

Applause, applause: Gazette reviewers pick favorites of 2011

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By Linda S. Mah

Editor's note: The Kalamazoo area has a wealth of entertainment options. That is especially apparent at the end of the year, when our stable of reviewers are asked to choose their favorite shows and concerts from the past 12 months. Their selections serve as a wonderful reminder of the special activities we've been able to share with family and friends and of the tremendous talents that live in our community — or who just happen to choose to put their abilities on display for an evening. Below are some of the most prolific reviewers' favorite shows of 2011.

BY C.J. GIANAKARIS

Pianist Radu Lupu

Details: Gilmore International Keyboard Festival Piano Masters Series, Jan. 31, Chenery Auditorium.

Romanian-born Radu Lupu, legendary classical pianist who only rarely concertizes in the United States, filled Chenery Auditorium last January to present a paradigmatic program combining superlative technique with deep probing.

His presto octave runs and rippling arpeggios appeared effortless.

Unbeatable technique, yes, but also intense focus — especially with Schubert's Sonata 21 in B-flat Major. Lupu articulated and clarified Schubert's multitude of musical ideas with inordinate intelligence. This was a "pro" of the first order whose astute musical perceptions made Schubert fully accessible.

Cellist Yo-Yo Ma

Details: With the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, April 28, Miller Auditorium

Yo-Yo Ma wooed and won over a full house at Miller Auditorium in an April program with the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra. The key achievement was effortless lyricism sustaining the enchanting melodies front and center in Tchaikovsky's Variations on a Rococo Theme, Op. 33. Ma's masterful bowing was magical, producing warm, full-bodied sound. Interpretively, Ma achieved maximum interest through evocative invention for each variation. Afterward, the ecstatic audience elicited Saint-Saens's "The Swan" as an encore, with Maestro Raymond Harvey accompanying on the piano. A perfect touch to conclude an engaging concert.

Clarinetist Anthony McGill

Details: With the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, Oct. 21, Chenery Auditorium

Mozart's Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra in A Major, remains a major work in the clarinet concerto repertoire. The Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra brought in guest clarinetist Anthony McGill to do the honors — a brilliant choice.

His playing produced the smoothest, creamiest sound the clarinet is capable of offering. McGill's perceptions of Mozart's piece were spot on and rewarding. McGill, first chair clarinetist for the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, gave a bravura performance, almost equaled later by the KSO's superb playing of Schubert's Fifth Symphony.

Pianist Ivan Moshchuk

Details: Gilmore Rising Stars Series, Nov. 6, Wellspring Theater

In the long series of Gilmore Rising Stars performances, only a few have matched the blazing radiance of Ivan Moshchuk's recital. Before a full house, he displayed breathtaking technique and full-blown musicality in works by Brahms, Beethoven and Rachmaninoff. Most remarkable was his clearly distinguishing the character of the different composers, all while bringing out the special genius of each piece. Moshchuk, a 2010 Gilmore Young Artist, remained a melodist who can at the same time do justice to the rest of the score. A bright future lies ahead.