

Piano styles vary in first of festival series

Five of the nine participating pianists were featured on the opening program of the three-part Piano Festival, presented by the Lyric Chamber Ensemble, last Saturday at Orchestra Hall.

The variety in terms of selections as well as artists made it a most interesting and stimulating event.

The participants were Flavio Varani, Louis Nagel, Joseph Curt, Fedora Horowitz and Karen Walwyn—all well-known in this area. High quality and impressive ability were the common characteristics.

Nagel, who is on the faculty of the University of Michigan, had a dual role as an emcee. He introduced the performers and related anecdotes about the music. Among his students is Walwyn, who plans to participate in the Tchaikovsky competition in Moscow four years from now.



Avigdor Zaromp

VARANI OPENED with works by Rameau and Grandos and demonstrated his affinity for 19th century Romantic music.

The one objection to his affinity was his application to Rameau, whose *Ging Pieces en Concert* sounded contorted and artificial. His forceful passion proved to be far more suitable for the *Allegro de Concerto* by Grandos.

Nagel presented a forceful, but

balanced rendition of Schubert's challenging "Wanderer" Fantasy. The intensity didn't obscure the clarity of the work. The left hand, which tended to be somewhat underemphasized at the beginning, eventually found its rightful level, culminating with the impressive double fugue.

Curt, also on the U-M faculty, presented Liszt's arrangements of a song by Schumann and an aria from Verdi's "Rigoletto." He managed to

'These kids are so nice, you don't mind doing things for them. As long as i'm working with these girls, they never swear. None of 'em smoke. They're the nicest kids.'

— Jack Stoddard

bring out the floating familiar themes with good control and sense of proportion.

HOROWITZ, PIANIST as well as the director, presented Chopin's An-

dante Splanato and Grande Polonaise Brillante.

This oft-performed work poses a tremendous challenge to the performer and few manage to go through some of the more difficult passages unscathed. Her performance was inspired both musically and technically, in spite of some isolated flaws.

Walwyn played "L'isle joyeuse" by Debussy, Chopin's Nocturne in D flat major and an arrangement of a popular tune by Gottschak. Her fluency in Debussy's piece was impressive, with peaks that sometimes pressed the limits of Impressionism, but with no permanent dent in the refined texture.

Her expressive, singing Chopin nocturne was followed by the

Gottschak piece that sounded respectable in this peppy, but well-balanced performance.

Horowitz and Curt joined forces to perform a set of variations by Paganini on a familiar Paganini caprice that has inspired several composers. The 20th century twists and multiple tonalities proved to be provoking and enticing, using the theme to bind the listener to the unconventional style.

This program should have attracted a substantially larger audience. It was worth every minute.

Those who missed this opportunity will have two more chances on the following Sundays. Among the prominent participants in these events will be Mischa Kottler—the senior piano master of our area.

Guitar's place in classical music remains secure

By Avigdor Zaromp
Special writer

The guitar is usually associated with folk music. Among classical musicians it is tolerated, but seldom admired. The idea of treating it as a classical instrument isn't new—prominent composers such as Vivaldi and Paganini treated it with utmost respect.

The person most credited with its revival as a classical instrument was the late Andrg Segovia. One of the most prominent and talented artists following Segovia's footsteps is Eduardo Fernandez, who gave a recital at the Detroit Institute of Arts

last Friday. This event of the Pro Musica series attracted a crowd that filled the auditorium.

Fernandez is one of those few who give the guitar an air of respectability. Born in Uruguay in 1932, he won several outstanding awards, among them the top prize in the Andres Segovia competition in 1975.

MOST ROLES for guitar are either as an accompanying instrument or, in some classical works, as a solo instrument with orchestra. To combine both convincingly requires skill and talent. Fernandez's control over the subtle nuances of the music is astounding.

In combining refined melody with the intricate harmonic support and even an occasional counterpoint, he is able to turn the guitar into a miniature orchestra, with each part refined with its own subtle nuances.

The European part of the program consisted of selections by the Elizabethan composer John Dowland, followed by a sonata by the Spanish composer Fernando Sor.

The second part was works by Villa-Lobos, Almeida-Prado and Alberto Ginastera. Almeida-Prado, a con-

temporary Brazilian composer, dedicated the "Book for Six Strings" to Fernandez.

These works, span different periods and styles and pose different challenges for the performer. The Sonata by Sor, similar in character to keyboard sonatas from the early 19th century, would sound simplistic and uneventful in a routine performance. With Fernandez it became a tribute to a composer who is recognized as one of the foremost masters of guitar music of his time, but little

known to non-guitarists.

VILLA-LOBOS, recognized for his "Bachianas Brasileiras," was represented here by his *Suite Populaire Bresilienne*, one of his rare works for guitar and far less known than the "Bachianas." It turned out to be most stimulating and rewarding, however, featuring old dance rhythms with Brazilian trappings.

The work by Almeida-Prado was thought-provoking with its subtle colors and moods. The most contemporary style was the Sonata Op. 47

by Ginastera. Here, some tantalizing sound effects were accomplished tapping the sound box and manipulating the strings on both sides of the bridge.

But these effects were only tools to bring forth the unmistakable quality of this music by the prominent Argentine composer.

Fernandez is among the guitar elite of this generation. Thanks to the few artists of his caliber, the legacy established by Segovia is a future.

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