

able worldwide publicity because he lost.

In the 1980 Chopin Competition he was eliminated after the third round, a decision which so angered pianist **Martha Argerich**, a member of the jury, that she resigned in protest.

Of course, one of the burdens a juror must bear is to keep "cool" no matter how unjust he or she feels are the opinions and/or machinations of his or her colleagues. If all jurors who disagreed with the majority vote were to follow Argerich's example. I fear, there would be a veritable epidemic of defecting jurors that would shake the all-too-imperfect competition syndrome to its very roots.

Consequently, Pogorelich, profiting from his publicity, has been forging an international career. Sunday evening at

though he possesses individuality, it is an individuality that is not always convincing, particularly when he plods through slow movements in tempi that often threaten to grind to a halt, and with rhythm that borders on the elastic.

On the other hand, he can be very daring, and "go for broke" with demonic fury, as in the Scarbo movement of Ravel's "Gaspard de la Nuit." Like more than a few other prominent pianists he tends to be percussive at the forte levels, but he maintains perspicuous clarity at all levels.

The Pogorelich musical approach is rather stern and unsmiling, like the platform image of the young man himself.

Obviously he had carefully thought out his interpretations in the two

Scriabin's *Sonata No. 1* ("Fantasy-Sonata"). Early work of the Russian visionary, draws heavily on Chopin and even Liszt and is (except perhaps for pianists) forgettable. It gray, quasi-poetic phrases fail to build to any nourishing culmination; the sound like attenuated vignettes, pleasant but unfilling. Pogorelich handled it like an exercise in repose—neatly, almost tenderly, but without the kind of gossamer sensitivity such a work demands.

It was in the Ravel that the pianist displayed his fullest mettle. Throwing caution to the winds and unleashing a whirlwind of bravura, he brought matters to a riotous conclusion. Bravo!

Unfortunately, the audience was sprinkled with oafish individuals who

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Shaner on The Arts

• **Win/Lose/Draw**, by Ara Watson and Mary Gallagher, directed by Dorothy Lyman. Three one-acts about woman-to-woman relationships in which Priscilla Barnes and Diane Civita each play three roles. The evening starts off well with a light piece about mothers vicariously pursuing themselves through their daughters who are entered in a "Little Miss" beauty contest. This is fun and well studied, a good promise for the evening. Barnes has a shiny sparkle that draws you in smiling. In the second piece, Barnes, an abusive mother, has walked miles in the heat to plead for the return of her daughter who has been placed in a foster home by the county. Civita, a no-nonsense social worker, gives a tight, disciplined performance against Barnes' trashy little slattern whose heart is broken. The third play takes place at a women's convention, where both women, separated from their husbands, face their severed selves by bingeing beyond the point of self-disgust. By this time, the evening has lost its luster and the play is far too long and untextured. Both actresses acquit themselves well and have successfully created six diverse characters, but the plays as such are static, uninvolved. And why this peculiar emphasis on the female form? Beautiful as both women are, the costumes (notable for lack of underpinnings) distract irrationally and irrelevantly. (Skylight Theatre, 1816½ N. Vermont Ave., L.A. Fri., Sat. 8:00; Sun. 7:00. Indef. 213/466-1767.)

• **What's Wrong With This Picture?** by Donald Margulies, directed by Stuart Damon. Mort (Allan Miller), his son Artie (James Stern), mother and father (Lillian Adams and Sandy Kenyon) and sister (Patti Deutsch) are sitting shiva for Shirley (Phoebe Dorin), Mort's wife and Artie's mother, who has choked to death in a Chinese restaurant. Shirley, however, hasn't finished her job—the new furniture has to be arranged, Mort has to learn to untie himself from his dependence and Artie has to finish growing up. So she comes back to take care of business. The play manages to be a comedy, though there are some unsettling moments. The death of a young mother isn't funny, and I sensed the opening night audience found the concept tough to swallow at first. Although the acting is faultless for the most part—Dorin, Adams, Miller and Kenyon are seasoned actors, warm and very present—the evening isn't as fulfilling as it might be. In this genre, one wants to cry more, laugh more, live a little more with these people. Director Damon has allowed the all too familiar stereotypes to take control, and what we have is a series of (good) character sketches that don't finally conform to the shape of a heart-warming play. Don't misunderstand, this play does fill a niche—comedy with no causes—but it could reach a little further, delve a little deeper, on a writing, acting and directing level. Great sets by Don Gruber. (Back Alley Theatre, 15231 Burbank Blvd., Van Nuys. Thurs.-Sat. 8:00, Sun. 2:00 & 7:00. Thru 3/20. 818-780-2240.)

Madeleine Shaner is the author of this exclusive report