PROGRAM PAGE

HOUGH FAMILY FOUNDATION MASTERWORKS

MOZART'S JUPITER SYMPHONY

Michael Francis, *Conductor*
Maximilian Hornung, *Cello*
Hein Jung, *Soprano*

Saturday, March 21, 2026, Mahaffey Theater at 8 pm
Sunday, March 22, 2026, Mahaffey Theater at 2 pm

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827)	**Grosse Fuge, Op. 133**
Dimitri Shostakovich (1906 - 1975)	**Cello Concerto No. 1 in E-flat Major, Op. 107** I. *Allegretto* II. *Moderato* III. *Cadenza* IV. *Allegro con moto* ***Maximilian Hornung, cello***
	Intermission
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791)	**Mozart: Queen of the Night arias from *The Magic Flute***
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791)	**Symphony No. 41 in C Major, K. 551 (Jupiter)** I. *Allegro vivace* II. *Andante cantabile* III. *Allegretto* IV. *Molto allegro*

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Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
Grosse Fuge, Op. 133
Duration: ca. 16 minutes

What to listen for:

- Radical for its time, this intensely emotional work with its often-dissonant double fugue captures Beethoven at the peak of his creative late period.

If ever Beethoven wrote music that could sound modern in concert halls today it would be his *Grosse Fuge*, a discarded torso from the *String Quartet No. 13* that stands on its own for its immense contrapuntal power – having two or more independent melodic lines.

When Beethoven turned the score over to his publisher in 1825, he was asked to replace the final fugue movement with something audiences could comprehend, and he reluctantly agreed after an offer of more money to make the change. Most people at the time struggled to understand Beethoven's late-period introspection, and the composer Louis Spohr spoke for many by calling the *Grosse Fuge* "an indecipherable, uncorrected horror."

The castoff was published separately two years later, shortly before the ailing and deaf composer died. But decades passed before listeners and critics would embrace it as one of the most profound creations in all of music, what Igor Stravinsky predicted to be "contemporary forever."

Although the Op. 130 quartet with its alternate finale lives on as a masterpiece, many consider it less compelling than the original. The *Talk Classical* website offers plenty of opinions from people who feel Beethoven caved in to his publisher and diluted the quartet by ending with a lighthearted dance. Some performers appease both camps by playing the revised quartet followed by the *Grosse Fuge* – stretching the work to seven movements over a full hour.

While the *Grosse Fuge* reflects Beethoven at his most modern and abstract, it also looks back to Bach in its use of the old fugue form. Beethoven wrote dozens of fugues in his younger days, "but imagination also wishes to exert its privileges," he wrote, "and a new and really poetic element must be introduced into the traditional form."

What he created was no simple gesture to Baroque technique. Here is a massive creation covering 740 measures – a hundred more than the combined five movements in the quartet that preceded it. The music opens quietly, as if wary of what's ahead: a grand double fugue of dissonance and fury that plows forward in unbroken fortissimo. Amid this seeming chaos are variations played in different tempos, even inverted and backward. Beethoven eventually winds things down into near silence and offers a fragmentary quote from the opening before an animated rush to close.

"This piece to me is the perfect piece to discover what is the true nature of depression, because you feel this pernicious worm of a theme that keeps coming back," TFO Music Director Michael Francis said of Beethoven's state of mind when he composed it. "Chamber music was Beethoven's personal therapy, and this is wild, fast, ferocious – and extremely demanding for the performers."

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-75)
Cello Concerto No. 1 in E flat, Op. 107
Duration: ca. 30 minutes

What to listen for:

- Throughout the entire third movement, the soloist plays an unaccompanied cadenza as the orchestra remains silent.

The great cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, who died in 2007, served as a conduit between composer and listener in the first-ever performances of more than 100 new works. Of these, two stand apart: The cello concertos of his friend, Dmitri Shostakovich, which remain at the heart of the repertoire today.

Rostropovich took his duties seriously by memorizing in just *four days* the *Cello Concerto No. 1*, a feat all the more amazing considering its taxing and fully exposed third movement. After its premiere in 1959 in Leningrad, the cellist immediately went to the studio to record it, then traveled to the United States to spread the word about this brilliant new Russian work – a well-intended effort to thaw Cold War tensions.

Tension defines the first movement, the music flowing on an urgent pulse, the cellist stabbing bow to strings in rapid, fragmented themes as an ominous-sounding horn serves as a foil. Following this frenetic opening, Shostakovich gives us a plaintive slow movement in the contrasting key of A minor, among the composer's most heartfelt expressions, one that becomes increasingly intense before trailing off in silence.

The third movement is unusual in being an unaccompanied cadenza for the soloist, serving as a sort of sonata for a single instrument. The solemn music, with its searing high registers and pizzicatos, is considered one of the most difficult in the repertoire. Played without pause, it links the adagio to a boisterous finale that reclaims the home key of the opening

movement and ends with seven rapid timpani strokes.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-91)

Queen of the Night arias from *The Magic Flute*

Mozart's *The Magic Flute* holds a special place in the hearts of opera lovers, regardless of its implausible story line. The music is enchanting, and its allure turns adults into children – no wonder it continues to inspire new and creative productions at opera houses and college theaters around the world.

TFO Music Director Michael Francis recently conducted an Opera Tampa production and was so impressed with soprano Hein Jung as the Queen of the Night that he decided to add two arias to this current Masterworks program.

"Oh, don't tremble, my dear son" in Act I is a shimmering, lyrical plea in which the Queen begs Tamino to rescue her daughter from the clutches of the high priest Sarastro. She first quiets Tamino's fears, then tells the sad – although misleading – tale of Pamina's abduction. It also serves as a companion piece to the second aria, as both employ similar vocal pyrotechnics.

With the fearsome-sounding "Hell's vengeance boils in my heart" from Act II, Mozart hit it out of the park. This remains among the best-known arias in the entire repertoire, and its series of high F notes are an acrobatic test for any coloratura soprano, who also must convince the audience of the Queen's unhinged state of mind.

"The aria is particularly challenging because I have to convey the Queen's intense emotion and fury while executing its demanding vocal technique," Jung said. "And the more I perform the role, the more I feel that the Queen definitely needs therapy."

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-91)
Symphony No. 41 in C Major, Jupiter
Duration: ca. 31 minutes

What to listen for:

- The finale is a giant fugato that weaves five themes into a tapestry of counterpoint reminiscent of a Bach chorale.

Mozart's summa symphonic statement, the famed *Jupiter*, stands in contrast to the dark murmur of the *G Minor Symphony* that preceded it. The longest of his symphonies, *Jupiter* is his most mature canvas, evident in the logical and imaginative relationship of themes and dispersal of weight within each movement. It represents the embodiment of Mozart's expressive power, a seamless blend of ideas that secure a larger musical argument.

"In this symphony, Mozart looks at everything in life," said TFO Music Director Michael Francis. "Then he takes you to a point where he says 'now, let's look at the universe.' The ending of the last movement is this five-part fugue where you're looking up contemplating the universe. It's the Sistine Chapel of music."

Cast in the bright key of C major, the work unfolds with an air of majesty, hence the sobriquet. However, the name *Jupiter* did not come from Mozart. A London-based impresario named Johann Peter Salomon felt the music represented Olympian grandeur, and the association with the Roman god of sky and thunder stuck.

The music begins with three tutti chords on which Mozart builds a complex allegro full of sparkle, storm and stress. It has been said that this movement is more like a play, with melodies and rhythms representing actors on stage. A richly embroidered second movement – a Baroque sarabande dance – expands through an inventive use of muted strings, and the following menuetto is a study in delicacy that prepares us for the miracle about to come.

The finale is one of the most exciting moments in any Mozart symphony, a series of fugal fragments that gain velocity before Mozart strips away the contrapuntal fabric to reveal all five themes at once. These superimposed ideas, their counterpoint inverted, stand alongside the great choral works of Bach – or the Act II septet from Mozart's own *Marriage of Figaro*.

"When Mozart wrote the finale, he cannot have known that it would be his valedictory essay in the genre, for he had every reason to expect to live into the 19th century," writes the American musicologist Neal Zaslaw in his 1989 study, *Mozart's Symphonies*. "Yet had he known, he could hardly have found a more telling summation of the journey he had traveled in his symphonies, from lighthearted entertainment … to serious works of art at the center of the musical universe."

Kurt Loft is a journalist and music critic who has written for various newspapers, magazines and arts groups for more than 40 years. A member of the Music Critics Association of North America, he lives in St. Petersburg.