

Unconventional Nigel Kennedy shows multiple, musical talents

By Avigdor Zorom special writer

Art and eccentricity have been keeping company at least since the beginning of written reports about artistic events, and probably much sooner. There are some gifted artists whose eccentricity is a natural byproduct of their art. Many others attempt to elevate their deficient art through contrived artistic gimmicks.

Violinist Nigel Kennedy is clearly and unmistakably a member of the first, much smaller category. He was the soloist last week with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra performing the Elgar Violin Concerto with conductor Neeme Jarvi. The Saturday performance, which I attended, was sold out.

To say that Kennedy's artistic indulgences were more varied than those of his more purist colleagues would be an understatement. He is

as much at ease with jazz and rock as he is with the traditional — and untraditional — classical repertoire. His unorthodox taste isn't confined to art, however. It is reflected in every aspect of his life, including his appearance on stage. He was outfitted more like a rock star than a concert musician. It is the kind of appearance that even those who are oblivious to fashion trends, which I notice myself to be, can't fail to notice.

HOWEVER ANY DISTRACTION was only temporary. As soon as he shared his vast and spontaneous artistic universe, his attire became irrelevant.

As the long, intricate Elgar concerto progressed, I became absorbed and engulped in the music of this rarely performed work, which tends to sound redundant and superficial in lesser hands.

Kennedy serves his art with all his

being — spiritual as well as physical. He frequently leaps into the air and stomps his feet in the more climactic passages. Foreright prevailed, however. A piece of carpet was affixed to the stage before the concert — in his expected-strolling range. It helped to reduce the impact of his feet, but not his art.

Following intense applause and standing ovation, Kennedy showed another face of his artistic multiplicity, when, together with double bass player Craig Ruffel, he performed a couple of jazz improvisations.

NOT TO BE OUTDONE, Jarvi maintained the special high quality of his program with most of the orchestral material. The short opening work by the American composer Arvo Part, titled "After Short Crumbs." If the composer feels that this title describes the work adequately, I won't quibble

with his assessment — he probably knows best.

French and English music seldom mix successfully, but this program was an exception. The second suite from the ballet "Bacchus and Ariadne" by Albert Roussel provided us with a rare, intoxication encounter with this highly charged material, which is seldom heard.

A more established work — Ravel's "Bolero" — was wound up with its continuous crescendo to a tension that is seldom reached. Among the detractors of this work, with its endlessly repeated pattern, was Ravel himself. On this occasion, however, it received a prolonged applause and standing ovation. What could possibly follow such a highly charged program?

A relaxing Adagio from Bizet's "L'Arlesienne" was performed as an encore. Jarvi's magic worked again.

Richard Vernick to show musical photo paintings

By Isabelle Smith special writer

preview

The master of musical photo paintings, Richard Vernick, is at it again. He will present his latest production, "The French Connection," at the Detroit Golf Club 5:30 p.m. Sunday, April 28 in a benefit for the Birmingham-Bloomfield Symphony Orchestra. Tickets (including hot and cold hors d'oeuvres and champagne) are \$30.

Incorporating the sights and sounds of Paris, the French countryside, New Orleans' French Quarter and impressionistic studies of the Great Smokies (with the music of Debussy and Saint-Saens), Vernick's unique combination of "music you can see, photography that you can hear" will conjure up the romance of Paris, the rhythm of Bourbon Street and the pulse of nature awakening.

Musicians Fontaine Laing (piano) and Nadine Debury (cello) will present live accompaniment for parts of the program. Taped portions include New Orleans' jazz bands, the 30s style cafe songs of French chanteur Jacques Lanier and the accordion music heard throughout Provence and the French countryside.

This latest in more than 80 Vernick programs, continues the "we are the world" theme begun in 1972 with his first trip to Italy.

"Images always conjure up music in my mind," says Vernick, "and when I began taking photographs and movies in earnest, I knew my 'art' would be incomplete without sound. The search for the proper musical setting is as important to me as the editing of the 'right' picture to convey the essence of a place, a person, a mood. It is my effort to recreate wonderful experiences."

Vernick's programs — some of which have been used for commercials — have included everything from clowns and children to China, the vagaries of nature to Vienna and various points in-between.

Last June Vernick did an Italian production for a DSOI Musical Feast, a program in progress is about Africa — but, for now, it is "April in Paris" and "everyone is welcome to come along on the trip."

For information on how to order tickets for "The French Connection," call 645-BBSO or mail checks and name to 6750 Telegraph Road, Apt. 39, Birmingham, MI 48010, noting "The French Connection" "C'est la Vie!"

Lafayette Quartet plans farewell performance

The farewell performance of the Lafayette String Quartet at Varner Hall, Oakland University at 5 p.m. Sunday, May 5, will feature the Detroit premiere of two Shostakovich preludes and fugues.

The quartet, in residence at Oakland since 1986, begins a residency at the University of Victoria in British Columbia next fall.

The quartet will open the concert with Shostakovich's preludes and fugues, Nos. 1 and 15, arranged for string quartet. These works, originally written for piano, have been performed only once — 25 years ago in Moscow by the Borodin String Quartet in the presence of Shostakovich.

The music was arranged for strings by Rostislav Dubinsky, former first violin with the Borodin. Dubinsky is a professor of chamber music at Indiana University and a mentor of the LSQ.

Tickets are \$10 general admission, \$5 for students and senior citizens and \$4 for OU students. For information, call the Center for the Arts box office at 370-3013.

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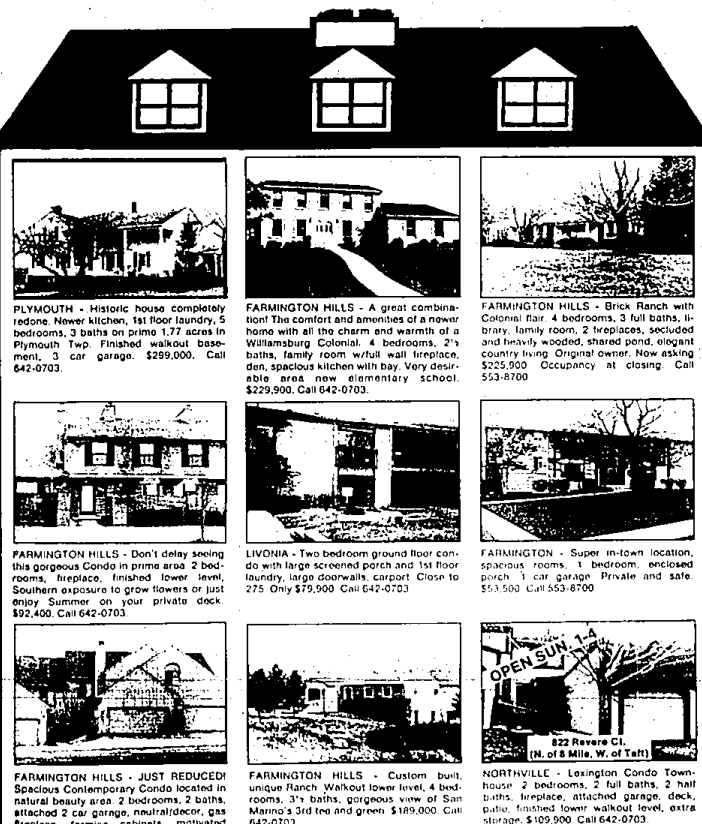
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A message from the American Diabetes Association.

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