

Choir to perform Brahms' Requiem

By Linda Ann Chomin
special writer

The Plymouth Oratorio Society, accompanied by the Michigan Sinfonietta, will present Johannes Brahms' "A German Requiem, Op. 45" in English on Sunday, April 21. Curtain time is 7:30 p.m. in the First United Methodist Church, 45201 N. Territorial, Plymouth.

Admission is free, but free-will offerings help underwrite the cost of the orchestra. The Michigan Sinfonietta was formerly the Ann Arbor Chamber Orchestra.

Guest soloists include soprano Carolyn Pratt of Minnesota and baritone John Stewart of Plymouth.

In ITS fifth season, the Plymouth Oratorio Society, under artistic director Robert Pratt, consists of 87 singers from Plymouth, Canton, Northville, Livonia, Redford, Farmington, Ann Arbor, Wayne, Westland and Brighton.

"We are a community choir, formed to do major choral works," said Donald Pratt, a tenor with the choir and society treasurer.

"Five years ago, we sent letters to all the church choirs telling

them of our purpose," said Robert Pratt, who conducts the Plymouth Oratorio Society.

He is former chairman of the music department at Pioneer High School in Ann Arbor.

"We wanted to do major works of length with orchestra, that church choirs might not want to tackle."

ORATORIO IS a monumental musical work for chorus, solo voices and orchestra set to a libretto usually of a sacred nature.

Performed in a church or hall without scenery or costumes, the oratorio features a series of recitatives and arias, duets, trios and choruses.

"Brahms chose the texts himself from the German Bible," Robert Pratt said.

"It's a non-denominational work with a positive cast for the living and the salvation of the dead, but it's more for the living."

BRAHMS' MUSIC is a dichotomy: the form is classic but the style is romantic.

The death of celebrated composer Robert Schumann inspired Brahms to begin writing the monumental choral work, "A German



Carolyn Pratt
soprano



John Stewart
baritone

Requiem," in 1861.

Overcome with grief when his mother died in 1855, Brahms wrote the fifth part of the Requiem as a tribute to her.

Brahms' masterpiece gives consolation to grief and despair. Clearly, Brahms was conscious of the eternal questions concerning life, and death.

THE PLYMOUTH Oratorio Society was a dream of an idea conceived by Plymouth attorney John Stewart. Stewart, an attorney for the last 15 years, performed for 12 years with the Kenneth Jewell Chorus.

In 1966-67, Stewart was a student conductor at Meadow Brook, after four summers at Interlochen. A baritone, Stewart is one of two featured soloists performing the

Brahms Requiem.

"I founded the oratorio group in 1985 for people looking for an outlet like this," Stewart said.

"We want to focus on a once-a-year performance for those of us who can't give a September to June (rehearsal) commitment."

Stewart has yet another dream: "to combine (the Plymouth Oratorio Society) with the Plymouth Symphony and the U of M Choral Union for the May Festival at Hill Auditorium" in Ann Arbor, he said.

A NON-PROFIT group, the Plymouth Oratorio Society's annual spring concert is financed in part by the Detroit Council of the Arts; the Michigan Council for the Arts; local businesses such as Blackwell Ford, Meijer, National Bank of Detroit and First of America; local service clubs like the Rotary and Kiwanis of Plymouth; individual donors, and members of the chorus.

"We're very grateful to the church here for letting us use the sanctuary," Robert Pratt said.

Before the church opened its new sanctuary a year ago in April, only 300 seats were available. Within

the new sanctuary are 650 seats.

The Plymouth Oratorio Society is open to all area singers. No audition is required. Rehearsals begin in January.

CAROLYN PRATT is the featured soprano soloist.

Pratt earned bachelor of music and bachelor of arts degrees from Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Oberlin, Ohio, and a master's of music degree from University of South Florida.

She is a candidate for a doctorate in choral conducting at the University of Wisconsin.

In 1987, Carolyn Pratt was a winner in the Madison Opera Guild's Metropolitan Opera auditions, as well as a finalist at the Del Canto Foundation Opera seminar.

A RECEPTION in the Fellowship Hall at First United Methodist Church will take place after the 78-minute performance of "A German Requiem."

For more information about the April 21 concert or joining the community choral group, call Robert Pratt at 761-2991.

creative impressions

This column appears regularly. Send news items to: Creative Impressions, Creative Living, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

ANTIQUE SHOW

Wanderland Mall at Plymouth and Middlebelt roads in Livonia will host an antique show April 18-21.

Hours are 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Thursday-Saturday and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. There is no admission charge.

The fare will include old pocket watches, fine linens, ironstone tea set, oak furniture, china, postcards, jewelry, silver matching service, antique reference books and Depression-era items.

DSO PERFORMS

British violin virtuoso Nigel Kennedy performs Elgar's Violin Concerto with music director Neeme Jarvi and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra at 8 p.m. Thursday, April 18, 10:45 a.m. Friday, April 19 and 8:30 p.m. Saturday, April 20 at Orchestra Hall. Also on the program are Sibelius's After Fallen Crumbs, Ravel's Bolero.

Detroit pianist Deborah Berman performs in the final 1990-91 Detroit Symphony Orchestra Hall Michigan Artists Recital Series concert at 3:30 p.m. Sunday, April 21 at Orchestra Hall. She will play works by Scarlatti, Shostakovich, Chopin, Poulenc and Schubert.

For tickets: 833-3700.

MOZART CELEBRATION

The Rackham Symphony Choir, one of the Detroit area's oldest singing groups under Frederic Delaven's direction, will join a worldwide celebration of the genius of Mozart with its annual schools concert at 8 p.m. Friday, April 19 in the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Woodward at Warren, Detroit.

Rackham will join the choir from Detroit Cass Tech High to perform Mozart's Coronation Mass. The choir will be accompanied by an orchestra that includes high school instrumentalists from throughout metro Detroit.

The choir and orchestra will open the concert with Mozart's Vespere Solenne de Confessore.

Tickets will be available at the door.

SPRING CONCERT

This year marks the 200th anniversary of Mozart's death.

The Schoolcraft College Community Choir, under Donald Stromberg's direction, will present its annual spring concert at 8 p.m. Saturday, April 27 in Northville First United Methodist Church, Eight Mile, west of Taft.

The 60-voice choir specializes in local concerts of the great classical choral works.

The program, "Serenade to Spring," will feature Schubert's Mass in F, "How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place" from the Brahms Requiem, Copland's "The Promise

of Living" and many capella works.

Donations will be accepted at intermission. For information about the concert or choir, call Schoolcraft's continuing education services 462-4448.

ROADSIDE GRAPHICS

Plymouth resident Dan Hershberger will provide an insightful portrait of American roadside graphics in a lecture sponsored by the Scarab Club of the Center for Creative Studies Sunday, April 28.

The Scarab Club is at John R and Farnsworth behind the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Hershberger, associate professor of Graphic Design for the Center for Creative Studies, will present "Gas, Food and Lodging: The Design of the American Roadside,"

He'll discuss roadside structures, their development and the context in which they existed.

Familiar roadside companies such as Texaco, Mobil, Howard Johnson's and McDonalds will be featured along with more general topics, including the classic American diner and pre-war tourist courts.

Registration for other lecture starts at 3 p.m. with the program beginning at 3:15.

Cost is \$5 a lecture for members of the Scarab Club, the Detroit Area Art Deco Society and Preservation Wayne. General admission is \$7. A reception and afternoon tea follows. For more information, call 577-3559.



JIM JAGFELD/Staff photographer

Wildlife art

The artwork of wildlife artist Michael Glenn Monroe of Brighton is on display through Friday, April 26, in the Livonia Civic Center Lobby, Farmington Road at Five Mile. He finished fourth among 57 entries for his common loon in the 1990 Michigan Wildlife Artist of the Year competition, hosted by the Michigan United Conservation Clubs. At left, an owl rests on a craggy tree branch that leads the viewer's eye to this wise old bird in the print, "Watchful Eyes." Green dominates. The owl is done in forest colors. A self-taught artist, Monroe has traveled across the country studying different types of wildlife. "Because the land is being developed so rapidly, through my paintings I want to remind people about the beauty of nature and about the animals that are living in those developing areas."

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