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*Haydn in
Esterházy*

First Church of Christ, Scientist
Central Park West at 68th Street, NYC

Saturday, 3 March 2018, 7:30 PM

EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK

FREDERICK RENZ - DIRECTOR

violins

Daniel Lee - concertmaster
Nicholas DiEugenio - principal
Chloe Fedor
Kate Goddard
Toma Iliev
Jeremy Rhizor
Chiara Stauffer

violas

Rachel Evans - principal
Jessica Troy

basses

Ezra Seltzer, violoncello - principal
Hannah Collins, violoncello
David Chapman, double bass violone

transverse flute

David Ross

oboes

David Dickey & Caroline Giassi

bassoon

Benjamin Matus

natural horns

Alexandra Cook & Sara Cyrus

Special thanks to Leanne Mahoney - First Church of Christ, Scientist
Board Member and House Committee Chair

Genial Kapellmeister

Sinfonia, H.I:34 ca.1766
Adagio
Allegro
Menuet & Trio
Presto assai

Notturmo, H. II:27 1788-90, rev. 1792
Largo
Allegro
Adagio
Finale: Vivace assai

David Ross and David Dickey

interval

Overture: L'isola disabitata, H.Ia:13 1779
Largo
Vivace assai
Allegretto
Vivace

Sinfonia - "Roxelane," H.I:63, version 2 1779
Allegro
Allegretto o più tosto allegro
Menuet & Trio
Finale: Presto

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Joseph “Papa” Haydn drew upon an inexhaustible well of creativity to make revolutionary contributions to the development of the symphony, among other genres. In the words of Frederick Renz:

“His compositional genius epitomizes 18th-century classical style. Within the scope of a single program, we can explore a wide range of forms and contrasting moods, from ‘Sturm und Drang’ to buoyant positivity. It’s hard to believe all these works flowed from the pen of the same man, though he imbued them all with geniality and his trademark sense of humor. That he achieved so much in relative isolation, while serving the Hungarian royal Esterházy family as Kapellmeister, makes his accomplishment all the more remarkable.”

Celebrated primarily as a composer of instrumental works, Haydn wrote for the theatre as well. Three compositions on the program have a connection to his stage works: in addition to the opera overture, the two bona fide symphonies both contain music repurposed from incidental music he wrote for the stage.

“I was cut off from the world. There was no one to confuse or torment me, and I was forced to become original.”

Thus did Joseph Haydn, with his subtle sense of humor, describe the effect his isolation, while in the employ of the Hungarian noble Esterházy family, had on his development as a composer. Schloss (Castle) Esterházy, the primary family residence for more than three centuries, was in the Austrian city of Eisenstadt, less than thirty miles south of Vienna. However, once Esterháza Palace was built in the Hungarian city of Fertőd, another thirty miles south and east, Haydn spent most of his time there, far from the ‘confusions and torment’ of the cosmopolitan Viennese musical community.

Today a trip from Eisenstadt to Vienna takes about an hour by train; in the 18th century, however, it required a full day by coach...from Fertőd, at least two. Haydn got there, but not often. Increasingly, however, his music did get there, and after the death of Esterházy Prince Nikolaus I in 1790, Haydn moved there full-time.

In 1766, Joseph Haydn was in his early 30s, with a couple dozen symphonies to his credit – not quite yet the “Father of the Symphony,” but maybe its big brother. The four movements of the work we know as **Symphony No. 34** hearken back to an older formal model – the *sonata da chiesa* (“sonata of the church”), following the tempo pattern slow-fast-slow-fast. The nomenclature of the form is not necessarily related to the intended use of the work itself, which may well have originated, in part, as incidental music for *The English Philosopher*, a play by the Italian poet Carlo Goldoni.

(This Haydn symphony is not the same as the one nicknamed “The Philosopher.” That work, No. 22, was composed around the same time, but its moniker – like most such indications – was applied much later, and had no connection with any literary source.)

The first movement of No. 34, a somber adagio, is “a movement of quiet, profound sadness,” according to noted Haydn scholar H.C. Robbins Landon. It is about as long as the three other movements combined, and the only one in a minor key. In the next few years, more minor-key symphonies would follow, heralding Haydn’s *Sturm und Drang* (“storm and stress”) period, a great leap forward in his compositional development.

The biblical King David is reputed to have composed, sung and played the harp. Frederick the Great of Prussia composed and played the flute, and commissioned works by C.P.E. Bach and Quantz. The late King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand played jazz saxophone.

It was Joseph Haydn’s peculiar luck to attract royal patrons who mastered obscure instruments destined for oblivion. Prince Nikolaus Esterházy was an enthusiast of the *baryton*, which had two sets of strings – one for bowing, the other for plucking – and for which Haydn composed at least 175 works.

Starting in 1786, Ferdinand IV, King of Naples, commissioned a series of works for his favorite obscure instrument, the **lira organizzata** – essentially a hurdy gurdy outfitted with organ pipes – which may have been conceived with the saying “Idle hands are the devil’s playthings” in mind: one hand turned a crank, the other played a keyboard.

Technical limitations meant the instrument could only play music written in the keys of C, F or G. Despite this restriction, Haydn – at the height of his creative powers – composed some of his best music for a series of concerti and **notturmi** for two **lire** and orchestra, for the King to perform with his teacher.

The **notturmi** (nocturnes, or night music) contain “an almost unbelievable variety...” according to H.C. Robbins Landon, “from meltingly beautiful slow introductions...to racy final rondos.”

Knowing a good thing when he wrote one, Haydn retained copies of the concerti and **notturmi**. When he needed extra music for his first London sojourn in 1791, he re-orchestrated them, assigning the **lire** parts to flute and oboe, or two flutes; it is these versions that generally are performed today.

The overture to Haydn’s twelfth opera, *L’isola disabitata* (The Uninhabited Island), is virtually a symphony in miniature. The slow opening is “a real introduction to the deserted island,” according to Robbins Landon. A fast section in classic *Sturm und Drang* style, and a following slower one, portray the anguish and the “constancy” of the opera’s heroine, **Costanza**. The fast section returns to raise the curtain.

It will be news to some that Haydn composed an opera, much less twelve. (In fact, there were 16.) But Prince Nikolaus was an opera fanatic, and built a theatre at Esterháza. As Kapellmeister, Haydn had to keep that theatre filled, staging operas by his contemporaries and, occasionally, by himself. Visiting theatrical troupes also performed there, for whom Haydn provided incidental music, some of which he wound up recycling into other works (including the two symphonies we hear tonight).

There are but three other characters in Metastasio’s libretto: Costanza’s younger sister, Silvia; Gernando (Costanza’s husband); and Enrico, a friend he brings with him to the island to search for his wife after a long separation. The name Costanza connotes constancy, faithfulness, loyalty and fidelity. Both Haydn’s Costanza and Mozart’s Konstanze (in his opera *The Abduction from the Seraglio*) embody these characteristics. But who was Silvia?

She was first sung by **Luigia Polzelli** who, with her violinist husband, Antonio, joined the Esterházy musical establishment in 1779, the year the opera premiered. By all accounts a mezzo-soprano of middling ability, she and her husband averted dismissal thanks to Haydn’s romantic interest in her. (It was rumored he sired her second son.)

Luigia clearly was no Costanza...and possibly Haydn was not only the father of the string quartet and the symphony.

Increasingly occupied in the 1770's with his duties as impresario of the theatre at Esterháza Palace, Haydn had less time to compose anything other than opera. Even so, new symphonies were required from time to time, so he increasingly made use of a practice he heretofore had employed only occasionally: re-purposing music composed for other uses.

Symphony No. 63 from 1779, subtitled "**La Roxelane**," is what Robbins Landon refers to as a "potpourri" symphony. The first movement is a slightly revised and re-orchestrated version of the overture to Haydn's 1777 opera *Il mondo della luna* (The World of the Moon).

The second movement is taken from incidental music composed for "Les trois sultanes," a play by Charles Simon Favert that was presented at Esterháza by a visiting theatrical troupe. It depicts Roxelana, the favorite wife of the Ottoman Empire sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. It employs a form that was something of a Haydn specialty - "double variations," wherein two contrasting themes alternate, in increasingly elaborate variations.

Sometime after the symphony's premiere, the third and fourth movements were replaced by freshly composed ones, reflecting changes in Haydn's orchestra (as with the first movement, trumpets, timpani and a second bassoon were eliminated). Especially in the case of the finale, which originally used an earlier symphonic fragment, this suggests Haydn had been pressed for time to finish the symphony for the premiere, and later decided he could do better. We will hear this second version tonight.

Despite its origin as something of a musical mongrel, "**La Roxelane**" was one of Haydn's more successful symphonies, performed in many musical capitals. Necessity, the "Mother of Invention," met her match in Haydn, the "Father of the Symphony."

-- **Daniel Guss**

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