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## Minnesota Orchestra upstages Mozart himself

BY ROB HUBBARD  
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It was supposed to be Mozart's party. The Minnesota Orchestra had set up this weekend's "Twin Cities Mozart Marathon" to be a 3½-hour homage to the composer's genius, re-creating his 1783 Vienna Academy concert right down to costumed dancers minuetting in the lobby and a local actor doing his best white-wigged Wolfy for comical context.

But the composer had the concert stolen out from beneath him by his understudy Friday night. While the ivory-tickling duties at the original concert were handled by Mozart himself, the Minnesota Orchestra turned them over to Daniel Alfred Wachs, the orchestra's assistant conductor. And Wachs proved a revelation, delivering a technically impeccable, emotionally powerful performance of two Mozart piano concertos and a pair of solo works.

Approaching the Fifth and 13th concertos with confidence, passion and authority, Wachs also proved as historically accurate as a modern Steinway grand piano would allow. Unlike the excessively showy cadenzas that modern pianists often insert into Mozart concertos, Wachs' solo flights were strongly rooted in the themes around them, yet bore enough fancy flourishes to leave the impression that Wachs could go the ostentatious route, too, if he didn't feel such loyalty to the evening's quest toward historical accuracy.

This was a program Mozart threw together as a kind of introduction to his talents for Viennese audiences. And he threw a lot at them: A symphony, two piano concertos, four operatic arias, a serenade and the aforementioned solo piano works. Some of Friday's audience found it to be too much Mozart and stumbled to the exits before evening's end. But conductor David Alan Miller proved an engaging host — with the help of Nathan Christopher's amiable Amadeus — and the orchestra brought in enough fresh troops after intermission to avoid blown lips and bleeding fingers.

While Kendra Colton deserves kudos for taking on all four arias — duties were divided at the original concert — it's Wachs' pianistic aplomb that made this marathon more exhilarating than exhausting.

**Who:** The Minnesota Orchestra with conductor David Alan Miller, pianist Daniel Alfred Wachs and soprano Kendra Colton

**What:** "The Twin Cities Mozart Marathon"

**When:** 7 p.m. today

**Where:** Orchestra Hall, 1111 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis

**Tickets:** \$55-\$20; call 612-371-5656

**Capsule:** A showcase for the composer becomes a pianist's triumph.

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