

Outstanding soloists perform here, Ann Arbor

By Avigdor Zaromp
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 magnetism, 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



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persistent, but at the same time rather diluted and scattered. Indeed, 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 wouldn't 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. 4 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.

Guitarists to perform

The Classic Guitar Society of Michigan will present its members in recital at 3:30 p.m. Sunday at Birmingham Unitarian Church, 651 Woodward (at Lone Pine), Bloomfield Hills.

Featured will be guitarists Michael Bryce, Mary Diller, Leo Dymant, John Hall, Nancy Squires Hall, Charles Leonard Johnson, Larry

Laub, Ken Puterbaugh, Walden Reed and bassist, Rich Kowalski.

The Society was founded in the 1950s by guitarist and teacher, Joe Fava. Meetings are held at 8 p.m. on the second Tuesday of the month at Dominec Restaurant, 2847 Coolidge, Berkeley. For information about the program or the Society, call 978-5465.

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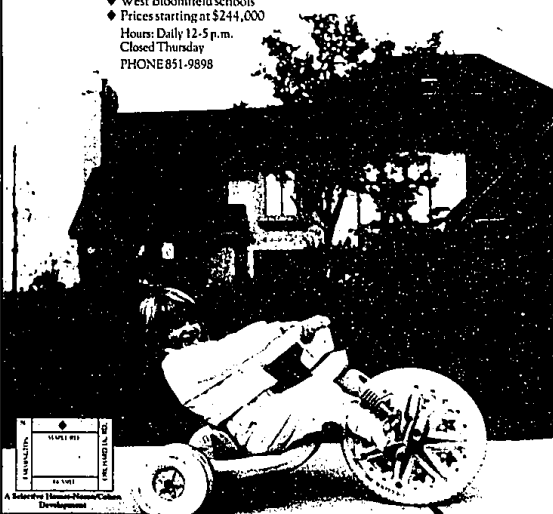
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