



'Superstar' goes modern

Lawrence Clayton, along with Andi Hopkins (second from the left), Susan Wood and Lisa-Marie Panagos, appear in the rock opera "Jesus Christ Superstar" restaged in modern dress at the Birmingham Theatre. The production starring Adrian Zmed runs through Sunday.

Soprano sings to a full house

By Avigdor Zoromp
special writer

When local mezzo soprano Nancy Mayer presented a voice recital early this month the Guild Hall of Christ Church Cranbrook was filled to capacity.

Mayer is still among the unsung singers — so to speak. That's due primarily to her youth and limited exposure. Her performance, however, reflected solid training and a degree of professionalism that deserve attention.

Mayer has studied under prominent teachers at the Eastman School of Music and has performed operatic roles reflecting a variety of styles — Cherubino in Mozart's "Marriage of Figaro," Nancy in Britten's "Albert Herring" (that's a different Nancy) and Nikolaus in Offenbach's "Tales of Hoffmann," to name a few.

There was a wide stylistic variety in her program of selections by Mahler, Faure, Orlandini, Ives and Gershwin.

She sang songs or song-cycles, rather than the more popular operatic arias. Much of this material is relatively unknown, but it represents some masterful vocal repertoire that deserves to be heard.

Among the major selections were two Mahler songs from "Des Knaben Wunderhorn," and a lesser known song cycle by Faure, "La Chanson D'Eve" ("The Song of Eve").

Altogether, there were four languages represented on this program. It was certainly a daring undertaking on the part of Mayer, who was accompanied by the capable pianist Gregory McCallum, who also received his degree from Eastman.

Her voice is smooth and silky, capable of performing even the most demanding passages with little strain. She enhances her singing with acting and facial expressions and maintains constant eye contact with the audience.

There are some things that should, and probably will, undergo some improvement. Among the major ones

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Her wide stylistic range in the selections wasn't reflected in the vocal technique. Gershwin's songs, with their 20th century flavor, including some blues, sounded very much like Italian operatic selections from the previous century. The Mahler songs had the right notes at the right places, but the intense emotional commitment was only suggested in the demeanor, not in the singing.

The clarity of the diction is, unfortunately, a problem even with many more established singers. It may be unreasonable to expect every syllable in a foreign language to be heard clearly, but there should be at least some linguistic flavor present.

In the Faure song cycle, for example, it would have been difficult to identify French as the language of origin without the text or knowledge of the composer's nationality. But even songs in English weren't easy to understand. The tongue-twister from Ives' set, "Memories" ("Very Pleasant") is challenging, indeed, if the words are clearly enunciated in the fast and witty tempo. Mayer didn't have the technique to execute it properly.

Among her more convincing selections was her encore, "Maidens of Cadiz" by Delibes, in which the French was better than in the Faure. She is a talented, promising vocal artist.

upcoming things to do

TAMMY WYNETTE

Country star Tammy Wynette will present a free concert at 7 p.m. Friday, June 15, at the Stage near B. Dalton Bookseller at Livonia Mall. The Waco Country Band will entertain at 2 and 4 p.m. Saturday, June 16, at the Stage near Crowley's.

MUSIC OUTDOORS

The Livonia Arts Commission will present the following concerts in the "Music Under the Stars" series for summer 1990: June 28, 7:30-9 p.m., City Hall Steps, Hamtramck Heritage Concert Band; July 5, 7:30-9 p.m., Civic Center Park, the Kasiku Mafia Success Reggae-Calyso Band; July 12, 7:30-9 p.m., Civic Center Park, the Tommy Baldwin Orchestra; July 19, 7:30-9 p.m., Civic Center Park, Austin-Moro Band; July 20, 7:30-9 p.m., Civic Center

Park, Academy Brass Ensemble from North Limburg (Het Groot Koperen Van de Nood Limburgse Muziek Academie); July 26, 7:30-9 p.m., Civic Center Park, Ed Peltz and Company; Aug. 2, 7:30-9 p.m., Wilson Barn, Downriver Dulcimers; Aug. 9, 7:30-9 p.m., Wilson Barn, Percy Gabriel; Aug. 16, 7:30-9 p.m., Civic Center Park, Livonia Symphony Orchestra; Aug. 23, 7:30-9 p.m., Civic Center Park, Ernest Malchuk.

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