

SSO gets warm review in Europe

The Singapore Symphony Orchestra's tour of London and Germany won over critics

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The Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO) has received four out of five stars from British newspaper *The Times* for its debut at London's Royal Festival Hall.

For its one-night concert on Oct 11 at the 2,900-seat hall, the SSO earned the praise of well-known *Times* critic Hilary Finch.

She described the orchestra in her review, which appeared on Oct 12, as "exciting", "scintillating", and that the orchestra played with "a velvety envelop" and "exuberant flair".

The programme for the night included Chinese composer Zhou Long's *The Rhyme Of Taigu*, French composer Claude Debussy's *La Mer* and German composer Felix Mendelssohn's *Piano Concerto No. 1 in G minor*.

Principal clarinet player Ma Yue was mentioned as "fine", and "deliciously accompanied" by Australian pianist Stephen Hough on the Mendelssohn concerto.

Finch also wrote of conductor Shui Lan's ability to "sense out the innermost energies of a work, communicate them compellingly and draw them out of his players", in a "dark and urgent" performance of Russian composer Sergel Rachmaninov's symphonic poem, *The Isle Of The Dead*.

Noting that the orchestra had not visited London in nearly 20 years, she ended her review with the words "Come back soon".

The SSO has been on its first European tour in five years - a trip which took it from London to six cities in Germany, including Munich, Leipzig and Berlin. The tour ended yesterday in Dresden.

For the German leg of the tour, the orchestra played with acclaimed German cellist Jan Vogler. Its repertoire included French composer Gabriel Faure's *Elegy* and Russian composer Peter Tchaikovsky's *Variation On A Roccoco Theme*.

Appreciative comments were made of the orchestra's performance last Saturday in the Hercules Hall at the Munich Residenz, a former home of the Bavarian monarchy.

In the German daily *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* on Oct 18, reviewer Klaus Richter called Shui "not the dictator at the conductor's podium, but a sensitive master". The critic also wrote: "In addition to the impassioned surges, there were also subtle notes -

displaying an orchestra with a 'sound culture' at its best."

Besides the two positive notices in the European print media, a mixed review has appeared online.

Reviewer Bob Briggs wrote on classical music website *classicalsource.com* about the London performance: "The Singapore Symphony is still a young orchestra - only 32 this year - and it is well-drilled, but too much so, and I found myself wishing for the human element to enter into the performances."

In response to the reviews, Shui, who is also the SSO's music director, says: "The SSO has done its best artistically and I am very happy with the outcome of the tour."
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Acclaimed music critic Hilary Finch of British newspaper *The Times* described the SSO's one-night-only performance in London's Royal Festival Hall (above) as exciting and scintillating. PHOTO: SSO