

## (dispatches)

## Los Angeles

**CONDUCTING ELECTRICITY**

Hoots and whistles fill a packed stadium of 17,000, as a charismatic young Venezuelan rallies the crowd with his emotional proclamations. Soon they're chanting his name: "Gu-sta-vo! Gu-sta-vo!"

Much as it might feel like a political rally, the event is actually a concert, a four-and-a-half-hour lovefest in honor of Gustavo Dudamel, new director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. "Who knew there were this many classical music fans in L.A.?" marvels local rock musician Marc Monroe Johnson, sitting in the stands. "It's like a reception for Dear Leader."

At just 28, the fresh-faced

It-boy of the symphony set is only the second youngest conductor in the L.A. orchestra's history to fill the director's position, and many hope he'll make classical music accessible to a new generation of fans.

He seems off to a good start: The curly-maned prodigy—dubbed "The Dude" by twentysomethings in the audience—makes his first stage appearance in true SoCal style, clad in a T-shirt. Jack Black and Andy Garcia are on hand to sing his praises, along with Herbie Hancock and Quincy Jones. And bassist Flea, of the Red Hot Chili Peppers, performs with kids from the Silver Lake Conservatory of Music, a school the rocker founded. Later Dudamel



himself conducts the Los Angeles Youth Orchestra.

Accordingly, the mood at the concert is playful, especially toward the end of the evening, when elaborate fireworks explode around the proscenium and the smoke lifts to

reveal a brightly colored marquee that simply reads "¡Bienvenido Gustavo!"

"Look out, Arnold," says one onlooker, noting that Governor Schwarzenegger will be wrapping up his final term next year.

—SHANA TING LIPTON

## Istanbul

**Busy Work**

Behind a pair of semicircular beige display counters, four workers unfold shirts from one pile and then, for no apparent reason, refold and deposit them in another. The work isn't particularly challenging, but that's precisely the point of this retail purgatory: They're laboring in the name of art.

A potent reminder that the economic downturn is global in scope, "Unemployed Employees—I Found You a New Job!" by Turkish artists Aydan Murtezaoglu and Bülent Sangar, is an odd yet topical performance piece on view at Antrepo No. 3, a waterfront warehouse in Istanbul's Tophane district.

For their humorous if pointed contribution to the Istanbul Biennial, the artists have hired local university graduates to perform needless tasks before a live audience and for an online video feed. It's like the myth of Sisyphus set in a Turkish outlet mall.


"I focus on the irony of it," says one participant, Ozgen Kaybaki, who, despite a masters in marketing, has been unable to find work—except as part of an art installation, of course, folding clothes and talking with passersby about her adventures in the global economy. "Millions work like this doing the silliest jobs," she adds. "Go to any shop in Istanbul. The people are like machines!"

One of her colleagues, Mehtap Pamukci, a 32-year-old philosophy graduate, notes that the financial crisis began far from Turkey. "Why do we suffer here?" he wonders.

At least these ersatz retail workers could count on paid employment through the Biennial's conclusion. "I was lucky to find this job after only three months of looking," says Kaybaki, "not everyone is so lucky these days." —RICHARD CARRIERO







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