



Photographs by MARIAH TAUGER Los Angeles Times

CELLIST: Julius Berger performs Schumann's Cello Concerto at Walt Disney Concert Hall as Eduard Schmieder conducts the iPalpiti Orchestral Ensemble of International Laureates, a chamber string orchestra whose members are drawn from 19 countries.

MUSIC REVIEW

All together now

The iPalpiti gala concert marking the Chopin and Schumann bicentennials draws a diverse crowd.

MARK SWED
MUSIC CRITIC

Frank Gehry had always hoped that Walt Disney Concert Hall would become a living room for Los Angeles. It's a nice sentiment for a spread-out megalopolis that has become more a collection of communities than ever before. Traffic and culture keep us apart. And don't even get me started on how concert culture has become so stratified in an Internet age that once promised the opposite.

Yet early Saturday evening, for the concert of the iPalpiti Orchestral Ensemble of International Laureates, the audience at Disney broad a cross section of Angelenos as I have ever encountered in a single place.

Young people fetchingly dressed as if for a club mingled with typically casual teenagers in shorts falling off the waist and sneakers. Well-tailored couples adorned in expensive jewelry were on hand as were families who might have mistaken this Disney venue for a different one in Anaheim. Asians, Latinos, Anglos, African Americans — all ages — were part of the mix. So was a cadre of naval cadets. And at least one transvestite. Russian was among the languages spoken near my seat.

The occasion was a concert, centered on the Chopin and Schumann bicentennials. The chamber string orchestra consisted of outstanding young soloists from 19 countries (their flags draped behind the stage) who had been invit-



PIANIST: Luiza Borac is embraced by conductor Schmieder after playing Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 1.

ed to take part in the annual iPalpiti festival of chamber concerts in small venues around town and this more gala Disney event. In the program booklet, there were letters of greeting from the governor of California and the mayors of Los Angeles and Beverly Hills, along with a statement of support from Queen Fabiola of Belgium.

Clearly a lot was at stake in this attempt to unify through classical music. People had come for different reasons: Tickets were handed out to various schools and agencies; a dinner for the benefactors followed the concert. Perhaps a few aficionados were enticed by the soloists: the Romanian pianist Luiza Borac and the German cellist Julius Berger, both with big reputations in Europe but less common on the U.S. concert circuit. A further curiosity was that Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 1 and Schumann's Cello Concerto were performed in rare string orchestra versions.

And clearly, the conductor Eduard Schmieder, the founder of the admirable iPalpiti, believes that music remains a functional universal language. In his letter to the audience, he cited Einstein (who said that relativity's discovery was a musical intuition), Plato and Pushkin. Perhaps Schmieder is right. The crowd, after a little settling down during the opener — a late Mozart Adagio and Fugue — was still and involved.

Schmieder is an authoritative conductor. A tall and serious Russian of the old school, he goes in for intense expression and dug-in string sonorities that reverberated through Disney with so much power that I wondered for a moment whether the loudspeakers onstage were plugged in. They weren't; they were left over from a Lyle Lovett concert in Disney the night before.

Borac provided Chopin's concerto with refinement, eloquence and no overindulgence of display. The pianist, like the strings behind

her, revealed a rich sound. A string orchestra had been Chopin's first intention for his concerto, and Schmieder reconstructed it from parts he found in Warsaw. I missed the horn and winds in the Romance, the middle movement. But Chopin was never noted for his orchestration, and Borac, if on the severe side, provided interest and color enough, although not quite the dazzle that can be found on her illuminating recordings of George Enescu's solo piano music.

Meanwhile, Berger was her opposite in the Schumann concerto. Playing what his biography describes as one of the world's oldest cellos (a 1566 Amati) and one that looked authentically antique, Berger gave a remarkably rhapsodic performance. He lost himself in the music, almost embarrassingly so. He even conducted with his bow and, with gaping wide mouth, silently sang along with the strings.

He went in for interpretive extremes. When fast, he was very fast and displayed a tight tone. When slow, he was very slow, soaking in liquid, vibrato-laden expression. The string re-orchestration by Rene Koering is modest (there is an immodest string version by Shostakovich), and the concerto here became like potent chamber music on steroids.

The generous program also included a short new work, Ronald Royer's "In Memoriam Frédéric Chopin" for solo clarinet (Tibi Cziger), cello (Yves Dharamraj) and strings — a gloomy new fantasy on Chopin's last Nocturne, Op. 72, No. 1.

It ended with a brilliantly characterized account of Benjamin Britten's ingenious "Simple Symphony." And, from what I could tell, a lot of delight among all the ranks.

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Israel Museum unveils new look

The \$100-million makeover increases its size and enhances the original design.

SUZANNE MUCHNIC
REPORTING FROM JERUSALEM

The Israel Museum — home of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the world's largest trove of biblical and Holy Land archeology and a broad collection of fine art and Judaica — will unveil its new look to the public Monday after a \$100-million expansion and renovation project.

Three years in the works and many more in planning, the project, designed by James Carpenter Design Associates of New York and Efrat-Kowalsky Architects of Tel Aviv, gives the 45-year-old museum 80,000 square feet of new entry facilities and 200,000 square feet of enlarged and reconfigured galleries in a 585,000-square-foot complex.

Beyond providing more room for the 500,000-piece collection and better accommodations for the public, the project enhances the museum's original design by Israeli Modernist architect Alfred Mansfeld and associate Dora Gad.

"The basic concept was to celebrate, invigorate and preserve the essence of Mansfeld's powerful vision of the place," said James S. Snyder, the museum's director since 1996. Carpenter's translucent structures have adhered to Mansfeld's aesthetic and grid system, he said, while Efrat-Kowalsky's "magical re-engineering"



Israel Antiquities Authority

ROMAN SCULPTURE: "Beth Shean Venus" is a recent acquisition.

has converted lots of existing space into galleries. Taking a moment to brag about getting the project done on time and on budget, Snyder added that achieving "a transforming renewal for only \$100 million is not the norm in the museum world."

Last week, a few days before the dedication Sunday, the "on-time" claim raised questions. The galleries, cleanly appointed and warmly inviting, were nearly ready for their close-up. But outdoor spaces were littered with lumber, electrical cords, tools, piles of rocks