

Alicia de Larrocha gives inspired performance

By Avigdor Aaromp
special writer

Last week's Detroit Symphony Orchestra program was dominated by 20th century music. The one exception, Strauss's "Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks," was chronologically, if not stylistically, close enough. It was written around 1895.

The program presented by guest conductor Michael Morgan was unusual in its scope. Among its central works was the Symphony No. 6 by Martinu, a seldom-performed musical treasure.

Pianist Alicia de Larrocha performed Ravel's Piano Concerto in G Major, which is among the more established 20th century works. The program opened with "Siren Song," a short work by the young American composer David Dzubay, who submitted it recently as his master's thesis.

Judging a new, unfamiliar work is always subjective. The list of instruments in Dzubay's score contains a whole kitchen sink of percussion devices — bells, drums and blocks of all sorts. In my opinion, an actual kitchen sink would have sounded better. Fortunately, the rest of the program was far more attractive.

Among the more impressive was de Larrocha's inspired playing of Ravel's concerto. The diminutive, celebrated Spanish pianist stands tall in the level of her artistic achievements spanning several decades.

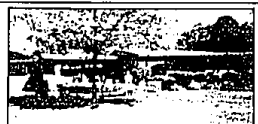
The themes in the second movement, which appear simplistic, sounded enchanting in her hands. The tempo in the outer movements was less vivacious than what I would have preferred. The orchestral role sounded undernourished as a result, but there was ample sparkle in the witty pianistic passages. The jazzy texture in the first movement was enriched with the artistic spark of classical tradition.

Martinu's symphony was the most impressive orchestral performance on this program. The full sonorities brought forth the inspiring elements underneath the layers of chromatic motion. It has been my feeling that music, like wine, needs to age to develop its ultimate taste and quality. Martinu's music seems to have been reaching this stage for the past few years. The new director-designate of the Detroit Symphony, Neeme Jarvi, once said Martinu would be among his three top choices of composers. While my choices wouldn't be the same, a work such as this makes his statement at least understandable.

The performance of the popular "Till Eulenspiegel" was correct, for most part. Among the ingredients needed

were greater flexibility of tempo, more playfulness in the pranky themes and, in general, more latitude in the spirit of this programmatic music.

On the positive side, the sound was well-balanced, there was good clarity and the music moved dynamically in the right direction. With more relaxation of the rigid grip this performance could have turned from mere adequate to superb.



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Architects to speak

Internationally known architect John Burgee of New York, designer of One Detroit Center, the 41-story skyscraper in Detroit, will speak at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 19, in the architecture auditorium, Lawrence Technological University, Southfield. The lecture is open to the public free of charge.

His work has been recognized with two national AIA Honor awards and by the Reynolds Prize. In 1983, his alma mater, The University of Notre Dame, gave him an honorary doctor of engineering and the following year the Illinois Council of the

American Institute of Architects of Chicago gave him its first Chicago Architecture Award.

Dennis Evove, vice president of architecture for Little Caesars Enterprises, and Lawrence Tech alumnus, will give a slide program and discuss his role in the restoring of the Fox Theater in Detroit at noon on Sunday, April 22. He led the renovation of the 16-story office building and 5,050 seat theater which cost more than \$20 million. This program will take place in the architecture auditorium and is open to the public free of charge. The campus is at 21000 W. 10 Mile, Southfield.



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