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2026–27 *Season*

FIRST MAINSTAGE CONCERT

Classic Constellation: Europe's Other Mozarts

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2026 | 7:00 P.M. | American Swedish Institute, Minneapolis
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2026 | 7:30 P.M. | Sundin Music Hall, Saint Paul
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2026 | 3:00 P.M. | Mount Olive Lutheran Church, Rochester

[Mozart] conversed with me a good deal about Thomas Linley, the first Mrs. Sheridan's brother, with whom he was intimate at Florence, and spoke of him with great affection. He said that Linley was a true genius, and he felt that, had he lived, he would have been one of the greatest ornaments of the musical world. MICHAEL KELLY, *Reminiscences* (1826)

PROGRAM Classic Constellations: Europe's Other Mozarts

Thomas Linley (1756–1778)

Ouverture to *The Duenna*
Allegro
Adagio
Rondeau–Allegro

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in F major
Moderato
Adagio
Rondeau

Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges (1748–1799)

Symphony No. 1 in G major, Op. 11
Allegro
Andante
Allegro assai

INTERMISSION

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

Divertimento in F major, KV 138
Allegro
Andante
Presto

Joseph Martin Kraus (1756–1792)

Symphony in C minor, VB 142
Larghetto–Allegro
Andante
Allegro assai

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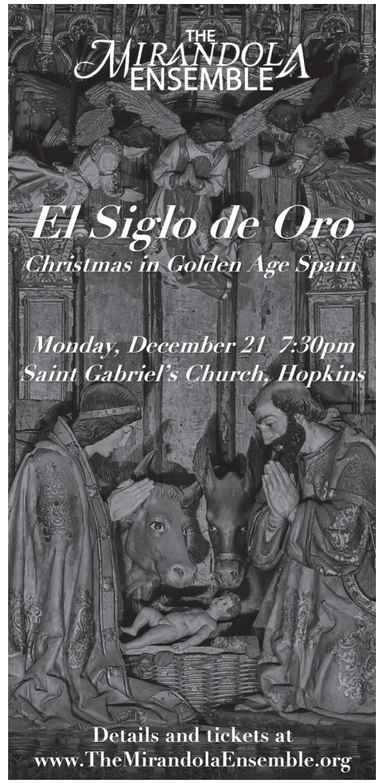

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Program Notes

by Bojan Čičić, Artistic Director

Welcome to the opening concert of our new season!

Last year, we set out to introduce you to some lesser-known names from the world of baroque music, alongside more familiar favorites. This season, we hope you will continue to join us on our journey through the extraordinary musical landscape of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, discovering remarkable composers and their music along the way.

Tonight's program brings together composers who, at various times, came to be regarded as "Mozarts" of their respective nations. These are, of course, retrospective labels, bestowed by later generations rather than used during the composers' lifetimes. It is important to remember that each of these musicians was celebrated in their own right, whether as a composer, conductor, or performer, quite independently of any comparison with Mozart. Interestingly, three of the composers featured on tonight's program were born in the same year, 1756.

Thomas Linley the Younger (1756–1778)

The English Mozart

We begin with the "English Mozart" Thomas Linley the Younger. Born in Bath in 1756, Linley displayed exceptional musical talent from an early age. Recognizing his son's extraordinary promise, his father sent him to Florence in 1768 to study violin with Pietro Nardini, one of the most celebrated violinists of his generation.

In April 1770, during his Italian tour with his father, Leopold, young Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart met his contemporary Thomas Linley in Florence. Although Mozart's stay lasted only a week, the two brilliant musicians quickly struck up a friendship, enjoying opportunities to make music together. Linley also made a considerable impression on Leopold Mozart, himself an accomplished violinist and highly respected teacher.

Following his departure from Florence in 1771, Linley returned to England where he embarked on a brilliant, if tragically brief, career as a violinist and composer. He contributed to sacred music and theater works, including *The Duenna* and *The Tempest* in collaboration with his father, who was also a distinguished musician.

Although Linley is believed to have composed numerous violin concertos, the only complete one to survive is Violin Concerto in F major. It is a charming and spirited work, displaying remarkable technical assurance and compositional confidence, comparable to Mozart's early concertos. Personally, Linley's writing reminds me of the violin concertos of Giovanni Mane Giornovichi (also know as Ivan Mane Jarnović), another rising virtuoso of the period and a composer particularly close to my heart because of his potential Croatian heritage.

Tragically, Linley's life was cut short in August 1778, when a sudden squall overturned his boat on a lake and he drowned. He was just twenty-two. His death was an immense loss to English music. Less than a century after the premature death of Henry Purcell, England had lost another extraordinary talent whose full potential would never be realized. Linley's story is one of the great "what might have been" moments in musical history. Had he lived, he might well have become one of the internationally significant composers of the classical period. Instead, England would wait until the end of the nineteenth century for a composer of international recognition, such as Elgar.

Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges (1748–1799)

Joseph de Bologne, later knighted as Chevalier de Saint-Georges, was one of the most extraordinary figures of eighteenth-century European musical life. He was born in Guadeloupe to a French plantation owner and an enslaved Senegalese woman known as Nanon. It was probably at the beginning of 1759 that his father relocated to France, bringing Bologne and Nanon with him.

In France, Bologne received an exceptional education, studying—among other subjects—music and fencing. He went on to become not only one of the finest violinists in France, but also one of the most celebrated fencing masters.

His musical career was impressive, as he directed orchestras such as *Concert des Amateurs* and later *Concert de la Loge Olympique,* writing 2 symphonies, 8 symphonie concertantes, 14 violin concertos and several operas, of which only one survives in a complete form.

In 1776, Bologne was considered for the prestigious position of director of the Paris Opéra. However, racial prejudice stood in his way. Three leading female singers reportedly petitioned Queen Marie Antoinette, objecting to the prospect of taking orders from a man of mixed African and European ancestry. Despite this setback, Bologne remained one of the most influential figures in Parisian musical life.

The French Revolution brought a dramatic change in his circumstances and particularly his musical output. Increasingly involved in revolutionary politics, he became a colonel, commanding a regiment composed largely of Black soldiers, one of the first military units of its kind in

Europe. During the Reign of Terror, he was imprisoned for almost a year, but escaped execution. Following his release, he eventually returned to musical life in Paris, where in 1797, he resumed what he loved most—directing an orchestra. He died two years later in 1799.

His Symphony No. 1 in G major, op. 11, is a fine example of the early classical orchestral style of the 1770s. Combining French elegance and Italian brilliance, it is full of rhythmic vitality, graceful melodies and an infectious sense of energy, showing us that Saint-Georges wasn't merely an extraordinary individual, but also a composer of considerable imagination and refinement.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

Divertimento in F major, KV 138

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart composed his Divertimento in F, sometimes described as one of the "Salzburg Symphonies" in 1772, at the age of just sixteen. It was an eventful year for the young composer. In Salzburg, he received a salaried appointment as concertmaster at the court of the newly installed Archbishop Colloredo. Later that year, he traveled to Milan for the premiere of his opera *Lucio Silla*.

By this time, Mozart had already taken two journeys to Italy, absorbing the musical language of a country whose operatic and instrumental traditions would profoundly influence his development.

The Divertimento in F major reflects this Italian influence in its clarity of structure, lyrical phrasing, and unmistakable operatic sparkle. Indeed, the opening movement could almost be heard as a miniature Italian opera overture. The slow movement unfolds like an intimate aria without words, its beautifully shaped melodic lines revealing Mozart's instinctive understanding of the singing voice. The finale bursts into life with irresistible energy—fast, playful and thoroughly Italianate, recalling the exuberance of an operatic-curtain riser.

Here, the young Mozart brings together his growing symphonic ambitions and his instinct for the theatre, creating a work that is at once charming, sophisticated, and surprisingly assured for a composer of sixteen.

Joseph Martin Kraus (1756–1792)

The Swedish Mozart

Our good friends at the American Swedish Institute in Minneapolis invited Lyra Baroque Orchestra to return this year with a small request: present a Swedish composer.

I took liberty with the meaning of "Swedish composer," since Joseph Martin Kraus was actually born in Miltenberg, in Lower Franconia (Bavaria, Germany) in 1756, just five months after Mozart. Nevertheless, he spent the most significant part of his professional life in Sweden, where he became one of the leading musical figures at the court of King Gustav III.

Kraus was a man of unusually broad intellectual interests. Alongside music, he studied philosophy and law in Mannheim, even writing a volume of poetry influenced by the literary movement known as *Sturm und Drang*, which celebrated emotional intensity, individual expression, and dramatic contrasts.

After settling in Sweden, Kraus enjoyed the support of Gustav III, an enlightened patron who believed that musicians should broaden their horizons through travel and exposure to Europe's leading artistic centers. Between 1782 and 1786, Kraus undertook an extensive European journey, during which he encountered some of the most important musical personalities of his age, including his idols Gluck and Haydn. He also moved in Vienna's Masonic circles, to which Mozart belonged.

Kraus met Joseph Haydn in October of 1783 and the older composer developed a profound admiration for his younger colleague. Haydn later described Kraus as "the first man of genius that I met." It is worth mentioning that Haydn hasn't been introduced to Mozart yet, still living a somewhat secluded life in Ezsterháza at the time.

Of particular interest is Haydn's admiration for the very symphony we are performing tonight. He reportedly declared: "The Symphony in C minor, which he wrote in Vienna especially for me, is a work which will be considered a masterpiece in every century."

The Symphony in C minor is, in fact, a reworking of an earlier composition, written in a strange key of C-sharp minor. Kraus transposed it down to a more manageable C minor, revised its orchestration, replacing the flutes with the more piercing oboe sounds and substituted a new finale for the original minuet.

It is not difficult to see why Haydn liked this work so deeply. It speaks the musical language of *Sturm und Drang*, a style that Haydn himself had explored so powerfully in his Symphonies Nos. 39, 44 (Trauer), 45 (Farewell), and 49 (La Passione), composed about a decade earlier.

These works share an unmistakable emotional intensity—tense openings, restless rhythmic momentum, angular melodies, and sudden dynamic shocks.

The opening movement pays tribute to Gluck's Ouverture to *Iphigénie en Aulide* with its exquisite polyphonic writing for the strings and dramatic atmosphere. The central andante, with its subtly varied melodic ideas, recalls a Haydn-like set of variations. In the finale, Kraus leans into dramatic flair with theatrical contrasts that work like a sustained drama on stage. It is music of extraordinary intensity, in which the composer's command of symphonic structure is matched by an almost operatic instinct for tension and release.

Kraus's Symphony in C minor stands among the most compelling orchestral works of the late eighteenth century. Its emotional power, originality, and imagination make a fitting conclusion to tonight's exploration of Europe's "Other Mozarts."

More than two centuries after Haydn's remarkable prediction, it falls to each new generation of musicians and audiences to continually prove him right by rediscovering, performing and celebrating this extraordinary work.