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DSO Celebrates First Sellout in Five Years



By Christine Facciolo

Concertgoers were treated to an evening of the savage and the sublime as the Delaware Symphony Orchestra opened the second half of its 2017-18 season Friday, January 26, at The Grand Opera House in Wilmington.

The program consisted of just two works: Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* and Beethoven's *Violin Concerto in D major* with the critically acclaimed Elena Urioste making a return appearance as guest soloist.

The event also marked a milestone: it was the first sold-out concert in five years.

DSO Music Director David Amado chose to open the concert with the Stravinsky work — something that's seldom done — saying it would be particularly effective for audience members rushing to their seats to hear the opening bassoon solo, which was gracefully delivered by DSO Principal Bassoonist Erik Holtje.

The 81 members of the DSO were supplemented by an additional 22 musicians to perform the work in its original version.

Anyone who thought *The Rite of Spring* had lost its edge over time would have left Copeland Hall thinking otherwise. Stravinsky's score throbbed with primitive eroticism until the very last chord was struck. The performance was as thrilling as anyone could have wanted: a powerful mixture of alien harmonies and jagged rhythms, virtuosity and controlled savagery.

You could feel the sacrifice happening around you. The bass drum and timpani add a fierceness to the "Ritual of Abduction," the double basses an earthiness to the "Spring Rounds." The bass clarinet added heft to the winds while brazen brass howled at the height of the ritual.

The Stravinsky/Beethoven pairing made perfect sense when one considers that *The Rite of Spring* redefined 20th Century music much as Beethoven's *Eroica* had transformed music a century earlier.

Friday's performance marked the return of violinist Elena Urioste. Urioste last appeared with the DSO in 2010 when she soloed in the Tchaikovsky *Violin Concerto*. The 32-year-old has enjoyed many career milestones since then, most notably being selected a BBC 3 New Generation Artist in 2012.

Urioste is a triple threat, with copious amounts of beauty, brains and talent. She was genuinely thrilled to be playing again with the DSO and it showed. Clad in a floor-length black gown, she took an expansive view of this long and repetitive work that is considered one of the most difficult in the genre.

Right from the opening tutti, which Urioste played along with the orchestra, her performance was joyful and congenial. She was profound without being pretentious in the first movement; lyrical without sentimentality in the larghetto; and playful without being frivolous in the final rondo. Her intonation was spot-on, letting the extremely high notes ring with an impressive resonance. Her impeccable technique allowed her to toss off the bravura passages with crispness and clarity, the softer passages with sublime sensitivity.

The audience showed its appreciation immediately after the first movement, when it broke concert protocol to applaud amidst gasps of "Wow!" Those lucky enough to have gotten tickets for this performance summoned Urioste back with three curtain calls, hoping that they wouldn't have to wait another eight years for her return.

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