



1725, and details concerning the interpretation of the ornament symbols (including the mordent or English beat).

Roseingrave's output is uneven and his style eccentric. If his reputation has suffered in the past as the result of judgments based on a partial knowledge of his work, then this volume should set the record straight. This publication will be welcomed by enthusiasts of Roseingrave's music as well as its sceptics.

SILAS WOLLSTON



RECORDINGS

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LEOPOLD ANTON KOZELUCH (1747–1818)

MOISÈ IN EGITTO

Simone Kermes (soprano), Linda Perillo (soprano), Markus Schäfer (tenor), Tom Sol (bass), Rheinische Kantorei, Das Kleine Konzert, Hermann Max Georgsmarienhütte
CPO, 999 9482, 2003, two discs, 103 minutes

Following the splendid set of Dittersdorf's *Giob*, CPO continue their exploration of the Italian oratorio in Vienna with Kozeluch's *Moisè in Egitto*. The same team is used, 'Das Kleine Konzert' under Hermann Max, with some of the same excellent singers. Kozeluch's *azione sacra* (1787, revised 1790) was written for the Tonkünstler-Societät founded by Florian Gassmann in 1771. Given at the Burgtheater in the year following the first public performances of *Giob*, it is considerably smaller in scope than *Giob*, which has nearly an hour more music. In this respect *Giob* follows Haydn's revised 1784 version of *Il Ritorno di Tobia*, which lasts for over three hours.

A striking feature of the Metastasian oratorio in this period is that the texts lack drama. Dittersdorf's *Ester* (1773) derives from Racine's least exciting play. His text for the story of Job (1786), with one tribulation after another, is not immediately compelling. Dittersdorf's glorious, cheerful music is necessarily often at odds with the sense of the text. In plot-related terms Haydn's story of Tobias curing Tobit's blindness (*Il Ritorno di Tobia* 1775, revised 1784) is hardly riveting, and all that happens in Part 1, after an hour of music, is the arrival of Tobias and his bride. Following Jommelli, J. C. Bach and others, Cartellieri's *Gioas Re di Giuda* (1795), recorded on Dabringhaus and Grimm MDG 338 0748, at least has the more promising stimulus, via Metastasio, of Racine's wonderful final play, *Athalie* (1691), so explosive in its theme of deposition and regicide that it was suppressed before the first performance. Kozeluch's anonymous text for *Moisè in Egitto* is elegant but hardly dramatic; indeed its subject could be summarized as 'Will the Israelites leave Egypt?'. However, it is compact and skilfully put together with a pleasing symmetry in the two parts. In his study *A History of the Oratorio: Volume 3, The Classical Era* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), Howard E. Smither catalogues the characteristics of the Metastasian libretto and notes the changes wrought in the late eighteenth century. (Oratorio veered more to the condition of opera, with librettists adding ensembles.) Smither analyses *Il Ritorno di Tobia* but mentions neither *Giob* nor *Moisè in Egitto*. Kozeluch's unknown librettist has followed Haydn's poet, Giovanni Gastone Boccherini, in permitting more than just single arias, and has included a duet, a trio and a quartet. In Haydn's *Il Ritorno di Tobia* the only duet comes towards the end of Part 2, after more than two hours of music. In Kozeluch's oratorio there are four principals and a chorus: Moisé (tenor) and his brother Aaronne (a soprano role), Egypt's ruler, Faraone (bass), and his daughter Merime, Moisé's foster mother (soprano). In both parts each singer has one aria. In Part 1 these arias are followed by a quartet augmented by the chorus; in Part 2 a trio (Merime,



Aaronne, Moïse) divides the arias, and a duet (Moïse, Merime) follows them. The Hebrew chorus frames the action, opening and closing the two parts, following the norm of the oratorio in Vienna. It is more prominent in Part 1, but is only occasionally integrated into the action, as in Part 2 where the very Gluckian opening chorus is rather feebly repeated after a recitative. In Part 1 it joins the quartet. By contrast Dittersdorf's *Giob* has choruses that respond to recitatives. However, in Dittersdorf there are no ensembles at all in Part 1, though a duet and a quintet feature in Part 2. Both composers conclude their work with the conventional fugal chorus. Haydn's oratorio has more choral participation in the revised setting, with choruses added strategically near the middle of each Part. In Kozeluch's work Part 2 develops into an emotional struggle between Merime and Moïse over the inevitable parting. The only oddity occurs on CD 2, and derives from the rewriting Kozeluch carried out for a 1790 revival. In Part 2 he replaced a fine comparison aria for Merime with a recitative and aria, also of high quality, and these alternative pieces follow each other on the disc. The insert note suggests that this ordering allows us to choose between them. In practice listeners will probably want to hear both pieces in succession. Aside from this, the insert note does not make clear what music is from the second version. Milan Postolka's 1964 Kozeluch catalogue seems unaware of the new music and gives no incipits from the 1790 version.

Kozeluch's music dutifully contains set-pieces such as the comparison aria, the above-mentioned choral fugue and the obligatory storm sequence, as in Haydn's *Il Ritorno di Tobia* and Dittersdorf's *Giob*. But Kozeluch's C minor storm, the finale to Part 1, cannot match Haydn's superb 'Svanisce in un momento' added to *Il Ritorno di Tobia* for the 1784 revival. (Dittersdorf's storm occurs in a busy recitative.) There is of course much religious and moral reflection, even if the composer's attention, here and generally in oratorios of the period, seems fixed elsewhere, on the human passions and scene painting. Although there was no room for an amorous interest in the oratorio, unlike in opera, the music is often unashamedly operatic. Kozeluch's text itself inclines more to contemporary opera than either Haydn's or Dittersdorf's, featuring several ensembles, and Kozeluch has breathed life into them. North German critics in Berlin and Leipzig were quick to criticize Viennese oratorios for their operatic flavour, targeting both Dittersdorf and Kozeluch. In 1785 Mozart had no qualms about adding two arias with operatic closing sections to his mass torso for his far-from-Metastasian *Davidde penitente* K469 also written for the Tonkünstler-Societät. The subject of Moses in Egypt seems to have found favour with opera composers when a love-interest was provided. Rossini's opera in all but name, the *azione tragico-sacra Mosè in Egitto* (1818–1819), derives from a play of 1760 and incorporates the tragic secret marriage between an Egyptian prince and an Israelite girl.

Kozeluch's music, never less than competent, is sometimes inspired, as in Merime's rewritten aria in Part 2. Here one feels the music prefigures the spare melodies of *La clemenza di Tito*. Recitatives are fully scored throughout as in Haydn, in contrast to those of Dittersdorf, who reserves orchestral recitatives for crucial stages of the action (if this is not a contradiction in terms, given the static text). There is colourful writing for the wind, with prominent clarinets, in particular in Merime's and Moïse's arias and the trio that follows them in Part 2. A discreet fortepiano is sometimes audible. At times a good idea on Kozeluch's part is undermined by prolixity where a number of Kozeluch's contemporaries would have been more economical, such as in the longest item in the oratorio, the protracted quartet with chorus in Part 1. Some recitatives are decidedly routine, for example Faraone's clash with Moïse (Part 1). Occasionally one detects an understandable familiarity with Mozart's piano concertos (the B flat concerto K456, for Moïse's Part 1 aria 'Cade il furor tiranno'; and hints of K466 in the opening D minor sinfonia). Kozeluch was after all Mozart's principal rival in the realm of the piano concerto. A recent disc of three Kozeluch piano concertos of 1784–1785 (Oehms Classics OC 588) leaves the overriding impression that the music is only intermittently memorable, and some may feel that the same can be said of the music for *Mosè in Egitto*.

Angela Pachovsky's insert article is helpful, although, as noted, more information about the 1790 revisions would have been welcome. She claims that Kozeluch's work was the 'last great success of Italian oratorio in Vienna' but one would like to know more about the reception of Cartellieri's impressive *Gioas* in 1795. After *Gioas* the German oratorio took precedence.



The singers are highly accomplished and impressive throughout. Markus Schäfer, in the title role, repeats his success as *Giob* and copes marvellously with the coloratura in his first aria, complete with a brief cadenza. Simone Kermes delivers her G minor *agitato* aria 'Cedi, o figlio' in Part 1 with panache and is quite brilliant in her coloratura comparison aria 'Colpo di vento' in Part 2, the piece that Kozeluch replaced in 1790 with an even more impressive recitative and aria ('Che veggo . . . / caro figlio'). As Faraone, the stock tyrant, Tom Sol is good in both his angry arias, their music noteworthy for the stabbing trumpets. His second aria is an *Allegro agitato* in C minor. Linda Perillo, the angel in *Giob*, is touching as Aaronne. The Rheinische Kantorei makes a splendid case for the chorus, while Hermann Max's period band is excellent throughout, as it was in *Giob*. Because CDs have mainly focused on Kozeluch's symphonies, concertos and chamber music, his vocal music comes as a welcome surprise. After hearing this oratorio one regrets the loss of Kozeluch's biblical operas about Deborah (1789) and Judith (1799). He would surely have provided some vigorous music for the murders of Sisera and Holofernes.

TONY GABLE



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MALCOLM BILSON (1935–)

KNOWING THE SCORE

Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2005

DVD, 93 minutes

Malcolm Bilson is among the best-known modern performers who favour using early pianos. One would not, after experiencing this splendid DVD, wish to be more specific; he does not, for instance, suggest that you must not play older music on less old, or modern, instruments: 'I am becoming less of a purist', he says at one point, at least from the point of view of his own intensive preparation, for one can learn something by playing a piece on what, in the glare of historically informed scrutiny, might be 'wrong'. The DVD includes a ninety-minute lecture (conveniently divided into 'chapters'), with questions from an evidently professional audience (identified as piano teachers and musicologists). Bilson uses a modern Steinway and a replica Viennese piano of c1790. There are performances at Eszterháza of Haydn's witty Fantasia in C, on a replica Walter ('the Steinway of the 1790s'), and two of Schubert's *Moments musicaux* in the Brahmsaal of the Vienna Musikverein, using a Stein of c1830.

Performers and students, whatever instruments they prefer, should take note of what Bilson has to say. Indeed, this DVD should be compulsory viewing for teachers especially. I recommend those unfamiliar with early pianos (Bilson rejects the anachronistic 'fortepiano') to begin with the dialogue between Bilson and David Owen Norris, which takes place in Bilson's own house and has them moving around among four different types of early piano. Only occasionally does good repartee threaten to derail the conversation. While not eschewing shots from curious angles, the camera sometimes leaves faces and fingers to follow the discussion into the instruments' interiors. One might not want to hear the whole discussion often, but it has documentary value as well as being a good preparation for the main offering, the lecture. Both bear repetition (and the discussion should be repeated after the lecture, on which it also comments). The lecture itself, described in the blurb as 'provocative', could cause fluttering in the conservatoire doves, although it will no doubt be loftily ignored by the school of thought (it still exists) that holds that there is no value in returning to 'primitive' instruments and earlier performing styles. But to anyone with an open ear and mind, comparisons of the same passages on the Steinway and the early piano are persuasive, if only because players on these different instruments cannot really be trying to achieve