

Semkow shows different side

By Avigdor Zaremp
special writer

review

In his first all-Brahms program, Maestro Jerry Semkow impressed the audience with works from the standard repertoire. In his second program last week, the same conductor demonstrated that the standard and non-standard works can live side by side and radiate with greatness, each on its own terms.

The non-standard element on the program wasn't just any odd obscurity. It was the symphony in Three Movements by Stravinsky, a landmark in 20th-century music. This 1945 composition is one masterpiece of our century that deserves to be heard more often.

Among the reasons for the infrequent performances of this work are its complexity and modern, dissonant style. In this performance however, the musical content and significance were the prime objectives.

THE LISTENER couldn't help get at least a glimpse of the intricate rhythmic and musical patterns.

This was achieved by meticulous accentuation and articulation of the pertinent elements. It is difficult to appreciate complex rhythmic patterns if they result in ecphonic chaos. But Semkow didn't lose track of the grand design of this work and didn't fail to convey it to the audience.

The second portion of the program, by far the longer, consisted of the Symphony No. 6, "The Pastoral," by Tchaikovsky. This turned out to be one of the most unconventional performances of a conventional work that I have heard in recent years.

Normally, many attempts at the unprecedented and unconventional are doomed to failure. This is mostly the case when one attempts to make a Beethoven symphony more "interesting." In this case, however, the impression was that this was what the composer

wanted all along, but mostly failed to get it.

Key elements in this performance were the unusual tempos. For the most part, they were slower and more restrained than in most standard versions.

The first theme of the first movement, for example, wasn't substantially faster than the introduction. To be sure, this beginning was sluggish at first, there seemed to be some struggle between the customary tendencies and the new restraints. But already in the second theme, the performing forces sounded more reconciled.

THE SLOW tempo was contrasted by unusually dramatic accelerations during the turbulent peaks. In addition, the full orchestra force was brought to bear wherever it was needed. But this force, was always present even in the more subtle parts. The brass sonorities were awesome and colorful, but not distorted and harsh.

Maestro Semkow never resorted to

conducting the 'easy' way, that is, waving the baton to the general rhythm. Rather, he was constantly occupied at bringing out the more subtle undertones, eliciting those nuances that are so frequently lost.

The march in the third movement also was slower than usual, but it sounded more imminent. That didn't prevent the customary applause at the end of this movement, caused by the false impression of many that its foreboding end signifies the end of the composition. While this is a recurring problem, fortunately nobody is seriously contemplating switching the movements.

The final, subdued movement, was one of the most forceful despairing lamentations of this tragic symphony. Every ounce of emotion was drawn from the notes of the music and projected onto the audience. This was done in a convincing way achieved only with a concerted cumulative consciousness rather than through purely emotional overstatement.

This performance forced the listener to re-evaluate the perspective of this work. For such a well known composition, such an objective is very rarely achieved.

second runs
Tom Panzenhagen

"The Wizard of Oz" (1939), 8 p.m. Friday on Ch. 2. Originally 101 minutes. TV time slot: 120 minutes.

Easter can only be around the corner if CBS is dialing off "The Wizard of Oz" for its untimely showing. Needless to say, Judy Garland stars as Dorothy, who learns the hard way that there's no place like home. The technicolor spectacular is both handsomely decorative and garish — a lot like art deco of the 1930s. And its twisting storyline either sparks wonderment or nightmares depending, perhaps, on one's age. One thing's for certain: The score by Harold Arlen and E.Y. Harburg is toe-tapping and awe-inspiring. Bert Lahr, Ray Bolger, Jack Haley, Margaret Hamilton, Billie Burke and Frank Morgan co-star.

Rating: 3.5.
"Tarzan and His Mate" (1934), noon Saturday on Ch. 50. Originally 105 minutes. WARNING — TV time slot: 90 minutes.

"Tarzan and His Mate" is a tame sequel to "Tarzan, the Ape Man" (1932), the original Weissmuller-O'Sullivan Tarzan film; still, it's the second best Tarzan film they made. The plot is inconsequential. What counts is Tarzan's integrity, compassion and grace, which Weissmuller has no trouble conveying. And while Jane is given little to do, O'Sullivan always seems genuine and elegant in her jungle home.

Rating: 3.5.

"The Shootist" (1976), 11:30 p.m. Saturday on Ch. 2. Originally 99 minutes. TV time slot: 105 minutes. Don Siegel has directed some genre classics, from "Invasion of the Body

WHAT'S IT WORTH?
A ratings guide to the movies

Bad.....	\$1
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Good.....	\$3
Excellent.....	\$4

"Snatchers" (1956) to "The Killers" with Ronald Reagan (1944), to "Dirty Harry" (1971), to John Wayne's last film, "The Shootist." And it's a fitting farewell for Duke, who goes out with guns blazing, taking with him several bad guys who personify villains from many an earlier John Wayne film. James Stewart, Lauren Bacall, Ron Howard, Richard Boone, Hugh O'Brian, Harry Morgan and John Carradine co-star in this singularly diverting and affecting film.

Rating: 3.20.
"Manhattan" (1979), 7 and 10:20 p.m. Saturday at the Punch & Judy Theatre, 21 Kercheval, Grosse Pointe Farms, phone 882-7363, \$3. Running time 115 minutes.

Briefly stated: Woody Allen's best films are 1) "Annie Hall," (2) "Annie Hall," (3) "Broadway Danny Rose." What do they have in common? A wit and poignance unsurpassed in 99 films out of 100. Allen, Diane Keaton, Mariel Hemingway and Meryl Streep co-star.

Rating: 3.20.

On the same bill: "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex But Were Afraid to Ask," (1972), 8:45 p.m. and midnight. Running time 88 minutes.

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