

Pianist Tocco soars far above crowd

review

DSO closes summer fare

Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture with live cannons will be on the program as the Detroit Symphony Orchestra (DSO) closes its 1986 Chrysler Concert Series at Meadow Brook at 8 p.m. Thursday and Sunday.

Each concert will feature a soloist playing a favorite Tchaikovsky concerto: on Thursday the Violin Concerto and on Sunday the Piano Concerto No. 1. Also included on the program is the "Firebird" Suite by Stravinsky. Both concerts will be led by guest conductor Daniel Nazareth.

Nazareth, music director of the West Berlin Symphony Orchestra since 1982, is originally from India and has won such top honors as the Leonard Bernstein Conducting Fellowship, the Koussevitsky Music Foundation Conductors Award and the International Ernest Ansermet Conducting Competition.

The Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto will be played on Thursday by DSO concertmaster Gordon Staples.

Pianist Jose Feghali will be featured on Sunday, playing Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1.

By Vigdor Zaromp
special writer

The crop of Detroit-born musicians is substantial. Among the most widely recognized is pianist James Tocco, a familiar figure to those who attend musical events regularly. He has appeared with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, most recently during last year's Meadow Brook Festival.

Tocco gave a recital at the Grosse Pointe War Memorial last week. The sheer scope of the selections is a testament to his energetic dedication to the art of piano playing. On the program were three Scarlatti sonatas, a set of Mozart variations, a big Beethoven sonata and works by Ravel

and Schullhof, the latter being a German composer born in 1976 who perished in a Nazi concentration camp.

THE SOLD-OUT EVENT, part of the Grosse Pointe Summer Music Festival, proved to be extremely rewarding to the appreciative audience. Tocco is one of those pianists who commands authority in any of the many styles and categories he tackles.

Even if one does not always agree with his approach or interpretation, these seem to be convincing in their own way. In this program, I didn't find the three Scarlatti sonatas to be stylistically authentic. They were somewhat too romanticized, in my opinion. But their smooth and compelling flow made it clear that he was successful in projecting his concept of these pieces.

Certain works gain in stature through a good performance. One such was Mozart's set of variations on "Ah, vous dirais-je, Maman," a theme better known here as "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star," in its English non-translation.

Many mediocre performances tend to emphasize the triviality of the theme, even through the layers of the variations. Here, however, the variations assumed a life of their own that extended beyond the technical brilliance of the fast variations — the slow variations were no less eventful.

Beethoven's sonata, Op. 110 in A

Flat Major, is his penultimate one and one of his most challenging. The fugue in the last movement is, in my opinion, Beethoven's best, surpassing even such monumental creations as the fugue in the Hammerklavier and the Great Fugue for string quartet. Tocco's playing of this sonata did justice to its awesome scope.

HIS STYLISTIC approach was also convincing in the three pieces from Ravel's "Miroirs." The last of these pieces, the well-known "Alborado del gracioso," was somewhat less impeccable than the rest, but with still enough sparkle to make it enjoyable.



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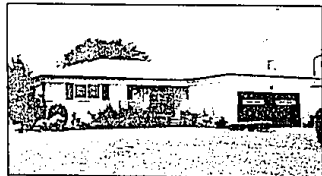
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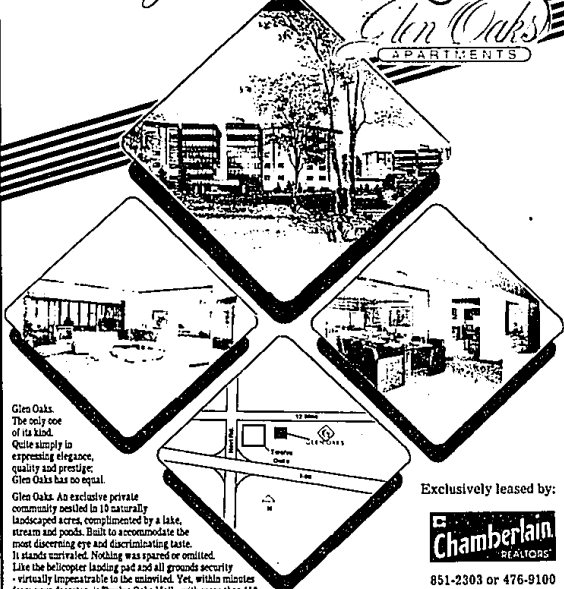
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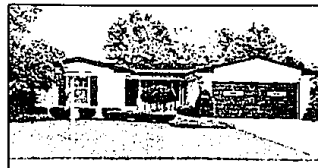
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