

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF FORT WORTH PRESENTS
The Dover Quartet: “Exploring Classicism”
Saturday 7 October 2023 - Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth
Program Notes by Laurie Shulman ©2023

String Quartet in G minor, Op.74, No.3; Hob.III:74 (“Der Reiter”)

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Haydn's six quartets Op. 71 & 74 (Hoboken III:69-74) are generally known as the Apponyi Quartets. The Hungarian nobleman who commissioned them from Haydn, Count Antal Apponyi, was to become a patron of the young Beethoven a few years later. Apponyi purchased both the privilege of having Haydn's newest quartets dedicated to him, and exclusive rights for the period of one year for the still unpublished works. It is quite possible that he also fancied they were written for him, for he was an accomplished amateur violinist.

More likely, Haydn had English performers and audiences in mind. Under the auspices of the entrepreneur and violinist Johann Peter Salomon, Haydn had enjoyed huge success in England in 1791 and 1792. The composer arrived back in Austria to widespread acclaim; nevertheless, he was already looking forward to a return visit to England. London's musical life in the late 18th century boasted far more chamber music in public concert halls than did Vienna's. The Op. 71 & 74 quartets herald an era of ensemble music intended for concert audiences as well as for the players.

Musicologists have hailed these quartets as the window looking out from the 18th century into the romanticism of the early 19th. Certainly Haydn is faithful to the traditional sonata form structure which he codified in dozens of earlier string quartets. In his musical language, particularly his use of tonality, he ventures into less charted territory. Op.74, No.3 is tonally ambiguous, vacillating between G minor and G major. Both the outer movements resolve firmly in major mode. The affecting slow movement is quite startling in the distant key of E major.

And the Menuet is in G major, with its Trio in G minor; one would expect the reverse.

This quartet takes its nickname, *Der Reiter* [The Rider], from its last movement.

Listeners will have little trouble discerning the horse's rhythmic, determined gait – until the joyous second theme. At this point it is difficult to refrain from dancing, as Haydn's irrepressible sense of humor starts to dominate. The working out of the conflict between the gallop and the dance concludes this delicious movement, and the quartet.

CATALOGUING HAYDN: A COMPLEX PROCESS FOR A PROLIFIC COMPOSER

Well before the impresario and violinist Johann Peter Salomon persuaded Haydn to travel to London in the 1790s, he was the most famous composer of his age. With the rise of domestic music-making and public concerts, enterprising music publishers helped spread Haydn's reputation by issuing editions of his music: quartets, solo piano pieces, trios, symphonies, and other works. The most important Viennese publisher with whom he was associated was the house of Artaria (pronounced ahr-tah-REE-uh). Their relationship started in 1780.

Many others publishers throughout Europe also issued Haydn's music: Jean-Georges Sieber and Boyer in Paris, John Bland and William Forster in London, Breitkopf in Leipzig, J.J. Hummel in Amsterdam, Johann André in Offenbach-am-Main, and other smaller houses. Not all these editions were sanctioned by Haydn. Some of the publishers were unscrupulous and so eager to capitalize on Haydn's reputation that they issued music by other composers under Haydn's name. Another complicating factor was that different editions of the same works appeared in various cities – often with different opus numbers organized to suit each publisher's internal system. Consequently, the study of Haydn's music is rife with issues of authenticity, textual discrepancies between early editions and manuscripts, inconsistent opus numbers, and chronology.

Starting in the 1930s, the Dutch collector and bibliographer Anthony van Hoboken (1887-1983) undertook the task of compiling a comprehensive catalogue of Haydn's music. His *magnum opus* was issued in three volumes between 1957 and 1978. Hoboken's exhaustive work documented early printed editions of Haydn's compositions, autograph scores, and manuscript copies. The project eventually involved scholars from the Joseph-Haydn Institut as well.

Hoboken's name is the source of the "Hob." citation identifying Haydn's compositions. His system organizes Haydn's works by genre (*e.g.*, symphony, opera, mass, concerto, piano sonata), then assigns an Arabic number to individual compositions within each category, in chronological order. In the case of this afternoon's opening piece, the Roman numeral III designates a string quartet – of which Haydn composed more than 80. One starts to understand why a cataloguing system is useful!

We generally identify Haydn's quartets by both opus number and Hoboken number. Most of the quartets were published in sets of three or six. They often pinpoint significant developments in Haydn's style. Also, the opus numbers assigned to his quartets are more or less chronological, unlike the opus numbers for some other Haydn works. Thus, the Op. 1 and Op.3 quartets are early works from the 1760s; the Op. 9, Op. 17, and Op. 20 quartets are from the 1770s, Opp.33, 50, 54, and 55 from the 1780s, etc. Haydn never completed his final quartet. The two movements he composed in 1803 were published in 1806 as his Op.103. Their catalogue number is Hob.III:83.

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String Quartet in G Major (Unfinished)

Florence Price (1887-1953)

In recent years, the music of Florence Price has taken a proud place on American concert programs. The first African-American female composer to have a symphony performed by a major American orchestra, Price is getting a considerable amount of well-deserved attention from orchestras and chamber ensembles nationwide.

Her story is remarkable. She performed in public at age 4 and published her first composition when she was 11. She was accepted to New England Conservatory at 16, studying composition, piano, and organ. After teaching in Little Rock and Atlanta for several years, she left the South for Chicago, pursuing additional study at Chicago Musical College and the American Conservatory. By the 1920s, Price's music was attracting favorable notice and winning awards. Her breakthrough came in 1932, when she earned first prize in the Wanamaker competition for her Symphony in E minor. Chicago Symphony conductor Frederick Stock took note and premiered that work in 1933. He also encouraged her to write a piano concerto. The American contralto Marian Anderson incorporated two of Price's arrangements of spirituals into her repertoire, enhancing Price's reputation. Florence Price continued to teach and compose until her death in 1953.

Black spirituals and African-American hymns make frequent appearances in Price's music. Her 1929 String Quartet in G major – restricted to two movements and presumably unfinished – is a fine example. The opening Allegro is a substantial movement in sonata form; if the exposition is repeated, it is a full ten minutes. The first theme is startlingly similar to the opening horn solo in Brahms's Second Piano Concerto; the second theme is a waltz-like affair awarded to viola. Price's musical language is tonal and post-romantic, with a mellifluous, lilting character that prevails even in its development section.

Listening to Price's songful second movement, one could easily mistake it for a movement by Dvořák. The melodies, while tinged with pentatonic flavor, are clearly linked to late Romanticism and American folk music. As in the first movement, they are staunchly tonal, though she does inject some surprising harmonic twists and key changes. A lively middle section in minor mode features pizzicato writing and a playful mood, but the reprise of Price's lovely opening Andante will tug at your heartstrings.

Quartet in D minor, D. 810 "Death and the Maiden" (1826)

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

I have not written many new songs, but I have tried my hand at several instrumental works, for I've written two Quartets for violins, viola and violoncello and an Octet, and I want to write another Quartet, in fact I intend to pave my way towards grand symphony in that manner.

So wrote Schubert to his friend Leopold Kupelweiser in March 1824. Having established his reputation with *Lieder*, the still young but already ailing composer was turning more toward instrumental music in the mid-1820s. In this case, his inspiration came in part from a song he had composed in February 1817 on a text by Claudius: "Der Tod und das Mädchen," D.531.

Modern scholars believe that Schubert composed 19 string quartets. Three of those are lost, and another four were not completed. Most of the efforts date from his teenage years. Young Franz played viola creditably, and by age 14 was considered to be quite accomplished. The entire family was musical: older brother Ferdinand played first violin, brother Ignaz second violin, and Papa Schubert cello in the Schubert family musicales. His family were thus the first performers of all the youthful string works.

Stylistically, the difference between the early quartets and this comparatively late one is overwhelming. No longer the Salieri student of counterpoint and vocal technique, by 1820

Schubert had earned a fair amount of recognition and established a circle of friends and admirers in Vienna. By 1824 he was ailing; the spectre of death clearly preoccupied him. Interestingly, the subtitle "Death and the Maiden" does not appear in the autograph manuscript, perhaps because the song was well known to Schubert's Viennese audience.

The D minor quartet distinguishes itself by a unity of purpose that pervades all four movements. Its centerpiece is the slow movement, a set of five variations on "*Der Tod und das Mädchen*." The original song is in D minor, which is the overall tonality of Schubert's quartet. For the slow movement variations, however, Schubert presents the melody in the subdominant key of G minor. Rather than quoting himself literally, he paraphrases the music of the song's piano introduction, which recurs as its second section. This part of Claudius's poem deals less with fear, more with acceptance of death and the peace that death may bring.

All four quartet movements have rhythmic and melodic patterns in common, recurrent motives more Beethovenian than Schubertian. Indeed, Schubert displays a mastery of counterpoint and developmental technique unequalled in any of his earlier chamber works. This quartet is the ultimate synthesis of *Lied* (the German art-song) and chamber music. In its technical challenges and defiance, its range of expression from savage to tender and resigned, the "Death and the Maiden" quartet must be counted among Schubert's greatest compositions.