

## Raul Midón and Lizz Wright delight at the Ordway

Written by Harry Colbert, Jr.

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Sometimes less is more.

That was the case when on the vast Ordway stage in St. Paul, just three musicians – Raul Midón on vocals and acoustic guitar and trumpet (well sort of), Lizz Wright on vocals and percussion (mostly just a wooden box that also doubled as her seat for much of the evening) and their accompanying acoustic bass player filled the theater with the most beautiful and soul-stirring sounds. And though I had been a Lizz Wright fan for years, why oh why did I not know about the musical treasure that is Raul Midón? Clearly I need to broaden my musical selection, but I already have a varied taste and on the many radio stations I listen to, not once have I heard Midón. We're being deprived by the play lists of commercial radio stations.

Midón, who released his first CD in 1999, has the most authentic, soulful, jazzy voice. If you close your eyes (which I did for several songs – I'll tell you why later) and listen to his voice one could make a fair comparison to jazz legend Al Jarreau. Midón's guitar prowess can be compared to Carlos Santana, only on an acoustic. But the biggest treat came during the third song in, when this beautiful horn began to play. I was waiting and waiting for the mystery player to emerge from off stage, then I realized there was no trumpeter off stage, but it was Midón vocally mimicking the brass instrument.



Outstanding.

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As I mentioned earlier, during several songs I listened with my eyes closed. I wanted to experience the music through Midón's point of view. As I realized when the accomplished guitarist was led on stage, Midón is blind. But to say he is without vision would be in error. When you hear him play and sing, it's clear his vision is far better than most.

Now don't get me wrong, Wright was by no means a second fiddle to Midón, and truth be told, I probably wouldn't have gone to the show if she weren't on the bill. I have been a fan of Wright for nearly a decade. For those not familiar with Wright, imagine India.Arie and Tracy Chapman rolled into one. Wright's soulful, but folksy voice was the perfect complement to Midón. The two were meant for one another.

The Ordway proved to be a wonderful venue for the two. There's something about the way sound cascades in the St. Paul opera house that made Midón's and Wright's effortless vocals resonate magnificently throughout the theater.

The show was the kickoff to the Ordway's 2013-2014 season, dedicated to world music and dance, in particular, arts from the African Diaspora. Midón and Wright were presented as part of the Ordway's Taking Our Place Centerstage program. The program partners the Ordway with area African and African-American organizations. The Midón/Wright performance was in partnership with Sabathani Community Center.

If that show was the opener to the Ordway season, I can't wait to see what's next. Clearly, I was impressed.