

DSO diary: expanding clothes and warm receptions

(This continues a series of reports by Ervin Monroe, Detroit Symphony Orchestra principal flutist, on the DSO's European tour)

BY ERVIN MONROE
DSO, PRINCIPAL FLUTIST

Day 5, May 1: My luggage is hard to close due to my hasty packing, so I use a little extra muscle. Today we travel to Birmingham (England, of course) by coach, where we will play in their Symphony Hall. Everyone is gathered in the large hotel lobby and we overheard Don Baker, our principal oboist, talking to Bruce and Linda Smith, violinists who live in Farmington Hills. Don said he was shocked when he received his hotel bill that included nearly \$140 in adult pay-per-view films.

"I knew something was wrong with my remote control and the TV would constantly flash a message informing me that the film I had selected was not showing at that time."

"A likely story," teased Linda. "We've all been wondering where you were these past two days!"

The hotel adjusted Don's bill and everyone happily boarded the buses.

The ride through English countryside was most enjoyable. The hills were lush green, high-



Ervin Monroe

lighted with an occasional field of brilliant yellow, which our guide explained was a plant that produced seeds used to make butter substitute.

We arrived in the heart of Birmingham, a bustling city of many new buildings and interesting architecture. The concert hall is located at the end of a large plaza with intricate mosaic patterns and is connected to our hotel by way of a sky walk. Birmingham's Symphony Hall is very striking and appears to be

quite large from the inside at first, but becomes more intimate with acquaintances. The stage is much deeper than the one at Orchestra Hall and I feel that the sound on stage has a lot of separation and is confusing at first to the musicians.

However, the tone of the building is very warm and once the orchestra began to play, we were able to adjust to our new surroundings.

Day 6, May 2: Another exciting morning of luggage packing and racing off to a quick breakfast before departure time. Our destination today is Brighton, which is a seaside resort town. After re-cramming all my articles of clothing into my suitcase, I now find it nearly impossible to close the baggage. It seems my clothes have been expanding in the English atmosphere.

At last my 200 pound frame comes in handy. I throw myself violently against the suitcase and pin it shut. Success!

The streets of Brighton were full of eighteers and Englanders enjoying the May Day weekend, a national holiday here. The city has many charming shops which empty out suddenly at a huge square where stands the Royal Pavilion. The Pavilion, the town library and the Theatre Royal are all built in a garish architectural style, which crosses East Indian, Persian and Egyptian structures. They make quite a strong contrast to typical English architecture.

I overheard our director of public relations, Jill Woodward, explain to one of the musicians that the Dome Theatre, where we were playing, was originally part of the royal horse stables. "Imagine," Jill said. "You are going to play where royal horses once trod."

After our performance the management appropriately herded us back to our buses, where Virginia Follis, director of major gifts for the symphony, awaited us with a refreshing gift from the management. A tall, cool one for the ride back to Gatwick.

Day 7, May 3: The mood is very upbeat today as we're off to the Big Daddy, London. We will be staying at the same hotel that housed us on our tour in '89. It's directly adjacent to Hyde Park. Our arrival time was for noon, but alas, only some rooms were ready when we arrived. After waiting for more than an hour, Susan and I decided to walk to The Swan Inn, a historic pub nearby that carries on a tradition of great food and atmosphere for all travelers, much as it did when it was established in 1735.

We passed Stephen Molina, bassist of Troy, and several other musicians at the intersection on our way and he seemed to know exactly where we were going. "We warmed some seats for you," he said.

The Barbican Centre was a familiar hall for the Detroit Symphony, as we played there in '79 and '89. Our concert was part of an American orchestra series and we treated the audience to William Grant Still's Afro American Symphony and Aaron Copland's Suite from "Billy the Kid" as part of our offerings.

Day 8, May 4: Madrid. At our English hotel, we met Marius DiFiore, cellist of Grosse Pointe, and Ollie Green, bass clarinetist of Birmingham, and his wife, Lee, at breakfast and exchanged stories and experiences from our trip. The flight to Spain is only a few hours and suddenly we are hearing a different language and dealing with a different currency.

The hall in Madrid was built in the late 1800s and we played there on our last tour. It has very interesting balconies crisscrossing in diagonal patterns and a warm, friendly sound. The orchestra seems to be comfortable with the touring routine and playing in the different halls. The city is a glow late at night as the Spanish have a long

day due to their traditional siesta break in the afternoon. Ann Strubler, violinist of Rochester Hills, and several other orchestra women met in the lobby after the concert and were off to enjoy an evening of flamenco dancing.

Day 9, May 5: My luggage closed more easily this morning, as Susan has repacked everything. Breakfast is provided in this Spanish hotel and room service breakfasts are common here. A breakfast in Spain means orange juice, rolls, butter and coffee. By the time we go to the airport, the Spanish breakfast had worn thin and we were starved. We joined Sam Tundo, percussionist, and his wife, Peggy Tundo, violinist, of Troy at the airport eatery.

The weather in Valencia is beautiful. There are palm trees everywhere and one is reminded of our trip and concert last year in West Palm Beach.

The concert hall in Valencia is somewhat similar to that in Madrid, though fewer jagged balconies. The orchestra played with enthusiasm. Spirits are high following the concert in Valencia and everyone is eager to spend the free day tomorrow enjoying the beautiful Mediterranean city.

Day 10, May 6: Pure bliss!

ART BEAT

GROVES STUDENTS' FILMS AT DIA MICHIGAN FESTIVAL

Three "Best of Show" films made by Groves High School Students were shown at the 1998 Michigan Student Film and Video Festival. The award ceremony was held Saturday, May 2 at the Detroit Film Theater at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

More than 350 films were entered into the festival. Of those, 60 films were selected for the final judging.

Groves student filmmakers to receive "Best of Show" awards included Ryan Kasprzak, Shane Pliska, Andrew Pollak, Lauren Shefman and Tisha Tyson.

Other Groves students to be selected into the festival included David Blair, Steve Kowalewski, Andrew Burns, Sara Nameth,

It's a wrap: Shane Pliska, left, and Andrew Pollak received "Best of Show," first division award in the Michigan Student Film and Video Festival.



Sara Brown and Tami Tarnow. COLLEGE EXHIBIT FEATURES LOCAL ARTIST

John Neumann, son of Martha and Kurt Neumann of Bloomfield Village is one of 12 seniors

whose work is exhibited at Kenyon College's Ohio gallery. The exhibit is dedicated to the senior thesis work of studio-art majors. The private liberal arts college is located in Gambier, Ohio.

Neumann, a graduate of Cranbrook Kingswood School, will receive his bachelor of arts degree in May.

MUSIC AND MEDITATION

The final B'Jazz Vespers of the season features Sandra Bomar and the Jazz Masters at 6 p.m. Sunday, May 17.

The concert is held at the First Baptist Church in downtown Birmingham at the corner of Wilkes and Bates streets. Bomar opened the Detroit Montreux Jazz Festival in 1995.

B'Jazz Vespers includes 20 minutes of worship interlude in a two-set, 100 minutes of jazz

concert.

REMBRANDT PLATE & PICASSO

ETCHING REPORTED STOLEN

Black West Gallery in Southfield is offering a \$25,000 reward for information leading to finding a 1655 etched copperplate signed and dated by Rembrandt.

The value of the plate is estimated at \$100,000.

In addition, Park West and Southfield Police have reported that a 1932 original Picasso etching was stolen from the gallery in late April.

The etching, "Nude Women and a Sculpted Head/Bust" is valued at \$50,000. It is one of 300.

If you have any information, please call Public Information Officer John Harris, Southfield Police, (248) 354-4769.

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