

DT501/1 History of Music: Classical/Romantic

Dr Adrian Smith

Lecture 8: Opera/Vocal Music (3)

Haydn's Late Career



- By 1790 Haydn was the most famous composer in Europe.
- International career:
 - received commissions from all over Europe.
 - London visits of 1791-2 and 1794-5.
- Remained composing throughout the final decade of his life which he spent in Vienna until his death in 1809.
- The *Creation* (1797) is seen by many as the crowning achievement of his career.

The Oratorio

- Definition: an extended musical setting of a sacred text made up of dramatic and narrative elements. Usually scored for soloists, chorus and orchestra and intended for concert rather than theatrical performance.
- The greatest influence on Haydn's *Creation* was Handel who composed several oratorios (the most famous being the *Messiah*) that were hugely successful in England.
- Handel's success in this genre can be attributed to:
 - his fusion of Italian opera, the German Passion, and English cathedral and ceremonial music.
 - these works appealed to middle-class audiences and came to be seen as symbols of British nationhood.
- Handel's oratorios were the subject of frequent revival culminating in the great Handel Commemoration festivals at Westminster Abbey 1784 –91.

The Creation: Genesis and composition

- Haydn's London visits of 1791–2 and 1794–5
 - listened to Handel's oratorios *The Messiah* and *Israel in Egypt* at the 1791 Handel Festival at Westminster Abbey.
- Receives Creation libretto from Salomon when leaving for Vienna in 1795
 - libretto originally written for Handel but never set.
 - based on Genesis, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and the Book of Psalms.
- Libretto translated and prepared by the aristocrat Baron von Swieten to form the first bilingual oratorio.
- Premiered in Vienna on 30 April 1798 to great success, followed by performances in London in 1799 and Paris in 1800.
- Became Haydn's most popular work during his lifetime as it remains to this day.



Haydn at a performance of *The Creation* in Vienna 1808

The *Creation*: Overall Structure

MOVEMENT

SUBJECT MATTER

PART ONE

1–2

First Day: creation of heaven, earth, light.

3–4

Second Day: division of the waters

5–10

Third Day: land and sea; plant life

11–13

Fourth Day: sun, moon and stars

PART TWO

14–19

Fifth Day: birds and fish; command to multiply

20–28

Sixth Day: beasts: man and woman

PART THREE

30

Adam and Eve's awakening

31–34

Adam and Eve's mutual love

Haydn's *Creation* and the Enlightenment

- Haydn's religious beliefs
 - simple, optimistic, tolerant faith in keeping with Enlightenment philosophy.
- Libretto is deistic in outlook emphasising the wonders of God's creation and the exalted status of man as lord of the earth
- There is little reference to the burden of sin and the only references to 'The Fall' are in Nos. 27 and 33.

'O happy pair, and always happy yet, if not misled by false conceit, ye strive at more, as granted is, and more to know, as know ye should'.
- Capable of appealing to a broad spectrum of people of varying degrees of religious belief.
- Can be considered an Enlightenment work with its optimistic vision of the world and humanity's place at the centre of it.

The Sublime and the Pastoral

- The Burkean Sublime

Sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small: beauty should be smooth and polished; the great is rugged and negligent;...beauty should not be obscure; the great ought to be dark and even gloomy: beauty should be light and delicate; the great ought to be solid and even massive. They are indeed ideas of a very different nature, one being founded on pain, the other on pleasure.

- The Kantian Sublime

Whereas the beautiful is limited, the sublime is limitless, so that the mind in the presence of the sublime, attempting to imagine what it cannot, has pain in the failure but pleasure in contemplating the immensity of the attempt.

- The Pastoral

A term given to a genre of literature, art and music which attempts to depict nature and country life in an idealised manner.

The Sublime in Painting



Caspar David Friedrich: *Northern Sea in the Moonlight* (1824)

The Pastoral in Painting



Thomas Gainsborough: *Landscape with a Distant Village* (c.1750)

Introduction: The Representation of Chaos

- Haydn may have been influenced by the so-called Nebular hypothesis which theorised that the solar system initially consisted of a massive body of gases and dust which eventually cooled and condensed to form the planets and the sun.
- The work begins with a bare unison C to evoke the void which preceded God's creation.
- From this point onwards Haydn proceeds by consistently denying the expectations that he himself had helped establish as norms:
 - in the opening bars tonality appears in a state of flux by the lack of any clear cadence to confirm the tonic.
 - thematic material consists of short fragmentary phrases which remain incomplete.
- Chaos is also represented in the orchestration by the swirling figures in the woodwinds as well as radiant chordal interjections from the woodwind and brass.

No. 1.

REPRESENTATION OF CHAOS.

LARGO. ♩ = 60.

The musical score is written for piano and consists of two systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The tempo is marked 'LARGO' and the time signature is 4/4, indicated by a quarter note equal to 60 beats. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The first system features a complex, dissonant melody in the right hand with many beamed sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and a more rhythmic, accented bass line. The second system continues this chaotic texture with dense chordal structures and rapid sixteenth-note passages in both hands, creating a sense of intense, uncontrolled energy.

Tone Painting: Accompanied Recitative and Arias

- Accompanied recitative originated with Metastasian *opera seria* and was usually reserved for moments of high drama in contrast to the ordinary dialogue of *secco* recitative.
- In the *Creation* Haydn combined the relative formal freedom of this form with imaginative tone-painting to great effect.
 - No. 12: ‘In splendor bright is rising now’, (Uriel).
 - No. 21: ‘Strait opening her fertile womb’, (Raphael).
- Examples of tone-painting also occur in the following arias:
 - No. 2: ‘Now vanish before the holy beams’, (Uriel and Chorus).
 - No. 6: ‘Rolling in foaming billows’, (Raphael).
 - No. 15: ‘On mighty pens uplifted soars’, (Gabriel).

Da Capo Aria Form

- In the early 18th century typical *da capo* aria was structured as follows:
AA'BAA'
or more accurately when considering ritornellos
RARA'R-B-RARA'R
- The first A section which set the first stanza of poetry would begin in the tonic and modulate to the dominant or relative key. The second A section would begin in the new key and then return to the tonic with the ritornellos confirming each key along the way. The B section which set the second stanza would be set in a different key or style often to express a contrasting emotion. After this the first section would be repeated.
- In the later 18th century with the rise of instrumental music and the dissatisfaction with Metastasian *opera seria*, the form of the aria began to take on elements of sonata form.

Aria form: 'With Verdure Clad'

BARS	LINES OF TEXT	SECTION	SUBSECTION	KEY
1–4		A	ritornello 1	Bb
4–16	1–3		a1	Bb
16–18			ritornello 2	Bb
18–36	4–6		a2+colorature and cadence	Bb mod. F
36–38			ritornello 3 and link	F
39–51	7–9	B		db–Db–Ab–bb–V of Bb
52–3		A'	ritornello 1, abridged	Bb
53–65	1–3		a1	Bb
65–67			ritornello 2	Bb
67–87	4–6		a2+ coloratura and cadence	Bb
87–89			ritornello 3 and final chords	Bb

Choruses

- Up until Haydn the chorus in Viennese oratorios was not particularly prominent.
- In his use of the chorus Haydn was heavily influenced by Handel who used it in various ways in his oratorios: as protagonist (*Saul*), narrator (*Israel in Egypt*), at climatic points to praise God (*Messiah*).
- In the *Creation* the chorus chiefly represents the Heavenly Host – God’s army of angels.
- The choruses are primarily used to praise God at the end of the Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth days and at the end of the oratorio.
- No. 28: ‘Achieved is the glorious work’
 - contains a full double fugue creating a complex contrapuntal texture.
 - complexity can be viewed as an attempt to invoke the sublimity and scale of God’s creation.

The Hymn

- In Part Three Adam and Eve appear, invited by the angel Uriel, to join in praise of God with the Heavenly Host.
- Uriel's recitative which precedes their hymn of praise (*Lobgesang*) summons up pastoral imagery in the simple melodies and prominence granted to the three flutes.
- The hymn in C major is the largest number in the work and comprises of a slow adagio introduction, a moderately fast-paced rondo, a concluding chorus with a choral fugue and climax.
- In the adagio, Adam and Eve express their profound thanks and wonder for the 'bliss' they find themselves in. In the rondo allegretto they call upon the other elements in God's creation to join in the praise. The chorus of the Heavenly host joins in at the end of each section to offer general praise.

Prescribed Listening

Joseph Haydn: *The Creation*, Introduction: The Representation of Chaos, Chorus and Recitative

Aria (Gabriel) 'With Verdure Clad'

Prescribed Reading

James Webster, 'The sublime and the pastoral in The Creation and The Seasons' in *The Cambridge Companion to Haydn*, pp. 150–163.

Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, pp. 633–639.

More detailed information can be found in Nicholas Temperley; *Haydn: The Creation* (Cambridge Music Handbooks).