

Concertmaster's solo exceptional

By Avigdor Zoromp
special writer

Non-standard repertoire made a full comeback last week with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra under visiting conductor Raymond Leppard.

In the right hands, such a program could become a success even though one of its major components was second rate. Success was only partial, however, on Thursday's performance.

The arduous peaked with Stravinsky's Violin Concerto. Most of the credit for this success goes to concertmaster Emmanuelle Beaugrand, the soloist in this challenging work. Her unconventional outfit — black silver-lined dress with unusual contours — drew gasps of awe and astonishment from the audience. But that, in the long run, didn't prove to be sufficient to distract the listeners from the music that was to follow.

The opening chord, which reappears in other spots, was initially considered unplayable by violinist Samuel Dushkin, who performed the premier in 1931. But anybody, especially a non-violinist, would have a hard time neglecting any detail in Boisvert's excellent performance.

ON THE TECHNICAL SIDE, her



Avigdor Zoromp

performance was clean, accurate and secure. But beyond that, she penetrated the work's inner soul. Within 20th century dissonant texture, the roots of the structure of this concerto go as far back as the baroque period.

It takes a gifted artist to transform this work from its dissonant sequences to a towering beacon of art, which this work certainly is. While Boisvert tended to underemphasize the fiery, defiant aspects of this concerto, her insight into the intimate subtleties amply compensated for that.

The work has a good sense of communication between soloist and orchestra — a factor which is most important in this concerto.

Leppard had obvious affinity for the opening selection by his countryman Gustav Holst, whose major claim to fame is through "The Planets." The witty, rarely heard music

from "The Perfect Fool" had a spark and zest to it, culminating with its snappy final chord.

Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 1 was far less fortunate. While Mendelssohn may be forgiven for writing, at the age of 15, a work far less cultivated than his "Italian" Symphony; there is no good reason for a conductor of Leppard's reputation and experience to accord it such shabby treatment.

MENDELSSOHN REDEEMED HIMSELF only a year later with his brilliant Octet. While the symphony has its shortcomings, its cause isn't served well by a third-rate performance, as was the case here.

The entire performance amounted to going through the motion of playing the notes, a task which the Detroit Symphony could have accomplished as well without a conductor. In spite of its shortcomings, this

work has many redeeming features, none of which were reflected in this mechanical performance. It is reported that in its performance in London in 1829, with Mendelssohn conducting, he replaced the minuet with an orchestral version of the scherzo from his Octet, as he was concerned about the English reaction to the old, extinct form.

WHILE IT WOULD HAVE been chronologically impossible for Mendelssohn to have had Leppard in mind, this present performance suggested exactly that. This minuet was rushed and banged up to the extent that there was no trace left of its considerable elegance.

The final movement, likewise, had no shape and form in this rendition. Whatever happened to the inspired fugue in the development?

There was a silver lining, however. Leppard presented the orchestrated version of the scherzo from the Octet as an encore, which — in contrast to the symphony — sounded elegant and inspired.

Now why couldn't he have done so with the symphony? To do it justice, somebody should perform it again — and do it right.



At Bonstelle

Tracey Karbel is Alice and Don Bortoff is the White Rabbit in "Alice in Wonderland" through Sunday, Dec. 16, at the Bonstelle Theatre. For ticket information, call the box office at 577-2960.

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upcoming things to do

● **FAMILY COMEDY**
"A Rosen By Any Other Name," a family comedy by Israel Horowitz, opens Wednesday, Dec. 12, at the Jewish Ensemble Theatre, at the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield. Preview performances begin Dec. 12, and the show continues through Jan. 6. Evening performances are Wednesday-Sunday, and matinees are on Sunday. JET offers a student discount. For this play, student tickets are \$5. There also are discounts for senior citizens. For more information, call JET at 788-2900.

● **'DECEMBER GLOW'**
Farmington Community Chorus presents its 11th annual winter concert "December Glow" at 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, Dec. 7-8, at Harrison High School. The chorus will perform seasonal favorites. The Perfect Blend (formerly the Farmingtons), a 16-voice group, also will perform.

Solos, duets and small ensembles complete the evening's program. Tickets at the door are \$5 for adults and \$4 for senior citizens and students. Children 10 and under are admitted free. Tickets also are available in advance from any chorus member or at the City of Farmington Hills Department of Special Services at 31555 Eleven Mile Road.

● **MATINEE ADDED**
Nearly all tickets are sold for every Detroit Repertory Theatre performance through Monday, Dec. 31, for "Cotton Patch Gospel," musical play by Harry Chapin, which tells the story of Jesus in a contemporary setting. A matinee has been added at 3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 8. The show runs Thursday-Sunday until New Year's Eve. Tickets at \$10 are available at the box office or all Ticketmaster outlets. For reservations for the added date or for the New Year's Eve performance call 869-1347.

Tickets for New Year's Eve are \$35 and include champagne, hors d'oeuvres, performance cabaret style, buffet supper and celebration.

● **SANTA BREAKFAST**
The jolly, bearded fellow hosts "Breakfast with Santa" for believers of all ages in Kravitz Court at the Detroit Institute of Arts. Visits with Saint Nick are at 9:45 a.m. Wednesday-Saturday through Dec. 22. Tickets are \$7 each and reservations are required. Weekend museum visitors may enjoy "Snack with Santa" noon to 3:30 p.m. each Saturday. No reservation is necessary.

● **AT DUFFY'S**
The Bob Fosse Comedy Show performs all weekends in December at Duffy's Waterfront Inn in Union Lake. Cover charge is \$7. Alexander Zonjic performs at 7 and 9 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 9. Cover charge is \$7.

● **HARLEM GLOBETROTTERS**
The Harlem Globetrotters bring their arch rivals, the Washington Generals, for two basketball games at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 27, at Joe Louis Arena in Detroit and at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 28, at the Palace of Auburn Hills. Tickets can be purchased at the Joe Louis Arena box office (10 a.m. to 6 p.m.), the Cobo Arena box office (10 a.m. to 6 p.m.), the Palace box office (10 a.m. to 6 p.m.) and all Ticketmaster outlets. Tickets are \$14, \$11 and \$8. Children under 12 and seniors over 60 receive a \$2 discount. To charge tickets by phone call 645-6666.

● **PACIFIC CAFE**
David Ball and Kevin Crosby perform every Wednesday and Friday at the Pacific Cafe at the Heights Shopping Center in Dearborn Heights. Kris Peterson performs every Saturday. Call 377-2111 for more information.

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