

# Young soloists display talents

By Avigdor Zarompe  
Special writer

For those accustomed to the sound of major orchestras and world renowned chamber groups, listening to community orchestras can be an illuminating experience.

For one thing, there is the need to get off the high horse in order to feel solid ground. The existence of these community orchestras is a reliable yardstick of the community's involvement in the process of music making.

There were two concerts last week presented by such community orchestras both in Rochester. On Friday, the Rochester Symphony performed at Rochester High School Auditorium. The Sunday concert featured the Pontiac-Oakland Symphony at Varner Hall, Oakland University.

There was impressive local talent on both programs. In the Rochester Symphony program, two young pianists impressed the audience with their superb skills. Bridget McKeever, student at the University Liggett school and a semifinalist on the "Quest for Excel-

lence" contest, played a movement from the piano concerto No. 2 by MacDowell.

THIS MOVEMENT, from the little-known work by the leading American romantic composer, has some lavish arpeggios and rolling passages, which McKeever performed with momentum. There was a lot of weight to her touch, which could use, however, some more refinement. This aspect should develop with more experience.

Another young pianist, 12-year old Andrew Song, dazzled the audience with the presto movement from the second piano concerto by Saint-Saens. This is a most challenging passage even for seasoned professional pianists. Andrew had the stamina and determination to keep up with the lightning fast passages in spite of some stumbling on the way.

While his technique is not yet up to the extreme demands of this movement, he demonstrated good expression and phrasing in those more passages that he did successfully conquer.

One could expect a higher standard,

however, from concertmaster and assistant conductor Alan MacNair, who performed Vivaldi's "Winter" concerto from the "Four Seasons." MacNair is a very capable musician who has showed ability on other occasions. This performance, which had many instances of bad intonation and other technical problems wasn't typical.

The orchestra too had some serious intonation problems here, as well as in some of the other works. The program was brought to an uplifting conclusion with Rossini's "William Tell" Overture, under the capable hands of conductor James Holmeyer, who managed to emphasize the spirit while masking the weaknesses.

ANOTHER GIFTED young pianist was spotlighted on the Pontiac-Oakland Symphony program. Elena Mack showed a remarkable, promising, talent in her performance of the first movement from Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3.

She managed to maintain good speed and good technique considering her age and limited experience. At times she

lacked intensity and she ran into problems in the cadenza, when trying to tackle the passage with the triplets too fast. This is, however, part of the learning process.

Other talented soloists on that program included flutist Jennifer Evenson, who performed a charming serenade for flute, harp and strings by the contemporary American composer, Howard Hanson. Soprano April McNeely-Kaufmann and baritone Scott Jussila, sang two Mozart arias.

THE PROGRAM also featured a complete performance of Dvorak's Symphony No. 8. While it has certainly heard better versions, this performance had its share of joy and pleasure. The third movement, however, could stand a lot of improvement.

The conductor on this program, David Mairs, is assistant conductor of the Flint Symphony. He also serves as a pastor in a Flint Church. His conducting ability, as demonstrated on this program, is admirable. It is regrettable that the program brochure failed to mention him prominently with a biography.



## second runs

**Hugh Gallagher**

"Wall Until Dark" (1967), 1 Friday night on Ch. 50. Originally 108 minutes. TV time slot: 128 minutes.

Audrey Hepburn gets to play a blind woman and Alan Arkin and Richard Crenna get to be nasty in this film version of a successful Broadway thriller. Hepburn is terrorized by a group of vicious thugs in her New York apartment. It's a good tension builder and the acting is first-rate throughout.

Rating: \$3.

"The Towering Inferno" (1974), 8 p.m. Saturday on Ch. 50. Originally 165 minutes. TV time slot: 180 minutes.

Irwin Allen was the "master of disaster" in the 1970s. He made a lot of money putting lives in jeopardy. Big stars flocked to perform in these formula films because they could be guaranteed a healthy profit. This was the biggest star coup of them all. Steve McQueen and Paul Newman were the top box office draws. Here they don't even have to act very much as a firefighter and architect who work together to battle a fire in a high-rise office building. William Holden, Faye Dunaway, Fred Astaire and Robert Wagner are also along for the ride. If you enjoy seeing people burn and get a thrill out of watching flames shooting into the sky, this is your kind of movie. Otherwise, it gets tedious and even McQueen's macho and Newman's passion can't save it.

Rating: \$2.

## WHAT'S IT WORTH?

A ratings guide to the movies

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

"Hound of the Baskervilles" (1939), 1 Sunday night on Ch. 4. Originally 80 minutes. TV time slot: 80 minutes.

The first in the Basil Rathbone-Nigel Bruce series of Sherlock Holmes films, this was also the best. Only two of the films in the series were set in the Victorian period of Conan Doyle's stories. This was one of them and it is excellent in atmosphere, acting and pacing. Rathbone was nearly perfect as Holmes — razor sharp, brutally quick witted, athletic. He fit the physical look of the early illustrations to a tee. Bruce was a perfect foil for Rathbone's wit. He is not the Watson of the stories, who was a charming, intelligent, patient man who was just not in the same genius league with his gifted friend. Bruce's movie Watson is a comic relief, a well-meaning blunder, slow-witted, dense but always loyal. He is also noticeably older than Holmes, which was not the case in the stories. The ending, restored in recent years to some prints, makes a, for the time, shocking reference to Holmes cocaine addiction.

Rating: \$3.40.

## Playhouse offering premiere

Harmonic Park Playhouse will open its second season with the Detroit premiere of "Spell No. 7," a geechee jbara kiki magic trance manual for technologically stressed third world people," on Thursday, Feb. 12.

The playhouse in Harmonic Park is downtown Detroit's only professional resident theater company.

Performances will continue through April 13, with curtain at 7:45 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays and

3:45 p.m. Sundays. For ticket information, call 965-2480.

"Spell No. 7" is written by Ntozake Shange, who also authored "For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide (When the Rainbow is Enough)." It is set in a New York pub, a hang-out for actors, where nine struggling artists are gathered during a typical night out after the curtains come down on and off Broadway.

The "theater piece," as Shange prefers to call it, was first produced by Joe Papp and Woodie King, Jr. at the New York Shakespeare Festival in 1979. The production is directed by Mikell Pinkney, Harmonic Park Playhouse artistic director, and will mark his Detroit acting debut.

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