

**Los Angeles Times / Wednesday, April 17, 2002**

MUSIC REVIEW

# **L.A. Phil's Embraceable Two**

The 20th Green Umbrella season ends with showcases of recent works from Marijn Simons and Osvaldo Golijov.

By MARK SWED , TIMES STAFF WRITER

With its Green Umbrella Series of new music concerts, the Los Angeles Philharmonic has made a long-term commitment to embracing the future. Monday night at the Colburn School's Zipper Hall, the orchestra's New Music Group closed the 20th Green Umbrella season with something more resembling a bear hug. Marijn Simons, a 19-year-old Dutch violinist and composer of astonishing talent, made his American debut, and the program featured recent work by Osvaldo Golijov, one of the most charismatic of American composers.



Carlos Chavez / Los Angeles Times  
**Marijn Simons, a 19-year-old Dutch violinist and composer, at the Colburn School's Zipper Hall**

Not everyone in the large audience was sent home bursting with optimism for music in a new century - two old-time new musickers I walked out with were underwhelmed. But they were surely a minority. The electric buzz in the theater at intermission and after the concert was more than enough to light up the dark strip of Grand Avenue on a Monday night.

Simons takes the breath away. He is boyish, lanky, adores the stage and seems to have a thing about Stan Laurel, whom he resembles (one of his pieces is "Capriccio for Stan and Ollie"). As he played the solo part of his new Violin Concerto No. 2, "Secret Notes," on the first half of the program, his face might have been Laurel's - his plastic expressions, along with his waves to the audience and orchestra afterward, were priceless.

The concerto, written for a chamber group that includes percussion and accordion, is already his Opus 19. In the program he writes about moving away from composing with notes and working with sonic fields. But a lot of notes in "Secret Notes" are far from secret, although Simons loves to bend the pitch like a jazzman or microtonalist. The physical, jerky rhythms in the first movement, "Keep Them in the Dark," come from the world of Stravinsky, but the scoring also has the raw instrumental edge favored in Dutch new music. In the second movement, "Keep Silent," lyricism turns tonally surreal. A short conclusion, "Leaked Out," is a merry fling.

Everyone in the ensemble - carefully conducted by Yasuo Shinozaki, the Philharmonic's assistant conductor - appeared challenged, but Simons seemed to simply dance through the solo. An old-school virtuoso, he beamed happily with his applause and then played a Bach encore in a robust Romantic manner.

The second half of the program, which was turned over to Golijov.....

LOS ANGELES TIMES MUSIC REVIEW; Monday, January 20, 2003.

## A young Dutchman flies yet again

Teenage violinist Marijn Simons wows the Southland for the second time with self-assured virtuosity.  
By Mark Swed, Times Staff Writer

The most flabbergasting debut last season was, without doubt, that of a teenage Dutch composer and violinist with a Stan Laurel fixation.

In April, Marijn Simons -- already at 19 a sensation in Europe but as yet unknown in America -- appeared as a flamboyant soloist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group in the premiere of his exuberant Second Violin Concerto, "Secret Notes." He brought the house down, and you would have expected the Philharmonic would have rushed to bring him back.

But it was the Long Beach Symphony that invited Simons to return to the Southland, and he appeared as soloist in a Villa-Lobos violin concerto titled "Fantasia de Movimentos Mixtos" (Fantasy of Mixed Movements) Saturday night at the Terrace Theater. Once again, Simons played quirky music to which he had a personal connection, and once again he proved irresistible.

Strangely enough, there was no mention in the program or even by music director Enrique Arturo Diemecke in his concert preview discussion that Villa-Lobos' concerto from 1941 was receiving its U.S. premiere. It had been lost for more than half a century and was only recently found by Simons' father at the bottom of a barrel in an Amsterdam secondhand music shop.

That the work had long been overlooked, though, is not surprising. Villa-Lobos was an astoundingly prolific composer who is known outside his native Brazil for only a handful of his some 2,000 scores. The Fantasia appears to have been hastily thrown together for a concert in Rio de Janeiro. Two movements were adapted from violin pieces written years earlier. A third movement may or may not have been newly composed -- there is, Diemecke said, uncertainty about the dating. Apparently, the disappearance of such a work by a famously disorganized and uneven composer, whose output no one could hope to keep track of, hardly registered.

Given that so much of Villa-Lobos' best music is little heard, the discovery of this pastiche is not exactly earth-shaking. There are dozens of solo, chamber, vocal and orchestral works most of us are waiting to "discover." Still the Fantasia is substantial, lasting a half-hour. The movements are titled. The first, "Tortured Soul," is in Villa-Lobos' powerful, dramatic style; the second, "Serenity," is moody, lyrical; the third, "Contentment," has a wonderfully showy violin part and comes closer to the swinging Brazilian folk style that made Villa-Lobos popular.

A cool operator on stage, Simons, wearing a florid vest, played without score and with wonderful assurance. His tone was not always big enough to make an ideal impact in the cavernous acoustic of the Terrace Theater, but there was no mistaking the intonation and Paganini-like ability to make virtuosity look easy. There was also no mistaking how much he enjoys himself performing before the public -- at the end, he gave a thumbs-up to the orchestra and made a V-sign with his fingers to the audience. There were calls for an encore, and one would have been welcome.

Diemecke surrounded this colorful soloist with an operatic program that began with Verdi's Overture to "The Sicilian Vespers" and concluded with a kind of Wagner symphony made up of the "Ride of the Valkyries," the Prelude to Act III of "Lohengrin," the Prelude and Love-Death from "Tristan and Isolde" and the Overture to "Tannhauser." Such a chain of opera excerpts is not satisfying programming, but Diemecke compensated with his considerable dramatic flair.

Now in his second season with the Long Beach Symphony, Diemecke has added considerable panache to the orchestra's playing. There was the occasional uncertain wind entrance in the "Tristan" Prelude, the not always centered string playing in the "Tannhauser" Overture, but the theatrical thrills made this listener hope Diemecke will program a complete opera with the orchestra one day.