



August 2 – 16, 2009

CLASSICAL WORLD JAZZ

CONCERT PROGRAM

Monday August 3, 2009 3 PM Christ Church Cathedral

Leipzig String Quartet

Stefan Arzberger, violin
Tilman Büning, violin
Ivo Bauer, viola
Matthias Moosdorf, cello

Quartet in C Major, Op. 76, No. 3, “Emperor” Joseph Haydn (1732 – 1809)

Allegro
Poco adagio, cantabile
Menuetto: Allegro
Finale: Presto

Quartet No. 3, “Hunting” Jörg Widmann (b. 1973)

INTERMISSION

Quartet in A minor, Op. 132, No. 15 Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)

Assai sostenuto – Allegro
Allegro ma non tanto
Molto adagio – Andante
Alla marcia, assai vivace
Allegro appassionato – Presto

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Since its founding two decades ago, the **Leipzig String Quartet** has garnered the attention of international critics and audiences with its distinctive dark timbre and meticulously sculpted interpretations of a widely varied repertoire. Formed originally by the string principals of the renowned Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, the Quartet continues to uphold the principles of sound and integrity ascribed to this great orchestra. Lauded by *The New York Times* for presenting “rich, mellow, unadulterated beauty” and a true “Leipzig sound”, the Quartet is beyond doubt one of the world’s great chamber ensembles.

Today, the Quartet performs widely throughout Europe, and since 1991 has had its own Pro Quatuor series at the Gewandhaus

where it has offered a multi-year cycle of the major quartets of the First and Second Viennese School in addition to premieres and performances of new works by Alfred Schnittke and Wolfgang Rihm.

The Quartet tours annually throughout North America and includes performances at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the Frick Collection, Wolf Trap, the Library of Congress, and chamber music series in Baltimore, Boston, Cleveland, Chicago, Los Angeles, Ottawa, and Toronto.

It has released over 60 recordings of repertoire ranging from Mozart to Cage. *Strings Magazine* proclaimed the Quartet’s recordings of the complete string quartet works of Franz Schubert to be “of the highest order, the interpretations bracing and intense, and the recordings themselves ideal in clarity, richness of sound, and naturalness of acoustics.” Fittingly, the Quartet has won prizes from the German Record Reviewers and both the ECHO and Diapason d’Or awards.

As a member of the Leipzig Ensemble Avantgarde, the Quartet remains on the forefront of contemporary music and is able to satisfy its desire to continually perform new music and interact regularly with composers.

The Quartet enjoys collaborating with other artists to enrich and expand its already large repertoire. The ensemble has performed and recorded with Alfred Brendel, Marc-André Hamelin, Joseph Kalichstein, Christian Zacharias, Menahem Pressler, and acclaimed klezmer clarinetist Giora Feidman, among others.

Program Notes

String Quartet in C Major, Op. 76, No. 3, “Emperor” (Haydn)

By the time Haydn returned to Vienna in 1795, after his second immensely successful visit to London, several new elements had become integrated into his writing. The realization that he was widely regarded as the greatest living composer (Mozart had already died, and Beethoven had not yet made his mark) had imbued him with great boldness and self-assurance.

When Count Joseph Erdödy asked Haydn for a set of quartets, probably early in 1796, the 64-year-old composer brought to the task his newly developed musical outlook, along with 40 years of continuous maturation in writing for the medium. Among the new features he incorporated into these quartets are more profound and emotional slow movements that move at a deliberate pace and, as Haydn biographer H.C. Robbins Landon finds, “are also bathed in a curiously impersonal and remote melancholy.” The minuets, on the other hand, are now more like scherzos, faster in tempo and lighter in mood in comparison with the older, dignified minuet-style movements.

The focus of the “Emperor” quartet focuses on its second movement, the expressive centre of the work. The theme comes from a hymn Haydn wrote to honour Emperor Franz II,

Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser (“God protect Emperor Franz”). In addition to its use in the quartet, the universally appealing melody became the national anthems of both Austria and Germany, a religious and a Masonic anthem.

Bearing the notable second movement in mind, Haydn probably decided to start the piece with the less weighty Allegro which is essentially monothematic: the melody heard at the very beginning dominates throughout. The theme, though, undergoes several especially interesting transformations – from a bright, sunny first statement, to a murky, low-pitched appearance later in the exposition, to a rough peasant dance in the middle of the development section. The writing for all four instruments, especially the first violin, is uniformly brilliant and virtuosic.

Haydn subjects the simple and dignified theme of the second movement to four variations. In a departure from his usual variation technique, he keeps the melody essentially the same throughout, giving it to different instruments and varying the setting and accompaniment against which it is heard. After the first violin statement, the melody passes to the second violin, while the first violin embroiders around it delicate and sprightly runs and leaps. In the second variation, the cello has the melody and the other instruments pursue richly

textured contrapuntal lines in the background. The viola is entrusted with the lead in Variation III, while the violins and cello contribute their rather spare countermelodies. The final variation is the apotheosis; the entire quartet plays the theme in a hauntingly beautiful and evocative setting.

To avoid competing with the preceding movement, Haydn created a simple, undemanding Menuetto. The first section is a heavy-shoed peasant dance, played loudly throughout. The contrasting trio is much smoother, quieter, and more songlike. It is followed by a shortened repeat of the Menuetto.

The grave Finale is the counterweight to the serious second movement. The opening measures contain three musical gestures that pervade the entire movement: three powerful chords, a smooth answering phrase that is rhythmically reminiscent of the first movement, and running triplet passages. While Haydn imaginatively transforms and develops these motifs with great vigour, the total effect is perhaps more anxious than cheerful. At the end he moves into a major, presumably happier key, but the concluding mood is still not entirely joyful.

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Quartet No. 3, "Hunting Quartet" (Widmann)

The five string quartets composed by me so far have followed a cyclical idea. They can be performed individually but also form a whole. Each quartet stands for an archetypal movement form. The first quartet is an introduction; the second (choral) quartet is a largo verging on the static; the third (hunting) quartet corresponds to a classical but grim scherzo with a hunting rhythm being chased to death; the fourth investigates forms of walking/stepping (*andante/passacaglia*); and the fifth quartet with soprano is an attempt at the fugue.

My third quartet may be said to correspond to the scherzo in its classical dramaturgy. It is a development of a wholesome dotted hunting theme (borrowed from Schumann's *Papillons*) to the point of the splintering of the initially positivistic hunting character and then finally to its skeletonizing. At the same time, the situation of the four instrumentalists changes: the braggart hunters go on to be hunted, to be pursued. The fact that three high strings conspire against the cello in a further (deadly) change of perspective and put the blame on this instrument is an analogy to social patterns of behaviour. The playful and overwound tone maintained throughout only with difficulty conceals the seriousness that suddenly has found its way into the piece.

Notes by Jörg Widmann

Quartet in A minor, Op. 132, No. 15 (Beethoven)

While working on his Op. 132 quartet during the winter of 1824-1825, Beethoven fell gravely ill, but was still able to finish the work by July 1825. Although it has the highest opus number of the three quartets composed at the behest of Russian nobleman and amateur cellist, Prince Galitzin, it was actually second in order of composition. Study of his sketchbooks shows that he originally planned the quartet in the traditional four movements, but on recovering from his sickness decided to replace the two middle sections with three movements, including the central *Heiliger Dankgesang*.

The quartet starts with a short, slow introductory motif that bears a similarity to the ones heard at the opening of the Quartet Op. 131 and the Grosse Fuge, Op. 133. Emerging from the introductory measures is a brilliant violin flourish that leads to the main theme, played high in its register by the cello. Following some expansion, a new idea, starting with the three repeated notes, is heard and quickly passes through the quartet, leading to still another distinctive idea – a flowing melody in the second violin over a nervous, agitated triplet accompaniment.

Wistful and nostalgic in tone, the second movement has two motifs that run throughout the entire opening section. The first is a pair of rising three-note figures; the other, and more important, is a long note that drops down with a little flurry of faster notes. After many repetitions of the two melodic cells, Beethoven moves on to the middle section, a sort of musette, with the first violin sustaining a bagpipe-like drone under its high-pitched melody. The movement ends with a literal repeat of the opening section.

Over the third movement, Beethoven inscribed the words, "*Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der lydischen Tonart*" ("Holy Song of Thanksgiving to the Divinity by a Convalescent, in the Lydian mode"). The sublime hymn expresses his gratitude for the return of good health; use of the Lydian mode, an ancient ecclesiastical scale gives the music a spiritual tone. The music consists of five lines of a slow, solemn chordal hymn, with each line preceded by a faster moving contrapuntal prelude. The vital and vigorous contrasting second section, *Neue Kraft fühlend* ("Feeling of new strength"), evokes a sense of strength through alternating loud and soft measures that surge with a powerful, propulsive force. After varied returns of both sections, the movement ends with a free reinstatement of the *Heiliger Dankgesang*, marked on the score by Beethoven to be played "*Mit innigster Empfindung*" ("with the most intimate emotions").

The raucous Alla Marcia provides the sudden change in mood, from heavenly to earthly. After a brief aggressive march, the

music completely changes character and takes on the style of a recitative, a rhythmically free section, in which the first violin plays an improvisatory speech-like melodic line over a minimal accompaniment in the other parts.

The finale follows the recitative without pause. Structurally, it combines rondo and sonata form. The basic lyrical character is modified by an underlying turbulent rocking motion that throws an uneasy cast over the proceedings.

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