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## REVIEW KWA-ZULU NATAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA March 2007

KZNPO Concert: 15 March 2007

### Emmanuel Siffert the visiting Swiss Conductor

Emmanuel Siffert the visiting Swiss Conductor returned to the podium for Thursday's concert. The first item was Mendelssohn's – 'Return from abroad', a light and graceful offering which I am unfamiliar with. Scored largely for strings, it requires a scaled-down orchestra, giving it a distinctly chamber-music flavour. It is from an operetta, which he wrote for his parents' silver wedding anniversary. Concise and melodious, it made for a light and pleasing start to the programme.

In Saint-Saëns violin concerto No. 3, the soloist launches into the main theme, to an initial background from the cellos. This is a romantic concerto, with the solo violin firmly at the forefront. Avigail Bushakovitz was soloist, and she has developed beautifully as a performer. Her interpretation was lyrical in a carefully controlled way. There was lovely dialogue between soloist and orchestra. Her fingerwork is fluid, and her sound was accurate.

The second movement, is a dreamy interlude with the orchestra in a largely supportive role, literally playing "second fiddle". The main theme is picked up by the cor anglais and the winds are integral to the whole. Bushakovitz played beautifully, and with Siffert's elegant conducting, this movement was a highlight for me.

The final movement is far more robust, and provides an effective contrast. What the finale lacks in bravura is made up in melody and lyricism, and Bushakovitz captured these qualities well, helped in no small measure by Siffert's sympathetic conducting. The final addition of the brass, with a fanfare gives the work a stamp of occasion.

The serious opening mood of Dvorák's Symphony No. 8 is quickly dispelled by a sunny flute, which ushers in the orchestra on a more cheerful note.

The music vacillates between severe and bright. The brass is used strongly to make bold statements, which constantly interject, and the winds are also used prominently. In the lovely, gentle second movement, it is the winds that shine, notwithstanding some lush orchestration for the strings. Dvorák can't resist using the brass briefly to change the mood, before reverting to his pastoral opening, with the flute used prominently, as is traditional. There are moments of yearning, which evoke strong feelings.

The third movement is my favourite, with its waltzing theme weaving a rich melody. Siffert's conducting was a delight.....

I so thoroughly enjoyed Siffert's conducting, which was confident and ever-so stylish. His self-assured manner seemed to rub off onto the orchestra, who played with vigour and flair. I look forward to his early return to Durban. – Stavros Anthias (courtesy of KWANA newspaper)