

BlueWater to feature Richard King in “All Hail the Horn” on Sept. 16

by Jarrett Hoffman



Friendships: each one is different, based around everything from a mutual career to telling weird jokes. Occasionally both of those come into play, as with hornist Joseph Leutgeb and one pretty famous composer. “Wolfgang Amadé Mozart takes pity on Leutgeb, ass, ox, and simpleton, at Vienna, 27 March 1783,” Mozart wrote on the autograph of the *Concerto No. 2 in E-flat*, K. 417, one of several works he wrote for the hornist.

Whatever the nature of that bond, hornists around the world are grateful for it, including Cleveland Orchestra fourth hornist Richard King. “Mozart’s my favorite composer, and that we horn players happen to have multiple works by him is just wonderful — and lucky,” King said during a recent phone call. “If Mozart’s friend had played the trumpet, then we might not have anything.”

King will take on Mozart’s *Concertos Nos. 1 and 2* during the aptly titled “All Hail the Horn,” BlueWater Chamber Orchestra’s first concert of its ninth season. Conductor Daniel Meyer will lead the performance at the Breen Center in Ohio City on Sunday, September 16 at 3:00 pm. The program will also include Stravinsky’s *Dumbarton Oaks* chamber concerto and Manuel de Falla’s *El Amor Brujo*, featuring mezzo-soprano Corrie Stallings. “I’ve been in the audience before and I’m a big fan of this group, so it’s great to have this opportunity,” King said.

Two concertos sounds like a huge load, but neither piece is long — *No. 1 in D* is around 9 minutes, while *No. 2 in E-flat* lasts about 14. “I figured I’d offer a combination of two of them, and they bought it, so I’m happy,” King said. “The first one is done very seldom because if someone gets an opportunity to play with an orchestra, they don’t usually want

to do something that short by itself. Actually this is the second time I've packaged it with a different piece, but it's a really lovely work. It'll be fun."

Here's a confusing fact: of Mozart's four horn concertos, *No. 2 in E-flat* was actually written first, while *No. 1 in D* was written...last. "Mozart's wife all of the sudden had a dead husband and a lot of unfinished music," King said, laughing. "She wanted to cash it in — and that's another thing we horn players are lucky about."

Unlike its brethren, *No. 1 in D* has only two movements. Even stranger, each movement received a different Köchel number in the first edition of that catalog of Mozart's works. (K. 412 comes before the other concertos, while K. 514 comes after.) "I've read different program notes that say these two movements just happened to be in the same key — they were never intended to be parts of the same concerto," King said.

Another twist in the tale of that work: Mozart passed away before it could be finished, so his student Franz Süssmayr was charged with completing it (as he was with the *Requiem*). King admitted he never knew that "before the days of Google" when he himself was a student. "But the concerto is actually signed, 'W. A. Mozart, 1792,' which is really funny because Mozart died the year before."

That final concerto, "No. 1," is also Mozart's only work for horn *not* written in the key of E-flat. And it's the least difficult: the concertos are noted for becoming easier as Mozart went along. "Maybe Leutgeb was just looking for less of a challenge — I'm not sure if that's true," King said. "But the first concerto that Mozart wrote, the one that's called number two, is certainly more technically challenging as far as pyrotechnics and high notes go."

Looking back on how he's grown with these works, King recalled The Cleveland Orchestra's 2009-2011 performances of Mozart's three operas with librettos by Lorenzo da Ponte. "It was one of the greatest things I've ever been a part of — it's extraordinary music. I realized that this guy was a really talented operatic composer, and that especially the middle movements of the horn concertos, and the quintet for horn and strings, are very operatic. That gave me a little bit more insight into playing them vocally, emulating the human voice."

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