

Review: Team DSO comes - Detroit News, The: Web Edition Articles (MI) - April 10, 2011

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Detroit - If **the** Detroit Symphony Orchestra had come running out of a tunnel to a cheering stadium throng, it could hardly have experienced a more intense welcome back than it got from 2,000 exuberant fans Saturday night at Orchestra Hall.

Officially marking **the** end of a strike that lasted 26 weeks, **the DSO** under music director Leonard Slatkin gave a performance that displayed mid-season form. But **the** biggest ovation came before **the** orchestra had sounded a note.

As **the** long-absent musicians filed onto **the** empty stage, **the** buzz of anticipation from a packed house erupted into a boisterous standing O that lasted for several minutes. **The** warmth of that welcome seemed to surprise some of **the** musicians, and all were beaming as **the** whooping and clapping shaped a long crescendo.

There were no speeches. Slatkin simply plunged into a crackling account of Bernstein's "Candide" Overture that had **the** familiar snap of this orchestra at its disciplined best. Then Slatkin picked up a microphone and spoke about **the** trials now behind and **the** meaning of this night.

"Welcome home" were his first words to **the** audience. **The** conductor singled out one visitor in **the** house for recognition: Rocco Landesman, chairman of **the** National Endowment for **the** Arts.

Slatkin's carefully shaped program unfolded in thematic chapters for which he provided a sort of narration. He commended **the** audience, **the** musicians, **the DSO's** executive leadership and its board as heroes of **the** arduous dispute that eventually had led everyone to **the** present moment of shared triumph.

In that spirit, he struck up John Williams' grand overture for **the** Olympics, "Summon **the** Heroes," an especially impressive showpiece for **the** brass department.

Then it was **the** strings' turn. Noting how much **the** world had suffered from conflicts and disasters in recent months, and how music is a common balm for loss both public and personal, Slatkin offered a work that has become America's national music of mourning, Barber's Adagio for Strings. It was a burnished performance, ruminative, ardent and precise.

Promising, to much laughter, that he was about to stop talking for **the** night, Slatkin set up **the** program's remaining works - Gershwin's "An American in Paris," a Yankee's postcard from abroad, and Dvorak's "New World" Symphony, **the** Czech composer's wistful letter home from his distant remove in Spillville, Iowa.

But Slatkin wasn't quite finished with that mic. Putting on his salesman's cap, he reminded his

listeners - all admitted free this night, as another solid house will be Sunday afternoon - that **the DSO** would be back next weekend as well. Only next week and for **the** remaining weeks of this brief season, **the** maestro intoned, **the** concerts will be paying propositions. But tickets for all **the** spring concerts, classical and pops alike, will be just \$20.

Gershwin's Paris postcard had a couple of things in common with every other work on **the** program. Slatkin led it without a score. And **the** orchestra played with an easy brilliance that exactly matched **the** conductor's expansive approach and unfailing sense of arc and tempo. It was an animated, urbane "American in Paris" that framed **the** breadth and bustle of life along **the** Champs-Élysée.

The "New World" Symphony, set forth with splendid brass fanfares and lyric wistfulness, was a glorious reminder of how much was lost in those months when **the** substance of **the DSO** was reduced to shadow. When one of America's great orchestras began a perilous slide into memory.

That's what resurfaced Saturday night on Woodward Avenue, through those doors beyond a sign on **the** sidewalk that said, "Sold Out." **The** reality of **the** Detroit Symphony resounding in its magnificent concert hall. Welcomed and honored by a joyful audience that stood and cheered **the** moment **the home team** came into view.

Sunday's repeat performance at 3 p.m. is also sold out. But you can still hear it live via broadcast on **the** web at www.dso.org and at www.dptv.org (Detroit Public TV) as well as on **the** radio at wrcjfm.org (90.9 FM).

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