

Pianist, Guest Maestro Shine With Symphony

A talented young pianist and an exciting guest conductor are sharing the spotlight with the Grand Rapids Symphony this weekend, and Friday night both were very impressive in their first appearances in Grand Rapids.

Pianist Alan Gampel won the opportunity to play with the local orchestra by taking first prize in the 1985 Young Keyboard Artists Association's Ann Arbor Competition last June. Trained at Stanford University and the University of California, Gampel also earned first place in the Music Teachers National Association Competition in Las Vegas and the Long Beach Mozart Festival Competition. It's obvious why he has been so successful. He played Chopin's "Concerto No. 1 in E Minor." Looking at least as young as his 21 years, he sat quietly on the bench and simply dazzled the audience with his facility. The Chopin work is pure pianism as only Chopin could produce. The fact that it doesn't say much musically doesn't matter a lot. You can just enjoy the brilliance of its passagework if it is played well. And Gampel played it spectacularly.

From the arresting opening of the piano's turn at the first theme, Gampel showed that he has enormous command of the keyboard. He whispered and roared up and down the keyboard without neglecting a note. The second move-



Music

by Richard DeVinney

THE GRAND RAPIDS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, with guest conductor Catherine Comet and pianist Alan Gampel. Friday evening in DeVos Hall.

The program:

Overture to "The Barber of Seville"Rossini
Concerto No. 1 in E Minor, Opus 11.....Chopin
Symphonie Fantastique, Opus 14 Berlioz

ment features a long, cavatina melody in the piano, accompanied by muted strings, and some shimmering chordal passages that Gampel handled with particular skill. The final Rondo spins its way with all of the tricks of elaboration that Chopin was so fond of and which show off the technique and control of the pianist. Gampel dashed off the difficult phrases with amazing ease and brilliant effect.

Like most of this season's guest conductors, French-born Catherine Comet is a candidate for the job of permanent conductor and music director of the local symphony. She proved Friday night that she is to be considered seriously. She made such an impression on the audience that she was given the only standing ovation among the candidates that this reporter has seen. It was well-deserved.