

Guitar concerto was 2 movements too long

By Avigdor Zoromp
special writer

Sometimes it seems that the appeal of an event is directly proportionate to its level of mediocrity. This season at Meadow Brook, those programs with high musical content are drawing a limited audience while those featuring lesser works seemed to gain the upper hand. Last week's classical program is an example.

Resident conductor Steven Stein was on the podium. The central attraction was the Concerto for Guitar and Orchestra ("Mediterranean") by the English composer and virtuoso guitarist, John McLaughlin, who was the soloist.

McLaughlin, like several other performing celebrities, applies his skills to both classical and jazz music.

He is a member of the Indo-jazz group Shakti.

His concerto, three long movements, abounds with loud, but repetitive displays of technical prowess. The amplification in this performance created frequent distortions and feedback from the closely placed mikes. The applause following the first movement may have been premature, but in some sense it was understandable.

I was hoping that, as with several more established works, the three announced movements were combined into one continuous one, with the restatement of earlier material providing for a cyclical structure.

AT THAT POINT, I confess that it was disappointing to discover that we had to bear two additional, dull movements. If Bruckner had written a concerto for guitar, it couldn't



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have been any longer or more repetitive.

Mischa Kottler, seated besides me, expressed his hope for rain and thunder to break more life into this music. He got his wish, proving that he has more power than I realized. The crowd on the lawn, quite large at the outset, dispersed; some took shelter in the pavilion, many others headed for the exit.

The other items on the program were light selections by French composers. Most would qualify as appet-

izers or deserts, but not the main course. One that wouldn't qualify for either was the opening fanfare from "La Peri" by Dukas.

It served to clarify two issues about Dukas, first, that he wrote some other music besides the "Sorcerer's Apprentice," a fact that may prove astonishing to many listeners, and second, the reason no other music of Dukas is regularly featured. The fanfare made a compelling case for a permanent return to the "Sorcerer's Apprentice."

The small redeeming musical value was in the rest of the program, excerpts from "The Damnation of Faust" by Berlioz, the "Prelude to the Afternoon of the Faun" by Debussy and Ravel's "Bolero."

ALL THESE took place in a soggy atmosphere with intermittent rain and wind gusts, even in the center of the pavilion.

Kottler, much like the proverbial Sorcerer's Apprentice who had the power to bring on the flood, didn't

seem to have the power to stop it.

The few rays of musical sunlight were provided by principal flute, Ervin Monroe, in his central role in Debussy's "Faun" and the percussionists, who were having a field day in the "Bolero."

They seemed especially zealous when delivering the final powerful blows assailing their instruments with sadistic, vengeful glee. Possibly their feeling about the program had something to do with it.

Piano concert set

Neill Eisenstein, area pianist and music teacher, will give a concert at 8 p.m. Friday, Aug. 4, at Macomb Center for the Performing Arts on the Macomb College campus, Hall (M-59) and Garfield roads, Clinton Township.

Eisenstein's classical improvisations will be presented as a part of the Macomb Community Summer Keyboard Workshop, July 30 to Aug. 4. Eisenstein returns to the college's stage by popular demand. His pro-

gram will include works by Ravel, Liszt, Mili Balakirev and Chopin.

He has a bachelor's degree in music composition from Berklee College of Music of Boston, Mass., and a master's in piano performance from New England Conservatory.

Tickets are \$7 for adults, \$6 for senior citizens and \$5 for groups. For information, call the Center's box office, 286-2222 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Friday.

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