

The Ledger

ISO Opens with a Bang

Percussionist highlights the music's biting rhythms.

By SERGIU GHERMAN
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One would say Tuesday night's Imperial Symphony Orchestra concert was a successful kickoff to the season.

Maestro Mark Thielen selected a program, themed "A Different Beat," that was quite suitable for the Masterworks series opening. It consisted of the "Festive Overture" by Dmitri Shostakovich, the Concerto for Percussion by Joseph Schwantner and the Symphony No. 2 by Alexander Borodin.

The character of the curtain-raising "Festive Overture" was the polar opposite of the Second Symphony, and the Percussion Concerto nicely bridged the contrast.



Svet Stoyanov, percussion, guest Artist performs with the Imperial Symphony Orchestra in the Youkey Theatre at The Lakeland Center in Lakeland, Florida. (DuCharme)

The extravagant "Festive Overture" put the orchestra's brass and woodwinds to a test. Rhythm, intonation and phrasing seemed to be in the orchestra's focus. While the music boiled with the necessary chutzpah, one could feel that the overall character was a beat too sentimental.

Concerto for Percussion was a tremendous success, which the audience recognized by giving a standing ovation. The pungent quality of the music by the American-born Schwantner provided a fresh and welcoming addition to the program.

Guest artist Svet Stoyanov masterfully played his instruments, and the audience seemed to relish the colors of the orchestral ensemble as a whole. A passionate performer, Stoyanov highlighted the music's biting rhythms and conquered the audience with a vast spectrum of colorful sonorities. Especially notable was the rendition of the second movement, evocative of the tragic overtones not unlike those of late Shostakovich.

As an aside, Thielen deserves a word of praise for scheduling into the repertoire works of those who have not yet been the subject of a funeral service.