Orchestra sound: enriching, refreshing

A visit of an orchestra of such outstanding caliber should be a regular part of our musical events.

By Avigdor Zaromp
special writer

The Meadow Brook Music Festival season closed last week with a special feature.

In a rare occurence, local audiences had the opportunity to hear a prominent orchestra other than our own Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

The Cleveland orchestra, with its director designate Cristoph von Dohnanyi, provided us with a glimpse of the world at large.

There are those who believe that our "own" orchestra, like a home team, should be unconditionally supported and others should be viewed as foreign invaders.

HOWEVER, THE unusually large turnout indicates that this provincial view is held only by a minority.

This event also proved that exposure to such an orchestra, one of the finest in the country, is enriching and rewarding for all of us, including the Detroit Symphony Orchestra musicians, many of whom were in the audience.

review

The program consisted of material that is not only standard repertoire but universal in its appeal. The works selected were the Overture to the Magic Flute by Mozart, the Symphony No. 3 by Mendelssohn (the "Scottish") and the Symphony No. 3 by Beethoven ("Eroica").

ONE OF the first aspects of this performance that struck me was the unusually full, rich and well-coordinated sound of the strings.

The opening Mozart Overture engaged only a small orchestra, as Mozart's music requires. However, there was no lack of intensity and fullness, in spite of the outdoor surroundings.

The success wasn't due to excessive volume, but rather to the sound's being focused, with no scattered energy, as was the case in a Mozart piano concerto earlier in the season.

The fugues in that Overture, which carried through clearly, didn't lose any of their refined and intimate characteristics.

THE MENDELSSOHN symhony was the only item on the program that left something to be desired. The merry sweetness, so characteristic of Mendelssohn's style, gave way to stuffiness and overbearing slugishness in the outer movements.

The second movement retained its pastoral quality and the third (slow) movement was profoundly expressive.

However, the final movement, played in an unreasonably slow tempo, was too restrained with uncharacteristic dark and sombre shadows.

The serious and stately character of the coda, with its shift to a major mode, was acceptable, but following the main body of the movement (which was in the same vein), its impact was lost.

BEETHOVEN'S "EROICA" symphony is one of those works that is not only a profound masterpiece, but is so ingrained in the repertoire that an incompetent performance is almost impossible.

In the several performances of this work in recent years, I failed to detect a glaring deficiency. It is, therefore, even more of a challenge to provide a performance of this composition that would stand out.

Maestro Dohnanyi and the Cleveland Orchestra met this challenge admirably — and this is stated without detracting praises of previous performances.

The slow movement, which is a funeral march, is the longest of Beethoven's symphonic slow movements. Yet, here, this movement didn't seem excessively long and dragging.

THE DRAMATIC richness and variety were exposed to the fullest. In the third movement, the three-horn trio wasn't always technically perfect, but it didn't put a significant dent in its overall impact.

In the final movement, there was sense and clarity even in the most tumultuous segments, as manifested in the opening and in the restated climactic conclusion.

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"The Thrill of It All" *(1963), 3 p.m. Saturday on Ch. 50. Originally 108 minutes. TV time slot: 120 minutes.*

It's couples week.

Doris Day and James Garner co-star in this sharp-witted spoof of TV commercials and ad executives, written by Carl Reiner and directed by Norman Jewison. Day's delightful, Garner does his best Rock Hudson impression, and the supporting cast — Edward Andrews, Reginald Owen, Arlene Francis and Reiner — is superb. But the fine script really makes this movie sail.

Rating: $3.10.

"Sunburn" *(1979), 9 p.m. Saturday on Ch. 2. Originally 94 minutes. TV time slot: 120 minutes.*

Farrah Fawcett and Charles Grodin are a delightfully offbeat couple in "Sunburn." Actually, she's a mannequin, he's offbeat as a private eye in a role you might expect to be better suited for a more machismo leading man. His foibles and their unlikely relationship is half the fun. Unfortunately, that's all the fun there is. The plot's too complicated for its own good and costars Art Carney, Joan Collins, Alejandro Rey, William Daniels, John Hillerman, Eleanor Parker and Keenan Wynn are wasted.

Rating: $2.60.

WHAT'S IT WORTH?
A ratings guide to the movies

Bad	$1
Fair	$2
Good	$3
Excellent	$4

"Houseboat" *(1958), 4 p.m. Sunday on Ch. 50. Originally 110 minutes. TV time slot: 120 minutes.*

Cary Grant and Sophia Loren are surprisingly bad for each other in this tepid comedy/romance of a bachelor father and his sexy housekeeper. Grant was 54 and Loren 24 at the time, which has a lot to do with it. Yet Grant was still in his cinematic prime with seven movies — including "North by Northwest" — to follow before early retirement. At any rate, his heart's not in this one. Martha Hyer, Harry Guardino and Murray Hamilton co-star.

Rating: $2.40.

"The Out of Towners" *(1971), 1 p.m. Monday on Ch. 50. Originally 97 minutes. TV time slot: 120 minutes.*

Rating: $2.90.

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