

3.30 p.m., Sunday 26 January 2025

Curtis Auditorium, MTU Cork School of Music

Cork2020sHaydnSymphoniesSeries 5/i

Cork Haydn Orchestra

Leader: Lesya Iglody

Conductor: Geoffrey Spratt



Haydnsaal, Esterházy Castle, Eisenstadt

Programme notes

Symphony No. 23 in G (1764)

Allegro; Andante; Menuetto - Trio; Presto assai

The first movement of this symphony is in triple time; initially it sounds as if it might be a Minuet, but symphonic processes take over and a binary structure emerges, with a typical Exposition :||: Development – Recapitulation.

The slow movement is scored for strings only, with the two violin parts pitted against the violas, cellos and double bass. There is a telling moment when the violas briefly join forces with the violin parts for a relatively intense and extended chromatic sequence.

For the Menuet, Haydn writes a canon between the upper voices (oboes and violins) and lower voices (violas, cellos, bassoon and double bass) at an interval of a single bar. Haydn had written such a canon in the Minuet of his Symphony No. 3 (1760-62), and would later develop this technique into the "Canones in Diapason" of the Menuetto in his Symphony No. 44 ("Trauer", 1772) and the "Witches Minuet" of his String Quartet in d, Op. 76 No. 2 ("Fifths", 1797 or 1798). For the Trio he goes one step further in writing a three-part canon where the second voice is played by the 2nd violins and the third voice by the violas, cellos and double bass (without the bassoon).

The last movement is notable for fading away unexpectedly at the end - a piano passage leading to a pianissimo repetition, and then, after a silent bar, a single pizzicato note. The second half is marked for repeat, so the tongue-in-cheek ending can be appreciated for a second time. H. C. Robbins Landon believes this may be 'the first positive example of Haydn's famous sense of humour.'

Symphony No. 50 in C major (1773-74)

Adagio e maestoso – Allegro di molto; Andante moderato; *Menuetto & Trio*; Presto

When H. C. Robbins Landon produced the urtext edition of the 106 symphonies and *Sinfonia concertante*, he decided to label all Haydn's horn parts as "alto". The debatable nature of this decision has already been discussed (Programme IV/ii, February 2024). Because the trumpets double the horns for almost all of this symphony, even notable Haydn scholars like Antony Hodgson suggest the trumpets may be omitted. If the horn parts are played "basso" (i.e. sounding an octave lower than written), the combination of horns, trumpets and drums makes perfect sense – with the fullness of texture an appropriate frame for the richer string writing (and without the horn players sounding severely stressed!).

It is possible that the first two movements of this symphony were reconstructed from a marionette opera by Haydn called *Philemon und Baucis, oder Jupiters Reise auf die Erde* (*Philemon and Baucis, or Jupiter's Journey to Earth*), now lost. The marionette show was performed for the Empress Maria Theresa in 1773; given her rather conservative tastes in music, and because this symphony is in some ways less "advanced" than No. 48 (the symphony dating from 1768 or 1769 which is traditionally known as the "Maria Theresa"), scholars such as H. C. Robbins Landon have suggested that No. 50 may be the symphony Haydn wrote for the visit of the Holy Roman Empress, Maria Theresa of Austria, to Eszterháza in 1773. The Menuetto contains some distinctive rhythmic accents, and Haydn provides a modulatory link to the Trio. There are several stops and restarts in the last movement that are in turn humorous and dramatic, with both harmonic and tonal gestures that titillate the ear.

The next concert: Sunday 16 February 2025, Symphonies Nos 61 (1764) and 62 (1773-74)

The orchestra

Violin 1

Lesya Iglody
Richéal Ní Riordáin
Sarah Murphy
Cillian Ó Cathasaigh
Selena McCarthy
Caitríona O'Mahony

Violin 2

Eithne Willis
Aoileann Ní Dhúill
Áine Ní Shé
Carol Daly
Irina Riedewald
Artem Tiupin

Viola

Constantin Zanidache
Hilda Leader
Ciara Moloney
Karl Riedewald

Cello

Hugh McCarthy
Sharon Nye
Órla Mhic Athlaoich
Gerda Marwood

Double Bass

Deirdre Cadogan

Oboes

Coral O'Sullivan
Catherine Kelly

Horns

Stephen Crowley
Michael Herlihy

Trumpets

Andrew Lennox
Heather Nash

Harpsichord

James Taylor

Bassoon

Brian Prendergast

Timpani

Dylan Tierney

Please visit our website, www.cork2020shaydneysymphoniesseries.com, for the dates and programmes for the remainder of the cycle and use the contact form to reserve your seat for the next concert. Whilst we hope dates and programmes will not change, minor revisions might occur if either practicalities or contemporary scholarship dictate.

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The marriage of Joseph Haydn and Maria Anna Keller

Wednesday 26 November 1760 should have been a happy day for Joseph Haydn, and perhaps it was. Aged 28, he already had a good job working as music master for an aristocrat, and had recently written the first of his 106 symphonies. Romantically, he had seemingly hit the jackpot too – that November day he married Maria Anna Keller (b. 1729) in St Stephen's Cathedral, Vienna, where two decades previously he had been a chorister. Years of happiness, both personal and professional, seemed to stretch out before him. Unfortunately it didn't work out that way. While Haydn continued to flourish as a musician – a career-defining appointment with the Esterházy family was just around the corner – his marriage to Maria Anna quickly crumbled to an untidy mess that would come to an end only with her death nearly 40 years later.



An unauthenticated miniature of
Anna Maria Haydn
attributed to Ludwig Guttenbrunn

Who was Haydn's wife, Maria Anna Keller, and what went wrong? The clue probably lies in how the relationship first started. Maria Anna was the daughter of a wigmaker, whose brother introduced Haydn to the Keller family. But Maria Anna was not the daughter who first attracted Haydn's eye – that was Thérèse (b. 1733), her younger sibling, to whom Haydn taught piano and with whom he fell in love. Thérèse, however, had been earmarked by her family for the religious life, and eventually joined a nunnery at the Convent of St Nicholas. The matter might have ended there had not a bright idea occurred to her father, Johann Keller. If Haydn couldn't marry Thérèse, what about her older sister? Might Maria Anna be a suitable replacement? Haydn was not exactly enthusiastic about the idea – it took five years of prompting by Herr Keller, plus the influence of what one acquaintance coyly dubbed 'a young man's natural urges', for him to finally name the wedding day.

Haydn's initial reluctance to act on Johann Keller's masterplan proved prescient. Virtually from the outset, he and Maria Anna proved drastically incompatible. Maria Anna was three years older than Haydn and, according to every account that has come down to us, exceedingly unattractive in both person and personality. 'She had no empathy for music and didn't care a straw whether her husband was an artist or a cobbler.'

Haydn's friend and biographer Georg August Griesinger expanded on the list of the hapless Maria Anna's alleged deficiencies: she had 'a domineering, unfriendly character ... was jealous ... a poor housekeeper ... a spendthrift, and also a religious bigot.' Haydn's friends and colleagues have reported that Maria Anna, out of pure malice, would use her husband's handwritten manuscript scores as parchment paper to line the inside of her pastry pans, or shred them and use the twisted shreds to curl her hair.

Haydn was probably not blameless in the disintegration of his marriage. He adored children and told Griesinger: 'My wife was incapable of having children, and thus I was less indifferent to the charms of other women.' Suggesting his partner's infertility as a reason for his own infidelity hardly paints a flattering picture of the composer. Or was Maria Anna simply averse to sexual contact with her new husband? We will never know for sure. What is certain is that both Haydn and Maria Anna had extra-marital dalliances – he with the Italian singer Luigia Polzelli, a mezzo-soprano with the Esterházy company.

Today, the Haydns' unhappiness with one another would probably have ended in a divorce court, but that was impossible for a Catholic couple in 18th-century Vienna and the pair were still officially married – though leading largely separate lives – when Maria Anna died in 1800, aged 69, of arthritis.

By the 1770s, Haydn and his wife were completely estranged, and spent as little time in each other's presence as was possible. By the 1780s, their marriage had, for all intents and purposes, ceased to exist. In 1797 – at the age of 65 – Haydn bought a house in what was then the Viennese suburbs (and which today is in the middle of the city!) with money earned from his two triumphant residences in England. To Haydn's great pleasure, his wife was almost never there; she suffered from severe rheumatism and lived in the spa town of Baden, taking – as it were – a permanent cure, and it was there that she died on 20 March 1800. Haydn outlived her by nine years, but did not re-marry.

Despite his inexperience with women, Haydn's naïveté regarding Maria Anna remains something of a mystery, because he was a genuinely good judge of human nature who showed himself – time and time again – to be shrewd and crafty in his dealings with people. "Papa Haydn" is the beneficent image of the composer passed down to posterity through oil paintings and his genial, life-enhancing music, but his dysfunctional marriage is a sharp reminder that beneath the magnificent accomplishments of an artistic career, personal failures and imperfections can linger as a discomfiting blemish.

