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The Week Ahead

From a solo virtuoso, a riot of percussion

"You can't take your eyes off of him because you can't really believe what he's doing."

Noreen Green, conductor and founder of the Los Angeles Jewish Symphony, was describing percussionist Chen Zimbalista, the Israeli virtuoso who will make his West Coast debut with the symphony Sunday evening at the Ford Amphitheatre in "Ahavah: From Israel with Love."

"He uses his hands, his feet and his mouth to create percussive sound. His entire body is in motion," Green said. "He's a one-man band, but it's not comical, it's exhilarating."

A reviewer in the Winnipeg Free Press wrote that Zimbalista "brings the percussion section — normally hidden at the back of an orchestra — to the forefront and shows off its diversity, as well as his formidable prowess with every rhythm instrument, from the tambourine to the tom-tom."

The Jerusalem Post described Zimbalista as "a virtuoso performer who captivates the audience by his ability to turn the performance into an adventure."

During rehearsal, Green noted, "I kept saying to him, 'Oh, my gosh, I'm going to have to conduct the orchestra and just hang on for dear life.'"

The classically trained Zimbalista, who counts Arabic, jazz, blues and rock music among his influences, will play his own work, "Impulse"; Shlomo Gronich's "Go"; "Deshame," from Ofer Ben-



Los Angeles Jewish Symphony

HE'S GOT RHYTHM: Chen Zimbalista will perform Sunday.

Amots' Ladino song cycle, "Songs From the Pomegranate Garden"; and the North American premiere of Hadas Goldshmidt-Halfon's "Knock on Wood," a concerto in three movements for marimba, percussion and chamber orchestra, described as representing contrasting ideas of good and evil.

Also featured on the program is Israeli French horn soloist Alon Reuven, who will perform Yehezkel Braun's "Concerto for Horn and String Orchestra," Lev Kogan's "Hassidic Rhapsody" and Lazlo Rooth's "Variations" on a Sephardic-Jewish Romance.

Founded in 1994, Green's symphony has made it a mission to bring audiences new and familiar orchestral works on Jewish themes.

— LYNNE HEFFLEY