

Arrau, in his mid 80s, is still impressive

By Avigdor Zaromp
special writer

Not surprisingly, the performing arts are dominated by superstars. The image that comes to mind is someone who is flashy and flamboyant and who draws gasps of awe and admiration from fans, who are mesmerized by the dazzling, seemingly superhuman feats.

Plantel Claudio Arrau is a superstar of a completely different sort. His impressive performing career has spanned almost eight decades since his start as a child prodigy.

Last week Arrau performed Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto with the Michigan Symphony Orchestra on the final regular program at Meadow Brook. This is one of the most established works in the repertoire.

It is unlikely to generate major surprises and tends to be taken for granted. It takes an artist the stature of Arrau to rekindle the spark of uncompromised fascination and appeal.

The size and kind of attendance was tribute to Arrau. This was a mature and cultivated audience — people who know the inner value of art.

ARRAU'S PERFORMANCE was impressively in terms of technical skill and raw force. His technique is definitely less than that of many less prominent pianists. At times, the number of wrong notes was more than I felt to be reasonable and many fast passages tended to be slow and sluggish. The entire performance was extremely subdued.



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But Arrau presented something that few others are capable of — such a refined level. This most elusive ingredient, which is the essence of genuine art, had one of its most compelling manifestations here this season. The outer movements sounded dignified and majestic even at their reduced tempo. The absence of technical acrobatics didn't diminish the inner momentum of the phrases.

One aspect of the performance that was a drawback, in my opinion, was the fast tempo in the slow movement. This was even more disturbing in the view that it wasn't developed gradually — but rather implemented abruptly, in a manner totally incongruent with the more conventional pace of the orchestral introduction. The treasures of art prevailed, however, once we got accustomed to

the faster rate, which in turn gradually diminished to a more conventional pace.

The applause and standing ovation that Arrau received were proof that artistically conscious audiences still exist in our area. One would hope for more of the same during the regular season.

OTHER ITEMS on the program were the "Freischütz" Overture by Weber and the Symphony No. 2, "Little Russian," by Tchaikovsky. Tchaikovsky's first three symphonies are not as highly regarded as his latter three and his second symphony has its share of drawbacks.

However, one has to be sufficiently familiar with it to notice its

weaknesses. Its positive qualities surpass its weaker aspects.

Maestro Gunther Herbig, who was on the podium, presented these stronger aspects impressively, especially the cheerful, agile main theme in the opening movement. In its early stages the Russian theme in the final movement was appealing. Even Herbig's skill wasn't enough to make the frivolous triviality of the later variations convincing. This symphony, with its limitations, deserves to be in the repertoire on an occasional basis.

The classical series at Meadow Brook ends this week with the appearance of the Israel Philharmonic at 8 p.m. Thursday.

7 communities receive grants

The Oakland County Cultural Council reports that seven arts projects within Oakland County were funded through money provided by the Michigan Council for the Arts' Regranting program.

Oakland County communities selected by a review panel of Cultural Council members to receive assistance are Ferndale, Royal Oak, Oak Park, Pontiac, Walled Lake, Troy and West Bloomfield.

"Our funds allocated for this granting period were, of course, far less than the requests received, but we were able to give full or partial funding to seven of the 12 requests, all worthy projects," said Virginia DeBenham Rodgers, director of Cultural Affairs.

The review board looked for activities with artistic merit, projects that would benefit large and varied audiences and would utilize the services of many Michigan artists.

"We were pleased that we were able to assist projects in many different communities throughout the county, and hope that in future granting periods, the northern and western areas will submit applications for the Mini-Grants project," says Rodgers.

The deadline for the next funding process is Oct. 14. Applications are available by calling 858-0414. Any Oakland County non-profit organization, institution, school, association or local government agency with an arts-related project is welcome to apply.

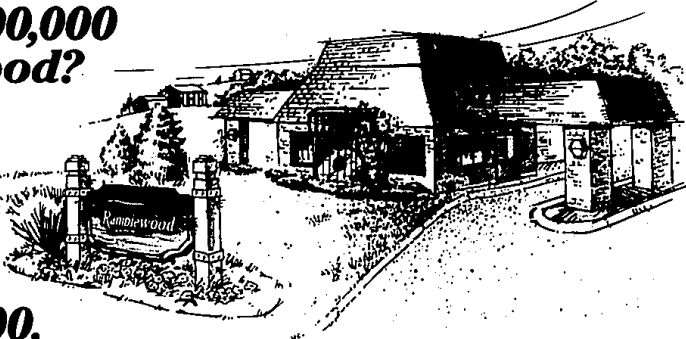
The program was established by the Michigan Council for the Arts to enable regional administration of Mini-Grant funding. Oakland County Cultural Council was chosen as the Regranting Agency for Oakland County.

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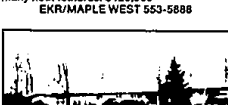
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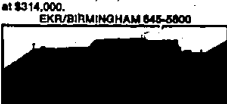
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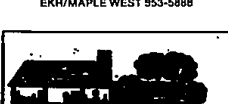
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