

Borromini Quartet  
Programme notes by Chris Darwin

**Roman Hoffstetter (1742-1815)** attributed to **Josef Haydn (1732-1809)** as String Quartet in F major Op.3/5, Hob. 3:17 'Serenade'

*Presto*

*Andante cantabile*

*Menuet and Trio*

*Finale: Scherzando*

Roman Hoffstetter was a Benedictine monk in the Odenwald region of south-west Germany. He was primarily in charge of the monastic kitchens but also directed the choir and played the organ. He admired Haydn: "*everything that flows from Haydn's pen seems to me so beautiful and remains so imprinted on my memory that I cannot prevent myself now and again from imitating something as well as I can.*" The success of his imitation became clear in the mid 1960s when Alan Tyson, H.C. Robbins Landon and László Somfai showed that the quartets known as Haydn's Op 3 were in fact composed by Hoffstetter. Not only were they stylistically different from Haydn, but the publisher, Bailleux, had only partly succeeded in erasing Hoffstetter's name from some of the parts. Incidentally, Hoffstetter, in turn, was published by Breitkopf as the composer of a viola concerto which turned out actually to be written by his good friend Joseph Martin Kraus (the 'Swedish Mozart').

The 'Serenade' second movement of the fifth of the 'Op 3' quartets contains one of the best known of all string quartet melodies, played by the first violin against a pizzicato accompaniment. It is perhaps unlikely that it would have become so well-known had it not been passed off as by Haydn.



**Juan Crisóstomo de Arriaga (1806–26)** String Quartet No. 1 in D minor (1822)

*Allegro*

*Adagio con espressione*

*Menuetto (Allegro) and Trio (Più moderato)*

*Adagio – Allegretto*

Arriaga, known as the 'Spanish Mozart', was born in Bilbao on what would have been Mozart's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. By the age of 10 he had written an octet and was playing second violin in a professional quartet. Like Mozart, his first opera was written at 13. His merchant father had the means to nurture his son's prodigious musical talent, sending the 16-year-old to the Paris Conservatoire to study with Cherubini. That year he wrote his three string quartets which were the only pieces to be published during his lifetime. The following year he wrote a *Stabat Mater* which drew the comment from Cherubini: "*Amazing - you are music itself.*" His teachers were astonished at Arriaga's ability to use sophisticated musical techniques without having been taught them. He became celebrated, but tragically died in Paris of a lung infection a few days short of his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday.

His first quartet is in D minor, the key of Schubert's '*Death and the Maiden*' written two years later. It shows well Arriaga's gift for melody, his unexpected rhythmic swerves and his deft handling of counterpoint and harmony with a fully liberated cello. Aged 16, Arriaga has an astonishing overall mastery of the string quartet - a much more difficult medium

than the string octet which Mendelssohn (three years his younger) so successfully wrote for at the same age.

The work opens boldly with 2 bars of dark unison and a *dolce*, harmonised, 2-bar reply. Four bars later the whole phrase becomes *dolce*, and a few bars later still we have wild semiquavers evocative of adolescent passion. These restless mood swings continue throughout the movement. Arriaga's Spanish heritage appears clearly in the expressive second subject, heard initially on the first violin and then on the second with asides from the viola. This contrasting material is developed and reprised before a shift to the major for the final thirty or so bars.



The second movement is built on an almost static opening: an introductory held chord followed by pairs of slow crotchets separated by rests. The first violin reveals the continuing melody, and the sense of movement increases as the inner parts break into semiquavers that accompany the start of a poignant dialogue (illustrated) between the cello and the first violin. The dialogue continues through much of the movement with the first violin's rhapsodic decorations echoed by the cello. The Minuet and Trio are conventionally structured; the stylish Trio has the flavour of a spanish dance.



The last movement starts with a slow introduction which gives way to an *Allegretto* spanish dance, reminiscent of the Siciliana last movement of Mozart's D minor quartet (K.421). The stately soon gives way to the wild, with another adolescent outburst; but Arriaga's natural musicianship keeps control and leads us to a delightful, contrasting theme from the viola. The slow introduction is reprised, and the viola's tune introduces a section in the major. The coda returns to the minor and this precocious work ends with stylish understatement.



**Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805) String Quartet in F major Op. 64/1 G.248 (1804)**

*Allegro molto*

*Adagio non tanto*

*Allegro vivo ma non presto*

Supernumerary double-bass player and singer Leopoldo Boccherini and his wife Maria, though of only modest means, enthusiastically encouraged the artistic talents of their children. They became dancers, poets, opera singers, librettists and in Luigi's case by his late teens not only an internationally renowned cellist but also a recognised composer of string duos, trios and quartets. Following the death of his father in 1766, Luigi, with a violinist friend Manfredi, planned to travel from their home town of Lucca to seek their fortune in London. En route they stopped in Paris, where they so impressed the nobility

that they were offered orchestral posts in Madrid by the Spanish Ambassador. The London plan was jettisoned and the pair went to Spain.

Luigi spent the rest of his life in Spain mainly as composer and chamber musician to the Bourbon royal court and other nobility. He also managed to hold the position of *compositeur de notre chambre* to the Prussian court of amateur cellist Frederick William II while continuing to live in Madrid. He attached himself to the Spanish court's string quartet thereby inventing the 2-cello quintet. He was an immensely prolific composer writing hundreds of string trios, quartets and quintets. In Madrid, he was somewhat isolated from the musical developments taking place in central Europe, and his style is uniquely his.

The C19<sup>th</sup> Belgian musicologist François-Joseph Fétis wrote in his universal encyclopedia:

*Never was there a composer... who [so] had the merit of originality; his ideas are all individual, and his works so remarkable in every respect, that one is tempted to believe that he knew no other music than his own. ... His ideas, always graceful, often melancholy, possess an inexpressible charm through their naivety. ... Boccherini is not known now save in France. Germany disdains his naive simplicity. ... Spohr... the celebrated German violinist and composer was asked what he thought [of a Boccherini quintet], he answered "I think that this does not deserve to be called music!"*

Contemporary taste, like Fétis, recognises the virtues of Boccherini, despite his not building on the classical tradition started by Haydn.

Today's quartet is the last he completed. It is dedicated to his patron Luciano Bonaparte, who after falling out with his younger brother Napoleon, had been sent to Madrid in November 1800 for a year as ambassador extraordinary. He successfully wooed the Bourbon court by providing concerts and dances to the nobility, helped by Boccherini's advice. Boccherini is probably reminding Bonaparte of this junketing just before the recapitulation of the first movement, when he quotes the well-known *fandango* that he had previously used in a popular 2-cello quintet from 1788 and in its arrangement for a quintet of guitar and strings in 1798.



The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Violin 2, Viola, and Cello. The Violin 2 part is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature (C). The Viola and Cello parts are in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. The Cello part features a prominent triplet pattern in the lower register. The score is a short excerpt, likely a quote from Boccherini's 'fandango'.

**Josef Haydn (1732-1809)** String Quartet in G (minor) Op 74/3, 'Horseman' (1793)

*Allegro*

*Largo assai*

*Menuet and Trio*

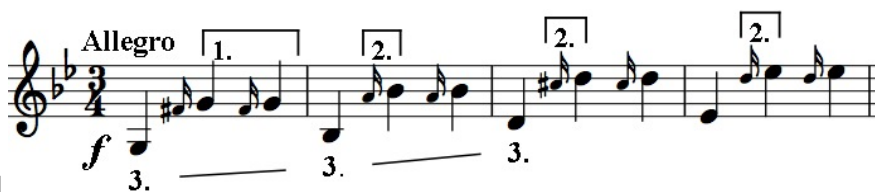
*Finale: Allegro con brio*

Haydn's six "Apponyi" quartets (Op 71 and 74) were written in 1792 & 1793 between his two extended visits to London. Prince Nicholas Esterházy, Haydn's patron, to whom he was devoted, had died in the autumn of 1790; his successor, Prince Anton, did not care for music and disbanded the Esterházy orchestra, for whom Haydn had composed for the previous 30 or so years, but kept Haydn on full pay with only nominal duties. Haydn was thus free to apply for leave to accept Johann Peter Salomon's offer to spend a year in London (against Mozart's advice, who thought the 58 year-old master too old for such jaunts). Its crowded, vibrant musical scene challenged and exhilarated Haydn, and his six new "London" symphonies, written for a larger orchestra, hall and audience than at

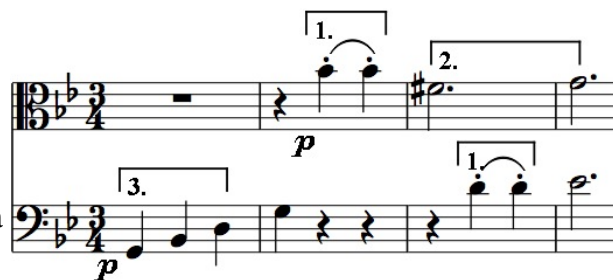
Esterházy, were a sensation. Haydn returned home in the summer of 1792, to a Vienna without Mozart, who had died in December just short of his 35<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The eponymous Apponyi, Count Anton Georg, was a relative of the Esterházy, and paid Haydn 100 ducats for the privilege of having the six quartets publicly dedicated to him. The quartets of the set have a power and brilliance that reflects Haydn's experience with the London orchestras and his intention to take the quartets back to his London audience.

Hans Keller in *"The Great Haydn Quartets"* highlights the many original features of the "Rider" quartet. One of them relates to its key – G minor, so they say. But Keller makes the case for it being in both G minor *and* G major: it is *"musical history's first work centred on a home tonality rather than a home key"*. Another novelty is its opening. All six Apponyi quartets have an introduction – mostly very short and attention gathering. But the Rider is different. Are the equestrian opening 8 bars an introduction or not? After them the music stops for almost 3 bars and then restarts with related but quite different material. That sounds like an introduction. But the opening gives seed material for much of the rest of the quartet, and is used explicitly in the development, so it could be regarded not as an introduction but as the exposition of the main subject: short but significant. As so often with Haydn's structures, expect the unexpected.



At least three features of this opening recur in many guises – [1] the upbeat of two repeated notes, [2] the semitone from the grace note, and [3] the three notes of the minor chord that start the first three bars (G, Bb, D). For example, they all feature immediately on cello and viola at the restart after the 'Introduction' (illustrated). A more contrasting idea soon appears: a running triplet figure; but even this is introduced by the repeated upbeat [1], as is the dotted-rhythm



second theme. The fact that different themes and episodes are built from the recombination of a few simple elements gives the work a satisfying integrity even when you are unaware of the mechanics of its construction. The key moves to G major for the last 30 bars of coda, ending with a G in the first violin. Its next note, the first of the slow movement is a shocking G sharp, a semitone higher; the key is now E major.

As in the opening of the first movement, Haydn again plays with the idea of a pause, holding the fourth note of the opening phrase to dominate a whole held (*tenuto*) *Largo assai* (Very broad) bar. This deeply serious movement moves into E minor in the



middle section with an upside-down version of the opening bar. Back to E major but now the serious mood is taunted by unsettling, bizarre episodes: the first violin plunging unexpectedly down a scale, all four instruments breaking into pianissimo demi-semiquavers for 2 bars. But the fiends dissolve and the movement ends serenely.

The otherwise relatively straightforward third movement supports Hans Keller's views about the quartet not really being in G minor: the Minuet is in G major and the Trio in G minor rather than the conventional other way round. The lively (and also equestrian) last movement rattles along initially in G minor with a theme that echoes the repeated upbeats of the first movement; Haydn plays with pauses again before switching to G major for the gallop to the finish.