

Ehrling, Laredo earned their ovations

By Avigdor Zoromp
special writer

Sixten Ehrling has been a regular visiting conductor here since the end of his 10-year tenure as Detroit Symphony Orchestra director, 1963-73. While relations with the musicians were rather stormy in those days, his stature here has been on the rise ever since. That underscores the fact that it's difficult to be fully appreciated at home.

Last Thursday at Meadow Brook,

Maestro Ehrling was greeted with a brass fanfare and a standing ovation when he came on stage.

Pianist Ruth Laredo was the soloist in Prokofiev's First Piano Concerto that evening. She was born and raised in this area and is internationally recognized for her knowledge of music by Rachmaninoff and Scriabin. Mischa Kottler, who has inspired generations of pianists from this area (and is still going strong), was one of her teachers.

Laredo's affinity for Rachmaninoff was reflected on Sunday's program as she played his Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini. On Thursday she dug into Prokofiev's demanding concerto displaying zest, vitality and authoritative command.

THE RIPPLING PASSAGES, alternating with formidable chords and rapid octaves, sparkled with brilliance. Her flexible tempo didn't always mesh perfectly with Ehrling's more rigid beat, and that occasionally resulted in a tendency to drift apart but without serious mishap.

In her performance of Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini (also known as the Paganini Variations) on Sunday, intensity and Romantic nostalgia alternated freely with good coordination between soloist and orchestra in spite of the flexible rhythms. Crisp, well-defined phrasing was the rule in this performance with just minor exceptions. The standing ovation at the end was well deserved.

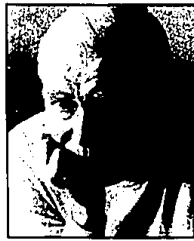
Ehrling, known for his command of a vast repertoire, proved once

again that it is possible to present a rewarding and fulfilling program even when venturing away from the three Bs. Both concerts opened with Rachmaninoff's "Isle of the Dead," a tone poem based on a painting by Swiss artist, Arnold Böcklin.

The refined molding of the musical texture helped convey the sense of artistic creativity rather than just emulating cinematic sound effects as some performances tend to do.

STRAVINSKY'S "Rite of Spring" was the other major orchestral item on the program. Here Ehrling demonstrated astonishing command of this complicated score. Even in the most rhythmically intricate portions, a sense of order and purpose emerged through the multiple tonalities. This work, which was received in its 1913 premiere, sounds contemporary even by today's standards and can sound chaotic and unappealing under a less skilled conductor.

The performance of Franck's symphony was another achievement by Ehrling. This work has some



Sixten Ehrling

gloomy overtones, especially in the first two movements. In many performances, this sense of gloom tends to detract from the vitality, even to spilling over into the final, triumphant movement.

This was one of the few renditions in which the emotional content was given its due recognition while being kept in its proper perspective. At the



Ruth Laredo

other extreme, the brass passages in the final movement sounded bright without overpowering the strings.

Both concerts ended with Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever" with the piccolos drawing applause from the cheering crowd. The traditional fireworks were back after being absent last year due to fire regulation problems.

Royal Oak fair slated

The annual Royal Oak outdoor art fair will be held 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday in Memorial Park, Woodward at 13 Mile, Royal Oak.

The show, sponsored by the Royal Oak department of recreation and public service and the Royal Oak Arts Council, is a juried show featuring 95 Michigan and outstate artists. Food and beverages available. No

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Among the artists participating are: Phyllis Aluph, Birmingham, pottery; Stuart Gray, Birmingham, pottery; Bernie Merritt, Bloomfield Hills, leaded glass; Shirley Schultz, Bloomfield Hills, watercolor; Karen Gearhart, Southfield, stained glass; Ted Striewski, Farmington Hills, jewelry; and Bruce Migdal, West Bloomfield, pastel.

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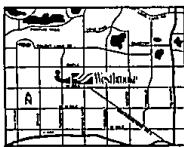


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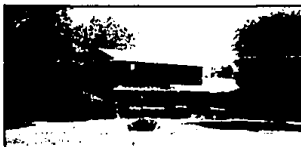
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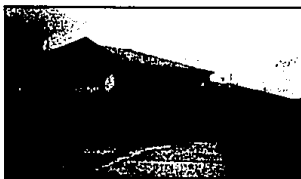
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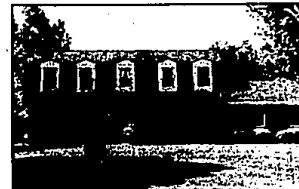
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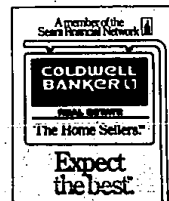
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