

THE MOZARTISTS

Ian Page and The Mozartists launch major new recording series exploring *Sturm und Drang*



Sturm und Drang Volume 1

Release date: 15 May 2020

Ian Page and **The Mozartists** begin a projected seven-volume recording series exploring *Sturm und Drang*, the 18th-century movement that swept through music and other art forms between the early 1760s and the early 1780s. Translated as “Storm and Stress”, this dramatic and ground-breaking style sought to evoke extremes of emotion and came to be associated with art, literature and music that aimed to shock the audience.

Ian Page’s critically-acclaimed recordings, including an ongoing series of Mozart’s operas, have largely featured operatic and vocal music. Now, reflecting the expansion of repertoire under his company’s new name, The Mozartists, this ambitious *Sturm und Drang* project is dominated by orchestral repertoire. It incorporates iconic opera, ballet and symphonies by Mozart, Gluck and, above all, Joseph Haydn, as well as including largely forgotten or neglected works by less familiar names such as Jommelli, Beck and Vanhal.

This first volume of *Sturm und Drang* features music composed in the 1760s and opens with the finale of Gluck’s *Don Juan* ballet, which depicts the Don’s descent into hell and is often cited as the birth of the movement in music. The two other centrepieces are Haydn’s remarkable Symphony No. 49 in F minor, ‘La Passione’, and the lesser-known but no less remarkable Symphony in G minor by Franz Ignaz Beck. Acclaimed Swiss-Belgian soprano **Chiara Skerath** is the soloist in darkly atmospheric arias by Haydn, Traetta and Jommelli.

Conductor Ian Page writes:

“The so-called Sturm und Drang movement in music prompted some astonishingly dynamic and visceral works, many of which now sound bewilderingly ahead of their time. The remarkable series of minor-key symphonies that Haydn composed during the second half of the 1760s and the early 1770s

are rightly acknowledged as the peak of this repertoire, but alongside these masterpieces I wanted to explore and champion lesser known works that captured the spirit of the time and similarly embodied the often turbulent and passionate reaction against the niceties of rococo style. Much of the repertoire, but by no means all of it, is centred around Vienna, and draws on the movement's penchant for highly-charged minor-key symphonies combined with the equally reactionary operatic reforms of composers such as Gluck, Jommelli and Traetta, and this music really lifts off the page when played on instruments of the period. The process of programming this series has been extremely stimulating and at times surprising – as with the wonderful Beck symphony featured on the first disc, for example – and I'm very excited at the prospect of sharing this music with our audiences."

This album was recorded at St John's Smith Square, London in January 2019 and will be released on the Signum record label on 15 May 2020. The second volume will follow next season, with Volumes 3-7 scheduled over the coming years.

Track listing:

GLUCK: Final scene from *Don Juan*

Larghetto – Chaconne (Allegro non troppo)

JOMMELLI: "Ombre che tacite qui sede" from *Fetonte*

(Chiara Skerath, *Fetonte*)

HAYDN: "Non v'è chi mi aiuta" from *La canterina*

(Chiara Skerath, *Gasparina*)

BECK: Symphony in G minor, Op. 3, no.3

1. Allegro con spirito
2. Andante un poco adagio
3. Minuetto e Trio
4. Presto

TRAETTA: "Crudeli, ahimè, che fate?" from *Sofonisba*

(Chiara Skerath, *Sofonisba*)

TRAETTA: "Sofonisba, che aspetti?" from *Sofonisba*

(Chiara Skerath, *Sofonisba*)

HAYDN: Symphony No. 49 in F minor, 'La Passione'

1. Adagio
2. Allegro di molto
3. Menuet e Trio
4. Presto

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Notes to Editors:

The Mozartists

The Mozartists were launched in 2017 as an extension of Ian Page's work with his internationally acclaimed period-instrument ensemble Classical Opera. Their début recording, 'Perfido!' – a programme of concert arias by Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven sung by British soprano Sophie Bevan – was shortlisted for the 2017 International Opera Awards, and was followed in 2018 by 'Mozart in London', which was selected as Recording of the Month in Gramophone and Limelight magazines.

Under the leadership of Ian Page, The Mozartists are among the world's leading exponents of the music of Mozart and his contemporaries, and are particularly renowned for their fresh and stylish performances, their ability to discover and nurture outstanding young artists, and their imaginative and illuminating programming. Formerly known as Classical Opera, they have performed most of Mozart's stage works, as well as operas by J. C. Bach, Gluck, Haydn, Arne, Telemann, Jommelli and Hasse, and in 2012 they embarked on a major new recording cycle of the complete Mozart operas. The company's discography also includes 'The A-Z of Mozart Opera' (Sony Classics, 2007, re-launched on Signum Classics in 2014), 'Blessed Spirit – a Gluck retrospective' (Wigmore Hall Live, 2010), Thomas Arne's *Artaxerxes* (Linn Records, 2011), and 'Where'er You Walk', a programme of arias composed for the celebrated English tenor John Beard, featuring Allan Clayton (Signum Classics, 2016).

The company has presented staged operas at Sadler's Wells, The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Southbank Centre, Buxton Opera House and the Schwetzingen Rokokotheater, and frequent concerts at Wigmore Hall, the Barbican, Cadogan Hall and Kings Place. It has also appeared in France, Italy, Germany and the Czech Republic, and in 2016 was invited to present the opening three concerts of the prestigious Haydn Festival in Eisenstadt.

In 2015 Ian Page launched MOZART 250, a ground-breaking 27-year project following the chronological trajectory of Mozart's life, works and influences. Each year MOZART 250 explores the music being composed and performed exactly 250 years previously, thereby placing Mozart's life and music in context, and this major initiative has already incorporated music by over thirty composers.

Ian Page

Ian Page is the founder, conductor and artistic director of The Mozartists, formerly known as Classical Opera, and is receiving growing recognition as one of the leading British conductors of his generation. He began his musical education as a chorister at Westminster Abbey, and subsequently studied English Literature at the University of York before completing his studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London. At the start of his career he worked on the music staff at Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Scottish Opera, Opera Factory and the Drottningholm Slottsteater in Sweden, assisting such conductors as Sir Charles Mackerras, Sir Alexander Gibson, Ivor Bolton and Mark Wigglesworth.

With Classical Opera he has conducted most of Mozart's early operas – including the world première of the 'original' version of *Mitridate, re di Ponto* and a new completion of *Zaide* – as well as the three Da Ponte operas and *La clemenza di Tito*. He has also conducted the UK premières of Gluck's *La clemenza di Tito*, Telemann's *Orpheus*, Jommelli's *Il Vologeso*, Haydn's *Applausus* and Hasse's *Piramo e Tisbe*, and the first staging for 250 years of J. C. Bach's *Adriano in Siria*. He made his Royal Opera House début conducting Arne's *Artaxerxes* at the Linbury Theatre, and his studio recording of the work was subsequently released on Linn Records. He has conducted in all of London's leading concert halls, and also at the Bath, Brighton, Buxton, Lichfield and Newbury Festivals, as well as in

Italy, France, Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic. In 2019 he conducted Handel's *Ariodante* at the Drottningholm Festival in Sweden, with Ann Hallenberg in the title role, and his future engagements include débuts in Paris and Brussels and recordings of Mozart's *La Betulia liberata* and volume 2 of *Sturm und Drang*. He devised and conducted Classical Opera's recordings of 'The A-Z of Mozart Opera' (Signum Classics) and 'Blessed Spirit – a Gluck retrospective' (Wigmore Hall Live), both of which were selected for Gramophone magazine's annual Critic's Choice, and he recently embarked on an acclaimed new complete cycle of Mozart opera recordings with Classical Opera. He has also created and devised MOZART 250, a ground-breaking 27-year journey through Mozart's music and influences, which was launched in London in 2015.

Chiara Skerath

Praised for her "brilliant technique" and her "velvety timbre" (Opera Magazine), Swiss soprano Chiara Skerath has made acclaimed débuts in the title role of Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* at Opéra de Nantes, as Melisande (*Pelleas et Melisande*) at Opéra de Bordeaux, Ännchen (*Der Freischütz*) in Paris and on tour with the Insula Orchestra, and as Antigone (Enescu's *Oedipe*) at the Salzburg Festival. She has appeared in numerous roles at Opéra National de Paris and has already established an outstanding reputation as a Mozart singer. She first worked with Ian Page and The Mozartists on their recording of Mozart's *Il sogno di Scipione* and has since appeared with them as Ninetta (*La finta semplice*) and in concert at London's Wigmore Hall and Southbank Centre. Skerath's numerous awards have included the Audience Prize at the 2014 Queen Elisabeth Competition, the 2013 International Nadia et Lili Boulanger Competition and the 2012 Emmerich Smola Förderpreis.

Forthcoming releases by Ian Page and The Mozartists:

Sturm und Drang Vol. 2 – due for release in 2020/21

Mozart: *La Betulia Liberata* – due for release in 2021

Forthcoming key events:

Mozart in Italy Festival

6-8 March - Cadogan Hall, London

Ian Page and The Mozartists continue their MOZART 250 series with a three-day mini-festival exploring the music that Mozart composed and heard in Italy during the course of 1770. Featured works by Mozart include symphonies, concert arias and highlights and first drafts from *Mitridate, re di Ponto*, and excerpts from largely forgotten operas including Guglielmi's *Ruggiero*, Piccinni's *Cesare in Egitto*, Mysliveček's *La Nitteti* and Jommelli's *Armida abbandonata*. The festival includes a series of talks and illustrated lectures by leading scholars including Cliff Eisen and Sergio Durante.

Mozart's Keys

30 April, 7:30pm - Queen Elizabeth Hall

E flat major is the key to this exquisite line-up of Mozart masterpieces, as conductor Ian Page and The Mozartists collaborate for the first time with the celebrated Dutch fortepianist Ronald Brautigam.

Mozart's Czech Mates

14 July, 7:30pm - Wigmore Hall, London

A concert exploring Mozart's links and friendships with a number of outstanding Bohemian

composers who settled in Vienna at the same time as him. The programme is framed by dramatic G minor symphonies by Vanhal and Kozeluch, and also features arias by Gluck.

Concert performance of Mozart's *Mitridate, re di Ponto*

26 November - London

Details to be announced shortly.