

Festival draws capacity crowd

By Mary Jane Doerr
special writer

Sometimes people who don't support community orchestra performances ask what their purpose is.

Last weekend the answer was clear at the Birmingham Bloomfield Symphony Orchestra's Cranbrook Festival. Last Friday evening, conductor Felix Resnick led the continuously improving orchestra and Christ Church Cranbrook's organist, Charles Raines, in two unduplicated masterpieces in the classical repertoire, Poulenc's 1938 Concerto in G Major for Organ, Strings, and Timpani and Saint-Saens' 1888 Symphony No. 3 in C Minor. Both are rarely performed in this area.

Featuring the two French works on Cranbrook's rebuilt 60-year-old Skinner organ represented another in the orchestra's efforts to program music audiences want to hear.

THE SANCTUARY of the gothic cathedral was filled to capacity for the inspiring collaboration of organ and the orchestra.

Raines is a versatile organist who performed the two very different styles, featuring the organ as a solo instrument, in the Poulenc and as an ensemble instrument in the Saint-Saens.

The proper levels of balance were not quite achieved in the Saint-Saens. The brilliant coda was a blend of equalities between organ and orchestra, but leading up to the coda the organ could have come out more.

Poulenc's witty, almost satirical style is so apparent in the organ concerto. Asserting Bach's unmistakable toccata melody as the work opened, somehow Poulenc managed to move into his own compositional technique.

THE CHANGING moods and ideas in the work, in addition to the intricate interplay between the orchestra and organist, were demands that Resnick and Raines understood and met.

From the opening strains of the Stokowski transcription of Bach's organ composition, Passacaglia and Fugue in G Minor, it was obvious that each of the sections of the orchestra was strong enough to carry the contrapuntal themes balancing each other in the desired ratio. It is the miracle of Bach's music that it always works in settings other than that for which it was composed.

For its final concert of the season, the orchestra moves to the Birmingham Theater June 24 for "Salute to Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops."

• The pulse of your community •

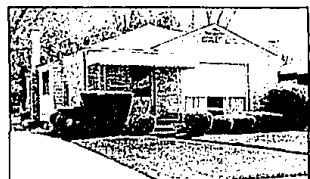


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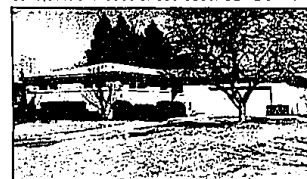
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