

Best concert of the year

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SPECIAL TO
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra staff conductor Stephane Laforest demonstrated mastery and control during his audition performance at last Thursday's Masterworks series concert.

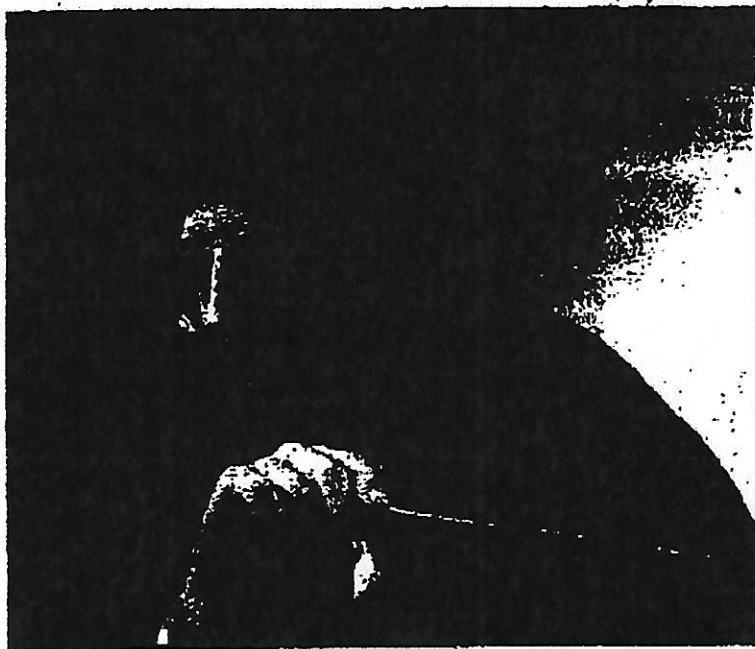
Laforest, one of six finalists short-listed to replace Glenn Mossop as principal conductor, had the good fortune to preside over a concert featuring Schubert's Symphony No. 8 "Unfinished" in e minor and Schumann's Symphony No. 2 in C Major.

These are very impressive works that Laforest has obvious mastery over. At no time during the entire performance was there even a hint of indecision from Laforest's hand. There was never any hesitation or ensemble problems from the orchestra, who gave their utmost in support of Laforest.

Classical Accord was the most successful Masterworks concert so far this season and also featured Joseph Petric in Peter Koprowski's Accordion Concerto.

Petric, a world-renowned accordionist who has been largely responsible for the expansion and acceptance of the symphonic and chamber repertoire for his instrument, gave a remarkable performance. Koprowski's concerto demonstrates both the great capabilities of the accordion as well as an expert command of composition in terms of melody, rhythm and clarity of orchestration.

A professor of composition and theory at the University of Western Ontario, Koprowski's time as a student of both Nadia Boulanger and John Weinzweig is quite apparent in the chromaticism of his melodies and the obliteration of the beat, both characteristics of mid-twenti-



COURTESY OF TBSO

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TBSO REVIEW

19th century musical thought. Polyphony takes precedence over harmony in this concerto. Koprowski's concerto provides the listener with a great deal to absorb and is an invigorating challenge.

Schubert and Schumann, the two outstanding leader writers of the 19th century, showed in their symphonic output that their mastery of the melodic line was not confined to the smaller forms. Schubert gave us one of the most powerful openings in symphonic history in the doleful pianissimo measures, which begin his Symphony No. 8. The cellos and basses playing in octaves in the very bottom of their compass.

The famous cello line that is the second subject of the first movement is one of the most instantly recognizable themes. Schumann's symphony structurally turns the

form on its ear by using a scherzo as the second movement in place of a slow movement.

The hauntingly beautiful e minor melody which permeates the third movement is as magnificent as any of the melodies in Schumann's songs. The finale is a large, dramatic movement with motivic links to previous movements which, as in Beethoven's era-defining symphonies, serve to unify the whole.

Laforest's deep understanding of both these works, the Schubert especially, came across in his total command of dynamics, tempo and expression in the service of the music. Laforest exhibited a commanding presence rarely seen in the less formal settings of the Pops and Candlelight Series where his naturally gregarious nature suits those settings. The range of material that Laforest has successfully presented to Thunder Bay shows him to be a capable conductor for any occasion.