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by Richard Dyer

David Hoose has approached Haydn's "The Creation" as if it were among the most familiar and greatly loved works of music in the world, as if it did not boast nearly 200 years of accumulated performance traditions. The result is an altogether extraordinary performance from the Cantata Singers and Ensemble, which fortunately will be repeated tonight so that those who weren't in Sanders Theater Wednesday evening can hear "The Creation" as new music.

Of course, there have been revisionist interpretations of "The Creation" before. But in the concert hall and on records, it always sounds as if the conductor has begun with the question, "How can I keep myself interested in 'With Verdure Clad' or 'The Heavens Are Telling'?" instead of "What is actually in this music?"

Hoose does indeed ask what is in the music. He has come up with some revelatory answers in terms of tempo, dynamics, articulation and emphasis. Take those two famous episodes as examples. In "With Verdure Clad," Hoose emphasized the rhythmic subtlety of the piece, the counterplay of the swinging 6/8 rhythm and the way the famous melody works both with and against it, on and off the beat. Or consider the whirling, rhythmical pattern in "The Heavens Are Telling" that Hoose found to propel this glorious chorus along. And all of this is also part of an overall architecture as grand as anything in music (or in Creation?).

Hoose also has a wonderful ear for sound, and performers to give him what he wanted. The playing of the orchestra was subtle and refined; the continuo of Suzanne Cleverdon and Shannon Snapp was elegant; the sound of solo winds was surpassingly beautiful (Christopher Krueger was the flute, Peggy Pearson the oboe, Bruce Creditor the clarinet). The chorus also sang firmly and with startlingly clear and accurate balance and articulation.

Bass James Maddalena was the most successful of the soloists; he has the majesty and mystery, the warmth and the humor for this music. Tenor Karl Dan Sorensen sang with dignity and simplicity and eloquent enunciation, although occasionally one wished for a greater breadth of tone to span those consonants. Jane Bryden, who deputized for the indisposed Susan Larson, is in a period of vocal transition. Her familiar choirboy tones are no longer consistently available to her, and the sound of the adult Jane Bryden is still emerging. What is certain in this uncomfortable time is that she now sings with a greater communicative warmth than ever before, and that is wonderful. In the last part of the oratorio, John Osborn and thrush-voiced Rosanne Halloran contributed a charming Adam and Eve.

Occasionally there were patches of the odd stiffness that used to mar Hoose's conducting; sometimes the intellectual response was so individual as to sound mannered. In the middle of all of this exploration and discovery, we lost sight of the most characteristic aspect of Haydn's genius, the seeming spontaneity of his music. Generations of community performances, too, have taught us that "The Creation" is a

great “sing” and that its harmonies can seem the harmonies of the spheres. That element of joyousness also occasionally seemed not as important as it ought to.

(As long as we are being critical, we might remark that it is an unnecessary affectation to perform “The Creation” in German as “Die Schoepfung” for an English-speaking audience. The standard translation has a few musically awkward moments, but it derives from the King James Bible and from Milton, has both dignity and charm, and keeps the particularity of Haydn’s music always before us.) But the performance was the kind that could dominate any reservations you might lodge against it. It was “The Creation” recreated.

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