

ENTERTAINMENT

THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 1993

6B(F)

ON THE MARQUEE

Chamberworks

Chamberworks presents "A Musical Tour of Europe: Part Four" 8 p.m. Friday, Jan. 29 at Christ Church Cranbrook, 470 Church Road, Bloomfield Hills. Tickets \$10 general admission; seniors and students, \$7. For tickets, call 643-7788.

Musical tour

Trio Aventura will perform a varied program of French and Spanish music for piano, violin and cello 8 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 30, in the Varner Recital Hall on the campus of Oberlin University in Rochester Hills. For ticket information, call 370-3013.

Musica Viva

Musica Viva will present the world premieres of "Ets Halm — The Tree of Life" a tone poem for viola, flute and chamber orchestra and the "Shepherd's Song Cycle," for soprano and chamber orchestra based on original music from 14th century Spain 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 31, at Temple Beth El in Birmingham. For ticket information, call 473-2229.

Plymouth Symphony

Plymouth Symphony Orchestra Chamber Concert and student competition winner, 8 p.m. Friday, Jan. 29, at the Plymouth-Canton Little Theatre, 8415 N. Canton Center Road, Canton. For tickets, call 451-2112.

Membership meeting

Plymouth Theatre Guild membership meeting 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 2, at 41001 W. Seven Mile on the campus of Northville Regional Hospital. Call 349-7110 for information.

Theatre Guild

The Theatre Guild production of Lee Blessing's "Two Rooms" opens 8 p.m. Friday, Feb. 5, in the Theatre Guild Building, 15138 Birch Daly, Redford. For ticket information, call 538-5078.

Brady Brunch

Schoolcraft College's Women's Resource Center is hosting "The Brady Brunch: Scholarships for Women," 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 7, at Diamond Jim Brady's in Novi. Tickets \$30, limited seating. Call 462-4443.

Group du jour

Group du jour will present music to "soothe the mid-winter Blues," at their concert 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 7, at Mercy Center in Farmington Hills. Bring your own picnic basket and lawn chairs, and enjoy music ranging from "Romeo & Juliet" to "South Pacific," to "The Little Mermaid." For tickets, call 478-2075.

'Lettice & Lovage' warm, funny

Performances of "Lettice & Lovage" continue through Jan. 31 at the George Burns Theatre for the Performing Arts in Livonia. For ticket information, call 1-800-589-8000 or Ticketmaster, 645-6866.



KEELY WYGONIK

"Lettice & Lovage" will make you laugh, and smile. Peter Schaffer's comedy hit is a story about two women, with nothing in common, who become friends. Julie Harris plays Miss Lettice Douffet, a free-spirited tour guide who works at Fustian House which she describes as the "dullest house in England." As the curtains part in Act 1, we see her in the house on the staircase, surrounded by bored tourists.

An equally bored Miss Douffet speeds up her presentation giving "just the facts" in tongue twister fashion. When that doesn't work, she starts embellishing history, just a little at first.

Her stories get more and more outrageous. "You are looking at the staircase of ennoblement," she tells one audience. "You are looking at the staircase of advancement," she tells another warned by the thrilling aspects of history as told by Miss Douffet. They applaud her, and leave tips.

The truth catches up with Miss Douffet in Scene 2 in Miss Charlotte Schoon's (Roberta Maxwell) office at the Preservation Trust in London. Here the audience is treated to some comical moments provided by Miss



Comedy hit: Roberta Maxwell (left), cast (center) and Julie Harris (right) in a scene from "Lettice & Lovage" playing at the George Burns Theatre for the Performing Arts through Jan. 31.

Schoon's secretary Miss Framer (Marylouise Burke). She's an adorable, gentle elderly woman who is flustered, but not hurt by Miss Schoon's orders. In her efforts to be helpful, she irritates Miss Schoon even more.

Miss Douffet is fired. "It is not my fault," she says in defense. "I respect history. I recount history when it is moving. But in some cases, I feel I have to take a hand."

Like her mother, who toured the French countryside doing Shakespeare plays with an all female cast, Miss Douffet has a theatrical presence.

In Act 2, 10 weeks later, Miss Schoon visits Miss Douffet's base-ment flat. Here differences in the

women are glaringly obvious. Miss Douffet is dressed in Bohemian fashion in colorful, loose flowing garments. Miss Schoon is dressed in a business suit.

Miss Douffet's name "Lettice" is French, and translated means warrant for imprisonment without trial. It fits. Miss Douffet feels she was unjustly tried and convicted.

Miss Schoon has a dismal outlook on life, but a heart. She tells Miss Douffet about a job, and gives her a letter of recommendation. They toast each other with quaff — a potent drink made from mead, vodka, sugar and lovage, a European plant of the parsley family used as a home remedy.

They become friends, and spend time together acting out the executions of famous people in history. In Act 3 we learn Miss Schoon was accidentally wounded during one of their scenes. Miss Douffet is unjustly charged with attempted murder.

Court-appointed attorney, Mr. Bar-dolph (John Horton) provides some comical moments. Miss Schoon doesn't want to admit the truth because it's embarrassing.

It all works out in the end as the two decide to "set fire to ugliness to show how beauty was murdered."

There were some lighting problems in Act 1, but in spite of these, "Lettice & Lovage" helps cure wintertime blues.

BBSO concert an enjoyable experience



AVIGDOR ZARNOP

The Birmingham-Bloomfield Orchestra has manifested again its tradition of high standards and excellence. Its program Sunday at Temple Beth El consisted of six selections bordering on the majestic and popular. This designation is primarily due to the short duration of these items.

The BBSO is a community orchestra which most of the time doesn't sound like one. Its sound is closer to that of a major orchestra than most other orchestras in its league. While one can't ignore class distinction between orchestras, it is nevertheless interesting to hear the opening selection — Dvorak's "Carnival Overture." Even though we are aware of the

professional gap, it was impressive to note how close the BBSO's rendition of this overture was to that of the more professional quality. Some better control of the brass section would have made it even closer.

Ravel's "Pavane for a Dead Princess" needed a substantially smoother sailing than the one in this performance, which suggested that the princess may have had some respiratory problems. But after some snags, there were some credible solo horn passages.

Stravinsky's "Firebird Ballet" is among the most highly regarded works by this composer. Its descriptive colors and tonal spectrum are a challenge for any orchestra, and the effort fell short at times.

The "Infernal Dance" lacked some polish and didn't quite have the momentum that one would expect. The results were better in the "Berceuse and the Fiddle."

Community orchestras invariably have a natural affinity for American music. Gershwin's "American in Paris," and Richard Rodgers' "Slaughterhouse on 10th Avenue" ballet from "On your Toes" were rather convincing in terms of authentic approach.

In Gershwin's work, which is the more popular of the two, there was the sense of fun and enjoyment when tooting the special taxicab horns and percussions, but there was also a good sonority in the more serious theme.

Few works can approach the entertainment quotient of Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture." This is the kind of work that tends to set any audience on fire — even without the traditional cannons.

While an indoor performance of this work makes some strategic compromise inevitable — this music is capable of a lot of bang even without the artillery. This aspect of the work

came through loud and clear.

The greater challenge lies in the idyllic theme, which requires a more tender sound and precise intonation. This performance mostly filled the bill on these counts. My most significant reservation was that there was hardly any shift in tempo when moving from the battlefield description to the more serene theme. The latter sounded too rushed and hurried to have its intrinsic mood leave a lasting effect.

For every orchestra there is room for improvement — and the BBSO is no exception. But listening to the BBSO is an enjoyable experience. It can be justly proud of its high standards.

Avigdor Zarnop, born in Poland, educated in Israel and the United States, has a Ph.D. in math and has studied piano, music theory and history.

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