

# The Christmas light shines in many eyes

By David Messing  
special writer

"How's that?" I asked Sandy, as I hung an ornament on the Christmas tree. "Um... that's fine, honey," she patiently said, as she moved it to another spot on the tree. "But look how nice it looks over here." "Oh, much better," I said with a smile, as I poured a cup of coffee and assumed my yuletide position at tree trimming time, which is a "watcher."

I think that there is an artistic fuse in my head that must blow a circuit when it comes to trimming the Christmas

## artifacts

tree. Well, it's 11 o'clock now, and everyone is in bed and I am still up marveling at the beauty of the Christmas tree.

Here in the stillness and darkness of the night I am more taken with the presence of the tree than the presents under it. Maybe I am more impressed with what the tree represents. The star

on top of course, to me, represents God's gift to man, the altogether most precious gift of his son. His birth is the inspiration of this holiday and the foundation of my faith. I have at times wondered how shallow Christmas must be to one who doesn't believe. It does, however, take much more faith to believe in "nothing" than it does to believe in God.

When I look at all the decorations on the tree I think of the many facets of life. The joy of doing things for and with others. The fun of sports and games. The closeness of family and the general spirit of the holidays.

BUT THE lights on our Christmas tree do especially catch my eye. To me the lights represent people that we come in contact with everyday. Some are dim and barely glow at all. Some

are constant and bright. Still some twinkle and almost demand my attention. All are however, likewise, beneficial to the total beauty of the tree.

Some time ago a burly overweight motorcycleist rumbled up to my store atop his black Harley "chopper." His two feet of unwashed hair, black leather attire and roar of the engine caught my attention. I thought to myself "well, this is it, my first holiday." To my surprise, he introduced himself politely, and asked if I could write on a birthday card "to my darling wife, with all my love, Brutus." He further said "I wanna make it look real good, with fancy writing like calligraphy and stuff on it."

Now, when I think back underneath the leather and behind the breath of coffee, cigarettes and the prior night's guard. Her name, I just found out, is Pauline Byczek. I hardly know her, but for years she has faithfully helped my

three sons and many other children safely cross the busy street. While I sit here writing by the light of the Christmas tree, I can't help but think of her as a very special light. Both constant and bright.

HERE AND there a certain few flamboyant customers do come into the art store and we all try to fill their urgent requests for art supplies. Flashing lights cause me to think of those "certain few." The trouble with flashing lights is that, unfortunately, they are turned off as much as they are turned on.

Like I said earlier, all are different and all contribute to the total beauty of the tree. The beauty of art is much like the beauty of the Christmas tree which is not just the tree but what it represents.

Art represents the expression of the individual, colored by the artist's personality. Though many artists may possess similar thoughts each will through their art create very different expressions. Just as the same electricity flows to each light, but each light burns at it's

characteristic brightness. So, likewise all expressions are worthy as all lend themselves to the total beauty of art and the expressions of the artists.

Well, folks it's after midnight and I feel that my lights are beginning to flicker. So to all of our friends, readers and customers have a "Very Merry Christmas." Dave Messing and family

This is another in a series of lessons on art and drawing by special columnist David Messing. He has taught for 10 years and operates two art stores, Art Store and More, 16338 Middlebelt, Livonia, and 265 N. Main, Plymouth. Messing encourages questions and comments from readers. You may call him at 522-6311, write to him at his store or in care of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 33203 Grand River, Farmington, Mich. 48024.



## Group offers insight to best piano quartets

By Avigdor Zaromp  
special writer

The concept of a piano quartet may take a back seat to that of a string quartet in terms of repertoire and the number of prominent groups associated with it. However, the body of piano quartet works composed by masters of that form, offers some surprising treasures.

Last Friday, Detroit-area audiences had the opportunity to listen to some of the most inspired of these works for piano. The Los Angeles Piano Quartet is one of the top groups of the particular combination. Founded in 1977, it consists of pianist James Bonn, violinist Joseph Gennadi, violist Ronald Copes and cellist Peter Reijo. This was yet another distinguished chamber group featured by the Chamber Music Society of Detroit.

The three piano quartets on the program consisted of the No. 2 in E-flat major by Mozart, the No. 1 in C major by Faure and the No. 2 in A major by Brahms. While these numbers and keys may not mean much to many readers, it is noteworthy that in the case of Mozart and Brahms, their most frequently performed piano quartets are their first, both in G minor.

These choices on the program provided an overdue opportunity to listen to the lesser-known works, which are nevertheless rewarding and inspiring. The Faure work, the least familiar of the three, sheds rare light on this late Romantic French composer who is far less regarded than the other two. Power of his works have gained universal acclaim.

This performance presented some of

the best elements in chamber music performance. Each individual in the group is, of course, extremely competent on his instrument. But there was much more to the performance than clean and correct notes and other aspects of technical fluency. Their approach indicated thorough stylistic appreciation of the three composers with their distinct styles.

The Mozart piano scales in the outer movements would melt into the strings with delicate continuity. The music had just enough body to make its presence felt, without compromising its agility.

The Faure work was convincing with its sweet-tart characteristics. It had more lavishness than one commonly associates with Faure but it was not overdone.

The Brahms work is a youthful composition, written when the composer was 23 and is thus more energetic than his intimate serene late chamber works. The fact that the piano role in this work is more prominent in comparison to other instruments is unavoidable. However, the subtle roles of the strings came through most of the time with the possible exception of the final movement in which the strings had difficulty competing with the full, resounding piano chords.

This latter imbalance, however, was only a minor drawback. Overall, one seldom hears such a robust, electrifying Brahms.

The Los Angeles Piano Quartet is one of those top chamber groups that tend to leave the listener with a sense of satisfaction. It is hoped that we shall have the opportunity to hear them again.

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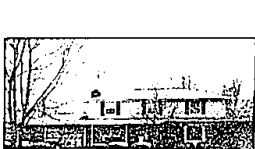
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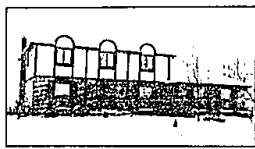
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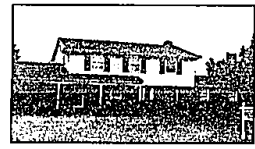
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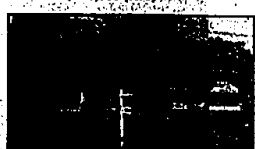
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