Staples family made concert a winner

By Mary Jane Doerr
special writer

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Besides talent, violinist Greg Staples, 17, has two good reasons for being an accomplished musician.

His father, Gordon Staples, is concertmaster of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, DSO, and his mother, Beatriz Badinszky, is a member of the violin section of the DSO.

They provided a climate for his talent to flourish in and he worked to achieve the technical proficiency he displayed Sunday evening at the Birmingham-Bloomfield Symphony Orchestra, BBSO concert at West Bloomfield High School.

His selection, Sarasate's "Zigeunerweisen," a collection of gypsy tunes, had two sections, a dramatic slow one, which he played with feeling and expression and a shorter more spirited one in which the orchestra entrances and exists were important.

GREG WAS a semifinalist in the 1985 Quest for Excellence and a finalist in the 1986 Quest for the Best. He was one of the winners of the Detroit Symphony Civic Orchestra Concerto Competition and will perform with the Detroit Symphony during its Hudson Metro tour this fall.

The concert titled, "The Staples Family Performs with the Symphony," featured parents as well as son.

Gordon Staples, about to retire as concertmaster of the DSO performed Introduction And Rondo Capriccioso by Saint-Saens. This brilliant work was a perfect vechicle for him to show off flashy scales and arpeggios without ever losing expression or feeling.

To open the concert, Badinszky joined her husband and son in Vivaldi's Concerto in F for Three Violins. The appealing short work provided the opportunity for all three to perform together, on equal terms, if that is possible, and they presented the work with warmth and charm.

Apparently the orchestra, Felix Resnick conducting, was inspired by the presence of the Staples family or by the planned move next year to the Birmingham Theater, Temple Beth El, and Christ Church Cranbrook. The performance of Dvorak's Symphony No. 9, the "New World", was one of its best of the season.

In a touching move, Badinszky and Staples, took the last chairs of the violin section to play the Dvorak with the BBSO — probably the only time Gordon Staples will ever be last chair. The effect on the violin section was magic.

Resnick has toned down the wind section, keeping it more balanced with the strings, especially noticeable in the "Going Home" second movement.

Yet, the winds were strong in the fourth movement where strength is called for.

The orchestra couldn't have selected a better evening to perform so well. The opening subscription renewal for next year begins and a concert like this one, should stimulate ticket sales.

Never too late to make music, neurologist says

By Cathie Breidenbach
special writer

"How can musicians move their fingers so fast?" The question started neurologist Dr. Frank Wilson searching for scientific answers to explain musical virtuosity.

In a lecture at the Smith Theatre at Oakland Community College, Wilson told how his search launched a sideline career and resulted in his recently published book, "Tone Deaf and All Thumbs."

The book, written in Wilson's breezy, humorous style, is aimed at adults who always wanted to play an instrument, but thought they were too old to learn or lacked talent. The good-looking doctor took up the piano himself at age 40 and gives hope to late bloomers and non-prodigies.

Wilson claims that nearly everyone has the neurological and muscular equipment to make music, and he insists that it's never too late to learn.

Research on the brain shows that specific areas control certain functions.

THE HUMAN brain is ideally suited to making music because disproportionately large areas of the brain are devoted to controlling the hands and fingers as well as the mouth, tongue and throat — control essential to playing instruments and singing.

> ***'Music is a way of speaking, an expressive skill. If we taught English the same way music tends to be taught, we would have people able to recite Shakespeare and the Gettysburg Address, but unable to write a letter to the editor or to a boyfriend or girlfriend.'***
>
> *— Dr. Frank Wilson*

"All the brain has to be involved in music making," said Wilson, because music requires a complex mix of skills — time keeping, memory, neuromuscular coordination, emotional interpretation.

Performing at Carnegie Hall may be out of the question for late-bloomers, but having a wonderful time making music is not. Wilson said the discipline of learning to play develops the neuromuscular system and studying music increases a person's ability to appreciate it.

He sighted studies which show that when musically educated people listen to music, the left side of their brain is more active than when musically uneducated people listen — neurological proof that learning music physically changes the way we listen.

He told of a woman in her 90s who took up the organ several years ago and has traded up instruments seven times since she started her late-in-life adventure. There is also the 60-year-old woman who learned to play drums and says there are things she can say with the drums that she can't say any other way.

WILSON, CHIEF of neurology at the Kaiser-Permanente Medical Center in Walnut Creek, Calif., and an assistant professor of neurology at the California School of Medicine in San Francisco, explained the physiological mechanics of coordination and compared musicians with athletes. The main difference is that musicians concentrate on small muscles and athletes specialize in developing larger muscles.

Musicians couldn't move their fingers so fast if they had to think about every movement. Repeated slow practice (and he stresses the slow) allows the cerebellum to record the correct movement so it becomes an authentic reflex, or "ballistic" movement in neurological terms. That's how musicians amaze the audience with their flying fingers.

He recommends fixed-pitch instruments for adult beginners because they're easier to get started on than pitch instruments.

"Finding the right teacher is the *single most important thing in learning* to play," he said.

When he began playing and exploring the physiology of music, he focused on adults 'earning to develop their musicality. That original pursuit has expanded to include an interest in performance anxiety and in music education for children.

HE CRITICIZES the way music is usually taught as an imitative rather than an expressive skill.

"If we taught English the same way music tends to be taught, we would have people able to recite Shakespeare and the Gettysburg Address, but unable to write a letter to the editor or to a boyfriend or girlfriend."

Wilson encourages music teachers to foster self expression by teaching improvisation and composition.

Few young musicians putting in their daily practice time enjoy the process of learning music. Wilson attributes this to the way music is usually taught to emphasize developing *a "product," a repertoire of polished* pieces to play in public.

He said that if those of us not destined for musical careers were freed from the feeling we should "get it perfect," we'd enjoy the process of making music much more.

Then practice could become a pleasure instead of a drudgery. Because it's enjoyable, we'd keep at it and, like the little old lady organist Wilson knows, we could raise the *rafters with music well into our 90s.*

Music lectures start

Jack DuBois continues his illustrated lectures on great symphonic poems at Somerset Mall beginning Monday.

After last fall's series on opera, the spring 1987 lectures will turn to great orchestral music of the Romantic Era.

The Romantic Era provides an immensely rich treasure of these "symphonic poems." Included will be such perennial favorites as Liszt's "Les Preludes," Tchaikovsky's "Romeo & Juliet" and Strauss' "Zarathustra."

But there are many lesser known byways to be explored — such pieces as "The Enchanted Lake" of Lindov or Respighi's "Vetrate di chiesa."

The time for all lectures is 7:30 p.m. on Mondays through May 18.

The fee for the series is $50. Individual lectures are $15. For information, call DuBois at 882-2325.

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