

Chamber groups show strengths, weakness

By Avigdor Zarnop
special writer

The **Michigan** schedule of chamber events continued last week with Detroit Symphony Chamber Orchestra and violinist conductor Joseph Silverstein and the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields and violinist-director, Jona Brown.

Silverstein is one of the leading instrumental soloists to turn to conducting. He has been music director of the Utah Symphony since 1983. Of the artists who have adopted well to the conductor's career and those who are less spectacular, Silverstein is somewhere in between. He is primarily a brilliant violinist as exemplified in his performance of "The Lark Ascending" by Ralph Vaughn Williams. The refined sound of his violin soared to the highest register with no significant distortion.

The other works, Stravinsky's Pulcinella Suite and Mozart's Serenade No. 9, K 320 "Pothorn" put his skills as a conductor to a more rigorous test. In both, his effort was adequate for the most part, but deficient where the scoring was heavier.

In the Pulcinella Suite, the heavy, brassy variations weren't as convincing as the portions where Pergolesi's original themes are more recognizable.

IN MOZART'S SERENADE, the more symphonic beginning and ending movements lacked clarity and a sense of direction. The movements in between which are lightly scored and which feature some inspired wind solos, came through with much more elegance.

The high standard of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra musicians made this program very enjoyable overall, in spite of the flaws.

Silverstein eventually takes his conducting activities very seriously and the possibility of impressive accomplishments in the future shouldn't be overlooked. Right now, I find him far more impressive as a violinist.

The performance approach of the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields seems to be predominantly introverted, with a sound that strives always to be polished and agreeable. This was apparent in the three program selections — Mendelssohn's String Symphony No. 9, Beethoven's Cavatina from Op. 130 combined with his Grosse Fuge (Great Fuge) Op. 133 and Schoenberg's early masterpiece "Verklarte Nacht." Mendelssohn's string symphonies were written when he was only 14, the intimate performance of this work outlines its glowing subtleties. Even the faster move-

ments sounded more introspective than carefree. This approach seemed fitting for Beethoven's Cavatina, but less so in the Grosse Fuge. This latter movement, when performed by less competent players, tends to sound more like Schoenberg of the atonal variety than like an early 19th century work.

HERE THE PLAYERS tackled the work too cautiously. While the performance was impressive in its cleanliness and smooth edges, the conscious effort to avoid roughness and dissonances at all costs robbed it of more dramatic impact. This demanding movement isn't tolerant of any fudge-factors in pitch to be sure, but a more daring approach would have brought it to life.

A more daring approach was present in Schoenberg's "Verklarte Nacht." This early tonal work enjoys

more exposure and appreciation than any other work by this composer whose claim to fame is the establishment of the fundamental principles of atonality. This was the one work in which the players showed more daring and extroverted passion.

Brown is an extremely capable violinist in addition to her role as director. She demonstrated effective leadership from her first chair position. This group isn't big on dazzling showmanship, but its more important attention to subtlety makes their music pleasing indeed.

Evening of poetry set

The Uptown Poetry Series will present a special program 7:30-9 p.m. Thursday, April 19 in the Marcotte Room of the Southfield Public Library with area poets, Jack Zuckerman and Patricia Hooper.

Zuckerman's work has been published in Esquire, The Literary Review, Poetry Northwest and Best Poems of 1971. His latest book, "From Manhattan," was published by Pointe

Hooper's poems have appeared in Chicago Review, Michigan Quarterly Review, Poetry and The New Critique.

Refreshments will be served and the poets will be available for book autographing. For information, call the Poetry Resource Center, 972-5580. The library is at 26000 Evergreen, Southfield.



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