

# Program features all Michigan composers

**By Avigdor Zaromp**  
staff writer

A special event saluting Michigan composers at the Detroit Public Library attracted a good-sized audience for a program of this kind.

Among musical occupations, composing is probably the most thankless. Composition is among the few fields in which one has to compete for attention with legends from the past. In addition to the fierce competition of the present generation, this is a major aspect one has to keep in mind when attempting to evaluate such new, untested works.

I found some of the works to be impressive while others failed to reach me. Taste is, of course, a personal matter. When approaching new art, it is important to know when to take certain things with a grain of salt.

**THE MOST** substantial works in terms of length were the opening and final selections.

The first, "An Epitaphology of the Planets" by Wesley Fishwick, brings to mind another work dealing with the same subject — that of Holst. However, the subject matter is about the only thing these works have in common.

Fishwick's work is for piano and soprano, based on text by Annie Dillard. It emphasizes the astrological

concepts of the planets, including Pluto, which wasn't discovered when Holst's work was written.

The singing was by soprano Bonnie Brooks, with Fishwick at the piano and Detroit Symphony Orchestra musician Haden McKay playing the cello. Fishwick, who teaches piano at Macomb County Community College, studied with Misha Kottler, who was present.

**ANOTHER FORMER** Kottler student was Lettie Becken Alston, who presented four short pieces with soprano Glenda Kirkland. The piano role, performed by Alston, featured the non-standard technique of plucking the strings manually and grating on the strings with the fingernails.

"I don't recall having ever taught her to play like that," Kottler said.

Other works on the program were by James Hartway, Leslie Bassett and Anthony Iannaccone. Hartway, a composer and teacher at Wayne State, has had his works performed by the DSO, among them "Cityscapes."

His work on this program, "City



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Sketches" consists of five city scenes, inspired by Detroit but which, according to Hartway, could be regarded as universal.

Performed by Doris Richards, piano, Charlotte Merkerson, violin, and Richard Filippio, cello, it ranged from the very dissonant "Abandoned House" to the very witty and contrapuntal "Festival Weekend."

Bassett, on the University of Michigan faculty, was represented with "The Jade Garden," a collection of four songs with text by Matsuo Basho.

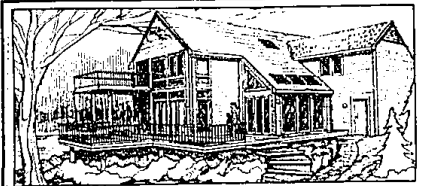
The contemporary style with some unconventional piano technique was supplemented by an almost impressionistic expressiveness. It was ably performed by pianist Joseph Gurt and his daughter, Naomi, soprano.

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For information, call Frederick Stubbs, 833-1475 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday. The Detroit Historical Museum, 5401 Woodward at Kirby in University Cultural Center, is open from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday-Friday.



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