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Gershwin classic closes Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival



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The Claremont Trio will perform Saturday at the Seligman Performing Arts Center in Beverly Hills. From left: Emily Bruskin (violin), Andrea Lam (piano) and Julia Bruskin (cello). / Michael J. Lutch

CLASSICAL

George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" has been an important work in the history of the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival. Festival artistic director and pianist James Tocco performed it at the inaugural festival in 1994, and then reprised the piece at the fifth, 10th and 15th festivals. The 20th Great Lakes festival's big-finish finale Saturday will again feature Gershwin's beloved

evergreen with Tocco in the soloist role and the Detroit Chamber Winds and Strings conducted by H. Robert Reynolds again providing the orchestral accompaniment.

Actually, the relationship between Tocco, Gershwin and the festival predates year one. The pianist, a Detroit native, teamed up with Detroit Chamber Winds and Strings for a performance of the “Rhapsody” at Orchestra Hall in 1989. It was out of that appearance that the notion of the Great Lakes festival eventually took root. As usual, Saturday’s performance will feature the original 23-piece orchestration, whose brassy pep and small string section gratefully excise memories of gooey orchestral performances.

The rest of the program promises plenty of allure, too. Judd Greenstein’s “A Serious Man” will be given its world premiere by the Claremont Trio, one of five former student ensembles featured this year that came through the festival’s training program years ago and became stars. Also on tap are music by Brahms, more Gerhswin and more. Violinists Ani Kavafian and Kimberly Kaloyanides Kennedy round out the group of performers.

8 p.m. Saturday, Seligman Performing Arts Center, 22305 W. Thirteen Mile, Beverly Hills.

Though Saturday is officially closing night, the festival actually runs through Sunday afternoon and there are seven additional performances between Thursday and Sunday spread throughout the metro area, from Bloomfield Hills to Ann Arbor, Windsor and Detroit. 248-559-2097. www.greatlakeschambermusic.org. \$35-\$45, \$10 students.

■ The Michigan Philharmonic heads to Kensington Metropark for the third straight year, offering a family-friendly and free concert on Maple Beach. The theme is “An American Salute,” with music director Nan Washburn leading a Yankee Doodle Dandy program marrying music by Sousa, Gershwin, Ellington, film composer John Williams and Tchaikovsky’s “1812 Overture,” which by now is so ingrained into the American landscape that it’s practically native born.

8 p.m. Friday, Kensington Metropark, exit 151 or 153 off I-96, Milford. 810-227-8910. www.metroparks.com. Free with park admission. \$5 per car daily, \$25 annually.

JAZZ

The final weekend of Palmer Woods Music in Homes concerts brings jazz, classical, tango, blues and more together in a pair of concerts. Friday’s performance features A. Spencer Barefield’s eclectically minded Super String Quartet that mixes the leader, one of Detroit leading jazz guitarists and composers, with three young New York-based string players on violin, viola and bass. Saturday’s concert features Detroit blues diva Thornetta Davis.

8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, with a special free performance for kids by Barefield’s quartet from 5 to 6 p.m. The location of the home for the performances is provided to ticket holders. 313-891-2514. www.palmerwoods.org. \$35-\$40. For reservations for Friday’s children’s concert, go to palmerwoodsmusicforchildren.eventbrite.com.

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