



# Classical Voice North America

Journal of the Music Critics Association of North America

AROUND THE U.S. AROUND CANADA INTERNATIONAL DIGITAL ISSUES IN THE ARTS MEMBER BLOGS MEMBERS ON THE WEB

## Hearing the Los Angeles Philharmonic Outdoors and iPalpiti Indoors

By Richard S. Ginell: [From Out of the West](#)

In the good old summertime in the Los Angeles area, classical music heads outdoors to Hollywood Bowl or, defying the seasonal practice, indoors in the case of [iPalpiti](#)'s Festival of International Laureates. So let's take a sampling from both over a long July weekend.

First, it was off to the Bowl last Thursday night to witness the return of [Esa-Pekka Salonen](#)... [Full review omitted here]

The following Sunday afternoon – the one day in which Southern California's overcrowded freeway system can be counted upon to cooperate, maybe – I journeyed all the way to Aliso Viejo deep within the hills of Orange County to hear the [iPalpiti Orchestra](#) in the new [Soka Performing Arts Center](#), which opened in 2011. "Soka" is a Japanese word that roughly means "to create value" (as in "values"), the mission of the extremely-well-endowed Soka University of America that houses this 1,032-seat concert hall. The acoustician is a familiar name, [Yasuhisa Toyota](#) – the wizard responsible for the sound in Walt Disney Concert Hall – and the surround aspect of the semi-circular seating, the highly-modified shoebox shape, and abundance of wood reflecting surfaces right down to the white cedar stage have his fingerprints all over them.

My first reaction upon hearing iPalpiti – a young, highly-skilled, international string orchestra under the knowing direction of Eduard Schmieder – was that Toyota has created a resonant gem of a hall. Soka sounds far more reverberant than Disney Hall; my own rough estimate of the decay was close to three seconds, which is a lot. Yet iPalpiti's strings absolutely bloomed in this space, delivering a deep, rich bass in a movement from a C.P.E. Bach "Hamburg" Sinfonia in A, floating almost Stokowski-like in *pater* J.S. Bach's "Air on the G String" with terrific control of dynamics.

Schmieder then presided over a lovingly conducted and played rendition of Pergolesi's Stabat Mater in a workable hybrid of period-performance clarity and luscious modern-instrument tone. Iceland's Disella Lárusdóttir displayed a big uninhibited operatic soprano, and Daniel Bubeck must have been delighted with the way Soka projected his pure, precise countertenor voice.

Ah, but the addition of five percussionists in Rodion Shchedrin's marvelously cheeky *Carmen-Suite* pointed out that all of that reverberation can lead to problems. The sharp pings and pops and ringings of Shchedrin's witty percussion embellishments to Bizet's familiar tunes turned into murky, often overloud splats, leading to some early sync problems and causing some of the jokes – like the silent treatment of the "Toreador Song" – to fall flat. But Schmieder clearly was having fun with Bizet-Shchedrin, toying with the tempo fluctuations as far as he could get away with, and the strings were as completely unified and opulent as before. Presumably the percussion section will be better-defined when this performance repeats in Disney Hall Saturday night July 26.