PROGRAM PAGE

HOUGH FAMILY FOUNDATION MASTERWORKS

MOZART & HANDEL

Jeannette Sorrell, *Conductor*

Saturday, Nov 22, 2025, Centro Asturiano at 8 pm
Sunday, Nov 23, 2025, Mahaffey Theater at 2 pm

George Frideric Handel (1685 - 1759) ed. J. Sorrell	**Water Music: Suite No. 1 in F Major** *Allegro - Andante - Allegro* *Air: Andante* *Bourrée & Hornpipe* *Menuet*
George Frideric Handel (1685 - 1759) ed. J. Sorrell	**Water Music: Flute Suite in G Major** *Rigaudons* *Menuets I & II* *Country Dance & Gigue*
George Frideric Handel (1685 - 1759) ed. J. Sorrell	**Water Music: Trumpet Suite in D Major** *Loure* *Allegro & Hornpipe* *Bourrée*
	Intermission
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791)	**The Marriage of Figaro Overture**
Franz Joseph Haydn (1732 -1809)	**The Uninhabited Island Overture**
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791) ed. J. Sorrell	**Ballet Music from Idomeneo**

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George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)
***Water Music* (selections)**
Duration: ca. 33 minutes

What to listen for:

- The hornpipe from the suite in D Major is a signature work that stands alongside the composer's *Hallelujah* chorus in popularity.

In London in the summer of 1717, King George made a much-publicized trip down the River Thames on a barge, the excursion moving from Whitehall Palace to Chelsea and back. But what made the event unique was the king's commission: a composer would write new music to celebrate the occasion, with 50 players on a boat moving alongside the royal fête.

The composer was George Frideric Handel, who, 24 years later, would be immortalized through his oratorio *Messiah.* Ever the problem solver, Handel knew an open-air atmosphere posed challenges for a traditional ensemble of strings and woodwinds, so he introduced horns – a first for an English orchestra. The result was *Wassermusik, or Water Music*, its effect so resounding that the king insisted on repeat performances during the round trip.

The original score is lost, but manuscript copies in the Fitzwilliam Museum allowed scholars to patch together (long after Handel's death) 18 sections in three suites in the keys of F, D and G, respectively, of which TFO will perform 10. The music takes on immediate brilliance, full of pomp and polish, with a large body of woodwinds and strings simmering below the piercing sheen of horns and trumpets. The suites can be played by any size ensemble in any order – even backward – without losing their energy or appeal.

Although these are technically French suites in their use of the menuet, bourrée and sarabande, they reflect Handel's cosmopolitan tastes and reverence for the Italian concerto. Just as important, *Water Music* is his first large-scale instrumental foray outside the opera house, but the suites are remarkably *vocal* in their expression.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-91)
Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro*
Duration: ca. 4 minutes

What to listen for:

- Mozart takes us on an irrepressible romp fueled by running 16th notes in the strings and rousing flourishes that embrace the opera's madcap story.

If ever an overture captures the spirit of an opera, this is it. Mozart most certainly was on a roll when he wrote the curtain raiser for *Marriage of Figaro*, which quietly percolates before exploding with a tensile exuberance, repeating the fun in a tightly compacted sonata form that tosses out the customary development section (why slow things down?). In just four minutes, Mozart creates equilibrium between the joy and despair of the characters, and its frantic tempo seizes the "crazy day" of the plot – without using a single tune from the action that follows.

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)
Overture to *L'Isola disabitata*
Duration: ca. 8 minutes

What to listen for:

- Note how the music alternates between moments of calm and agitation.

Prolific is an apt word to describe Haydn, who composed more than 750 works in almost every form of the day, including 20 now-forgotten operas. His tenth, *The Uninhabited Island*, lives only through its dramatic overture, a compressed and compelling introduction to the action first heard in 1779 in the court of Esterházy, Haydn's employer.

The music moves between slow and fast in the key of G minor, the dynamic shifts and abrupt tempo changes characteristic of the *sturm und drang* (storm and stress) trend of the time. In this rebellion against the Enlightenment, intense expression replaces rationalism and sets the stage for the nascent Romantic period. Within this tempest, Haydn inserts a delicate minuet, providing calm before the furious conclusion that follows. Beethoven may have known this score, as its tension-and-release struggle echoes in his own *Egmont* overture.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-91)
Ballet Music from *Idomeneo, K. 367*
Duration: ca. 15 minutes

What to listen for:

- Through a series of dances, Mozart adds a bit of joviality to the end of a long and demanding opera.

When Mozart received a commission in 1780 from the Elector of Bavaria to compose an opera seria, or "serious" stage work, he jumped at the chance to earn much-needed cash and write music based on Homer's Trojan War epic. The opera tells the story of Idomeneus (Idomeneo is the Italian form), the king of Crete who survives a violent storm on his journey home from Troy and later abdicates the throne to his son.

Typical of lyric tragedies of the time, composers embellished their operas with diversions for the audience at intermissions or at the end, often tailored to national tastes. In this case, Mozart wanted a coda to celebrate the love of Idamante and Ilia and possibly to serve as relief from the opera's severity.

He wrote a 15-minute suite of ballet dances in the French style, including a gavotte, pas seul and passepied that honor the influence of the great operatic reformist, Christoph Willibald Gluck. Knowing the dances would be performed by the virtuoso Mannheim Orchestra, Mozart composed at a high level and deepened the colorings by including clarinets for the first time in one of his operas. Mozart also put his personal stamp on the grand chaconne, a stately theme that repeats in rondo form and often is performed by itself, apart from the suite, in concerts.

Kurt Loft is a journalist and arts writer who has covered classical music for various publications and arts groups for more than 45 years. A member of the Music Critics Association of North America, he lives in St. Petersburg.