

# Vienna Philharmonic draws fewer protests

NEW YORK (AP) — There were far fewer protesters in front of Carnegie Hall this year.

However, when the Vienna Philharmonic walked on stage, it was still an all-male ensemble, an anachronism in the music world.

Yes, the orchestra did vote to break its gender barrier on Feb. 27, 1997 — just before last year's U.S. tour — ending a tradition that began with the group's birth in 1842.

But harpist Anna Lelkes, the woman admitted last year, wasn't required in Friday and Sunday's programs, and it was the turn of the other harpist, Harold Kautzky, to play in Mahler's Symphony No. 4 on Saturday night.

Of the five positions that opened in the past year — tuba, trumpet, principal viola, second violin, principal cello — women auditioned for only the final two. And of the five women who did audition, none was selected.

It remains unclear whether last year's vote marked the start of a determined effort to integrate.

The roughly half-dozen protesters who chanted slogans and passed out leaflets before Friday's concert appar-

ently weren't convinced. But they were far fewer than the two dozen demonstrators outside Carnegie Hall at each of the orchestra's performances last year.

What's clear now is that the Vienna Philharmonic retains its singular sound — deep, lush strings producing chords that seem to flow off the stage into the auditorium, a burnished molasses of notes no other orchestra in the world can match. It's hard to believe this same orchestra was booed last month for poor playing during a concert in Madrid, Spain, under conductor Lorin Maazel.

Riccardo Muti, the conductor of this year's U.S. tour, did not impose any idiosyncratic stamp on Friday and Saturday night's programs. During the delicate slow passages of Mahler's Fourth, the thought occurred that the woodwinds and horns playing over the strings — creating an atmosphere that could remind one of the Austrian countryside — must have sounded much the same when Mahler led the first rehearsal of this symphony with this same orchestra in October 1901.

Despite its hiring practices, the Vienna remains a treasure. Perhaps in a few years, music fans will be proud of its gender politics, too.

# 'Full Monty' gets hit with plagiarism suit

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A day before Oscar ballots were mailed and two weeks before the video release of "The Full Monty," two New Zealand playwrights sued the makers of the English male stripper comedy for plagiarism.

Anthony McCarten and Stephen Sinclair said in the federal lawsuit filed Monday that the movie was "strikingly similar" to their 1987 play "Ladies Night."

The premise, set in the economically strapped north of England, and seven scenes were drawn from the play, the copyright infringement lawsuit said.

Among the scenes lifted is one in which the play's fledgling strippers are presented with "very fancy G-strings." One of the characters in the play is chubby and decides not to participate.

"I didn't see anything in (the movie) that was original," the playwrights' attorney, Donald Engel, said Tuesday.

Bert Fields, a lawyer for producer 20th Century Fox, said nothing was copied, and the makers of "The Full Monty" saw

none of the play's 500 England performances.

If there are any similarities, they involve ideas beyond the reach of copyright law, he said.

"The basic similarity is the general idea of unemployed men becoming male strippers. ... There's been every sort of male stripper show and article that you can ever imagine," Fields said.

The controversy couldn't have come at a worse time for the low-budget blockbuster that earned four Academy Award nominations. Oscar ballots were mailed Tuesday, and winners will be announced March 23.


"The timing is very unfortunate," Fields said. "It's an underdog picture, and it's a shame to have it hurt by something like this."

Such lawsuits rarely succeed: One against Steven Spielberg's "Amistad" was recently dropped, and the makers of "Twister" were cleared in another. Fields said the "Amistad" suit hurt its Oscar chances because it was filed just before the movie opened.

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