

José-Luis Novo, conductor

Press Acclaim

Annapolis Symphony Orchestra

“Novo and his players added to the poignancy of the evening with playing as distinguished as any enjoyed during the maestro's brief tenure in Annapolis. Especially impressive was the *Metamorphosen*, Strauss' dense, discursive commentary on nostalgia and loss as only an old man can feel them. What stood out last Friday was the aristocratic flair of the playing from concertmaster Mateusz Wolski, principal cellist Kerena Moeller and their 21 colleagues, who allowed the intensity of the work to emerge with a stoic dignity that made the emotions all the more affecting. It took guts to begin a concert with such staunch, uncompromising fare, but they pulled it off.”

The Baltimore Sun
March 23, 2007

Modesto Symphony Orchestra

“The *Eroica* Trio has played this [Beethoven's *Triple*] concerto many times, so their excellent ensemble playing is understandable, but after only a couple of rehearsals, Novo led the orchestra as if he had been on tour with the soloists for a year... The program concluded with Robert Schumann's *Symphony No. 4*... it was delightful to hear Novo conduct it ... His sense of timing is impeccable, especially in transitions between movements and tempo changes... Novo has deep understanding of the music, and he has the technique and skills to enable an orchestra to express that understanding... His conducting is clear and precise but not in the least pedantic, and he successfully invoked the passion, lyricism, excitement and meaning of the works presented Friday evening.”

Modesto Bee (Modesto, CA)
January 14, 2007

Annapolis Symphony Orchestra

“The orchestra's performance [of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*] finally caught fire in the *Fourth Movement*, which features descriptions of a festival in Baghdad and shipwreck. Here, Mr. Novo pulled out the stops: Orchestral chords were brilliant and imposing, tempos were exhilarating and the playing dramatic. The artfully constructed imagery of this final movement culminated in a powerful and imposing finale, and brought the concert to a rousing musical conclusion.”

The Capital (Annapolis, MD)
November 23, 2006

Annapolis Symphony Orchestra

“...the Annapolis Symphony Orchestra unleashed a nasty, unremittingly exciting Shostakovich 10th that showed off the strengths of the ensemble that already has been reconfigured during Novo's brief tenure ... From desolation to terror, the emotional states rolled by as the power of the playing communicated the magnificence of Shostakovich's symphonic vision.”

The Baltimore Sun
September 22, 2006

Annapolis Symphony Orchestra

"In Josef Haydn's Symphony No. 94, Novo led the orchestra in such a brisk and fun-filled performance that it almost had the freshness of a premiere. Mr. Novo eschewed the mannerisms of the Germanic school of Haydn with its pseudo-seriousness, and gave us instead the delectable and jocular work of a rollicking prankster, stripped of its encumbering accretions... In labeling this concert "outstanding," I am probably giving the ASO and its new music director less than their just due...Based on what I heard last weekend, I suspect that this level of performance will quickly become the routine measure of the degree of musical excellence that we can expect from the ASO."

The Capital (Annapolis, MD)
September 27, 2005

Eastern Music Festival

"A Miraculous Mahler 6th at the Eastern Music Festival... This was some of the finest orchestral playing that I have ever heard – from any age, at any level."

Classical Voice of North Carolina
July 7, 2005

Annapolis Symphony Orchestra

"When it was time to unleash his players, whether in the dark, tautly conceived forte passages in Schubert's opening movement to the Unfinished, or for the expansive emotionalism of Dvorak's New World, he didn't hesitate to embrace the weighty excitement packed into these much-loved (and different) scores. Apparently, Novo was a popular choice among ASO musicians, because they've played with passion and verve both times he's led them... From the beginning, the overwhelming sensation was that the [Annapolis Symphony] orchestra had found themselves the right guy."

The Baltimore Sun.
May 13, 2005

Annapolis Symphony Orchestra

"The Spanish-born Novo impressed musicians, board members and audience back in September when, as a candidate, he conducted a demanding program that included challenging, non-hit parade items. Friday's program was all hit parade - golden oldies by Schubert, Wagner and Dvorak. Novo took advantage of this opportunity to demonstrate what he can do to freshen standard repertoire. His ideas weren't wildly individualistic but weren't run-of-the-mill, either. Carefully considered tempos and phrasing yielded telling interpretations. He proved particularly impressive in Schubert's Unfinished Symphony. The ominous nature of the opening measures came through powerfully, as did the melancholy weight that keeps the famous lyrical theme of the first movement from breaking all the way out from darkness into sunlight."

The Baltimore Sun.
May 9, 2005

Abilene Symphony Orchestra

"Novo looked similarly entranced during Ludwig van Beethoven's "Symphony No. 7."...the orchestra's performance of the finale was rousing."

The Reporter-News (Abilene, TX)
February 13, 2005

Stamford Symphony Orchestra

"Novo turned on the charm after intermission. In humorous election terms he urged the audience to "Vote for Me!" He also introduced the Ives/Schumann *Variations on America* as being patriotic

but with “tons of humor,” and he described the bitonal passages as being somewhat like “multitasking.” He then rendered the variations in a performance that worked from start to stop.”

The Stamford Advocate (Stamford, CT)
October 24, 2004

Annapolis Symphony Orchestra

“Last Saturday, Novo came across as an inspiring communicator who bonded with his musicians in a short amount of time. Limber, emphatic and unafraid to let his body do the talking, Novo is an animated presence on the podium. However, he is anything but a show-off, as his body language is in harmony with the ebbs and flows of the music, not with the assertion of his ego. The orchestra seemed to adore playing for him, digging deep to create the swirling atmospheric effects he was after in such off-the-beaten-path fare as de Falla’s flamenco-inspired ballet score, *El Amor Brujo*, Ravel’s *Tzigane* - a single-movement gypsy rhapsody for solo violin and orchestra - and Kodaly’s Hungarian-to-the-core *Peacock Variations*.”

The Baltimore Sun.
September 23, 2004

Binghamton Philharmonic

“Throughout the evening, the philharmonic sounded better than ever... He came out after the intermission to introduce the 20th-century piece *Sensemaya*. He was funny, disarming, charming, personable and a total cut-up. He had the audience laughing like crazy, especially when he compared hearing a dissonant clarinet theme to the uncertain discomfort of sitting in a dentist’s chair. It was another smart move, because his little talk (which did not seem overly scripted or deliberate) served to put the audience at ease for what turned out to be a very unusual and haunting piece, with a tribal, jungle feel.”

Press & Sun- Bulletin (Binghamton, NY)
September 29, 2002