

Bach on bayan makes sense — sometimes

Peter Soave of Southfield performs on an unusual instrument, the bayan, a Slavic version of the accordion. It resembles the accordion and its sound is similar. The right side consists of levers, or buttons, chromatically sequenced, instead of a regular keyboard.

Ordinarily, there's nothing unusual about the accordion or its relatives. It is unusual, however, to hear such an instrument used for classical repertoire, and handled with such skill.

Soave and an orchestra of musicians, some from the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, gave a concert at the Fairlane Club in Dearborn.



Avigdor Zaromp

One has to be flexible on the issue of stylistic authenticity when dealing with works written for a different medium. Most of the things on this program, however, were either written for the instrument by contemporary composers or lent themselves naturally to the bayan.

Concerto for Bayan and Orchestra by the Russian composer Tchakin opened the program. It is long and overbearing by my taste. But it presents tremendous challenges to somebody who is willing to expend time and effort on its behalf. Other items on the program, mostly by little-known composers, were more accessible and tended to highlight the impressive talent and virtuosity needed.

The one traditional item was the Suite for Viola DaGamba and Harpsichord by Bach in D Major. The cello, the dagamba's modern counterpart, was played by Nancy Charleaux of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

The substitution of the bayan for the harpsichord, is far more controversial. To be sure, it wasn't the kind of Bach I prefer to hear on a regular basis. But it provided a different balance and put the two instruments on more equal terms.

The harpsichord is typically too weak to compete with the cello for its share of attention. In this setting the harpsichord's virtues came through loud and clear. However, even allowing some stylistic liberties, more work on the details is needed to retain the masterful quality.

Trials and explorations are the essence of art. Not all experiments are likely to result in unqualified success. But Peter Soave is one person who is willing to undertake the challenges. He is getting impressive results — at least some of the time.

Chamber concerts fall below expectations

By Avigdor Zaromp
staff writer

Two major chamber events took place at Orchestra hall last week. Both could have been outstanding under the right circumstances, but weren't. The first featured the Chicago Symphony Chamber players on the Chamber Music Society of Detroit (CMS) series.

A top orchestra such as the Chicago Symphony is expected to have top musicians as its members. Indeed, most of the members of the chamber group appearing on this event are fine musicians.

Unfortunately, the audience had the chance to enjoy this fine musicianship only in a small portion of the program — the Quintet for Clarinet and Strings K. 581 by Mozart. The other items were a quintet for guitar and strings by Boccherini and two works by the Michigan composer William Bolcom.

I never understand why those in

charge of musical events go out of their way to find trivial, banal and boring works, when vastly superior material is available. THIS ISN'T to say that only the top masterpieces should be performed. There is certainly room for occasional lesser works. Thus, there is good reason to perform works by Boccherini even though he wasn't in the same league with Beethoven or Brahms or several others that come to mind.

Boccherini, who enjoys only a limited exposure with a couple of works, could use every possible boost. Several of his works are fine musicians.

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spired and a joy to listen to. The guitar quintet on this program, however, isn't one of those. It is a long, overblown and redundant exercise of emptiness — not of the kind likely to enhance the stature of a composer who may be underrated.

Bolcom, a leading Michigan and national composer, received a Pulitzer prize recently for one of his works. I have no quarrel with his talent and sincerity. I have heard his music and there is little doubt that it deserves promotion and exposure.

His works on this program, Fancy Tales for Violin and Piano and Section III for Clarinet, Violin, Cello,

Piano and Percussion, probably have merit. However, one of these pieces, preferably the Fancy Tales, would have been enough to get the message across. Anything more amounts to an attempt to ram this music down the throats of unwilling listeners. This may only create greater resistance to this music which may deserve a better chance.

Musical content was no problem with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra event, featuring Bach's six Brandenburg concerti. There were no qualms about the caliber of the performing musicians who, like their Chicago colleagues, are first class.



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