

# Midori deserves her legendary reputation

By Avigdor Zoromp  
special writer

soloist in Bartok's Violin Concerto No. 2 on last week's Detroit Symphony program. The Saturday performance which I attended was nearly sold out.

It is true, that influential connections are important, and Midori may have been fortunate for having been given an early break by Zubin Mehta in the mid 60s, when she performed with the New York Philharmonic. But the rest of us are fortunate as well, for having the opportunity to behold such an exceptional talent. Midori, at the age of 19, possesses an artistic capability that few attain in a lifetime.

This talent was evident in her performance of Bartok's Concerto No. 2, a work that is seldom heard, and even more seldom understood. Its unconventional form and the pushing of tonality beyond its limits makes its general appeal rather limited. Since the name of Bartok carries a lot of weight, especially since his death in 1945, this concerto may evoke respect, but is nevertheless kept at arm's and bow's length.

When listening to her play this intricate work, one realizes that it contains a whole universe to be explored. Midori seems to be one of the few qualified guides to this enchanting universe. Adopting naturally to

the changes of tempo, mood and texture, it is evident that this universe is part of her artistic domain.

Zdenek Macal, born in Czechoslovakia and currently the music director of the Milwaukee Symphony, was the guest conductor. While definitely skillful and talented, his approach to Bartok's concerto seemed to be that of a mortal who strives to unravel the secrets of the universe, but without being part of it. He was successful in holding the work together technically, but without enough of the breathing that an artistic entity requires.

The program opened with "SaSi-Ma" by the Puerto Rican composer

Roberto Sierra. The title, which looks Spanish to English readers, is an acronym derived from San Antonio, where the work was first performed, the composer's name Sierra and the name of Macal, who conducted the work's premiere in 1990. While the work may have some merit, I would still consider it a good candidate for Gov. John Engler's budget cuts, provided the more viable artistic endeavors were left alone.

Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition" was the only standard repertoire work on the program. It received a standard, but competent

performance. Impressive at times. It tended to be big on sound. The Bydlo, which is a Polish ox-cart, sounded like a big diesel truck. The Gate of Kiev was more like the Berlin Wall, or at least loud enough to knock it down — Joshua must have known it when he used it to tumble the Wall of Jericho. Most other scenes were more in proportion, though. The Tulleries, the Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks and the Market in Limoges were among the better scenes. Most of the drawbacks were not Macal's, however. Following Midori's performance, the standard repertoire simply sounds too standard.

## The show went on despite comedy of errors

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This is cluster time — a cluster of musical events, that is. Two chamber events I attended last weekend were a fraction of the possibilities.

A Friday evening concert at OCC-Royal Oak featured violinist David Cerone and pianist Eunice Podis in a

program at the Lila Jones-Johnson Theatre as part of the Stellar Concerts series. Cerone and Podis are both from the Cleveland Institute of Music.

Sunday afternoon, another program of rare chamber works was presented at Cranbrook/Kingswood Auditorium by the American Artists Series.

The Stellar Concerts event drew a disappointingly small audience, resulting in more delicious cakes than the rest of us could consume. But the program itself took the cake, so that we could literally have our cake and eat it, too.

There were two sonatas for violin and piano — the C major, K 296 by Mozart and one in A major by Franck. The latter is by far the more established work of the standard repertoire. The Mozart sonata, however, is scheduled to be performed today by Isaac Stern and pianist Robert McDonald on the special recital at Orchestra Hall.

While a match between David and Goliath may be uneven, the biblical story indicated that victory should not be taken for granted. One should consider, though, that in that case, victory went to the better musician.

Other items on the program — Chopin's No. 1 in E minor, Op. 10, major and Ballade No. 1 in G minor (solo piano), Recitative and Scherzo for solo violin by Kreisler and Three Preludes by Gershwin arranged by Heifetz for violin and piano.

While the approach may have been too passive at the onset, possibly as a reaction to the low attendance, it picked up momentum and culminated in an impressive performance of the Franck sonata. Podis showed impressive ability, especially with the Chopin Ballade, handling even the difficult coda with authority.

The AAS event turned out to be a comedy of errors — of the kind that could inspire a PDQ Bach program. It started when one of the string players lost his music and the program had to be rearranged until the part could be copied on the Kingswood School Xerox machine and taped together.

The opening, quartet for oboe and string trio by Lenox Berkeley, was moved to later in the program and the concert proceeded with Five Improvisations of a Holiday for flute, cello and piano by Eugene Goossens and the Three Moods for Solo Oboe by Michale Berkely (b. 1940), the son of Lenox Berkeley (1903-1990), followed by Impresiones de la Puna by Argentinian composer Alberto Ginastera.

After that, things went together with only a few minor hitches. Backstage volunteers were putting the score for the final movements of the Quintet in C Minor by Dohnanyi together, even as the musicians were performing the beginning ones.

Flutist Ervin Monroe who had performed so well earlier in the program, delivered the rest of the score between movements and stayed to double as page turner for the rather cumbersome package which violinist Hart Hellman had to read from.

Monroe was turning a page every few seconds — most unusual for a string instrument which uses only one staff at a time. It turned out that, when the loss of the viola part was discovered, there was a frantic effort to retrieve it by copying the piano score, cutting out the viola part and pasting it on a separate sheet of paper.

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The Richard Luby and Friends Early Music Series will present two All-Mozart programs in the metropolitan area this weekend. The first will be 8 p.m. Saturday at Center for Creative Studies-Institute of Music and Dance, and the other will be 8 p.m. Sunday at Cranbrook/Kingswood Auditorium, 500 Lone Pine, Bloomfield Hills.

These concerts, sponsored by CCS-IMD, are in lieu of the concerts originally scheduled May 4, 5, Luby, internationally renowned recitalist and soloist with leading period instrument ensembles, has given the complete cycle of unaccompanied sonatas and partitas by J.S. Bach in London's Wigmore Hall and New York's Merkin Hall. He is a native Detroit, studied with Misha Mischakoff and attended Cass Technical High School before earning degrees from Curtis Institute, Juilliard and Yale University School of Music.

He is artistic director of Ensemble Courant: the Society for Performance on Original Instruments



David Schrader

in residence at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where Luby is associate professor.

Others who will be performing in the Saturday and Sunday concerts are Susan Klebanow, soprano; Debra Lonergan, classical cello; David Schrader, forte piano; and Luby, classical violin.

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