

# LIVE

FROM LINCOLN CENTER



**August 2, 2011 at 8:00 on PBS**  
**Opening Night Mostly Mozart Festival**

Summer music at New York's Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts means the now traditional Mostly Mozart concerts. Accordingly our next Live From Lincoln Center presentation, on Tuesday evening, August 2 will be a concert from the Mostly Mozart series...with a difference. This will not be mostly Mozart, it will be ALL-Mozart. Louis Langrée, Music Director of the Mostly Mozart concerts, will be on the podium and the soloists will be violinist Christian Tetzlaff; violist Antoine Tamestit; and soprano Susanna Phillips. The program combines examples of three of the many sides---opera, concerto solo, and symphony---of the musician considered by many to have been the greatest composer ever.

Mozart as opera composer will be represented by the sparkling Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* and the accompanied recitative and rondo "non mi dir" from the Second Act of *Don Giovanni*, in which Donna Anna begs for forgiveness from her fiancé, Don Ottavio, for her transgressions. We'll also hear the concert aria *Bella mia fiamma*. The two "big" works on the program are the sublime Sinfonia Concertante for Violin, Viola and Orchestra, and the "Linz" Symphony, No. 36. I used the word "sublime" to describe the Violin and Viola work with good reason, as will soon be evident.

The year 1778 was one of great activity for Mozart, who was then 22 years old. He and his mother were in Paris where he was in great demand as both performer and composer. Quite out of the blue his mother became desperately ill and died in his arms on July 3. With her death one phase of Mozart's life came to an end; grieving over her loss he knew he would have to return to his hometown, Salzburg, and its unsympathetic Archbishop Colloredo. He took his time about it, though, and remained in Paris until the end of September. On his way back to Salzburg he made a number of stops, including one in Munich to visit his hot flame of the previous year, Aloysia. Alas, to his dismay he discovered that in the interim Aloysia had married "a jealous fool"---Mozart's words---and she now seemed totally indifferent to him. So it was that Mozart returned to the city of his childhood in January, 1779 mourning the loss of his mother, disappointed in love and with bleak prospects for his future.

Such misfortunes would be more than enough to sap the energies of the ordinary man. Of course Mozart was no ordinary man and it was at that time that he composed the Violin and Viola Sinfonia Concertante, one of his most divinely inspired works. It is in the customary 3-movement format of most concertos since the time of Vivaldi. Here, however, its heart lies in the slow middle movement, a threnody of such profound passion that many scholars view it as a lament over the recent loss of Mozart's mother. The two solo instruments amplify and embellish the elegiac mood with great eloquence, and in place of a development the subject matter is repeated with even more elaborate ornamentation and a rich harmonic background.

An interesting aside: there have been rare performances in which the solo viola was replaced by a solo cello. Much as I love the cello, and I do, it is the particular mellow sound of the viola which I find indispensable in this work.

Amazingly the Sinfonia Concertante has served as something of a catalyst in several films. Remember "The Thomas Crown Affair" and its unforgettable song "The Windmills of Your Mind"? Its opening two phrases recall the opening of the slow movement. A rather macabre use of variations on the slow movement's opening is heard in Michael Nyman's score for the film "Drowning by Numbers". And surely Edgar Meyer drew his inspiration for his Double Concerto for Cello and Bass from Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante.

The "Linz" Symphony, No. 36, is the last he composed before that extraordinary quartet of symphonies, numbers 38-41; the so-called No. 37 is largely a work by Michael Haydn, the brother of the great Franz Joseph. In late 1783 Mozart and his recent bride, Constanze, the sister of Aloysia, were on their way back to Vienna after three months in Salzburg. At the invitation of the Count Thun of Linz they spent a short time at his castle. Mozart felt it only right that he compose a symphony as gratitude for the Count's hospitality. In the unbelievable span of four days he produced the "Linz" Symphony, one of his brightest and most cheerful, and a fitting finale to a very special evening.

A word about our performers:

Louis Langrée has been Music Director of the Mostly Mozart Festival for nearly a decade. In that time he has reinvigorated the series and brought it to new artistic heights. In addition he is a regular conductor at the leading opera houses of the world.

Hamburg-native Christian Tetzlaff is universally regarded as one of the leading violinists of our time. He has played the world over in recital and with every major orchestra and is also an avid chamber music player.

Paris-born Antoine Tamestit is the winner of many major competitions, has appeared as soloist with many of Europe's great orchestras and is also an avid chamber music player. He is concurrently a Professor at the Cologne Musikhochschule.

Susanna Phillips, a Juilliard graduate with a Master's degree, is a winner of the Metropolitan Opera Council Auditions and the Women's Division and People's Choice Awards at Plácido Domingo's Operalia Competition in Madrid. She has sung at the Chicago Lyric Opera and the Metropolitan.

Such are the delights that await us at the next Live From Lincoln Center on Tuesday evening, August 2. Again, and as usual, let me remind you to check the listings of your local PBS station for the exact date and time in your area.

Enjoy!

MARTIN BOOKSPAN