

All the right notes

With Richard and Rana Florida as hosts, the evening sparkled like Veuve Cliquot, Deirdre Kelly writes. Photos by Tom Sandler

By DEIRDRE KELLY

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Musicians in the dining room, a former politician in the foyer and an international architect in the kitchen.

A stimulating and thought-provoking mix and no wonder, when the hosts are Richard and Rana Florida.

The glamorous "it" couple recently invited a cross-section of Torontonians to their ultramodern Rosedale home to celebrate Ms. Florida's recent appointment as a board member of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

The intimate gathering felt like an extension of their Creative Class Group consulting business. The guest list was eclectic and ideas fizzed as much as the Veuve Clicquot. Everyone, including Marilyn Thomson, widow of Ken Thomson, and Allan Gregg, the Canadian pollster and pundit, seemed in a talkative mood. Topics ranged from the recent drama in the House of Commons to the resemblance of the Bloor Viaduct (visible from the house's back windows) to a Piranesi.

It would have seemed natural for Mr. Florida to dominate the conversation. After all, the director of the Martin Prosperity Institute at the University of Toronto and author of *Who's Your City?* is a press magnet who attracts crowds wherever he lectures around the world. His most recent engagement took place in Moscow, where he addressed Russia's federal agency on youth affairs.

But on this night, the urban-studies theorist seemed content to watch his leggy wife hold court. "I'm actually an introvert," he said. "Rana's the extrovert. She manages it all."

Dressed in a Missoni-esque mini and knee-high black suede Ferragamo boots, Ms. Florida thanked TSO board chair Ana Lopes for inviting her to join the arts organization and its music director Peter Oundjian for returning the orchestra to its former lustrous status. Where, a few years ago, the orchestra narrowly averted bankruptcy, today it is playing to sold-out houses without needing to bring in star soloists to bolster ticket sales. "Rana represents the new face of Toronto," Mr. Oundjian said after members of his orchestra had played a 240-year-old Haydn piece for the guests. "As such, she's a wonderful ambassador for the new-look TSO."

1. TSO assistant concertmaster Etsuko Kimura, left, and Marilyn Thomson
2. Rana and Richard Florida
3. Jonas and Lynda Prince
4. Nicole Tapscott, left; her brother, Alex; their mother, Ana Lopes, TSO board chair
5. Nadine and Peter Oundjian, TSO music director
6. Allan and Sharon Gregg

7. TSO members perform:

Neil Deland, left; Igor Gefter; and Etsuko Kimura

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