

Mozart : portraits of women

Presented by



FRIDAY

24

JULY
8 P.M.

AMPHITHÉÂTRE
FERNAND-LINDSAY

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PROGRAM

JOSEPH HAYDN

(1732 – 1809)

Symphony n° 81 in G major, Hob. I:81 — 23 min

- I. Vivace
- II. Andante
- III. Menuetto – Trio: Allegretto
- IV. Finale: Allegro, ma non troppo

Overture from *Armida*, Hob. XXVIII:12 — 5 min

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

(1756 – 1791)

Alma grande e nobil core, air de
concert K. 578 — 4 min

E Susanna non vien... Dove sono, extrait
de *Le nozze di Figaro*, K. 492 — 6 min

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Crudele? Ah no, mio ben... Non mi dir,
extrait de *Don Giovanni*, K. 527 — 6 min

Joseph Haydn

Overture from *L'isola disabitata*,
Hob. XXVIII:9 — 7 min

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Ecco il punto... Non più di fiori, extrait de
La clemenza di Tito, K. 621 — 8 min

Symphony n° 33 in B-flat
major, K. 319 — 21 min

- I. Allegro assai
- II. Andante moderato
- III. Menuetto – Trio
- IV. Finale: Allegro assai

INTERMISSION – 20'

ARTISTS

Les Violons du Roy

Bernard Labadie, conductor

Hanna-Elisabeth Müller, soprano

PROGRAM NOTES

*“...When you have just heard
a piece by Mozart, the silence
that follows is still his.”*

— Sacha Guitry - *Toutes réflexions faites*

In his powerful writing and his eloquent silences, Mozart addresses our certainties, questions them and overturns them. Sacha Guitry, an absolute fanatic of the divine Wolfgang, even devoted to him the libretto of the musical comedy Mozart, composed by Reynaldo Hahn and premiered in Paris in 1925. Guitry shares with Mozart the same fascination with the eternal feminine, painting portraits truer than life throughout his output. The almost novelistic life of the great Amadeus was accompanied by female figures. Muses or collaborators, fantasies or realities, Mozart devoted to women the most vivid colours of his palette. Beyond the composer's genius, it is the plots and the libretti that show how thoroughly the eighteenth century centred its expression on a certain image of femininity. Woman is no longer the unfading goddess of the Renaissance or the troubling temptress of the seventeenth century, but a being of flesh and blood, enamoured of freedom and justice in the face of the opposite sex's brutality. The operas of Mozart and his contemporaries (Haydn, Cimarosa, Grétry) seem to bear witness to an age in which, despite social constraints and inequalities, women's voices were decisive in the circulation of the ideas that would illuminate the century with a brilliant and inevitable light.

In this programme, Hanna-Elisabeth Müller and Les Violons du Roy do more than inhabit characters and noble archetypes. At first glance, the Contessa, Donna Anna and Vitellia seem like marble statues. The three arias, drawn from three of Mozart's landmark works, are moments of dramatic turning point for each of these heroines. In the nostalgic “Dove sono”, Rosina remembers the lightness of young love with her Almadiva; from that moment on, the Contessa will devise a gentle revenge in an attempt to save this settled but precious love. In “Non

mi dir, bell'idol mio”, Donna Anna shows at last that she can give herself to love and not only to modesty or vengeance, thereby reassuring the impatient Don Ottavio.

In “Non più di fiori”, the terrible Vitellia surrenders to tenderness and to ultimate sacrifice after her dark plotting. This aria is the perfect mirror of Sesto's Act I aria “Parto, parto”, accompanied by bassoon. In the score of La clemenza di Tito, these two arias are the principal emotional pillars of the drama. The obbligato clarinet here is no decorative commentary, but the inner voice of Vitellia, strengthening her resolve to face every consequence of her past actions.

Mozart, a dramatist of genius, also conceived arias to be inserted into works by other composers. Such is the case with “Alma grande e nobile core”, written for a revival of Domenico Cimarosa's comic opera I due baroni di Rocca Azzurra. Mozart's writing contrasts with Cimarosa's in its phrasing, more attentive to expression and to the emotional accentuation of the text. In the plot, Laura sings this grandiloquent aria to crush her rival Sandra in a vocal duel. In the end, the fair Laura triumphs, and no doubt Mozart deserves some of the credit.

Like Henry James in The Portrait of a Lady, Mozart is not content with noble portraits or caricatures. He works dramatic material like a demiurge, breathing organic energy into his female characters, whose intensity seizes us at the heart of our contemporary societies. Our age, chaotic and complex, seeks balance at all costs. Mozart delivers it to us in his music and in his silences, the landmarks by which we find freedom, peace and the happiness of being human.

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