

# Slatkin finds his voice

Silent during strike, maestro plans future

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Detroit Symphony Orchestra music director Leonard Slatkin said little during the six-month musicians strike that threatened to destroy the institution that he's led to new artistic heights in his brief tenure.

Slatkin opted for the usual conductor stance of neutrality in labor disputes. Silence is not the loquacious Slatkin's default mode, so in the wake of the tentative settlement reached Sunday, he has begun to open up.

The musicians return to work for rehearsal on Thursday, with a formal ratification vote expected to finish on Friday. Slatkin is slated to lead the orchestra in free patron appreciation concerts on Saturday and Sunday at Orchestra Hall, assuming the contract is ratified. Here's some of what he had to say earlier this week and in an e-mail:

■ **Reason for silence:** "It was uncharacteristic, but I'm very satisfied with my lack of a role. There's no question that I had to do what I did to retain credibility with both sides."

■ **Coming together:** "I'm certainly pleased that after all this time we're finally getting back onstage. We need to heal the



KIMBERLY P. MITCHELL/Detroit Free Press

Leonard Slatkin says he views the contract as a new beginning.

rifts. It's going to be a long road; there's no question about it. The relationship between the orchestra and board has to coalesce."

■ **Moving forward:** "My job is really just beginning. I can sit down and formulate the new directions where we might be going."

■ **Lessons learned:** "One of the lessons learned during the strike was that reaching out to the communities is vital. I advocated this when I arrived three years ago and nothing pleases me more than to see the orchestra take the initiative in this area.

Whatever shape a 'new DSO' takes, there is no question that we will be a strong presence in many areas outside of Orchestra Hall.

"We will never abandon our

home base, but in order to attract people to the downtown venue, we must go to them first. There will be evidence of this during the next eight weeks and this will grow as next season moves forward."

■ **Perspective:** "I don't look at this as a three-year contract. I look at it as the beginning of a long-range plan and a new beginning."

■ **Recruiting talent:** "I think our pool of musicians and being able to attract them will be the same, but I do think we'll have to do more to recruit. We have to reassure musicians from across the country, and the world, that Detroit remains a vital place to make music. We have to actively ask people in the orchestra to be involved, and instead of waiting for people to call us to come to auditions, we can call them and let them know that things are stabilizing. If we do more of that, we'll attract quite a high caliber of musicians."

■ **On the Web:** "Another area that will see a fundamental change is that of media. There will be more flexibility in how we disseminate our performances. Several other orchestras have been doing this, but it will be new for Detroit. It will be particularly welcome as far as Internet streaming goes."

■ **Staying put:** "People asked me all the time if I would leave, but I never considered bolting. I was going to stay by the orchestra. I see this as a great opportunity to do something for our community that makes sense."

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