

Programme notes for Haydn *Te Deum*, Mozart *Requiem*, Rheinberger *Organ Concerto No. 2*

Te Deum in C, HobXXIIIc/2

Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)

The *Te Deum* which begins tonight's concert is a comparatively late work of Haydn, being composed in 1799. In 1790, when Prince Nicholas Esterházy died, Haydn had been the court composer at Eisenstadt and then Esterháza for almost 30 years, having been appointed by Nicholas's father Paul in 1761, and eventually serving under four successive Esterházy princes. The new prince, Anton, had nowhere near the interest in music that his father had had, and almost immediately disbanded the court orchestra. Although Haydn continued to have an official position with a small salary and maintained a somewhat strained relationship with Anton, his only substantial duty was to compose a mass each year for the name day of the prince's wife, Maria Hermenegild. The composer, now in his sixties, was not expected to work on a regular basis, and spent much more time in Vienna than at Eisenstadt or on the rather remote Esterháza estate in Hungary.

Marie Therese, wife of the Austrian emperor Franz I, was a great music lover (one of her favourite composers being Joseph von Eybler, whom we will meet again when looking at Mozart's *Requiem*). She had a fine soprano voice, and Haydn accompanied her in a private performance of *The Creation* at court. She had long wanted Haydn to compose a work for her, but Prince Anton Esterházy was reluctant to allow "his" composer to write for another Austrian court, even that of the emperor. Eventually, however, Marie Therese persuaded him to agree, and Haydn wrote the *Te Deum* in about 1799. The earliest record of its performance, however, was not for the Empress, but at the Esterházy court at Eisenstadt in 1800, when it was sung at a ceremony to celebrate the visit of Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton. Haydn's *Nelson Mass* was probably also performed during this visit, and the two men apparently became quite friendly, Nelson presenting Haydn with a gold pocket watch and he writing a piece for Lady Hamilton which he presented to her with the pen with which he had composed it.

Unlike the masses of both Haydn and Mozart, the *Te Deum* is a comparatively small-scale piece without any solo singers. The key of C major is almost traditional for works which are essentially, uncomplicatedly festive. Only in the harmonically much more adventurous middle section, "Te ergo quaesumus", does a minor key and chromatic harmony predominate, though this soon gives way to a bracing double fugue at "In te domine speravi" leading to a blazingly affirmative conclusion.

Organ Concerto No 2 in G minor, Op. 117

Joseph Rheinberger (1839–1901)

1. Grave
2. Andante
3. Con moto

Joseph Rheinberger can hardly be called a household name, even among ardent lovers of classical music, yet his career and influence deserve respect. Like many composers, he was something of a prodigy; he became parish organist of his town church at the age

of seven, entered the Munich Conservatory at 12 and became a teacher of piano there at 19. In 1867 he was appointed a professor of composition, and became Hofkapellmeister at the Bavarian court in 1877. He remained in Munich until his death in 1901, a few weeks before his retirement from the university, a much respected teacher of many renowned musicians, including Engelbert Humperdinck, Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari and Wilhelm Furtwängler.

Even during his lifetime, his compositions were regarded as conservative. In 1865 he had helped prepare the singers for the premiere of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* at the Court Opera in Munich, despite his dislike of the new music of Wagner and Liszt. However, though his own taste was firmly with the Brahms camp in the rancorous debates about the future direction of German music, he never attempted to force his tastes onto his pupils - indeed, Humperdinck became Wagner's assistant at Bayreuth in the 1870s and wrote in a style heavily influenced by him. In as far as Rheinberger is remembered today, it is almost entirely through his works for organ, though these constitute only about a sixth of his 197 published works, which include 12 masses, several operas and symphonies. He wrote 20 sonatas (of a projected 24 in all the major and minor keys) and two concertos for organ, the second of which is a late work, dating from 1894. It follows the usual three movement form, though it has none of the conflict between solo instrument and orchestra which we expect in a romantic concerto, and no cadenza to allow the soloist to show off his technique. It is scored for a small orchestra of strings, two horns, trumpet and timpani.

Requiem in D minor, K626

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Over the years, a farrago of pseudo-supernatural tosh which could have come straight from the pen of Dan Brown has become attached to Mozart's *Requiem*. The unannounced visits of a mysterious man whom, it must be admitted, the superstitious and terminally ill Mozart regarded with some dread as a possibly supernatural harbinger of death, have led to various highly romantic myths about the circumstances of the *Requiem*'s commissioning. The truth, though highly unusual, is actually quite down-to-earth.

Count Franz von Walsegg was a distinctly odd, but genuine, music lover and amateur composer whose wife had died in the February of 1791. He had a great desire to be regarded as a composer of real merit and came up with the ruse of commissioning a requiem from Mozart and then passing it off as his own work (something he had already done on several occasions with the works of a number of different composers). To maintain his anonymity, an intermediary was used for all negotiations and no mention was ever made as to the identity of the patron. Mozart was advanced half the agreed fee and set to work on the composition, putting it to one side in late August 1791 in order to concentrate on finishing his opera *La Clemenza di Tito*. He returned to the *Requiem* in late September, but his health was deteriorating, and, at his wife Constanze's insistence, the *Requiem* was put aside. He took it up again in late November, but by this time he was seriously ill and died on 5 December 1791, leaving the *Requiem* unfinished. In fact, he had only fully completed the opening Introit and Kyrie, and these two movements were performed at his own requiem mass on 10 December.

Her husband's sudden death and the unfinished state of the *Requiem* were a considerable problem for almost penniless Constanze, especially as half of the fee had

already been paid. Apart from the two movements mentioned, Mozart had completed only the vocal parts of the Dies irae sequence up to the Confutatis, but with only a figured bass. Of the next Lacrymosa movement, only eight bars were written and all the remaining movements were in fragmentary states. She therefore decided to arrange for someone else to complete the work in secret, and pass it off as solely Mozart's work in order to claim the remainder of the fee (given von Walsegg's intentions, there was a wonderful, if unintentional, poetic justice to this plan). Joseph von Eybler, a favourite of the Empress Marie Therese and a friend and sometime pupil of Mozart, attempted to complete it. He worked on the Dies irae, but eventually felt that the task was beyond him, and it was passed on to Franz Xaver Süssmayr. It is another rather nice little irony that Süssmayr was a pupil of Anton Salieri, who, according to the other piece of complete fantasy invented by the Russian poet Pushkin and maintained by Peter Schafer in his play *Amadeus*, murdered Mozart by poisoning him. Süssmayr orchestrated the movements from the Kyrie onwards, completed the fragment of the Lacrymosa and composed the Sanctus, Benedictus and Agnus dei. To conclude the work, Süssmayr adapted the opening two movements into a Lux aeterna (something for which there is no precedent in any other religious work by Mozart, but which both Constanze and Süssmayr claimed was on Mozart's direct instructions). The completed score (with a forged signature of Mozart dated 1792!) was sent to, and accepted by, von Walsegg, though the tragic circumstances of the composition meant that he was unable to follow his original plan of claiming it as his own work.

Much later, when it became known that Mozart had not finished the work, Süssmayr and Constanze claimed that Mozart had left detailed instructions on how the *Requiem* was to be completed on various "little scraps of paper" and that he and Süssmayr had discussed the completion of the *Requiem* in detail. Unfortunately, it is now impossible to tell how much of this was true and how much simply an attempt by Constanze to claim authenticity for the work and thereby keep both the fee and revenue from publication and performances. The original manuscript was lost for many years, but was rediscovered in 1839, allowing us to know with certainty which parts are purely by Mozart. Since then, there has been considerable disagreement about how much of Süssmayr's work is genuinely based on Mozart's intentions, and about the quality of the parts which were completed or fully composed by him. Over the last 30 or 40 years there have been a number of alternative completions, but none has been sufficiently convincing to supplant Süssmayr's completion, which is the version we are performing tonight.

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