

BSO welcomes pianist Michael Schneider

By Diana Farris

Bartlesville Symphony Orchestra

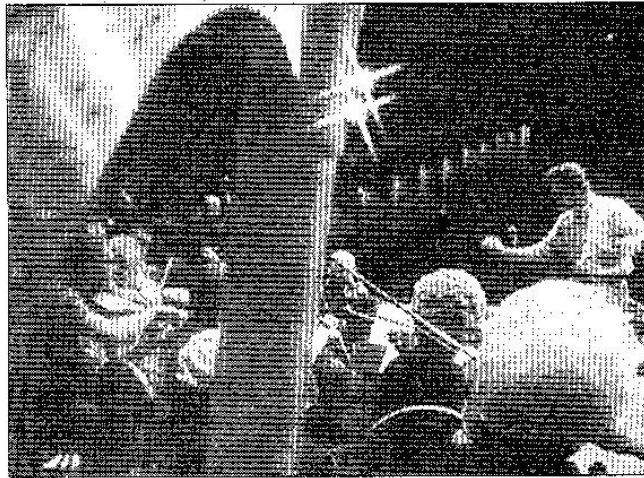
A distinctly French flavor will permeate the music selected by Maestro Lauren Green to complement the concerto pianist Michael Schneider who will perform at 8 p.m. Saturday evening in the Bartlesville Community Center, Adams and Cherokee.

Schneider loves to find rarely performed works and give them a "day in the sun." His father actually discovered this enchanting Massenet piano concerto and shared it with his son, who will now share it with Bartlesville concertgoers.

Upbeat! with Lauren will precede the concert at 7 p.m. and is free to ticketholders. A question and answer period will follow the informative session on the music and its composers showcased in the evening's concert.

Last Tuesday on the regularly scheduled rehearsal night, I was privileged to attend the session and observe all the hard work and drama that occurs. With an orchestra made up of volunteer and paid musicians, who range in age from teenagers to 98 years old, it is expected that varied experiences and skills will be in abundance. The orchestra was practicing Lalo's Overture to "L' Roi d'Ys" when I arrived and the concentration was intense as the musicians tried to make the scores come to life as music and to play as a cohesive whole. Occasionally, the furrowed brow of the conductor showed he was not entirely pleased with a passage and the players just worked harder to satisfy.

At one point, percussionist



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Travis Dunlap was rehearsing the a movement of "Symphonie Fantastique" by Berlioz, when he was stopped by the conductor for an alleged mistake and it turned out that Dunlap was right, according to his score. Green apologized rapidly; the movement went on and right away, Dunlap was called down again. This time he was on the wrong track. He acknowledged the error and moved on, determined to reach perfection. Each player was continually addressing individual rough spots — practicing, perfecting. When the entire work had a meltdown, the stress was relieved by collective laughter. These wonderful musicians are enjoying the work, the stress, the occasional slips, and the opportunity to play in a fine orchestra.

Maestro Green admonished "Be aware of what my beat is doing ... I'll give you a break, but I'm heartless here. Put eyeglasses on those two measures."

At break, it is obvious that

the players all relate to each other with camaraderie, no matter their ages. So much work and intensity goes into a rehearsal and after a long, hard day at work, home or school, the musicians come seeking fulfillment and a concert of which they can be proud. They strive to make the guest artist comfortable, confident, and glad to be playing with the Bartlesville Symphony Orchestra. After all, this is one of only four symphony orchestras left in Oklahoma.

After the break, the orchestra begins to work on the Massenet concerto which pianist Michael Schneider will play on Saturday night. Since he will not arrive for rehearsal until later this week, they work at somewhat of a disadvantage. Without the pianist present, rhythmically, dynamically, melodically, it is like fitting puzzle pieces together with the major one missing, all the time trying to work around it.

Schneider will attend the Tuesday night rehearsal, but

will merely listen to the orchestra rehearse. He related to me Monday that he did not have access to the entire orchestral score and only had a piano transcription with which to work. So he wisely decided to sit back and absorb the entire work to see if there were any discrepancies between his score and what the orchestra was actually playing. He is such a gifted musician and composer that he'll readily discover any places that need "tweaking."

The French concert will begin with a thrilling brass fanfare from Paul Dukas' ballet "La Peri." Dukas is mostly known for his symphonic poem "The Sorcerer's Apprentice."

Georges Bizet will be represented by the "Farandole" from the "L'Arlesienne" Suite. Mainly known for his operas "Carmen," and to a lesser extent, "The Pearl Fishers," Bizet was a brilliant pianist, good-natured, sociable and unpretentious — bourgeois. He was a remarkable composer, yet an unremarkable citizen, accepting fame or failure with equal grace.

Gabriel Faure's "Pavane" is always an audience pleaser. Faure became known with a group of songs in 1865, which earned him the title of the "French Schumann." The beauty of his music, its purity of style and melodic freshness, continue to appeal to modern audiences.

Edouard Lalo had such a hard time making a name for himself as a composer that he did not write a single note for seven years. At first he composed mostly chamber music, which brought little apprecia-

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tion. His works were regarded as advanced and difficult to understand. He became well known for his special gift for creating local color, stunning orchestrations and stirring rhythms. The orchestra will perform his great work "Le Roi d'Ys," which was first performed in 1888, and contrary to all expectations, met with great success. Henri Prunieres stated, "Lalo was the real pioneer of the modern French school."

Michael Schneider will perform Jules Massenet's shimmering Piano Concerto with the orchestra. This will likely be the first time anyone in Bartlesville or even the entire region will have heard this work. There is only one known recording of this concerto and that is indeed unfortunate. The exciting music is powerful and charming at the same time and is interspersed with dynamic surprises and tender introspection. Massenet is mainly remembered for his large body of operas, including "Herodiade," "Manon," "Le Cid," "Werther," "Thais" and "Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame." His sweet tunefulness set a style in French music that lasted beyond his lifetime through his influence as a professor of composition at the Paris Conservatory from 1878 to his death in 1912.

Schneider is an award-winning pianist and composer who has been concertizing since age 11, when he appeared playing a Mozart Concerto with the San

Angelo Symphony four times. Now he has made a name for himself with many orchestra and solo appearances here and abroad. In 2002, he made his Carnegie Hall debut.

Schneider has appeared as invited soloist at the International Chopin Festival in Nohant, France, at the Chateau of George Sand in 2003. He won both first and second prizes at the Stewart Graduate Grant auditions and a total of \$6,000 here in Bartlesville in 2001 and 2003.

In February, he was second prize winner in a piano festival in Vancouver. Schneider recently completed his master's degree at the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he studies with Paul Schenly and is continuing to pursue his Professional Studies program.

The program emphasizes performance and intense interaction in the professional world. While in Bartlesville, Schneider will perform for Musical Research Society at 1 p.m. Monday for members, their guests, and the winners of the Junior Festival held March 6. The public is invited to the program at the Bartlesville Women's Club Building, 6th and Shawnee.

Concluding the program of the finest in French music will be two movements from "Symphonie Fantastique" by Hector Berlioz. This work, written three years after Beethoven's death, depicts imaginary "episodes in the life of an artist"

(alluding to himself).

Although his family predestined him to become a doctor, his first experience with dissections horrified him; he escaped through a window and decided never to become a doctor. Entering the Conservatory as a pupil of Lesueur in 1825, he was able to have a Mass performed in La Roche church, which was a success. Lesueur remarked prophetically: "You will be neither a doctor nor a chemist, but a great composer, because you are a genius. It is true!" He was an arch-romanticist, baring his soul in public and brooding until an outburst was sure to follow. "His soul desire was to air his passion."

It is interesting to note that four of the six composers featured on this program won the prestigious Prix de Rome.

Tickets are still available for this concert at \$20 for adults and \$7.50 for students by calling the box office at 336-2787 or 800-618-2787.

Sponsors of this concert are Gopi Vasudevan, M.D., and David and Tracye Caughell. The patron reception is sponsored by 66 Federal Credit Union. The entire season has received generous grant assistance from ConocoPhillips, the Arts Council of Oklahoma and the National Endowment for the Arts, many corporate and individual donations. For more information, call 333-6719.