



NAXOS



HAYDN

Baryton Trios

Treasures
from the
Esterháza
Palace

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Valencia
Baryton
Project

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809) Baryton Trios, Hob.XI: Nos. 6, 35, 67, 71, 93 and 113

The city of Eisenstadt, 30 miles from Vienna, was a hotbed of musical activity in the middle of the 18th century. This was the location of the Esterházy Court, where Joseph Haydn was music director for nearly 25 years from 1766. For this entire period Haydn served Prince Nikolaus, known as ‘the Magnificent’, who had moved from a hunting lodge in Süttör to assume his position four years earlier.

Nikolaus began his tenure by commissioning new operas, but as a keen chamber musician he was avidly studying the baryton, an instrument on which he became a proficient player. Nikolaus commissioned Haydn to write regularly for his new project, though his composer had begun at Esterházy in a period of uncertainty. Second hand opinion, fed through to the prince, had brought the quality of Haydn’s compositions into question, effectively placing him on probation as he began to write for the baryton. Typically, he responded with works of sustained inspiration. While Haydn’s output for the baryton is seldom heard, he wrote more than 125 trios in which the instrument takes the lead. Initially Haydn attempted to learn the instrument himself, but when it became clear the prince was keen to retain the lead role, his composer wrote for the baryton with parts for viola (Haydn) and cello (likely Andreas Lidl). They were published in a series of five books.

In the Classical period it was common for composers to associate with and receive commissions for less traditional instruments. Mozart wrote for the basset clarinet, posthorn and glass harmonica, Albrechtsberger wrote at least seven concertos for Jew’s harp and strings, while Haydn himself would later write his famous *Trumpet Concerto* for the keyed trumpet.

As with nearly every medium in which he composed, Haydn left a substantial body of work notable for depth of quality as well as quantity. Yet whereas the piano trios are often recorded and programmed in concert, those headed by the baryton have faded into relative obscurity, not helped by the instrument’s scarcity or its reputation. Many commentators took against its unusual construction, for although it is a stringed instrument the baryton also fulfils a kind of keyboard obligation, comprising six or seven bowed strings and a set of metal strings that can be plucked by the player, who can effectively accompany themselves should they wish.

Most of the baryton trios are written in straightforward keys, with A major the best suited to the instrument. The sonority can sometimes resemble that of a viol consort. Haydn’s solution to the challenge of writing for instruments with a lower register was to pair the baryton with the viola, often in melodic intervals of a third, underpinned by bass accompaniment from the cello. This approach also featured in his string quartet writing at the time, notably the set of six ‘*Sun*’ *Quartets* published as *Op. 20* in 1772. In their structure the baryton trios more closely resemble Haydn’s piano trios, cast in three movements, and frontloaded in duration. The substantial first movement can be either a sonata form *Allegro* or an *Adagio*, followed by a second contrasting tempo – a lighter *Menuette* or a fast movement if the first was slow. The finale is often a quick movement, both in tempo and duration.

The six works in this volume of trios from the Valencia Baryton Project illustrate the range of which Haydn was capable. The *Trio in G major, Hob.XI:67* has charm, elegance and poise in its *Allegretto* first movement, though a fleeting shadow is thrown by a brief excursion into the minor key. The *Menuett – Trio* has deeper colours and an attractive lilt to its triple time meter, while the brisk third movement passes a scurrying figuration between the instruments in busy counterpoint. Here the metal strings of the baryton enjoy greater prominence.

The *Trio in A major, Hob.XI:6* begins with a theme, marked *Adagio moderato*, followed by four variations. The second part of the first variation allows room for pizzicato from each of the trio, revealing a distinctive and slightly mellow timbre to the strings of the baryton. The repetitions of the third variation make use of the open ‘A’ string, while the fourth variation is more expansive, showing off the expressive qualities of the instrument. The *Menuett* has elaborate figuration above the regular dancing rhythm, while the lively finale has busy dialogue between the three instruments.

The *Trio in D major, Hob.XI:113* has a substantial and profound *Adagio* as its first movement, its sombre mood redolent

of one of the 'Sturm und Drang' symphonies. Led off by the metallic strings but soon melting into tightly knitted dialogue between the melodic instruments, its enhanced harmonic palette suggests it to be a later work. The second movement is the complete opposite, powered by a vigorous theme. The baryton has a short cadenza before the bracing music returns, full of energy. This time Haydn places the *Menuetto – Trio* last, with a perky dance rhythm to the former and a softer timbre for the latter, which has a folk-like melody.

The *Trio in A major, Hob.XI:71* is rich and colourful, with the baryton and viola often in thirds, the baryton's metallic strings acting as an anchor point. Although a *Menuetto*, the second movement has all the characteristics of a strident march. Its *Trio* is a brief, more languid repose in the same key, prompted by the metallic strings. The fugal finale is led by the baryton with an immediate response from the viola and further lively exchanges through to the end.

The *Trio in A major, Hob.XI:35* may be in the same key as its counterpart on this album, but it carries a quite different mood, beginning with a thoughtful and often profound *Adagio*, where the lower parts are on occasion sustained as a drone. The second movement, a rustic *Allegro molto*, emphasises the pitch of 'A' even more forcefully, its repeated notes the base for excursions into the higher register. After these relative excesses, a sobering *Menuetto – Trio* appear to be in hand, but the *Trio* turns out to be a darkly hued episode in A minor, with daring chromatic asides. Haydn could never just do 'normal'.

Finally, the *Trio in C major, Hob.XI:93* begins with a theme whose vigorous syncopations generate an oom-pah figure, bringing some wit to the table – emphasised by the odd languorous pause. There follows an upright *Menuett* with a darker *Trio* in C minor, led by an energetic arpeggiated figure from the viola. The finale, marked *Presto*, is a quicksilver affair. Its jagged three-note theme proves unexpectedly catchy, and there are flourishes for each instrument which would surely have pleased the audience had the Esterházy trio performed the work in public.

Ben Hogwood

Valencia Baryton Project

The Valencia Baryton Project comprises Matthew Baker (baryton), Estevan de Almeida Reis (viola) and Alex Friedhoff (cello) – musicians from the Palau de les Arts Reina Sofía opera house in Valencia and the Opéra Orchestre National Montpellier. They founded the ensemble with the vision of performing the nearly 170 works by Joseph Haydn written for the baryton which is a cross between a viola da gamba and a lirone. At the heart of the project, is the traditional baryton trio – baryton, viola and cello – for which Haydn wrote 123 works of outstanding beauty during his time as court composer for Prince Esterházy of Austria.

Led by Matthew Baker, one of only a handful of baryton performers in the world, the Valencia Baryton Project has inspired audiences in sold-out concerts and festivals throughout North, Central and South America, and Europe. Their work with the baryton, considered to have been the pinnacle of aristocratic instruments of the Classical era, has garnered wide acclaim.

Beyond performing and recording the works of Haydn and his contemporaries, the Valencia Baryton Project is committed to the creation of new compositions for this forgotten instrument. They have collaborated with contemporary composers Steve Zink, Ivan Moody, John Pickup, José Zárate and Julian Calarco to expand the repertoire and incorporate this novel soundscape in modern composition.

www.valenciabaryton.com

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Photo © Alex Baker

Matthew Baker: baryton, Owen Morse-Brown (2004)
Estevan de Almeida Reis: viola, Jean Baptiste Vuillaume (Sainte Cecile Collection) (c. 1850)
Alex Friedhoff: cello, Jan Lorenz (1993)

The city of Eisenstadt was the location of the Esterházy Court where Joseph Haydn was music director for 25 years. Prince Nikolaus commissioned Haydn to write trios for the baryton, an instrument on which the Prince had become proficient. The baryton is a bowed, stringed instrument similar to the viol but with extra plucked strings that can enable the performer to accompany themselves. For Nikolaus, Haydn wrote string trios of elegance, refinement and poise that encapsulate a rich variety of moods. Seldom performed or recorded, the baryton trios attest to Haydn's limitless powers of invention in every medium.



AJUNTAMENT de
RIBA-ROJA DE TÚRIA

Franz Joseph HAYDN (1732–1809)



TURISME
I PATRIMONI
RIBA-ROJA DE TÚRIA



Baryton Trio in G major, Hob.XI: 67 (c. 1767–68)		9:27	Baryton Trio in A major, Hob.XI: 71 (c. 1767–68)		9:58
1	I. Allegretto	5:35	10	I. Allegro moderato	5:18
2	II. Menuett – Trio	2:25	11	II. Menuetto – Trio	1:55
3	III. Finale: Allegro di molto	1:23	12	III. Finale: Allegro di molto	2:42
Baryton Trio in A major, Hob.XI: 6 (c. 1765)		10:55	Baryton Trio in A major, Hob.XI: 35 (c. 1766–67)		9:49
4	I. Più tosto Adagio	6:15	13	I. Pastorella: Adagio	4:42
5	II. Menuett – Trio	2:45	14	II. Allegro molto	2:23
6	III. Presto	1:52	15	III. Menuetto – Trio	2:41
Baryton Trio in D major, Hob.XI: 113 (c. 1773)		14:28	Baryton Trio in C major, Hob.XI: 93 (c. 1771)		7:54
7	I. Adagio	7:43	16	I. Allegro di molto	3:01
8	II. Allegretto di molto	4:16	17	II. Menuett – Trio	3:20
9	III. Menuetto – Trio	2:27	18	III. Finale: Presto	1:28

Valencia Baryton Project

Matthew Baker, Baryton

Estevan de Almeida Reis, Viola • Alex Friedhoff, Cello

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