Even when cut, St. Matthew Passion shines

Among the landmarks in this sea-son's Bach celebrations was the De-troit Symphony Orchestra's per-formance of the St. Matthew Pas-sion. There is an abundance of talent devoted to this master's work these days, which is encouraging. Missing was the audience. There was more

than the usual number or ones, seats.

Bach's religiously based musle tends to be victimized by extremes. Many religiously devout have little interest in music and many of the rest are alienated by text. Overlooked by most is the awe inspiring, unparalleled art and profound stature embodied in this music.

This work, over three hours in its



uncut version, was reduced to only two hours by Maestro Gunther Herbig. He told me several weeks ago that such cuts were dictated by practical considerations. One was trisk of allenating the audience if the complete version were presented. "In Europe, any conductor attempting to cut this work would have been crueilted, but here we have quite a different attitude," he sald.

Among the many parts cut was the aria "Aus Liebe" for soprano and flute obbligato. Both preceding and subsequent evangelleal recitatives feature the text "Las ihn Kreuzigen" ("Let's crucify him").

Another casualty was the master-ful aria for bass and viola da gamba, "Komm suesses Kreuz" ("Come, thou sweet cross"). The portions omitted could have provided suffi-

The remaining two-thirds received one of the best live performances that I have heard. Every element functioned not only smoothly and effectively, but with stylistic integrity and authenticity that only a most knowledgeable leadership could accomplish.

complish.
Mezzo-soprano Marietta Simpson, a substitute for the scheduled Jard van Ness, proved to be extremely capable. A moving rendition of the heart-wrenching aria, "Erbarmwe dich," was among her several splendid solos.

did solos.

Jon Humphrey, as the Evangelist, was so enmeshed in his part that he choked, when relating the betrayal of Jesus, but had steadiness and clarity everywhere else.

Leslie Guinn as Jesus was a source of strength and confidence in his au-thoritative singing. Soprano Edit Wiens and bass Jan Opalach were impressive in their minor evangeli-cal roles and arias.

Another major source of great sat-Another major source of great satisfaction was the double choir, a combination of the Detroit Symphopy Chorus and the Boys 'Choir, Christ Church of Grosse Pointe. There was precision, delicate barace and overall unity present even in the most challenging mighty fugues. Nothing could convey a sense of thunder and lightning more convincingly than the well-focused singing of 'Sind Blitze, Sind Donner."

century gimmicks. The small but effective orchestra maintained a haroque character throughout. The ob-bligato instruments in the various arias performed with distinction, shining whenever necessary and giv-ing way to the vocal soloists when appropriate.

The attempt to cater to the audience by cutting the music is understandable, but this didn't solve the problem of poor attendance. Given the choice, catering to artistic and musical integrity is the better way.

Without a dedicated champlon for this music, it may be a long time before we are privileged to hear the St. Matthew Passion again. But when the time comes, it should be presented in its entirety. If one is destined to lose, one might as well do it in style.

Young violinist shows extraordinary talent

Many young musicians experience a meteoric rise to fame and recognition. Typically, these are prodigles whose artistic grasp and technique whose artistic grasp and technique in the prodiging of the prodiging the prodicing the prodicing the prodicing the prodicing the prodicing the prodign the prodicing the prodicing the prodicing the prodicing the pr

This chamber series, like others of its kind, offers programs by some accomplished artists. The limited publicity frequently results in low attendance. This is a loss for many who fall to seize these opportunities to hear top music by top artists at very reasonable prices.

Schumann's rarely performed sonata radiated with expressive, singing romantiesm. Techkovsky's "Melodie," a popular short piece, appeared with substance beyond its exterior schmaltz. Ravel's "Cyganne" combined impressionistic breathing texture with profound, expressive content.

For an encore, Bell and Feldman presented a miniature march by

Kreister, which is seldom played. This provided yet another glimpse into the world of this 20th Century-virtuoso, whose nostalgic pleces keep bringing to life those past periods that would be otherwise lost for-

Violinist Joshua Bell certainly de-serves to be among those chosen few who survive in the tough arena of classical music.

Next program in this series will feature planist Vladimir Feltsman on Tuesday, April 18.





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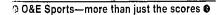
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A hint of his accomplished tech-nique came in the Chaconne by Vi-tale, featuring variations on a simple theme with increasing levels of diffi-culty.

The major items, Beethoven's famed "Kreutzer" Sonata and the lesser known Sonata in A minor by Schumann, gave us a chance to savor the art of planist Jonathan Feldman

as well. Feldman, who studied in Juilliard under some of the best teachers, is one of the unsung talent-ed musicians whose name is unjustly eclipsed by the principal artist.

Bell's performance of the "Kreutzer" did justice to this monu-mental masterpiece. The distinct character of the variations in the second movement was artistically articulate. The romping final move-ment had a sense of agility that didn't contradict Beethoven's sub-

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