

San Francisco Conservatory of Music
Opera & Musical Theater Program

L'Amant Anonyme

(The Anonymous Lover)

Music by
Joseph Bologne
Chevalier de Saint-Georges

Libretto by
Madame de Genlis

Heather Mathews, *director*
Curt Pajer, *conductor*
Michael Mohommed, *choreographer*

Thursday, May 6, 2021, 7:30 PM
Caroline H. Hume Concert Hall

Cast

Valcour	Alex Granito
Ophémon	Keaton Brown
Léontine	Jayne Diliberto
Dorothée	Katherine Ahmann
Jeanette	Kaylee Miltersen
Colin	Michelle Skyler
Bridesmaid	Meghan Jolliffe
Bridesmaid	Kate Julianna
Bridesmaid	Alexa Rosenberg

Orchestra

<i>Violin I</i>	<i>Viola</i>
Archer Brown	Nasr Sheikh
Matthew Vouse	Conor McAvinue
Seunghye Park	
<i>Violin II</i>	<i>Cello</i>
Evan Parker	Julian Bennett
Jaimie Yoon	Eric Yang
Xiaoman Ke	
	<i>Bass</i>
	Christian Hales

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Costume Designer	Robert Horek
Lighting Designer	Cassie Barnes
Wigs and Makeup Designer	Heather Sterling
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Production Assistants	Kyle Tingzon
	Katherine Ahmann

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	Kyle Wilmmore
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	Orly Raveh

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Musical Preparation	Sun Ha Yoon
	Dana Sadava

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SYNOPSIS

ACT I

Valcour has been hopelessly in love with Léontine, a beautiful young widow, for years (aria: “Depuis longtemps” — “For a long time”). With the help of his trusted accomplice Ophémon, Valcour has been showering Léontine with a stream of gifts, flowers and love letters. He has done so anonymously; Léontine had been betrayed by her late husband, and Valcour is certain that she has no interest now in pursuing romance with anyone. To help cover up his secret, Valcour has told Léontine that his heart is closed to love too. Valcour tells Ophémon that he has lost all hope of winning her affections, while Ophémon responds that it is time for Valcour to reveal his secret (duet: “Tant de constance, tant d’amour” — “Such constancy, such love”).

Léontine asks Valcour to settle a dispute she is having with her friend Dorothée. The Anonymous Lover has sent Léontine a bouquet of flowers along with a letter asking her to carry it at a wedding later that day; if she doesn’t, he will take it as a sign that he should stop sending gifts and leave her alone. Dorothée thinks that it would do no harm for Léontine to accept the flowers. Léontine doesn’t want to hurt her secret admirer’s feelings (ariette: “Son amour, sa constance extreme” — “His love, his extreme constancy”), but doesn’t want to lead him on either. Valcour convinces Léontine to carry the bouquet.

Jeannette and Colin, the young couple about to be married, arrive and express their thanks to Léontine (chorus: “Cantons, célébrons notre dame” — “Let us sing, let us celebrate our lady”) for making their wedding possible. They hope that everyone might be as filled with love and joy (chanson: “Jouissez de l’allégresse” — “Enjoy the happiness”) as they are.

When Léontine and Dorothee are alone, Léontine recalls her heartache when her late husband's love grew cold during their brief time together, and how Valcour's friendship helped her get through it.

Back in the garden, Valcour tells Léontine that the Anonymous Lover might very well be watching them nearby at that very moment. He convinces her to call out to her mysterious suitor and ask him to reveal himself. When she does so, Valcour overdramatically—and clumsily—answers that he himself is the tormented Anonymous Lover...a declaration that makes Dorothee laugh at Valcour's "joke" but leaves Léontine strangely confused. Valcour and Ophémon quickly try to convince Léontine that it was all in jest, while Jeannette and Colin are sympathetic to Léontine's obvious emotional distress (quintet: "Que de maux mon coeur ressnet" — "My heart feels such pain").

ACT II

Alone, Léontine laments that Valcour is unlikely to understand her feelings (recitative: "Enfin une foule importune" — "At last this unwelcome crowd") but she wishes that she could unburden her heart to him, since he has been such a trusted friend. Ophémon arrives with news that he has spoken to the Anonymous Lover, and Léontine presses him for details (duet: "Ah, finissez de grâce" — "Ah, go on please") while Ophémon resists, prolonging the conversation while gleefully watching her attempt to conceal her eagerness. Finally, Ophémon describes how the Anonymous Lover worries that it would be impossible for Léontine to love him (aria: "Aimer sans pouvoir le dire" — "To love without being able to admit it"), but that he wishes to reveal his identity anyway.

Léontine agrees to the meeting, but her obvious reluctance convinces Ophémon that she is in love with someone else: Valcour. As she awaits the arrival of her secret admirer, Léontine reflects that her heart is now full of passion (ariette: "Du tendre amour"

— “Such is the power of tender love”), something she never expected. When Valcour shows up, explaining that he’s just there to be her supportive friend, Léontine desperately tries to get him to leave before the Anonymous Lover’s arrival (duet: “Non, je ne puis rien entendre” — “No, I can’t listen anymore”). As Ophémon listens outside the door, Léontine and Valcour finally confess their love for each other as Valcour reveals that he himself is the Anonymous Lover (trio: “Ah, quel trouble” — “Ah, such confusion”).

Léontine tells an astonished Dorothée everything, and they all join Jeannette and Colin for what is now a double wedding (chorus: “Deux nocés à la fois” — “Two weddings at once”). The two couples celebrate their happiness with songs and dances (quartet: “Aimons-nous sans cesse” — “Let us love one another”).

(Courtesy of the Los Angeles Opera, adapted for this production)

Program Notes

Le Chevalier de Saint-Georges, Joseph de Bologne

Born: December 25, 1745, Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe

(French Antilles).

Died: June 12, 1799, Paris, France.

***L'Amant Anonyme* (The Anonymous Lover)**

Joseph de Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges, was a prolific Black composer, violinist, conductor, and swordsman. Though largely overshadowed in music history, he was head of the prestigious *Concert des Amateurs*, wrote extremely popular and influential *symphonies concertantes*, composed some of the first French string quartets, and conducted the Parisian premiere of several Haydn symphonies. His legacy as a sword fighter has lived on, eventually spawning an exciting — if not entirely accurate — romantic adventure novel based on his life.

After becoming the conductor of the *Concert des Amateurs*, Bologne, along with several other artists, made a bid to take over the financially failing Paris Opera. This bid was dismissed, however, when King Louis XVI fully nationalized the institution. Despite this setback, Bologne became obsessed with the genre, writing several before leaving music to become a professional revolutionary with his patron, the Duke d'Orleans.

His operatic works achieved modest success, with the most popular receiving a typical number of performances, but were always less prominent than his instrumental works. Most of his works in the genre with the exception of *L'Amant Anonyme*, survive only in fragments or are completely lost to time. As Bologne's accomplishments and importance are now being gradually recovered, this is only the third production of *L'Amant* to take place in the United States and the first to be fully produced (with sets, orchestra, costumes, etc.).

Program Notes

L'Amant Anonyme is an *opéra comique*, a mid-eighteenth century genre inspired by various traditions such as the French *vaudeville* and *ballet*, the English theatrical plays, and the Italian *opera buffa*. *L'Amant* is structured as such – interspersed with creative dialogues, moving arias, grand ensembles, and majestic dances.

Bologne's musical style in *L'Amant* is consistent throughout the opera, generally conforming to mid-eighteenth century galant style that features simple, graceful, and lyrical melodies that use the full extent of the vocal range. Supporting these beautiful vocal lines is an orchestral accompaniment that moves in simple diatonic progressions. Ensemble movements drive the story, either with busier accompaniments in joyful moments, or longer melodic lines with short chordal accompaniments in intimate moments.

While such musical characteristics are sometimes described as Mozartean, Bologne was actually born eleven years before Mozart. The younger composer's musical style is in large part a product of artistic encounters during his trips abroad. In this context it is worth noting that Mozart met and lived in the same house as Bologne in Paris in 1778, so his influence on Mozart cannot be discounted.

With its light-hearted plot and elegant music, Bologne's *L'Amant Anonyme* stands as a welcome contribution to and expansion of the eighteenth-century opera repertoire, one that further illuminates a remarkable composer and his place in the diverse musical world of his time.

Terrence Martin, PSD '21

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“Our son, Corry, was an exceptional cellist and human being who thrived in SFCM’s collaborative, close-knit environment. When his life was cut short too soon in 2002, we created the Memorial Corry A. Rankin String Scholarship at SFCM to give future students the opportunity to excel musically and personally. We are proud to give annually to this scholarship in Corry’s memory.”

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*If we have made a mistake in our listings, please accept our apologies and let us know at 415-503-6210 or giving@sfcmedu so we may correct it.

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