

Horn player's performance riveting

By NANCY RAABE
Sentinel critic

There's no point in beating around the bush: Eric Ruske is the most exciting horn player to come along in many years.

Ruske's riveting performance of Mozart's Horn Concerto No. 4 Thursday evening with Margery Deutsch's fine University of Wisconsin — Milwaukee Chamber Orchestra surpassed expectations already high from his impressive list of accomplishments — not least of which is his four years of service as the Cleveland Orchestra's associate principal.

Review

The 26-year-old hornist's appearance at UWM occurred midway through the inaugural installment of the Worklights residency program, sponsored by the Artist Series at the Pabst.

Most others among the select group of horn virtuosi who make their living as touring soloists have distinguished themselves through suaveness of tone, fluency of technique, or some combination of the two.

What Ruske brings to his art, however, is virtually unique. Never does the performer's ego eclipse the music's message.

This was no dusty scholar's Mozart, but rather the living, breathing

character represented in Jamin Hoffman's well-written program notes who penned mischievous inscriptions to the concerto's dedicatee in the manuscript's margins.

Everything Ruske undertook, however improbable, worked perfectly. The third movement's brief cadenza was brilliantly highlighted by a note virtually impossible on the instrument for which the piece was written. His first-movement cadenza emerged a perfectly calculated but utterly un-Mozartean forest of trills, leaps and roulades.

The Chamber Orchestra mirrored Ruske's enthusiasm in its lively and alert accompaniment.