

Stravinsky's work done brilliantly

By Mary Jane Doerr
special writer

"L'Histoire du Soldat" by Igor Stravinsky isn't often programmed. When it is, usually it is the Concert Suite not the fully staged theatrical version originally composed in 1918.

With a superb production of the fully staged version, the Birmingham Temple closed its 10th Vivace Series.

Dr. David Daniels, chairman of the music department of Oakland University, conducted the carefully chosen group of seven instrumentalists in the difficult work and the Mime Ensemble acted out the story with a delightful interpretation.

Daniels explained the complexity of the music through instrumental demonstrations to the full house in an easily understandable manner during the first half.

Telling the story of the Russian fairy tale, he related how Stravinsky and his librettist, Charles Ramuz, altered the story for their own purpose.

mask for the devil.

The words were easily understood, so that the story about Joseph and the Devil could be followed. The story is similar to that of the medieval story of Faust, except Joseph, the Soldier, doesn't find salvation in the end as Marguerite does. The lines seem like they came from the Songs of Solomon and the story has biblical connotations.

Aston's narration unfolded the tale of a soldier returning to his village with his cherished violin which he finds entrancing somewhat like "Fiddler on the Roof." The two stories are of common origin giving rise to obvious parallels.

"The way of the violin or the way of the devil" is the poetic expression in Stravinsky's tale expressed in both Aston's narration and the actors' movements.

As a musical work, the piece revolutionized classical music as it reduced the massive orchestras of that period to only seven musicians, each representing the high and low of the section.



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EACH IS EXCELLENT, easily meeting the demands of the piece. They executed the polyrhythms, dissonant harmonies, ostinatos and the parodies on the tango, ragtime, and waltz with precision.

This is the second time in the last 12 years that the Soldier's tale has been presented in the Detroit area. In 1980, Oakway Symphony Orchestra presented a fully staged production. The work is perfect for places

such as the Birmingham Temple with the small orchestra and few actors.

The only problem is that it requires a first class ensemble, such as this one, to make a production successful.

Mary Jane Doerr of Bloomfield Hills is a full-time teacher and free-lance writer who specializes in opera and musical theater.



Photos on display

"Modern Times," the final exhibit in a series of four on the work of Eugene Atget, French photographer (1857-1927) is on display at the Detroit Institute of Arts through June 29. The one above, "Avenue des Gobelins" with its peek at the shops and window displays illustrated his interest in the life and look of the streets of Paris. The show, in the De Salle Gallery of Photography, is open without charge. Hours are 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday, 5200 Woodward, Detroit.



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