

Herbig shows true connoisseurship

The appreciation of music is often compared to appreciation of other arts, even wine or food. For example, the comparison of impressionistic music to the art of painting is quite common. On other occasions, my tendency is to compare certain style of music with wine.

The appreciation of wine, like that of music, has been elevated to an art by the experts. Among those are professional wine tasters and connoisseurs. The former typically taste many varieties on a given occasion. Some can impress and bewilder with their ability to determine the wine's region, vintage and even the estate with great accuracy.

For most part, the wine taster doesn't swallow the wine, as doing so may dull the senses for the subsequent variety. The connoisseur, on the other hand, usually knows what

he wants and tries to enjoy every drop if it when he gets it.

This wasn't intended to be an article on wine appreciation. But the performance of Schumann's concerto by the gifted Japanese pianist, Mitsuko Uchida, last week at Ford Auditorium provoked some of these thoughts.

UCHIDA IS AN ARTIST who is acutely aware of the shades and intricacies of her artistic domain. She is especially recognized for her recordings and performances of Mozart's music. She played one of Mozart's concert in her previous visit here, some two years ago.

Her impressive technical skill results in clean and balanced phrases, each note delivered with the kind of clarity that few can match. Of the many performances of the



Avigdor Zoromp

Schumann concerto I have had, I can't recall any in recent years that could match this one in clarity and precision.

However, returning to the wine example, Uchida seemed to be more of the wine-tasting expert and less of a connoisseur. This was manifested by the fact that the clarity of the detail was at the expense of the full-bodied tone that this particular music requires.

This isn't to say that her playing should have been louder—the distinction between loud and soft passages should be respected, which Uchida most appropriately did. But the blending and combining of the notes to achieve their sum-total effect should be different in this work than in Mozart's music.

THE MANY arpeggiated passages in the first and final movements, fre-

quently over several octaves, tend to lose their effect if treated as merely sequential phrases. Granted, certain aspects of the clarity may be compromised.

However, as is the case with wine, enjoying its full flavor may be more important than knowing its exact combination of ingredients. Uchida is certainly capable of savoring and enjoying the music and she should have less reservations in doing so with the Schumann concerto.

The program opened with Four Essays for Orchestra by the Polish composer Tadeusz Baird. With this, Maestro Herbig dispensed his obligation to contemporary music on this program.

The program, seemed to be minimal, which is not surprising. However, taking the disadvantage of little known contemporary works into account, Baird deserves recognition for this effort.

The most impressive orchestral performance was given Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5. This symphony frequently is uncomfortably situated between Numbers 4 and 6, which tend to snatch most of the glamour.

In this dramatic performance, the work shone as a masterpiece in its own right. The effective use of the brass and the momentous tempo made this work reverberate with sound. The tempo in the final movement was occasionally too fast. But, in his handling of this music, Maestro Herbig showed himself to be a true connoisseur.

Soloists make program special

By Avigdor Zoromp
special writer

There was some fine singing on the program presented by the Lyric Chamber Ensemble at Orchestra Hall recently.

Much of the material on this program was non-standard repertoire. Yet it had to offer much beyond the mere novelty of some of these works.

Several capable singers and pianists assured the high artistic quality of this program, dedicated to Michigan's Sesquicentennial (150th) anniversary. Besides Metropolitan Opera star Robert Merrill, other singers known to local audiences proved extremely capable.

The Brazeal Dendard Choral, one of the most impressive choral groups in the area, presented the Brahms "Liedersederl Waltzes," which are seldom performed, and a work by James Hartway for choir, piano and percussion.

Hartway, on the faculty of Wayne State, dominated the first portion of the program. Several of his works have gained recognition and had been performed by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

WHILE ON some previous occasions the rays of Hartway's music had some difficulty penetrating the

mighty shield by the three B's, I find his music more noteworthy with each additional exposure.

All of the contemporary material was based on poems by Ronald Cooney, a gifted Michigan poet who died in 1983 at age 28. One group of pieces, "Songs for Ronald," featured remarkably descriptive music to the sensitive poems.

Soprano Ernestine Nimmons and pianist Fedora Horowitz, who is the director of the LCE, presented an impressive performance of this challenging material. Among the more entertaining poems was "When," a satire on a computer whose memory is being erased. The special effects consisted consisted of some elbow work — chords played with the elbow by Horowitz, contrasted with the fast tongue twisting syllables of Nimmons.

The Trilogy for Baritone, Piano, Choir and Three Percussions, also by Hartway, was likewise based on songs by Cooney, performed convincingly by baritone James Bronson and pianist Gloria Nimmo, percussionists Paul Parrish, Albert Williams and Greg White with the Brazeal Dendard Choral.

BARTONE MERRILL, who is in his late 60s according to some accounts, has a voice that doesn't diminish with age. Most of his pieces

review

consisted of more traditional material by Handel, Pergolesi, Gluck, Mozart and Verdi.

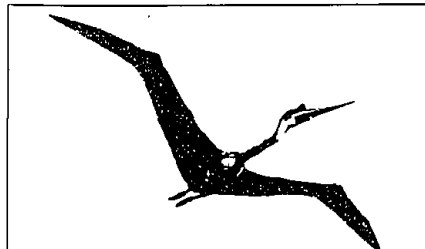
There was, however, a bridge between this and the contemporary material, provided by other extremely musical members of Merrill's family. This was a set of three songs based on poems by Cooney composed by David Merrill who also performed on the synthesizer and accompanied on the piano by Robert's wife, Marion Merrill.

Even if some of the works on the program may not match the level of some more established master-

pieces, the dedication and conviction of the performers made this program a memorable and rewarding event.

The audience, which was considerably larger than what one typically sees at Orchestra Hall for local chamber groups, was a further indication of the far reaching impact of this program.

There will be, of course, several more attractive programs presented by the LCE this season. The next one take place on Sunday, Oct. 26 at the Edsel Ford House. Call 357-1111 for more information.



Creature soaring over Death Valley is actually a lifelike replica of the great pterodactyl Quetzalcoatlus northropi.

Flying dragon stars at gem and mineral show

The Greater Detroit Gem and Mineral Show, Friday-Sunday at the Detroit LightGuard Armory, 4400 E. Eight Mile, promises gems of all kinds. Not just the expected emeralds and rubies, but everything from a giant man-made flying pterosaur to tourmaline candelabra.

This 28th show hosted by the Michigan Mineralogical Society of Cranbrook Institute of Science is as full of surprises as its predecessors have been.

There will be more than 50 gem, mineral and fossil dealers showing gems, carvings and treasures as well as displays by 32 different museums.

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