

WEEKEND REVIEWS; Music; A Stylish Program Conducted by Foster*[Home Edition]*

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From the largely unfamiliar joys in Mozart's neglected Symphony No. 32 to the overexposed charms of Ravel's "Bolero"--which he led Friday night in the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion--Lawrence Foster remains a conductor for all occasions, as he has been proving on our symphonic podiums, and those in numerous international locales and operatic pits, for more than 35 years.

Returning to the Los Angeles Philharmonic, which he has been leading virtually every season since his debut in February 1967, Foster brought another engrossing program and conducted it probingly and in high style.

The Mozart half of this agenda showed conductor and ensemble in elegant form, their performances of the Symphony No. 32 and the Piano Concerto No. 25 tightly formed, solidly balanced and admirably conversational as they unfolded.

In the C-major Concerto, the resourceful and effortlessly musical soloist, pianist Ignat Solzhenitsyn, contributed strongly to a most felicitous reading, which became a lively and lyrical yet unhurried dialogue between keyboard and orchestra. The 25-year-old, Moscow-born pianist, son of the Russian writer, shows those telltale, and rare, signs of musical intelligence--here combined with exceptional technique--that can result later in a conductor of distinction.

Foster's Ravel group, encompassing "Rapsodie Espagnole," the "Pavane pour une Infante Defunte," "Alborada del Gracioso" and "Bolero," contrasted the Apollonian world of Mozart with the Dionysian revels of the shadowy composer--whose works, so elegant, sensuous and violent (as Herbert Glass' comprehensive program notes observed), continue to fascinate.

Great fascination and myriad corroborative details filled these sweeping performances, punctuated throughout with virtuosic instrumentalism and seductive sounds.

Many nuances revealed the characteristic contrasts of the "Rapsodie." Lushness of tone, under complete control, marked the direct yet resonant appeal of the Pavane, which ended in a perfect diminuendo. Pinpoint dynamics, with the subtle force of pointillism, handsomely probed the inner workings of "Alborada del Gracioso."

Finally, the inexorable motion of "Bolero," never overstated but quietly and without grandstanding proceeding to its climax-conclusion, was exactly what one has come to expect from Foster: musical comprehensiveness without ego massaging. In Lawrence Foster's performances, only the listener gets the massage.

PHOTO: Piano soloist Ignat Solzhenitsyn gives a lively, lyrical performance in the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion.; PHOTO: (F1) SOLID: Lawrence Foster, above right, applauds piano soloist Ignat Solzhenitsyn after a performance with the L.A. Philharmonic. Foster, as usual, delivered an authoritative performance, this time of an engrossing Mozart-Ravel program.; PHOTOGRAPHER: KIRK MCKOY / Los Angeles Times

Credit: TIMES MUSIC WRITER

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