

Quality varies for Requiem

By Avigdor Zaromp
special writer

The Ann Arbor May Festival was laid to rest on Saturday, May 12, to the strains of Brahms' German Requiem. This was the last of four programs with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, conducted by Andre Previn.

A requiem, by its very nature, implies a sense of loss. Some losses don't always reflect what the composer had in mind. One loss was Brahms' Tragic Overture, which was on the program, but not performed. The choir platform, installed for the Requiem, didn't leave enough space on stage to accommodate the full orchestra. That sealed the tragic fate of this short but remarkable overture.

A masterful work such as the German Requiem is bound to sound impressive even in a routine performance, by the sheer force of its musical quality. This performance at the Hill Auditorium soared above the mundane and routine, but fell short of being outstanding.

Each component in this event was capable of attaining high standards, at least most of the time. This was true of the orchestra, the Festival Choir under its director Laura Rosenberg, the two vocal soloists — baritone Richard Stilwell and soprano Hel-Kyung Hong — and, of course, Maestro Previn.

The total combination of all the resources had varying degrees of quality, most of it in the high range, to be sure. The opening "Seig sind" choral segment featured a uniform, balanced choir, sufficiently flexible to mold the calm, but expressive phrases. This was the case with many of the other smoothly flowing portions of this work.

Stilwell reflected the anxiety and anguish in "Herr, lehre doch mich" with sincerity. His rich, sound reached every corner of the auditorium, filling it with the score's profound phrases. His vibrato, however, caused such richness to be at the expense of overall clarity.

Well-focused clarity proved to be no problem for soprano Hong, who wove her sorrowful expression with refined art in "Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit." This Korean-born singer is another valuable Far-Eastern addition to Western music.

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providing yet another testament to the universality of the musical language.

Fugue and counterpoint were the weakest aspects of Previn's conducting. The one in "Der Gerechte Seelen," starting with the lower voices, lost its foundation and orientation when reaching into the higher range. Another double fugue, "Herr, du bist würdig," started with a mismatch between the strings and the chorus, which was corrected. The lack of solid counterpoint persisted, however.

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if the latter are performed correctly. A case in point was in "Denn as wird die Posaune schallen" ("... for the trumpet shall sound") which had an overly soggy texture to it.

The concluding, serene "Seig sind die Toten" ("Blessed are the Dead"), was among the best performed portions, and left the listener fulfilled.

Ann Arbor audiences prove time and again to be sophisticated. In this instance, the performance was followed by a prolonged applause — but no standing ovation.

A review shouldn't be based on audience response, but it is encouraging to observe an audience whose reaction is frequently proportional to the quality of the performance rather than to the number of the decibels.



The Spinnners will perform at 2 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Saturday on the Northwest Airlines Main Stage at the Michigan TasteFest at Detroit's New Center Area. Festival admission is free.

upcoming things to do

● **CHINESE FESTIVAL**
Chinese Folk Arts Festival will be 7:30-9:30 p.m. Friday, June 1, at Plymouth-Canton High School. Theme for this gala event will be Chinese Folk Art, featuring performances and demonstrations by folk artists. Special performances include the Chinese Lion Dance, other traditional Chinese dances and a Chinese costume show. Three artists will demonstrate Chinese painting, Chinese calligraphy and paper folding. The audience is being invited to participate in these activities. For further information contact the Chinese American Educational and Cultural Center of Michigan at 663-

0099, between 9:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

● **'DOOLEY'S DELI**
The musical comedy "Dooley's Deli" will be presented by the Plymouth Theatre Guild on Thursday, May 31, through Sunday, June 3, at the Water Tower Theatre on the campus of the Northville Regional Hospital. May 31 is a benefit performance — Cystic Fibrosis and Hearing Impaired Night. Curtain is at 8 p.m. except Sunday at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$6 adults, \$5 seniors and students; advance tickets are \$1 off. For more information call 459-9429.

table talk

Healthy foods

Alban's Bottle and Basket restaurant in Birmingham will feature HeartSmart selections, low in fat and cholesterol, during the four-day Michigan TasteFest in Detroit's New Center Area. HeartSmart dishes from Alban's will be available Friday-Monday at the TasteFest from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. (closes at 9 p.m. Monday).

day). The festival also features food samples from 40 other restaurants and breweries, as well as continuous music by top local and national entertainers. For more information on TasteFest call 872-0188.

Lion cooks

Detroit Lion tackle Jerry Ball of

Bloomfield Hills will be one of the celebrity chefs at the Michigan TasteFest this weekend. He will prepare a favorite dish at 12:15 p.m. Friday, right after TasteFest's grand opening.

5-Star dinner

The Lark restaurant in West

Bloomfield will hold at Five-Star Celebration Dinner at 7 p.m. Tuesday-Wednesday. The restaurant, which offers a special theme dinner each month, has scheduled this one to honor its recent rating of five stars awarded by Detroit Monthly magazine. The dinner is priced at \$65 per person. For more information call the Lark at 661-4466.

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