“THE MAGIC OF MOZART” SHOW NOTES

Cape Symphony will perform “The Magic of Mozart” on Saturday, November 11 and Sunday, November 12, 2023 at the Barnstable Performing Arts Center.

Cape Symphony

Jae Cosmos Lee, Concertmaster
Cape Symphony Musicians

Guest Artist

Sylvia Berry, Fortepiano

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Enjoy “The Magic of Mozart”!

Pre-concert Presentation

A pre-concert talk by Cape Symphony’s Assistant Conductor Joe Marchio will begin in Knight Auditorium an hour before each performance.

Program

All works by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791).

OVERTURE TO *THE MAGIC FLUTE* (1791)

SELECTIONS FROM 12 GERMAN DANCES (1789)

PIANO CONCERTO NO 13 (1782)

Intermission

SERENADE NO. 10, “GRAN PARTITA” (1781 or 1782)

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About Today's Program

Please note the program is subject to change.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) is, of course, one of the most well-known, gifted and prolific classical composers of all time. He was a famous child prodigy, and there are many accounts of his precocity and genius: He learned to play harpsichord at 3, and was composing at 5; at 6, he was touring Europe and playing for kings. At 7, he picked up a violin and sightread with complete accuracy despite never having had a lesson. He composed his first opera at 11 and was called "the greatest genius in all music" at 12. It's hard to wrap our minds around this kind of gift. Fortunately, we don't have to; we can sit back, close our eyes, and bask in its results.

Mozart tried holding down a stable, secure job in Salzburg; it didn't work out. To no surprise in retrospect, a strict patron and an unruly young genius were not a good fit! At 25, he moved to Vienna to work as a freelance composer, teacher, musician and conductor. Despite periods of frantic overwork, his financial life was chaotic, and he often relied on friends and fellow Freemasons for support.

The precise nature of Mozart's feverish illness and the cause of his tragically early death at 35 has never been definitively identified, and speculation over the years has amplified theories of varying merit. While his finances were certainly shaky, the story of his burial in a communal pauper's grave is unfounded. Mozart's burial in a "common grave" refers to his being a citizen not of the aristocracy, and was customary in Vienna at the time.

The music you're about to hear in "The Magic of Mozart" is over 200 years old, but the emotions it evokes are timeless. It will take you beyond years, beyond miles, beyond spoken language. This music is transcendent. *That* is the magic of Mozart.

Overture to *The Magic Flute*

The Magic Flute, widely considered one of the greatest works in operatic literature, premiered just two months before Mozart's death in 1791. It was his last completed masterpiece, and a huge success, drawing enormous crowds and being performed hundreds of times.

The overture was finished mere days before the premiere – anyone who has ever worked on deadline can relate. It is an energetic, vivacious piece. After its famously attention-grabbing opening chords, Mozart brings listeners briskly along as if at a playful gallop toward a grand, harmonious conclusion.

This is Mozart's only instrumental work that uses trombones, making it a terrific piece for modern orchestras to perform in concert. It is a perennial audience favorite.

Selections from 12 German Dances

While Mozart is known for some of the most important masterpieces of the Classical period, part of his paid work was to create and perform vast quantities of dance music for court parties. Today, we tend to think of classical music as having limited appeal, but classical was the pop music of its day. A

great number and variety of charming original compositions were needed for these enormous, lavish events, with a thousand partygoers in attendance and a hundred people on staff just to tend the candles all night!

Happily, Mozart loved a good party, loved to dance, and loved creating this sparkling, irresistible music. “Selections from 12 German Dances” is a delightful sampling of pieces he composed late in his career for those festivities. The German dances, generally livelier than minuets, were thought by some to be immoral due to (gasp) spinning-induced dizziness and close contact between dancers!

Piano Concerto No. 13

We are especially fortunate to have an authentic fortepiano on the Cape Symphony stage for “The Magic of Mozart.” Guest artist and classical music scholar Sylvia Berry has played Piano Concerto No. 13 in C major many times in smaller ensembles. “I’m really excited to play it with a full orchestra for the first time with the Cape Symphony!” she says.

Ms. Berry’s instrument is a painstakingly faithful replica, built in Belgium in 1995, of a 1795 Viennese fortepiano. “This is Mozart’s touring piano,” she says. As to the “touring” part, “a minivan is a huge improvement over a horse and carriage!”

“The fortepiano will be a sound people might not be used to,” Ms. Berry says. “They will have to adjust their ears a little!” The effort will be worthwhile: while the fortepiano is a smaller instrument than the modern piano, it is capable of “many more dynamic colors and possibilities. It lets you take in a fuller range of Mozart’s experience as a keyboard artist.” It produces a percussive, incisive sound which brings out the conversational character of the music.

“You’ll hear the music as Mozart heard it, as he played it,” says Sylvia. “The shorter sounds really do sound like people talking, and they’re meant to! Concerto 13 is like an opera, or a conversation, alternating jocularity with sadness. It’s like a party going on, then someone stumbles in feeling sad and bringing the room down, and then that person is made to feel better again and again. It’s more than just beautiful music. Imagine characters behind it. Mozart put conversation and drama there.”

Ms. Berry puts this music in fascinating historical and sociological context. “A lot of music that has come down to us from major classical composers was written for women to play. That’s not especially well known,” she says. Learning music was a required part of women’s conscripted lives, as they were expected to entertain guests and show off to suitors. While some instruments were deemed “unfeminine” – women simply did not play wind or string instruments, for example – they did play harpsichord and piano. Some were very talented, playing at the virtuoso level, but still forbidden from playing in public. Instead, they hosted salons in their homes, becoming famous in their cities for these private performances. These women needed suitable music and eminently qualified teachers, Mozart among them. This, Ms. Berry explains, is where a lot of now-famous piano concertos come from. “We wouldn’t have this music if not for those women.”

Serenade No. 10, “Gran Partita”

Mozart produced a great deal of brilliant, lighter music intended to be a lovely backdrop for gatherings on special occasions and celebrations, often held outdoors. These are the serenades, no less sophisticated for their varying degree of formality.

It was especially fashionable in early 1780s Vienna to have a wind ensemble on hand, and Mozart's works were in high demand for them to play. "Gran Partita" is considered a masterpiece of its kind. A seven-movement tour de force, it is scored for 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 basset horns, 2 bassoons, 4 horns and a double bass. The instruments' voices weave masterfully in and out, expressive of every emotion and mood.

In the beloved 1984 film *Amadeus*, Antonio Salieri first encounters Mozart at a performance of Serenade No. 10. Having previously considered him an intolerable boor, Salieri examines the score in astonishment and falls into a kind of rapture, saying "it seemed to me that I was hearing the voice of God."

Symphony No. 38, "Prague"

"Mozart loved Prague, and Prague loved him," says Cape Symphony Concertmaster Jae Cosmos Lee. Symphony No. 38 premiered there in 1787. Whether the piece was composed specifically for the Prague public is not known. Mozart had been invited there with great enthusiasm, sweeping into town on a great wave of popularity of his opera *The Marriage of Figaro*, which was being staged in the 1786-87 season of the National Theatre.

Extensive use of wind instruments in the Prague Symphony represents a major advance in Mozart's symphonic technique. It may have been done specifically to please the concertgoers of Prague, which especially appreciated skillful deployment of wind instruments. In any case, it was a development he retained for his later symphonies. Symphony No. 38 may be the first that contains so many passages in which no string instruments play at all.

Symphony No. 38 is written in a three-movement, fast-slow-fast format reminiscent of earlier Italian works, and unusual by 1786. Mozart may have chosen it to accommodate the weight and complexity of the symphony's first movement. In any case, "Prague" is thought to reflect Mozart's most sophisticated and masterful symphonic style, covering a broad spectrum of contrasting emotions.

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Enjoy "The Magic of Mozart"!

Join Cape Symphony for "The Magic of Mozart" at the Barnstable Performing Arts Center, 744 West Main Street on Saturday, November 11, 2023 at 7:30 PM and Sunday, November 12, 2023 at 3:00 PM. A pre-concert talk in Knight Auditorium begins an hour before each performance.

For more information and to purchase tickets for The Magic of Mozart, visit capesymphony.org, call the Box Office at 508-362-1111, email tickets@capesymphony.org, or visit 2235 Iyannough Road in West Barnstable, MA. The Box Office is open Monday – Friday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. It is closed on Friday November 10 in observance of Veterans Day.

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Behind the Scenes

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With thanks to Wikipedia, hollywoodbowl.com, laphil.com, and "Classical Music: The Rough Guide."

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