



On Sunday afternoon, 19 May 2024 at 2:30 pm the Newcastle University Choir (NUC) will perform *Power and Elegance* at Christ Church Cathedral. The program will include works composed by two of the greatest classical composers from the 18th Century: Mozart and Haydn.

Tickets are \$45 adult, \$40 Concession, and \$25 Student. They can be obtained from www.TryBooking.com or at the door. We cannot accept ticket orders by telephone.

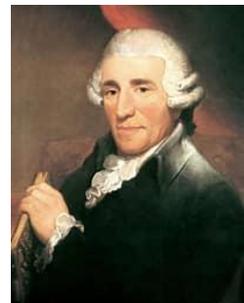
Our Musical Director, Dr Christopher Allan, will conduct the Choir and supporting orchestra. The soloists are Marion Maroney (Soprano), Caroline Hill (Mezzo-Soprano), Daniel Wheeler (Tenor), and Nicholas Geddes (Bass). The orchestra is the strings from Christchurch Camerata.

Both composers overlapped in life and location. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in Salzburg in 1756, and died in Vienna in 1791. Franz Joseph Haydn was born in Rohrau, Austria in 1732 and died in Vienna in 1809. Much of their composing occurred during the Classical Era, a golden age for classical orchestra

choral music and opera. Major developments include simplification of the relationship between choruses, soloists and orchestra compared to the previous Baroque period. Extended harmonic contrasts brought a whole new spectrum to classical music. Yet the composing approach from these two composers are very different in detail.



W.A. Mozart



F.J. Haydn

The first half of the concert will feature choral works and solos by Mozart. *Ave Verum Corpus* is a short but very popular piece featuring the choir. Translated into “Hail, True Body”, this motet was written in 1791 for Anton Stoll, a church musician, at the Feast of Corpus Christi. The lovely harmonies between choral parts make this one of the most performed classical works of all time.

Two choruses from *Solemn Vespers for a Confessor*, “Laudate Dominum” and “Beatus Vir” are also featured. Composed in 1780 for liturgical mass at Salzburg Cathedral, the work consisted of 6 movements. This was Mozart’s first choral work composed for this cathedral. Apparently, the description “Confessor” was added later by another to the original manuscript. “Laudate Dominum” begins with soprano followed by chorus. All four soloists intermingle with the chorus in

“Beatus Vir” to create a beautiful music perspective.

Two choruses from the opera *Idomeneo* are included in the first half of the concert. Mozart wrote this opera in 1780, one of his earliest efforts. The opera set in Crete about 1200 BC. Helen has been carried off by Paris triggering the Trojan war. Several Greek kings have allied with Agamemnon to lay siege to Troy. One of those kings is Idomeneo, the King of Crete.

On his way home to Crete, Idomeneo sends some captives ahead - one of which is Illia the daughter of King Priam of Troy. On her arrival in Crete she is rescued from a storm by Idamante - Idomeneo's young son. So begins a love affair. In the first chorus the Trojans and Greeks rejoice together after Illia has sought to have the Trojan prisoners freed.

Meanwhile the King of Crete is caught in major storm at sea. To save his life, he promises the ocean god Neptune to sacrifice the first person he sees upon returning. That person turns out to be his son, Idamante. Idomeneo spends the rest of the opera trying to get out of this promise. Add in a jealous lover and several other characters in for further complexity.

In the final chorus, love has triumphed, Idomeneo's promise is resolved, and the chorus calls on the gods to bless the union of Idamante and Illia. This is the final chorus on the opera. The music is joyous and uplifting, a very positive end to the opera.

Haydn's *Mass No. 10 in C Major (Mass in Time of War)* will feature in the second half of the concert. Haydn composed this mass in 1796 while Austria was organizing a general mobilization of troops. This was the period just after the French Revolution. Austria was at war with France. Haydn's

mass is also called the "Paukenmesse" because of its liberal use of timpani.

Haydn was deeply religious. There is a suggestion that *Mass in C Major* may have been an anti-war concept. However there is no proof, either in the libretto or the music. The work is written for chorus and four soloists, The total performance time is a little over 40 minutes.

The mass is organised along traditional lines as a church mass: Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, Benedictus, and Agnus Dei. The music is beautiful but also sombre and reflective in places. It is also strongly structured, very typical for Haydn's compositions.

For example, the Gloria can be described as a choral symphony. In the middle, the cello and baritone combine in a beautiful "Qui Tollis" which only last 16 bars. The Sanctus begins slowly, builds to an ominous forte for "Pleni Sunt Coeli" before relaxing into "Hosanna in Excelsis". The drums and wind fanfares appear first in the Agnus Dei and continue ominously in the Benedictus. It becomes brighter near the conclusion, almost joyous with "Dona Nobis Pacem".

The structure of the work is different than most big choral masses or requiems. The soloists often sing as an ensemble or have short interjections or commentary within choral sections. There are no long solos. Only the Benedictus features the soloists singing as a quartet, and the chorus in the final few bars.

On Sunday afternoon May 19, the acoustics at the Cathedral will ring with some glorious choral music.

Howard Bridgman, Editor

(References: Wikipedia sites for brief background descriptions; The Oxford Dictionary of Music; Phaidon Book of the Opera)