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MUSIC REVIEW | MOSTLY MOZART FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

Mozart, Joined by His Friends and Heirs

By VIVIEN SCHWEITZER

Of all the composers featured at the [Mostly Mozart Festival](#) this month, probably Haydn would have been [Mozart](#)'s guest of honor. The two men admired each other's music, were friends in the 1780s in Vienna and often played chamber music together and discussed their latest compositions.

Haydn's lithe Piano Concerto in D, immediately popular after its publication in 1784, was probably inspired by Mozart's concertos from the early 1780s. At Avery Fisher Hall on Friday evening, [Louis Langrée](#) conducted the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra and the pianist Stefan Vladar in a spirited reading of the Haydn concerto.

Haydn lacked Mozart's virtuoso keyboard skills, and this concerto is sometimes, as in the pianist's understated entrance, more a "symphonie concertante" than a showpiece for soloist. But there was plenty of dazzle when Mr. Vladar played it in his festival debut. Especially in the Gypsy rondo finale, his fingers seemed to be flying ahead of the ensemble.

His interpretation was notable for its clarity and pristine articulation in the outer movements and its elegant phrasing in the second movement, complemented by supple playing from the orchestra. He performed the cadenzas published with the concerto, presumed to be by Haydn, who was also represented indirectly on the program by Brahms's youthful "Variations on a Theme by Haydn" (though the theme is now thought not to have been Haydn's at all).

Mr. Langrée led a detailed interpretation of the variations, with a spacious, buoyant rendition of the opening theme and plenty of contrast between the slower and livelier sections. The finale uses a passacaglia or chaconne (variations over a repeated bass figure or harmony), as does the finale of Brahms's dark-hued Symphony No. 4, which concluded Friday's program. Brahms, who admired Haydn, said he wanted his ninth symphony (he wrote only four) to sound as eloquent as Haydn's Symphony No. 88.

Mr. Langrée, a physically demonstrative conductor, crouches on the podium to convey diminuendos and hushed passages and almost tap-dances to elicit greater energy from the musicians. Although the performance sometimes lacked polish, there was plenty of excitement in his interpretation of the Fourth Symphony, with sweeping phrases in the first movement, joyous energy in the Allegro giocoso and some fine woodwind playing throughout.

There were more variations later on Friday in the Little Night Music concert in the Kaplan

Penthouse, featuring the pianist Nicholas Angelich, who performed Book 1 of Brahms's Variations on a Theme by Paganini with virtuosic flair and muscular power. Understandably he looked tired afterward. And Mozart finally made an appearance at his own party, with Mr. Angelich's introspective, poetic rendition of the somber Fantasia in C minor (K. 475). In sunny contrast he also offered the cheery Sonata in C (K. 330), played with poise and singing lines.

Mr. Angelich's final encore, the Allemande from Bach's Partita No. 2, was an appropriate nod, in this festival of connections and influences, to a composer whose innovations greatly inspired Mozart, Haydn, Brahms and many of their successors.

The Mostly Mozart Festival continues through Aug. 22 at Lincoln Center; (212) 721-6500 or lincolncenter.org.

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