Acclaim for Lincoln Center’s Mostly Mozart Festival 2013

After more than 50 events featuring orchestra works, chamber music, operas, recitals, lectures, premieres of new works and a film screening, Lincoln Center’s 2013 Mostly Mozart Festival has now come to a close. The events in the Festival received tremendous acclaim from the press, and some highlights are below:

**Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra**

“Langree sustained compelling passion. His attentive players responded with gutsy bravura. His fine soloists – the British mezzo-soprano Alice Coote and French pianist Jean-Efflam Bavouzet – performed as if lives were at stake…For once, a festival really seemed festive.”

*Financial Times*

“For the closing night of the Mostly Mozart Festival, the word “mostly” could have been eliminated from the title. While Mozart has shared the stage with various composers during the lineup this month, he had the spotlight to himself for the concluding event, conducted by Louis Langrée on Friday at Avery Fisher Hall. The final section of the “Jupiter” Symphony features some of the most remarkable music Mozart composed, a fitting way to end a festival dedicated to his oeuvre…Mr. Langrée led a dynamic interpretation of the work, the counterpoint clean and vigorous in the finale and the orchestra engaged and committed in the earlier movements.”

*The New York Times*

“The program ended on an exuberant note, with an impassioned interpretation of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5. Mr. Langrée conducted a reading notable for its brisk tempos in the opening movement and dynamic shadings throughout, with a striking contrast between pianissimo and forte passages that created an arresting tension. Some audience members had probably heard the work performed innumerable times, but judging by the rapturous applause and appreciative comments overheard afterward, listeners seemed happy to have heard it again.”

*The New York Times*

“The rationale for pairing Tchaikovsky’s concerto with Mozart’s Symphony No. 36 in C (“Linz”), played first, was detailed in the program. Both works were written in just a few days’ span and happily reflect freshness and facility. Really, though, no justification was necessary, given the pert, characterful account that Mr. Langrée and his players provided.”

*The New York Times*

“Langree pulled out all the stops: the orchestra snapped to his attention, the string players sawed (and soared) through the four movements. I can’t remember a more rousing segue into the final movement.”

*Seen and Heard International*
“Sprezzatura was the word that came, vividly, to my mind listening to the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra’s performance of Brahms’s Symphony No. 2 on Friday evening at Avery Fisher Hall. The conductor, making his debut at that festival, was David Afkham, a 30-year-old German of Persian descent who is rapidly rising to prominence in Europe… Mr. Afkham never indulged in unnecessary drama but allowed each resolution enough space to unfold its sweetness. The orchestra sounded great, lavishing equal attention to color on the most quiet passages in the second movement and the playful dances of the first. There was fine woodwind playing and a couple of beautiful horn solos; a rush of energy seemed to course through the orchestra during the triumphant ending.”

- The New York Times

International Contemporary Ensemble

“The contemplative allure of the whisper opera, the new piece of lyric theater by the composer David Lang that had its New York premiere on Saturday night at Lincoln Center’s Clark Studio Theater, comes from its pervasive softness, stillness and intimacy. For just over an hour the soprano Tony Arnold, the closest this experimental work has to an actual character, walks atop a small platform stage amid white lace curtains, sometimes humming chants but mostly whispering cryptic sentence fragments and phrases… It is impressive that the Mostly Mozart festival has grown adventurous enough to present the local premiere of an experimental work performed by a contemporary music ensemble in residence.”

- The New York Times

“The International Contemporary Ensemble, in residence at the [Mostly Mozart] festival, found an adventurous way to grapple with Beethoven. Two of his works were played along with two fascinating contemporary pieces by the German-born composer Matthias Pintscher… Having just heard the ‘Egmont’ Overture as an accordion fantasy and the two experimental Pintscher scores, [the performance of Beethoven’s String Trio in G] seemed boldly inventive, even wild.”

- The New York Times

“I was fortunate to hear one of the best hours of new music in recent memory from ICElab, a collaboration between the International Contemporary Ensemble and a select group of young composers, currently hosted at Lincoln Center’s Mostly Mozart festival. The night in question featured work by Phyllis Chen and Carla Kihlstedt, and the program was satisfying not only because each composer writes with an utterly confident voice, but also because they complement one another so well. Chen, for me, produces a deeply moving formalism, while Kihlstedt manages to make emotional directness feel technically sophisticated.”

- Bachtrack.com

Budapest Festival Orchestra staged concert of Mozart’s Le nozze di Figaro

Iván Fischer, conductor and director

“A remarkable production…the musical performance on its own terms was extraordinary.

There is nothing in [Iván] Fischer’s background that would make him a natural at stage direction. He clearly has a gift, no doubt based on his acute insights into music.

A highlight not just of the Mostly Mozart Festival, but also of the opera season in New York.”

- The New York Times

“An ingenious "staged concert" of Le nozze di Figaro, conducted and directed by Iván Fischer with the Budapest Festival Orchestra. Staged concerts run the gamut from a few gestures to more elaborate use of sets and costumes; this one was unusually well integrated and theatrical. The most exhilarating moment was the overture, during which
singers and actors dashed through the onstage orchestra, stripping off their street clothes and donning period costumes and wigs in time with the music...The orchestra played handsomely, and put up with having wigs occasionally placed on their heads. It was a unifying conceit—everyone was playing dress-up— but there was no question that the orchestra and its conductor were a vital part of the show."

"‘A Crazy Day’ — that's the subtitle of Le Nozze di Figaro, and at times Sunday, the Budapest Festival Orchestra tried a little too hard to live up to it.

But that's forgivable, because their Mozart can only be described as crazy good.

Iván Fischer conducted and directed this staged concert of the opera, a highlight of the Mostly Mozart Festival, with an international cast of singers, who — on ramps and platforms dotted among the onstage orchestra — acted out the comic tale in modern evening dress studded with bits of 1700s finery like brocade vests and lacy nightcaps.

It wasn't fancy, but it was funny and touching." 

- New York Post

Emerson String Quartet

“First of all, for those who were wondering: They're still standing. The podium is the same, too, only there's a different man sitting on it. On Monday evening, the Emerson String Quartet made its first New York City appearance with its new cellist, Paul Watkins, who took over the seat vacated by David Finckel early this summer. Playing to a packed Alice Tully Hall in its customary manner — the cellist sitting on a raised platform, the other three standing — the “new” Emerson Quartet sounded and looked enthused, at ease and passionately engaged with the music...the performance will remain memorable for a delightfully elegant and playful Andante, in which Mr. Watkins did some unspeakably beautiful things with his pizzicato part — and for a final movement so fast, and so crisply articulated, that a gust of wind seemed to come off the stage."

- The New York Times

“A Little Late Night” Series

“At the [Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse], part of the Mostly Mozart Festival’s candlelit series A Little Night Music, he brought a scholarly understanding and clear passion for the music to both his playing and his engaging commentary. Mr. Bavouzet offered anecdotes and demonstrations, illuminating Debussy’s “gray harmonies” — created when one hand plays black keys, and the other white keys — and discussing the influence of Wagner on Debussy...Throughout the set, Mr. Bavouzet's deft touch, fluid playing and coloristic flair illuminated myriad details, which unfolded with crystalline clarity and hazy atmospherics in turn.”

- The New York Times

“At Lincoln Center’s Stanley Kaplan Penthouse, music drips through the air like wax from the candles on the tables scattered throughout the space. At late-night concerts, part of the annual Mostly Mozart Festival, concert-goers can listen to works by and influenced by Mozart while drinking wine and drinking in the view from the tenth floor. Giant windows look out at the lights and buildings of Manhattan arranged like statues in a museum, blinking blankly in all directions. ‘A Little Night Music’ is a fantastic tradition that gives audiences a cozier, less stifled experience than a more traditional performance.

The stars of Saturday night’s show were the members of the Calder Quartet: Benjamin Jacobson, Andrew Bulbrook, Jonathan Moerschel, and Eric Byers. They performed their ‘two favorite seven-movement works’: the quartet
Arcadiana by Thomas Adès, and Beethoven’s String Quartet in C sharp minor, Op. 131. The first was composed in 1994, when the composer was in his early 20s and embarking on his career, while the second was composed in 1826, at the very end of the composer’s life. First we would hear sounds looking towards the future, followed by sounds looking back on a turbulent past.”

-Bachtrack.com

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