



Festival's fashion byword: celebration

By Cathie Breidenbach
special writer

DESPITE RUMORS that informality runs rampant in American fashion, at the Meadow Brook Music Festival people still dress for a concert. They may not always dress "up," in fact casual comfort dominates — especially for those sitting on the lawn — but people throw themselves into the spirit of the occasion and dress to accent the festivity of only-in-the-summertime outdoor concerts on the grounds of Oakland University.

To be sure, times have changed since the first festival 25 years ago when the Baldwin Pavilion became the summer home for the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. The scope of the music has broadened and so have fashions. Nowadays people dress less for propriety and more for comfort.

Florence Knudsen, who, with her husband Semon (Bunkie) chaired the very first music festival, recalls that in the festival's early days people sitting in the pavilion "tried to dress up a little. We wore good looking outfits. Wool, if it was going to be chilly or a dress and jacket." She adds, "And I never went anywhere without heels."

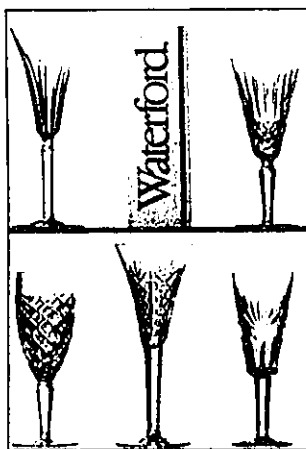
Hose and heels are no longer de rigueur in our informal era. Mrs. Knudsen says of today's fashion informality, "Sometimes I fight it and sometimes I think how wise it is. I loved the dressy-up stage, but we just moved beyond it."

AT THE MEADOW Brook Music Festival today, the fashion byword is "celebrate" and audiences still dress up on opening night. They bring out their finery not because it's expected, but because they enjoy dressing for the occasion. Some men sport tuxedos and women ward off the evening chill with

mink coats. For most classical concerts, women in the pavilion wear dresses and men wear suits. Those on the lawn opt for easy-care, easy-wear clothes.

Julie Glynn, who has worked at Meadow Brook for the past five years, recalls occasional dapper young men in tuxedos, not in the pavilion, but picnicking on the lawn with the nonchalant elegance of Ralph Lauren models.

People-watching vies with picnicking as a pre-concert pastime especially when handsome fellows ask for attention by lounging on the lawn in tuxedos. Glynn says, "Attire varies from night to night depending on the concert." When stars on stage dress with knock-'em-dead glamor, the audience sometimes comes dressed to match. Glynn remembers when the Pointer Sisters appeared in past years, the audience "dressed to the hilt with lots of gold jewelry, electric colors and elaborate hairdos. They almost mimicked what the performers had on."

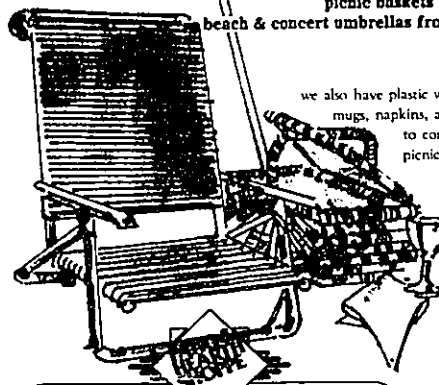


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Advertising coordinator was Marsha Stamps. Special writers were Joan Boram and Cathie Breidenbach.

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