

Heavy-handed piano ruins recital

By Avigdor Zaromp
special writer

Ann Elliott-Goldschmidt, Lafayette String Quartet's first violinist, joined pianist Flavio Varani to present a piano and violin recital at Varner Hall Friday. Varani, artist-in-residence at Oakland University, is also a participant in the current Piano Festival offered by the Lyric Chamber Ensemble. Lafayette is quartet-in-residence at the university.

Their program attracted a large audience. The selections were the Sonata Op. 100 by Dvorak, the Sonata for Violin and Piano Op. 13 by Faure and Beethoven's famed "Kreutzer" Sonata.

Bird program to be offered

English Gardens of West Bloomfield will host a program, "Feeding Our Feathered Friends: Attracting Birds to your Yard" at 10 a.m. Saturday and repeated at 11 a.m. Sunday.

The speaker will be Linn Osborn, assistant manager of the garden center. She will cover styles of bird feeders, kinds of seeds available and which types of birds the different seed mixtures attract, placement of a bird feeder and selection of plants and landscaping to attract certain birds. Question and answer period will follow. The program is free and open to the public.

"The placement of a bird feeder is just as important as the selection of it," said Osborn. "Many times when seeds fall from the feeder they will start to germinate in a flower bed or landscape bed, causing problems for gardeners. This can be prevented with proper planning."

For information, call Bob Walker, 851-7506. English Gardens is at 6370 Orchard Lake, West Bloomfield.



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Considering the talent and ability of the artists, this program with these selections should have been a smashing success. However, it turned out to be a letdown, and I was left with a sense of disappointment.

The major impediment was Varani's tendency to pound on the piano, a characteristic I've noticed on several previous occasions. There is no doubt this has been brought to Varani's attention by others.

This problem could be corrected; failure to do so amounts to a regrettable waste of talent and artistic potential.

There were some isolated rewarding movements, to be sure. One was the slow movement in the Dvorak Sonata. But much of the agility was lost in the other movements. The dotted second theme in the final movement, for example, had the agility and bounciness of a turtle. "The Faure sonata had too much of the heavy Franck style texture (that is present in the work to some extent) and too little light airiness, which is more characteristic of Faure."

The biggest setback was suffered by Beethoven's masterpiece in the fast movements. The presto pianistic passages can't be properly played if the approach is too heavy handed. This resulted in a final movement that was much too slow, crumbling under its own weight.

Varani is capable of much better art than was demonstrated on this program. Elliott-Goldschmidt did her best under the circumstances, but she would have sounded much better under more favorable conditions. This performance should have been recalled if it were possible.

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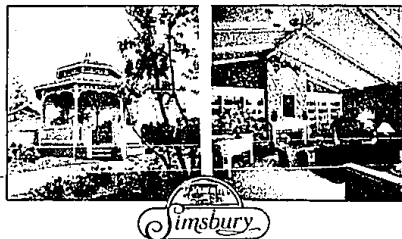
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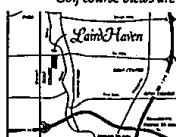
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