

Selection choices weakened program

By Avigdor Zaromp
special writer

Last Sunday marked the end of yet another busy week saturated with attractive chamber music events. This is characteristic of the final few weeks of the season.

Following the Chajnes Series concert of the Jewish Community Center that afternoon, the Chamber Music Society of Detroit (CMS) presented another in its attractive series. The feature was the Dresden Chamber Orchestra.

This fine group of string players, established in 1978, is on its first North American tour.

There are several things one associates with the city of Dresden, which is in the German Democratic Republic (East Germany). One

source of pride is its rich musical tradition, of which this fine group is a dedicated exponent.

Another association is less positive, and has to do with its firebombing by the Allies in World War II. The reason that this aspect is mentioned here is that it served as a source of inspiration for one of the significant works on this program.

This work, the String Quartet No. 8 by Shostakovich, was written when the composer visited Dresden in 1960 and observed its ruins. It has been rearranged for string orchestra by the Soviet conductor Rudolph Barshai, with the composer's endorsement and approval. It was presented in this form here.

This work, in one form or another, is by now one of the favorite chamber works. Only a few weeks ago I

reviewed its performance by the New World String Quartet. The performance of this composition was, in my opinion, the highest point on this latest program.

Its profound musical content never fails to leave an impact on the audience. This arrangement is successful in conveying that impact even more forcefully, without violating its intimate structure.

The other works on the program were the String Sonata No. 6 by Rossini, the Divertimento in B-flat Major, K.137 by Mozart and the String Symphony No. 9 by Mendelssohn.

One of the unusual aspects of this group is the fact that they perform the works standing up, except for the cello players. Somebody mentioned in just that it would have been more interesting to watch them playing

while lying down.

As it was, they were certainly kept on their toes. They managed to present the selections with conviction. The broad dynamic range has kept a sustaining interest alive most of the time.

The one drawback was in the selections themselves. Except for the Shostakovich piece, all the other works were written when the composers were in their teens. Their achievement as child prodigies are, of course, acknowledged and respected.

It isn't meant to suggest here that these works are unsuitable for performance — each of them has merit. However, one such work would suffice on any one program.

The Mozart divertimento, which is one of a group of three written when



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Mozart was 16, is the least attractive among them, in my opinion. While second-rate Mozart has some place in the repertoire, it should not be combined with second-rate Mendelssohn and second-rate Rossini.

As it was, the Mendelssohn string symphony, written when the composer was 14, was the most impressive. The effect of the program

would have been enhanced if it were preceded by "real" Mozart. Even the F Major Divertimento K.138 would have been a better selection.

The encore, the final movement of this piece, was a step in the right direction.

These limitations notwithstanding, the Dresden Chamber Orchestra is worth going to hear.

Internationally acclaimed pianist to appear

By Mary Jane Doerr
special writer

Chef Duglass has been after him for years to bring some of his light, "Love Boat"-style entertainment to Southfield's Restaurant Duglass. This weekend the famed classical pianist, Leonard Pennario, is doing just that.

The black-tie affair is at 7 p.m. Saturday for the 125 people who want to support the Young Artists Apprentice Program of the Michigan Opera Theatre. For \$250 a couple, the evening includes a gourmet dinner, a classical music concert and dancing to the Wilbert Flegler Quartet.

"I really enjoy this type of thing," Pennario said in a telephone interview between New York concerts at Avery Fisher Hall (Lincoln Center). "I do not get to do it very often."

His improvised program will consist of a smattering of Chopin, a little bit of Debussy, some Gershwin, some transcriptions and a few of his own compositions.

A number of times Pennario has been featured on the "Love Boat," as he will be in June when he goes to Alaska for two weeks aboard the SS Universe.

"It is the most delightful job I have ever had," he said. "I am paid to do what I love and to enjoy myself."

Pennario is more selective about where he cruises, after just missing being hijacked in the Mediterranean last fall when the Achille

Lauro was boarded. Instead of his ship, the Royal Viking.

From his Beverly Hills home, Pennario travels all over the world giving 50 concerts a year, half of which are concerts with the world's great orchestras. The other half are recitals.

He has appeared with the Chicago Symphony, Philadelphia, Cleveland and Boston Symphony Orchestras; New York, Berlin and London orchestras; and many others. He has performed with the world's greatest conductors, including Eugene Ormandy, Fritz Reiner, Arthur Fiedler, Andre Kostelanetz, Robert Shaw, Sir Georg Solti, Zubin Mehta, Andre Previn, Seiji Ozawa and Otto Klemperer.

In 1985, he appeared on nationwide television with Beverly Sills and James Levine, music director of the Metropolitan Opera.

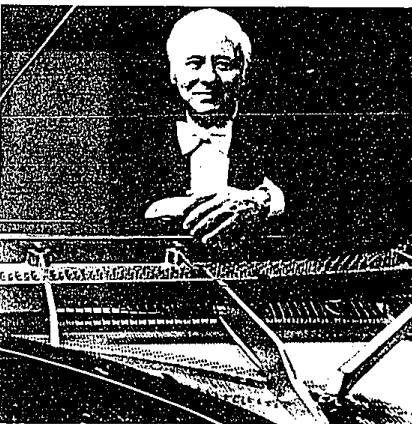
It seems that with his career, Pennario would have a wealth of memories, wonderful stories to tell, and, if nothing else, would want to talk about his own compositions.

No, Pennario was more interested in talking about bridge. "Usually I play in about three tournaments a year," he said. "I have to fit them in between my concerts. I am not able to play every day like the real professionals."

EVEN THOUGH he can't play everyday, Pennario has achieved enough red and gold points to become a Life Master and his tournament schedule over the last 12 years throughout the United States could

easily be confused with his concert schedule.

Phil Leon, whom Pennario calls a real pro, is his partner in most of these tournaments. Leon is from Grosse Pointe and is the person who first interested Pennario in taking up tournament bridge.



Leonard Pennario

Pennario's lifetime career in music began at age 12, when he had six days to learn the Grieg Piano Concerto in A minor to perform with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra.

"No, I wasn't nervous. I was excited. At that age, you don't know enough to be nervous," said Pennario.

lo, who has a photographic memory. Soon after the debut he was booked with the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

Pennario made his debut with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall, playing the Last Concerto in E-flat just after his enlistment in the army shortened a national concert tour.

By special permission, he played in uniform and left immediately for the Pacific where he fought in World War II.

"It was very difficult to re-establish myself after being away for

three years without practicing," said Pennario.

The highlight of his career was the years he spent performing and recording with Jascha Heifetz and Gregor Piatigorsky, an association that began in 1961 and continued until Piatigorsky's death.

Arthur Rubinstein had been the trio's pianist and the two asked Pennario to perform with them in 1961 at Carnegie Hall. The music they performed later was recorded.

"It was the greatest thrill of my career to perform with them," Pennario said.

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