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*From the Los Angeles Times*

## MUSIC REVIEW

# Vienna caps L.A. Phil's 'Grand Tour'

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Ten days long, open to a lot of tourists (nearly 10,000 at the end), encompassing four glorious European cities, taking in music by many composers (and always Mozart), led by an insightful, delightful guide, the Los Angeles Philharmonic's "Grand Tour" reached its final destination Thursday: Vienna.

I don't imagine the Hollywood Bowl really needed so corny a conceit to sell an all-Mozart concert with two major works on the bill -- the D-minor Piano Concerto (No. 20) and the "Jupiter" Symphony (No. 41) -- plus a popular conductor, Nicholas McGegan, and an excellent young pianist, Shai Wosner. But this "Grand Tour" gimmick was one way to squeeze in some unlikely Baroque and early Classical-period repertory for the Bowl, especially on the London, Paris and Venice stops.

The only unusual pieces Thursday were five featherweight contredanses written for the court in Vienna -- a quintet of miniatures dashed through in a little more than four minutes. But they made an impression.

Vienna in the late 18th century, Mozart's Vienna, was the capital of the Holy Roman Empire, which McGegan reminded us was, in Voltaire's words, not holy, not Roman and not an empire. Mozart's brief, as court musician, was to be slight. The dances satisfied his employer. The concerto and symphony were rebellion.

In fact, the stormy D-minor is perhaps the most defiant of Mozart's 27 piano concertos. Its premiere was not at the court but in a casino (as McGegan pointed out, Vienna was a music capital without concert halls in Mozart's day). This was the one Mozart concerto turbulent enough for Beethoven to play in public, and Wosner used Beethoven's cadenzas (Mozart's don't survive).

A memorable tour may include members who don't see eye to eye but who still get along, and that seems to have been the case with McGegan and Wosner on Thursday.

The British conductor is a specialist in early-music performance styles, and he was his usual urgent, enthusiastic self, encouraging crisp articulation and tidy textures as he moved things right along. Mozart's concertos are considered the most operatic of his instrumental music, and McGegan is an instinctively operatic conductor for whom dramatizing changes in mood is second nature.

There was nothing in the slightest operatic about Wosner's playing, however, nor did the Israeli pianist subscribe to a modishly light Mozartean approach. His was Beethoven's Mozart -- and a latter-day, weighty idea of Beethoven at that.

Wosner's tone, as picked up by the Bowl's sound system, was plummy. He demonstrated little sense of spontaneity. But he played with an impressive, unflappable security. He phrased with the greatest of care. He plunged deep into the music. He reminded me of a young Alfred Brendel.

Somehow, this mismatch of styles worked just fine. Wosner didn't hold McGegan back, and McGegan gamely got a chamber-sized Philharmonic to gracefully dance around the piano's big sound. The Beethoven cadenzas sounded all substance.

The "Jupiter" Symphony was meant to bring the "Grand Tour" full circle. Mozart actually wrote his last symphony for London. Vienna's emperor had decided to go to war at the time, and that kind of thing, McGegan observed, never does much for the arts. Moreover, Mozart in the "Jupiter" alludes to his juvenile first symphony, which McGegan conducted last week at the tour's point of origin in the British capital.

Here McGegan needed no compromising. He darted through the score in a performance full of sharp character. Though stylistically apt, the approach was a bit on the light side. This is a symphony that can take some heft; a big orchestra does not trample it.

McGegan's talent for the lilting phrase and the Philharmonic's snap gave the "Jupiter," I thought, a touch too much in common with Mozart's boyhood symphonies. I don't think I'm alone in liking to imagine the "Jupiter" as a revolt against the confines of the Classical symphony or in romanticizing Mozart, at the end of his short life, as a composer who had become too worldly for provincial Vienna.

Still, the performance was never less than likable and had its share of exciting and unpredictable moments, the kind tourists always delight in, if often after the fact.

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