

For Immediate Release

Mozart and more opens Grand Rapids Symphony's Great Eras Series

GRS principal horns and a prize-winning cellist are featured soloists

GRAND RAPIDS, MI., Oct. 5, 2016 – Mozart loved a good joke, and the composer of several comic operas took delight in earthy humor and pulling pranks on his friends.

Though music was a serious business, he took pleasure in inserting jokes and sly asides into his music and musical scores as well.

Mozart composed his **Horn Concerto No. 2 in E-flat major** for Joseph Leutgeb, a celebrated musician in late 18th century Vienna who was a favorite horn player of composers including Joseph Haydn as well as Mozart's father, Leopold.

What's more, Leutgeb, though 23 years older than the younger Mozart, was a good friend who frequently was the butt of Mozart's jokes.

Inscribed on the manuscript for the Horn Concerto No. 2 is the dedication, "W.A. Mozart took pity on Leutgeb, ass, ox and simpleton in Vienna on 27 May 1783." Leutgeb apparently didn't mind the teasing, and Mozart wrote several pieces for him.

Grand Rapids Symphony opens its **Crowe Horwath Great Eras** concert with "The Classical Concert: Mostly Mozart" at 8 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 21, in St. Cecilia Music Center.

Highlights of the evening concert will be given at 10 a.m. that morning for the **Porter Hills Coffee Classics** series, a one-hour program held without intermission. Doors open at 9 a.m. for complementary coffee and pastry.

Grand Rapids Symphony **Associate Conductor John Varineau** conducts both concerts in St. Cecilia's Royce Auditorium.

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French hornists soloists are Grand Rapids Symphony musicians. **Principal hornist Richard Britsch** is soloist in the Mozart Horn Concerto No. 2, and **assistant principal hornist Erich Peterson** joins Britsch for Haydn's Concerto for Two Horns, 3rd movement.

Britsch, a native of Florida, has been principal horn of the Grand Rapids Symphony since 1990 and teaches horn at Grand Valley State University. A former member of the Emerald Brass, he won first prize in both the Fischhoff Chamber Music Competition and the Yamaha/Summit Brass International Brass Competition with the ensemble.

Peterson, who joined the Grand Rapids Symphony in March 2004, formerly played in the pit orchestra for the national tour of *Les Miserable* for six years, performing in more than 1,500 shows in more than 40 states and Canada.

One of the greatest recordings of the Mozart Horn Concertos was made by the immortal British hornist Dennis Brain, who recorded all four with Herbert von Karajan and The Philharmonia Orchestra.

Brain, who loved fast cars, died in a tragic auto accident in September 1957 at age 36.

Brain also had a sense of humor of his own. At the Gerard Hoffnung Music Festival in 1956, he performed in public a horn concerto by Leopold Mozart on a rubber hose pipe that he trimmed with garden shears to put it in the proper key.

The Grand Rapids Symphony's concert series that, at various times has been called Casual Classics and Rising Stars, is both wrapped up into one first of three concerts this season.

Casual Classics come courtesy of music by Mozart and Haydn plus informal commentary from Varineau.

The rising star is **cellist Daniel Hass**, the May 2016 winner of Kalamazoo's [Stulberg International String Competition](#), who will be soloist in a Concerto for Cello by Boccherini. The contest for string players age 20 or younger, includes a public appearance with the Grand Rapids Symphony.

In July, the Israeli-Canadian cellist was awarded \$25,000 Canada Council Michael Measures Prize, awarded to promising, young Canadians in classical music.

The complete ***Classical Concert: Mostly Mozart*** program will be rebroadcast on March 19, 2017, at 1 p.m. on [Blue Lake Public Radio](#) 88.9 FM or 90.3 FM.

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Tickets

Tickets start at **\$26** for the **Great Eras** series and **\$16** for **Coffee Classics** and are available at the **GRS ticket office**, weekdays 9 am-5 pm at 300 Ottawa Ave. NW, Suite 100, (located across from the Calder Plaza), or by calling 616.454.9451 x 4. (Phone orders will be charged a \$2 per ticket service fee, with a \$12 maximum.)

Tickets are available at the **DeVos Place box office**, weekdays 10 a.m. - 6 p.m., or at the door on the day of the concert prior to the performance. Tickets also may be purchased online at GRSymphony.org

Full-time students of any age are able to purchase tickets for only **\$5** on the night of the concert by enrolling in the [GRS Student Passport](#) program.

About the Grand Rapids Symphony

Organized in 1930, the [Grand Rapids Symphony](#) is nationally recognized for the quality of its concerts and educational programs. Led by Music Director Marcelo Lehninger, Principal Pops Conductor Bob Bernhardt and Associate Conductor John Varineau, nine concert series are presented, featuring a wide range of music and performance styles. More than 400 performances are given each year, touching the lives of some 200,000, nearly half of whom are students, senior citizens and people with disabilities all reached through extensive education and community service programs. Affiliated organizations include the Grand Rapids Symphony Chorus; Grand Rapids Youth Symphony and Classical Orchestra; and Grand Rapids Symphony Youth Choruses. GRS provides the orchestra for performances by [Opera Grand Rapids](#) and the [Grand Rapids Ballet](#) and sponsors the biennial [Grand Rapids Bach Festival](#), which returns in March 2017.

To learn more about the [Grand Rapids Symphony](#), please visit the website or
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