



School of

Music

College of Arts and Sciences

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

Symphony Orchestra

“London”

Danh Pham, Conductor

Tuesday, November 8, 2022

7:30 p.m.

Kimbrough Concert Hall

Program

Crown Imperial (1937)

William Walton
(1902-1983)

Symphony No. 104 in D major, H. 1/104 (1794)

Franz Joseph Haydn
(1732-1809)

- I. Adagio – Allegro
- II. Andante
- III. Menuetto and Trio
- IV. Finale: Spiritoso

Program Notes

An English composer, known particularly for his orchestral works, William Walton emerged between Ralph Vaughan Williams and Benjamin Britten. Raised as a chorister in his father's church choir, his exposure to Anglican anthems as well as non-sacred music at home influenced him greatly during his lifetime. Not only did he compose numerous choral and solo vocal works throughout his career, but he also created a great many works in various instrumental genres, including works for brass and band ensembles, chamber and solo instrumental works, and various works for stage and film, some of which have been adapted for orchestral performances.

In 1936, Walton was commissioned by the BBC to compose a work for the upcoming coronation festivities, with the request that it be similar in character to previous works composed for the royal family by Edward Elgar who had passed away in 1934. As it turned out, King Edward VIII who was supposed to be crowned on May 12, 1937 abdicated his role to his younger brother Albert, who was subsequently crowned as King George VI on the same day.

The composer is believed to have taken the title from William Dunbar's poem "In Honour of the City of London" which includes the lines: 'Empress of towns, exalt in honour; In beauty bearing the crown imperial; Sweet paradise excelling in pleasure; London, thou art the flower of Cities all.' In fact the second line was quoted at the beginning of his original score. Some scholars also acknowledge that Walton was already arranging a setting for the poem for the Leeds Festival in 1937.

In 1953, Walton was given the opportunity to revise the same march to be performed as part of the festivities for the coronation of Albert's daughter, Elizabeth II, where this work, along with a new piece "Orb and Sceptre", were performed. At that time the composer indicated that William Shakespeare's 'Henry V' may have provided the inspiration for both works, quoting the line: 'Tis not the balm, the sceptre and the ball; The sword, the mace, the crown imperial; The robe of gold and pearl...' "Crown Imperial" would appear again at a more recent royal affair, when it was played as a recessional for Queen Elizabeth's grandson Prince William's marriage to Catherine Middleton in 2011. "Crown Imperial" is presented in the traditional ABABC form found in many British marches. The TPO will be performing a revised shorter version for this concert series with cuts authorized by the composer in 1963. Opening in the key of C major, the work then transitions to A-flat for the more lyrical trio section, before restating and developing both, leading to the brief but truly majestic coda finale.

By 1790, Haydn was no longer in service to the Esterházy family. His longtime patron, Prince Nicolaus, had died, leaving Haydn a handsome pension while he maintained some connection with the court. However, the new Prince, Anton, although he increased Haydn's pension, dismissed the entire musical establishment, leaving Haydn with little to do. So, the composer moved to Vienna.

Abundant job offers came his way, but nearing 60, famous and secure financially, the composer decided that he had no need to seek another permanent appointment. Thus, he accepted the most beguiling of the many commissions he was offered: for a half dozen symphonies, ordered by Johann Peter Salomon of London, impresario, violinist, and conductor of his own orchestra, reportedly England's finest.

Haydn was treated like royalty – or at least like Europe's greatest composer – upon his arrival in England at the beginning of 1791 for a residency during which the first set of Salomon's symphonies, Nos. 93-98, would be presented. Later, another series of six – the rest of the 12 so-called "London Symphonies" – was composed in Vienna. Haydn returned to a breathlessly expectant London in February of 1794. The English were not disappointed.

The last symphony, the present work, to which alone among the 12 the name "London" has become particularly attached, was first heard on April 13, 1795, and was also the main event of Haydn's London farewell concert, for his own benefit, three weeks later. Of the latter, Haydn recorded in his diary: "The hall was filled with a picked audience. The whole company was delighted and so was I. I took in this evening 4000 gulden. One can make as much as this only in England." It should be noted that by this time Salomon was no longer able to afford his own series and Haydn had become associated with another presenter.

Whether or not Haydn had decided that this would be his last symphony – which it is – everything about it projects the feeling of a "statement," including the boldly decisive, symmetrical introduction, as distinct from the improvisatory feeling Haydn conveys in similar circumstances elsewhere: two portentous D-minor episodes framing a smaller one in the key of F major. The dark drama nonetheless gives way to something quite different (otherwise it wouldn't be Haydn, master of the unexpected), a charging, joyous *Allegro*.

Reversing the procedure, the *Adagio* begins with an innocent, lilting G-major melody in the first violins, which darkens almost imperceptibly as the other strings enter, then changes its personality as the winds play a little lament, whereupon the whole orchestra bursts out in (minor-key) fury.

The burly minuet has a particularly jaunty trio, dominated by solo oboe and bassoon, while the grand finale – to London and to Haydn, the symphonist – is a potpourri of Slavonic folk tunes which Haydn heard during his years on the Esterházy estates. The opening theme had long been thought of as a London tribute, quoting from the street-song "Hot Cross Buns," but in recent years has been identified as "Oj Jelena," a ballad sung by the Croats living in Eisenstadt when Haydn made his home there.

—Herbert Glass

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Holiday Celebration – December 3, 2022, 2:00pm



WSU Symphony Orchestra
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