THE MOZARTISTS

CADOGAN HALL

Tuesday 29 September 2015, 7.30pm

Mozart, Haydn & Beethoven

Mozart	Overture to La clemenza di Tito, K.621
Haydn	Scena di Berenice
	Overture to Windsor Castle
Beethoven	"Ah! perfido", Op.65
	Symphony No.1 in C major, Op.21

Sophie Bevan (soprano)

The Mozartists (leader, **Alison Bury**)

Ian Page (conductor)

Mozart Overture to La clemenza di Tito, K.621

La clemenza di Tito was written in the final months of Mozart's life to celebrate the coronation of Emperor Leopold II as King of Bohemia. The commission had originally been offered to Antonio Salieri, who was too busy to accept. Metastasio's lengthy libretto, which had previously been set by such composers as Caldara, Hasse, Gluck and Jommelli, was shortened by about a third by the Italian librettist and court poet Caterino Mazzolà, and Mozart allegedly wrote the opera in eighteen days, delegating the composition of the recitatives to his student Franz Xaver Süssmayr. The opera was performed in front of Leopold II on 6 September 1791 at the Gräflich Nostitzsches (Estates) Theatre in Prague, the same theatre in which *Don Giovanni* had been premièred four years earlier. It did not receive its Vienna première until three years after Mozart's death, when the composer's sister-in-law Aloysia Weber rather surprisingly sang the role of Sesto.

As befitted the stature of the commission and the opera's place in the composer's canon, the overture to *La clemenza di Tito* is one of the most brilliant and festive that Mozart ever wrote. Although only listeners with perfect pitch would nowadays be conscious of such long-term architecture, it was important to Mozart that his operas should begin and end in the same key, and the choice of C major for this work enabled him in particular to write bright and celebratory music for the trumpets. Unlike the overtures to *Don Giovanni, Così fan tutte* and *Die Zauberflöte*, no slow introduction is deemed necessary, and the grand call to attention with which the *Tito* overture begins calls to mind the opening of another of Mozart's late C major works, the 'Jupiter' Symphony. Resplendently cascading semiquavers in the strings propel the music forward with tremendous verve and energy, and the contrasting second subject provides delightful opportunities for the solo wind instruments.

Haydn Scena di Berenice

On Monday 4 May 1795, Haydn gave his last benefit concert in London. It took place in the King's Theatre, Haymarket, and the programme included his recently composed 'Military' and 'London' Symphonies (Nos.100 and 104) as well as the *Scena di Berenice.* The text for this concert aria, a dramatic evocation of a loving woman abandoned by her partner, is taken from Metastasio's *Antigono*, and the work was specially composed for the celebrated dramatic soprano Brigitta Giorgi Banti, who had come to London a few months earlier.

Banti was born, it is said, the daughter of a Venetian gondolier, at Crema in Lombardy in 1759, and she started out as a street singer before finding fame and fortune in Paris and then London. The musical reminiscences of the splendidly named Lord Mount-Edgcumbe recall how "the most exquisite taste enabled her to sing with more effect, more expression, and more apparent knowledge of her art, than many much better professors; her voice had not a fault in any part of its unusually extensive compass", while on the only surviving copy of the hand-bill for Haydn's benefit concert, an anonymous commentator has written: "Banti has a clear, sweet, equable voice, her low & high notes equally good, her recitative admirably expressive".

To judge from the range and demands of the music Haydn wrote for her in the *Scena di Berenice,* Banti must indeed have been a most accomplished artist, and yet she seems to have had an off-night at the 4 May concert, for the composer wrote in his diary that "she sang very scanty". Nevertheless, Haydn was delighted with the overall success of the concert: "The hall was filled with a distinguished audience. The whole society was extremely pleased, and so was I. I netted four thousand florins on this evening. This one can make only in England". Three months later, after much procrastinating, Haydn reluctantly left London to return to Vienna.

The text of the *Scena di Berenice* is taken from Act 3, scene 7 of Metastasio's *Antigono*, a libretto which had originally been set by Hasse in 1743 and subsequently by over thirty composers, including Jommelli (1746), Gluck (1756), Traetta (1764) and Paisiello (1785). Although betrothed to Antigono, Berenice is actually in love with his son, Demetrio. Torn between his feelings for Berenice and his filial duty, Demetrio can see no way out of his predicament, and has resolved to kill himself. In "Berenice, che fai?" the disconsolate heroine deliriously laments her fate and longs to die alongside her beloved.

Haydn's setting of the scene ostensibly comprises two recitatives and two arias, but the effect is in practice far more organic and unified. The opening music is full of dramatic contrasts – from the string tremolo depicting Berenice's icy shivers to the serene oboe and bassoon melody as she imagines the gods' contentment at her lover's death and vows to accompany him to the dark shadows of the river Lethe – and this recitative leads directly into the first aria, a tranquil yet impassioned largo in E major. A short linking recitative prefaces the final allegro, a fiery and virtuosic number which races headlong to its frenzied conclusion.

Recitativo
Berenice, che fai? Muore il tuo bene,
Stupida, e tu non corri? Oh Dio! Vacilla
L'incerto passo; un gelido mi scuote
Insolito tremor tutte le vene,
E a gran pena il suo peso il piè sostiene.

Dove son? Qual confusa
Folla d'idee tutte funeste adombra
La mia ragion? Veggo Demetrio: il veggo
Che in atto di ferir… Fermati! Vivi!
D'Antigono io sarò. Del core ad onta
Volo a giurargli fè: dirò che l'amo;
Dirò…

Misera me, s'oscura il giorno,
Balena il ciel! L'hanno irritato i miei
Meditati spergiuri. Ahimè! Lasciate
Ch'io soccorra il mio ben, barbari Dei.
Voi m'impedite, e intanto
Forse un colpo improvviso…

Ah, sarete contenti; eccolo ucciso.
Aspetta, anima bella: ombre compagne
A Lete andrem. Se non potei salvarti
Potrò fedel… Ma tu mi guardi, e parti?

Aria
Non partir, bell'idol mio:
Per quell'onda all'altra sponda
Voglio anch'io passar con te.

Recitativo
Me infelice! Che fingo? Che ragiono?
Dove rapita sono
Dal torrente crudel de' miei martiri?
Misera Berenice, ah, tu deliri!

Aria
Perché, se tanti siete,
Che delirar mi fate,
Perché, non m'uccidete,
Affanni del mio cor?

Crescete, oh Dio, crescete
Finché mi porga aita
Con togliermi di vita
L'eccesso del dolor.

Recitative
Berenice, what are you doing? Your beloved is dying,
and yet you, like a fool, do not run to him? Oh God,
my uncertain footsteps falter! A strange,
icy chill courses through my veins, and
only with great pain can my feet support their burden.

Where am I? What muddled
folly of dark thoughts clouds
my reason? I see Demetrius: I see him
in the act of striking… Stop! Live!
I shall marry Antigono. In spite of my heart,
I fly to swear my fidelity to him. I shall say I love him;
I shall say...

Wretched me! The daylight fades,
the heavens flash with lightning! My intended perjury
has angered them. Alas! Let me
come to the aid of my beloved, cruel Gods!
You block my way, while perhaps
some sudden blow…

Ah, you will be content: behold him, killed.
Wait, my beloved soul-mate; let our shades go as
companions to Lethe. Though I was unable to save you,
I can still be faithful… But you look at me, and leave?

Aria
Do not go, my beloved;
I too want to cross that river
to the other side with you.

Recitative
Unhappy me! What am I pretending? What am I
thinking? Where am I dragged off to
by the cruel torrent of my anguish?
Wretched Berenice, ah, you are delirious!

Aria
Why, since you are so numerous,
you who cause me to rave,
why do you not kill me,
torments of my heart?

Increase, oh God, increase,
until the surfeit of grief
at least comes to my aid
by taking away my life.

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Haydn Overture to Windsor Castle

The German violinist, composer and impresario Johann Peter Salomon was born in Bonn in February 1745, in exactly the same building – Bonngasse 515 – where Ludwig van Beethoven was to be born a quarter of a century later. He was employed as a court musician, firstly in Bonn and then in Rheinsberg, before moving in 1781 to London, where he established himself as one of the leading figures on the musical scene. Salomon is best remembered today for his role in bringing Haydn to London (he was also attempting to bring Mozart to the English capital, but if any discussions were productive they were scuppered by Mozart's death in 1791), and for leading the orchestra which premièred Haydn's 'London' symphonies.

In 1791, during the first of his two visits to London, Haydn composed an opera called *L'anima del filosofo*, an elaborate setting of the story of Orpheus and Eurydice with fiercely virtuosic arias and grand choruses. In the event it was never performed (indeed, rather astonishingly, the work was not premièred until 1951, when the cast included Maria Callas and Boris Christoff), but the overture was used four years later as the overture for an opera by Salomon entitled *Windsor Castle.* This opera was staged at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden during April 1795, as part of the celebrations for the marriage of the Prince of Wales (the future George IV) to the Princess of Brunswick. Unfortunately for the Princess, her husband had already secretly married Mrs Fitzherbert (being a Catholic, her marriage to the Prince could not be revealed without barring him from the throne), but despite this unusual encumbrance the Princess was to bear George a daughter, Charlotte.

Salomon did subsequently compose his own overture for *Windsor Castle* – it was customary for composers to leave the composition of the overture until last, and maybe Salomon ran out of time in the run up to the opera's first performance. Haydn's overture, though, provided a dynamic opening for the opera's first performances. It begins with a slow, sombre introduction in C minor before launching into a fast, ebullient main section in C major.

Beethoven "Ah! perfido… Per pietà, non dirmi addio", Op.65

Like Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito*, Beethoven's great concert aria "Ah! perfido" was composed (or at least completed) in Prague. Born in Bonn in 1770, Beethoven had settled permanently in Vienna in 1792, and by 1796 he had established an outstanding reputation as a pianist. Early in that year he set out on a concert tour of Prague, Dresden, Leipzig and Berlin, arranged by his wealthy patron Prince Lichnowsky. It was intended to last for six weeks but in the event took six months.

"Ah! perfido" was dedicated to the Prague singer and patron Countess Josephine de Clary, but it was first performed by Josefa Dušek, for whom Mozart had written two of his greatest concert arias, and it was surely for this celebrated Czech soprano that Beethoven conceived the work. As with Haydn's *Scena di Berenice*, written the previous year, "Ah! perfido" is a lengthy and highly charged dramatic monologue delivered by a distraught lover, this time an abandoned one. Again the text for the opening recitative is by Metastasio – this time from a widely admired soliloquy in *Achille in Sciro* – but the source of the anonymous text for the ensuing aria has not been identified; perhaps it was penned specifically for Beethoven's composition. The work was not published until 1805, hence its misleadingly high opus number.

Recitativo
Ah! perfido, spergiuro,
Barbaro traditor, tu parti? E son questi
Gl'ultimi tuoi congedi? Ove s'intese
Tirannia più crudel? Va', scellerato!
Va', pur fuggi da me, l'ira de' Numi
Non fuggirai. Se v'è giustizia in ciel,
Se v'è pietà, congiureranno a gara
Tutti a punirti! Ombra seguace!
Presente, ovunque vai,
Vedrò le mie vendette; io già le godo
Immaginando; i fulmini ti veggo
Già balenar d'intorno. Ah no! ah no! fermate,
Vindici Dei!
Risparmiate quel cor, ferite il mio!
S'ei non è più qual era, son' io qual fui;
Per lui vivea, voglio morir per lui!

Aria
Per pietà, non dirmi addio,
Di te priva che farò?
Tu lo sai, bell'idol mio,
Io d'affanno morirò.

Ah crudel! tu vuoi ch'io mora!
Tu non hai pietà di me?
Perchè rendi a chi t'adora
Così barbara mercé?
Dite voi, se in tanto affanno
Non son degna di pietà?

Recitative
Ah, faithless, false-hearted,
barbarous traitor, are you leaving me? And are these
your last farewells? Where was
more cruel tyranny ever known? Go, villain!
Go, fly from me, then, but you shall not escape
the anger of the gods. If there is justice in heaven,
if there is mercy, they will all compete with each other
to punish you! Like a ghost
haunting you wherever you go,
I shall be there to see my vengeance: I already rejoice
at the prospect; I already see lightning
flashing around you. Ah no! Ah no! Wait,
you avenging gods!
Spare his heart, strike mine instead!
Though he is not what he was, I am unchanged;
I lived for him, for him I wish to die!

Aria
For pity's sake, do not say farewell to me;
deprived of you what would I do?
You well know, my beloved,
that I would die of grief.

Ah, cruel one! Do you want me to die?
Have you no pity for me?
Why do you so harshly repay
the one who adores you?
Say, all of you, whether in such distress
I am not worthy of pity?

Beethoven Symphony No.1 in C major, Op.21

1.Adagio molto – Allegro con brio 2. Andante cantabile con brio 3. Menuetto: Allegro molto e vivace 4.Adagio – Allegro molto

The composition of Beethoven's first symphony spanned the last weeks of the eighteenth century and the first weeks of the nineteenth. He had first started planning the composition of a C major symphony as early as 1795, but in the event the main bulk of the first symphony was written relatively quickly, with only the finale making use of previous sketches. This in itself is telling, for this symphony already hints at a shift that was to develop throughout Beethoven's symphonies whereby the final movement, rather than the opening one, carried the greatest import and dramatic thrust.

Despite Count Waldstein's famous description of the young Beethoven "receiving the spirit of Mozart from the hands of Haydn", it would come as no great surprise if we were somehow to discover that Beethoven had consciously waited for the dawn of the new century to unveil a symphony to the world for the first time, for his view of his role as a composer and an artist was quite different to that of his illustrious predecessors. To borrow and re-apply the words of Bill Shankly, the composition of a work as significant and substantial as a symphony was not for Beethoven a matter of life and death – it was far more important – and he seems to have been altogether more conscious than Haydn or Mozart that his music would outlive him and secure him a permanent position in posterity. He had deliberately waited until he had been composing for over a decade before he felt ready to designate any work as his Opus 1 (in the event a group of three piano trios took the honour), and in this context it seems entirely fitting that Beethoven should have waited until his thirtieth year to write his first symphony.

Despite all of this, though, we should resist the temptation to assess and listen to Beethoven's first symphony with the benefit of hindsight, viewing it as the harbinger of greater and more startling works that were to follow. As with all great works of art, it is best understood and appreciated by approaching it from the perspective and context in which it was first conceived. Such an approach in no way diminishes the work's freshness and originality – if anything it draws greater attention to them.

Beethoven had first come to Vienna in April 1787, seemingly with the specific purpose of studying with Mozart, but within two weeks he was returning home to Bonn, summoned by his drunkard father to attend to his sick mother (she died three months later from tuberculosis). By the time he returned to Vienna in November 1792, this time to stay for good, Mozart too had died. The twenty-one year old Beethoven immediately began studying with Haydn, but their working relationship was not a successful one. Beethoven felt he required more discipline and criticism than Haydn was prepared to provide, and when Haydn left for his second visit to London Beethoven remained in Vienna, studying not only with Johann Georg Albrechtsberger (the deputy appointed by Haydn in his absence) but also with Johann Schenk (to whom Beethoven had turned in secret to provide the rigour he felt had been lacking from Haydn's tuition).

By the turn of the century Beethoven had established an enviable reputation in Vienna as a prodigiously gifted, even demonic, keyboard virtuoso, but despite an increasingly accomplished and visionary portfolio of compositions he still needed to spread his reputation as a composer. The benefit concert which he gave at the Burgtheater on 4 April 1800 was his own promotion, and was designed to address this issue. It began with a symphony by Mozart (we do not know which one, but given the tonal structure of the concert it is likely to have been one of his mature C major symphonies, No. 34, 36 or 41), and also included an aria and a duet from Haydn's *The Creation*, one of Beethoven's first two piano concertos (probably the so-called No.1, again in C major, which had actually been composed after the so-called No.2) and the first performance of his popular Septet, Op.20; Beethoven then gave one of his famously gargantuan improvisations on the piano, before finishing with the première of the first symphony. First-hand reports of this important musical event are scarce, but a delayed report in the Leipzig Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung described it as "truly the most interesting concert in a long time".

It is telling that Beethoven preceded his new symphony with performances of masterful late works by Mozart and Haydn, for in so doing he seems to have been positioning himself as the natural successor to the great Viennese tradition (perhaps mindful of Haydn's concerns that the boldness, force and harmonic daring of Beethoven's C minor piano trio, Op.1, no.3 might alienate Viennese audiences). Nonetheless, a glance at the opening of each movement is enough to reveal a bold and assertive new symphonic voice. Though not perhaps sounding quite so revolutionary and ambiguous to modern ears, the symphony's opening famously launches us into the 'wrong' key, and it is not until the sixth bar that the home key is established. The andante begins with the second violins, pianissimo, playing a theme entirely on their own for six bars before violas and cellos join in, while the next movement, labelled a minuet, is full of the vigour and elemental fire of the scherzos of later Beethoven symphonies – certainly this is not music to be danced to. A unison G for the full orchestra announces the finale, but again our expectations are dashed as the first violins hesitantly assemble scraps of a G major scale. Only when this scale reaches an F natural do we realise that we are heading back to C major, and the accelerated scale passage launches us into the finale proper, an exhilarating and impetuous tour-de-force.

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Violin 1	Alison Bury (Leader) Marianna Szücs Liz MacCarthy Lucy Waterhouse Kristin Deeken George Clifford
Violin 2	Rebecca Livermore Bill Thorp Camilla Scarlett Davina Clarke Naomi Burrell Claudia Norz
Viola	Lisa Cochrane Mark Braithwaite Marina Ascherson Kate Fawcett
Cello	Joseph Crouch Jonathan Rees Gavin Kibble
Double Bass	Cecelia Bruggemeyer Elizabeth Bradley
Flute	Georgia Browne Jane Mitchell
Oboe	Rachel Chaplin Mark Baigent
Clarinet	Jane Booth Sarah Thurlow
Bassoon	Christopher Rawley Inga Maria Klauke
Horn	Anneke Scott Nick Benz
Trumpet	Matthew Wells Phillip Bainbridge
Timpani	Scott Bywater

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