

Jewish group celebrates with music

The Lubavitch movement is the world's largest Chassidic organization, having chapters in many countries. The membership's strict observance of orthodox Jewish customs and their unconventional attire, which can be traced back to past centuries, sets them apart from the rest of the population.

Traditionally, their interaction seems to be the increase. One of the recent signs of this was a social concert and dinner, which was part of a fund-raising effort for the organization.

The combination of Lubavitch and

classical music is indeed rare. However, celebrating events with music is actually in accord with this movement's philosophy. The Chassidic movement was founded in 18th-century Poland. One of its basic principles was to serve God with joy and celebration rather than with fear and trembling. Some of the Chassidic songs are notorious to this day.

For many years, this movement has been in self-imposed segregation with its rigid customs and observances. Today, however, the Lubavitch movement boasts of a wide educational network, with some chap-

ters associated with universities and other secular institutions. While one of the goals of this movement is to bring Jews back into the traditional fold, there is none of the desperate, hard-sell efforts to convert anybody in sight.

THE RECENT CELEBRATION last week at the Masonic Temple featured a special concert with top ranking violinist Pinchas Zukerman and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, which he helped establish and has been directing since 1980.

Zukerman is one of the several Israeli musicians whose career has



Avigdor Zaromp

bloomed through the generous help of Isaac Stern. Some say that while half of the Israelis became leading musicians, the other half became critics.

Jews comprise the bulk of the top musical performers today,

their presence among major composers has been far less pronounced. There is, however, one composer whose inclusion in any such program is a "must." This is Ernest Bloch, the Swiss-born Jewish composer who wrote many works based on Jewish or Hebrew themes.

His Suite Modale for Flute and Strings is based on more universal principles and was written in 1956, three years before his death. The work, which is impressionistic in nature, is very appealing and received an inspired performance with flutist Julia Bogard.

The two other works on the program were more familiar — the String Symphony No. 10 by Mendelssohn and the Violin Concerto No. 5 "Turkish" by Mozart.

Of these works, I found the performance of the Mendelssohn work to be understated. This single-movement work is one of a collection written when the composer was 14.

In spite of the composer's youth, this work has a mature shine and polish

to it, which were not fully brought out in this performance.

THE MOZART CONCERTO was performed expertly by all involved. While Zukerman was also doing some nominal conducting, the solo passages received his full attention. Meanwhile the ensemble was providing good support, its members being fully aware of their role. The clean and articulate performance did justice to this masterful work. The extraneous "Turkish" theme in the final movement was given an ample exotic touch, which Mozart must have undoubtedly had in mind.

Among the individuals being honored on this occasion were Jack and Miriam Shenkman, whose active involvement and support of the Lubavitch movement for many years was most significant.

Among their most visible contributions is the Sherkman Synagogue at the University of Michigan Chabad Student Center, and the building they helped purchase in Farmington Hills which serves as the Michigan Chabad Center and also bears their name. The Shenkman are also celebrating their 45th wedding anniversary.

The special event will hopefully become a tradition. Next year, violinist Itzhak Perlman will be featured. It should be something to look forward to.

Violinist displays great ability

By Avigdor Zaromp
special writer

Time and again Gunther Herbig, Detroit Symphony Orchestra music director, has shown his great skill in conducting the standard repertoire.

On some occasions, however, his excursions outside the beaten path prove his great stylistic versatility. At the latest DSO program last week one had the chance to observe both aspects.

The major works on the program were of the traditional kind — the Symphony No. 5 by Schubert and Violin Concerto by Brahms. The non-traditional work was the "Six Pieces for Orchestra," Op. 6 by Anton Webern. This work, in its original version, was also presented in an untraditional way.

In an unprecedented scheduling, this work was performed twice on the same program — once before each of the major works. Maestro Herbig, who offered an explanation on stage to this unorthodox format, assured the audience that this double-exposure was not due to lack of rehearsal time. Rather, this work which portrays shifting moods, sometimes captured in brief tansions, would be difficult to digest in a single listening.

As another justification for this, Herbig related an example from the past, in which Hans von Bülow had conducted Beethoven's Ninth three times on the same evening.

IF WEBERN'S WORK is no match for Beethoven's masterpiece in terms of overall quality, it is also considerably shorter — it lasts only about 12 minutes. But even if one feels some reservations, the work has considerable merit.

It was written in 1909 in reaction to the death of the composer's mother three years earlier. In spite of the passage of almost eight decades, the work is still an enigma to most listeners.

Schubert's fifth symphony was mostly appreciated for its melodic, playful themes which are in great abundance. But this performance presented this deceptively simple symphony as a more serious and significant work than many performances indicate.

The intensity of the themes in this performance tended to bring this symphony closer to Schubert's C Major one "The Great" at least occasionally in terms of tone color. If not in scope, the contrast between the energetic and refined aspects made this performance among the better ones I have heard.

Almost any performance of the Brahms violin concerto is guaranteed to be a major attraction. This was especially the case here, with the distinguished violinist Henryk Szeryng playing the solo part. His outstanding ability is yet another refutation of the notion that advanced age should inevitably spell decline.

SZERYNG'S APPROACH, which was technically secure, was also characterized by a sound that was well-focused and clean without being pompous.

The double stops, such as in the opening theme of the last movement, sounded effortless and undistorted. Moreover, the integration of the solo part with the orchestral passages, which are significant in this work, was among the more impressive ones.

The passing of the themes between soloist and orchestra was extremely smooth, providing a rare sense of continuity. The refined, lyrical second movement was done with artistic taste, without overblown emotionalism.

Returning to the subject of double exposure, I wouldn't find a repetition of the Brahms concerto,

review

under such fine performance, an unreasonable burden (but presumably the performing musicians would).

It would probably have the effect of drinking a complete bottle of wine instead of half a bottle, which could be very stimulating if the quality is right.

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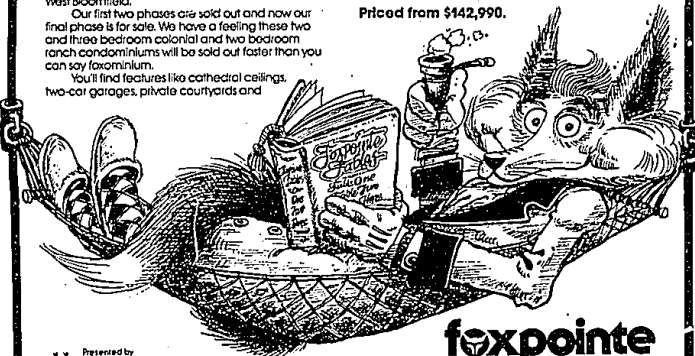
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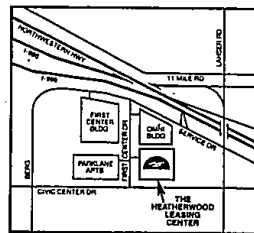
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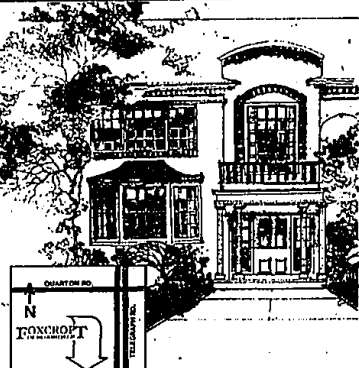
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