

Credo Music Explores Haydn's *Creation*

By Mike Telin



Each summer talented young musicians make their way to the Oberlin College campus to participate in Credo, where for three weeks they study chamber music with leading artist-teachers from around the world. But what makes a Credo experience different from many summer music camps and festivals is Credo's commitment to community service.

Participants perform

concerts in prisons, nursing homes, early childhood centers and hospice facilities as well as volunteering at local food banks, homeless shelters and parks. "Credo is about chamber music and chamber music is about relationships," Credo's Artistic Director and Professor of Viola at Oberlin, Peter Slowik told us during a recent telephone conversation. "Credo is about catalytic relationships and it gives people a sense of what they can do with their music apart from the concert hall."

This summer marks Credo's 15th anniversary and in honor of the occasion, Slowik and his creative team have put together several seminars designed to introduce audiences to the social, musical, and artistic elements which influenced Haydn's masterpiece, *The Creation*. These events will culminate with a performance of the beloved oratorio on Saturday, July 19 at 7:00 pm in Severance Hall under the direction of renowned conductor John Nelson. "This is something I have wanted to do for about 15 years," Slowik said. "Looking to the future of classical music we're all trying to find a new model that works for the minds of the 21st century. As performers we are interested in discerning the mind and heart of the composer. My hope is to immerse seminar attendees in all of the elements that surround Haydn's *Creation* so that when they come to the performance they will already feel like they have been engaged in it some way." Click [here](#) for a seminar registration brochure.

Events will begin on Thursday, July 17 at 7:00 PM at John Knox Presbyterian Church in North Olmsted, with an evening of lectures titled *Haydn's Masterpiece*. Oberlin Conservatory Music History Chair Steven Plank will discuss the social context of oratorios and "sacred operas." Wheaton College Dean of Conservatory, Arts, and Communication Michael Wilder will speak to theological aspects of the work in his talk, "A Creative Inheritance."

During his talk, Wilder plans to spend some time discussing the theological underpinnings of Haydn's work. "I'm not sure there is a whole lot that is especially complex – the piece is a fairly straightforward marrying of the two texts, the Book of Genesis and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. I also hope to spend a few minutes investigating the broader topic of creativity and creation within the lives of Christians. *The Creation* offers us a great excuse to reflect on a biblical perspective on the beginning of the world."

Wilder thinks it is important to understand the period of time during which the piece was written. "It's a bit sociological and a bit theological too. What does it mean to be experiencing Haydn's *Creation* this side of the 20th century."

On Friday, July 18, at 9:00 am at Oberlin College, *Exploring the Creative Spirit* will focus on the many manifestations of the creative spirit. Seminar events will include two curated gallery walks titled "The Art of Creation" and "Art in the Time of Haydn" at the Allen Memorial Art Museum.

Peter Slowik points out that seminar attendees will also have the opportunity to attend two talks by composer Greg Pascuzzi. "Greg plans to create a composition using one of Haydn's texts from *The Creation*," Slowik said. "He'll talk about things like the text mentions birds, so what should that sound like?"

The day will also include a Credo Chamber Music Mini-Concert. "Outside of hearing great music, people will have a chance to get to know Credo musicians in an intimate setting as they play highlights from the chamber music repertoire."

Seminar attendees will also get to learn a little bit of music theory during Oberlin Conservatory Music Theory Professor Brian Alegant's talk *Why This Music Moves Me*. "Theory can be somewhat difficult to understand," Slowik said. "But it is just explaining why we feel the way that we do about music. Brian will talk about the emotional impact of Haydn's harmonic language and his unique compositional style."

Slowik's hope is that people who come to the seminar will have a fun time learning about music. "They'll get some musical history, which I think is always fascinating, and a little music theory as well."

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