

UNDERSTANDING CLASSICAL MUSIC – Report by Ian Royston

The third part of Howard Goodall's Story of classical music entitled "Elegance and Sensibility" looked at music on the cusp of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Though the world was gripped by revolution and turbulence, composers such as Mozart and Beethoven continued to produce music for aristocratic patrons which sought to soothe and provide an idyllic backdrop to their privileged lives.

It was also a time when the complexities of the baroque style began to simplify into a smaller range of chords with the three favourites emerging and remaining the mainstay of many repertoires to this day including almost all of the output of legendary rock group Status Quo.

It is only well into the first quarter on the 19th century that music starts to better reflect the heroism and misery of the outside world and composers such as Mozart and Beethoven become freelance rather than relying on a rich patron. It is said that Mozart wrote the world's best-remembered tunes, very necessary when your livelihood depends on it.



It was into this world that Frederic Chopin, the main subject of the second part of the morning's programme was born. Warsaw was torn between Russia and Prussia so after realising the limitations of being able to thrive as a virtuoso pianist in Warsaw, Chopin moved to Paris where he became a popular salon performer and the lover of writer and influencer George Sand (Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin de Francueil). Simon Callow informed us that though we see Chopin as being prolific he set such high personal standards that only a fraction of his output has ever been heard. Nevertheless, the accessibility of factory-made pianos and cheap sheet music was key to the popularity of the pianoforte to aspirational, well-bred women and encouraged them to explore composition.

We plan to continue with Howard Goodall and discover another musical destination next month at 10:00 on 23 May at Startforth Community Centre.