

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



Thursday, December 22, 1988 O&E

10118



Martin Scot Kosins plays nostalgic songs at Sebastian's in Troy.



Jay Wesch is the drummer in Kosins' trio, which also includes Al Martin on bass. Couples enjoy twirling on the restaurant's tiny dance floor.

DOUGLAS E. SUSALLA

Romantic music is his specialty

By Cathie Brelidenbach
special writer

WHERE CAN A COUPLE go to dance to old-fashioned love songs that kindle romance?

Since last Valentine's Day, pianist Martin Scot Kosins has been playing mellow, sentimental songs and easy-listening dining music at Sebastian's in Troy's Somerset Mall.

"We're one of the few places in town where you can dance cheek to cheek," he says of the intimate restaurant where he offers hold-each-other-close music dating from as early as 1915 and moving through the '20s, '30s, the war years on to the present.

Four nights a week he sets the mood with solo piano, and Friday and Saturday nights the other two members of the Martin Scot Kosins Trio join him — Al Martin on bass and Jay Wesch on drums.

Kosins likes to see his music bring people onto Sebastian's dance floor.

"I see couples draw each other closer as they live the music they

romanced to," he says, recognizing the way a special song can spark memories and make years seem to evaporate.

"I don't do top-40 songs," he points out. Kosins specializes in "songs you can't hear anywhere else" and takes pride in being able to play anything and to fulfill even obscure requests.

A BUSINESSMAN from Lloyds of London had dinner at Sebastian's recently and was amazed that Kosins could play from memory so many songs that were popular in London during World War II. Another regular listener pulled a cherished record out of her purse and asked him to learn a song from it. He did.

"If someone asks for a song I can't play, the next time the person comes in, I know it or I'm working on it," he says.

Kosins scavenges for old records at thrift shops, rummage sales and auctions. From them he learns new/old songs to add to his repertoire.

"No way am I a modernist," he says of the charm that "simple and

Although he usually doesn't know what he's going to play until he sits down at the keyboard, for New Year's, Kosins has planned a sentimental set to follow the requisite "Auld Lang Syne" played at the stroke of 12.

singable" songs of past decades hold for him.

Staple tunes by George Gershwin, Cole Porter and the Best of Broadway form the nucleus of his repertoire of literally thousands of songs, but he likes to sprinkle the American mainstream with lesser-known gems from forgotten movies as well as international tunes to add spice and a good dancing beat.

"If a customer asks for an Italian song, I'll play him eight," he says. His personal favorites are French songs flavored with the romance of

Paris and the Seine. With a little encouragement he will play an hour of French songs — all from memory and all straight from the heart.

HE SAYS THAT after a 10-year hiatus it's good to be back playing cabaret piano. Kosins started playing professionally at society parties when he was 15, and he played piano to work his way through Wayne State University where he earned a bachelor of arts in music and a master's in composition.

Ten years ago he played at the

London Chop House, the Caucus Club and the Dearborn Inn. Then in 1978 he quit cold and said, "Never again." He wanted to compose classical music.

For 10 years he wrote music ranging from symphonic works for the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and chamber music to jingles for commercials, and he produced records on both coasts for entertainers such as the Ink Spots, John Carradine and Loretta Swit.

Although he continues to compose and to produce occasional records and commercials, Kosins says he is delighted to play music for listening and dancing once again. Call it a fluke, or call it fate, that led Martin Scot Kosins to return after 10 years to spend his evenings at the keyboard.

Last February he was wandering through Somerset Mall and decided to stop at Sebastian's for a cup of coffee. Sebastian's owner Matt Prentice, who had worked with Martin on some commercials for the mall and for Sebastian's opening, asked him to

plinch hit at the piano for just one evening because he was stranded without a pianist on Valentine's Day. Martin agreed.

He had given away all his tuxedos and performing suits and had to rent one for the night. At the end of the evening, Prentice commanded, "Tomorrow we talk terms," and Kosins has been at Sebastian's ever since.

THE ENTERTAINER maintains that the musicians and the music they play sets the tone for a restaurant.

"A place like Sebastian's wouldn't hire a boogie woogie band."

He chooses to wear a tuxedo and says, "I think the musicians should be the best-dressed people in the room."

One tuxedo won't suffice because just as he takes pride in never playing the same song two nights in a row, he also makes it a point never to wear the same suit on consecutive evenings. So he has bought a whole new performing wardrobe.

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