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U.S. Teachers to Learn Why Audiences Have Enjoyed for More Than 200 Years

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U.S. TEACHERS TO LEARN WHY AUDIENCES
HAVE ENJOYED MOZART FOR MORE THAN 200 YEARS

DAYTON, Ohio -- In a darkened concert hall, the maestro taps his
baton, lifts his arms and pauses. Musicians raise their instruments,
a member of the audience stifles a cough.

If candlelight shows that the patrons are clad in powdered wigs
and voluminous skirts, it’s the 18th century. If the dimmed electric
lights reveal that their attire tends to be double-breasted suits and
little black dresses, it’s the 20th century.

The music, however, is the same. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s
ageless compositions will entertain either audience.

Applauded as a child prodigy, Mozart was a published composer by
the time he was seven years old. As a boy and a teenager, he traveled
with his family to major European capitals, writing and performing and
honoring his musical skills.

As a mature composer, he turned out piece after piece of rich,
joyous, intricate, sweeping, delicate, graceful, inventive music. He
was 35 when he died 200 years ago, on Dec. 5, 1791, in Vienna.

Thirty high school and middle school teachers from around the
country will have the opportunity to explore Mozart and two of his
operas this summer when they attend a National Endowment for the
Humanities (NEH) institute in Vienna, Austria. They will walk his
streets, visit his rooms and look into his life through his letters.
They will learn, in order to teach a new generation about Mozart.

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The institute was proposed and will be directed by two University of Dayton professors, Richard Benedum of the music department and R. Alan Kimbrough of the English department. It will be held June 17 to July 12.

Because the institute's purpose is education, the participants are expected to analyze, dissect and discuss. But they won't forget to just stop and listen every now and then.

"Mozart is perhaps the most versatile of the truly great composers," says Benedum. "Virtually no composer was as successful in as many different fields of musical endeavor as was Mozart--symphony, concerto, opera, chamber music, keyboard music, church music. While we will talk about the very specific details of his music, I hope the participants will get the sense that there are some incredibly lovely and beautiful moments, apart from any analytical discussion, that simply deserve to be heard as beautiful moments in sound."

"We won't lose sight of that."

The four-week institute will concentrate on The Marriage of Figaro (1786) and Don Giovanni (1787), both composed in Vienna with Italian librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte. The best-known and most frequently performed of Mozart's operas, they were also chosen because they can be adapted successfully for classroom use by the attending teachers.

"We will focus on opera as a composite art," says Kimbrough. "Opera is both literature and music--it involves both a score and a libretto, the two neatly seamed together. We hope that each participant will develop a greater appreciation of Mozart's amazing abilities as both a composer and a dramatist."

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