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MINNESOTA OPERA PRESENTS THE COMPANY PREMIERE OF *THE ANONYMOUS LOVER* BY JOSEPH BOLOGNE, CHEVALIER DE SAINT-GEORGES

For the first time in over two years, Minnesota Opera presents live, in-person performances at the Ordway with a comic romance about earnest vulnerability and steadfast devotion.

MINNEAPOLIS (January 13, 2022) – Nearly two years after the COVID-19 pandemic closed doors to performances all around the world, Minnesota Opera returns to the Ordway stage for live, in-person performances in February 2022, with Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges' comic romance, *The Anonymous Lover*—the company's first ever presentation of an opera by a Black composer.

This new production is set in the Caribbean, the composer's birthplace, and tells the story of a beautiful young widow who is doubtful she'll ever find love again. When she begins receiving anonymous love letters, her close friend—and secret admirer—feigns amusement while anxiously working up the courage to confess to his role as the sender. Will their journey result in woeful case of unrequited love? Or will true love prevail?

The Anonymous Lover premiered in the private theater of Charlotte-Jeanne Béraud de La Haye de Riou, the Marquise de Montesson, on March 8, 1780. At the time, Chevalier de Saint-Georges was the music director of the Marquise's theater. The libretto was written by Desfontaines and was adapted from a play by celebrated French writer Madame de Genlis. *The Anonymous Lover* is the composer's only completed opera surviving today.

The opera follows the tradition of 18th-century French opéra-comique, which includes singing interspersed with spoken dialogue, as well as prominent dance numbers. Minnesota Opera's production will be sung in the original French with spoken dialogue in English, translated by Minnesota based playwright, Harrison David Rivers.

French stage director Maria Todaro leads this new production. "Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint Georges' extraordinary life, impact and art; his influence on many incredible historical figures; and his incredible success despite the prejudice he faced throughout his life has been the core inspiration for this concept," says Todaro. "Bologne's life was simply remarkable. While *The Anonymous Lover* has gallant charm, romance, and lighthearted themes of love typical of French culture, I cannot help but see him through each note and I cannot help wondering how much of himself is present through the opera."

The Anonymous Lover features Minnesota Opera Resident Artist Symone Harcum as the widow Léontine alongside 2018 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions winner tenor Carlos Enrique Santelli as Valcour, the anonymous lover. Other cast members include Minnesota Opera Resident Artists Aaron Keeney, Leah Brzyski and Joseph Leppek, as well as Project Opera alumna Zoie Reams.

Christopher Franklin (*Thaïs*, 2017 and *Flight*, 2020) returns to conduct this new production at the Ordway Music Theater.

- What:** *The Anonymous Lover*
Music by Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges
Libretto by Desfontaines
Sung in French with dialogue in English (English captions projected above the stage)
- Where:** Ordway Music Theater, 345 Washington St., St. Paul, MN 55102
- When:** Saturday, February 5, 2022 at 7:30 p.m.
Thursday, February 10, 2022 at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, February 12, 2022 at 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, February 13, 2022 at 2:00 p.m.
- Tickets:** \$25-\$225. Call Minnesota Opera Patron Services at 612-333-6669, Monday–Thursday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., or purchase online at mnopera.org/the-anonymous-lover.
- Media:** Digital assets are available on our [Online Press Room](#).

Creative Team

Conductor | Christopher Franklin
Stage Director | Maria Todaro
Chorus Master | Andrew Whitfield
Co-Choreographers | Jennifer Mack, Djenane Saint Juste
Intimacy Director | Doug Scholz-Carlson
Set Design | Stephan Morvaski
Costume Design | Ari Fulton
Lighting Design | Mary Shabatura
Hair & Makeup Design | Emma Gustafson

Cast

Léontine | Symone Harcum*
Valcour | Carlos Santelli
Ophémon | Aaron Keeney*
Dorothee | Zoie Reams**
Jeannette | Leah Brzyski*
Colin | Joseph Leppek*



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*MN Opera Resident Artist
**Project Opera Alum

To learn more about *The Anonymous Lover*, please visit mnopera.org/the-anonymous-lover.

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