

Musical debut impressive

By GRETCHEN McHUGH

Friday's Michigan Chamber Orchestra concert, repeated Saturday afternoon, brought together Israeli guest conductor, Dalia Atlas and pianist Claude Frank. The program was well-suited to the orchestra's small size—between 20 and 30 players, depending on the piece.

Miss Atlas chose to open with Wagner's "Siegfried Idyll." Writing it as a birthday gift to his wife, Wagner scored the piece for a manageable surprise-package size of "a few strings" and a woodwind/solo combination of eight players. Therefore, Friday's performance by a chamber orchestra was a pleasant revelation to listeners whose idea of something Wagnerian is of something big.

In a scoring whose transparency approaches that of chamber music, Miss Atlas drew from the orchestra the long expressive phrases with great skill. Her underlying sense of the beat engendered cohesiveness, in spite of the slow tempo.

Each phrase "went somewhere." That is, it swelled with the exact sense of proportion to its climax, so that one was aware of the structure without thinking about it.

The effect is similar to one expressed in a sonnet by Robert Frost, in which a lady is compared to

a silken tent, whose central pole "... is loosely bound by countless silken ties. . . ."

French horn playing by Karen Nixon and Douglas Anderson was particularly fine.

THE REST OF THE PROGRAM, made up of the more "classical" Corelli, Mozart and Beethoven, presented to the orchestra the usual challenges of accuracy, expression, timing, phrasing and balance.

Pianist Claude Frank performed the Beethoven Concerto No. 1 with keen attention to dynamic and rhythmic subtleties. These combined with his obvious enjoyment of the piece and with Miss Atlas' competence on the podium, made this the highlight of the evening.

SFORZANDOS WERE CRISP, accurate and authoritative; reflective themes were expressive; and the last movement, full of Beethoven-style jokes, was truly delightful.

For the most part, the two artists managed to coordinate entrances very well and to keep the solo/orchestra balance. There was excellent playing by the oboes in the last movement, and Frank's presentation of the long cadenza was dramatic and altogether satisfying.

Beethoven's writing of three differ-

ent cadenzas for this concerto, said Frank, "showed how much he thought of this piece."

Unfortunately, the Corelli Suite for String Orchestra, which was to be played with perfect intonation to be worthwhile, wasn't, leaving a blot on the otherwise fine evening.

Having been alerted to the strings' struggle in this piece, one was more alert of it in the Mozart Haffner Symphony which followed, and heard a thinness in the strings that otherwise would have been hardly noticed in the very fine reading Miss Atlas gave it. She brought out the spirited opening rocket theme in dazzling relief against the sweet contrasting secondary themes, although the woodwinds tended to be somewhat lost in tutti sections.

THE MENUETTO, played at a sedate tempo requiring a great sense of "line" from the conductor, expressed the delicate balance grace of this quintessential classical music. Other than a few slightly ragged string entrances, the orchestra performed beautifully under Miss Atlas' baton.

Her conducting strength lies in her keen sense of line and texture. Combined with a crisp sense of timing, these are skills to stand any conductor in good stead. Hopefully, she'll be back soon after this fine Detroit debut.

Rates increase for U-M housing

University of Michigan residence hall rates will increase next year.

An increase averaging 7.4 per cent was approved Feb. 17 by U-M regents.

For the U-M family housing units, rate increases averaging 13 per cent were approved. The increases, recommended by the student-

staff rate study committee of the Housing Division, were submitted by Robert C. Hughes, acting director of housing, and Henry Johnson, vice president for student services.

The basic U-M residence hall rate for a standard double room, which now is \$1,638 for two terms, will be \$1,759

next year. The rate includes room, seven dinners and six lunches weekly.

Other residence hall rates will range from \$643.50 (now \$600.75) for a room-only unit, to \$2,057.50 (now \$1,985.75) for a single room in the traditional residence hall.

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S-L senior wins debate scholarship

Jon Frank, a senior at Southfield-Lathrup High School, won first place in a \$1,500 scholarship in the John S. Knight Debate Contest Feb. 24-25 in Detroit.

He topped a field of 37 finalists to win the competition, sponsored by the Michigan Interscholastic Forensic Association and the Detroit Free Press.

His victory capped a successful season of debate competition, including a first place finish in the 1978 Class A Debate Championships in Grand Rapids two weeks earlier.

"It's rare to have a state debate championship and John S. Knight winner in a single year," said Southfield-Lathrup debate coach Frank Lawson. "But it's also rare to have students like Jon Frank and his partner in the state finals, junior Richard Elias, who have the talent and motivation for success in debate."

Lawson said it is not the first time Southfield-Lathrup has parlayed the combination of talent and motivation

into victories. In the past six years, the team has chalked up three state and two national championships, the John S. Knight winners and three third place debate finishes. Lawson predicts continued debate success in the future, with a considerable number of talented underclassmen returning for the 1978-79 debate season.

The 1978 debate topic was "Resolved: That the federal government should guarantee comprehensive medical care for all citizens in the United States." Frank was one of more than 10,000 high school students from throughout the state who have debated the topic since last September. Of these, 37 finalists were selected to compete in the scholarship contest.

Frank and Southfield-Lathrup junior Richard Elias will compete in May in the Tournament of Champions at the University of Kentucky and in June at the high school National Debate Tournament at Northwestern University in Chicago.

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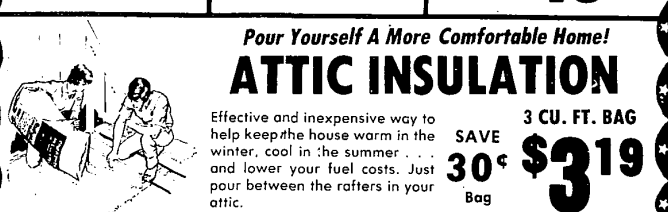


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