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L'CHAYIM REVIEW - 8/10/09

L'Chayim (To Life!) was a presentation worthy of the Ford Amphitheatre. The Los Angeles Jewish Symphony's production on Sunday, August 9, 2009, played to a full house. Billed as "a musical celebration of Eastern European culture," the performances lived up to and surpassed their goal.

Conducted by Dr. Noreen Green, the symphony was in tip-top shape, full of the verve and life they promised. An exciting blend of musical roots from Poland, Russia, and Jewish theater, the program was exciting, informative, and reminiscent. Ever popular favorites included Bei Mir Bist du Shein, Odessa, and Raisins and Almonds.

A stunning performance was offered by 23-year-old piano virtuoso Yevgeniy Milyavskiy, who played a piece by the Polish Gershwin Wladyslaw Szpilman. It was hard to believe that this melodic upbeat music was written in the Warsaw ghetto. Clarinetist Zinovy Goro brought Klezmer rhythms to life, as well as arranging several pieces for the entire orchestra. Mark Kashper, concertmaster/violinist, added solos that brought tears to the audience's eyes. Last but certainly not least were the hilarious contributions of talented Mike Burstyn, who gave vaudeville new life as he recreated the song, dance, and Yiddish humor of his parents, world famous Jewish vaudevillians of the early 1900's. A talented polyglot with a history of world-wide performances and awards, Burstyn brought smiles and howls of laughter to an appreciative audience. The show underscored the talents and roots of the Jewish musical experience - which has become integral with the musical experience for all of us.