

"The Annual German Carnival of Cacophony" :
What critics called the All-German Music Association in the early 20th century.

Franz Joseph Haydn

In London on Monday 5th December, 1791 "the fog was so thick you could have spread it on bread". We know this because Joseph Haydn noted it in his diary. He was unaware that on the same day his friend Wolfgang Mozart died in Vienna.



Haydn's biographer Dies wrote, "He couldn't understand how it happened that in his life he had been loved by many a pretty woman. They couldn't have been led to it by my beauty".

London at the time was the place for musicians – the public were gripped by "a rage for music" according to some reports. Impresarios of the day tried to convince composers like Mozart and Haydn to perform in the city. None succeeded until Johann Peter Salomon, a German violinist, visited Haydn in Vienna and announced "I am Salomon from London and have come to fetch you. Tomorrow we shall conclude an agreement." Which they duly did – Haydn left for London on 15th December, 1790.

He arrived on January 1, 1791. He was quite pleased with himself for not vomiting on the voyage, but noted that he needed two days to recover. "My arrival caused a great sensation," he wrote. "Everyone wants to know me... if I wanted I could dine out every day, but first I must consider my health, and second my work."

Certainly his hard work paid off. During his stays in London he was awarded a doctorate from Oxford University and made a fortune. His earnings from a single concert were said to be more than twice his savings for his whole life before then. King George wanted him to stay, and offered him a suite of room at Windsor Castle, which Haydn declined.

Haydn had married the elder sister of the woman he loved in 1760. The union was not ideal - he referred to her as "that infernal beast", and they lived apart as she became jealous of his numerous affairs. His love life obviously took a turn for the better in London. He received a letter: "Mrs. Schroeter presents her compliments to Mr. Haydn, and informs him, she is just returned to town, and will be very happy to see him whenever it is convenient for him to give her a lesson. James str. Buckingham Gate. Wednesday, June 29th 1791."

If you'd like to know more about this affair, visit http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rebecca_Schroeter.

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On the other hand, when I give it closer thought, I realize I'm not enough of a dictator to conduct an orchestra because it requires a pretty awful person. When you read these biographies of famous conductors, they are all awful people who fail in their private relationships.

- Eberhard Weber

Haydn was a prolific and innovative composer – a total of 1,195 of his works survive.

He composed 160 trios for the baryton – an interesting instrument with six bowed and 12 plucked strings – you will find a visit to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZApJANZjl0> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BB3-N9vVWjw> both interesting and rewarding.



A baryton

He is generally credited with creation of the string quartet, in which each instrument is equal and independent. The *Razor Quartet* is so-called because Haydn told an English publisher “I would give my best quartet for a good razor,” which the publisher duly supplied in return for the rights.

Haydn told Mozart’s father Leopold that “Before God and as an honest man, I tell you that your son is the greatest composer known to me, either personally or by reputation.” Many say that Mozart was inspired by the power of Haydn’s mature quartets. He dedicated six string quartets to Haydn.

Haydn’s Trumpet Concerto was his last purely instrumental composition and is considered by many to be the greatest of his surviving concerti. It was inspired by his friend Anton Weidinger, who invented a keyed trumpet in 1793, and premiered the work in Vienna in 1800.

Haydn was paid £1,200 by Salomon to compose and direct a number of pieces – an opera, six symphonies and a number of lesser works. On his second visit he presented a further six symphonies, but was particularly inspired when he heard Handel’s oratorios. Salomon gave him an English libretto based on the book of Genesis, which Haydn had translated into German for what is probably his most performed work, *The Creation*.

In *Choral Masterpieces* the choir will sing two pieces from *Creation* – *Achieved is the glorious work* and *The heavens are telling*.

After playing Chopin, I feel as if I had been weeping over sins that I had never committed, and mourning over tragedies that were not my own.

- Oscar Wilde, 1891

Opportunity knocks!

In 1876, Wagner presented the first complete performance of his *Ring* cycle, in his opera house in Bayreuth. It was attended by emperors and kings and other European royalty. Also there were Liszt, Tchaikovsky, Grieg and Gounod.

In 1906, in the city of Graz, Richard Strauss conducted his opera *Salome*. In attendance were Puccini, Mahler and his wife Alma, Schoenberg, Berg and the widow of Johann Strauss. Even Hitler claims to have been there. That night at the Hotel Elephant, Strauss was joined by a group that included Mahler, Schoenberg and Puccini.

Wouldn’t it have been great to be part of any of these historic occasions! Opportunities like that don’t happen very often.

However, you can hear the music of Handel, Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Faure and Vaughan Williams in one afternoon, when the Newcastle University Choir presents a concert of Choral Masterpieces in the Great Hall at 2pm.

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If we all worked on the assumption that what is accepted as true were really true, there would be little hope of advance.

- Orville Wright (1871-1948), co-inventor of the first successful airplane

There’s just no pleasing some people...

Richard Strauss premiered his *Symphonia Symphonica* in America, where it proved to be so popular that two extra performances were scheduled. The venue was the fourth floor of Wanamakers, one of the biggest department stores in New York. The store was a regular venue for concerts, and featured regular performances by prominent artists.

The *Times* reported that there were more than five thousand in the audience – “There was... an eager desire to hear the great German composer conduct his own compositions”.

Of course, this success was not acceptable to the European cognoscenti, who opined that Strauss was so desperate for the dollar that he would perform in a supermarket.

Cacophony is edited by Peter McCloy on behalf of the Newcastle University Choir, who do not necessarily share the views of the editor. To contribute or to communicate, email us at newsletter@newcastleuniversitychoir.com

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