

***LIVE FROM LINCOLN CENTER***  
**August 16, 2007, 8:00 p.m. on PBS**  
**Mostly Mozart Festival**  
***Mozart Dances***  
**Mark Morris Dance Group**

"Mozart Dances." The title could refer to a program made up of German dances, minuets and other dance forms drawn from the voluminous output of the genius whose 250th birth anniversary was celebrated everywhere last year. But no. In this instance the title refers to a full-length program of music by Mozart, commissioned by Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (along with Vienna's New Crowned Hope and the Barbican Centre in London) and choreographed by the redoubtable Mark Morris.

Far from turning to works originally intended to be danced, Morris has chosen two Piano Concertos (No. 11 in F and No. 27 in B Flat) along with the Sonata in D for Two Pianos. Mark Morris's "Mozart Dances" has already had a significant success wherever it has been performed, and it will be the attraction on our next Live From Lincoln Center, scheduled to originate from the New York State Theater on Thursday evening, August 16. Music Director Louis Langrée will conduct the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra; the pianists will be Live From Lincoln Center veteran Emanuel Ax, and Yoko Nozaki; and the dancers, of course, will be the Mark Morris Dance Group.

Mark Morris was born in Seattle 50 years ago, and dance has been fundamental to his life from his early childhood. In his years as a professional he danced with such notables as the Lar Lubovitch ensemble and the Eliot Feld company. In New York in 1980 he formed his own successful troupe, The Mark Morris Dance Group, which from 1988 to 1991 was in residence at the Theatre de La Monnaie in Brussels. In 1990 he and Mikhail Baryshnikov formed the White Oak Dance Project for the purpose of choreographing and performing new dance.

In addition to working with his own company, Morris has choreographed works for the San Francisco Ballet, the American Ballet Theater, Boston Ballet and the Paris Opera Ballet. And in the field of opera he has directed and choreographed productions for the New York City Opera, English National Opera and the Royal Opera in London's Covent Garden. Another milestone achievement was his collaboration with cellist Yo-Yo Ma in a film of Bach's Third Suite for Unaccompanied Cello.

The first section of "Mozart Dances" is titled "Eleven." It begins with eight men on stage, but they soon leave. The remainder of the action is left to women, and the three movements of the F Major Concerto are danced in front of three different painted backdrops. The choreography for the middle section, the dance for the Two Piano Sonata, is titled "Double" and is very nearly all-men. The concluding piece, to the Piano Concerto No. 27, is titled appropriately "Twenty-

seven", and here there is much mixing of the sexes, along with some stunning mirror effects.

As to the music to be heard, the F Major Concerto, Köchel 413, is one of three that Mozart composed at the end of 1782 and the beginning of 1783, to be used as showcases for his own ability as a virtuoso pianist. In a letter to his father, Leopold, Mozart wrote of these three concertos that "they are a cross between unduly complicated and unduly simple--very brilliant--pleasing to the ear...In order to obtain applause one has to write things which are so easy to remember that even a coachman can repeat and sing them, or so incomprehensible that people will like them precisely because no sensible person can understand them." Well, all three of the Concertos have a joie de vivre and pleasing audience content while at the same time exhibiting nothing of condescension; in particular, the slow movement of the F Major Concerto is a pure and irresistible melody reminiscent of a Viennese folk song.

The Sonata for Two Pianos, K. 448, despite its later Köchel number, was composed a year before the F Major Piano Concerto. Apparently the "inspiration" for the piece was a pupil of Mozart's who took a shine to him. He, however, was not similarly stricken. In a letter he described her "as fat as a farm girl." The music, however, offers masterful interplay between the two pianos and the Sonata long ago took its place as one of the cornerstones of the two-piano repertory.

The B Flat Piano Concerto, K. 595, is the last in the line of ground-breaking Mozart Piano Concertos. It bubbles over with good spirits; particularly in its last movement, a rollicking Allegro, which has a playful quality that is reminiscent of the comic opera Mozart.

I earlier referred to Emanuel Ax as "a Live From Lincoln Center veteran." He is assuredly that, having appeared in our series many times and in varied guises: most recently in last season's Mostly Mozart opener as partner to Yefim Bronfman in a performance of Mozart's Concerto for Two Pianos. He will be one busy pianist on our forthcoming presentation, playing both the Concertos and joining his wife, pianist Yoko Nozaki, for the Two-Piano Sonata.

Reviewing last year's first performance of "Mozart Dances" in The New York Times, John Rockwell wrote: "After only a first viewing, I feel safe in pronouncing it a masterpiece, a triumph for the Mostly Mozart Festival, which commissioned it, and one of Mr. Morris's grandest achievements." Prior to its upcoming performances in New York, "Mozart Dances" will have played in London, July 4 to 7. And, following its New York performances, "Mozart Dances" is scheduled for a run in Chicago in late August; in Berkeley, California in late September; and in Los Angeles in late October.

So be with us for this special treat--"Mozart Dances"-- that will comprise the

next Live From Lincoln Center, on Thursday evening, August 16. Again, since some stations carry the program on a day and time different from the live telecast, I urge you to check your local PBS station for the exact broadcast time in your area.

Enjoy!