

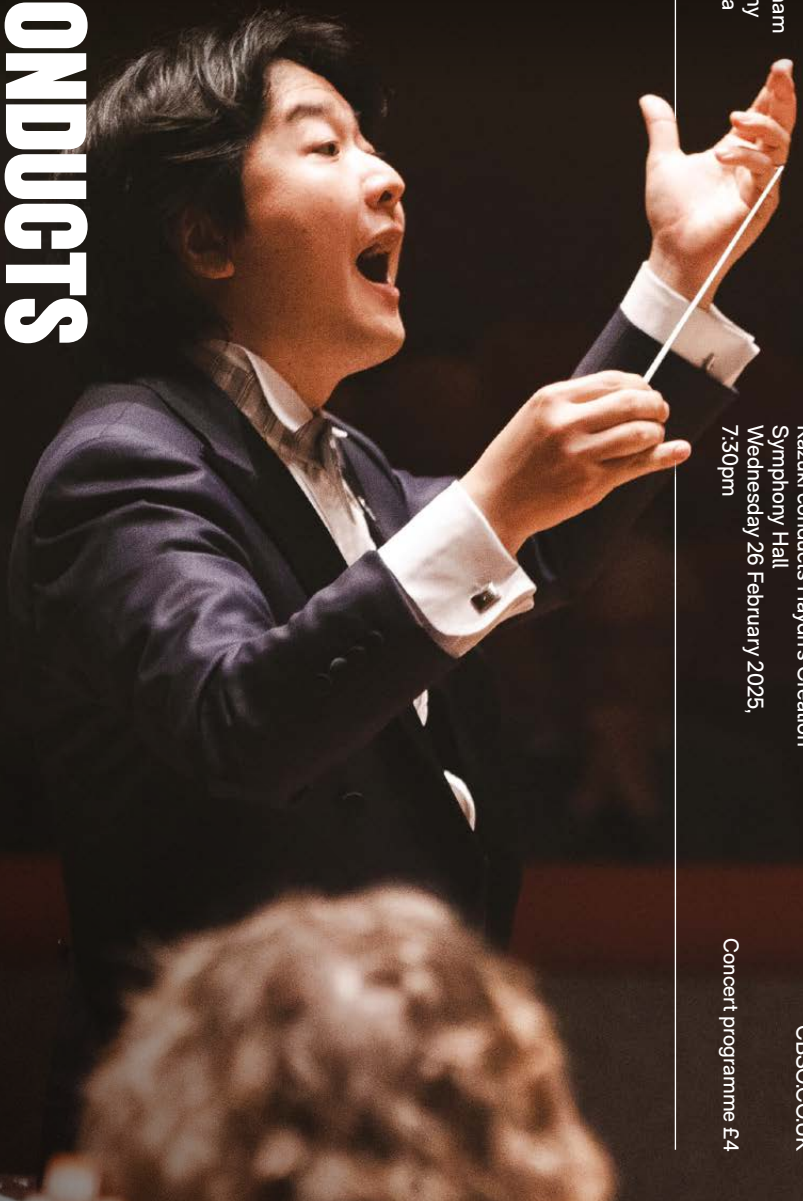
GBSO

City of
Birmingham
Symphony
Orchestra

Kazuki conducts Haydn's Creation
Symphony Hall
Wednesday 26 February 2025,
7:30pm

Concert programme £4

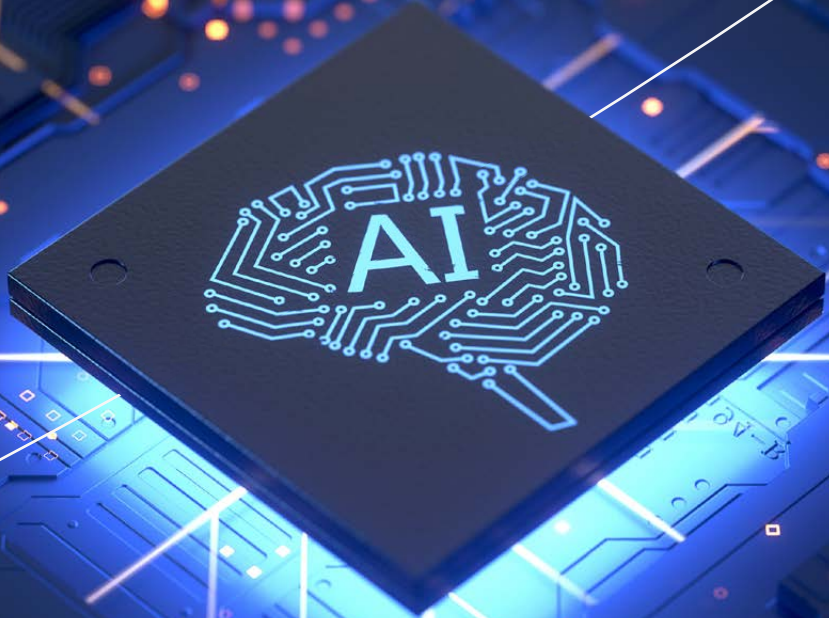
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HAYDN'S CREATION

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Carolyn Sampson
Soprano

INTRODUCTION

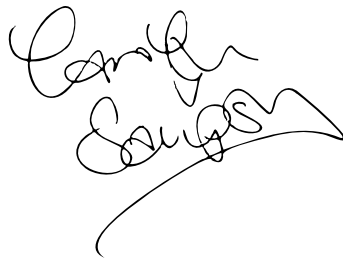
Welcome to this evening's concert at the Symphony Hall.
If I had to choose one word to describe Haydn's Creation,
I think it would be 'technicolour'.

My first experience of the piece came as a teenager when I took part in a performance in Bedford, my hometown. I sang with gusto in the choir, adored the bubbly joy of the soprano soloist and marvelled at the sounds being produced by the orchestra. Having sung it many times since then; as a choir member or as a soloist, in German or in English, even 'With verdure clad' as an audition aria for Ex Cathedra; I still seem to discover new delights every time, which is testament to how rich the score is. Each conductor and performer bring out different elements and I can't wait to see what will surprise me this evening.

The colours come from the orchestration and the word-painting, of course. But more than that, from the very beginning in Haydn's extraordinary opening, we feel him challenging the usual musical structures and conventional harmonies... deliberately creating confusion - we never quite know where we are. All swiftly followed by the mystery of God's spirit, a brilliant goosebump moment (for me, at least), and there we have the first day.

Haydn seems to relish drawing the making of the world for us. Sun and moon; whales and worms; plants, birds, man and the garden of Eden all have their own special sound worlds. Every 'extra' instrument is somehow indispensable, whether it's the third flute that joins us for Part Three, or the (with respect) giggle-inducing contrabassoon.

For me, it's the sense of joy and wonder that makes 'The Creation' one of my favourite pieces to be a part of. So from Chaos to Amen and with all the colours in between, that is what I'm most looking forward to sharing with the audience tonight.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carolyn Sampson', with a long, sweeping underline.

Haydn (ed. Klaus Burmeister), The Creation HOB. XXI:2, 109mins

Part I (No.1 - No.14), 36mins

Part II (No.15 - No.29), 37mins

Part III (No.30 - No.35), 26mins

This concert will have a 25 minute interval after Part II (No.20).

Kazuki Yamada, Conductor

Carolyn Sampson, Soprano

James Way, Tenor

Ashley Riches, Bass

CBSO Chorus

Assistant Conductor, Charlotte Corderoy

Julian Wilkins, Chorus Master

Hannah Komedera, Alto Solo CBSO Chorus

This performance has been kindly supported by Frances and Barry Kirkham.



This performance will be broadcast on BBC Radio 3

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To ensure that everyone is able to enjoy the performance, please make sure your mobile phone is set to silent.

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KAZUKI CONDUCTS HAYDN'S CREATION

A regular visitor to London, Haydn was inspired to write a mighty oratorio after hearing performances of Handel's choral works. He tackled the biggest subject in the Bible: the creation of everything. The music is suitably immense, for a big orchestra, chorus and soloists. Three fantastic singers take up the solo roles while Kazuki leads the CBSO and CBSO Chorus to bring out every detail of this epic work.

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

THE CREATION, HOB. XXI:2

An Austrian in London

When the 58-year old Joseph Haydn arrived in London on 1st January 1791, after a two-week journey from Vienna, he sparked a Georgian media-frenzy. Haydn was fascinated by Britain, enthusiastically noting down in a private notebook his reactions to everything from Royal Navy warships to Cockney slang. (A punch recipe served by the Prince of Wales – involving multiple bottles of burgundy and champagne – seems to have made a particular impression). In June 1792, he encountered one of the scientific wonders of the age. He recorded the occasion in his personal notebook:

"On 15th June I went from Windsor to Doctor Herschel, where I saw the great telescope. It is 40 feet long and 5 feet in diameter. The machinery is very big, but so ingenious that a single man can put it in motion with the greatest ease."

William Herschel's telescope (actually, it seems likely that Haydn was welcomed and shown around by Herschel's sister and fellow-astronomer Caroline) clearly made an impression upon him – an impact rivalled, perhaps, only by the massive Handel Commemoration Festival at Westminster Abbey in May 1791. Over 1000 performers were assembled, and an even larger audience heard performances of Handel's *Israel in Egypt*, *Messiah*, *Zadok the Priest* and extracts from *Saul*, *Judas Maccabeus* and *Deborah*. The concerts were lively occasions, attracting all levels of society: one observer noticed that the audience munched on "hard boiled eggs, ham and roast meat" during the intervals. "One had almost to wade through a mass of eggshells and other rubbish on the way out of the church", he noted.

At one of these the music-lover William Gardiner recorded that "Haydn was present at this performance, and by the aid of a telescope, planted on a stand near the kettle-drums, I saw the composer near the king's box." Haydn seems to have been profoundly moved – both by the music, and

the overwhelming communal response it inspired (a novel and stirring experience for a composer who had spent much of his career working for a closed circle of Hungarian aristocrats).

"He confessed" recounted one of his first biographers, Giuseppe Carpani, "that when he heard the compositions of Hendl [sic] in London, he was struck as if he had been put back to the beginning of his studies and had known nothing up to that moment". Haydn returned to Austria determined to create something with the same power and popularity. And he wanted it to be heard and enjoyed by his friends in Britain too.

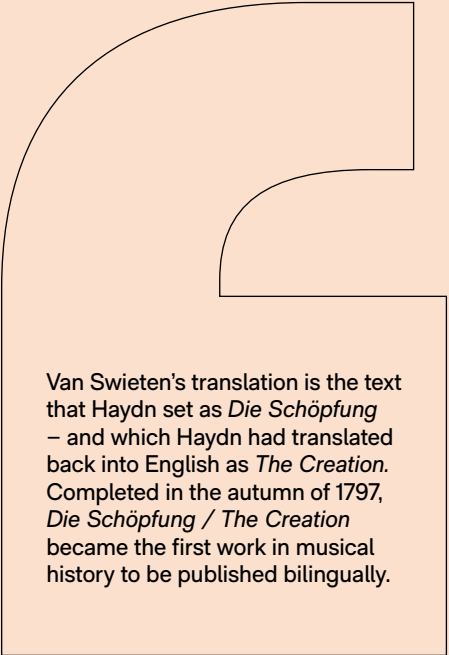
Paradise Lost...and Found

Before leaving London for the last time in 1795, Haydn had been given an English libretto for an oratorio based on Milton's *Paradise Lost*, in which three angels and Adam and Eve retell the opening verses of the Book of Genesis. We don't know who wrote it, though Haydn was assured that it had originally been intended for Handel. Modest about his grasp of English, he hesitated to set it in the original, so he enlisted one of Vienna's most knowledgeable music-lovers, Baron Gottfried van Swieten, who "resolved to clothe the poem in German garb". Van Swieten's translation is the text that Haydn set as *Die Schöpfung* – and which Haydn had translated back into English as *The Creation*. Completed in the autumn of 1797, *Die Schöpfung / The Creation* became the first work in musical history to be published bilingually. It would soon become almost as popular as *Messiah* in the English-speaking world.

But it was in Vienna that *The Creation* received its premiere, on 30th April 1798, at the Palais Schwarzenberg (the reaction was ecstatic). The reaction was ecstatic, and understandably – because no work gives us a bigger, warmer or more generous picture of Haydn as thinker, creative genius,

and supremely loveable human being. Van Swieten's libretto gave him ample opportunity to exercise his sense of humour, and nineteenth century critics, in particular, disapproved of his playful tone-painting (inspired directly by Handel): his musical portrayals of rain, hail, and snow; the sun and moon, the tiger, eagle and whale, and (of course) the humble earthworm.

Of course, they'd missed the point. The astonishing, tonally-ambiguous prelude to *The Creation*, the *Representation of Chaos*, is itself a radical masterpiece: music unbounded by notions of classical stability, representing a universe without form. But Haydn planned it as part of a far greater design. Chaos is defeated by the most dazzlingly powerful affirmation of tonality in all classical music – a mighty burst of C major (the brightest and simplest of keys) as God creates light. And throughout the whole work, passages of relaxation (the radiant soprano aria *With Verdure Clad*,



Van Swieten's translation is the text that Haydn set as *Die Schöpfung* – and which Haydn had translated back into English as *The Creation*. Completed in the autumn of 1797, *Die Schöpfung / The Creation* became the first work in musical history to be published bilingually.

the rosy dawn that opens Part Three), of playful humour (all those sound-effects, and a bubbly comic-opera duet for Adam and Eve) are balanced by music of visionary grandeur.

Light out of Darkness

Learning from Handel, Haydn structured his oratorio around big, stirring choruses. As thrilling to sing as they are to hear, *Awake the Harp*, *The Heavens are Telling*, and *Achieved is the Glorious Work* match Handel's majesty with classical symphonic sweep. And then there are the moments where Haydn simply expresses Biblical ideas in some of the happiest music of the Age of Enlightenment - he freely admitted that he "was never so devout as when I was working on *The Creation*". Yet his faith was as much about joy as awe: "Whenever I think of God" he famously remarked (according to Stendhal) "I can imagine only a Being infinitely great and infinitely good, and the idea of this latter attribute of the divine nature fills me with such confidence, such joy, that I should set even a *miserere* in *tempo allegro*." Both worms and angels had their place in his universe.

Still, Haydn is emphatically not naïve. At Mozart's suggestion, Haydn had joined the Viennese Masonic lodge *Zur wahren Eintracht* (True Concord) in February 1785, and his personal library contained a range of banned philosophical texts. He didn't just take the Bible's word for the splendour of the Universe – as we know, he'd used science to gaze deep into the heavens.

Similarly, in *The Creation*, the very noblest music celebrates the limitless potential of Creation's highest achievement - humanity. Haydn ends his story before the Fall of Man; his aim – in a Europe tormented by war and social turmoil – was to offer a hopeful vision of the world that a loving God had intended, not the mess that humanity had made of it. Written three years before Beethoven's first symphony, the arias *Now Heaven in Fullest*



PORTRAIT OF JOSEPH HAYDN BY THOMAS HARDY, 1791. UPDATENERD, PUBLIC DOMAIN, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

Glory Shone and *In Native Worth* are surely the crowning moment of the 18th century Enlightenment in classical music.

Haydn's contemporaries felt it then, as we feel it today. Haydn's final public appearance was at a performance of *The Creation* at the University of Vienna in honour of his 76th birthday, on 27th March 1808. Antonio Salieri was at the keyboard, and Haydn's former pupil Beethoven was in the audience. (Afterwards, as Haydn left, he kneeled to kiss the old man's hand). At the words *And There Was Light* the entire audience erupted into spontaneous applause. Haydn, no longer able to stand unaided, raised his arms to heaven and declared, as strongly as his weakened voice allowed, "Not from me – it all comes from above".

© Richard Bratby

Conductor

KAZUKI YAMADA



Kazuki Yamada is Music Director of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO). Alongside his commitments in Birmingham, Yamada is also Artistic and Music Director of Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo (OPMC). His time under the close supervision of Seiji Ozawa served to underline the importance of what Kazuki Yamada calls his “Japanese feeling” for classical music. Born in 1979 in Kanagawa, Japan, he continues to work and performs in Japan every season. Highlights this season include returning to the BBC Proms with the CBSO, closely followed by his return to Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin. In May 2025, he takes the CBSO on tour to Europe and on tour to Japan, and has debuts with Berliner Philharmoniker, The Cleveland Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, and San Francisco Symphony to name only a few.

© ZUZANNA SPECIAL

CAROLYN SAMPSON

Equally at home on the concert and opera stages, Carolyn Sampson has enjoyed notable successes in the UK as well as throughout Europe and the rest of the world. Last season marked an incredible achievement for Carolyn as she celebrated her recording legacy with the release of her 100th album as a featured solo artist. In 2024 she was awarded an OBE in the King's New Year Honours and was elected an Honorary Member of the Royal Academy of Music. This season's highlights include Haydn Die Schöpfung/Creation, with both the Orchestre de Chambre de Paris under Masato Suzuki at the Paris Philharmonie and with the CBSO under Kazuki Yamada, another European tour with Bach Collegium Japan, solo programmes with La Scintilla at Opernhaus Zurich with Riccardo Minassi and the Freiburger Barockorchester, and returns to the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks and Dresdner Philharmonie.



© MARCO BORGGREVE

Tenor

JAMES WAY



© BEN MCKEE

James Way is fast gaining international recognition for the versatility of his voice and commanding stage presence. Having followed his initial interest in baroque music through the young artist programmes of Les Arts Florissants and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, he immediately became in demand as a soloist for conductors including William Christie, Rene Jacobs, Harry Bicket and Trevor Pinnock. Equally comfortable in later repertoire, he has a particular affinity for the music of Britten and Stravinsky. His performances include Flute in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Glyndebourne Festival and Garsington Festival, The Son in *Les Mamelles de Tiresias* also for Glyndebourne Festival, Young King in George Benjamin's *Lessons in Love and Violence* with Orchestre de Paris, Sellem in Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* with the Munich Philharmonic and Holy Fool in *Boris Godunov* with the Philharmonia Orchestra. Performances of various Handel roles continue to take him around the world with performances at Carnegie Hall, Tokyo Opera City, Barbican and Paris Philharmonie amongst others. In 2025 he will release a recording of the complete Britten Canticles for Delphian Records alongside pianist Natalie Burch.

ASHLEY RICHES

Bass-baritone Ashley Riches studied at King's College, Cambridge and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He was a Jette Parker Young Artist at the Royal Opera House and a BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist. An extremely versatile artist, his 2024/25 season includes Handel's *Messiah* at the BBC Proms with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, Rossini's *Stabat Mater* with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Berlioz *L'Enfance du Christ* with the NFW Wroclaw Philharmonic, Bach's *St John Passion* with The English Concert, and Puccini's *La Rondine* with the London Symphony Orchestra. In 2023/24 he returned to the Royal Opera House as Roucher *Andrea Chénier*, sang Rheinberg in Wallace's *Lurline* with the National Symphony Orchestra Dublin, Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with David Afkham in Madrid, Verdi's *Requiem* with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and Handel's *Messiah* in concert at Glyndebourne and with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, and Purcell's *King Arthur* with Paul McCreesh in Lyon and Lausanne. An accomplished recitalist, he released his debut solo recital recording, *A Musical Zoo*, in 2021.



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