

More treasures unearthed by American Artists

By Avigdor Zaromp
special writer

The American Artists Series concluded another season of unusual music last week. The predictable element is that at least part of each program is works that haven't been performed here. In many instances, they are unknown even to the performing musicians.

Joann Freeman, pianist and music director of the series, has the ability to continually come up with challenging, rewarding items season after season. This program was no exception.

One change in the performing group was DSO violist Marguerite Deslippe, who replaced Ron Fischer, who was recently married in Vienna. In addition to the regulars — Linda Sneed-Smith (violin), Hart Holman (viola) and John Thurman (cello) — there were two guests.

Harp player Jane Richman, who is active in area chamber events and also appears as second harpist with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, joined the string players in works by Debussy and Andre Caplet (1876-1925).

WQRS music director Charles Greenwell, presented the narration for these French Impressionistic

works. Debussy's "Dances Sacree et Profane" is the more established work, but its impact here was far more pronounced than one is likely to experience when listening to a recorded version while driving a car, which was much of my previous experience with it.

The "Conte Fantastique" by Caplet, based on the story by Poe, "The Mask of the Red Death," is an example of ingenious musical storytelling. Greenwell prepared the background by reading a synopsis of the story and the music was performed under dim, red lighting. It can be reported that there were no Red Death casualties among the audience. All lived to enjoy this unusual work with its rare, glowing, captivating harp passages.

Bloch and Smetana were the composers in the second part, with works for violin, cello and piano. The three short nocturnes for these instruments gave us another sample of Bloch's nostalgic tunes and his special use of singing quality of the cello, among his favored instruments.

The seldom-heard Trio Op. 15 by Smetana is filled with sadness, tragic and dramatic emotions. It was written following the death of his child. The style, not surprisingly, is occasionally reminiscent of Dvorak, but

spans a substantially wider spectrum. The turbulent extremes were energetic, sometimes to the point of overstatement; in particular, the final Presto movement was in need of more cultivation and refinement in its subtle details.

This performance made a convincing case for putting this work on

the map and for more recognition of Smetana, who is associated primarily with his popular tone poem "Moldau."

Five exciting events are scheduled for next season, starting in December. We can count on more combinations of novelty and high quality in that new season.



Avigdor
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Center names coordinator

Sheree Rensel was named exhibition coordinator for Paint Creek Center for the Arts of Rochester earlier this spring. This new position was created to handle the center's expanding exhibition programs. Rensel is responsible for planning and coordinating all on-site exhibitions.

She has worked at the center since 1985 in all areas — teaching, programming and exhibition — and has been involved in its growth and progress.

"I would like to see that progress continue and flourish with innovative and meaningful exhibitions of contemporary art," she said. Rensel has bachelor and master degrees from Wayne State University, teaches at Henry Ford Community College and is artist-in-residence at the Nakaki Talibah Schoolhouse.

She is an active exhibitor whose work has been shown at the Detroit Institute of Arts, Michigan Gallery, Detroit Artists Market and Nawara Gallery.

She has won awards, including a Vermont Studio Colony Fellowship and the Arts Foundation of Michigan award for her "Detroit & Vicinity" exhibition.

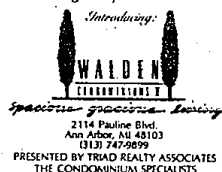
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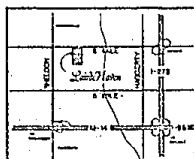
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