

Nicholas McGegan, conductor Yulia Van Doren, soprano Robin Tritschler, tenor Douglas Williams, bass-baritone St. Louis Symphony Chorus Amy Kaiser, director Saturday, October 27, 2018 at 8:00PM Sunday, October 28, 2018 at 3:00PM

HAYDN (1732-1809)

The Creation (1797-1798)

Part I

INTERMISSION

Part II Part III

Yulia Van Doren, soprano Robin Tritschler, tenor Douglas Williams, bass-baritone St. Louis Symphony Chorus Amy Kaiser, director

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Yulia Van Doren is the Linda and Paul Lee Guest Artist.

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PROGRAM NOTES

BY TIM MUNRO

Editor's Note:

This season, our program notes are a little different. We are presenting a broad range of voices, a sort of "festival of ideas." Some voices are conventional, some experimental. Some tell stories, some mine personal experience, some lean towards the experiential.

Haydn's Creation is many things: a musical work, a religious text, a series of dramatic scenes, a personal statement of faith. My program note is really a constellation of tiny orbiting essays, each hinting at one of these issues.



JOSEPH HAYDN

Born March 31, 1732, Rohrau, Austria **Died** May 31, 1809, Vienna. Austria

The Creation

Before the beginning

Musical sentences were short in Haydn's time. (Like these opening sentences.) Melodies were cut into mostly even phrases. Melodies ended with some certainty. Each journey arriving at a restful end.

But when Franz Joseph Haydn reached for the opening sounds of *The Creation*, sounds evoking a time before creation of the world, he sought something new.

The Creation opens with a pungent blow that is naked and bald and out of this bang creeps sound as if out of primordial sludge with strings leaning into dissonances and winds, like this sentence, carrying on and on and keeping listeners like you dear readers TENSE and uncertain and buffeted by occasional OUTBURSTS unsure of where we might GASP a breath when we GASP might finally reach a full...stop.

Haydn's "Representation of Chaos" must have raised hairs on the arms of contemporary audiences.

Haydn, recreated

For much of his life, Haydn had a steady job. He was the head of music for Austria's immensely wealthy Esterházy family, writing and directing for their bustling cultural life.

And he yearned for freedom. The Esterházy palace sat in the suburbs of Vienna, but Haydn felt straightjacketed, his travel and work restricted. He often said that isolation encouraged his originality, but on rare visits to Vienna, Haydn

excitedly inhaled a thrilling new world.

By the time he turned sixty-eight, Haydn's Esterházy work had slowed to a trickle, so he was lured by a lucrative offer in London. Haydn was already famous in the far-flung city, and his presence there "electrified audiences," according to a contemporary account.

One London experience stood out above all for the aging composer: a performance of George Frideric Handel's *Messiah*. Handel's genre was all the rage in London. Called "oratorio," it was a new and unique form, a kind of "sacred opera" with no costumes, fewer starry solo moments, and a large chorus that often took center stage.

Haydn may have seen more than three hundred performers on the stage, singing and playing with gusto, receiving wild adulation. Haydn's ears were pinned back, his heart raced. According to an early biographer, he was "struck as if he had known nothing up to that moment. He meditated on every note."

Haydn was the most famous composer in Europe, and yet he often thought of himself as an outsider, a servant. He craved recognition. After decades of symphonies, string quartets, masses, and operas, perhaps this new *oratorio* form might open a new chapter.

A work for a new audience. A work for All Of England.

"In the beginning..."

Rafael, an angel, seems a little nervous. Overwhelmed by the importance of this moment, he is barely able to utter the words. "In the beginning...God created the Heavens and the Earth." Does Rafael carry some of the creator's nerves? Is Rafael concerned that we won't believe him?

An awe-struck chorus barely murmurs their words: "and God said: Let there be Light, and there was..."

Here, Haydn has a mighty trick up his sleeve. He was so proud of this moment that before the first performances he dared not whisper a warning. "No one had seen the page of the score where the birth of light is described," wrote one observer.

The universe seems to stop moving for a hair's breadth of silence. Then, blazing brightness on the word "LIGHT." Full choir and orchestra blind us as the hard sunlight of C major streams into the hall.

"I think I see his face even now," wrote the observer. "In that moment when light broke out, rays seemed to dart from his burning eyes."

"Vanish, dismal shades of dark!"

Haydn wrote that *The Creation* was a "religious action." A voice whispered in his ear: "There are in this world so few happy and contented people; perhaps your labour will become a source in which the person burdened will find peace and rest."

Haydn was pious. Raised in strictly Catholic Austria, he carefully added the words *laus Deo* ("Praise God") or *Soli Deo gloria* ("To the glory of God always") on each and every manuscript. But his piousness was lightly worn.

An early biographer wrote that Haydn had no "intolerant feelings." All people were different, Haydn thought, and yet all were part of humanity. "His devotion was not of the suffering sort, but rather cheerful and reconciled."

His own *Creation* wears a smile. A terrifying god is nowhere to be found in this comforting, optimistic oratorio. Little storm-and-stress, no jowl-wobbling. The

prevailing mood is one of celebration, and the fall of man barely rates a mention.

In Haydn's time, the Enlightenment was questioning the Church's dominance. The natural world had opened secrets to naturalists, and a growing group of Deists began to doubt the centrality of god in society.

Haydn, who joined the liberal-leaning masons late in life, certainly knew of these tectonic shifts. And his *Creation*, celebrating nature and free from hectoring lectures, seemed tailor-made for a new world.

Lions and birds and storms, oh my!

After two dazzling theatrical coups early in *The Creation*, might Haydn run out of gas? Not a chance. He has begun as he intends to continue.

Haydn, at the peak of his significant powers, thwarts expectations again and again, avoiding standard forms, experimenting with instrumental colors. He deploys these with no little swagger, but always at the service of text and drama.

Let's zoom in on Haydn's instrumental picture-painting. Delights are plentiful, from the rumbling contrabassoon's "dismal shades of dark," the timpanis thrilling tempests, the violins' halting snow drops, the winds' delicate birdsong. There are roaring lions, bleating goats, and farting cows. Contemporary audiences would have guffawed.

Haydn also rifles through a vast storytelling musical toolbox. Recitatives (a sort of musical heightened speech) are as varied as they are dramatic, embracing both sober narration and vivid tone-portraits. Solo arias are shaped to align with the text, sometimes featuring an instrumental soloist, sometimes involving the chorus.

The main job of Haydn's chorus is to pop champagne corks and party hard, proclaiming and exalting and glorifying late into the night. Written for a large amateur choir, *The Creation* puts its singers through their paces, interlacing melodies into beautiful, complex woven textures.

"cumb'rous elements"

When Haydn first began work on *The Creation*, he may have blown dust from the libretto. The author's name is lost to history, but this English language text was likely written fifty years prior for the musical quill of GF Handel. A friend and patron of Haydn's, Gottfried van Swieten, pressed it into his hands.

The text draws from three sources: the opening of Genesis; John Milton's *Paradise Lost*; and the Book of Psalms. *The Creation* divides into three parts: the first four days of creation; the fifth and sixth days; and Adam's and Eve's love in Eden. Each day has both poetry and prose, and each ends with a celebratory choral hymn of praise.

Even in Haydn's day the text had an old-fashioned creakiness. Characters sing of "cumb'rous elements," "expanded boughs." The sun is an "am'rous, joyful, happy spouse." The librettist's meanings are often opaque, including lines like, "Thou openest thy hand, and sated all they are." Fear not if you find yourself a little lost.

Some of the poetry betrays very old fashioned attitudes to gender. Eve is "fair and graceful," a "softly smiling virgin, of flow'ry spring," while Adam is "erect and tall." At least when they sing together, near the end of the work, they are united as a couple. Here, man does not always lead.

Angels and humans

In Parts One and Two, three angels tell Haydn's creation story: Gabriel, soprano; Uriel, tenor; and Raphael, bass. Their roles are ill-defined, unclear, shifting from impartial narrators of past action to opinionated observers of current events.

Perhaps we might imagine that these angels float around us, reading heavenly bedtime stories. Or maybe we are students in an angelic class, learning about the history of our world. Or are we congregants in a cathedral, listening to bible readings and sermons, every now and then serenaded by the church choir?

In Part Three, following the days of creation, we are introduced to Adam and Eve. Haydn wants us to imagine Eden as a sort of idealized rustic paradise. Pan-pipe-like flutes join innocent strings to capture Eden's first "rosy" dawn, and a gentle dance is introduced by the oboe, descendent of the shepherd's shawm.

This celebration of young love has a tiny, blink-and-you'll-miss-it sting. In the final recitative, we hear that the pair will be "always happy yet, if not misled by false conceit." This "false conceit" is Haydn's only hint at the tragic "fall" that is to come.

As a result, *The Creation* feels a little poignant, as if Haydn made a movie about the Titanic that ends when the ship departs Liverpool. All is ticker tape, thrill, anticipation, celebration. But we know how this story ends.

Belief

The words of Genesis mean something different to every person in this concert hall. To some they are literal truth. To others a powerful metaphor. To some they are inspiring prose. To others, they are the beginning of a rip-roaring tale.

Look to your left. That person has a different spiritual life. Look to your right. That person's belief system might not fit with your own. Each of you will take a different journey through this teeming work.

Haydn's *Creation* seems to encourage such different reactions. It draws on every musical style that Haydn had spent fifty years perfecting. The work pushed its creator to new flights, new musical worlds. The work is theatrical, almost cinematic in its imagery, but you alone are the director of this imaginary opera.

First Performance April 29, 1798, Vienna, Haydn conducting

First SLSO Performance October 15, 1886, Joseph Otten conducting

Most Recent SLSO Performance March 15, 2008, David Robertson conducting

Scoring solo soprano, solo tenor, solo bass baritone, chorus, 3 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, fortepiano, and strings

Performance Time approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes

MCGEGAN ON THE CREATION

I love conducting *The Creation*. It's one of my favorite pieces and I try to do it every year.

I think Haydn must have been one of the nicest people on the planet. I feel I would have liked him a lot. He's witty and I like music that is good humored. I find his music very congenial and that means I enjoy conducting it.

The Creation has everything you could want. It has grandeur, it has humor. At one point it's pretty obvious that a cow is passing gas, as the trombones and bassoons play their lowest note very loudly. Clearly the audience would have laughed.

He has all the technical skills to write really intricate counterpoint. With that he's a master, the same as Mozart, Bach, and Handel. So in an hour and a half, you've really got everything, from the grandest down to imitating worms and insects.

THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGE OF CREATION

BY TIM MUNRO

The Hebrew text of Genesis sings its own sort of linguistic music. Wordplay, assonance (word echoes), and repetition may have aided memorization at a time when the text was communicated orally.

For instance, the names Adam and Eve play on the sound of other words. The Hebrew 'adam is also the general term for "human." And hawah ("Eve") is strikingly similar to the verb hayah ("to live"), as well as, tellingly, to the Aramaic word for "serpent."

The name "Adam" is also close to the word for ground, *adamah*. So the passage, "God formed man of the dust of the ground," might have sounded to ancient ears like, "God formed human of humus."

The first lines of Genesis contain this satisfying assonance: tõhû wãbõhû (pronounced like "TOE-hoo vah-BOH-hoo"). The translation in Haydn's *The Creation* is "without form, and void," but Robert Alter's recent translation tries to retain the assonance, with "welter and waste."

There is also a clear sound connection between the word *shāmayim* ("heavens") and *māyim* ("water"), and between the first two Hebrew words of Genesis, "In the beginning" and "created."

The Hebrew text is full of repetitions that conjure an almost musical quality: "And God said," "...Let there be...," "And God saw that it was good." These might feel redundant today, but likely helped with memorization.



Nicholas McGegan most recently appeared with the SLSO in December 2017.

NICHOLAS MCGEGAN

As he embarks on his sixth decade on the podium, Nicholas McGegan — long hailed as "one of the finest baroque conductors of his generation" (*The Independent*) and "an expert in 18th-century style" (*The New Yorker*) — is recognized for his probing and revelatory explorations of music of all periods. The 2018/2019 season marks his 33rd year as music director of Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Chorale and he is also Principal Guest Conductor of the Pasadena Symphony.

Best known as a baroque and classical specialist, McGegan's approach—intelligent, infused with joy and never dogmatic — has led to appearances with many of the world's major orchestras. At home in opera houses, McGegan shone new light on close to twenty Handel operas as the Artistic Director and conductor at the Göttingen Handel Festival for 20 years (1991-2001) and the Mozart canon as Principal Guest Conductor at Scottish Opera in the 1990's. At the same time, he was principal conductor of the Drottningholm Opera in Sweden.

McGegan's prolific discography includes more than 100 releases spanning five decades. Having recorded more than 50 albums of Handel, McGegan has explored the depths of the composer's output with a dozen oratorios and close to twenty of his operas. Under its own label, Philharmonia Baroque Productions (PBP), Philharmonia has released almost a dozen acclaimed albums of Handel, Scarlatti, Vivaldi, Brahms, Haydn, Beethoven, and more. Since the 1980s, McGegan has released more than 20 recordings with Hungary's Capella Savaria on the Hungaroton label, the latest being a 2-CD set of the complete Mozart violin concerti.

English-born Nicholas McGegan was educated at Cambridge and Oxford. He is an honorary professor at the Georg-August University in Göttingen and also was given an honorary Doctorate of Music at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. In 2010, he was made an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) "for services to music overseas." He also was awarded the Verdienstkreuz (am Bande) from Niedersachsen (Germany) in 2011.

In 2016 he was the Christoph Wolff Distinguished Visiting Scholar at Harvard and is a frequent visitor to Yale.



Yulia Van Doren is making her SLSO debut.

YULIA VAN DOREN

Linda and Paul Lee Guest Artist

Highlights of Yulia Van Doren's 2018/2019 season include returns to Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra under Nicholas McGegan (Handel's *Saul*) and Music of the Baroque (Bach's Christmas Oratorio) and appearances with the National Symphony (*Messiah*) and Seattle Symphony (*Messiah*).

A dedicated interpreter of repertoire off the beaten path, career highlights include creating the lead female role in the world premiere of Shostakovich's *Orango* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, directed by Peter Sellars and released on Deutsche Grammophon; two Grammy-nominated opera recordings with the Boston Early Music Festival; the modern revival of Monsigny's opera *Le roi et le fermier* at Opera de Versailles, Lincoln Center and the Kennedy Center (recorded for Naxos); a tour of Handel's Orlando with Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra to the Mostly Mozart, Ravinia and Tanglewood festivals; a leading role in Scarlatti's *Tigrane* at Opera de Nice; nationally-televised performances at the Cartagena International Music Festival with soprano Dawn Upshaw, an important mentor; and creating a leading role in the world premiere staging of Lera Auerbach's *The Blind*, an a cappella opera, in the Lincoln Center Festival. Especially recognized for her work in the baroque repertoire, Van Doren has performed with the majority of the North American Baroque festivals and orchestras, and has the distinction of being the only singer awarded a top prize in all four U.S. Bach vocal competitions.

Other recent debuts and engagements include performances with the San Francisco, Toronto, Houston, Cincinnati, Nashville, Colorado, Baltimore, Indianapolis, and Milwaukee Symphonies; the Cleveland Orchestra; the Los Angeles Master Chorale; Washington D.C.'s Folger Consort; and two trips to the Netherlands for performances with the Radio Kamer Filharmonie.

Born in Moscow, Van Doren was raised in the United States in a music-filled household in which she and her seven younger siblings were taught by her Russian mezzo-soprano mother and American jazz pianist father. She is honored to be an Astral Artist, a Paul and Daisy Soros Fellow, and as the recipient of a Beebe Grant she spent the 2011/2012 season based in Paris.



Robin Tritschler is making his SLSO debut.

ROBIN TRITSCHLER

Acclaimed for his "radiantly lyrical" voice, Irish tenor Robin Tritschler has garnered praise from critics and audiences for his performances. In concert, Tritschler has appeared with many leading orchestras including the London Philharmonic, L'Orchestre National de Lyon, Gulbenkian Foundation Lisbon, the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, the Moscow Virtuosi, and the BBC Philharmonic. With the RTE Concert Orchestra, Tritschler performed the *Messiah* before Pope Benedict XVI to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Vatican State, and gave the UK premiere of CPE Bach's St. John Passion with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra under Kirill Karabits.

With Welsh National Opera, Tritschler's operatic roles include Count Almaviva in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore*, Narraboth in *Salome*, Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*, Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* and Belmonte in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. He recently made his debut with the Royal Opera, Covent Garden in *Wozzeck*, and with Garsington Opera as Ferrando. Tritschler also enjoys performing contemporary opera, creating the tenor roles in Roger Waters' Ça *Ira* and Will Gregory's *Piccard in Space*, and appearing in Jonathan Harvey's *Wagner Dream* (WNO) and productions of John Cage's *Europeras 1 & 2* and Louis Andriessen's *De Materie* with the RuhrTriennale Festival.

Tritschler frequently appears in recital at London's Wigmore Hall with leading accompanists Graham Johnson, Malcolm Martineau, Iain Burnside and Julius Drake. He has also performed recitals at many other renowned venues such as the Köln Philharmonie, Het Concertgebouw, and the Kennedy Centre (Washington DC), and at the Aldeburgh Festival, Aix-en-Provence Festival, the KlavierfestRuhr and the West Cork Chamber Music Festival. In 2012, Tritschler was selected as a BBC New Generation Artist and has broadcast extensively with its orchestras, including appearing at the BBC Proms. He also broadcasts regularly across Europe, including the Britten Centenary Song recitals for Radio France and the Danish Radio. His growing discography includes a critically acclaimed recording of Britten's Winter Words with Malcolm Martineau (Onyx), Poulenc: The Complete Songs with Graham Johnson (Hyperion), a recording of World War One songs with Malcolm Martineau, and a Britten and Schubert disc with Iain Burnside as part of the Wigmore Hall Live series.



Douglas Williams is making his SLSO debut.

DOUGLAS WILLIAMS

Douglas Williams has collaborated with leading conductors including Sir Simon Rattle, Nicholas McGegan, Helmut Rilling, Sir Neville Marriner, John Nelson, and Christoph Rousset, in such prestigious venues as Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, Stuttgart's Mozart-Saal, and the Frankfurt Alte Oper. His repertoire reaches over four centuries, being a sought-after interpreter of Monteverdi, Handel, Bach, and Mozart, in addition to the romantic and modern eras.

Recent operatic highlights include the role of Sciarrone in *Tosca* with Simon Rattle and the Berlin Philharmoniker at the Baden-Baden Festspielhaus and his debut as Figaro with Edo de Waart and the Milwaukee Symphony in a new production by Robin Guarino. He also performed Sciarrone in his Boston Symphony debut at Tanglewood under Andris Nelsons. He appears regularly with Opera Atelier, most recently in the title role in *Marriage of Figaro* and as Antinoo in Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patri*. He has performed the role of Caronte in Monteverdi's *I'Orfeo* with Sash Waltz and conductor Pablo Heras-Casado and was also highly acclaimed as "Polyphemus" in the world premiere Mark Morris Dance Group production of Handel's *Acis and Galatea* (he recorded the work in 2015 with Boston Early Music Festival).

Recent highlights include the American premiere of Scarlatti's *La gloria di primavera* at Carnegie Hall and California's Orange County and Bay Area with Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and conductor Nicholas McGegan; baroque programs with Les Talens Lyriques in Paris, Versailles, and Oslo; a performance at Carnegie Hall of Charles Wuorinen's *It Happens Like This* with the MET Chamber Ensemble; and *Messiah* with Nashville, Detroit, Houston, and National Symphonies

Williams is featured on the recording of Scarlatti's *La gloria di primavera* released on the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra's label in April 2016. His recording of Charpentier's *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* with Boston Early Music Festival won the 2015 Grammy Award for Best Opera Recording.

Williams trained at the New England Conservatory and the Yale School of Music. Raised in Farmington, Connecticut, he now lives in Berlin.



AMY KAISER

AT&T Foundation Chair Director of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus

Director of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus since 1995, Amy Kaiser is one of the country's leading choral directors. She has conducted the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra in Handel's *Messiah*, Schubert's Mass in E flat, Vivaldi's *Gloria*, and sacred works by Haydn and Mozart, as well as Young People's Concerts. Guest conductor for the Berkshire Choral Festival in Massachusetts, Santa Fe and at Canterbury Cathedral and Music Director of the Dessoff Choirs in New York for 12 seasons, she led many performances of major works at Lincoln Center.

Other conducting engagements include Chicago's Grant Park Music Festival, Peter Schickele's PDQ Bach with the New Jersey Symphony, and more than 50 performances with the Metropolitan Opera Guild. Principal Conductor of the New York Chamber Symphony's School Concert Series for seven seasons, Kaiser also led Jewish Opera at the Y, and many programs for the 92nd Street Y's acclaimed *Schubertiade*. She has prepared choruses for the New York Philharmonic, Ravinia Festival, Mostly Mozart Festival, and Opera Orchestra of New York.

Kaiser is a regular pre-concert speaker for the SLSO and presents popular classes for the Symphony Lecture Series and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. A former faculty member at Manhattan School of Music and The Mannes College of Music, she was a Fulbright Fellow at Oxford University and holds a degree in musicology from Columbia University. A graduate of Smith College, she was awarded the Smith College Medal for outstanding professional achievement.

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY CHORUS 2018–2019

Amy Kaiser Director

Leon Burke III Assistant Director

Gail Hintz Accompanist

Susan D. Patterson Manager

Sharon Abada Eddie Allison Evan Babel Tracy Baker Annemarie Bethel-Pelton Margaret Boeckman

Jerry Bolain Michael Bouman Richard F. Boyd Keith Boyer Robyn Danielle Bran

Robyn Danielle Brandon
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Leon Burke III
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Laurel Ellison Dantas

Inés De Erausquin

Mary C. Donald

Shane D. Evans

Ladd Faszold

Danielle Feinstein Yang-Yang Feng Alan Freed Mark Freiman

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FROM THE ARCHIVES

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When it was still referred to as the St. Louis Choral Society, the SLSO performed Haydn's *The Creation* on October 15, 1886, with Joseph Otten, the orchestra's very first music director, conducting. This page is from a hand-written index of the orchestra's earliest performances.