



June 11, 2009

## Stephen Hartke's delightful take on the blues

### CLASSICAL

There's a lot to like about Stephen Hartke's music, but the first thing to say is that his pieces have the best titles in the business. Take, for example, the whimsical moniker "Oh Them Rats Is Mean in My Kitchen," which Hartke borrowed from "Maltese Cat Blues" by the early Texas blues singer and guitarist Blind Lemon Jefferson.

"Them Rats," a 1985 duo for two violins heard at Tuesday's Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival concert at St. Hugo of the Hills in Bloomfield Hills (\*\* out of four stars), is a clever and affectionate homage to that most American of vernacular forms: the blues. Hartke, the festival's resident composer, has created an improvisatory dialogue that sways between sudden bursts of modernist abstraction and down-home allusions. The opening of four movements begins with some rhapsodic wailing in a high, lonesome register, but later descends into a meditative moan.

There's lots of bowed and plucked scampering -- the scurrying rats, no doubt-- woozy bent pitches and slides, witty peeking around corners, chordal passages, wild abandon and, most delightfully, episodes in which one violin grooves do-wacka-do bass lines while the other sings a plaintive melody spiced with blue notes.

If there are times when the music wanders a little randomly, it's always an entertaining journey. Violinists Ida and Ani Kavafian, the Detroit-raised sisters, played with tigerish energy and technique and charismatic ease with the idiom.

Elsewhere, the performance of Beethoven's Piano Trio, Op. 1 No. 3 (pianist Pei-Shan Lee, violinist Yehonatan Berick, cellist Paul Katz) never completely gelled. But Mendelssohn's "String Quintet No. 2, Op. 87" was given an impassioned, über-romantic ride by the Biava Quartet and violinist Kim Kashkashian. Pianist and festival artistic director James Tocco offered one of Mendelssohn's exquisite "Song Without Words" as a lovely opening prelude, a reminder that the festival, which continues through June 21, is celebrating Mendelssohn's 200th birthday. Complete schedule, highlights and more at [www.freep.com/glf](http://www.freep.com/glf). 248-559-2097. [www.greatlakeschambermusic.com](http://www.greatlakeschambermusic.com)

**Big night:** For the Detroit Symphony Orchestra's largest annual fund-raiser, donors will pay from \$250 to \$5,000 for a reception, concert, dinner, dessert and dancing. But the DSO is also inviting the public to attend free of charge. Tied to music inspired by Shakespeare, the program, "A Midsummer Night's Dream," will be conducted by music director Leonard Slatkin and feature mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade.

The DSO is extending a special invitation to patrons who work for an auto company, supplier or dealer, but all are welcome. Reservations required: 313-576-5111. Open seating. 7 p.m. Saturday, Orchestra Hall, Max M. Fisher Music Center, 3711 Woodward, Detroit.

## JAZZ

Speaking of fund-raisers, Music Hall's Cars & Stars 2009 features the extraordinary tap dancer Savion Glover and one of the top drummers in jazz, Jeff (Tain) Watts. The relationship between jazz and tap has always been close, but Glover -- who has worked with McCoy Tyner and frequently cites John Coltrane as a personal hero -- takes that connection to a new level of modernist sophistication and soul. 8 p.m. Friday, Music Hall, 350 Madison, Detroit. Cocktail reception at 7 p.m. Dessert and dancing at 9:30. 313-887-8500. \$125. Concert-only tickets, \$25.

**Not so serious:** The Dutch taught us that free jazz doesn't have to be about avant-garde angst or revolutionary polemics. The music can be fun, joyous and witty. The loose-limbed Trio BraamDeJoodeVatcher -- pianist Michiel Braam, bassist Wilbert de Joode, drummer Michael Vatcher -- creates collective improvisations steeped in this aesthetic. 8 p.m. Wednesday, Kerrytown Concert House, 415 N. Fourth, Ann Arbor. 734-769-2999. [www.kerrytownconcerthouse.com](http://www.kerrytownconcerthouse.com). \$5-\$25.

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## Additional Facts

MORE CLASSICAL

### Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival:

- Featuring Ani Kavafian, Kim Kashkashian, Yehuda Hanani, Debra Fayroian, James Tocco, Pei-Shan Lee and Gwendolyn Burgett Thrasher. Performing works by Schubert, Chopin, Mendelssohn and Ueno, 7:30 p.m. Thu., 10:45 a.m. Fri. Kirk In the Hills, 1340 W. Long Lake, Bloomfield Hills. 248-559-2097. \$35, \$10 for students in advance. \$40 and \$15 at the door.
- Featuring Paul Katz, James Tocco, Biava Quartet and Hausman String Quartet. Performing works by Haydn, Ueno, Mendelssohn and Schubert, 8 p.m. Fri. Kerrytown Concert House, 415 N. Fourth, Ann Arbor. 734-769-2999. \$15-\$30.
- Featuring Ani Kavafian, Yehonatan Berick, Kim Kashkashian, Paul Katz, James Tocco, Pei-Shan Lee and Biava Quartet. Performing works by Haydn, Schumann, Hartke and Mendelssohn, 8 p.m. Sat. Seligman Performing Arts Center, 22305 W. Thirteen Mile, Beverly Hills. 248-559-2097. \$35, \$10 for students in advance. \$40 and \$15 at the door.
- Featuring Yehuda Hanani, Ken Ueno, James Tocco and Hausmann String Quartet. Performing works by Mendelssohn, Bach and Beethoven, 11:30 a.m. Sun. Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward, Detroit. 313-833-4003. \$35, \$10 for students in advance. \$40 and \$15 at the door.
- Featuring Yehonatan Berick, Kimberly Kaloyanides Kennedy, Dmitri Murrath, Robert deMaine, Debra Fayroian, James Tocco, Lisa Stidham, Harlem String Quartet and Hausmann String Quartet. All Stephen Hartke program, 7:30 p.m. Mon. Temple Beth El, 7400 Telegraph, Bloomfield Hills. 248-559-2097. \$35,

\$10 for students in advance. \$40 and \$15 at the door.

- Featuring Yehonatan Berick, Robert deMaine, James Tocco, Jeremy Denk, Kati Agócs, Kerstin Allvin and Eighth Blackbird. Performing works by Schumann, Debussy, Agocs and Schubert, 7:30 p.m. Tue.-Wed. Temple Beth El, 7400 Telegraph, Bloomfield Hills. 248-559-2097. \$35, \$10 for students in advance. \$40 and \$15 at the door.

**Many Voices...One Song:** "Messiah," featuring conductor and organist Tom Trenney and several vocal soloists, 7:30 p.m. Wed. First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, 1669 W. Maple, Birmingham. 248-540-9124. Free.

**Motor City Brass Band:** 7 p.m. Wed. Burgh Historical Park, 23960 Civic Dr., Southfield. 248-796-7788. Free.

**Sing Out Detroit:** "I've Got the Music in Me," 7 p.m. Sat. Mejishi Martial Arts, 247 W. Nine Mile, Ferndale. 248-542-5371. \$10 in advance, \$15 at the door.

**Ward Chancel Choir & Orchestra:** "Land of the Free, Home of the Brave," 5 p.m. Sun. Ward Evangelical Presbyterian Church, 40000 W. Six Mile, Northville. 248-374-7400. Free.

**West Philadelphia Orchestra:** 7 p.m. Mon. Top of the Park at Ingalls Mall, 915 E. Washington, Ann Arbor. 734-764-2538. Free.

**The Zamir Chorale of Metropolitan Detroit:** "Salute to Israel," featuring director Cantor Penny Steyer and pianist Ted Wyman, 3 p.m. Sun. Temple Shir Shalom, 3999 Walnut Lake, West Bloomfield. 248-737-8700. Free.

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