

Violinist adds oomph to Mendelssohn's work

By Avigdor Zaromp
special writer

In many concert programs the center of gravity is concentrated in one work, while other selections tend to become side dishes, appetizers or desserts.

This format works well on most occasions, and successful departures from it are relatively rare. One such departure occurred last week with the latest Detroit Symphony Orchestra program at Orchestra Hall. Czech-born guest conductor Jiri Belohlavek, who is in his early 40s, has an impressive list of achievements to his credit. Among the latest is his appointment as music director of the prestigious Czech Philharmonic, a role he is scheduled to assume this year.

Guest violinist was the Romanian-Israeli violinist Sergiu Luca, who played Mendelssohn's celebrated violin concerto in E minor.



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THE RICH international mixture was reflected in the selections as well as the guest artists. In addition to works by Mozart and Mendelssohn, the program also featured works by Havel and Debussy. The only appetizer on the program was Mozart's overture, "La Clemenza di Tito," which is seldom played.

Mendelssohn's popular concerto is occasionally criticized for sounding too agreeable to the ear, with no significant sense of drama or conflict. Those who hold this opinion tend to blame Mendelssohn's financial comfort for the seeming absence of struggle in his music.

If this concerto tends to sound carefree and even sterile in some performances, then the fault lies with the approach rather than with Mendelssohn.

LUCA'S APPROACH differed from several routine ones I have heard in the attempt to lend more substance to the music than meets the ear during a casual listening.

His tone had a certain edge that elevated it from the trap of innocent purity and sweetness. While there

were some instances of flawed intonation — such as in the ascending octaves in the opening movement — these were exceptions to the rule.

For the most part, Luca's approach tended to enhance the substance of the phrases. Unfortunately, the physical strength of this sound wasn't always sufficient to penetrate the orchestral barrier, in spite of Belohlavek's attempt to keep it low.

The line of communication between soloist and orchestra would occasionally become fragile, resulting in some awkward tempo adjustments. In spite of these shortcomings, this performance was a welcome change from the predictability of many adequate, but routine performances.

RAVEL'S "Ma mere l'oye" (Mother Goose) Suite and De-

bussy's "La Mer" are favorite examples of orchestral tone painting by these unchallenged impressionistic French masters.

Often, the effect of this music is similar to that of the average painting in a museum — its beauty is acknowledged, but its impact is lost among the hundreds of other paintings that one walks by.

It takes a conductor who is intimately familiar with the subtle orchestral nuances and who knows how to use vast orchestral resources ef-

fectively to explore the inner treasures of this music. Belohlavek has this gift. Under his leadership, the movements of this music turned into enchanting voyages with lasting impact.

The concept of a balanced meal is too often associated with substantial compromise in taste. This program was a rare example of a balanced musical menu that was satisfying and fulfilling. We need more programs of this kind.

Varani giving concert

Pianist Flavio Varani, artist-in-residence at Oakland University, will give a concert at 7 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 28, at The Community Center, 24705 Farmington Road, Farmington Hills.

His program of works by Haydn, Chopin, Faure and Villa-Lobos is part of The Center's fund-raising effort to purchase a grand piano. Varani has recently returned from a concert tour of Italy, France, Germany and Spain. He regularly performs at the

Meadow Brook Music Festival as a soloist with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and is a popular soloist and chamber musician in Michigan as well as the United States and abroad.

He has performed at Carnegie Hall, and has received many awards, among them ones from the Art Critics Association of Brazil and Michigan Foundation for the Arts.

For ticket information, call The Community Center, 477-8404.

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Like so many of today's young entrepreneurs, Rick is looking for value in time as well as money. Having a country club in his backyard makes it easy for him to enjoy his leisure without wasting time with a long drive. According to him, "Robertson Brothers has sure proved its mettle."

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