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– San Francisco Classical Voice



THE NEW ESTERHÁZY QUARTET

Lisa Weiss, violin

Kati Kyme, violin

Anthony Martin, viola

William Skeen, violoncello

present

The Cellist King

Joseph **Haydn**: Quartet Op. 50, No. 1 in Bb Major

Luigi **Boccherini**: Quartet Op. 41, No. 1 in c minor

Wolfgang Amadeus **Mozart**: “Prussian” Quartet in F Major, K. 590

Friday, September 13, 2013, at 8pm, Hillside Club, 2286 Cedar Street (at Spruce), Berkeley, CA 94709 *tickets for this Friday concert are \$15, and sold only at the door*

Saturday, September 14, 2013, at 4pm, St. Mark’s Lutheran Church, 1111 O’Farrell Street (at Franklin), San Francisco, 94109

Sunday, September 15, 2013, at 4pm, All Saints’ Episcopal Church, 555 Waverley Street (at Hamilton), Palo Alto, CA 94301

Tickets for Saturday & Sunday are \$25 (discounts for seniors and students)

(415) 520-0611 // www.newesterhazy.org

San Francisco, July 10, 2013–**“The Cellist King,” Frederick William II, ardent cellist and chamber music lover, ruled Prussia from 1786 to 1797. His court at Berlin became the cello capital of the world and is famed for several string quartets by Haydn, Mozart, and his own appointed chamber music composer Boccherini. The**

period instrument ensemble New Esterházy Quartet open their 2013-2014 season with three of these quartets: Haydn's Op. 50, No. 1 in Bb Major, Boccherini's Op. 41, No. 1 in C minor, and Mozart's "Prussian" Quartet in F Major, K. 590.

The New Esterházy Quartet play the Boccherini Quartet from photocopies of manuscript parts dated 1788, found in the collection of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, and the Haydn Quartet from facsimiles of Artaria's first Viennese printing of the parts from late 1787.

Already in 1773 Frederick the Great (the flutist) had hired Jean-Pierre, elder of the two cello-playing Duport brothers, as lead cellist for his court in Berlin and tutor for his nephew, Frederick William II. Jean-Pierre was joined by his brother Jean-Louis in 1798, thus **making Berlin the cello capital of the late 18th century**. In addition to the work of the resident virtuosi were the offerings of composers all over Europe hoping for royal favor. Quartets by Pleyel and Louis Jadin from Paris, Förster from Vienna, Boccherini from Madrid, Haydn from Esterháza (and of course Beethoven's Op. 5 Cello Sonatas) were dedicated to Frederick William II and played in his leisure hours, surely some by the monarch himself.

Of all those composers, it was Luigi Boccherini who was officially employed by the Berlin court. Frederick William had already hired him before he became king, as can be gleaned from his official appointment

We, Frederick William, by the grace of God Hereditary Prince Royal of Prussia, heir presumptive to the crown, having recognized the eminent musical talents of Signor Luigi Boccherini, have been induced thereby to confer upon him the present Patent, with the title of Composer of Our Chamber, and in consequence we have signed these presents and caused the seal of our arms to be apposed thereto.

Berlin, the twenty-first of January, 1786

Since Haydn was already in royal service to the Princes of Esterházy, he had no need of a gig in Prussia. Nevertheless, he arranged for a copy of his *Paris Symphonies* to be sent to Berlin and Frederick William II replied:

His Majesty, King of Prussia, &c. &c. is sensible of the mark of respect which *Herr Kapellmeister* Haydn, in sending him six new Symphonies, again wishes to show to His Serene Majesty. They have especially pleased him, and there is no doubt that His Highness has always appreciated *Herr Kapellmeister* Haydn's works, and will appreciate them at all times. To provide concrete assurance of the same, he sends him the enclosed ring as a mark of His Highness' satisfaction and of the favour in which he holds him.

In return Haydn dedicated his Op. 50 Quartets to the generous and musical monarch:

...I have received a beautiful ring from His Majesty, the King of Prussia. I feel deeply in His Majesty's debt because of this present, and for my part I can think of no better and more fitting way to show my thankfulness to His Majesty (and also in the eyes of the

whole world) than by dedicating these 6 quartets to him...(Joseph Haydn, to his publisher Artaria in May of 1787).

Of course, we “know” that Mozart's last three string quartets, named the “Prussian Quartets,” were written for Frederick William II, and the prominence of their cello part is a portion of the proof that they were calculated to flatter the Prussian monarch. But there seems to be little or no proof for what we know. Maynard Solomon points out in his biography of Mozart that

...the difficulty is that there are no court records, letters, memoirs, newspaper accounts, or documents of any kind to confirm Mozart's appearance at court, the commissioning of the two sets of works [the quartets for the king and some keyboard sonatas for the queen that Mozart boasts of in letters home to his wife], or the payment to him of any sum of money.

In fact, the first publication of these quartets, just a few weeks after Mozart's death, carried no dedication to Frederick William.

Nevertheless, **the cello parts of the three quartets on this program can easily be interpreted as catering to or flattering the Royal Cellist.** Boccherini’s Quartet features frequent use of thumb position, sequences in octaves, and arpeggio patterns characteristic of cello concerti (Haydn’s C major in particular), but of course Boccherini was a virtuoso cellist himself, so it is not surprising that his cello writing might fly over the top. Haydn’s Quartet opens with a solo for the cello, although quite the opposite of Boccherini’s fireworks—it is just a single note repeated twenty-one times! The cello is heard again solo in the variations of the second movement, has some fancy passages in the finale, and ends the entire piece with an upward-rushing scale. Still, this set of quartets was written before Haydn decided to dedicate it to His Majesty in Berlin. The nature of the cello part of Mozart’s Quartet is perhaps the best evidence that it was written with Frederick William II in mind, yet it is not merely the cello part that is highlighted, but all four parts in a *concertante* style more characteristic of Paris than Vienna. If Mozart had intended to feature the cello, his love of balance and symmetry necessitated giving the other parts their own fancy and soloistic passages as well.

Whether all these three quartets were directly inspired by or commissioned for the Cellist King or not, they owe their existence and their fame to a man in power who loved chamber music. And in turn a large part of his subsequent fame and prestige derives from the works of the artists he encouraged and supported.

The members of the New Esterházy Quartet—violinists Kati Kyme and Lisa Weiss, violist Anthony Martin, and cellist William Skeen—specialize in period performance and often occupy the first chairs of Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and American Bach Soloists. They have been praised for their “sumptuous sound with beautifully controlled dynamics.” This is the ensemble’s seventh season.

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