

Score Review

Mark Ferraguto, ed., *Franz Weiss, Two String Quartets Op. 8 ('Razumovsky')*, Recent Researches in the Music of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries 90. (Middleton: A-R Editions, 2023), xviii + 219 pp.

On the Introduction and Front Matter

Franz Weiss (1778–1830) has not received much attention from music historians, and on those occasions when he is mentioned it is generally as a footnote to the violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh (1776–1830), who is himself a footnote to Beethoven. Weiss was the violist in most of the iterations of the string quartet led by Schuppanzigh over a four-decade period from the 1790s through the 1820s, including, most famously, the quartet sponsored by Count Andreas Razumovsky from 1808 to 1816. He also had ambitions as a composer, but so far there has been only one little-known modern edition of a relatively unambitious, very early work, Op. 3 from 1803,¹ and none of his compositions have, to my knowledge, been recorded. Any assessment of his importance and worth as a composer has had to rely on the record of implicit endorsement by those who performed his works, and then on the scattered comments and reviews of his contemporaries. That situation is about to change: we now have a new edition of two key compositions by Weiss, edited by Mark Ferraguto, and published by A-R Editions as part of the series 'String Quartets in Beethoven's Europe' (Series Editor Nancy November), and we can only hope recordings will follow.

The new edition is of Weiss's two Op. 8 string quartets, published in 1814 and dedicated to Razumovsky. Ferraguto's excellent introduction to the volume includes Weiss's biography and career; the context for the Op. 8 quartets; an explanation of Ferraguto's editing principles ('Notes on Performance'); and appendices listing Weiss's known compositions, publications, and the dates of performances of his string quartets up to 1825. Nancy November's Preface, introducing the series, is also excellent. The appendices alone amount to the most definitive catalogue on Weiss in existence. In that spirit, I have a few minor additions to the appendices to suggest, and one major quibble with how Ferraguto sets the context for the Op. 8 quartets. The opera Weiss wrote was called *Der Graf und der Steiger* (xii) and can be added to Table 2. And in Table 4 the dates for Joseph Böhm's subscription concerts may or may not be correct. (Ferraguto has a note that the listing for Christmas day may be incorrect.) The dates are based on the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung mit besonderer Rücksicht auf den österreichischen Kaiserstaat* (1/4 (23 Jan 1817), 27), which says that Böhm's concerts began on Friday 20 November 1816 at noon, and have been continuing every week since. But 20 November 1816 was a Wednesday. Which is correct, the date or the day of the week?

¹ *5 Capricci und Variationen für Flöte Solo*, edited by Bernhard Päuler (Winterthur: Amadeus-Verlag, 1976). Opp. 1, 5, 8 and 9 are available in original editions through IMSLP, which means in parts only, no scores.

The choice of Weiss's Op. 8 for a new edition is felicitous not only because it was the crucial opus within Weiss's central genre, and not only because Weiss was by all accounts a well-trained and talented composer with close personal ties to both Beethoven and Razumovsky, who was responding in these works to Beethoven's 'Razumovsky' quartets. Weiss was also responding to larger cultural changes affecting the string quartet, changes to which he was also intimately tied, and a better explanation of those changes would have further strengthened Ferraguto's case for the importance of this edition.

Weiss had started his composing career eleven years earlier with quartets (Op. 1, Nos. 1, 2 and 3 in 1803), but had not written any since, which is perhaps surprising given his long-standing participation in Schuppanzigh's quartet, and inside-out knowledge of the genre. But with Op. 8 he was making a new beginning – Ferraguto calls it Weiss's 'most ambitious chamber work' (ix). This work, like Beethoven's Op. 59 was dedicated to Razumovsky, and, as Ferraguto demonstrates, Weiss's elaborate dedication page was modelled on the one Beethoven had used (xii and Plate 2). Thereafter Weiss published three more string quartets (Opp. 9, 10 and 12) but he numbered them from one to five, starting with Op. 8, thus leaving out Op. 1 (xii, n. 35).²

The new beginning, the difference between Weiss's Op. 1 and 8 quartets, and by implication the difference between Beethoven's Op. 18 and Op. 59 quartets, can best be understood as generic, according to Ferraguto. He lists the elements that distinguished the Op. 8 quartets from their predecessors, elements familiar from Beethoven's middle-period quartets, which made the new quartets more challenging for performers and listeners alike: expanded scope and scale, a high degree of virtuosity, quasi-symphonic textures, cyclic design and so forth. Generically, he describes the difference as between quartets written for 'amateur performers and audiences' (xii) and those written for a '*Kennerpublikum* (audience of connoisseurs)' (xiii). And lurking behind this generic difference is an association of amateur with private music-making and connoisseurs with public performance, with a large semi-private grey area in between. The genre description seems to me more or less correct, but not particularly enlightening. It misses the crucial historical change that motivated the new development in the string quartet.

What had happened in the time between Weiss's Op. 1 (1803) and his Op. 8 (1813), or for that matter between Beethoven's Op. 18 (1800) and his Op. 59 (1806), is that string quartets began to be performed in public – by none other than Schuppanzigh, in 1804. To sharpen the point, I would say that what happened is that string quartets began to be performed, with all that entails, including rehearsals, whereas before they had been played. In the first decades of the nineteenth century the string quartet was the chief vehicle of sociable music making, which explains why almost every other genre was also published as a quartet arrangement. The main point of the string quartet was to enable enjoyable participation in making music, not to polish music for a prospective audience; the focus was on the performers, not the listeners. This attitude and approach persisted long after Schuppanzigh's innovation. Count Razumovsky, for example, never hired a complete string quartet; he hired a violinist, a violist, and a cellist, and played the second violin himself. His prime objective was not to engage a crack ensemble so that he and his guests could listen to their polished performances, but rather to hire people he would enjoy playing with. So there were two Razumovsky string

² The titles of Opp. 9, 10, and 12 included "3ème", "4ième", and "5ième".

quartets: the one with the Count participating at home, and the quartet, with Louis Sina playing second violin, performing in public for audiences – but if Sina got paid by Razumovsky it was on an ad hoc basis, and after Razumovsky dismissed the quartet, Sina, unlike the other three, got no pension. Emperor Franz II played in a similar string quartet, although being the emperor, he played the primo part.³ Amateur and connoisseur were two non-exclusive categories that had a large common membership in the cultivation of the participatory string quartet, and after Schuppanzigh's innovation the string quartet audience mostly consisted of that intersection: amateur connoisseurs.

Beethoven was prompt to grasp the implications of the quartet as an audience piece. Weiss took a bit longer to mull over the new realities; his Op. 8 quartets have enormous intrinsic historical interest as the first product of a talented composer intimately knowledgeable of both Schuppanzigh's innovations and of Beethoven's consequent reimagining of the possibilities of the quartet, and determined to carry on in that same spirit. He had a difficult task: trying to compose in Beethoven's spirit from Beethoven's shadow. As Ferraguto points out, reviewers repeatedly faulted Weiss for being derivative, as well as for 'bizarre' exaggerations of what were perceived as Beethoven's occasional eccentricities.

The strongest recommendation for Weiss's quartets was that Ignaz Schuppanzigh programmed them from 1823 through the fall of 1825, during the last, free-lance iteration of his ensemble, when it had no patron. Schuppanzigh's main concern had always been to present Beethoven's works in the context of those of his illustrious predecessors, Haydn and Mozart, and he stuck to this trio of composers far more consistently than any of his competitors. During the 1820s Schuppanzigh was promoting his repertory as the quartets of 'the most famous masters',⁴ and it caused more comment than previously, because Haydn and Mozart already belonged to a bygone generation; reviewers began to talk of the 'classical' works Schuppanzigh was performing.⁵ In the fall of 1823, Schuppanzigh announced a new policy of performing, in addition to Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, the 'most successful' works by newer composers.⁶ After Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, Weiss ranked atop the next tier with six performances of his quartets (including Op. 8/1 twice, and Op. 8/2 once), along with Louis Spohr, and Georges Onslow.

On the Edition

The only source is the 1814 first edition by S.A. Steiner of Vienna, which is available on IMSLP. The two quartets were originally published only in parts, without a

³ Karel Boženek, 'Beethoven und das Adelsgeschlecht Lichnowsky', in *Ludwig van Beethoven im Herzen Europas: Leben und Nachleben in den Bömischen Ländern*, ed. Oldřich Pulkert and Hans-Werner Küthen, German trans. Václav Maidl and Erhard Müller (Prague: České lúpkové závody A.G., 2000), 135.

⁴ Subscriptions-Anzeige in the *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung und Unterhaltungsblatt für Freunde der Kunst, Literatur und des geselligen Lebens* (hereafter ATz) 16/64 (29 May 1823), 256.

⁵ See for example *Wiener Zeitschrift für Kunst, Literatur, Theater und Mode* 8/121 (9 October 1823), 992; *ATz* 16/150 (16 December 1823), 599; *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung mit besonderer Rücksicht auf den österreichischen Kaiserstaat* (*AmZö*) 8/81 (9 October 1824), 321; *ATz* 17/142 (25 November 1824), 567; *AmZö* 8/99 (11 December 1824), 393.

⁶ *AmZö* 7/84 (18 October 1823), 665–6.

score, without bar numbers in the parts, and without rehearsal numbers. All of this was usual at the time, and is more evidence that string quartets were expected to be played through, not rehearsed or performed. Not until Beethoven's late quartets was chamber music published simultaneously in parts and in score.

Ferraguto has edited these quartets to be accessible to the modern string player while remaining true to the source. He has accordingly made a score, added bar numbers, modernized and standardized literal directives as well as rest patterns and the beaming of note groups, and a host of other notational details. The myriad small inconsistencies between the parts that required correction likely became apparent only once the score had been assembled. Every one of thousands of editorial decisions is addressed either in the Editorial Methods, in general, or in the Critical Notes, in detail, in accordance with the high scholarly standards maintained by A-R. Ambiguities remain, and performers are well-advised to read the Notes on Performance (xii–xiii), for guidance on the interpretation of strokes vs. dots, a whole spectrum of accent markings, and especially Weiss's use of the *più lento* marking.

A tremendous amount of meticulous, detailed, patient, eye-straining work is required to put together an edition like this. I congratulate Mark Ferraguto on a job well done as well as on his choice of quartets.

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