conducting a class or an orchestra, Rutgers' Davis Jerome inspires in audiences a new appreciation for the music of the Austrian composer.

by Bill Glovin

If the unconventional Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart were alive today, he might be garbed like Davis Jerome: bow tie, silk jacket, and sneakers. Like Mozart, Jerome is slight, outgoing, and passionate. Few can wax as poetic as he when expounding on the myth, music, and misconceptions that surround the life of the great composer. "Something in Mozart's music creates great reverence in musicians," says Jerome. "When one plays the music of other composers, one can take liberties. But Mozart is so intimidating because all one needs to do is to play the notes as they are written. Obey the music and Mozart defines it for you."

Before there was the Mostly Mozart Concert Series at Lincoln Center, before there was the acclaimed play and film *Amadeus*, before the 1991 bicentennial celebration of Mozart's death, there was Jerome, a professor of music at Rutgers–Camden who has dedicated his career to popularizing the composer whom many consider the greatest who ever lived. Since founding the Mozart Society of Philadelphia and organizing its performing ensemble, the Mozart Orchestra, in 1980, Jerome, as conductor, has led the orchestra in its mission to publicly perform the Austrian composer's entire repertoire.

Mozart, says Jerome, assimilated a great variety of musical influences and mastered all the forms of his time. In his short life, Mozart

Photograph by Nick Romanenko

produced over 600 works, and, despite the great speed and ease with which he composed, his music shows a continuous growth in purity, grace, and depth, points out Jerome. Of Mozart's 20 operas, 41 numbered symphonies, 27 piano concerti, and the innumerable serenades and other instrumental works, Jerome is most fond of "Symphony No. 29 in A" and "Piano Concerto, No. 18."

How do immortals such as Beethoven and Bach compare with the 18th-century genius? "They may be Mozart's equals as composers, but they do not match his perfection for form," declares Jerome, who traces his fascination with the composer to his youth, when he played Mozart as a young oboist with his hometown's Philharmonic orchestra. "Every composer since Mozart has realized that."

The idea for the Mozart Orchestra and an organization to support it grew out of his early experiences as a performer. "When I played Mozart in large orchestras, many of the details, the incredible nuances and depth, were often lost in the sauce," says Jerome. "I started to think about a way to do justice to what I perceived as his original intentions. Many of my friends and colleagues didn't think the public would support a concert series devoted to the works of a single composer, no matter how great."

Determined to improve the way Mozart's music was heard, Jerome and his wife, Frances, an organist and choir director at the First Presbyterian Church of Lansdowne, Pennsylvania, founded the 375-member Mozart Society of Philadelphia. Jerome then recruited about 15 to 20 of the best freelance musicians he could find in the Philadelphia area for the Mozart Orchestra. Over the past 14 years, the orchestra has mastered and performed almost two-thirds of the composer's repertoire. "We are the only professional orchestra-in-residence at a major university in this country," boasts Jerome.

The Mozart Orchestra performs three subscription concerts each year at the Church of St. Luke and Epiphany in Philadelphia. In 1984, Jerome conducted the American premiere of Mozart's first opera, *Apollo et Hyacinthus* [in Latin]; and, in 1992, he was invited to conduct the Mozart Orchestra in an encore performance of that opera at Lincoln Center. In reviewing the opera, a *New York Daily News* critic wrote that "the performance was, in many ways, outstanding. Davis Jerome conducting the Mozart Orchestra seemed to know his musical manners very well indeed."

Like Mozart, a child prodigy who toured with his pianist sister and composer father, Jerome comes from a family of musicians. His mother was an accomplished pianist, and his father was principal of the Royal Hamilton Conservatory of Music and a church organist in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, where Jerome was raised. He took up the piano at the age of six and the oboe at 10, receiving his first lessons from a local barber who was an accomplished oboist. "I learned right there in his barber's chair," recalls Jerome. "When I had a good lesson, he would reward me by spinning me wildly in the seat."

After demonstrating exceptional ability on the oboe—one of the most difficult of all instruments to play—he was sent to study with Perry Bauman, a world-class oboist with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. He went on to attend preparatory school at the Royal Conservatory of Music, University of Toronto, and later studied at Bauman's and Leonard Bernstein's alma mater, the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. "Oboists are known to be crazy, highly individualized characters because the instrument can be so unstable, so fickle, so difficult to govern," says Jerome. By his midteens, Jerome had not only become an accomplished player, but had learned to construct his own reeds, another difficult demand on the oboist. "An oboe reed is extremely delicate and must be tailored to fit the style of the player. The tying, gauging, and shaping of the reed is almost a medieval art form," Jerome says.

Two experiences during his performing career deeply affected Jerome's view of the world and turned him towards academia. In 1960, while touring through the southern United States, Jerome was appalled to see the treatment the orchestra's African-American and Arab musicians endured. "It was the time of great social unrest in the South," he says. "Our minority members were all treated extremely shabbily. My view of the world changed in places like Oxford, Mississippi."

The orchestra also played at universities across the country, and Jerome was troubled by

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professors displayed toward performers. "I had studied music and had great training, and yet they had this somewhat degrading view [of me]," he says. Determined to bridge the gap between those who teach and those who perform, Jerome returned to Philadelphia to work towards a doctorate in musicology at Bryn Mawr College. Meanwhile, he continued to perform with such ensembles as the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Opera Company of Philadelphia, and the Santa Fe Opera Orchestra. The great conductor/composer Igor Stravinsky, who was artist-in-residence with the Santa Fe Opera at the time, had a great influence on Jerome's view of contemporary music and gave him the advice that he still brings to his conducting: "All you have to do is keep the train on the tracks."

After receiving his doctorate in 1973, Jerome taught at Bryn Mawr, Swarthmore, and Haverford colleges. He spent two years as the director of the Graduate Program in Music at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia before joining the faculty of Rutgers–Camden as chair of the music department in 1976. In the classroom, Jerome is known for his animated style, involving students as if they were performing musicians and conducting lessons with all the attention and skill he lavishes upon a concert presentation. "Teaching, like conducting, is not an act of power, but an act of friendship," he says. "Music is thought and ideas in tones. It's another language and the students are listeners. They don't need to know the technical terms, they need to know the ideas that music can express but that language cannot even name."

Jerome is also known for the parade of live performers like forte pianist Andrew Willis and the jazz group the Mark Kramer Trio he has brought into the classroom over the years. Many students' only experience with classical music is through recordings heard over the radio or adequate. "It's a much different experience than hearing music through electronic fog," he says of live performance. "After musicians play, the students can ask them how they felt, why they played the piece a certain way, and any other question that comes to mind. It brings the human dimension into something that is very often a disembodied art."

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Jerome's creativity in the classroom has earned him almost every teaching award Rutgers bestows, including the Warren I. Susman Award for Excellence in Teaching. In addition to the extremely popular "Introduction to Music" course, Jerome directs the Camden campus's General Honors Seminars and cofounded the Rutgers Summer Music Festival and Institute, a concert and teaching series for young artists at Camden. His colleague, world-renowned early music specialist, recording artist, and associate professor Julianne Baird, says of Jerome, "I daresay that there is not a student on this campus who has not, in some way, been touched by his innovative efforts as a teacher."

Each semester Jerome shows *Amadeus* to his class to introduce his students to the composer and his work. A child prodigy, Mozart won considerable fame but never the popular acclaim or wealth known to other composers. Gentime, Mozart died a poor man and a social outcast at the age of 35. He was buried in a pauper's grave in a cemetery that is now the site of a housing development.

The astronomical success of *Amadeus*—the film won the Oscar for Best Picture in 1984—helped Mozart become more mainstream. "Mozart had long been eclipsed by the more dramatic Beethoven," says Jerome. "In the late 1930s and early 1940s, classical musicians began to reevaluate composers, particularly Mozart and Bach. By the 1950s, many were trying to recapture what they thought Mozart had heard or intended, even going as far as using facsimiles of the original instruments. This swell continued and helped lead to *Amadeus*."

Jerome believes, however, that Tom Hulce's characterization of Mozart as an eccentric buffoon and social misfit went too far. "When the film opened, some members of the Mozart Society wanted to stage a protest outside the theater," he says. "Mozart had a great intellect and an IQ of around 175. No great genius would act like such a brainless, silly fool." Still, as far as popularizing the works of Mozart, Jerome concedes that the film "did infinitely more good than harm."

Each time he shows *Amadeus* to his class, says Jerome, the film has an impact on his students that impresses him anew. "A lot of young people who feel unappreciated or who have had trouble with their parents or their self-worth are able to identify with this great composer," he speculates. "*Amadeus* humanized Mozart and helped turn so many new people on to classical music. The fact that the film took what many of us had been saying about Mozart for so long to the next level is its extraordinary legacy." As is, perhaps, Jerome's. ❑

Bill Glovin is the senior editor of Rutgers Magazine.

LETTERS

OZART MEMORIAL

would like to thank senior editor Bill Glovin for his article "Maestro of Mozart" in the Spring 1995 issue of *tgers Magazine* as well as Dr. Davis rome and his Mozart Society for eir much-appreciated and magnifi- nt efforts. Mozart's music is as enjoy- le today as in the past; it incredible to consider t it has survived more an 200 years without dios, cassette tapes, and npact discs.

I was also interested in dy Schindler's letter in Summer 1995 issue estioning Davis's asser- n that Mozart's unmark- grave is now the site of ousing development. I, was a victim of that oneous tale, until, after ing *Amadeus*, I became essed with a desire to the Mozart grave site. t year, I traveled to zburg, Munich, and nna to explore the ions where Mozart was n, where he practiced music, and where he was eventu- buried.

Manuevering my way through nna, using my fragmentary lan- ge skills and my rudimentary iliarity with the public transporta- system, I managed to find St x's cemetery, about three miles hwest of St. Steven's cathedral. I ecstatic to see that there was no sing development in sight. Upon ring the old cemetery, one sees a ue on the main wall indicating this e the burial site of Wolfgang deus Mozart.

It is true that Mozart was buried in uper's grave and the exact loca- tion is unknown. Constanze Mozart did not visit her husband's grave until 17 years after his death. Because the gravedigger had died three years before, it was impossible for her to find its exact location. But the cemetery provides directions to the general location, where visitors are greeted with a simple but beautiful grave marker.

To convince those who say there is no longer a grave site, I took the photograph [above]. Please let your readers know that there is indeed a place in Vienna to pay homage to the greatest composer who ever lived.

GEORGE A. ARTICOLO (FAS-C)
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As always, I looked forward to reading *Rutgers Magazine* when the Spring issue arrived. I was especially intrigued by the article "Maestro of Mozart," about Davis Jerome, since I am such a Mozart enthusiast. I will now make an effort to attend one of Prof. Jerome's concerts.

However, I cannot help correct an inaccuracy about Mozart's gravesite. It is generally accepted that Mozart died a pauper's death, although recent research may point in another direction. For instance, it was not customary at the time for mourners to accompany the funeral procession to the cemetery outside Vienna's city gates. A few days after Mozart's passing, there was a festive funeral mass, or memorial service as we would call it, in St. Michael's Church, right next to the Imperial Palace. His incomplete requiem was performed there for the first time. That Mozart was buried in a mass grave is, of course, unfortunate, but the site of this grave is well-known and certainly is not anywhere near a housing development. The gravesite is now prominently marked and always decorated with flowers in the St. Marx Cemetery that has been closed to burials since early this century. This cemetery is now lovingly maintained as a park, and benches and walks allow Viennese to spend quiet and reflective hours in the beautiful surroundings of old graves and old trees.

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