

# Los Angeles Times | ARTS

LOCAL NATION WORLD BUSINESS SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT LIVING TRAVEL OPINION MORE

Search

TONIGHT ONLY. AFTER 5PM.

## THE AFTER 5 EVENT

BANANA REPUBLIC

**25%** OFF YOUR PURCHASE OF \$100 OR MORE. **IN STORES AND ONLINE.** ONLINE CUSTOMERS, ENTER CODE **BRFALL25** AT CHECKOUT. \*Discount taken at register. Certain restrictions apply. See store for details.

## Culture Monster

ALL THE ARTS, ALL THE TIME

« Previous Post | Culture Monster Home | Next Post »

### Music review: Nicholas McGegan conducts Mozart at the Hollywood Bowl

August 12, 2009 | 4:15 pm



I'd like to have a dollar for every time [Nicholas McGegan](#), the longtime music director of the Bay Area's [Philharmonia Baroque](#), has been called the Energizer Bunny of early music. He is, in fact, the sunniest conductor in classical music.

He opened his all-Mozart Los Angeles Philharmonic program at the [Hollywood Bowl](#) on Tuesday night (it repeats Thursday) with the "Marriage of Figaro" Overture. But his performance began a few seconds before the music. The video monitors showed him on the podium boyishly excited, barely able to contain himself. Beaming, he put his fingers to his lips, as if the pleasure would be just too delicious for words were the music allowed to quietly sneak up on its listeners.

It was and it did. That little motivic twirl that sets off Mozart's great societal exploration of folly,

### Stay connected:

RSS twitter facebook

advertisement



### About the Bloggers

- Mike Boehm
- Lisa Fung
- Diane Haithman
- Christopher Hawthorne
- Reed Johnson
- Christopher Knight
- Charles McNulty
- Suzanne Muchnic
- David Ng
- Sherry Stern
- Mark Swed

### Recent Posts

**August 13, 2009** , 5:00 am | A music lesson for LACMA's film program »

**August 12, 2009** , 11:00 pm | CTG receives \$1-million grant for experimental productions »

**August 12, 2009** , 6:02 pm | Michael Govan, Save Film at LACMA agree on date for 'popcorn summit' »

**August 12, 2009** , 4:15 pm | Music review: Nicholas

authority, lechery and redemption was a musical spring that snapped into exhilarating cadential fireworks. Who wouldn't have been happy to wrap up in a blanket against the evening chill and settle into four hours of full opera following that?

Some throw away the "Figaro" Overture. The orchestra pretty much did so in a slovenly performance over the weekend, when it used the piece as an irrelevant curtain raiser for the Herbie Hancock/Lang Lang extravaganza. McGegan, however, made his "Figaro" opener perkily pertinent to the piano concerto and symphony that would follow.

Louis Lortie was soloist in K. 488, Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23 in A-Major. "We're Laurel and Hardy," McGegan said, introducing the French Canadian pianist, who is a little taller and slimmer than the conductor. And then in banter, Laurel merrily contradicted Hardy.

McGegan: The concerto is cheery Mozart.

Lortie: The slow movement is sad.

McGegan: But it's short.

Lortie: And I get to set the tempo.

McGegan: Well, that's easier for me than the other way around.



Mozart's late concertos are often described as operatic. The major-keyed ones are the comic operas; the minor-keyed ones, the opera seria. The amiable Laurel and Hardy act continued musically in the performance.

McGegan encouraged a bright sound. He follows period performance practice, which means little vibrato in the strings. Flute, clarinets, bassoon and horn supply the concerto warmth, and McGegan made certain that they stood out.

Lortie is cooler, a careful and precise pianist with just enough sparkle in his eye to give his playing character. He was somber in the Adagio and added embellishments that, while not inappropriate to the Classical-era style, had a hint of the blues. That was a nice touch, especially following Hancock's radiant embellishment of "Rhapsody in Blue" at the Bowl on Friday night. In the fast movements, Lortie and McGegan playfully bounced the ball back and forth, not exactly competitively but not altogether innocently either.

After intermission, McGegan conducted Mozart's Symphony No. 40. G minor, the key of his penultimate symphony, provided Mozart the atmosphere for agitation and melancholy. McGegan was not dark, but he was aggressive in the way Toscanini could be aggressive with this symphony, letting the rhythm do the driving.

One way to read Mozart's score is as a road map to dark places. But McGegan did not get distracted by emotions. He focused on the rhythmic grooves in each movement and rode them hard and dramatically. A listener knew the disturbing scenery not by observing it but by the cinematic white-knuckled tension of the driver.

Still, this was a driver who clearly enjoyed the ride wherever it took him, and he didn't hesitate to ride the brakes for the moving Andante, which he led like a big caress. The orchestra was taut, playing Mozart with the quick reflexes it famously brings to new music.

Mozart attracts large crowds to the Bowl -- more than 9,000 came Tuesday -- probably because this idealized composer seems a pleasant accompaniment for a picnic under the stars. From what I could tell of the audience around me, though, McGegan made many sit up and really listen. The amplification had juice, and that was a good thing as well.

-- Mark Swed

**Los Angeles Philharmonic**, Hollywood Bowl, 2301 N. Highland Ave., Hollywood, 8 p.m. Thursday. \$1 to \$126. (323) 850-2000 or [www.laphil.org](http://www.laphil.org).

*Photos: (Top) Nicholas McGegan conducts the Los Angeles Philharmonic in an all-Mozart program at the Hollywood Bowl on Tuesday night. (Above) Pianist Louis Lortie, and McGegan. Credit:*

McGegan conducts Mozart at the Hollywood Bowl »

August 12, 2009, 2:44 pm | Warhol painting of Michael Jackson goes on view »

## Recent Comments

**RE:** Miley Cyrus and the stripper pole: What do you think? | comment by Edgar

**RE:** Miley Cyrus and the stripper pole: What do you think? | comment by Reseam

**RE:** Miley Cyrus and the stripper pole: What do you think? | comment by Bethanie Rayburn

**RE:** Miley Cyrus and the stripper pole: What do you think? | comment by diane

**RE:** Miley Cyrus and the stripper pole: What do you think? | comment by lex

**RE:** Miley Cyrus and the stripper pole: What do you think? | comment by marimayko

## Categories

ahmanson theatre american idol ancient art andrew lloyd webber ann powers anne marie welsh antonio

villaraigosa architecture **art** arts economy asian art auctions autry national center awards ballet barack obama battlestar galactica blogs books bowers museum broad stage **broadway** business calarts **celebrities** charles mcnulty charlotte stoult chris jones chris kraul chris lee chris pasles christopher hawthorne christopher knight christopher smith cirque du soleil **classical**

**music** coachella comics computers constance meyer craig fisher **criticism** esi cultural affairs current affairs dance daryl h. miller david c. nichols david l. ulin **david ng** david pagel deaccessioning debra levine **diane haithman** disney concert hall dolly parton downtown east west players education eli broad elina shatkin elizabeth khuri esa-pekkka salonen f. kathleen foley facebook fashion **film** food and drink ford amphitheatre fowler museum frank gehry fundraising **galleries** gay and lesbian geffen playhouse geoff boucher getty government graffiti grand avenue greg braxton gustavo dudamel hammer museum holiday holly myers hollywood bowl hunter drohojowska-philp huntington iphone irene lacher james c. taylor jazz jeremy piven jessica gelt john horn jose iturbi international music competition josef woodard jukebox musical julius shulman karen wada kate linthicum kerw kennedy center kenneth turan kirk douglas theatre kodak theatre la jolla playhouse la live **lacma** laguna playhouse las vegas latino arts laura bleiberg law leah ollman lee margulies lewis segal liesl bradner **lisa fung** london long beach looting los angeles opera los angeles philharmonic magazines mark swed mark taper forum master chorale mccain michael govan michael jackson **mike boehm** mocha monster mash **museums** music music center musicals myspace national mall nea new york news norton simon obama obituary ocma off-broadway ojai openings opera orange county oscar's pantages theatre pasadena playhouse patrick pacheco paul yuong philip brandes photography