

Oakway Gets A Vigorous Start

By TIM RICHARD

After just five months of gestation, the Oakway Symphony Orchestra has been born and is romping vigorously.

Conductor Francesco DiBlasi, perhaps reflecting his own background in theater orchestras, dipped heavily into that area for the first concert — Weber's overture to "Der Freischutz," selec-

tions from Bernstein's "West Side Story," the prelude to Wagner's "Die Meistersinger," along with Schumann's showy piano concerto in A minor.

They were crowd pleasers, and it was exactly the kind of opener the new orchestra needed to give the 500-plus first-nighters in the Mercy High auditorium in Farmington Hills.

Despite the showiness of the program, DiBlasi gave a soft, dreamy reading to many of the scores — to the point that in the Schumann concerto, pianist William Doppmann kicked up the tempo in both the second and third movements.

Doppmann was an excellent choice as opening soloist. In the few years since he was last in Observerland, he has added a little weight, a dose of bravura and a handsome mustache.

Robert Schumann's only piano concerto is an often-heard, often-recorded work. Doppmann, besides being technically competent, offered many fine, new phrasings of this lyrical opus and treated it as a whole, resisting the temptation to slice it into a lot of shorter pieces.

I was intrigued by the mini-symphony constructed of movements by Johann Sebastian Bach and two of his

sons, Johann Christian and C.P.E. Reliable informants said DiBlasi himself put it together.

That's creative programming in my book. Besides having a Juilliard degree and some credentials, DiBlasi has a creative streak. Well, well.

Another crowd-pleasing bit of showmanship came with the costumed herald trumpeters who added a color on stage and a different brass sound to the closing bars of the familiar Wagner music — conducted by DiBlasi without a score.

In any community orchestra, especially on the first night, the weak spot is likely to be the string attack. The opening overture to "Der Freischutz" is the sort of work that will expose such a weakness.

There was, however, much

strength and precision to the Oakway string section — good posture, very good tone, excellent timing. Besides fine first chair people in violinists Sidney Colman and Sherry Khezrajian, violist Ara Zerunian and cellist Jacob Becker, Oakway also appears to have depth in its strings.

There were a few clinkers in the winds, but not enough to make you wince. The overall impression is that this orchestra is strong, good and promising.

Can they keep it up? We'll see on Sunday, Dec. 9 at 4 p.m. in Birmingham Groves High School. Cellist Paul Olefsky will be heard in a Haydn concerto and the orchestra in Popper's "Hungarian Fantasy" and selections from Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess." There's that theatrical streak.

Local Woman Displays Work

"Expressions in Acrylic" by Joyce Hood of Plymouth will be displayed in Gallerie 12, 831 Penniman, Plymouth during November.

It is part of a continuing series of one-man shows by

member artists of the gallery.

The show opens Saturday, Nov. 10, with a reception between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. It will close on Saturday, Dec. 1.

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