

HAYDN

The Seven Last Words of Our Saviour on the Cross

Jenő Jandó, Piano



Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

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Born in 1732 in the village of Rohrau, near the modern border between Austria and Slovakia, Joseph Haydn was the son of a wheelwright. He had his musical training as a chorister at St Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna and thereafter earned a living as best he could from teaching and playing the violin or keyboard. During these earlier years he was able to learn from the old composer Porpora, whose assistant he became. Haydn's first regular employment came in 1759 as Kapellmeister to a Bohemian nobleman, Count von Morzin. This was followed in 1761 by appointment as Vice-Kapellmeister to one of the richest men in the Empire, Prince Paul Anton Esterházy, succeeded on his death in 1762 by his brother Prince Nicolaus. On the death in 1766 of the elderly and somewhat obstructive Kapellmeister, Gregor Werner, Haydn succeeded to his position, remaining in the same employment, nominally at least, until his death in 1809.

Much of Haydn's service of the Esterházy was at the new palace of Eszterháza on the Hungarian plains, a complex of buildings to rival Versailles in magnificence. Here he was responsible for the musical establishment and its activities, including regular instrumental concerts and music for the theatre, opera and church. For his patron he provided a variety of chamber music, in particular for the Prince's favourite instrument, the baryton.

On the death of Prince Nicolaus in 1790 Haydn was able to accept an invitation from the violinist-impresario Salomon to visit London, where he already enjoyed a considerable reputation. He was in London for a second time in 1794 and 1795, after which he returned to duty with the Esterházy family, now chiefly at the family residence in Eisenstadt, where he had started his career. Much of the year, however, was passed in Vienna, where he spent his final years, dying as the city fell once more into the power of Napoleon's army.

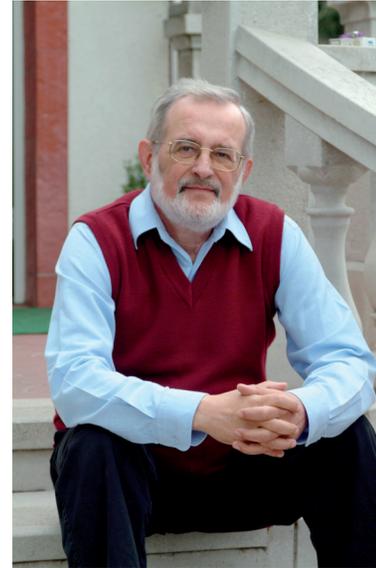
Haydn's music for the *Seven Last Words* was written at the request of a priest in Cádiz, José Saluz de Santamaria, Marqués de Valde-Inigo, for the underground oratory, the Santa Cueva, that he had had constructed. In his own account Haydn explains how it had been the annual custom at the principal church in Cádiz to offer an oratorio to mark Good Friday. The music now commissioned was to be played at ceremonies starting at midday. The bishop was to repeat the words of Christ on the Cross, followed by a short meditation, descending from the pulpit to pray before the altar, while the music of each sonata was played. On the suggestion of the Abbé Stadler Haydn proceeded to write his seven slow movements by setting the words of Christ, providing him with the basis of each of the seven orchestral movements. The work, which, in its demand for a series of slow movements, posed obvious problems for a composer, was written in 1786 in its original orchestral version. In 1787 Haydn arranged the work for string quartet and in

the same year a version was prepared for keyboard. The latter was not the work of Haydn, but he was able to check the proofs provided by the publisher Artaria and gave the transcription his approval, declaring it "*sehr gut und mit besonderem Fleiss abgefasst*" ("very good and made with particular care"). Some ten years later, having heard in the course of a journey to England a choral version of his work, with a pietist German text, Haydn had a new text prepared for him by Baron Gottfried van Swieten, *arbiter elegantiae* at the court in Vienna, who also collaborated with Haydn in *The Creation* and *The Seasons*. This final version of the work is scored for soloists, chorus and orchestra and was published in 1801.

The D minor *Introduction* foretells something of the drama behind what is to come, its solemn dotted chords giving way to more poignant moments and dramatic dynamic contrasts. The first sonata, in B flat major, takes the first words, *Pater, Pater, dimitte illis quia nesciunt quid faciunt* (Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do), the music echoing the significance of this act of forgiveness. It leads to the second of the seven sonatas, the C minor *Hodie mecum eris in Paradiso*, (This day you shall be with me in Paradise), with its glimpses of Heaven in a secondary theme that appears first, in the repeated opening section, in E flat major and, in the second section of the piece, in C major. The third sonata, *Ecce, Mulier, filius tuus* (Woman, behold thy son), in E major, opens with an exact echo of the Latin words, moving to the dominant B major in the repeated first section. *Deus meus, Deus meus, et quid dereliquisti me?* (My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?) Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?) is in F minor, the opening melody echoing the Latin words. The fifth sonata takes the single word *Sitio* (I thirst). In A major, the music is gently lilting, after the opening call to our attention. The word *Sitio* is seemingly echoed in a recurrent simple descending interval of a third, while the opening of the second part of the sonata, after the repeat of the first section, introduces an element of tragic drama. The sixth sonata, in G minor, takes the text *Consummatum est* (It is accomplished), the words clearly outlined in the first three bars, the source of a recurrent motif. The sonata ends with a final passage in a tranquil G major. The final words, *In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum* (Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit) are reflected in an E flat major sonata that follows a similar pattern, a repeated first section, modulation to the dominant, followed by a second section that starts by introducing contrasting keys. Here, however, the sonata prepares us gradually for what is to follow, the final earthquake, the veil of the Temple rent in twain from the top to the bottom and the rocks rent, the whole mirrored in a dramatic C minor.

Keith Anderson

Jenő Jandó



The Hungarian pianist Jenő Jandó has won a number of piano competitions in Hungary and abroad, including first prize at the 1973 Hungarian Piano Concours and a first prize at the chamber music category at the Sydney International Piano Competition in 1977. He has recorded for Naxos all the piano concertos and sonatas of Mozart. Other recordings for the Naxos label include the concertos of Grieg and Schumann as well as Rachmaninov's *Second Concerto* and *Paganini Rhapsody* and the complete piano sonatas of Haydn and Beethoven. He has performed and recorded a wide repertoire of chamber music, in addition to his recording of the complete piano music of Bartók. Jenő Jandó is a professor of the Liszt Academy Budapest.

The request for Haydn to write *The Seven Last Words* came from a priest in Cádiz to mark Good Friday. Setting the words of Christ gave Haydn the basis for the construction of seven slow and meditative movements to be played by the orchestra as the Bishop descended from the pulpit to pray. The following year Haydn arranged the work for string quartet and a version for keyboard was prepared. To this version, which he did not prepare himself, Haydn gave his wholehearted approval noting that it was 'very good and made with particular care'.

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| 1 | L'Introduzione: Maestoso ed adagio | 5:27 |
| 2 | Sonata I. Pater, Pater, dimitte illis,
quia nesciunt quid faciunt: Largo | 7:13 |
| 3 | Sonata II. Hodie mecum eris in Paradiso:
Grave e cantabile | 8:56 |
| 4 | Sonata III. Ecce Mulier, filius tuus: Grave | 9:54 |
| 5 | Sonata IV. Deus meus, Deus meus,
et quid dereliquisti me: Largo | 7:22 |
| 6 | Sonata V. Sitio: Adagio | 9:45 |
| 7 | Sonata VI. Consummatum est: Lento | 8:30 |
| 8 | Sonata VII. In manus tuas, Domine,
commendo spiritum meum: Largo | 8:23 |
| 9 | Il Terremoto (The Earthquake): Presto | 2:08 |

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Recorded at Phoenix Studio, Diósd, Hungary, on 22nd and 23rd July, 2013

Producer: Ibolya Tóth • Engineer: János Bohus • Editor: Ádam Boros

Booklet notes: Keith Anderson • Cover by Rui Vale de Sousa (Fotolia.com)