

String Quartets in Beethoven's Europe

Nancy November, *General Editor*

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Introduction

Andreas Romberg (1767–1821) wrote extensively for the string quartet during the period of its most intensive cultivation from the later eighteenth to earlier nineteenth centuries. Although by the 1790s he already boasted an extensive roster of compositions, he, like many of his contemporaries, reserved his first opus number for a set of string quartets, written between 1794 and 1796. Having thus officially introduced himself, Romberg went on to write and publish twenty-five full-fledged string quartets, as well as other works for the medium including variations, rondos, a fantasia, and a capriccio. Among these, his op. 2 quartets, written between 1797 and 1799, are particularly worthy of renewed attention by performers and scholars alike.

Although during his lifetime Romberg seemed destined for a prominent place in musical history, that promise would barely be fulfilled. With the exception of his cantata *Das Lied von der Glocke*, which long kept his name alive in German-speaking lands, Romberg's music quickly faded into obscurity after his death. In his obituary of the composer, music critic Friedrich Rochlitz (1769–1842) predicted a different fate:

As a composer he is known by all who are familiar with recent music. His works, more than 150 in number and in almost every genre, have circulated through the whole of the musical world, and have elevated, educated, and delighted many thousands, and will do so, we hope, for a long time yet.¹

Of the enduring appeal of Romberg's string quartets in particular, Rochlitz seemed to have little doubt:

As far as their style is concerned, one notices, it is true, that the quartets of Haydn, and even more those of Mozart, have exercised a decided influence on Romberg; in spite of that, he wrote his quartets in his own way, and he shaped them ever more perfectly, so that here too he demands a secure and honorable place in the history of musical art, and will always do so.²

1. "Als Componisten kennet ihn Jedermann, der überhaupt neuere Musik kennt. Seine Werke, deren er über 150 verfasst hat, und fast aus allen Gattungen . . . sind in der ganzen musikalischen Welt verbreitet, haben auf viele Tausende erhebend, bildend, erfreuend gewirkt, und werden es hoffentlich noch lange." Friedrich Rochlitz, "Andreas Romberg, Doktor der Musik und herzoglich sächsischer Kapellmeister in Gotha," *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 19 December 1821, 853.

2. "Was aber die Schreibart betrifft, so bemerkt man zwar, dass Haydn, und noch mehr Mozart, in ihren Quartetten, auf

Rochlitz's high opinion of Romberg was evidently shared by his contemporaries. For example, an 1808 advertisement recommends quartets by one Franz Alexander Pössinger to music lovers who "do not confine themselves just to . . . the quartets of Mozart, Haydn, and Romberg."³ Similarly, an 1817 review of a new symphony by Johann Baptist Moralt begins by referring to the lofty achievements of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Romberg in the genre; once again, it seems that Romberg's name could be lined up alongside those of now far greater repute.⁴ When the Nationaltheater in Berlin was rebuilt in 1819, busts of eighteen famous Austro-German composers were installed in the concert hall, Romberg among them, taking his place alongside figures such as J. S. and C. P. E. Bach, Handel, Hasse, Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, Weber, and Beethoven. Romberg was one of just a handful of living composers, alongside the likes of Weber and Beethoven, to be so honored, a clear indication that he was expected to join the pantheon of great names in musical history.⁵

The Composer

Andreas Romberg was born in the town of Vechta, Lower Saxony, on 27 April 1767, into a family of professional musicians. His father, Gerhard Heinrich Romberg, played clarinet and violin, while his father's brother, Bernhard Anton Romberg, played cello and bassoon. His uncle's son, Bernhard Heinrich (1767–1841), would achieve wide renown as a cellist, while Andreas took up the violin, on which he became a virtuoso. The early part of Andreas's career was closely tied to that of his cousin: the two undertook tours together, and jointly composed works including a set of duos for violin and cello.

R[omberg] entschiedenen Einfluss gehabt haben: aber er hat sich dennoch die seinige selbst geschaffen und sie immer vollkommener ausgebildet, so dass er auch von dieser Seite einen sichern und ehrenvollen Platz in der Geschichte musikalischer Kunst behauptet und immer behaupten wird." *Ibid.*, 855.

3. ". . . die sich . . . nicht blos auf Mozarts, Haydns und Rombergs Quartetten, einschränken . . ." Unsigned review of op. 8 string quartets by Franz Alexander Pössinger, *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 9 November 1808, 96.

4. Unsigned review of symphony by J. B. Moralt, *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 10 December 1817, 845.

5. Martin Blindow, *Andreas Romberg: Quellen zu seiner Biografie* (Wilhelmshaven: Florian Noetzel, 2016), 9–11.

String Quartet No. 1 in E Major

I

Allegro

Musical score for Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. The score is in E major (three sharps) and common time. The tempo is marked **Allegro**. The dynamics are marked *p* (piano). The Violin 1 part features a melodic line with a long slur. The Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello parts provide harmonic support with sustained notes and rests.

Musical score for Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. The score is in E major (three sharps) and common time. The tempo is **Allegro**. The dynamics are *p*. The Violin 1 part has a melodic line starting at measure 5. The Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello parts are mostly silent, indicated by rests.

Musical score for Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. The score is in E major (three sharps) and common time. The tempo is **Allegro**. The dynamics are *p*. The Violin 1 part has a melodic line starting at measure 9. The Violin 2 part has a melodic line starting at measure 9. The Viola and Violoncello parts are mostly silent, indicated by rests.

String Quartet No. 2 in A Minor

I

Allegro

Violin 1 *p*

Violin 2 *p*

Viola *p*

Violoncello *p*

7

Vn. 1 *f*

Vn. 2 *f*

Va. *f*

Vc. *f*

13

Vn. 1 *f* *p*

Vn. 2 *f* *tenuto*

Va. *f* *tenuto*

Vc. *f* *tenuto*

33

Vn. 1 *f* *p* *rfz* *p*

Vn. 2 *f* *p* *rfz* *p*

Va. *f* *p* *rfz* *p*

Vc. *f* *p* *rfz* *p*

(36)

Vn. 1 *p* *p* *p*

Vn. 2 *p* *p* *p*

Va. *p* *p* *p*

Vc. *p* *p* *p*

40

Vn. 1 *p* *p* *p*

Vn. 2 *p* *p* *p*

Va. *p* *p* *p*

Vc. *p* *p* *p*

String Quartet No. 3 in B-flat Major

I

Allegro ma non troppo

Violin 1
f *p* *f* *p*

Violin 2
f *p* *f* *p*

Viola
f *f*

Violoncello
f *p* *f* *p*

Vn. 1
5 *p*

Vn. 2

Va.
p

Vc.

Vn. 1
9 *f* *p* *f*

Vn. 2
f *f*

Va.
f *p* *f* *p*

Vc.
f *p* *f* *p*

Critical Report

Sources

Manuscript

Of the op. 2 autograph scores, only nos. 1 and 3 survive to the present day, held at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz. The notation is for the most part careful and clear, although there is occasional ambiguity in the distinction between staccato dots and strokes and in the precise placement and length of slurs. The autographs themselves reveal some development or change of ideas on Romberg's part, particularly in Quartet no. 3.

Op. 2, Nos. 1 & 3. Autograph manuscript of op. 2 quartets nos. 1 and 3. Mus.ms.autogr. Romberg, A. 1 N. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv.

[Zwei Quartette] | [1.] Quartetto [op. 2, livre 2, nr. 1] Andr. Romberg 1797 (brackets in original; these and the enclosed text added by a later hand)

Print

The first edition of Romberg's op. 2 quartets was published by Simrock in 1802 (plate no. 160). The original print consists of four individual part books, each containing all three quartets.

Simrock. The first printed edition of the op. 2 quartets, issued in 1802 by Nikolaus Simrock in Bonn. Beethoven-Haus, Bonn, shelfmark Eller C ROMB / 1.

Trois | QUATUORS | pour | Deux Violons, Alto & Basse | composés et dédiés | à | J. Haydn | par | ANDREAS ROMBERG | OEUVRE II LIVRE II. | À PARIS aux adresses ordinaires | A BONN chés [*sic*] l'Editeur N. Simrock. | propriété de l'Editeur et enregistré à la Bibliothèque Nationale.

While any or most of the differences evident in the print may represent intentional changes by Romberg, there is no way of determining this solely on the basis of the available sources. Because of this uncertainty, the present volume follows the manuscripts as the principal source for Quartets nos. 1 and 3. In the absence of the third manuscript, this edition of Quartet no. 2 follows the Simrock print.

Evaluation of the Sources

Comparison of the manuscripts of Quartets nos. 1 and 3 against the printed parts demonstrates a high degree of

consistency overall; it would be reasonable to conjecture that the print of Quartet no. 2 is similarly faithful to its source. There are, however, a number of points of divergence between the print and manuscript sources, some of which offer alternatives that would have a clear, audible impact in performance.

The most significant difference between Romberg's autograph and its corresponding print appears in the latter half of the first movement of Quartet no. 1. While the manuscript clearly indicates first and second endings at the end of the movement, with a repeat back to the middle of measure 139, the published parts omit these repeat barlines and the first ending entirely. While there is nothing to suggest a possible reason for such a major departure, it is conceivable that it represents a late revision by the composer; it certainly seems like too many measures of autograph for the engravers simply to have overlooked.

Quartet no. 1 reveals further variant readings in its inner movements, mostly in regard to ornamentation. The inconsistent transcription of ornamental signs in the second movement (see "Notes on Performance" in the introduction) is also evident in the third movement, though to a lesser extent. More evident in the third movement is the omission of ornaments and grace notes from the printed parts, such as the first violin's inverted mordents in measures 2 and 4 and the grace notes of violin 2 in the corresponding passage at measures 48 and 50. Elsewhere in the same movement, however, the printed parts contain written-out embellishments absent from the manuscript score (see critical notes). Whether or not these were added at the composer's behest is unknown.

There is further evidence, however, suggesting that Romberg may be responsible for some of these differences. This is especially true within the first violin part, particularly in regard to its articulation markings. This can perhaps be explained by the fact that it would have been the composer himself playing that part in early performances of these quartets, and thus he may have felt it unnecessary to notate such details. Certain additions in the Simrock print go well beyond self-evident continuation of patterns of articulation. For example, the "sul una corda" indication in Quartet no. 1, movement 1, measure 231, present in the printed part but absent from the autograph, is unlikely to have originated from anyone other than the composer.

The autograph reveals several points at which Romberg appears to have had a change of mind. In the