

HAYDN

String Quartets, Op. 33 "Russian" Nos. 3 "The Bird", 4 and 6

Kodály Quartet



Joseph Haydn (1732 - 1809)

Russian Quartets / Jungfernquartette

Joseph Haydn was born in the village of Rohrau in 1732, the son of a wheelwright. Trained at the choir-school of St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna, he spent some years earning a living as best he could from teaching and playing the violin or keyboard, and was able to learn from the old musician Porpora, whose assistant he became. Haydn's first appointment was in 1759 as Kapellmeister to a Bohemian nobleman, Count von Morzin. This was followed in 1761 by employment as Vice-Kapellmeister to one of the richest men in the Empire, Prince Paul Anton Esterházy, succeeded on his death in 1762 by his brother Prince Nikolaus. On the death in 1766 of the elderly and somewhat obstructive Kapellmeister, Gregor Werner, Haydn succeeded to his position, to remain in the same employment, nominally at least, for the rest of his life.

On the completion of the magnificent palace at Esterháza, in the Hungarian plains under the new Prince, Haydn assumed command of an increased musical establishment. Here he had responsibility for the musical activities of the palace, which included the provision and direction of instrumental music, opera and theatre music, and music for the church. For his patron he provided a quantity of chamber music of all kinds, particularly for the Prince's own peculiar instrument, the baryton, a bowed string instrument with sympathetic strings that could also be plucked.

On the death of Prince Nikolaus in 1790, Haydn was able to accept an invitation to visit London, where he provided music for the concert season organized by the violinist-impresario Salomon. A second successful visit to London in 1794 and 1795 was followed by a return to duty with the Esterházy family, the new head of which had settled principally at the family property in Eisenstadt, where Haydn had started his career. Much of the year, however, was to be spent in Vienna, where Haydn passed his final years, dying in 1809, as the French armies of Napoleon approached the city yet again.

Haydn completed his Opus 33 quartets in 1781 and before their publication offered manuscript copies on subscription to a number of leading patrons, of whose interest he was assured. The *Russian Quartets* take their name from their performance in the presence of the Russian Grand Duke Paul, later Tsar Paul II, with his wife, visiting Vienna under the names of the Count and Countess von Norden and accompanied by members of the family of the Grand Duchess, the ruling family of Württemberg. The quartets were played, in the presence of the composer, by Luigi Tomasini, Franz Aspelmayr, Thaddäus Huber and the cellist Joseph Weigl.

The *Quartet in C major, Opus 33, No. 3*, is known as *The Bird* from the grace notes that embellish its principal theme, played by the first violin, an element that re-appears as the movement continues. The second movement, a scherzando that replaces the earlier *Minuet*, an expression of the new mood of Opus 33, preserves bird-like elements in the trills of the first violin in a *Trio* section played only by the two violins. The F major *Adagio* finds room for increasingly elaborate embellishment by the first violin and leads to a final *Rondo*, in which the first violin theme is echoed by the other instruments, before a first episode in A minor. It is, however, the opening figure that characterizes the whole movement.

The last quartet of Opus 33, in D major, opens with a movement marked *Vivace assai* and in 6/8 metre. There is a D minor *Andante*, its first thematic material declared by the second violin, shadowed by the viola, under a sustained higher note from the first violin, a recurrent feature. The *Scherzo* has a *Trio* in which the cello assumes initial importance, followed by imitation between first violin and viola in the second section. The last movement uses a varied version of its opening D major material to frame a more contrapuntal D minor passage, which re-appears thereafter in a version of further contrapuntal elements before the return of the D major opening thematic material. The quartet ends a set of six works that seem to reflect the happiness of the composer at this period of his life, attributed by some to his new relationship with

the singer Luigia Polzelli, wife of the Esterháza violinist Antonio Polzelli, a liaison that was thought to have resulted in the birth of a son, born in 1783.

The fourth quartet of Opus 33, in the key of B flat major, has a first subject stated by the first violin, with a rhythmic accompanying figure that re-appears as the movement proceeds. The well known *Scherzo* has a B flat minor *Trio* section, while the slow movement, in E flat, makes particular use of the melodic figure of the first bar. The principal theme of the last movement has a central section in related keys and the rondo ends with a statement of the opening theme plucked softly, after the bowed version has been allowed to diminish to a whisper.

Kodály Quartet

The members of the Kodály Quartet were trained at the Budapest Ferenc Liszt Academy, and three of them, the second violinist Tamás Szabó, violaplayer Gábor Fias and cellist János Devich, were formerly in the Sebestyén Quartet, which was awarded the jury's special diploma at the 1966 Geneva International Quartet Competition and won first prize at the 1968 Leo Weiner Quartet Competition in Budapest. Since 1970, with the violinist Attila Falvay, the quartet has been known as the Kodály Quartet, a title adopted with the approval of the Hungarian Ministry of Culture and Education. The Kodály Quartet has given concerts throughout Europe, in the then Soviet Union and in Japan, in addition to regular appearances in Hungary both in the concert hall and on television and has made for Naxos highly acclaimed recordings of string quartets by Ravel, Debussy, Haydn and Schubert.



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STEREO

HAYDN

**"Russian Quartets" Op. 33
Nos. 3, 4 and 6**

Kodály Quartet

DDD

**Playing
Time:
53'38"**

Quartet No. 32 in C Major, Op. 33, No. 3 "The Bird"

- | | | |
|----------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | Allegro moderato | (6:58) |
| 2 | Scherzo: Allegretto | (2:46) |
| 3 | Adagio ma non troppo | (6:10) |
| 4 | Finale: Rondo - Presto | (4:50) |

Quartet No. 33 in D Major, Op. 33, No. 6

- | | | |
|----------|----------------------------|---------------|
| 5 | Vivace assai | (5:36) |
| 6 | Andante | (4:52) |
| 7 | Scherzo: Allegretto | (2:14) |
| 8 | Finale: Allegretto | (4:59) |

Quartet No. 34 in B Flat Major, Op. 33, No. 4

- | | | |
|-----------|----------------------------|---------------|
| 9 | Allegro moderato | (4:29) |
| 10 | Scherzo: Allegretto | (2:46) |
| 11 | Largo | (4:16) |
| 12 | Finale: Presto | (4:59) |

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from 21st to 24th September, 1993.

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(Detail from the Portrait by Batoni)



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