

# MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN

## PIANO

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### **Conductor Kwame Ryan makes impressive debut**

Lawrence B. Johnson / Special to The Detroit News

#### **Detroit Symphony Orchestra**

Kwame Ryan, a 36-year-old conductor whose career has blossomed in Europe and who is bowing with several major American orchestras this season, made a promising debut with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in a cleverly fashioned program Thursday night at Orchestra Hall. Next season, he becomes music director of the National Orchestra of Bordeaux Aquitaine in France.

In presiding over a chamber-scaled reading of Mozart's Symphony No. 25 in G minor and an extraordinarily intimate account of Brahms' Piano Concerto No. 2 with soloist Marc-Andre Hamelin, Ryan displayed adaptable, well-schooled musicianship -- even while revealing some technical flaws that might be ascribed to his relative youth.

From a classically proportioned ensemble of just eight first violins, six seconds, four violas, three cellos and two basses plus winds -- in other words, barely half the standard modern orchestra -- Ryan drew a propulsive, full-bodied performance of Mozart's shadowy 25th Symphony.

Here and there, one might have wished for more precise rhythmic detail, and some voicing imbalances occasionally left the first violins reticent where they needed to speak out. Still, the essential turbulence of the work remained intact, surfaces glistened and momentum never flagged.

**No such questions clouded Ryan's adroit collaboration with Hamelin on a Brahms' Second Piano Concerto that wedded measured brilliance to arresting introspection.**

**Hamelin, a complete virtuoso known for his intellectual pursuits into remote areas of repertoire, offered a sunlit Brahms Second charged with interior energy and unsullied by extravagance of any kind. This was playing of electric lyricism, articulate and poised.**

Ryan was the perfect confederate. Never pressing the concerto's inherent orchestral grandeur, he allowed Hamelin plenty of room to reflect and sing and soar. The full-size DSO played Brahms' luxurious score for all its warmth, nobility and charm.

Ryan opened his program with a romp through John Corigliano's "Mannheim Rocket," an 11-minute ride into deep space on a sonic ship devised from scraps of Wagner and Haydn among others, and bolted together with musical hardware like a police whistle, a steel hammer and sandpaper. What a setup for Mozart!

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