CORO

The Creation
Harry Christophers & Handel and Haydn Society
Sarah Tynan, Jeremy Ovenden, Matthew Brook

Inspired by his trips to England, where he first heard Handel's oratorios, The Creation is widely considered Haydn's crowning masterpiece. The oratorio was premiered in the US by the Handel and Haydn Society in 1819.

“Harry Christophers, the artistic director, led a performance that was brilliant… From the opening through the final, buoyant chorus, Christophers emphasized both the music’s dramatic contours and its almost boundless well of character.” THE BOSTON GLOBE

Symphonies Nos. 6 Le matin & 82 L’ours

Harry Christophers & Handel and Haydn Society
Aisslinn Nosky violin

The first disc in H+H’s Haydn series on CORO showcases two of Haydn’s symphonies. Completing the album is Haydn’s Violin Concerto in G major performed by Handel and Haydn’s fiery and expressive Concertmaster.

“This performance has all the attributes that display this music at its best.” GRAMOPHONE

To find out more about CORO and to buy CDs visit www.thesixteen.com
One of the many delights of being Artistic Director of America’s oldest continuously performing arts organisation, the Handel and Haydn Society, is that I am given the opportunity to present most of our concert season at Boston’s glorious Symphony Hall. Built in 1900, it is principally the home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, but it has been our primary performance home since 1900 as well, and it is considered by many, with some justification I would add, to be one of the finest concert halls in the world. It is that classic ‘shoebox style’ reminiscent of the Musikverein in Vienna; the acoustics are quite superb and, despite its size – c.2500 capacity, perfect for playing on period instruments.

On this live recording, we present a programme devoted to that Master of the Symphony, Franz Joseph Haydn, where you can witness first-hand the development from his early symphony Le midi to his much later Paris symphony La poule. The first concert I ever gave with H+H was at the Esterhazy Palace in Eisenstadt in August 2006, where we performed Le midi in the Haydnsaal on the very stage on which Haydn first performed it for his new employer, Prince Paul Anton Ersterhazy, under the ceiling paintings of Le matin, Le midi and Le soir – a very clever way for Haydn to impress his new employer. These are very much concertante symphonies with the flutes, violin and cello taking centre stage. 30 years later and Haydn’s fame had spread across Europe. Although he was still employed at court, Parisians in particular had taken Haydn’s music to their hearts. Symphony No. 83 shows just how much his symphonies had transformed from those early years, not only in orchestral size but also in individuality. It’s been nicknamed The Hen because of a clucking dotted note motif which first appears on the oboe against which Haydn makes the violins play a jerky appoggiatura theme. Fun, yes, but there is also great drama and theatricality.

Over the next few years, our inspirational concert master, Aisslinn Nosky, will be recording all of Haydn’s violin concertos. They were not even published until the 20th century and sadly are still seldom performed. We are redressing that and, having already recorded his fourth, we continue with his C major concerto. Aisslinn’s stylistic awareness and her inventiveness are a constant delight and inspiration to us all and her rendition certainly brings Haydn’s intentions to life.

I feel very privileged to have taken this august Society into its Bicentennial; yes, the Handel and Haydn Society was founded in 1815. Handel was the old, Haydn the new (he had just died in 1809), and what we can do is continue to perform the music of the past but strip away the cobwebs and reveal it anew. This recording of music by Haydn was made possible by individuals who are inspired by the work of the Handel and Haydn Society. Our sincere thanks go to all of them.

“Impressively, Aisslinn Nosky showed the Hen to be a jazzy, not-so-serious symphony. Her playing was consistently sparkling in its energy and finely attuned to Classical polish and style. Harry Christophers led a vivid reading of the symphonies. He conducted with a firm sense of the music’s theatricality, taking time to shape phrases through various shades of dynamics and occasional accents. The orchestra, following his every move, delivered playing of stirring energy, particularly in the Menuet and Finale.”

Aaron Keebaugh / BOSTON CLASSICAL REVIEW
When Haydn joined the service of Prince Paul Anton Esterházy in 1761, his post as Vice-Kapellmeister carried very clearly defined duties, one of which was ‘to compose such pieces of music as his Serene Princely Highness may command’ for performance at his palatial residences in Vienna and at Eisenstadt, some 25 miles outside the city. In effect, this meant that while the ageing Kapellmeister, Gregor Joseph Werner, looked after the church music, Haydn’s job was to write for and direct a small orchestra recently recruited from among the ranks of Vienna’s freelance players. Haydn himself had formerly made a living in this way, and many members of the band were his friends. One can readily imagine the easy-going composer enjoying a pleasantly relaxed working relationship with the musicians under his command, even if we did not know that in 1765 the jealous, increasingly marginalised Werner wrote to the Prince to complain about ‘the lazy idleness of the whole band, the principal responsibility for which must be laid at the door of the present director, who lets them get away with everything, so as to receive the name of a good Heyden.’
Happier evidence, though, is provided by the fact that ‘Heyden’ was raised to the Kapellmeister’s job on Werner’s death in 1766, and also by the music he had already written for the ensemble, which includes concertos for the violinist Luigi Tomasini, the cellist Joseph Weigl, the double-bass player Johann Georg Schwenda, the flautist Franz Sigl, and the horn-players Johann Knoblauch and Thaddeus Steinmüller. In addition, several of the symphonies of the early 1760s made a point of providing these talented musicians with solo passages, many of which have something of the air of private jokes. These symphonies include the popular trilogy Le matin (Morning), Le midi (Midday) and Le soir (Evening), believed to have been first performed at the Prince’s palace in Vienna in May or June 1761 and thus among the very first works Haydn composed for him.

The titles were Haydn’s own, their use of French a nod to modish afectation. The implied pictorial element is not followed through with any great degree of consistency (most of it being contained in the sunrise and bird-music of the first movement of Le matin), but the solo interventions remain a constant. The first movement of Le midi, after a stately opening for full orchestra, features suave solos for two violins and cello, a combination recalling the concerto grosso tradition of the earlier part of the century, and reminding us that the Esterházy music library contained quite a few works by composers of the Italian baroque. The second movement is among the most striking in these early symphonies, a lugubrious operatic scene with the violin spinning wordless recitatives over a sympathetic accompaniment, then embarking on a pseudo-aria, supported by a cello and a pair of flutes making a late but telling arrival in the piece. There is also an elaborate cadenza for the violin and cello just before the end. Haydn had written no operas at this stage in his career, but this movement is a good early advertisement for his talent (and as H.C. Robbins Landon has pointed out, displays the flavour of the Elysian music from Gluck’s Orfeo ed Euridice, a year before that work was composed). The Menuetto is conventionally polite and courtly, keeping back the fun of an extended double bass solo for the central Trio section, and the bustling Finale returns us to the concerto grosso-like texture of the first movement, this time with added flute solos.

Paul Anton died in 1762, to be succeeded by his brother Nicolaus. Nicolaus turned out to be a sympathetic employer, and when Haydn’s contract as Kapellmeister came up for renewal in 1779 a small change was made that was to have a profound effect on his fortunes. Previously, anything Haydn composed became the exclusive property of the Prince, but from now on this would no longer be the case. The concession not only bestowed official recognition on Haydn’s growing international reputation, it also enabled him to profit from it for the first time by selling his works abroad, where they were already known and admired through unauthorised publications and performances from which he had received little or no income. Ultimately it would lead to the triumphs of the London visits of the 1790s, but for the time being Haydn was happy to work from Austria, maintaining an astute business correspondence with publishers and patrons in Vienna, London and Paris.
It was from the last of these cities that, in the mid-1780s, he received the most prestigious commission of his career so far: six symphonies for one of Paris's most important and fashionable concert societies, the **Concert de la Loge Olympique**. Haydn's music had been enjoyed in Paris for 20 years by the time the commission came, and his high standing among his French admirers is shown by the fact that his fee was 25 **louis d'or** for each symphony, an unusually high figure which the composer himself was said to have found 'colossal'. The symphonies (Nos. 82–87) were written during 1785 and 1786, and supplied in time for performance during the 1787 season. Their premieres must have been quite a spectacle: the orchestra wore sky-blue coats with fancy ruffles and dress swords, and the performances were directed by Joseph Boulogne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges, the West Indian-born violinist, composer and swordsman whose eventful career pretty much sums up the difference between the respective musical milieux of fashionable Paris and the semi-feudal surroundings of the Esterházy palaces.

The six 'Paris' symphonies were received with great acclaim: 'beautiful of character and astonishing in craftsmanship ... Haydn's name resounds to their extraordinary merit', wrote the **Mercure de France**. They were indeed Haydn's finest symphonies for more than a decade, blending an approachable and popular style with an inventiveness and broad emotional range that revealed new possibilities in what was still a relatively youthful genre. Parisian orchestras were generally larger than the little band Haydn was used to back at the Esterházy court – the Loge Olympique's orchestra enjoyed the services of 40 violins and 10 double basses – and it seems likely that the rich expressiveness of the new works was inspired not only by the composer's growing awareness of his respected position in the musical world, but also by the thought of a large ensemble in action.

The first movement of Symphony No. 83 cries out for just such an ensemble. Its upwardly-striding G minor theme and its dramatic silences, for all that they recall the turbulent sound-world of the **Sturm und Drang** symphonies Haydn wrote for the Esterházs back in the early 1770s, certainly benefit from a spacious sonority. But this is an oddly schizophrenic work; G minor passion very soon gives way to a clucking second theme on violins, joined by the first theme's dotted rhythm on solo oboe which in the 19th century earned the symphony the nickname of 'La poule' ('The Hen'); from here on, the music remains predominantly major-mode. As if to compensate for such levity, Haydn follows this movement with a tenderly serious sonata-form Andante in E flat major; but the Minuet and Trio return to an air of playfulness, while the Finale – in G major – is unremittingly good-humoured.

Haydn's concertos do not occupy quite the same crucial position in his output as do his symphonies and string quartets. The latter were nothing less than central to the development both of Haydn as an artist and, by extension, of Western music itself, but the concertos marked no such progress, the burden of the genre's status as the most popular instrumental form of the previous 50 years proving rather hard, perhaps, for
their composer to shake off. As a result, Haydn’s output of concertos – most of which dates from the 1760s – is small and comparatively conservative, for all its charm seemingly content with adopting the received and trusted formal procedures of the baroque.

The C major Violin Concerto, Hob. VIIa/1, which probably dates from the early 1760s, carries the inscription ‘fatto per il Luigi’ (‘made for Luigi’), revealing that it was intended for Luigi Tomasini, the Pesaro-born violinist who had joined the Esterházy orchestra in 1761 at the age of 20 and quickly risen to the position of leader. He also became a close friend of Haydn, who stood as godfather to several of his children, and doubtless also played an important part in the performance and development of the composer’s string quartets. Haydn himself was an experienced violinist, but the solo part of this concerto, while not primarily virtuoso in character, demonstrates in its double-stopping and high-lying writing a level of difficulty which we can assume Haydn was happy to leave to Tomasini. Perhaps Tomasini affected its general Italian flavour as well, for from the first solo of the first movement there are no real themes, but rather a unity of material and a steady momentum that again betrays a stylistic kinship with the concertos of Vivaldi and other Baroque Italians still familiar in Austria at the time.

More high writing dominates the slow movement, with its intricate melody spun uninterruptedly by the soloist over the simplest of pizzicato accompaniments; and the concerto ends with a sprightly and quick-thinking Presto, in which the soloist is a seemingly irrepressible presence.

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Harry Christophers

Appointed Artistic Director of the Handel and Haydn Society (H+H) in 2008, Harry Christophers began his tenure with the 2009-2010 Season and has conducted H+H each season since September 2006, when he led a sold-out performance in the Esterházy Palace at the Haydn Festival in Eisenstadt, Austria. Leading up to the organisation’s 2015 Bicentennial, Christophers and H+H embarked on an ambitious artistic journey with a showcase of works premiered in the United States by H+H since 1815, education programming, community outreach activities and partnerships, and the release of a series of recordings on the CORO label.

Christophers is known internationally as founder and conductor of the UK-based choir and period instrument orchestra The Sixteen. He has directed The Sixteen throughout Europe, America, and the Asia-Pacific, gaining a distinguished reputation for his work in Renaissance, baroque, and 20th- and 21st-century music. In 2000 he instituted The Choral Pilgrimage, a tour of British cathedrals from York to Canterbury. He has recorded over 130 titles for which he has won numerous awards, including a Grand prix du Disque, numerous Preise der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik (German Record Critics Awards), the coveted Gramophone Award for Early Music, and the prestigious Classical Brit Award (2005) for his disc entitled Renaissance. In 2009 he received one of classical music’s highest accolades, the Classic FM Gramophone Awards Artist of the Year Award; The Sixteen also won the Baroque Vocal Award for Handel Coronation Anthems, a CD that also received a 2010 Grammy Award nomination.

Harry Christophers is also Principal Guest Conductor of the Granada Symphony Orchestra and a regular guest conductor with the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields. In October 2008, Christophers was awarded an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Music from the University of Leicester. He is an Honorary Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, and also of the Royal Welsh Academy for Music and Drama and was awarded a CBE in the 2012 Queen’s Birthday Honours.
Handel and Haydn Society

Founded in Boston in 1815, the Handel and Haydn Society (H+H) is America’s oldest continuously performing arts organisation. It celebrated its Bicentennial in 2015 with a series of special concerts, a commemorative book, and an interactive exhibition at the Boston Public Library. H+H’s esteemed tradition of innovation and excellence began in the 19th century with the US premieres of Handel’s Messiah (1818), Haydn’s The Creation (1819), Verdi’s Requiem (1878), and Bach’s St Matthew Passion (1879), among other choral works. H+H today, under Artistic Director Harry Christophers’ leadership, is committed to its mission to enrich life and influence culture by performing baroque and classical music at the highest levels of artistic excellence, and by providing engaging, accessible and broadly inclusive music education and training activities. Its Period Instrument Orchestra and Chorus are internationally recognized in the field of Historically Informed Performance, using the instruments and techniques of the composer’s time. The New Yorker recently affirmed, “American classical music launched in earnest” at the Handel and Haydn Society 200 years ago, and the organisation is still a “steady heartbeat for classical music in this country.”

H+H is widely known through its local subscription series, concert broadcasts on WCRB/99.5 Classical New England and National Public Radio, recordings, and tours, including performances of Handel’s Jephtha in California in 2013. Its recording of John Tavener’s Lamentations and Praises won a 2003 Grammy Award and two of its recordings, All is Bright and Peace, appeared simultaneously in the top ten on Billboard Magazine’s classical music chart. Since its first recording collaboration with Harry Christophers on the CORO label, released in September 2010, it has issued three live commercial recordings of works by Mozart – Mass in C Minor (2010), Requiem (2011), and Coronation Mass (2012) - as well as the critically acclaimed Haydn, Vol. 1 (September 2013) and the best-selling Joy to the World: An American Christmas (October 2013). Its new recording of Messiah was released in 2014 to mark the 200th anniversary of the founding of the group and in 2015 the group recorded Haydn’s epic oratorio, The Creation, which was released in October of the same year.
Canadian violinist Aisslinn Nosky was appointed Concertmaster of the Handel and Haydn Society in 2011. With a reputation for being one of the most dynamic and versatile violinists of her generation, Nosky is in great demand internationally as a director, soloist and chamber music collaborator. She has appeared with Holland Baroque, the Utah Symphony, the Staunton Music Festival, the Calgary Philharmonic, La Jolla Summerfest, and Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra.

Aisslinn is also a member of I FURIOSI Baroque Ensemble. For over 15 years this innovative Canadian ensemble has presented its own edgy and inventive concert series in Toronto and toured Europe and North America turning new audiences on to baroque music. With the Eybler Quartet, Nosky explores repertoire from the first century of the string quartet literature on period instruments. Since 2005, Aisslinn has been a highly active member of Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra and has toured and appeared as soloist with this internationally renowned ensemble.

Aisslinn Nosky violin & leader

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This recording has been made possible through the generous support of the following:

Peacewoods Charitable Fund
Peter G. Manson & Peter A. Durfee
King’s Chapel, Boston

The cover of this CD features the beautiful vaulted ceiling and pillars of King’s Chapel in Boston. The Chapel, the first Anglican church and only the fifth church of any denomination built in colonial Boston, was originally named for King James II. The original church was a wooden structure built in 1688; by the 1740s that building needed extensive repairs and church officials decided to erect a new building in stone. Designed by Peter Harrison, the new church was constructed around the original wooden one while the latter continued to be used for services. During the American Revolution, King’s Chapel was renamed Stone Chapel in an effort to remove its association with the British monarchy and therefore protect it from being damaged. In the 1780s, the church reopened as King’s Chapel, now named for Christ the King.

The Handel and Haydn Society presented its first oratorio (or concert) in King’s Chapel on December 25, 1815; six other performances followed between 1816 and 1817. Within two decades of its first concert, H+H gave the first complete American performances of Handel’s Messiah (1818) and Haydn’s The Creation (1819) and performed 138 concerts in all. In addition, it published its own collections of music beginning in 1818 and inspired the formation of more than 20 other musical societies in New England and the United States.

Teresa M. Neff, May 2013

Recording Producer: Raphaël Mouterde
Recording Engineer: James Donahue
Recorded Live at: Symphony Hall, Boston, USA, 23 & 25 January, 2015
Cover Image: Kat Waterman. Vaulted ceiling in King’s Chapel, Boston, USA
Edition: Symphony No. 7 – Barenreiter
Violin Concerto in C major – Breitkopf
Symphony No. 83 – Haydn-Mozart Presse (Universal)
Design: Andrew Giles – discoyd@aegidius.org.uk

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