



warbling choir' (the recorder's repetitive birdsong is highly irritating for Galatea, whether particularly rapid or not), it works less well in the other movement with a recorder solo, 'O ruddier than the cherry', sung by Polyphemus. This last aria makes Polyphemus so lumbering that he does border on buffoonery (although the strings' attack hints at his underlying menace), and it also encourages bass-baritone Matthew Brook to overemphasize the 'i' in 'ruddier'. Brook's rendition of 'Cease to beauty to be suing' is also too heavy. In his notes, Butt draws a connection between the time signatures of Galatea's and Acis's music, but fails to see a link between Polyphemus's 'Cease to beauty to be suing' and Acis's 'Love sounds th'alarm' (which is also too slow). The former is in 3/4 while the latter is in 3/8, and although these time signatures present basically the same triple metre, they highlight the difference between the lissomness of the youth and the clunking-fistedness of the giant (which is rather laboured if taken too measuredly). 'The flocks shall leave the mountains' is taken at a very deliberate andante, which lends it gravitas, and which perhaps makes the impending disaster more horrible, but in my opinion it is a little too slow – the voices struggle to cope (especially Polyphemus, having to elongate 'cannot'), and Butt makes the orchestral postlude representing Polyphemus's murder of Acis into a rather obvious accelerando. Had he taken the whole trio a little faster, he could have avoided this predicament, as again the semiquavers should not rush, for they represent the unstoppable rock bearing down on the hapless shepherd. The other problem with the slowness of some of Butt's tempos is that his singers are not quite up to the task. All are pleasing on the ear, but Galatea is a little on the thin side (for example in 'As when the dove'), Acis sounds as though he is still a choral scholar – professional but lacking in dramatic effect – and Damon could do with more lyricism. However, it must be acknowledged that this is nit-picking, as all of them offer some delightful moments. Death brings out the best in Nicholas Mulroy (Acis), whose final rendition of the phrase 'sheds delicious Death' in Part I is lovely (although I am not sure that he quite conveys its double meaning); his portrayal of the dying Acis is properly pathetic, in the true eighteenth-century meaning of the term. In all, this is a thoughtful and highly successful interpretation of *Acis and Galatea*, and one that reminds the listener of the profundity of Handel's short and sweet work.

KATIE HAWKS



Eighteenth-Century Music © 2009 Cambridge University Press
doi:10.1017/S1478570609990157 Printed in the United Kingdom

JOSEPH HAYDN (1732–1809)

THE CREATION

Sandrine Piau (Soprano), Mark Padmore (Tenor), Neal Davies (Bass), Peter Harvey (Baritone), Miah Persson (Soprano)/Chetham's Chamber Choir/Gabrieli Consort & Players/Paul McCreesh
Archiv Produktion 00289 477 7361, 2008; two discs, 109 minutes

In the beginning was Deutsche Grammophon. Only such a major label, one suspects, could have taken on so monumental a project as Paul McCreesh's gloriously successful recording of Haydn's *The Creation* in English. From the very opening bars of the performance, I heard some of the most luxurious period-instrument sounds that I have ever experienced in a recorded medium. Perhaps it was the herd of some ten cellos, or the many flocks of violins. On the other hand, it could have been a result of microphones numberless, or just a glorious heavenly hierarchy of engineers and producers. But however the magnificent sound was achieved, this is a recording of *The Creation* where heavy beasts tread, tigers leap, eagles soar and the heavens tell. So it is all the more disturbing to learn that McCreesh and the German recording label have recently announced the end of what has been a most fruitful partnership (one that has seen the release of some thirty recordings over fifteen years): the Gabrieli Consort & Players' most recent contract was not



renewed. It is obvious, of course, that recording projects whose size approaches the magnitude of one such as McCreesh's reading of *The Creation* are already notoriously difficult to finance. Yet without the support of a multinational corporation like Deutsche Grammophon, it becomes even more challenging to make them a reality.

Any hint of this trouble apparently lay in the unknown future, however, when McCreesh, his Gabrieli Consort & Players, the chamber choir of Chetham's School of Music and distinguished soloists (Sandrine Piau, Miah Persson, Mark Padmore, Neal Davies and Peter Harvey) gathered in the fine acoustic of Watford Town Hall for this recording in 2006. On the agenda was a performance of proper late-eighteenth-century grandeur – the booklet lists 213 orchestral members and choral singers – complete with a newly adjusted English text. The performance of McCreesh's careful and, to my ears, successful solutions to the challenges of Gottfried van Swieten's problematic back-translation of the lost original English libretto is reason enough to own this recording. In this new guise, *The Creation* sounds, for once, like a piece that was composed to an English text rather than translated from the German (I'll return to this in a moment).

The orchestra and choir play and sing with a suppleness that is quite remarkable, given the substantial size of the ensemble as a whole. The soloists, who have to project over this vast body of musicians, sing with considerable subtlety, although some numbers are performed with reduced orchestral forces. Indeed, it is the smaller-scale numbers like Uriel's aria 'In native worth and honour clad' (just before the end of *The Fifth Day*) that are this recording's quiet triumph: Mark Padmore's well-modulated tenor soars above sensitive winds, attentive string accompanists and a lyrical cello section that is truly 'orchestral' in tone. Once the listener has become familiar with this recording, other versions – which use around four cellos – are likely to disappoint.

Success on a small scale is not to say that this interpretation of *The Creation* pulls its punches. Haydn's famous depiction of the sunrise out of the topical mists of the *stile antico* at the dawn of *The Fourth Day*, which begins with a wondrous *pianissimo*, is all the more striking for the 'brightest splendour' of the trumpets and timpani that mark the sun's progress over the horizon. Likewise, the choruses of praise that end the various subsections are – thanks, no doubt, to the work that went into rehearsing them – studies in choral discipline. McCreesh's singers can certainly sing loudly *and* softly, unlike many choirs that take on this sort of work.

To hear *The Creation* in English, and to hear it performed this well, is to hear a triumphant closing gesture of the Enlightenment in another way. In German, the oratorio takes its place as a precursor to a nineteenth-century canon of (German) masterworks, most notably Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*. Indeed, scholarly observers, including Lawrence Kramer, Matthew Head, Nicholas Mathew and Richard Kramer, have recently shone light on aspects of *The Creation* that include the 'archaeologies' (Head) of Haydn's 'glorious work' and its importance to the formation of the canon of *grosse Werke* (not to mention these works' attendant glories). The story told by these musicologists is a mainly German one, relating the birth – from sublime chaos – of the heroic composer writing heroic music. The experience of *The Creation* in English, on the other hand, feels much more rooted. It evokes the British eighteenth century in all of its contradictions, with its worship of the exemplars of history – hence the Handelian choruses – and its love affair with the anti-historical and pseudo-naturalistic garden, the site of that wholly English mix of the pastoral and the picturesque. In other words, to listen attentively to *The Creation* in English is to discover a work with a past: the ghosts of George Frideric Handel and John Milton (not to mention the familiar textual cadences of the King James Version of the Bible) step to the foreground, and the sublimities of creation seem somehow less, well, overwhelming. If both Germany and England have appropriated the work and incorporated it into their national consciousnesses, in Germany the stakes have always been higher. Indeed, the idea of modern Germany, as we now know, was born in the days of *The Creation*: the famous performance to honour its composer on 27 March 1808, in the midst of nascent national resistance to Napoleon, must count as one of many 'zero hours' attendant on the birth of the German national spirit. The remarkable thing is that, when the work is sung in English, this crucial aspect of its early reception melts into air.



According to the website of the Gabrieli Consort & Players (<<http://www.gabrieli.com>>), McCreesh and his ensemble will perform *The Creation* on tour in 2009, thus offering a major contribution to the many events that commemorate the two hundredth anniversary of Haydn's death.

THOMAS IRVINE



Eighteenth-Century Music © 2009 Cambridge University Press
doi:10.1017/S1478570609990145 Printed in the United Kingdom

JAMES NARES (1715–1783)

INGENIOUS JESTINGS. JAMES NARES: EIGHT HARPSICHORD SETTS

Julian Perkins (harpsichord)

Avie AV2152, 2008; one disc, 76 minutes

James Nares was organist of York Minster for some twenty years (1735–1756) before moving to the Chapel Royal, and it was during his time at York that he published his first collection of harpsichord music, *Eight Setts of Lessons for the Harpsichord*, which was issued by John Johnson in 1747. Similar collections of 'lessons' had been published by several other composers in preceding years, including those by Richard Jones (1732), Thomas Chilcot (1734), Henry Symonds (1734), John Christopher Smith (c1732 and 1735) and John Alcock (1741), but Nares's collection is perhaps the most impressive among these, besides containing two lessons more than the usual six.

Nares's collection was published by subscription, and the subscribers included some notable names. Julian Perkins's CD booklet mentions Thomas Arne, William Boyce and George Frideric Handel; other notable composers who subscribed were Alcock, Charles Avison, Willem De Fesch, Maurice Greene, Barnabas Gunn, William Hayes, Johann Christoph Pepusch, John Stanley, John Travers and Worgan (either James or John), while the publishers John Walsh and John Johnson each ordered seven copies. They were surely not disappointed, for there is some fine music in the collection, and the fact that it was reissued ten years later may attest to its commercial success. Interestingly, this compact disc itself was also issued by subscription, thus reviving the eighteenth-century practice; the subscribers' names are duly listed in the booklet, and even include one modern-day James Nares.

One of the most striking features about the collection is the structural variety displayed by the eight 'setts'. Although each 'sett' has either three or four movements, they form an interesting hybrid between the traditional baroque suite and the not-yet-developed classical sonata. Lesson 6, consisting of an Allemand, Courant and Gavot, is the most retrospective and perhaps the earliest to be composed, whereas Lesson 5 is positively forward-looking in its three-movement structure of Allegro, Larghetto and Allegro, which was still quite rare in England at the time. The other six lessons are all more transitional, starting with a non-dance movement but finishing with a dance. Lesson 5, besides its modern structure, contains an extraordinary passage in its slow movement, where the music gradually modulates up several semitones enharmonically from A minor to B flat minor to B minor to C minor to C sharp minor before settling back in A major.

Among the more modern influences that are present in these works, the most conspicuous is that of Domenico Scarlatti, whose first keyboard publication had appeared in London less than ten years earlier. Several of Nares's movements contain characteristic Scarlattian features, such as rapid scales and arpeggios, hand-crossing, wide leaps and sudden pauses. The first and last movements of Lesson 8 are particularly prominent in this respect. Nares's collection is in fact the first English one to show unmistakable signs of Scarlatti's influence.

The recording also includes a suite by Handel (HWV447), neatly placed in the centre between Lessons 1–4 and 5–8. Even though it was written less than a decade before Nares's 'setts', Handel's suite sounds distinctly