

WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 23 March 2024
7.30pm

Florilegium

Ashley Solomon flute, director
Agata Daraškaitė leader, violin
Gabriella Jones violin I
Alice Earll violin I
Sara Deborah Timossi violin II
Jane Carwardine violin II

Ellen Bundy violin II
Jordan Bowron viola
Elitsa Bogdanova viola
Jennifer Morsches cello
Imogen Seth-Smith cello
Carina Cosgrave double bass

Marta Gonçalves flute
Andrés Villalobos Lépiz oboe
Angelika Stangl oboe
Catriona McDermid bassoon
Gavin Edwards horn
Peter Moutoussis horn

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Symphony No. 6 in D 'Le matin' (?1761)

*I. Adagio - Allegro • II. Adagio - Andante • III.
Minuet - Trio • IV. Finale. Allegro*

Symphony No. 7 in C 'Le midi' (1761)

*I. Adagio - Allegro • II. Recitativo. Adagio • III.
Minuet - Trio • IV. Finale. Allegro*

Interval

Joseph Haydn

Symphony No. 8 in G 'Le soir' (?1761)

*I. Allegro molto • II. Andante • III. Minuet - Trio •
IV. La Tempesta. Presto*

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By 1760, the young **Joseph Haydn**, then 28 years old, had already acquired a considerable reputation in Vienna. So when his patron Count Morzin ran into financial difficulties and had to dismiss him, he was not left unemployed for long. The wealthy Prince Paul Esterházy, himself a fine flautist and passionate music lover, quickly offered Haydn the position of *Vice-Kapellmeister* at his court. Aside from the church choir, Haydn would be responsible for all the music there, including directing the court orchestra, and would also be required to compose any new pieces requested by the prince. He signed his contract on 1 May 1761, and remained in the employment of the Esterházy family for the next thirty years.

According to Haydn's biographer Albert Christoph Dies, it was the prince himself who suggested Haydn should compose a cycle of pieces on the theme of *Tageszeiten*, or the times of day. These became the first three symphonies that Haydn wrote for the Esterházy court, shortly after commencing his employment. Subtitled *Le matin* ('Morning'), *Le midi* ('Noon') and *Le soir* ('Evening'), they are each highly original works, but together form a magnificent trilogy that showcases a huge variety of up-to-date styles and genres. They also display outstanding instrumental writing, featuring long virtuosic solo passages that gave the principal members of the court orchestra ample opportunity to show off their skills and prove their worth.

The first symphony of the trilogy, No. 6 in D 'Le matin', begins with a feature common in many later symphonies but comparatively rare in music of this period: a slow introduction. It depicts the first event of the morning, the sunrise, here represented by the swelling of the music from very soft to very loud as it also rises in pitch. Haydn then moves into an infectious *Allegro*, in which the fanfare-like main theme is first heard in the solo flute before being taken up by the oboe and then the entire orchestra; later on, it is heard again in the horns, rushing in just before the reprise. The winds are absent in the following slow movement, which is in three sections and opens with an ascending scale, possibly representing the moon or Venus at dawn. It exhibits many features reminiscent of Italian Baroque music by composers such as Corelli and Vivaldi, of which Prince Esterházy was especially fond. The third movement, a *Minuet*, is notable for the grotesque solos given to the violone and bassoon in the contrasting D minor *Trio* section, whilst rising scales are again a central feature of the *Finale*, which also includes very difficult extended solo passages for the violin and cello.

The slow introduction to the Symphony No. 7 in C 'Le midi' is even grander than that of *Le matin*, employing stately dotted rhythms borrowed from the courtly French overture style; however, Haydn soon propels us into an exciting *Allegro*. The extraordinary second

movement is really an Italian operatic scena: it begins with the solo violin, accompanied by strings and oboes, playing an anguished recitative filled with pathos and drama, as might be heard in an opera seria by Hasse. This eventually gives way to an exquisite duet with the cello in G major, where the flutes now appear for the first time to provide special colour as they soar over the other instruments. The movement concludes with a remarkable cadenza for the soloists which, unusually for this period, is completely notated in the score, rather than improvised. Following the *Minuet*, which once again incorporates a bass solo in the *Trio*, the *Finale* is in a concerto grosso style, featuring bustling exchanges between groups of soloists and the rest of the orchestra.

Haydn borrowed the theme for the opening movement of the final symphony, No. 8 in G 'Le soir', from a popular tune by Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714-87). It comes from Gluck's comic opera *Le diable à quatre*, where it is set to the words 'Je n'aimais pas le tabac beaucoup' ('I didn't like tobacco very much'). Records show that Gluck's melody was heard at a musical soirée at the Esterházy Palace in May 1761; did the prince perhaps instruct Haydn to use it? In any event, Haydn wields the tune with delightful wit (and, as Daniel Heartz has noted, also makes a few 'improvements' to it!), evoking the atmosphere of an evening in good company, filled with music and dancing. In the second half, he even spins it out into a canon, before building to a whirring climax that is temporarily interrupted by a cheeky E flat, keeping the audience guessing until the end. By contrast, the delicate *Andante* that follows is the epitome of elegant courtly music, whilst the *Minuet* is imbued with an irresistible rhythmic swagger.

In the *Presto finale*, *La Tempesta*, Haydn concludes his symphonic day by depicting a thunderstorm, possibly recalling the 'summer' concerto from Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*. Beginning with the first drops of falling rain, we soon encounter lightning in the form of a descending arpeggio played by the flute (a motif that Haydn would use again 40 years later when depicting a storm in his oratorio *The Seasons*). Thunder follows, represented by *forte* unison passages played by the entire orchestra, and once again Haydn gives his players every opportunity to show off their virtuosic skill in numerous solo sections. The whirring scales and harmonies at the end recall the first movement, thus bringing the trilogy to a thrilling close.

Haydn pulled out all the stops in the *Tageszeiten* cycle to show the Esterházy's what he could do. As the start of a new career with the most important noble family in Hungary, it could hardly have been more auspicious.

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