

Would Mozart Have Posed For Your Selfie?

Oh, yes. In fact, he would likely have photobombed you, if you didn't invite him to join you in the first place.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was not raised to be the shy and reclusive sort. Born in Salzburg, Austria, on January 27th, 1756, he displayed an affinity for the keyboard at age three while observing his older sister's lessons. His own instruction began the following year, and within a few months he was composing simple pieces himself. His father, Leopold, was a violinist, music teacher, and something of an entrepreneur. Recognizing his children's talent as a marketable commodity, he began to take them on tours to the musical capitals of Europe.

At age six Wolfgang played harpsichord at Schonbrunn Palace for Empress Maria Theresa of Austria. When she expressed her delight at his performance he jumped up onto her lap, put his arms around her neck, and kissed her. While this effrontery may have shocked the court, the empress rewarded the child with one hundred ducats and a little silk suit decorated with gold braid.

Still youthful and handsome at age two hundred sixty-three, Mozart and his charming wife Constanze were special guests at the forty-first annual Mozart Birthday Concert held in UNCSA's Watson Hall last month. This concert tradition was begun by longtime UNCSA piano professor Eric Larsen. Since Larsen's retirement in 2017, a faculty member serves as the event's artistic director each year, putting together a program of performers and selected works. This year's concert curator was bassoonist Saxton Rose, Associate Professor of Bassoon and Director of the school's contemporary music ensemble.

UNCSA Music Dean Brian Cole welcomed the audience to this afternoon event with several prefatory announcements. Now in its fifteenth season gracing the campus, Watson Chamber Music Hall has several new enhancements. High definition video cameras have been installed, to bring UNCSA concerts to the rest of the world. Cole reported that he was able to watch the previous week's concert by UNCSA duo *Low & Lower* while flying over the Yukon Territory on the way to China. Followers of the UNCSA School of Music on Facebook can see and hear concerts both live and at their later convenience. Audio and video quality are excellent. The hall's lobby is now appointed with furniture by Robert Kopf, given to the school by Judy and Bill Watson, as well as a wood sculpture titled "The Orchestra," by Tony Di Leo, commissioned for UNCSA by Janet Bealer Rodie and Chris Rodie and officially unveiled at the concert's conclusion.



While himself a highly capable violinist as well as a keyboard virtuoso, Mozart made exquisite use of wind instruments in chamber ensembles of various sizes and in his symphonic works and operas. His concertos for flute, clarinet, horn, and bassoon are among the finest for each of those instruments. Bassoonist Saxon Rose assured that winds, including his own instrument, were well represented in this program.

The music of Mozart seems to bring out the best in both performers and listeners. A palpably attentive audience was immediately swept along with the cascades of notes of the concert's opening work, a flute sonata performed by Tadeu Coelho, with pianist Dmitri Vorobiev.

Elizabeth Pacheco Rose, Visiting Professor of Voice at Wake Forest University (and wife of Saxon Rose) came onstage in character as Susanna for a love song from *The Marriage of Figaro*. Next, Logan Trotter, a fourth year UNCSA voice student, took the role of Zerlina, coaxing forgiveness from Masetto in *Don Giovanni*. The two sopranos then turned again to *Figaro* for the “Letter Duet,” in which Countess Almaviva and Susanna plot a tryst involving multiples levels of disguise.

Ida Bieler, Director of UNCSA's Chrysalis Chamber Music Institute and Allison Gagnon, Chair of the school's Collaborative Piano Department teamed up for a violin sonata in which their joyful music-making in the concluding Allegretto was particularly infectious.

Most of Mozart's over-six-hundred works have long been conclusively documented and catalogued, but a few mysteries remain, including some which he may have copied from scores by other composers – and likely improved upon in doing so. Saxon Rose heard one such work which understandably piqued his curiosity: an aria for soprano, bassoon, and orchestra. There being no published score, Rose appealed through the musicians' grapevine back in 2012, leading to the Czech National Museum, where a friend-of-a-friend kindly scanned the original manuscript. That document has since been copied out into a “playable” score, which served as the finale for this concert.

As performed by a nine-piece chamber orchestra of UNCSA faculty and student musicians, *Mens sancta Deo* amply rewarded those efforts, concluding with a brief duo cadenza for the connubial soloists.

Following the concert the Mozarts joined us in Watson Hall's newly-enhanced lobby for refreshments, genial chat and, of course, selfies.



Addendumb: Last month's newsletter article, *Your Associates Board: What Needs Doing, and Who Gets It Done*, failed to include the stalwarts of the *Hospitality Committee*: Janet Bealer Rodie, Sarah Pierce Rubio, and Inez Davis, who lead a team of home bakers in making sure that Associates events feature a table laden with a bounty of delicious refreshments for hungry arts lovers.

Martha Graham's Valedictory Joggling Act



On a cold, rainy night a capacity crowd took seats set up in a dance studio of UNCSCA's venerable Gray Building for a *Behind the Scenes* preview from the School's *Winter Dance* program. *BTS* co-honcho Anne Sessions (along with Nola Miller) welcomed Associates and their guests: “We are shocked that so many of you came out in this nasty weather, and that shows your dedication and love for School of the Arts.” Indeed – but we were well rewarded for attending.

School of Dance Dean Susan Jaffe added her welcome, observing that “dancers love to be watched,” before introducing frequent UNCSCA guest artist Maurizio Nardi.

Nardi joined Martha Graham Dance Company in 2002 and retired in 2014 to Key West. He has staged and demonstrated Graham's work all over the world, including *Maple Leaf Rag*, in which he performed numerous times under Graham's direct tutelage.



Nardi explained that *Maple Leaf Rag* was Graham's last completed work, created in 1990, a year before her death at age ninety-six. Her dedication to dance was “the only thing that really kept her alive.” He called this piece “one of the few joyous dances Martha created.”

Turning to a large wooden apparatus staged on the dance floor, Nardi related that, while in Charleston, South Carolina, Graham observed her troupe's playful interaction with a “joggling board” - a traditional fixture of Lowcountry porches, that served as a sort of courting bench. As the dancers

explored its rocking, bouncing capabilities Graham decided “I’ve got to use that.” The resulting work, while beginning with the “sort of gloom-and-doom feel, typical for Graham,” becomes a “joyous ritual.”

Nardi emphasized that, “above all, dance is not representational” for Graham but, rather, about movement, itself, as a language. He credited the dancers for committing themselves to learning this exacting new idiom in a short period of time.

Adjusting the deployment of the dancers around the room's perimeter, Nardi confided “You get to see what happens backstage, when the curtain's down.”

The score for *Maple Leaf Rag*, stitching together portions of several of Scott Joplin's popular dances, begins with a portentous repeated bass drumbeat on the piano, as one female dancer, wearing a skirt reminiscent of a Georgia O'Keeffe flower, spins ritually across the dance space. This turns out to be a bit of misdirection from the flirting, teasing playfulness that follows.



The moment the performance ended, while the dancers were still receiving The Associates' appreciative applause, Nardi was immediately back in pedagogical mode – calling upon various subsets of the performers to make precise adjustments to details of movement and gesture.

With those matters dutifully noted, Nardi and his company of twenty-seven UNCSA Dance students joined Associates and their guests at a table full of treats, which some of us enjoyed while doing a bit of joggling.

Winter Dance will feature works by George Balanchine, Douglas Dunn, and School of Dance faculty member Ilya Kozadayev, as well as *Maple Leaf Rag*. Performances continue through Sunday, February 24th at the Stevens Center.

By the way: If you've never been *Behind the Scenes*, you're missing out on one of the best benefits of being an Associate. You get a preview of one of UNCSA's major performance events, a peek at the process that goes into making them so fine, and an opportunity to see fellow members, as well as make the acquaintance of some of the school's talented and personable young artists. Helpmates make sure you are able to find your way on campus, and the Hospitality team provides delicious refreshments. Admission is free for you and a guest who, we hope, will have such a good time that they'll want to become Associates, too.

General Information—Important Links

The Associates Website: <http://www.uncsa.edu/Associates>

For membership forms, a list of our Board members, and other general information.

Email Address: uncsaassociates@gmail.com

The Performance Calendar Website: <http://www.uncsa.edu/performances/>

Our Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/uncsaassociates>

Newsletter: uncsaassociates.news@gmail.com