



GUSTAVO DUDAMEL CRITICAL ACCLAIM

**SPRING 2012
Review Excerpts**

The Los Angeles Philharmonic: Mozart/Da Ponte Trilogy – Part I "Don Giovanni" on May 18, 20, 24 and 26, 2012

Bloomberg News & Business Week May 23, 2012

"Frank Gehry, Gustavo Dudamel and – hold on to your suspenders of disbelief – the Rodarte sisters of Black Swan. The unlikely combo conjured up a spookily beautiful production of *Don Giovanni* at the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles on Friday. ... [Gehry] relocated the orchestra to risers high up at the back of the stage. Dudamel and his players ... are barely visible to us... Even in this difficult situation, the supremely gifted Venezuelan conducted without a score. Remarkably, coordination was near perfect. ...*Don Giovanni* is the first in a trio of Mozart productions linking major architects and designers. Next up: *Marriage of Figaro* with Jean Nouvel and Azzedine Alaïa. Then *Così Fan Tutte*... Alden directs all three. This unconventional series is the brainchild of Dudamel and the imaginative dynamo who hired him and has made this orchestra great: its president, Deborah Borda."

- *Manuela Hoelterhoff*

San Francisco Classical Voice May 23, 2012

"It was a major risk for the Los Angeles Philharmonic to undertake Mozart's *Don Giovanni* as its first fully staged opera, in an unusually configured concert hall never intended for opera. Its current music director, 31-year-old Gustavo Dudamel from Venezuela, has conducted *Don Giovanni* in Berlin, but this is his first opera in the U.S. ... The result was a nearly unqualified triumph, the most exciting opera production I've seen in Los Angeles (of about 100, over 25 years), and one of the most musically and visually exciting *Don Giovanni*'s I've seen, out of 15. ... [The] L.A. Philharmonic ... know their Mozart (Dudamel himself conducted the three-hour-plus opera, without a score), and I think the composer would have been

pleased. ... The glorious result was that we heard every singer loud and clear, whether whispering or belting.”

- David Littlejohn

Los Angeles Times May 21, 2012

“The Los Angeles Philharmonic's new production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, which had its first of four performances Friday night at Walt Disney Concert Hall, is certainly getting all the attention at the moment and for all the obvious and all the right reasons. The hall's architect, Frank Gehry, has designed stunning sets. The fashion world, long enamored of Disney, is involved, with powerfully theatrical costumes from Rodarte and hairstyles by Odile Gilbert. Gustavo Dudamel conducts his first staged opera in the States. Christopher Alden's production is shockingly intense. The cast is sensational. Here is Mozart's opera as a site-specific Disney Hall *Don Giovanni*, freshly illuminated. ... And Dudamel – who conducts even this long opera from memory with probing insight but favors eccentric slow tempos... This *Don Giovanni*, the first in a cycle of three Mozart operas that Dudamel and Alden undertake in upcoming seasons with different designers, is an extraordinary achievement, a once-only production....”

- Mark Swed

Pasadena Star-News/San Gabriel Valley Tribune/Whittier Daily News May 21, 2012

“Los Angeles Philharmonic's *Don Giovanni*: Wonderfully performed, wave of the future? ... One thing I've learned from yesterday afternoon's performance of *Don Giovanni* ... was to never bet against the imagination of Gustavo Dudamel and the rest of the Phil's creative team, which in this case included Christopher Alden, Frank Gehry, Kate and Laura Mulleavy of the design firm Rodarte, and several others. They pulled off the seemingly impossible feat with panache and ingenious skill. The performance was highlighted (as is usually the case with Mozart) by the music. In an article in last week's *Los Angeles Times* Dudamel said that one reason for choosing to present Mozart operas (coming seasons will include the other two Mozart-DaPonte operas, *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Così Fan Tutte*), was his belief that symphonic orchestras should play Mozart regularly, 'for purity of sound,' and perform opera occasionally 'to be nimble.' This performance certainly validated Dudamel's thinking. The orchestra played with supple, buoyant brilliance throughout the entire three-plus hours. Moreover, we're watching Dudamel grow up as both a Mozartean and an opera maestro before our very eyes. Conducting as usual without a score, Dudamel's pacing was a model of clarity and precision and the balances between orchestra and the singers were exemplary. ... All of this proved to be a stunning show, but can opera become

a regular part of the Phil's repertoire? Every arts impresario knows that Mozart sells big time, so it's no surprise that the combination of Mozart's music with Gustavo Dudamel conducting created sellouts for the four performances."

- Robert D. Thomas

Musical America.com May 21, 2012

"The Los Angeles Philharmonic's production of *Don Giovanni*, led by music director Gustavo Dudamel, is great to look at, wonderful to listen to, interesting to contemplate.... No mere concert version or semi-staging, this production launches a three-year project by Dudamel and the orchestra to present all three of the Mozart/Da Ponte operas in Walt Disney Concert Hall. The credits are long and notable, including, among others, a distinguished director, a venerable architect [Gehry], famous fashion designers [Rodarte], and perhaps the most celebrated *Don Giovanni* of the moment [Kwiecien]. It practically drips prestige. ... It is all very smart and stylish.... As it happens, this was the L.A. Philharmonic's first complete performance of *Don Giovanni* in its history. Dudamel, a gifted Mozartean, led from memory. He enforced invigorating gusto and coaxed warm and generous lyricism. The inner parts mattered. ... It was, in short, a wonderful performance that captured the zesty, gentle and human Mozart...."

- Timothy Mangan

Culture Spot LA May 22, 2012

"**LA Philharmonic and Gustavo Dudamel Mozart/Da Ponte Trilogy Begins With *Don Giovanni***. The opera event of the season currently under way at Walt Disney Concert Hall with Gustavo Dudamel conducting the Los Angeles Philharmonic, members of the LA Master Chorale and a cadre of internationally acclaimed soloists in the first installment of a three-year plan to perform the operas Mozart composed to librettos by Lorenzo da Ponte.... On May 20, Dudamel delivered another astounding performance. ... What can one say but 'Wow!' ...The overall effect of the production was to maximize the music and singing and minimize visual distraction, and it succeeded admirably. ...The LA Phil's foray into opera was an impressive spectacle of music, voice and art, especially considering the logistical demands of Disney Hall. But those demands also provided for a different, but satisfying arrangement between singers and conductor and orchestra than audiences are used to."

- Henry Schlinger

The Los Angeles Philharmonic: "The Gospel According to the Other Mary"
May 31; June 1, 2 and 3, 2012

Los Angeles Times June 2, 2012

"...Taking on the most monumental narrative in Western civilization, Adams' part-opera/part-Passion [*The Gospel According to the Other Mary*] is ... huge. ... So what did the orchestra, which is ending an outrageously ambitious season with this premiere, get ... it got a masterpiece that will be part of its legacy. ...The L.A. Phil played with surprising accuracy, given that it had less than a week to learn an opera score to which a typical opera company would allot several weeks of rehearsal. Dudamel conducted with palpable enthusiasm..."

- Mark Swed

The New York Times June 1, 2012

"*The Gospel According to the Other Mary*, which Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic performed at Walt Disney Concert Hall here on Thursday evening, is big and ambitious ... with moments of beauty among the longueurs. ...Mr. Dudamel and the Philharmonic, sounding clear and transparent, do their best to bring out the elusive drama, as does a gifted group of young soloists with distinctive voices.... And if Mr. Adams's *Gospel* impresses, and sometimes even dazzles ... there are still sequences as fresh as anything he has written. ...Mr. Adams has written a piece of grand scope and confidence."

- Zachary Woolfe

San Francisco Chronicle June 1, 2012

"*The Gospel According to the Other Mary*, a Passion oratorio ... had its world premiere Thursday night in an exciting performance by Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. ...On Thursday, Dudamel led a swift, responsive performance, graced by elegant and vital singing by the Los Angeles Master Chorale under Grant Gershon and by superb contributions from the vocal soloists."

- Joshua Kosman

The New Yorker June 18, 2012

"**John Adams's Passion Oratorio, in Los Angeles.** ...The Los Angeles Philharmonic began rehearsing *The Other Mary* immediately after the last of a series of staged performances of *Don Giovanni* – a coolly stylized production under the direction of Christopher Alden, with arresting crumpled-paper sets by Frank Gehry. The orchestra ... played magnificently; the brass section, in particular, deserves a medal for courage under fire. The vocal leads ... gave red-blooded life to elusive characters. ...Dudamel ...led with a

clear, sure hand. The L.A. Phil demonstrated once again why it is the most creative, and, therefore, the best, orchestra in America. ...Adams seems to be entering a new phase, revisiting the danger zones of twentieth-century style, and the first results are astonishing."

- Alex Ross

Musical America.com June 4, 2012

"...**The Other Mary Argues for Life Today.** ... (Adams holds the post of Creative Chair.) His challenges of shifting meters, complicated syncopations, wide-ranging dynamics, and driving pulsation seem to hold no terror for the orchestra, which played them brilliantly. Presiding expertly over all was Music Director Gustavo Dudamel. ... At the end – the miracle – Adams' music turns wondrous, transparent and eerie; the audience sat for several long, silent moments before exploding into applause. Sellars will stage *Mary* in March 2013 in Disney Concert Hall, after which the orchestra takes the oratorio on tour to London, Lucerne, Paris and New York. The first non-Los Angeles [Philharmonic] performance will be in Amsterdam in June, 2013."

- Chris Pasles

San Francisco Classical Voice June 3, 2012

"**Great New Creation: According to John Adams.** John Adams has written a long, arduous and mostly extraordinary new oratorio titled *The Gospel According to the Other Mary*. Conductor Gustavo Dudamel, a strong advocate of the composer, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, which commissioned the score, are giving the work its world premiere performances at Walt Disney Concert Hall as the finale to their 2011-2012 season. ...In the middle of it all stood Dudamel.... It was a testament to his work that you barely noticed him even as the music did its considerable thing, sounding like a million bucks as it did so."

- Timothy Mangan

Culture Spot LA June 3, 2012

"The May 31 world premiere of *The Gospel According to the Other Mary* by John Adams with Gustavo Dudamel, the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Los Angeles Master Chorale at Walt Disney Concert Hall will mark a defining moment in the soundscape of our time. ...The music seemed to flow through Dudamel, leaving him to react with the rest of us. I heard an orchestra that intuitively expressed a music like no other. Dudamel's full minute of silent stillness at the end was a genuinely effective coda. A pallid mood lingered throughout the bows and acknowledgements. What a fantastic ending to a hugely ambitious and phenomenally successful season. The significance of this performance will take time to

register. Sellars will stage the work again in Disney Hall and then on tour with the orchestra next season. Hopefully there will be no editing of [a] profound modern masterpiece. Bravo to Adams and Sellars for a monumental achievement and magnificent contribution to contemporary music. Bravo to Dudamel, our LA Phil, the Master Chorale and all of the soloists for an inspired performance.”

- *Theodore Bell*

The Berlin Philharmonic at Paris’s Salle Pleyel – May 7, 2012

Le Monde May 7, 2012 [translated from French]

“The maturity of Gustavo Dudamel. At only 31 years old, the brilliant conductor performs Beethoven and Strauss with panache. ...he [displays] the maturity of a seasoned veteran, whether he grabs a handful of Beethoven or sculpts the birth of man from Straussian clay, ‘in the Nietzschean conception of the superman.’ Could Dudamel be one himself? ...Dudamel maintains an immediacy, an incarnation, a joy of the sound, a highlighted energy. And also his own unique way of working beyond the orchestra palette to create astonishing sound matter. ...the changes of harmonies become iridescent like kaleidoscopes. ...The Philharmonique de Radio-France musicians, who have been inviting Dudamel since 2005, are evoking unbelievable musical experiences. This feeling is visibly shared by the musicians from the Berliner Philharmoniker, whose dazzling form and knowing smiles say more than all the rhetoric.”

- *Marie-Aude Roux*

THE 2012 MAHLER PROJECT IN LOS ANGELES & CARACAS, VENEZUELA

Strokes of Genius: Conductor Gustavo Dudamel Takes on the Works of Gustav Mahler

Vogue *January 2012*

"Now, the relentlessly energetic maestro is pushing himself to new heights with an ambitious project that, in less capable hands, might seem poised for an Icarian fate. ... 'This is going to be like running a marathon – for Gustavo especially,' says Deborah Borda, the Los Angeles Philharmonic's president and CEO. ... 'Mahler's music is special and perfect,' says the conductor. 'He has been such a big inspiration for a very long time. ...The range of emotions one can experience is endless when listening to music as magnificent as Mahler's.'"

- Evelyn Crowley

The L.A. Phil Mahler Project begins [LA Phil]

Los Angeles Times *January 14, 2012*

"The Mahler Project, begun Friday at Walt Disney Concert Hall, is big. Los Angeles Philharmonic officials have calculated that by the time Gustavo Dudamel finishes performing the nine complete symphonies, the Adagio of the Tenth and 'Songs of a Wayfarer' with the L.A. Phil and Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra, he will have conducted, most likely from memory, more than 70 hours of Mahler in rehearsal and concert in less than a month. With a mere day's break to fly to Venezuela, Dudamel then reboots the whole shebang in Caracas. ... [Symphony No. 4] Dudamel had a playfully athletic approach to sudden mood swings and to those flicking, instantaneous dynamic shifts, to say nothing of those turbulent climaxes in the first and third movements. ...the playing all evening was exquisite."

- Mark Swed

Los Angeles Philharmonic opens "The Mahler Project" at Walt Disney Concert Hall [LA Phil]

Pasadena Star-News/San Gabriel Valley Tribune/Whittier Daily News *January 14, 2012*

"The Los Angeles Philharmonic's 'Mahler Project,' which began last night at Walt Disney Concert Hall, will ooze grandiose power during the next 16 performances. ... One thing seems certain: if the quality of future performances match last night's, it's going to be a very special three-plus weeks in the City of the Angels. ... Dudamel conducted Symphony

No. 4 without a score – elicited a probing, urgent, scintillating performance from the Philharmonic.”

- Robert D. Thomas

Gustavo Dudamel conducts Mahler's First and Tenth [LA Phil]

Los Angeles Times *January 20, 2012*

“Thursday night at Walt Disney Concert Hall, in what may have been Dudamel’s most stirring and satisfying performance here thus far, it was clear that relationship has reached full maturity. The performance also provided excellent evidence of just how much Dudamel has refashioned the sound of the Los Angeles Philharmonic in the little more than two years since he became its music director. ... he brought out endless little expressive touches, allied with the grand gestures, levitating lyricism and that sense of celebratory drive on which Dudamel thrives. ... Dudamel already has worked his way up the transcendent ladder with the First. ... For his first time conducting the Tenth’s Adagio, Dudamel took few chances, letting weighty anguish speak for itself, particularly in his enforcement of its ripe, robust and richly textured string playing. ... But the lesson from a great First Symphony performance was clear. Don’t underestimate Dudamel.”

- Mark Swed

Dudamel and L.A. Phil play Mahler's Symphony No. 1 at Walt Disney Concert Hall [LA Phil]

Pasadena Star-News/San Gabriel Valley Tribune/Whittier Daily News *January 21, 2012*

“...an exhilarating and subtle performance of this symphony [Symphony No. 1]... every conducting gesture Dudamel made...had musical meaning... all sections of the orchestra were in top form. Conducting without a score, Dudamel painted this 58-minute tone poem with a multi-hued palette. ...the third movement...really stood out for me. Dudamel’s balancing of these seemingly disparate elements was masterful... a superlative performance.”

- Robert D. Thomas

Dudamel's Bolivars perform Mahler's 'Resurrection' [Bolivars]

Los Angeles Times *January 23, 2012*

“[SBSOV] has been growing into a phenomenally tight ensemble. There were no small fries this time, only highly accomplished young musicians...The loud passages made their obvious effects, but the ultra-quiet ones were incomparable. ... Dudamel treated the ‘Resurrection’ like a drama acted out on an epic scale. He could be very expansive and then make extreme

shifts in tempo. That sonic palette that the Bolivars provide is vast, and Dudamel reveled in that. ... He takes Mahler's spectacle of the soul at face value. But what face value that is! ... The symphony's final moments were electrifying in the extreme, what with the magnificent chorus, blazing brass, hall-filling organ, stirring soloists, winds as vivid as trumpets, those many strings and a percussion section looking to make a mark on the Richter scale."

- *Mark Swed*

***Review of Mahler's 2nd: Dudamel & Simon Bolivar Orchestra – Pure Genius, Part 2
[Bolivars]***

LA Classical Music Examiner *January 23, 2012*

"It was an experience of a lifetime. A transcendent event. ... At the conclusion of the concert, Dudamel along with all the performers received a thunderous standing ovation lasting for more than 10 minutes. Mahler's 2nd Symphony... The audience experienced such profound absorption participating in the drama unfolding on stage, that nobody moved, coughed or disturbed the space for the entire 90 minutes of the performance. ... Gustavo Dudamel and his orchestra didn't 'play' Mahler, they sang it. Passionately, and fervently. Each movement, was a world apart, which they performed with total mastery. ... With this enthralling yet humble presence, Dudamel appeared as one, with his orchestra. There was no separation between him, the orchestra, the audience, or Mahler's music. ... the Simon Bolivar Orchestra's exceptionally gifted brass and woodwinds section displayed an astonishing sweetness and clarity of tone... Equally impressive were the timpanists... The string and cello sections played with dynamic persuasion and sincerity, eliciting subtleties of colors and dynamics... The Los Angeles Master Chorale sang with stunning effect."

- *Ahdda Shur*

Mahler's "Resurrection" Symphony at Walt Disney Concert Hall [Bolivars]

Pasadena Star-News/San Gabriel Valley Tribune/Whittier Daily News *January 23, 2012*

"I doubt that words (at least my words) can adequately describe what happened last night at Walt Disney Concert Hall ... Dudamel has been the group's music director for 13 years (since age 18) and he clearly has a special relationship with the musicians. ... [Symphony No. 2] When playing all out, they could storm heaven (there's lots of that in this symphony) but in tender moments they could achieve breathtaking pianissimos. ... Dudamel was at his most compelling leading the 40-minute-long final movement...the finale was a majestic, glorious celebration of resurrection and eternal life. ...standing ovation...lasted 10 minutes and would have gone on longer if Dudamel had not led the musicians off the stage."

- *Robert D. Thomas*

Gustavo Dudamel conducts Mahler's Third [Bolivars]

Los Angeles Times *January 25, 2012*

"The brawny Bolívars were...a sonic force to be reckoned with. ... Dudamel's approach was to supply as much character as he could get away with, and occasionally a bit more. ... In the final movement Dudamel went for big-boned rapture. ...there was a sense of striving and a sumptuousness of sound that grew bigger and bigger and finally huge."

- *Mark Swed*

3rd and short: Dudamel and the Bolivars at Walt Disney Concert Hall [Bolivars]

Pasadena Star-News/San Gabriel Valley Tribune/Whittier Daily News *January 25, 2012*

"Any performance of Symphony No. 3 is an endurance contest for all concerned... Last night was ... spellbinding. ... The 96 string players... were remarkably precise in the opening movement... and the entire brass section was at its burnished best. The second movement was a model of melding propulsion and lyricism...Dudamel let it all unfold unhurriedly...beautifully to finish on a majestically glorious fortissimo."

- *Robert D. Thomas*

Dudamel and LA Phil revel in multi-week 'Mahler' project [LA Phil]

blogdowntown.com *January 25, 2012*

"More wonders came with the 4th Symphony... Dudamel and the Phil found an almost topographical quality to the score when they let phrases die down and rise up again in their marvelous pliant reading. ...with masterly control. ...Later in the week Dudamel and Co. turned to the 1st Symphony, which they also plunged into with controlled abandon. ... Finally, there was the Adagio from Mahler's uncompleted 10th Symphony and here Dudamel led the orchestra through a surround of enveloping plushness that cushioned the stringent lines of dissonance."

- *Donna Perlmutter*

***Taking the 5th – Gustavo Dudamel and the SBSOV at Walt Disney Concert Hall
[Bolivars]***

Pasadena Star-News/San Gabriel Valley Tribune/Whittier Daily News *January 27, 2012*

"Last night was the most cohesive collaboration between Dudamel and his youthful colleagues during this cycle and the orchestra's playing was exemplary. ...this was a smartly paced 74-minute performance that sustained tension admirably. May he never lose the sense of excitement that continues to pour out of all these programs."

- *Robert D. Thomas*

Gustavo Dudamel and L.A Philharmonic play Mahler's Symphony No. 6 at Walt Disney Concert Hall [LA Phil]

Pasadena Star-News/San Gabriel Valley Tribune/Whittier Daily News *January 28, 2012*

"...a sweeping performance by Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic last night. ... The Philharmonic was again in top form throughout the evening."

- *Robert D. Thomas*

Gustavo Dudamel conducts Mahler's Fifth [Bolivars] and Sixth [LA Phil]

Los Angeles Times *January 29, 2012*

"On Thursday, the day Gustavo celebrated his 31st birthday, his Mahler Project turned the troubling 20th century corner in an imaginative performance of the Fifth Symphony with the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela in Walt Disney Concert Hall. The next night, Dudamel led the Los Angeles Philharmonic in a driving, riveting Sixth. ... Dudamel and his huge Bolívar band readily underscored Mahler's wildness and most extravagant emotions. But most telling was his Adagietto, which is scored for strings and harp. It was quite slow but redolent of tender romance not tragedy, with the Bolívar harpist even sprinkling a dash of salsa dust. The Rondo sneaked in no longer boisterous but slyly full of an expectation for music heading in new directions. ... He attacked the Sixth with a frank rhythmic intensity that presaged Stravinsky's 'Rite of Spring,' which premiered in 1913, a decade after Mahler began the Sixth and two years after he died. Dudamel tapped the L.A. Phil's incomparable responsiveness for Mahlerian ferocity and ephemeral delicacy. The sound, whether needing booming bass or evanescent percussion, maintained extraordinary tactile immediacy. ...the sheer vibrancy of the L.A. Phil's instrumental dabs of color made this performance practically... a celebration of life. Gorgeous lyricism sprang, seemingly out of nowhere. Cow bells rang invitingly from onstage and off, as if the lush mountainside beckoned. The slow movement is even more beautiful than the Fifth's Adagietto."

- *Mark Swed*

Gustavo Dudamel and multitudes tackle Mahler's 8th [Bolivars & LA Phil]

Los Angeles Times *February 5, 2012*

"Mahler's Eighth Symphony is always an event. Gustavo Dudamel wanted a spectacle to climax his Los Angeles Philharmonic Mahler Project. He got it Saturday night in the Shrine Auditorium. ... With such multitudes onstage and five times their number in the audience to provide an atmosphere for collective wonder, Dudamel turned this into an occasion of ecstatic revivalism. ... The orchestra was fascinating to watch. The athletically unfettered Venezuelans sat side by side at each stand with more eloquently expressive Angeleno players. ... This was Dudamel's first Eighth, and it was prepared under the extreme conditions of conducting a Mahler cycle. He rose to the occasion in that he remained in full control... Dudamel, no doubt, has a great Eighth in him, and that showed when he produced an uncanny sensation of hushed awe rising to a drug-like euphoria at the end."

- *Mark Swed*

Crazy 8th concludes the L.A. Phil's "Mahler Project" [Bolivars & LA Phil]

Pasadena Star-News/San Gabriel Valley Tribune/Whittier Daily News *February 5, 2012*

"It's one of the few times that a performance has achieved the work's subtitle 'Symphony of a Thousand'... there were many spine-tingling moments... what's amazing is how cohesive the performance sounded... Soft passages (especially at the beginning of the second movement) were ethereal; loud moments hurled thunderbolts. ...the symphony ended in a blaze of glory..."

- *Robert D. Thomas*

Gustavo Dudamel conducts Mahler's Ninth [LA Phil]

Los Angeles Times *February 3, 2012*

"In the final and most demanding week of this Mahler Project, Gustavo Dudamel has been pushing a conductor's physical, mental and Mahler endurance about as far as it can go. ... On Thursday, Dudamel led the first of three performances of a lyrically transcendental 90-minute Ninth with the L.A. Phil. In extraordinary performances – conducted, as usual, from memory – Dudamel reached new and Mahlerian heights. ... More than ever before, Dudamel went with the Mahler flow. ... The L.A. Phil was marvelous. ... Dudamel reached a Mahlerian pinnacle and took in his surroundings conveying a sense of rapt awe."

- *Mark Swed*

Mahlerpalooza: Gustavo Dudamel Makes L.A. the Mahler Capital of North America [Bolivars & LA Phil]

blogs.laweekly.com *February 6, 2012*

"Did you have a WTF moment Saturday night, a tug towards the ocean followed by a sensation of heaviness pulling downward for a second? What you felt was the Mahlerian center of gravity in North America, shifting from Manhattan to snap into place beneath Los

Angeles, minutes after Gustavo Dudamel and over 1000 musicians onstage at Shrine Auditorium finished Gustav Mahler's Eighth Symphony. That performance was the last piece of the LA Philharmonic's ambitious Mahler Project: all nine of Mahler's ginormous symphonies performed in a little over three weeks. By one conductor. From memory. 101 years after Mahler's death, nobody to our knowledge has done that before."

- Christian Hertzog

***Bravo, Gustavo! How Maestro Dudamel Is Saving Classical Music
Gustavo Dudamel is the Elvis of the orchestra world, and he has the sold-out
concerts to prove it. Meet the L.A. Philharmonic conductor who's bridging the
generation gap – and saving classical music.[Bolivars & LA Phil]***

Newsweek February 6, 2012

"The tiger Dudamel is taming today – known as the 'Symphony of a Thousand' because of the sheer number of performers it takes to stage – has the maestro behaving like the exacting tiger mom his musicians have come to admire. ...Having just finished a blockbuster run in Los Angeles, Dudamel and his orchestras depart this week for Caracas to perform the whole nine yards again. ... The diminutive conductor is a towering figure in symphonic music, whose cultural influence belies his relatively young 31 years. With his undulating mane of corkscrew curls, ecstatic podium presence, and unabashedly modern interpretations of cherished orchestral works, Dudamel has unleashed a flood of new interest in classical music, bridging the generation gap between pension-age high-culture appreciators and younger listeners."

- Chris Lee

Gustavo Dudamel and the L.A. Phil start things in Caracas [LA Phil]

Los Angeles Times February 12, 2012

"After the end of the Los Angeles Philharmonic's excitable and radiant performance Saturday night at Teatro Teresa Carreño of Mahler's hauntingly elegiac Ninth Symphony, Gustavo Dudamel stopped to sign autographs for screaming fans who ran up to the foot of the stage of Caracas' main concert hall. ... Not only is the L.A. Phil the first major international orchestra to visit Venezuela in more than two decades, but the Venezuelan conductor and his L.A. Orchestra are rock stars here. ...All tickets to the Mahler concerts were about \$8 and sold out in less than two hours, with some people arriving in the middle of the night to wait in the ticket line. ... Over the previous consecutive four nights, he [Dudamel] had conducted Mahler's Second, Third, Fifth and Seventh with the Bolivars. ... for this audience, every note meant something. *That*, for any Mahlerian, anywhere, is a dream."

- Mark Swed

A Venezuelan Debut [LA Phil]

KUSC.org *February 12, 2012*

"Inside the hall, the LA Phil and Dudamel gave a powerful and poignant reading of Mahler's 9th Symphony. ... everyone is just full of excitement to hear a great performance and to see what Dudamel is up to with his new LA family. The reaction to last night's concert, I think, speaks for itself. ... the cheering sounded like a fútbol match."

- *Brian Lauritzen*

Caracas diary: A sweet Mahler's Fourth and Dudamel-mania [LA Phil]

Los Angeles Times *February 14, 2012*

"The performance of the Mahler Fourth had a relaxed but potent sweetness Monday in the Teatro Teresa Carreño... Following the L.A. Phil's month of one emotionally momentous Mahler symphony after another after another, it found for a brief moment (well, for the 55 minutes of Mahler's shortest symphony), a remarkable pocket of sweet sublimity... Creamy strings in the Adagio were ever so sweet. Uplifting winds in the first movement were ever so gentle. Brass breathed the heavenly life."

- *Mark Swed*

Gustavo Dudamel: L.A.'s classical rock star [LA Phil & Bolivars]

Toronto.com *February 14, 2012*

"After dazzling L.A. audiences over three weeks, with a spectacular 17-concert cycle of all nine Mahler symphonies, the brilliant young conductor Gustavo Dudamel received a hero's welcome, complete with police escort at the airport, when he returned to his native Venezuela last weekend. ...To me there could be few greater musical thrills than being at Frank Gehry's magical Walt Disney Hall earlier this month for a live performance of Mahler's *Ninth*. It was simply an overwhelming experience. Sitting behind the orchestra, I had the added pleasure of watching Dudamel's wonderful facial expressions as he led the orchestra from memory, without consulting a score. But the event that took L.A. by storm was a performance of Mahler's *Eighth* at the barn-like 5,400-seat Shrine Auditorium - featuring both the L.A. Phil and the Simón Bolívar Orchestra plus vocal soloists plus more than 800 singers from several local choral groups. Scalpers were getting \$700 per ticket. On Saturday, Dudamel again conducted the L.A. Phil in Mahler's *Ninth* - this time in Caracas. ... as it ended, screaming fans mobbed Dudamel to get his autograph. The Mahler Project is the L.A. Phil's most ambitious and expensive undertaking since it moved into Disney Hall in 2003."

- *Martin Knelman*

Gustavo Dudamel and Los Angeles Philharmonic captivate Venezuelans with Mahler's symphonies [LA Phil]

The Washington Post (AP) *February 16, 2012*

"Dudamel was typically passionate and energetic as he led the orchestra on Wednesday night in Mahler's Symphony No. 6..."

- *Ian James*

In Caracas, Doubling Up the Orchestra

The New York Times *February 16, 2012*

"As you approached the stage of the Teresa Carreño Theater here on Wednesday morning, terrifying, powerful and otherworldly sounds could be heard: vocal plunges, a whoop, arpeggios. There, on risers as high as a sports stadium section, were 1,200 choristers warming up for a rehearsal of Mahler's Symphony No. 8, nicknamed 'Symphony of a Thousand.' Try 1,400. It was the first gathering in Caracas of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, which is on tour here, the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela and 16 Venezuelan choruses before Saturday's performance of the Eighth, to be simulcast in high definition in movie theaters in the United States. The two orchestras have been collaborating on Mahler symphony cycles, first in Los Angeles and this week in Caracas. Gustavo Dudamel, who is the music director of both, conducts. ... At the end, cheers and applause and chants of 'Gustavo' rose up."

- *Daniel J. Wakin*

Mahler Megasymphony: Marshaling the Troops [Bolivars & LA Phil]

The New York Times *February 19, 2012*

"The performance was seen in 430 theaters in the United States and Canada, and several in Brazil, Colombia and Argentina, but not here in Venezuela. Instead, it was shown on a state television channel, TVes. ... The performance of the Eighth was the culmination of two Mahler symphony cycles presented by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Bolívars, as they are called, first in Los Angeles and then here. The spectacle of such a huge chorus and a 200-member orchestra was impressive. So was the video operation, as observed during Friday's rehearsal. Thirteen cameras were stationed around the hall. The production company had to bring in monitors, computers and other mechanics and electronics, because high-definition equipment was not available here."

- *Daniel J. Wakin*

Mahler Megasympphony: The Onslaught [Bolivars & LA Phil]

The New York Times *February 19, 2012*

"As Mr. Dudamel said in filmed remarks beforehand, it is the chorus that drives this work, and for the occasion, El Sistema, Venezuela's nationwide music education program, had assembled a chorus of close to 1,200. It made for an awesome sight and a sound that projected real body and power... Unified under the name National Youth Choir of Venezuela, the array of choruses had obviously been excellently trained to produce a cohesive sound that had clarity as well as volume. The children's choirs that occupied the front rows of the towering risers sang entirely from memory. The Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra, which had been collaborating for more than a month in the Philharmonic's Mahler Project, performing all of Mahler's symphonies first in Los Angeles, then in Caracas, also presented a fine united front. Veteran Angelenos and young Bolívars exchanged virtuosic flights and supple phrases seamlessly. Mr. Dudamel kept a firm grip on the sprawling work in two movements: huge and huger. ... He achieved fine detail and seemed particularly attentive to recurring strains of other Mahler symphonies, making this work seem a more integral part of Mahler's output than it often does."

- *James R. Oestreich*

Gustavo Dudamel's monster Mahler 8 in Caracas [Bolivars & LA Phil]

Los Angeles Times *February 19, 2012*

"On Wednesday, the orchestra had given a tight, incisive, brilliantly played Mahler Sixth. The next night Dudamel led a finely nuanced reading of the Adagio from Mahler's Tenth, followed by a hot Mahler First that was excitingly off the charts. ... Dudamel's reading of the Eighth has already matured. ... Not only was he combining two orchestras of which he is music director, but there was the all-Venezuelan chorus that seemed to fuel the event. Yet this was not just a grand performance, it was a communal one."

- *Mark Swed*

2012 Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra Tour
Gustavo Dudamel, Music Director and Conductor
November 29 – December 11, 2012

At New York's Carnegie Hall

New York Times December 13, 2012

"Enough Enthusiasm to Fill the Huge Hall - Young Venezuelans Exude Confidence to Go With Their Passion. It is typical for orchestras of well-trained young musicians to convey exuberance. The players of the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela, under their charismatic music director Gustavo Dudamel, were afire with exuberance during two sold-out programs at Carnegie Hall on Monday and Tuesday nights. But it is less common to encounter youth orchestras that project the supreme confidence of these impressive players, ranging in age from 18 to 28. I am tempted to call it cool confidence, though that would give a wrong impression of the impassioned, natural performances the orchestra gave to bring Carnegie Hall's monthlong festival Voices From Latin America to a rousing conclusion. From the opening work on Monday, the Mexican composer Carlos Chávez's *Sinfonía India*, the technical command and aural richness of the playing made clear why this orchestra, which gave its Carnegie Hall debut in 2007 with two programs, dropped the word youth from its title last year. Why qualify such strong playing? ...At the end the audience was also standing and shouting."

- *Anthony Tommasini*

At Philadelphia's Kimmel Center

Philadelphia Inquirer December 6, 2012

"Gustavo Dudamel charms Kimmel Center audience. They just couldn't let him go. As Gustavo Dudamel basked in audience love along with the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela Wednesday night, a few in Verizon Hall unfurled Venezuelan flags and shouted suggested encores. ...People come to classical music for all kinds of reasons.... Few events boast the kind of explosion that came with the second encore."

- *Peter Dobrin*

Baltimore Sun December 6, 2012

"The refreshing power of Gustavo Dudamel, Simón Bolívar Symphony. If you ever need your batteries recharged, just get to a performance by the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela, led by its kinetic music director Gustavo Dudamel. You'll be hopping for days afterward. Thanks to the Washington Performing Arts Society, these irrepressible

forces have made two appearances in this region since 2009. The second, Tuesday night at the Kennedy Center, proved as memorable as the first. ...I find it easy to accept that this [El Sistema] is everything it is cracked up to be, one of the greatest music education adventures anywhere, at any time. ...Then there is the sound itself. It's not just a matter of volume, although that is obviously significant – this orchestra is more than twice the size of our BSO. It's the quality of the tone, which Dudamel has helped to hone. The strings have a great deal of sheen, the woodwinds an impressive array of colors. The brass are capable of producing massive walls of well-controlled sonic power. The percussion section is fearless. Dudamel, conducting from memory all night, led an action-packed, prismatic program that included Carlos Chávez's *Sinfonia India*, Julian Orbón's *Tres Versiones Sinfónicas*, Strauss' *An Alpine Symphony*, and, for an encore, some Wagner. ... Dudamel held the sprawling score [Strauss *Alpine Symphony*] together, making each pictorial episode communicate clearly and absorbingly. And because he could draw on an apparently bottomless reservoir of strength from his musicians, the conductor was able to avoid hitting an anticlimactic slide along the way. Each fortissimo seemed louder, deeper, more stirring than the last. Each gentle valley in this sonic journey likewise was masterfully shaded, so that delicate instrumentation emerged with telling clarity and nuance. Even some Strauss fans find the *Alpine Symphony* a slog, but when you experience such a visceral account, the score's strengths easily outshine the weaker moments. This remains a sterling example of orchestration, and it was a keen pleasure to hear it fulfilled so viscerally by the Venezuelans. This music also has a genuine emotional component, and it was likewise a keen pleasure to hear that side treated with such feeling by Dudamel. His conviction in the score registered at every turn. ...the conductor led the players in something totally un-showy, something all about maturity -- the *Liebtestod* from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. The rapturous performance signaled yet again what a tight bond Dudamel and the players share, and offered yet another demonstration of truly impassioned music-making. It is awfully easy to believe in the future of classical music after an encounter with the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela."

- Tim Smith

At Washington D.C.'s Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

The Washington Post December 5, 2012

"Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra: All grown up on the Kennedy Center stage.

Every child prodigy is faced with a point at which it's time to figure out how to navigate adulthood. But you don't often see this phenomenon happen to an entire orchestra. The

Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra has been playing under conductor Gustavo Dudamel for 17 years. ...The Bolívar Orchestra is one of classical music's favorite stories. ...It is supposed to demonstrate the civilizing power of classical music: at-risk children find joy, happiness and whole, healed lives through playing Beethoven. The kids are exuberant, talented and free of preconceptions; they've learned to do something hard, and they exult in it. This has led to a distinctive concert experience that has sat just to one side of gimmickry: an extra-big orchestra playing with élan. ...like the two preceding pieces [Chávez's *Sinfonia India* and Orbón's *Tres Versiones Sinfónicas*], the Strauss [*Alpine Symphony*] mingled largeness of forces with lightness of expression. ...Dudamel is a remarkable conductor. ...he controlled the music with ease and without pretension, bringing the orchestra from full ear-piercing cry...all the way down to the single voice of a flute. And the players are fiercely disciplined and play cleanly. ...The final bid for maturity came with the first encore, when, in spite of calls from the hall, Dudamel plunged his forces into something more somber and searing: the *Liebtestod* from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. ...And if the orchestra is still feeling for its grown-up identity, it still plays with a fire that many other ensembles can only dream of."

- Anne Midgette

At Chicago's Symphony Center

Chicago Tribune December 3, 2012

"As the world's most famous media personality in classical music, Gustavo Dudamel presides over events that share the atmosphere of rock concerts, and so it was with Sunday afternoon's program of the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela at Orchestra Hall."

- Alan G. Artner

The Classical Review December 3, 2012

"... there's no denying that pulling off this vast work [Strauss's *Alpine Symphony*] as well as Dudamel did Sunday was a genuinely impressive achievement from a conductorial point of view as much as it was a testament to the talent of these extraordinarily gifted young players. ...From the trombone passage heralding the morning's fading darkness and the ensuing, resplendent account of the sunrise, this was, as early stereo LP labels would put it, 'A Sonic Spectacular!' Strauss's grand climaxes, of which there are plenty, were rich and sumptuous with thrilling weight and sonic impact. ...Dudamel and his charges did not neglect the score's many quiet and interior moments, as in the awe and stillness atop the mountain.... After the thrill ride of the first 20 minutes, the second part can often be

anticlimactic...yet Dudamel's focus and concentration on detail allowed the more reflective moments to resonate as well without lingering pedantically. The playing from all sections was fiery and often electrifying and was rewarded with an immediate and thunderous ovation with cheering.... A surging and impassioned encore of the *Liebestod* from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* was a fitting coda to the quiet end of the Strauss. More curtain calls and to the delight of the crowd, Dudamel rounded out the program with the populist strains of the Venezuelan composer Pedro Elias Gutiérrez's *Alma Llanera*, the conductor encouraging the audience to sing along."

- Lawrence A. Johnson

Chicago Sun-Times December 2, 2012

"Gustavo Dudamel and the Simón Bolívar orchestra bring vigor and finesse to Symphony Center. Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela ... musicians retain the fire and excitement of their student days but have added depth and refinement as a part of their professional development. Now a grand old man of 31 and in his fourth season as music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Dudamel has become increasingly economical and controlled as a conductor. ... Under Dudamel, the players have reached an astonishing level have reached an astonishing level, with excellent and rich string ensembling, wind and brass choirs, and soloists many a fully adult orchestra could envy. After several years in Gothenburg, Sweden, and the responsibilities of leadership in Los Angeles, Dudamel himself also shows additional discipline. ... The Strauss [*Alpine Symphony*] was ever of a piece, its sprawl wholly tamed. The Orbón, too, has its moments of fascination.... The second section, a slow movement dubbed *Organum-Conductus*, had an eerie sense of freezing time. After calls for encores... a calming, even gentle *Liebestod* from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. And then came *Alma Llanera*, Venezuela's lilting, unofficial second national anthem."

- Andrew Patner

At Berkeley's Zellerbach Hall

San Jose Mercury News November 30, 2012

"Once again, Gustavo Dudamel has come to town with his special ways: among other things showing that classical music can artfully embrace drum freak-outs and flat-out fun. By the time his Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra had finished its program Thursday at Zellerbach Hall in Berkeley, its 160 youthful members were dancing, spinning their instruments in the air and shouting 'mambo!' – and the audience was shouting back. ...

Classical music hasn't seen a phenomenon of his [Dudamel's] order in decades.... And this week in Berkeley Dudamel used his bully pulpit to introduce audiences to Latin American composers who are barely known in this country – and sold out the hall in the process. The revelation of Thursday's program (the first of two) was *La Noche de los Mayas* by Silvestre Revueltas.... It is gripping and unique. ...his conducting was contained, elegantly communicative. ...the program's first half...was quite excellent.... Dudamel and the orchestra played *Sinfonia India*, by Carlos Chávez, dean of Mexican composers, and *Tres Versiones Sinfonicas* by Julián Orbón."

- Richard Scheinen

San Francisco Classical Voice November 29, 2012

"To Dudamel, to Bolívar, Is to Believe. A visiting orchestra hasn't received this kind of visceral response since – well, since the last time the charismatic Dudamel and his youthful ensemble were here. Thursday at Zellerbach Hall, the orchestra performed the first of two concerts featuring Latin American masterworks. Presented by Cal Performances as part of a residency that included master classes, school performances and a two-day symposium on music education that drew experts from around the world, the event marked a welcome return for this remarkable organization. Here's the thing about music education: It works. ...Dudamel's reputation precedes him, but nothing quite prepares you for seeing and hearing his accomplished 200-member ensemble in action. ...That concert, in 2007 at Davies Symphony Hall, was nothing short of incendiary: a young, gifted conductor leading one of the most exuberant, dynamic ensembles local audiences had ever seen. Since then, Dudamel has become an international star (in addition to the Bolívar orchestra, he is currently in his fourth season as music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic). He and his Venezuelan musicians are older, more musically mature. His podium presence is more economical, and the orchestra has acquired a sleek, cultivated sound. But neither the conductor nor his players have lost their fire. ...The evening's centerpiece was a brilliant performance of Orbón's 1953 *Tres Versiones Sinfonicas*. Dudamel elicited the subtle sonorities of the *Pavane* movement with admirable precision and refinement; in the brisk finale, titled *Xylophone*, the orchestra's percussion section played with fierce muscularity. Yet the slow, contained energy of the central *Organum-Conductus*, built on medieval themes, registered with the greatest impact. Under Dudamel's direction, the movement's long, shapely melodies shimmered and soared."

- Georgia Rowe