

## DSO, Slatkin tune up again after long strike - Detroit News, The (MI) - April 8, 2011 - page A1

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The 6-month-long Detroit **Symphony** Orchestra strike could be over today when the musicians' bargaining team tallies up the ratification votes.

Musicians returned to work Thursday for rehearsals, though they hadn't yet voted on ratification of the three-year, \$36.3million contract; spokesman Greg Bowens said the bargaining team recommended musicians accept the deal.

"You can imagine there was some relief," said cellist Haden McKay said. "Six months is a long time. There were a lot of twists and turns."

The DSO is about to enter a fragile period of healing. Music director Leonard **Slatkin** acknowledged there will be an abundance of challenges ahead for both him and the orchestra. The mood differs among the musicians.

"Some are overjoyed to be back; others aren't sure what they face," **Slatkin** said. But, he added, "most seem to be smiling, and I certainly am."

**Slatkin**, who stayed mostly silent publicly during the long strike, said Thursday he spoke to parties on both sides of the issue in private. Now he sees his role as that of unifier. "I can be the glue for both sides," he said, adding that he plans on forming committees to address lingering concerns within the organization.

However, Saul Eisen, professor of psychology and organization management at Sonoma State University in Sebastopol, Calif., urged professional consultation from outside the DSO.

"This is a tough place to recover from," said Eisen, who helped the Oregon **Symphony** regroup after a brief but bitter strike in 1996.

"What's needed is a new collaboration toward shared goals and the development of trust. Musicians and management need to embrace the idea that 'We're all in this together. We may have acted stupidly or insensitively, but we need to work it so that the next contract will be based on mutual understanding.'"

DSO spokeswoman Elizabeth Weigandt said professional consultation "has been discussed but there is no plan at present. Right now we have our hands full just managing upcoming concerts. We appreciate that this is an important issue that we will need to address."

The walkout began Oct. 4 and bitterness increased when on Feb. 19 musicians rejected an offer and management suspended the season on Feb. 19. A 27-hour bargaining session last weekend ended early Monday the provisional contract.

McKay said musicians are focused on the upcoming concerts. While they have been putting on ad hoc performances since fall, he said he still was relieved by Thursday's rehearsals. "I was actually pleasantly surprised by how good we sounded."

During the strike, the musicians announced four players — three percussionists and the acting principal flute — will be leaving the orchestra, but they haven't left the orchestra yet. McKay said all four will perform at this weekend's concerts, and perhaps longer. "None has started their new jobs," he said.

Slatkin said those musicians may have gone elsewhere anyhow as part of the natural ebb and flow of their jobs.

Mostly, Slatkin said Thursday's rehearsal was a way for him and the musicians to reacquaint themselves with their home. "(We're) reminding ourselves who we are and what music means to all of us," he said.

McKay agreed, saying that while they've been reaching out to audiences on their own the past few months "it's nice to reconnect in Orchestra Hall."

Still, while the excitement from nearing the end of the labor dispute caused the free tickets for this weekend's return performances to be quickly snatched up by the public, the real test of the orchestra's strength will come when next season's program goes on sale.

"Stability is our biggest challenge," Slatkin said.

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Detroit **Symphony** Orchestra

8 p.m. Saturday; 3 p.m. Sunday

Orchestra Hall at The Max

3711 Woodward, Detroit

Tickets: None available

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