

Detroit-born pianist shows great talent

By Avigdor Zoromp
Special writer

On some rare occasions a pianist will prove to an enchanted audience that mere technique and competence aren't enough. One such pianist is Cynthia Raim, who performed with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra at last week's Meadow Brook Festival.

The guest conductor was Walter Weller. Being a native of Detroit, Raim started her studies under Misha Kottler, a musical legend in our area for the past seven decades. On this occasion, Raim displayed her impressive talent in Rachmaninoff's "Rhapsody on a theme by Paganini," a most demanding work both technically and musically. This work was featured on both Thursday and Sunday programs.

MAESTRO Walter Weller, who was born in Vienna in 1939, is regarded as still young — for a conductor. However, he is an extremely seasoned and gifted. The Thursday program was dedicated exclusively to works by Rachmaninoff, while the Sunday program featured works by Dvorak, except for the repeat of the Rachmaninoff rhapsody.

The Raim's style was not only technically precise, but very elegant. The subtle aspects of the work, which consists of 24 loose variations on the famous theme, were given full attention.

There was no lack of intensity in the rough and meaty passages, but the technical display took second place to the musical content.

In some of the early variations, the piano was overshadowed by the orchestra. But this was largely due to the particular instrument, whose sound isn't as full and rich as one would hope. There was a slightly better balance in these variations in the Sunday performance.

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Thursday's program opened with an inspired rendition of "The Rock," a symphonic fantasy. The first orchestral work that night was Rachmaninoff's "Symphony No. 2." This is the most frequently performed of the composer's three symphonies and, while it has been played in this area on several occasions in the past few years, this was the most convincing version.

If it seemed somewhat longer than usual, it was because this performance was without the usual cuts — changes actually instigated by the composer himself.

THE BROAD expressiveness of the third movement was hypothesizing. The climactic last movement was impressive, even though I would have preferred a more pointed and resolute opening theme.

Sunday's program opened with Dvorak's "Carnival Overture," whose festive mood was even more prominent with the fast tempo.

The concluding work on that program was the "Symphony No. 7." While one could state that Dvorak's symphonic output is no match for greater masters such as Beethoven and Brahms, this performance showed that it is not to be taken lightly.

It was characterized by a serious approach, rendering this symphony as a significant work, rather than as an inconsequential second rate symphony.

The expressiveness in the second movement was sincere and the scherzo portrayed some dramatic overtones, rather than a light, carefree rhythm.

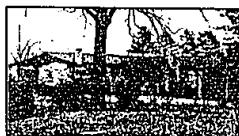
The final movement was dramatic and turbulent. The ominous conclusion with its tragic nature projected a more lasting effect, rather than a transient diversion.

Walter Weller is one of few conductors who is able to make standard selections sound non-routine, without violating their authenticity.

review



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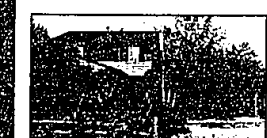
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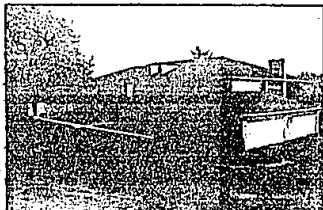


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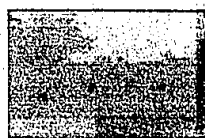
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