

Creative Living

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(F1)

Seducer 'Don G' rates lavish treatment



Director designer John Pascoe adjusts Renee Fleming's costume for her role of Donna Elvira in "Don Giovanni" at Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Marianna

Christos will be wearing a similar costume when she sings the Donna Elvira role in Detroit later this month.

By Mary Jane Doerr
special writer

"Don Giovanni and Donna Elvira are virgins," English designer/director John Pascoe said quite naively over a cup of tea at the Daytonian Hilton in Dayton, Ohio.

His production of "Don Giovanni," a joint project of the Michigan Opera Theatre, Opera Pacific and Dayton Opera, would open at the Dayton Opera in three hours.

It opens Saturday, April 21, at the Masonic Temple with the Michigan Opera Theatre.

"I think the derivation of the word playboy or 'playing boy' best describes Don G," Pascoe said in his distinguished accent.

"He is a little boy who has never grown up. I don't see him at all as being sinister. He is a charmer who has always gotten his way. He seduces everyone with his apparent goodness."

PASCOE'S UNBELIEVABLE concept of the notorious seducer of Seville is lost in the sensuality of his staging of the Mozart opera, especially in the lurid final scene.

In the story, Don G, as Pascoe calls him, attempts to rape and seduce all the women despite constant interference by a persistent Donna Elvira.

"I believe that Donna Elvira is Don G's God-given wife," Pascoe said.

In Pascoe's production, she isn't played as a half-crazed, red-haired lover, but a woman deeply in love.

Pascoe said he perceives her much in the tradition of women of the 18th century — in the image of the Virgin Mary — the reason he sets her aria "Mi tradi" un-

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— John Pascoe

der the Virgin's statue in the Cathedral of Seville.

PASCOE IS KNOWN for his opulent sets and use of lavish materials. Last year, audiences raved about his "Norma" for Joan Sutherland. This year's darkly lighted production with its rich reds and creams had the same effect on audiences at Opera Pacific.

Pascoe isn't discussing how the costumes were carefully constructed in London or how the sets were built in Portland, Ore., based on his Goya-inspired designs.

The fair-haired, 41-year-old Pascoe is totally absorbed by what he calls the magic of the illusive morality tale of the "Stone Guest."

"DON GIOVANNI" takes place in a 24-hour period in Seville (in this production).

As the opera opens, Don G has tried to rape Donna Anna and kills her father. He then happens upon a wedding and attempts to seduce the bride, Zerlina.

As his group of offended increases, Don Giovanni continues his attempts until the murdered commendatore returns from the dead to claim his life.

Pascoe has set his production at the time of Mozart and placed several scenes in the Cathedral of Seville.

During the overture he has added a

controversial scene from Don Giovanni's childhood inspired by Goya's "Madonna with Flagellants" where men whip themselves to gain God's favor. Don G cries as he is forced to watch.

"DON GIOVANNI is a member of the aristocratic class on the same social set with Don Otavio," Pascoe said as he quoted Italian passages of the libretto; "That explains why it is so hard for them to accept his guilt."

Besides the overture scene, Pascoe injects religious elements throughout the opera.

Before Donna Elvira enters the ball at Don Giovanni's will, a priest warns her not to go and then blesses her. In the ball scene, the action is separated by an enormous black drapery with gold crosses.

The moralistic ending tacked on after Don G's death has been dropped, as Mozart did in the opera's Vienna premiere. This production ends with the death of Don Giovanni.

PASCOE HAS been playing with theater designs with carved wood, draperies and flashlights since he first heard Sutherland and Callas sing when he was 13.

Since graduating with honors from Wimbledon School of Art in London, he has been working for the world's top opera houses — Covent Garden, Paris Opera, Sydney Opera, the Metropolitan Opera and others.

After this performance, Pascoe will go immediately to New York to meet with Favaroni's managers. He doesn't have the slightest idea of what, he said.

"I hope one day people will say about my work that John puts the music on stage," Pascoe said.

Ars Poetica fills the cultural gap

By Corinne Abatt
staff writer

A newcomer to the metropolitan music scene, Ars Poetica Chamber Orchestra, will give its inaugural concert at 8 p.m. Monday, April 30, at Orchestra Hall. It will be royally welcomed by many major figures in the arts from the local to the state level, who are on the list of ticket and boxholders.

This ensemble was founded and is directed by Anatoli Cheinikou, Russian conductor who now lives in Grosse Pointe. Gail W. Rector, most recently artistic adviser to Orchestra Hall and for many years president of the University Musical Society in Ann Arbor, is president of the board.

Certainly one of the key people is making this dream into a reality is Dr. Dieder Golden-Dutka, board vice president. She has few peers as an organizer/implementer. White Rector, Golden-Dutka and an impressive group of board members including Gillian Von Drehle, Franklin, vice president, give the fledgling group a much needed, strong support system. It is the quality of the music that will be put to the test on April 30.

CHEINIKOU WAS a soloist and member of the Moscow Chamber Orchestra, directed by Rudolf Barshai from 1968 to 1980. He has toured throughout the world with that ensemble and as a soloist with the Moscow Virtuosi, directed by Vladimir Spivakov, a group he helped found. He has participated in the major European festivals and made recordings in Russia and the U.S.

He said of Barshai who now lives in Paris, "He created his own school — each of us (in the orchestra) have now founded their own chamber orchestra. Moscow Chamber Orchestra was the first chamber orchestra in the Soviet Union."

He said the idea to form an orchestra "has always been with me."

When he began to choose musi-

'These musicians are among the elite of this country.'

— Anatoli Cheinikou

clans for Ars Poetica, he said he sought the same level of quality he had known with the Moscow Chamber Orchestra.

Ars Poetica is made up of 10 musicians from the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, eight from the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra, one each from the Chicago, Ohio and Windsor symphony orchestras and one unaffiliated. All are veteran musicians, one is a principal and two are assistant principals.

Cheinikou said, "These musicians are among the elite of this country." Later he added, "There are no strangers in chamber music — they are really united by the love of chamber music."

GOLDEN-DUTKA, MOTHER of three young sons (they study with Cheinikou), who is working on a degree in psychiatry and has worked diligently for more than two years on behalf of Ars Poetica, said slowly and quietly with a fleck of Dublin Irish still on her tongue, "You do it for the music. You do it for the city. You do it for the culture."

Ever since they began, these three have been both pragmatists and dreamers — Cheinikou to wrestle with the unwieldy details of scheduling rehearsals for musicians from more than a dozen cities and different orchestras, Golden-Dutka and Rector to find money and support for the concept. Their dreams, when they allow themselves to indulge, are of the positive impact Ars Poetica will have on Michigan and how this well-packaged chamber orchestra could be an important cultural force worldwide. The field in Michigan is wide open since the Detroit Symphony won't have a chamber orchestra after this season and there aren't any others around.

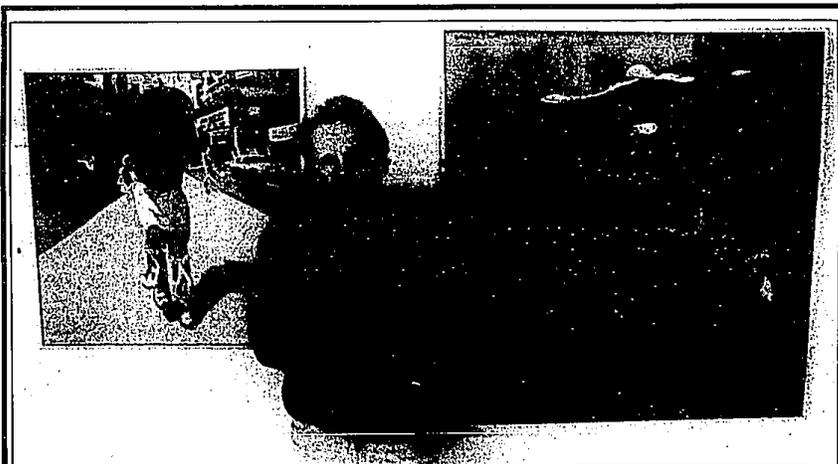
MARTHA AARONS, flute, member of Ars Poetica and the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra, will be the soloist in Mozart's Flute Concerto No. 2 in D Major K-314 at the April 30 concert.

Other works on the program are the Divertimento in F Major K-138 by Mozart, Five Minuets with Six Trios by Schubert, the Symphony No. 49 in F Major "La Passione" by Haydn and the Sonata No. 3 in C Major for String Orchestra by Rostropovich.

Tickets for the reception and concert are \$50 and for the concert only \$25 and \$15. To order, call the Orchestra Hall box office, 633-3700.



Anatoli Cheinikou.



Ed Levine stands between "Buffalo Dancer on 7th Ave." on the left and "Trinity." He said he still wants to do more paintings in this series.

Whose town is this anyhow?

By Louisa Okrutsky
special writer

Edward Levine juxtaposes the ancient with the modern, the joyous with the bleak in his series of oils on canvas, "Without Reservation." His work is handled by Xochipilli Gallery, Birmingham.

Native American figures in colorful tribal dress are seen as surprising parts of urban landscapes in New York City and Los Angeles street. In New York, another rides regally on an I-beam hoisted over a busy street.

"I've always been interested in American Indian art from the turn of the century," Levine said. "The whole idea of a culture being able to survive 500 years of European domination is extraordinary. In spite of this immense army of occupation, tribal and clan roots still survive."

Through the years, he's taken photos of native American social and ceremonial dances whenever permission was granted.

These photographs weren't on his mind when he began the series a couple of years ago with the Los Angeles street scene. After trying several more conventional figures in the scene, he painted in the native American in full dress talking on the phone.

"Nothing else worked," he said.

FROM THEN ON, the Royal Oak-based artist used his collection

of photographs of different tribal dancers for what turned out to be a series of paintings.

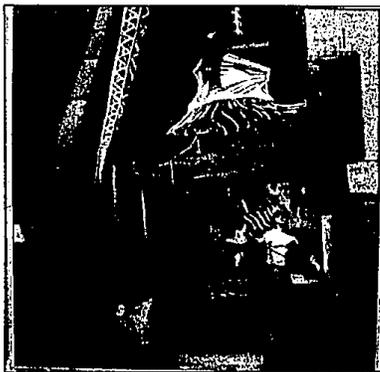
Some figures are whimsically incongruous with their scenes while others take part in small dramas. On a freeway ramp in Los Angeles, a dancer stands with his back to the viewer and in the path of an oncoming truck.

Although it calls to mind the scene in Timesman Square in which one man stands in front of a tank, Levine says he started the painting before that incident happened. "It took me a long time. I started this picture and then Timesman Square happened. It was too much. There was something about that image. I stopped working for two months on this painting."

He was afraid that the image would be repeated by others so many times it would lose its impact.

In a more whimsical scene on a New York street a young native American boy dances as a taxi passes him. His movements echo the stamp of frustration made by anyone who's had a tough time flagging a cab. At the same time the boy dancer looks joyful in his brightly colored costume.

Even the bleak streets of New York are painted in colors that seem to be brightened by an unseen sun. His intense colors are inspired by the time he spent in Los Angeles.



"Shawl Dancer on West 57th St." is the name of this Levine painting.

les, Levine said. THIS SERIES isn't finished. Possibilities still present themselves to him. A Pueblo ceremonial room, a kiva with its mystical implications calls to his mind images of a subway. He's working at another painting in the series showing one

JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

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man in American Indian dress holding a flag. "When I got into it it was just cityscapes. I don't feel I'm quite finished with this." Xochipilli Gallery, 568 N. Woodward, is open 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday.