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Colburn School partners with LA Opera to present Joseph Bologne's *The Anonymous Lover*

James Conlon conducts the online stream of a long neglected 1780 comic romance by pioneering Black composer Joseph Bologne, directed by Bruce Lemon, Jr.

***The Anonymous Lover* will be staged and streamed at Colburn's Zipper Hall following all health and safety protocols, and by digitally connecting different performance spaces throughout the campus**

**Saturday, November 14, 2020 at 5pm PDT
at www.laopera.org/lover**

(Wednesday, October 15, 2020, Los Angeles) – The Colburn School has partnered with LA Opera to present the company premiere of *The Anonymous Lover* (*L'Amant Anonyme*), a 1780 opera by Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges (1745-1799), who is widely regarded as the first Black classical composer known to history. Conducted by James Conlon, LA Opera's Richard Seaver Music Director, and directed by Bruce Lemon, Jr., in a socially distanced stage setting, the performance will be streamed online for free on Saturday, November 14th, 2020.

To ensure a socially distant and safe environment to stage and produce the opera, the Colburn School digitized the campus, enabling the cast and crew to stay connected while performing and working from different locations. Fred Vogler of Sonitus Consulting and Francesco Perlangeli, Colburn School's AV Manager, developed plans to connect a number of spaces in the school's Grand Building via data, video, and fiber optic cables, expanding the existing video network. For rehearsals and the performance of *The Anonymous Lover*, the singers will perform in Zipper Hall while the orchestra will perform in the nearby Grand Rehearsal Hall.

Once LA County allows for schools to reopen, this technology will also serve Colburn students and faculty, allowing for rehearsals, performances, lessons, and master classes while observing social distancing. When complete, Grand Rehearsal Hall, Mayman Hall, the Heifetz Studio, and two dance studios will all be connected and video-ready. A single camera operator will be able to

monitor multiple streams at once from a centralized control room, including streams from the School's Zipper and Thayer halls, which are already equipped with 4K cameras.

Read more about Colburn School's plans to digitize the campus [here](#).

In addition to the *The Anonymous Lover* presentation, Colburn School will concurrently and collaboratively engage in a performance-based exploration of the works and legacy of Joseph Bologne. Colburn Conservatory students will perform works by Bologne and other Black composers during LA Opera Connects November 7 seminar, as part of a session exploring the lost music of composers of color from Colonialism through the late 19th century led by Colburn faculty member Dr. Tiffany Kuo. The Viano String Quartet will perform Bologne's String Quartet Op. 6, No. 1 as part of their December 20 Colburn Artist Series performance.

The Anonymous Lover will be the inaugural presentation of LA Opera's [On Now](#) initiative to make streaming a permanent part of its programming. Under the *On Now* banner, the company will shine the spotlight on new and innovative interpretations of opera that viewers in Los Angeles and beyond can enjoy on screens, even when stay-at-home recommendations are lifted. To date, the company reports more than 750,000 views of its online programming since its launch on March 17, 2020, demonstrating a clear demand for such content.

How to Watch

Free digital tickets for *The Anonymous Lover* are now available at www.laopera.org/lover. The stream will premiere at 5pm on Saturday, November 14

Learn more at LAOpera.org

About the Opera

The comic romance tells the story of Léontine, a beautiful young widow who has become disillusioned with the idea of love. For years, she has received a steady stream of love letters and gifts from an unknown man who professes his undying passion. This amuses her friend Valcour, who also claims to have no interest in affairs of the heart. But now, after hiding his true feelings for so long, Valcour finally works up the courage to reveal that he himself is Léontine's devoted secret admirer. Will his awkward confession sway a heart sworn to resist all affection?

The Anonymous Lover premiered on March 8, 1780, in the private theater of the Marquise de Montesson, wife of the Duke of Orléans, who appointed composer Joseph Bologne as the music director of her theater and gave him a residence in the ducal palace. The libretto was adapted from a play by the celebrated writer Madame de Genlis. It is the only one of his operas that survives in complete form.

The opera follows the conventions of 18th-century French *opéra-comique*, which include spoken dialogues between the arias and ensembles, as well as prominent dance numbers. LA Opera's performance will be sung in the original French (with English subtitles), with the dialogues spoken in English translation.

As a musical bonus, LA Opera's performance will incorporate an aria from Bologne's first opera, *Ernestine*, of which only fragments exist today. The aria has been given to the character Dorothée, originally a spoken (non-singing) role.

The Cast

The cast is made up of singers from the company's young artist program. Tenor Robert Stahley sings the title role of Valcour, the secret admirer. Soprano Tiffany Townsend portrays Léontine, the woman who has captured Valcour's heart.

Soprano Alaysha Fox appears as Léontine's friend Dorothée and baritone Michael J. Hawk appears as Ophémon, enlisted by Valcour to assist in the deception.

Mezzo-soprano Gabriela Flores and countertenor Jacob Ingbar portray the young lovers Jeannette and Colin, whose wedding provides a delightful backdrop for the opera's happy ending.

Creative Team

LA Opera Music Director James Conlon will conduct the LA Opera Orchestra. The production is directed by Bruce Lemon, Jr., who makes his company debut. A Los Angeles native, Mr. Lemon is the Artistic Director of Watts Village, Associate Artistic Director/Ensemble Member with Cornerstone Theater Company and an Illyrian Player.

Sets and projections are designed by Hana S. Kim, whose previous LAO credits include *Wonderful Town*. Costumes are designed by Misty Ayres and lighting is designed by Pablo Santiago. The choreographer is Andrea Beasom. Ariane Helou serves as dramaturg for the production, which takes place at the Colburn School's Zipper Hall (with no audience members physically present).

About the Composer

Joseph Bologne was born in 1745 on the French Caribbean island of Guadeloupe, the son of an enslaved woman of Senegalese origin and a French plantation owner. When Joseph was eight, his father sent him to France to be educated, and he remained there for most of his life.

He first came to fame as the best fencer in France. At the age of 17, Joseph was made an officer of the king's guard and given the title "Le Chevalier de Saint-Georges."

He began his professional career as a musician with Les Concerts des Amateurs. He made a sensational debut as a soloist with that orchestra in 1772, playing two violin concerti of his own composition. The following year, he was named the orchestra's conductor. Under his leadership, it became regarded as the finest orchestra in Paris and one of the finest in all Europe.

In 1781, Bologne became director of a newly formed orchestra, Le Concert Olympique. He notably conducted the world premieres of Haydn's six "Paris Symphonies" with that orchestra in

1786. Throughout this decade, he composed string quartets, violin concertos, *symphonies concertantes*, operas and other works.

When the French Revolution broke out, he distinguished himself as a war hero. In 1791 he was appointed the colonel of the Légion Franche de Cavalerie des Américains (American Free Legion of Calvary), which was composed mostly of men of color; it soon became known as the Légion Saint-Georges. After the Revolution, his close ties to the aristocracy made him the object of suspicion. He was jailed without a trial in 1793, on false charges, for nearly a year.

In 1797, he became director of a new orchestra Le Cercle de l'Harmonie, which he led for the final two years of his life.

About LA Opera

Los Angeles is a city of enormous diversity and creativity, and LA Opera is dedicated to reflecting that vibrancy by redefining what opera can be with thrilling performances, thought-provoking productions and innovative programming. The communal and curative power of opera is needed now more than ever before, especially given the extraordinary challenges of the time. As LA Opera awaits its cue to return to the stage with world-class productions in person, the company is offering a multitude of opera content including live recitals, opera broadcasts and learning opportunities via its *LA Opera On Now* (formerly *LA Opera at Home*) digital offerings, which has accumulated over 750,000 views since its launch on March 17, 2020. The company is grateful to its supporters for helping to ensure that it has the resources needed to get through this unprecedented period through the LA Opera Relief Fund. Those wanting to support LA Opera can visit LAOpera.org/donate.

LA Opera's production of *The Anonymous Lover* is made possible with generous support from the Colburn Foundation.

LA Opera's young artist program is generously underwritten by the Colburn Foundation, Eugene and Marilyn Stein, and Richard and Lenore Wayne.

About the Colburn School

The Colburn School comprises four academic units united by a single philosophy: that all who desire to study music and dance should have access to top-level instruction.

Units of the School are:

- The diploma- and degree-granting Conservatory of Music, a preeminent training ground for professional musicians
- The Music Academy, a pre-college program preparing musicians to study at top conservatories
- The Trudl Zipper Dance Institute, a comprehensive dance program including the elite pre-professional Dance Academy

- The Community School of Performing Arts, offering a graded curriculum of private lessons and group instruction in music performance, appreciation, and theory for everyone, from the youngest children to adults

Together, these units provide performing arts instruction to more than 2,000 students from around the world, with a renowned artist faculty who serve as invaluable mentors guiding the students' artistic development.

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