

SPOHR IN VERSE

SPOHR received many tributes during his life and poems of homage flowed in abundance, two of which have come to our notice recently. The first poem below, in a translation by Celia Skrine, was written in praise of Spohr after the performance of his oratorio *The Last Judgment* in Düsseldorf in 1826 and was published in the *Nieder-Rheinische Beobachter*, no. 97, 1826. The unsigned poem, which refers to specific parts of the oratorio, certainly does not match its subject in sublimity but is interesting in illustrating how moved people were by Spohr's compositions at that period.

How soulfully your strings resound,
how deeply moved is every heart!
Away from earthly feelings, ever in conflict,
your muse soars heavenwards;
the earth drops away, the farthest times of the future
open up; every last sorrow is stilled;
and those who died in the Lord find grace,
for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Alleluia rings out from everyone
and all who can praise in any way join in;
the mighty chorus of voices swells
like rivers coursing down from mountain tops,
till they fade away in a hushed Amen,
a beautiful end to a beautiful whole.
Not one but all may say aloud to you:
You have borne us all aloft to the highest heights.

To you, Master, all thanks! We have felt deeply:
the Muse has endowed you with holy power,
may she often again in golden hours
teach you immortal songs, whose burden
may lift us from the pain and hurt of earth
and lead us into realms of radiant beauty.
Preserve the noble fire within your bosom
and you will be endeared to distant generations!

The next poem first appeared in *The Musical Times* (we acknowledge their kind permission to reprint) for January 1977 in the original German and an English version by Pamela Willetts as part of her article on Johann Andreas Stumpff (1769-1846). Stumpff was an expatriate German who settled in London in 1790 and turns up in the biographies of Beethoven and Mozart's sister, in both cases raising funds for them. He makes a brief appearance too in Spohr's memoirs as 'a friendly old gentleman, the instrument maker Stumpff' who used to accompany Spohr and his wife on their outings in London in 1820. Pamela Willetts examined a large collection of Stumpff's papers in the British Library as the basis for her article and among them are many of his poems. The one on Spohr, entitled "Homage" is dated April 18th 1820 and therefore came into being soon after Spohr's arrival in London.

Your playing delights the lover of art, O Spohr,
the inner ear of the connoisseur listens to you with content.
Beautiful Psyche pays homage to your strains,
and holds out a wreath to crown your temples.
Only she can call the works of artists to life
and make them float like images of light on the stream of time.
You stride boldly on the path to fame
made by German genius to that sanctuary
of the lofty spheres of Handel, Bach and Gluck,
to the brightly shining altars of Haydn and Mozart.