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LEND AN EAR By MADELEINE HARRIS
Special Writer for The Eccentric

Pennario Plays Enthusiastically

Paul Paray and the Detroit symphony orchestra played host to the American pianist, Leonard Pennario, at Ford auditorium Thursday evening.

A large audience heard first the overture to "Don Giovanni" by Mozart. The orchestra dispatched this with a sure hand and went on to play Beethoven's Symphony No. 1 in C Major. It is a work full of high spirits and a great rhythmic vitality.

Already Beethoven's great genius for invention displays itself. It has many impressive passages for the string sections and ends on a note of almost gay abandon. Paray and the orchestra played with great zest, matching Beethoven's spirit, movement by movement.

After intermission the suite "Le Tableau de Couperin" by Ravel occupied the stage. Hauntingly beautiful, it is a work that plays musical homage to the composer, Francois Couperin who lived at the time of Louis XIV. The work is the epitome of French impressionism which creates a glimmering mass of tonal color out of an orchestra. Paray is particularly at home with Ravel, communicating uncannily specific directions to the men amidst the glowing chimera of sound.

THE ORCHESTRA and Maestro Paray were then joined by Leonard Pennario to play Khatchaturian's piano concerto. Pennario, born in Buffalo, made his debut at 12 in Dallas and has since played with the New York Philharmonic as well as on tour throughout Holland, Italy, France and England.

Possessed of a prodigious technique, Pennario appears to have everything it takes to conquer this bombastic, anachronistic concerto. Khatchaturian, who seems to have borrowed at one time or another throughout this work from Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, Gershwin, and even a little rag-time, brings forth a barrel-load of lush, mid-Eastern themes that never seem to go anywhere. Then the composer fills in with a mass of prestidigitator for the soloist. It is all very colorful but not too satisfying.

Pennario fell enthusiastically into the role of making the piano a percussion instrument, except when he was called upon to echo one of the several lush themes usually played an octave apart. Despite the handicap of having devoted himself to this vastly over-rated, underdeveloped work, Pennario is obviously a pianist of great brains and power. So much more about him could have been learned in just one Chopin Prelude than in

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VETERAN APPROVED

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Christmas Star Still An Unsolved Mystery

For almost 2,000 years people have marvelled at the Christmas star.

Hazel M. Losh, University of Michigan associate professor of astronomy, says: "Although we are continually reminded by the limited description of the event and the uncertainties of early calendars that any exact astronomical explanation or determination of the time of the Christmas star is out of the question, the bright planets are always promising and alluring."

MARS DOMINATES the night sky during December, although it is rapidly drawing away from us, she continues. "It shines more brilliant than any star except Sirius."

"Another planet, Venus, is just coming into the evening sky. By the end of December, it will not nearly an hour after the sun, and may be seen in the twilight near the southwestern horizon. This planet has often been pointed out as a possible interpretation of the Christmas star."


Meteors are also mentioned in connection with the Star of Bethlehem, "but their transient character seems to rule them out immediately," she adds.

"After Orion comes over the horizon, he is followed by Canis Major, his faithful dog. No difficulty ensues in identifying this figure, as Sirius, its brightest star, outshines all others in the sky. From time immemorial Sirius has been watched, admired and revered, rising in the early evening as it does around Christmas time. It was worshipped by the Egyptians and temples were built in its honor."

SIRIUS, one of our nearer neighbors, is only 8.6 light-years distant, she notes. "It is about 27 times more luminous than our sun. If our sun were removed to the same distance as Sirius, it would appear to us only as bright as the North Star. On the other hand, if Sirius were as close to us as the

signs of the month as an impressive symbol of the season. As it moves from the south to the northwest, it gradually assumes more and more of a vertical position, until by Christmas Eve it stands outlined against the northwestern sky, the long bar of the Cross standing upright," she concludes.

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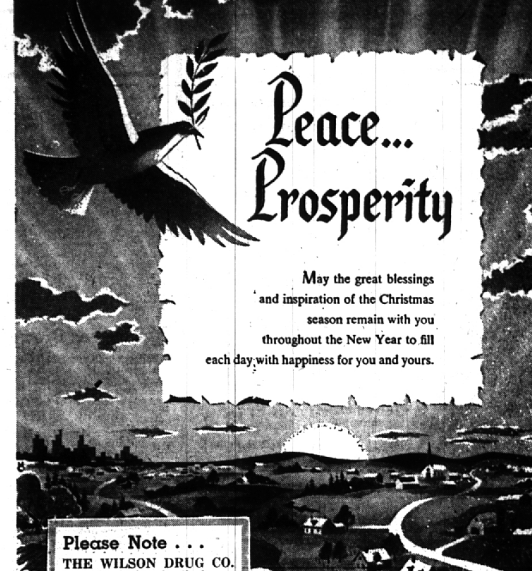
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