-marriage births the soaring divorce rate. Then figure that half of all those families qualify for some form of public assistance.

The American family is in bad shape. The problem is more than moral and social. The decline of the American family is debilitating our universities and hampering Michigan's economic recovery.

And most educators are afraid to say it out loud.