

LIVE
FROM LINCOLN CENTER



August 12, 2009, at 8:00pm on PBS
Joshua Bell and the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra

On August 1, 1966 a new summer series was inaugurated at the still recently-unveiled Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City. Titled "Midsummer Serenades--A Mozart Festival", it was the FIRST indoor summer music festival in the United States thanks to the air conditioning in what was then called Philharmonic Hall, now Avery Fisher Hall. The series was an instant hit and plans were immediately drawn to make these concerts an annual event. Early on the title morphed into "Mostly Mozart" and the concerts have served as the model for "Mostly Mozart" concerts the world over. They have long since become a New York summertime tradition.

Also now a long and enduring tradition is the annual inclusion of a "Mostly Mozart" concert in our Live From Lincoln Center schedule. This year's installment will occur on the evening of Wednesday, August 12. The Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra will play under its Music Director, Louis Langrèe, and the soloist will be the remarkable violinist, Joshua Bell, who will play the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto in E Minor as well as two short works by Mozart for violin and orchestra.

In addition to the Mendelssohn Concerto the other major work on the program is the Symphony No. 104 by Haydn. At the invitation of the German-born London impresario, Johann Peter Salomon, Haydn paid two extended visits to the British capital in 1791 and 1794. Each visit produced a group of six symphonies. Collectively then there are twelve "London" Symphonies by Haydn. Why this, the last of the more than 100 symphonies Haydn composed, should be known as the "London" Symphony is something of a mystery. In fact there is a paradox here: the principal theme of the last movement is actually an Austrian peasant dance! In any event the Symphony is a marvel of invention, with a particularly deeply moving slow movement. The Haydn scholar, Karl Geiringer, went so far as to speculate that this slow movement was a lament over the premature death of Mozart whom Haydn once called the greatest composer known to him.

Like the Brahms Violin Concerto, which was composed in steady consultation with Joseph Joachim, a formidable violinist-friend of Brahms, the Mendelssohn Concerto had a behind-the-scenes advisor in Mendelssohn's violinist friend, Ferdinand David. David gave Mendelssohn advice on the writing of the solo part, and apparently the first movement cadenza as we know it was devised by David. But Mendelssohn's own sense of form and expression determined the overall shape and content of the score. Along with the aforementioned Brahms Concerto and those by Beethoven and Tchaikovsky the Mendelssohn E Minor Concerto is one of the cornerstone pieces for violin and orchestra. Joshua Bell, our soloist, is one of the reigning contemporary masters of his instrument and a veteran of Live From Lincoln Center performances. A native of Indiana, where his

father was a professor at Indiana University and his mother an accomplished pianist, Joshua studied there with one of the great violinists and teachers of the later half of the 20th century, Josef Gingold. I first met him at the Spoleto Festival in Charleston, South Carolina when he was a teen-ager playing chamber music with some of the world's outstanding musicians. Soon afterwards he made a sensational debut with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Riccardo Muti...and the rest, as the saying goes, is history.

As already mentioned, we'll also hear the two independent pieces by Mozart for violin and orchestra, the Adagio in E (K.261) and the Rondo in C (K. 373), both probably intended to be movements for Concertos but ultimately replaced by others. It occurs to me: the K. indication in Mozart's music may be a mystery to some of you. The K. simply stands for Ludwig Köchel, a 19th century botanist who made it his life's ambition to catalogue all of Mozart's music chronologically, beginning with his first work, K. 1, a Harpsichord Sonata, and ending with his last, the uncompleted "Requiem", K. 626.

Our concert will also include the "Hebrides" Overture (sometimes identified as the "Fingal's Cave" Overture) by Mendelssohn, a musical souvenir of an extended visit Mendelssohn paid to Scotland in 1829 (along with his Symphony No. 3, the "Scottish".)

So there it is, our next Live From Lincoln Center telecast on Wednesday evening, August 12: A "Mostly Mozart" concert with Louis Langrèe and the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra and with violinist Joshua Bell as the soloist. As always I leave you with the suggestion that you check the schedule of your PBS station for the exact date and time of the program in your local area.

Enjoy!

By MARTIN BOOKSPAN