

Trio turns obscure works into masterpieces

The Beaux Arts Trio recently appeared as part of the prestigious Chamber Music Society of Detroit series (CMS). On past occasions I have described this group as the finest of chamber music. On each occasion I am equally impressed with this special, high quality group.

The Beaux Arts can make obscure works sound like major masterpieces. The Trio in G major, Opus 65 by Hummel and the Trio No. 5, Opus 11 by Schumann are two such works. Both of these trios require substantial artistic effort — they don't shine on their own, which may be a major reason for their neglect. This delicate performance diverted the listener from the apparent simplicity of Hummel's first movement, revealing the more significant interior of the last spinning passages of the

final movement would tempt an average artist toward display of virtuosity, especially of the piano part. With the Beaux Arts Trio, however, the integration of the individuals with the group is always the primary objective. Pianist Alexander Fessler does over his colleagues, violinist Isadore Cohen and cellist Peter Wilemyn like a hen over her chicks. The result is, invariably, one of the most impressive displays of fine coordination and collectiveness.

Schumann's trio, with some of its awkward rhythms, may suggest to some the traces of insanity which were to cut his life short five years later. There was little doubt of its significant musical quality, however, in this performance. The Beaux Arts plan to record all of the three Schumann trios, all of which are seldom heard.



Avigdor Zoramp

A more established item on the program was Ravel's Trio in A minor. The outstanding performance provided continuity and unity to this challenging work with its multitude of irregular rhythms. The passionate conclusion was fortuitous — but without any harshness, retaining the texture of an extremely precious and delicate fabric. The applauding audience was rewarded with a movement from Dvorak's "Dumky" Trio as an encore.

We will be fortunate to have this group with us a second time this season — on March 12. Fessler will also appear with the Tallis String Quartet on March 19.

ANOTHER CHAMBER TRIO, less known than the Beaux Arts, deserves recognition. Trio Mexico, founded in 1975, has an extremely heavy schedule here as well as in Europe, Asia and Latin America. The trio consists of pianist Jorge

Suarez with his brother, violinist Manuel Suarez and cellist Ignacio Mariscal. They have performed here recently in the Stella concert series at the Lila Jones Theater on the campus of Oakland Community College in Royal Oak.

Their program had one major item in common with the Beaux Arts — the Ravel Trio. There was markedly more individualism in this performance, which was less homogeneous. There was, however, ample talent and perception on an individual basis, which made it a convincing and valid performance.

Other works on that program consisted of a Shostakovich trio and the Piano Trio No. 2 by Armando Lavalle, a Mexican composer born in 1924 who dedicated this work, as

well as his first Trio, to the Trio Mexico.

The Shostakovich Trio No. 2 is performed occasionally. Among its better known themes is one borrowed from the Suite on Hebrew Themes, which Shostakovich also used in his String Quartet No. 8. Among the captivating aspects in this performance was the mischievous humor, such as ending a phrase on the "wrong" note.

It was stated that the Lavalle work was composed just two years ago, but my fears were put to rest by the total, melodic themes in the context of Mexican and Latin American native rhythms. Trio Mexico is a capable group with substantial experience and wide repertoire. They are deserving of acknowledgment and recognition.

Semiconductor continues on his wise, silly way

Avigdor Zoramp
Special writer

The name of P.D.Q. Bach is better known today than that of his creator, Peter Schickele, the author and "semiconductor" of the sold-out event at Orchestra Hall last Saturday.

The talent of Schickele goes far beyond being funny — there are quite a few who make a comfortable living doing that. The most potent element of his humor is the deep, profound knowledge on which it is based. It appeals to listeners all levels, ranging from those with no musical training to those with a solid musical background.

When attending such an event, one finds himself on a very special universe. This universe is encountered even before he actual event begins — on the main program page. Titles of movements are based on real, straight concepts, but with a tiny twist that may remain unnoticed by an unwary reader. One movement is entitled "Introduzione Casuale; Allegro con molto brio."

Other humorous material is found among seemingly regular lines, such as "The Taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are not allowed in this hall. Nor are many other things. For a complete list, send a self-addressed stamped envelope." Or a line such as "Activities of the Detroit Symphony . . . are made possible in part with the support of the City of Detroit." — the kind of statement that only an inspired comedian could think of.

TO MANY LISTENERS, the P.D.Q. Bach material is funny and entertaining due to the strange sounds, facial grimaces and ridiculous contortions of the conductor on the podium. Much of the effect of this humor derives from the fact that it is based on some reality.

Few would find a timpani beat humorous in its natural environment, such as a Beethoven symphony. Make the beat a little louder, however, with a tiny shift of the accent — and this instrument turns into a most ridiculous device, at least before the advent of electronic music and synthesizers. The latter got their share of ridicule in the Royal Firewater Music, performed with empty bottles of booze and double reeds — without the instruments, that is.

Strange instruments are also an important ingredient of P.D.Q. Bach. There is nothing unusual about a triangle — of the metallic variety used by percussionists. Here, however, we were looking forward to hear a Bermuda Triangle — alas, in vain, since it got lost. But there is still a vast universe left in the fertile mind of P.D.Q. Bach.

But the UNIVERSALITY of Bach's music (the real one) was brought home through comedy with

the music of J.S. Bach, which was a major ingredient in earlier stages of this series, played a much smaller role on this occasion.

Following a slew of other themes, there emerged another phrase of universal significance — that of Richard Strauss' "Also Sprach Zarathustra," also known as the theme from the film "2001." There was a little twist added, however. The original phrase, as written by Strauss, features a descending semitone, creating an unresolved effect.

But Schickele evidently found a solution to the enigmatic riddle, by reversing Strauss. An ascending semitone provides a complete, satisfactory resolution and, being in harmony with Bach's prelude, establishes the universality of his music.

Now that's hardly a laughing matter.

force that no dry, formal lecture could match. This was done at the conclusion, when Shickele proceeded to play on the piano the first Prelude, in C major, from Book I of the Well-Tempered Clavier, among Bach's most simple and easy pieces. Suddenly it combined with a theme from Borodin's "Prince Igor," popularly known as "Stranger in Paradise."

Other works on that program consisted of a Shostakovich trio and the Piano Trio No. 2 by Armando Lavalle, a Mexican composer born in 1924 who dedicated this work, as

well as his first Trio, to the Trio Mexico.

Now that's hardly a laughing matter.

LOVELY RANCH ON THE POND
1/2 Acre, new construction; super-insulated. 3 Large bedrooms, 2 full baths, great room with cathedral ceilings, marble floor fireplace, walk-out basement, first floor laundry, large exterior dock with gorgeous view of pond, 2 1/2 car attached garage. New subdivision of \$150,000 to \$300,000 homes. For sale by builder, only \$173,900.

COUNTRY CONCEPTS
BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT
(313) 437-3667

Who do you know?

Know someone who wants to deliver The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers?
Call 581-0900 for route details

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Thanks to our good friends!
We're delighted to have helped you find the comforts of home!

COLDWELL BANKER
SCHWEITZER REAL ESTATE

HOMES OF QUALITY ARE OUR SPECIALTY

CITY OF BLOOMFIELD HILLS location just under 2 acres with private pool, patios, courtyard and tennis! Interior rebuilt and expanded with quality and style...so beautiful it must be seen \$1,450,000 H-173534

ORCHARD LAKE FRONTAGE for this exciting new contemporary. Magnificent views from all main rooms. Extra high ceilings, walls of glass, open floor plan, slab granite floors and counters. Breathtaking. \$1,550,000 H-61798

NEW ENGLISH TUDOR with old world charm and quality workmanship. Custom features including solid cherry doors, floors and moldings. Premium Orchard Lake and canal frontage. Private pool area. \$1,825,000 H-176038

CITY OF BLOOMFIELD HILLS magnificent Chestnut Hills colonial with quality features! Extensive custom woodwork with attention to detail. First floor master suite, large family room with vaulted ceiling. Walk-out to lovely terrace and pool. \$660,000 H-176626

Warm wishes for a happy holiday season.

Thanks for your business — serving you is always a pleasure. We hope the holidays bring you warmth and happiness.

Hannett, Inc. Realtors

KIRK IN THE HILLS
New contemporary interior with style and panache! Floors of marble, bleached oak and ceramic tile. Two elaborate fireplaces. 26x13 solarium with Jacuzzi and walk-out to landscaped private pool area. Fine homes. \$357,900 H-177142

MAGNIFICENT CONTEMPORARY
Quality features in this lovely home in Bloomfield's premium Echo Park. Large marble foyer, living room with curved walls and marble floor. Great room with two-story marble fireplace. Exquisite master suite. Decking. \$1,095,000 H-167364

MAINTAINED TO PERFECTION
Every detail has been tended to in this Georgian Colonial. Lovely Beverly Hills area. Magnificent private wooded setting with pool area to rear. Convenient location to Birmingham public and private schools. \$395,000 H-165702

Hannett, Inc. Realtors
646-6200 birmingham ml 48009
open monday through friday 8:30-7:00 p.m., saturday 9-6 p.m. and sunday 10-6 p.m.

Is a move to FLORIDA in your future?
Call John Hannett for personal service both here and there!
646-6200

★ ★ ★ **Estates Club** ★ ★ ★
...club for the world's leading real estate firms