Faculty Recital

Anne Grimm, soprano
Colin Tilney, fortepiano

Haydn in London - Mozart in Munich

Friday, November 18, 2011 at 8:00 p.m.
Phillip T. Young Recital Hall
MacLaurin Building
Adults: $17.50 / Students & seniors: $13.50
www.finearts.uvic.ca/music/events

Program

O liebes Mädchen, höre mich
Das Leben ist ein Traum
Die zu späte Ankunft der Mutter
The Wanderer
Piercing Eyes

Sonata in F Major, K 280
Allegro assai
Adagio
Presto

An Chloe
Die kleine Spinnerin

Intermission

Un piccolo Divertimento, Hob. XVII:6

Als Luise die Briefe ihres ungetreuen Liebhabers verbrannte

Das Lied der Trennung
Das Veilchen
Das Traumbild
Der Zauberer

Fortepiano after Anton Walter by Kenneth Bakeman
London? Of course – the city where, after all the hidden Esterhazy years, Haydn finally achieved international fame; and where Mozart too thought he might make his fortune (to that end, in fact, he starting learning English in later life). But what has Munich to do with anything? Surely the missing city is Vienna, where Haydn struggled in his youth, boy chorister at the cathedral, accompanist and general dogsbody, music teacher to young aristocrats, but to which finally he retired full of years and honour; and where Mozart led a brilliant performing and composing career, though without ever winning a post at Court or securing continuing patronage from the nobility. And so it is, no question, viewed from either Salzburg or Esterhazy: Vienna, centre of commerce and empire, the meeting place of outstanding people from all parts of the world and essential market for every ambitious foreign or Austrian artist. Both Haydn and Mozart were born in the provinces and arrived in Vienna later; both died there, even if in very different circumstances; and both saw their music promoted vigorously in that city of lively competing publishers.

But twice in his life at least, Munich offered Mozart a chance to sell his genius to the right kind of public. The commission from Elector Carl Theodor for Idomeneo in the summer of 1780 was the great breakthrough: Mozart’s first opportunity to write a full-length opera for a brilliant court that had adequate professional resources. He had heard the Elector’s musicians before in Mannheim, knew many of them personally and was able both to restructure the libretto to meet the demands of intelligible stagecraft and to adapt his music to the strengths and weaknesses of his singers. The opera was played three times, to resounding success, and is now considered the uncontested start of the wonderful procession of his mature operas, from Seraglio to Magic Flute. But another triumph for Mozart had also taken place in Munich five years earlier: the staging of a much lighter entertainment, the Italianate Finta Giardiniera, one of the composer’s many attempts to leave the drudgery of Salzburg and find more glamorous work somewhere else - anywhere else, in fact. That time, too, the modest little opera had been roundly applauded, but the sad fact remains that on neither occasion was Mozart offered a permanent job. In 1775, of course, Mozart was only nineteen, almost certainly too young to be in the running for maestro di cappella, but almost equally certainly a willing candidate for playing violin in the Elector’s orchestra, even maybe for rehearsing the Elector’s opera chorus, so great was his desire to change employers. Munich was no Ithaca – was there ever likely to be one for Mozart? – but it was a crucial step on his journey.

Mozart had taken with him to Munich something besides a pastoral operetta. During the preceding summer he had been preparing six new keyboard sonatas, in the hopes of being asked to perform them to aristocratic circles in the city, thereby perhaps attracting the notice of some publishing house or other. (He didn’t). These are the six sonatas K 279-284 that open Volume I of every complete edition of the Mozart Piano Sonatas. Because they come first in the book they are usually assumed to be some kind of juvenilia and are given to beginners, to guide them towards the more Beethoven-like works in F major and C minor. (Mozart’s own family, interestingly, referred to them as “Wolfgang’s difficult sonatas”). This misapprehension is a pity because, in fact, these new creations have wit, pathos, variety, technical challenge and a brevity that is not merely shortness of breath. (And they are clearly for piano, not harpsichord.) All these virtues shine out in K 280: pathos in the central adagio – possibly a tribute to Haydn’s recently published Hob. XVI:23.ii, in the same F minor and starting with the same phrase – and the rest in the dashing outer movements, where sudden dynamic jokes also recall the older man.

Haydn’s Piccolo Divertimento, given this ironic title by the composer on an autograph (but generally called, more prosaically, just “Variations in F minor”), dates from 1793, Haydn’s Viennese interlude between the two visits to London. He wrote it for the gifted pianist Barbara von Ployer, a student of Mozart’s, who was already the dedicatee of two concertos, K 449 and 453, as well as of another ironic jest, the little Marche funèbre del Signor Maestro Contrapunto, K 453a, which Mozart inscribed in her visitors’ book. Ployer’s obvious musicality and Haydn’s delight in satisfying it make this double variation set, alternately in minor and major, an outstanding contribution not only to Haydn’s output, but to the whole eighteenth-century piano repertory. Particularly evident throughout, too, is the exact correspondence between the expressivity of Haydn’s writing and the colours of a Viennese five-octave fortepiano of that period, from the exquisite opening melody to the final dotted figure that covers the complete range of the keyboard, from FF to f iii, pianissimo.
Judging by frequency of performance, it seems safe to say that the songs of Haydn and Mozart have today been more or less eclipsed by those of Schubert and, to a lesser extent, by Beethoven’s. The pianistic skills of Haydn – in his own eyes, “more than adequate” – and of Mozart – tremendous, but unshowy – gradually came to be thought less affecting and relevant than Beethoven’s thunder and Schubert’s endless variety and sheer stamina. A minor social art, often amateur and domestic, was thus gradually transformed into a more profound and searching questioning of everyday life and love, in which singer and pianist joined in an almost sacred rite. The German Lied came into being. As one Mozart critic writes, nowadays the earlier songs “suffer from the usual incapacity of most performers and listeners to judge a type of music according to the standards of its own time.” Those standards do appear fairly undemanding, to be honest. Charm and fluent melodic writing were usually enough to gratify an audience; the poetry was generally forgettable; pianists often had to improvise the right hand or play the singer’s line; intensity was rare. Mozart surely kept his deeper thoughts for opera, Haydn for the string quartet.

But there are notable exceptions, and some you will hear tonight. Of Haydn’s songs the best known are the twelve English Canzonets, published in London in 1794/5, set mostly to words by his friend Anne Hunter. But a decade or so earlier Haydn had also had two sets of German songs published in Vienna, under the customary title Lieder für das Clavier. A good many of these strophic songs conform to the easy listening type described above; occasionally though, as in Geistliches Lied or Das Leben ist ein Traum, a deeper note is touched. In the latter the pianist’s left hand becomes a clock, ticking time away, while the singer rises to impassioned rhetoric about life and dreams. Similar Romantic gloom fills The Wanderer, whose vivid words (“where nightbirds’ complaining adds sound to the horror that darkens the glade”) suggest the Gothic terrors of Mrs Radcliffe and her novels. Haydn’s Too Late to Stop It and Mozart’s Zauberer are about lovers or, alternatively, mothers foiled. Good clean fun. An Chloe and Als Luise have deservedly always been favourites; Veilchen has words by Goethe, who smiles down gently at a terrible small tragedy. And so on. Miniatures perhaps but, no less than in Schubert, every song needs superlative singing.

~ Colin Tilney

Internationally known for his concerts and recordings on harpsichord, clavichord and fortepiano, Colin Tilney now lives and teaches in Victoria, where he plays regularly with the Victoria Symphony. Before deciding to specialize in early music, he worked in London as an accompanist and repetiteur, experiences that drew him irresistibly to the pianos of Haydn and Mozart; on the one you are listening to this evening he has recorded six discs of Mozart’s solo music. His two latest recordings will be released early next year by Music and Arts in California: harpsichord suites by the seventeenth-century German composer, Johann Jacob Froberger; and Bach’s six French Suites on a clavichord built in 1895 by the great pioneer of early music, Arnold Dolmetsch.

Anne Grimm studied violin and voice in Amsterdam, continuing on in voice at the Netherlands Opera Studio, on scholarship in London and at the Stean’s Institute in the USA. Recognized for her “expressive technique [and] exceptional sensitivity” - Classics Today, she has been heard throughout Europe and North America as well as on recordings (Sony, Channel Classics, Erato and Harmonia Mundi).

Recent engagements include a recital at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Purcell’s Fairy Queen with Toronto Masque Theater and Lieder of Schumann at the Music and Beyond Festival in Ottawa. Upcoming performances include the works of Carissimi with Pacific Music Works, Seattle and Bach and Charpentier with the Bach Choir of Bethlehem.
O liebes Mädchen, höre mich
Sweetheart, listen – don’t keep running away from Love! Could we ever have a happier fate than Love?

Why do you hesitate, dearest? You should have faith in me. For shame! Such doubts are for ordinary girls – not for you, my beloved angel.

Das Leben ist ein Traum
Our life is a dream.
We slip gently into this world;
We hang suspended on its make-believe
Until we are released from earth.
And then? What is our life?
Our life is a dream.

We fall in love, our hearts beat as one.
Our love and laughter seem scarcely real:
Empty foam, all gone, carried away.
Someone asks: “What is Life?”
Our life is a dream.

Die zu späte Ankunft der Mutter (Too late to stop it)
Hidden in the bushes, Rosalis lay beside her Hylas. They sang and joked and pelted each other with flowers. Urged on by Spring and Love, Hylas kissed Rosalis and squeezed her till she shouted for help.
Her mother came rushing out to see what damage Hylas had done; but her daughter cried: “It’s all over! You can go home now.”

An Chloe
When Love looks out of your clear blue eyes,
I feel my glowing heart beat fast.
I kiss your rosy cheeks
And hold you in my arms.

I press you tenderly to my breast,
Where I shall hold you till the end;
Then, with clouded eyes,
I shall sit beside you,
Weary but at peace.

Die kleine Spinnerin (A Young Girl Spinning)
“What is it you’re spinning?” asked our neighbour, Fritz.
“Your little wheel is turning like lightning!”
Why are you wasting your time?
Come out and play”.

“If you weren’t for ever playing games,
You wouldn’t have to ask silly questions.
I’m spinning flax to make dresses
For my two young sisters.

“So hum your song, my little wheel,
And keep my bobbin full of thread.
Winter is coming and my sisters
Will need warm clothes for school.”

Als Luise die Briefe ihres ungetreuen Liebhabers verbrannte
(On Louise, as she burned the letters of her unfaithful lover)

“Conceived in fanciful passion
And born in a moment of sentiment –
Perish, you melancholy offspring!
You owe your very being to flames:
I now give you back to them;
Along with all those sentimental songs,
Which, ah God, he sang to many others, too!

See, you are burning now and soon
There will be no trace of you left;
But ah! he who wrote them will surely
Burn for ever in my heart.”
**Das Lied der Trennung** (A Song of Parting)

God's angels weep when lovers part!
How can I live, my love, without you?
From now on, a stranger to all joy,
I will live only for sorrow!
And you?
*(Perhaps Louisa will forget me for ever!)*

(One of Mozart's most lovely songs - and certainly his longest: the mawkish text, with its exclamation marks and unchanged refrain, runs on for eighteen verses. We shall sing five.)

**Das Veilchen** (The Violet)

A violet was once growing in a meadow, lowly and obscure. It was such a sweet little violet. Then along comes a young shepherdess, light of step and blithe of heart; she sings to herself as she crosses the meadow.

“Oh”, thinks the violet, “if only I were the loveliest flower in all the world – just for a moment – and my beloved were to pick me and pin me languidly to her breast – ah, just for a moment or two.”

Alack and alas! The girl came past and didn't even notice the violet – just trod on the poor thing. The violet sank down and died, full of joy: “If I have to die, then at least I am dying because of her – and at her feet!”

Such a sweet little violet!

**Das Traumbild** (Vision in a Dream)

Where are you, O Vision, that came to me
As I lay dreaming in the garden?
Where are you, O Vision, that came to me
And looked into my soul?

Your two great eyes of azure blue,
Your face so full of kindness,
The little dimples round your mouth
A glimpse of heaven –
Bring all these treasures with you, my love!

**Der Zauberer** (The Magician)

Listen, girls – run for your life from Damōtas! When I first saw him, it was like, it was like….I don't know what. Take my word for it, he can certainly “magic” a girl....

I went all hot. First I went red and then I went white. He took my hand. I couldn't see, I couldn't hear, all I could say was Yes and No.

He took me off into the bushes. I tried to run away, but I followed him. He said something – I could only mumble. His eyes burned into me, mine shrivered up.

Inflamed with passion, he pressed me to his heart. Heavens, what delicious pain! I sobbed, I could hardly breathe. Then, luckily, my mother came along. O God, think if she hadn't! What would have become of me, with all those magic tricks of his!