

## Classical Masters

Presented by the Stratford Symphony Orchestra

April 12, 2014

### ABOUT THE CONCERT SELECTIONS

*Some thoughts from the conductor, Paul Pulford*



When I learned of the repertoire for this concert I was very pleased and excited. Not only does the music suit this orchestra well, it has such an interesting blend of classical styles and form combined with a premiere – always an exciting event.

To top everything off, the wonderful soloist in the concerto is a talented young man with whom I have worked for about six years now, both as teacher and ensemble coach.

The overture from **Der Schauspieldirektor (The Impresario)** is Mozart at his light-hearted best. He calls the work not opera but a “Comedy with Music in One Act,” and this surely gives us a few clues as to the nature of the beast. The opera was written the same year (1786) as *The Magic Flute*, and was intended as a submission to a competition setting German *Singspiel* against Italian opera. This is Mozart at his ebullient and roguish best.

The ***Cello Concerto in C*** by Haydn is a fascinating work: both the piece itself and its history. The work was written sometime around 1761-65 (the same period as his excellent early symphonies: No. 6, *Le Matin*; No. 7, *Le Midi* and No. 8, *Le Soir*), and was likely played for the first time in 1766, when Haydn took the post of kapellmeister in the Esterhazy court. However, it remained lost – hidden at the back of another score in the Prague National Museum – until its discovery in 1961 by musicologist Oldrich Pulkert, 200 years after its composition. It was given its modern-day premiere by the Czech cellist Milos Sadlo and made available to the eagerly waiting cello community in 1963.

I can remember well the fuss it caused. Up until it was discovered, it was considered that the D major concerto (written 20 years later) was our only significant work for cello and orchestra from the classical period. Beethoven did write the Triple Concerto (violin, cello and piano) but that is something different. When the two Haydn works (the C major and the D major) were compared to each other it was clear that they were very different. So different, in fact, that some scholars doubted that the same person could have written both of them!

The first movement is masterful in its contrasting themes: an opening with regal bearing and an air of haughtiness; a second theme, elegant and lyrical and, atypically, a third theme that hangs its hat on a descending minor 7<sup>th</sup>, also

unusual in this period. The second movement is in sonata (or first movement) form. Beethoven did this in his middle period, but it is unusual at this point in the development of musical form. The themes are supple and conversational and seem to slide by effortlessly. Each time the main theme occurs, it is preceded by a single long note that lasts for two full bars. Haydn repeats this device in the final movement to great effect, drawing in the listener until the cello line explodes in virtuosity. This is a quintessential Haydn last movement, full of fun, technical fireworks and more than a few musical “pulls of the leg.”

Chris Meyer’s ***Dusk to Dawn*** draws on his signature use of an extended harmonic language that is wonderfully evocative. I am delighted to be the conductor presenting the premiere of this work. You can browse the notes Chris has provided in the program, and he will be speaking with me about this new work at the beginning of the second half of the concert.

The final work on our program tonight is Haydn’s ***Symphony No. 99 in E flat***. In case some of you are wondering, it was not written in honour of Wayne Gretzky. In fact, I’m not sure that Haydn even knew “the Great One.”

Haydn had already visited London in the early 1790s where he composed and premiered the first six (Nos. 93-98) of what came to be known as his “London Symphonies.” One could say he took London by storm: audiences flocked to his concerts, and he was invited back for a second extended stay in 1794-95. It was for this second visit that No. 99 was composed (in Vienna) and the remaining six (completing the 12 London Symphonies) were created. It is worth noting that, while travelling to London in 1791, Haydn passed through Bonn, where he made the acquaintance of a young composer by the name of Ludwig von Beethoven!

This symphony, No. 99, is the first time Haydn included clarinets in the score. The themes are robust and dramatic (the better to penetrate the thick London fog) and his distribution of thematic material takes on a much more intentional and innovative character. The four movements are crafted from a minimum of thematic material. This is not immediately apparent, as Haydn varies tempos, uses inversion (playing the theme upside down) and other devious devices to keep us spellbound. This may well be one of Haydn’s greatest achievements.