

The coming of the Messiah is a central theme among the faithful of the Judeo-Christian denominations. The time and age of his coming may be elusive to many, evoking anticipation and prayer. To classical musical audiences, however, the coming of the Messiah is never in doubt. It happens every year around this season.

Handel's masterpiece, which he completed in 24 days, always has attracted large audiences. To maintain such interest and attention, this Messiah keeps coming in different forms and guises. The latest of these versions presented here isn't exactly new. It was arranged by Mozart some two years before he died.

Orchestra Hall was packed Thurs-

day for the first of four presentations of the "Messiah" on consecutive days. The guest conductor and soloists, all from Germany, are relatively unknown to local audiences. They were conductor Ernst-Ulrich von Kameke, soprano Maacha Deubner, alto Hildegard Laurich, tenor Peter Maus and baritone Berthold Possemeyer.

**PERFORMANCE OF** oratorios, especially from the baroque era, is a specialty that is separate from other parts of the standard repertoire. Artists who are relatively unknown can frequently prove to be more effective and convincing than their more celebrated colleagues. In this regard, this performance of the "Messiah" had some positive aspects to offer.



**Avigdor  
Zaromp**

The controversial aspect of authenticity has a bearing on one's perception of the quality of the performance.

If the standard version one is accustomed to is the yardstick for authenticity, last week's version certainly deviated. However, Mozart wasn't an ordinary arranger, and my own perception was that, in a strange way, a great deal of authenticity was in this performance.

This version was most illuminating even if I didn't find all its nuances agreeable. For example, the extra dotted edges and extraneous phrases in "His Yoke is Easy" tended to be obnoxious, clashing with the evenly flowing sixteenths originally intended. But other aspects of the performance compensated.

**THE CHAMBER-SIZE** orchestra and the 40 singers of the Detroit

Symphony Chorale proved to be quite effective in the refined acoustics of Orchestra Hall. Handel's music sounded big due to its intrinsic characteristics, rather than through exaggerated size of the performing forces.

The singers were capable for most part. One major reservation I had was about alto Laurich. While she had all the notes in place, her voice had a rough, husky quality to it. It would be ideal for tavern or beer drinking songs.

Soprano Deubner conquered the fast sixteenths in "Rejoice" effortlessly. Maestro Kameke, who had good timing and control most of the time, had some problem adjusting to the slower tempo of the middle portion of this aria.

Tenor Maus had a bright, vibrant

voice that was natural and unforced even in the most intense phrases.

Baritone Possemeyer managed to sing even in the lower range without excessive vibrato, even though his voice lacked some strength in these ranges.

The audience spontaneously was on its feet during the "Hallelujah" chorus, a custom initiated by the king who was present during Handel's performance.

This version of the "Messiah" may not prove to be superior to the standard one. Many of us may have greater affinity to the latter due to sheer habit. But this version was instructive and revealing to the majority of listeners who had never heard it before. It is a version that deserves to be performed — at least occasionally.

**By Avigdor Zaremp**  
special writer

The Lafayette String Quartet performed jointly with the Augustine String Quartet on a program at Varner Hall, Oakland University, recently. The Augustine was established at the Eastman School of Music, where it formed its connections with the Lafayette String Quartet, quartet-in-residence at Oakland University.

The masterful Items made the

program hard to beat. Each group performed a string quartet by Beethoven and then combined to perform Mendelssohn's celebrated Octet.

The Lafayette String Quartet is getting to a point where no introduction is necessary — mention of the name is enough.

THE QUALITY of their playing at this concert reflected a standard that one may expect only in the top leagues.

***This earliest Beethoven quartet, whose style is still indebted to Haydn, came through with undistorted clarity, undaunted even by the bursts of intensity.***

minor. The approach of the Augustin Quartet was reflective of a much later style. They pushed phrases to the limit, with a resulting sound that was sometimes harsh and abrasive. Their violins also tended to clash with the lower instruments. This was still within the bounds of a high-quality performance, to be sure.

Quite a few performances by established groups make Beethoven's late quartets sound extremely contemporary. If I felt that some as-

pects of this performance were unduly harsh, it is a reflection of my personal preference.

**THE AUGUSTINE** String Quartet derives its name from an Austrian folk song that Schoenberg quoted in his Second String Quartet. This name seems to fit too well — I kept associating their sound in Beethoven's Op. 95 with the dissonances in Schoenberg's music. Depending on one's taste, some may consider this to be a positive trait, my own preference

notwithstanding.

The performance of Mendelssohn's Octet was one of the most lively and intense that I have heard.

This work, written when Mendelssohn was only 16, is typically played with a sweetness, which tends to diminish its stature. The combination of Lafayette's precise intonation and Augustine's intensity produced a rendition that is likely to leave a long term imprint in one's memory.

**VARNER HALL**, on the Oakland University campus, tends to attract

small local audiences, typically a fraction of its capacity. On this occasion, however, the attendance was far more substantial, and for good reason. With the stature and prestige of the Lafayette continually increasing, this hall may be too small for them in the near future.

The Augustine Quartet, which may need more time to reach its optimal level, seems to be on the right track toward high professional acclaim. It would be interesting to hear them again in a couple of years.

DINING & ENTERTAINMENT

*On the Town*

---

**Observer & Eccentric**  
**CLASSIFIED**  
**ADVERTISING**

644-1070 Oakland County  
591-0900 Wayne County  
852-3222 Rochester / Avon

**A SWEET DEAL  
WITHOUT  
A SUITE PRICE**

**WEEKEND RATE**  
**\$99** | **\$59**  
**TWO NIGHTS** | **ONE NIGHT**

**YOUR RATE INCLUDES:**

**YOUR RATE INCLUDES:**  
**FULL COOKED-TO-ORDER BREAKFAST,**  
**EVENING COCKTAILS, LATE NIGHT SNACKS**

A weekend stay at the Compi Hotel includes all the "extras" of trendy suite hotels without the extra-high rates. For \$99 for two nights, or \$59 for one night, you can enjoy:

- Four-star, luxurious rooms, each with spacious sitting area, remote control TV desk and two phones.
- Cooked-to-order breakfast, daily cocktail reception from 5-7 pm, and late-night snacks.
- Private exercise facilities, indoor pool, and whirlpool.
- Exclusive Compi Club with comfortable lounging areas, intimate bar, stocked library, and big screen TV.

Weekends at Compi—how sweet it is!

For reservations, call 1-800-4-COMPI

*The Brand New*  
**(Compi) Hotel**

COMPI HOTEL DETROIT/SOUTHFIELD  
 Across from the American Center  
 Franklin Rd., at American Center  
 Southfield, MI 48034/313-357-1100

Based on double occupancy, with a maximum of 4 persons per room. Children under 18 stay free in parent's room and eat free. Valid only at Compi Hotel Detroit/Southfield location.



**Jan. 4-7**  
**Bobson**  
"Slight  
of Hand  
Comedian"



**Jody's  
Comedy  
Club**

**And Steven's in**

**Jan. 11-14**  
**Gary Hardwick**  
One of Detroit's Finest  
*back by popular demand*

Wed., Thurs. Shows  
at 8:00 P.M.  
Fri. & Sat. 8:00 - 10:30 P.M.  
Thurs. 8:00 Show No Smoking  
Fri. Night 8:00 Show No Smoking

**JOIN US NEW YEAR'S EVE**  
with **Leo DuFour**  
**Two Shows - 8:00 & 10:30**  
*Advanced Tickets Only*  
**For Show reservation call 261-0555**  
36071 Plymouth Rd. - Livonia



**Jan. 18-21**  
**Gary Kern**  
Opened for Sunday  
Night Live. Father  
Guido Sarducci &  
Carm Stendell



**Jan. 25-28**  
**Tom  
Anzalone**  
From Dangerfield's  
in New York City


*Fonte D'Amore*  
DEL Signore  
RESTAURANT  
NOW TAKING  
RESERVATIONS FOR  
NEW YEAR'S EVE  
CALL 422-0770

WEDNESDAY  
IS  
OPERA  
NIGHT

32030 PLYMOUTH ROAD • LIVONIA • 422-0770

"Please, my little girl  
needs blood."

Imagine if you had to ask for blood to save the life of someone you love.  
Next time the American Red Cross asks, give blood, please.

**GIVE BLOOD, PLEASE**  **American  
Red Cross**

# Cuddly.

Get a huggable holiday gift,  
only at A&W Restaurants!



Give something huggable for the holidays: a plush A&W Great Root Bear® toy! He's a cuddly critter who makes a great gift for someone special. Only \$9.99 with any purchase, from participating A&W Restaurants. Take the A&W Great Root Bear® home with you today!

*A taste to remember*



**A&W® Restaurants**  
29285 Southfield Road