

# second runs Tom Panzenhagen

## Column marks fourth anniversary

It's been four years and about 700 films since this movie column debuted. If you don't mind, we'd rather not count the hours spent in front of the TV since 1980 watching all those films.

Thank heaven for video recorders. Staying awake until 5 in the morning to catch the late, late show is a thing of the past now.

After four years of scanning the airwaves — from channels 2 to 62, and including out-of-state stations 11, 13, 32, 42 and 54 when atmospheric conditions permit — one develops a pretty keen sense of the state of movies on TV in the Detroit area, and that's what this anniversary column is about.

DETROIT'S TV stations — 2, 4, 7, 9, 20, 50, 62 and occasionally 56 — run some 200 hours of movies each week. If you have cable, the number of films on TV is infinite — or seems so, at least.

But let's stick with commercial TV, where Ch. 50 remains, as its slogan insists, Detroit's TV movie station. Ch. 50, in fact, has gotten better in recent months, first with its selection of recent and occasionally first-run films (such as "The Howling") at 8 weeknights and second, with its addition by subtraction of *Sonny Wortzik* from its 1 o'clock afternoon movie.

Pretender to the crown is Ch. 20, which last year booted ON TV from its airwaves and premiered its own prime time movies at 8 and 10 weeknights. That sounds fine on the surface but has become annoyingly clear of late that Ch. 20 cares not about chopping films to fit its two-hour time frames.

"It's Always Fair Weather" was butchered several weeks ago and, more recently, a huge chunk of "The Collector" was left on the cutting room floor.

A solution: Run longer films from 8 to 11 p.m. and shorter ones from 11 to 1 a.m.

BUT AT LEAST channels 50 and 20 show a lot of films, which is more than can be said for the Detroit area's other stations. Ch. 9, in fact, recently picked up Ch. 2's very bad habit of forgoing late night films for back-to-back episodes of "Hawaii Five-O."

## Show to star Melikin Puppets

Chicago's Melikin Puppet Theatre returns to the Detroit Youththeatre stage with its original show, "Dragon Feathers," at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Saturday in the Detroit Institute of Arts auditorium.

For ticket information and a detailed "Something Every Saturday" schedule of family entertainment through May, call the ticket office at 632-2730.

"Dragon Feathers" explores the world of dragons, from the legendary

beast who challenged St. George, to the Melikin's own How Kong, a 30-foot Chinese ceremonial parade creature.

Long a Detroit Youththeatre regular, the Melikins have performed throughout the United States for more than 20 years.

This presentation is designed for families with children 5 years of age and older. Children younger than 5 years will not be admitted to the theater.

## Comedy 'Moonchildren' staged

The University Players will present "Moonchildren," a comedy by Michael Weller, at 8 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday and 7:30 p.m. Sunday at the Studio Theatre in the School of Dramatic Art, corner of Sunset and Wyandotte, at the University of Windsor (Ont.).

Admission is \$4, and the box office is open daily 4:30-8:30 p.m. For reservations, call 253-4565.

"Moonchildren, which won a Best Play citation when it was first produced, is a comedy about the peace marches, the sexual revolution and growing up.

Final production of the University Players' season will be the musical "The Robber Bridegroom," with performances Thursdays-Sundays, March 29 to April 1 and April 5-8.

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# Semkow reinforces greatness of Brahms

By Avigdor Zarembo  
special writer

The quest for a satisfactory variety in musical programs is a formidable challenge.

The concept of the "standard repertoire" is frequently sneered at. Attempts to find acceptable substitutes abound. While such attempts are sometimes welcome, the urge and longing for "home" is always there. In particular, the spell of Brahms is of the kind from which one can never break for very long.

The latest Detroit Symphony Orchestra program consisted of two monumental Brahms' favorites — his violin concerto and his symphony No. 2.

Guest conductor was the highly acclaimed Polish-born Jerzy Semkow, scheduled for two more weeks.

The solo violinist was Elmer Oliveira, who, among other impressive achievements, won the Gold Medal in the 1978 Tchaikovsky competition in Moscow.

While it might be too early to question the wisdom of scheduling the same two compositions for October and December this year as part of the plans

for next season, the present performance was a pure joy.

VIRTUOSITY is another term with negative connotation with respect to musical performance. However, there is nothing wrong with virtuosity if it is used in the service of artistic ends.

This was the case in Oliveira's performance on this occasion. He approached this masterpiece with an enthusiasm and brilliance that was untempered by a cautious, predictable approach that is frequently cultivated in the course of many decades.

This statement, however, isn't meant to endorse page discrimination — masterful performances of this work by older performers do exist.

The technical display in this performance didn't obscure the musical message. The slower passages were saturated with expressive inspiration. The enchanting second movement was a rare display of greatness.

There was an equally superb performance of the part of the orchestra and a sense of balance between solo and orchestra. While this is one of the top works in the violin literature, Semkow didn't lose sight of its significant orchestral dimensions.

## review

The qualities of Brahms' symphonies can't be overstated, but it is rather difficult to say something in that context that hasn't been said before. Musically, the task may be even more difficult. Thus, the question whether this, or any other performance, is truly unprecedented is irrelevant. There is a little doubt, however, that it belongs near the top.

SEMKOW, who conducted the work from memory, was in complete control of the massive orchestral forces. The intensive peaks were well proportioned. The contrapuntal part in the development of the first movement was a rare example of confrontational ingenuity.

In the slow movement, the raw orchestral forces were transformed into expressive energy. In the final, fourth movement, Semkow pitted the fast moving themes against each other with unwavering accuracy and sense of purpose.

There were also judicious changes of tempo in this movement. While it is true that some of these changes are indicated and followed automatically in most performances, one way to characterize them in this instance is to compare them to manual versus automatic transmission.

In both instances, the automatic shift is more convenient, but comes at the expense of a smooth performance. While in the case of an automobile, reaching the destination might be more important than a perfectly smooth performance, that "manual shift" is indispensable in a Brahms symphony.

The concluding coda in this work is, by nature, flashy and showy, and rarely fails to impress. However, in this performance it wasn't an end by itself. It was the inevitable outcome of the preceding material, which made it more rewarding than ever. We all are aware of the fact that Brahms was a great composer. Now we are beginning to understand why.

## Dancers performing

The Hungarian State Folk Ensemble from Budapest, Hungary, will perform Sunday on Detroit's historic Music Hall Center stage.

Tickets at \$18 and \$14 may be purchased at the Music Hall box office, by phone (953-7680) and at all Ticket World/CTC outlets.

The spectacle blends choreography, singing and gypsy orchestras displaying the country's culture. The show has been performed for audiences in 27 countries.

As official state-supported representatives, this ensemble consists of 100 dancers, singers and musicians from all corners of Hungary.

The previous Hungarian State Folk Ensemble was founded in 1966 under the direction of Miklos

Rabai. Upon his death the ensemble was completely reorganized under the artistic direction of Sandor Timar. Performances consist of authentic dances, which date back several hundred years.

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