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Scene & Heard: L.A. Philharmonic opening gala is a night to remember

October 8, 2010 | 2:06 pm



“Celebración,” the Los Angeles Philharmonic's opening-night gala, attracted 800 guests Thursday to what appeared to be a high-tech supper club on tented-over Grand Avenue, with images projected on giant spheres overhead. Judging from the crowd packing the dance floor, guests could have danced all night, when they weren't praising music director Gustavo Dudamel and Peruvian tenor Juan Diego Flórez for the night's concert of Italian and Latin classics.

Jazz great Herbie Hancock called the performance “phenomenal,” noting his surprise to discover that Flórez not only had sung but also orchestrated one of the pieces. Eva Mendes said she recognized the Latin music from her childhood and that her mother, Eva Perez-Suarez, who accompanied the actress, knew every tune. Earlier, Mendes hosted the taping of the concert for a later broadcast on PBS and release on DVD.

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Amid the acclaim, Dudamel said, "I'm lucky to be here. I feel like I've been here my whole life and it's only one year."

Just before Melissa Manchester made a surprise appearance, event chair David Bohnett announcing the gala proceeds at \$3 million for the L.A. Philharmonic and its education programs. He then thanked his "girls," a.k.a. the otherwise all-female event committee, including honorary chairwoman Eloísa Maturén (Mrs. Dudamel), Maria Bell, Lynn Booth, Margaret Eberhardt, Kimberly Marteau Emerson, Lenore Greenberg, Joan Hotchkis, Joyce Kresa, Ginny Mancini, Jane Nathanson, Soraya Nazarian, Carolyn Powers, Nancy Sanders, Carla Sands and Alyce Williamson.

-- Ellen Olivier

Photo: Eloisa Maturen, left, and Julia Trappe, wife of tenor Juan Diego Florez, are escorted to the event. Credit: Kirk McKoy / Los Angeles Times

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