

Outstanding soloists perform here, Ann Arbor

By Avigdor Zaroop
Special writer

Earlier this month two outstanding musicians performed in Michigan. The better known was Isaac Stern, violinist, who was the soloist with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra at Ford Auditorium.

The other was Russian pianist, Vladimir Feltsman, who played with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra at the Ann Arbor May Festival.

Stern, an artist with proven magism, introduced a work which

might have generated far less attention on its own. It was the violin concerto by contemporary French composer Henri Dutilleul (b. 1916), composed for and dedicated to Stern in 1985.

Life would be simpler if there were a scientific way to evaluate such creations. Not everybody in the audience was equally enthusiastic with this new, dissonant concerto. This was evident in the unusual pattern of applause, which was long and persistent, but at the same time rather diluted and scattered. Indeed,



in touch
Joanne Zuroff

many of the regular listeners I met clearly indicated their dissatisfaction with the work.

However, Stern cut through the dissonant exterior, the contemporary sound effect generated by exotic percussions, to yield a most lyrical, shining tone.

IT MADE THE WORK sound cultivated, artistically motivated, if not outright attractive. While it is impossible to adequately evaluate a new work from first listening, the violin concerto by Dutilleul is the kind of work I would attempt to hear without a compelling reason. Stern is one such compelling reason, one of the few that could motivate me to hear this work in the future and possibly change my mind.

Other works on the program were more conventional. These were a Concerto Grosso by Handel, the "Herbicides" Overture by Mendelssohn and the Symphony No. 1 by Schumann. These are the kind of works with which Maestro Gunther Herbig normally feels at ease with. Among the positive aspects of

Herbig's musical leadership is the introduction of more material from the baroque repertoire. Handel's Concerto Grosso in B Flat Major, Op. 6 No. 7, received its first DSO performance on this occasion. While the initial largo sounded somewhat strained and artificial, the well-paced Handel style emerged in the subsequent movements.

Mendelssohn's overture received a climactic buildup which made it almost Brahmsian in scope going beyond Mendelssohn's agreeable texture, which tends to sound too benign in some performances.

SCHUMANN'S SYMPHONY overcame some of its problematic aspects under Herbig's guidance. The main theme of the first movement was flowing freely in spite of the awkward pattern that tends to weigh it down. The expressive slow movement, followed by the well focused scherzo gave the work internal substance that compensated for its structural weaknesses. The coda in the final movement was done at a

tempo that was much faster than any performance of this work that I can recall. It provided the final, uplifting mood that left a lasting feeling of artistic achievement and success.

FELTSMAN IS A GIFTED Russian artist who only recently got permission to leave the Soviet Union. His performance of the challenging Rachmaninoff Concerto No. 3 showed tremendous technique and control of the keyboard. He maintained the fast tempo even through the most technically ferocious passages.

Many established pianists stay away from this work because of its technical demands. The few deficiencies were in the more subtle, artistic aspects. There were moments

of intense passion to be sure, but in other places, such as in the theme of the first movement, the expressive, singing quality was absent.

He is 36 years old with a long career ahead of him and his musical horizons are likely to widen. He has yet to reach the ultimate heights artistically, but he is on his way to getting closer to this unattainable goal.

The orchestra's performance of the Beethoven Symphony No. 6 showed an all too passive following of the score with some automated dynamics to polish it up. There were some isolated attempts to infuse life into the music — extroverted playing in the third movement and the rillard at the end of the work. What was lacking most was the kind of dynamics that are made with conviction rather than habit.

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