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FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN

Cassatio ex C (Hoboken II:17)
Notturno in C (Hoboken II:25)
Divertimento a Sei (The Birthday) (Hoboken II:11)

THE BIEDERMEIER ORCHESTRA
Dr. Kurt LIST, conductor
Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) extracted from a life of intense creativity not only some of music's pinnacle works but also an almost never ending stream of music of nearly every genre. Even today long lost works are being discovered constantly. Haydn himself said of his output, "Sunt mala mixta bonis (bad is mixed with good): some of my children are well bred, some ill-bred, and here and there is a changeling among them." Certainly the resuscitation of his better works is not only a task of music-historical significance but also one that gives tremendous esthetic pleasure.

The three compositions contained on this record are relatively "new" discoveries. In the sequence of their creation the DIVERTIMENTO A SEI is the earliest. It was written about 1760, was apparently quite popular in Haydn's times when it was extensively circulated in manuscript form but was never printed in its original version. The well-known Haydn specialist H. C. Robbins Landon has now reconstructed it from several early sources (mainly the autograph at the monasteries of Osek and Kremsmuenster). The work is interesting in that it combines the typical divertimento style of its time with a certain kind of program idea, the juxtaposition of the two sexes (certainly as an apotheosis not unlike that by Mozart in the "Zauberflote"). The outer occasion is apparently a "birthday" but no further details are known.

The work takes its main clue from the finale in which the theme, full of dignity, is in each variation elaborated according to the different character of each sex. Simultaneously each variation gives each instrument a chance of developing itself. Over the unchanged bass-figure of the theme (which makes the movement a passacaglia) elaborate the cello, flute, second violin, oboe and first violin respectively in variations one to five. In six, seven, eight, the entire group participates with the bass maintaining the melody relentlessly. (In the whole work the cello is an obbligato instrument and only the contrabass alone performs the bass line). The second movement juxtaposes the two sexes in bass versus soprano lines. This makes for a beautiful effect in the strings alone which play in respective octaves against each other. The other two movements are more traditional, the first being a charming small sonata form and the third a typical minuet whose trio again displays the great tenderness already manifest in the second movement.

The exact year of origin of the CASSATIO is not known, but the author of the most important modern catalog of Haydn works, Anthony van Hoboken, places it before 1766 thus close to the time of the Divertimento. However, it is a much more involved and complicated work. It is mentioned in Haydn's own catalog as "Divertimento a nove Stromenti". There are a number of copies of the work to be found in the National Museum in Prague, the Court Library of the Princes of Thurn and Taxis in Regensburg, the Seminary of Seitenstetten, the Library of Congress in Washington, the Archive of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, Vienna, the Seminary of Aign-Schlagl in Upper Austria, and the Seminary of St. Paul in the Lavant Valley in Carinthia. There are several instrumental versions in each of these copies, each differing mainly in the mode of orchestration. The instrumentation used on this recording is for violins, violas, cello, bass, horns and clarinets.

The work opens, as was conventional with these kind of works, with a stately march and closes with the elaboration of a theme based on a tune sung by the pilgrims who paid their annual hommage to the shrine of Mariazell. Within this framework there are two minuets, (the first more folklike, the second rather courtly), two allegros, (the first rather elaborate, the second very much in the spry divertimento style), and the central fifth movement for the strings, a cantilene which is prepared by the fourth movement, a recitative which is prepared by the first violin as the "singer".

The NOTTURNO is one in a series of several compositions which Haydn wrote at the command of King Ferdinand IV of Naples and the Twin Sicilies. Written in 1790 it was conceived for two lire organizzate (Robbins Landon defines this correctly as "a kind of hurdy gurdy, the gavurier instrument of the lazzaroni or the people of Naples) orchestra. When Haydn gave his famous Salomon concerts in London he also performed some of these notturni rescoring the lire part for flute and oboe and it is in this version (the only other "authentic" Haydn version of the music) that we hear this work on this record. The original score of the work has disappeared but a contemporary copy of it by one of the Esterhazy copyists is to be found in the Esterhazy Archives of the National Museum in Budapest.

The four movements combine the divertimento character with that of the symphony in that the work opens with a march, but is then continued with the traditional fast-slow-fast set of the earlier symphonic works.

Florian Grassmayr
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Dr. Kurt LIST, Music Director

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