

DSO gets warm greeting at concert

By MARK STRYKER
FREE PRESS MUSIC CRITIC

Wow!
Orchestra Hall has seen its share of electric performances and thunderous applause. But in 16 years of attending concerts at this acoustic miracle on Woodward, I have never heard a volcanic eruption like the one that greeted the Detroit Symphony Orchestra mu-

sicians as they took the stage Saturday for their first performance after a six-month strike. It was less an ovation than a catharsis, a collective expression of the joy and relief felt by 2,000 people, all standing, hooting and hollering as if someone just hit a walk-off home run to win the World Series.
The DSO is back. The soul of

Ossip Gabrilowitsch, the DSO's first world-class conductor, can rest in peace. DSO music director Leonard Slatkin engineered a sly bit of theater to frame and even goose the moment. An empty stage greeted audience members taking their seats. Slatkin had the musicians enter from the wings together in the manner of a European orchestra a few minutes after 8 p.m.

rip-snorting romp through Leonard Bernstein's "Overture to Candide" opened an all-American first half that achieved a gravitas with Barber's "Adagio for Strings," before giving Gershwin's "An American in Paris" an exuberant ride, car horns and all.

The audience, which never really stopped buzzing, again went nuts, though this was nothing compared to the roar that met the close of a horn-proud sweep through Dvorak's "New World Symphony."

Cue two minutes of pandemonium. "It was overwhelming," said bassist Larry Hutchinson. "The love from the audience and the passion from the orchestra, all playing on our favorite instrument — Orchestra Hall."

Pandemonium, take two. "Now we know how it feels to be at a Lady Gaga concert," Slatkin told the adoring crowd once order was restored.

Now that the strike is over, there has been a lot of talk about the serious financial challenges the DSO confronts and the fractured trust between musicians and management. But the concerts Saturday and today, offered free to patrons, were meant to address the strained bond between the orchestra and its audience.

"Tonight is about celebrating," said subscriber Paul Scarcello. "There was a hole in our lives without the orchestra, and this makes us whole again."

About the only folks not in a party mood were about 100 people who couldn't get in because officials overbooked the house. About 500 watched on a video feed in the Music Box; those turned away received vouchers for another concert.

The orchestra sounded in reasonable shape, a bit ragged for the wear perhaps, but egged on by Slatkin, the players were feeling the spirit, and audience hung on every note. A



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