

String Quartets in Beethoven's Europe

Nancy November, *General Editor*

Allan Badley, Mark Ferraguto, Sam Girling, and

W. Dean Sutcliffe, *Editorial Board Members*

Published in cooperation with Beethoven-Haus, Bonn,
and supported by a grant from the University of Auckland
Faculty Research Development Fund.

Performance parts are available from the publisher.

A-R Editions, Inc., Middleton, Wisconsin

© 2024 by A-R Editions, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any electronic or mechanical means (including photocopying, recording, or information storage and retrieval) without permission in writing from the publisher. Please apply for permission to perform, record, or otherwise reuse the material in this publication at our website (www.areditions.com).

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 978-1-9872-0912-9 (print)

ISBN 978-1-9872-0913-6 (online)

DOI <https://doi.org/10.31022/N094>

ISSN 0193-5364 (print)

ISSN 2577-4573 (online)

Ⓒ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1992.

Contents

Preface	vii
Introduction	ix
The Composer in Context	ix
The Music of the Edition	x
Issues of Performance Practice	xii
Plates	xiv
Three String Quartets, Op. 8	
String Quartet No. 1 in C Minor	
I. Allegro moderato	3
II. Menuetto: Allegretto	16
III. Larghetto	21
IV. Finale: Allegro	27
String Quartet No. 2 in F Major	
I. Allegro vivace	38
II. Menuetto: Allegretto	55
III. Andante con espressione	58
IV. Rondo: Allegro	67
String Quartet No. 3 in A Major	
I. Allegro con brio	79
II. Menuetto: Moderato	92
III. Adagio	94
IV. Allegretto	99
Critical Report	113
Source	113
Editorial Methods	113
Critical Notes	114

Introduction

Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven dominate the received history of music at the turn of the nineteenth century, and their works are often seen as the cornerstone of the performed canon. As a consequence, the works of many contemporaries of the “big three” have either been overlooked by scholars or regarded as less important than those of their more famous peers. Franz Alexander Pössinger (1766–1827) is one such neglected figure: a highly respected Viennese violinist, composer, and arranger, he spent the majority of his life working for the opera orchestra of the Nationaltheater and later the Hoftheaterorchester; he thus likely helped premiere many of Mozart’s and Beethoven’s most significant works. Of Pössinger’s compositions, only a small proportion have been studied or recorded, mostly his trios for wind and string instruments. Perhaps the most important study in recent years is Bert Hagels’s edition of the Violin Concerto in G major, op. 9, and the subsequent recording of the work by violinist Anton Steck.¹ Among Pössinger’s yet-unstudied chamber music are four sets of string quartets, three of which, opuses 1, 2, and 8, were written in the early stages of his career. Despite forming a large part of his oeuvre, studies, editions, and recordings of these quartets have been notably lacking. This new edition of Pössinger’s three opus 8 quartets aims to raise awareness of the composer’s work, which is often of a high standard and reflects the complex and multifaceted nature of chamber music in Vienna during the age of Beethoven.

The Composer in Context

Little is known of Pössinger’s early life other than that he was born in Vienna on 16 December 1766. He studied counterpoint and composition with Johann Georg Albrechtsberger, who also taught Beethoven, Johann Nepomuk Hummel, and Ferdinand Ries. In 1786, at age nineteen, Pössinger joined the Nationaltheaterorchester in Vienna, and in 1792 his first set of three string quartets, op. 1, was published in Offenbach.² In 1798 he was

appointed violinist-violist in the Hoftheaterorchester, a position he held until his death on 19 August 1827. As a composer, Pössinger produced concertos for flute, violin, and oboe, the melodrama *Omasis; oder Joseph in Egypten* (librettist Joseph Sonnleithner), and some small-scale sacred and secular vocal works. The Violin Concerto in G major, op. 9 (1805), is perhaps his most substantial instrumental work of note and is typical of the Viennese concerto style at the turn of the nineteenth century in terms of instrumental forces, soloistic dominance, technical virtuosity, and thematic development. The majority of his compositions, however, are chamber music, including string trios and quartets, wind trios, and works for a mixture of wind and string instruments.³ Many of Pössinger’s chamber pieces were issued by leading early nineteenth-century Viennese publishers—predominantly Artaria and Thadé Weigl—and his works appear to have been highly respected by his contemporaries. From 1805 onward, Pössinger seems to have focused on creating chamber arrangements of popular works of the day, a practice he pursued until the end of his life. Most of his arrangements were of operas, including Mozart’s *Le nozze di Figaro*, Beethoven’s *Fidelio*, Boieldieu’s *La dame blanche*, Rossini’s *L’italiana in Algeri*, and Weber’s *Der Freischütz*.⁴

Not only did Pössinger produce arrangements of Beethoven’s work, but they also met in Vienna and worked together closely on several occasions. Hans-Werner Küthen has established that Pössinger was heavily involved in the revisions of the solo part for Beethoven’s Violin Concerto, op. 61. Küthen suggests that Pössinger, who had written his own violin concerto just one year before Beethoven’s, was considered an expert in such matters, and that he helped to produce a version of Beethoven’s solo violin part that was “as idiomatic for the

1. Franz Alexander Pössinger, *Violinkonzert G-Dur für Violine und Orchester op. 9*, ed. Bert Hagels (Berlin: Ries & Erler, 2009); *Beethoven: Violin Concerto [op. 61]; Pössinger: Violin Concerto [op. 9]*, with Anton Steck (violin) and L’arpa festante, conducted by Matthew Halls, recorded May 2016, Accent, ACC 24320, 2017, compact disc.

2. Ernst Ludwig Gerber, *Neues Historisch-Biographisches Lexikon der Tonkünstler (1812–1814)*, vol. 3, ed. Othmar Wessely (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1966), 741.

3. Constantin von Wurzbach, “Pösinger [sic], Franz Alexander,” in *Biographisches Lexicon des Kaiserthums Oesterreich* (Vienna: Kaiserlich-königliche Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1872), 24. Wurzbach lists Pössinger’s early works, including the opus 1 and 2 quartets (1792 and 1799, respectively) and the opus 3 quintets (1803), as well as several duos and trios. No comprehensive list of Pössinger’s later compositions exists, but copies of printed music by Pössinger in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin and Österreichische Nationalbibliothek enable us to estimate the extent of his oeuvre.

4. An edition featuring several of Pössinger’s string quartet arrangements for *Recent Researches in the Music of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (Middleton, Wis.: A-R Editions) is forthcoming.

String Quartet No. 1 in C Minor

I

Allegro moderato

Violin 1 *ff* *p dolce*

Violin 2 *ff*

Viola *ff*

Violoncello *ff*

5

Vn. 1

Vn. 2 *p*

Va. *p*

Vc. *p*

9

Vn. 1

Vn. 2

Va.

Vc. (1)

Detailed description: This page contains the first system of a string quartet score. It features four staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. The music is in C minor, 2/4 time, and marked 'Allegro moderato'. The first system (measures 1-4) shows a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the violins and violas, and a similar pattern in the cello. Dynamics range from fortissimo (ff) to piano dolce (p dolce). The second system (measures 5-8) shows a change in texture with the violins playing a more melodic line and the lower strings providing a steady accompaniment. The third system (measures 9-12) continues this texture, with the first violin playing a more active melodic line. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

20

Musical score for measures 20-24. The score is for four staves: Vn. 1, Vn. 2, Va., and Vc. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat). Measure 20 starts with a treble clef and a common time signature. The first two measures of each staff are marked with *[cresc.]*. In measure 23, Vn. 1 is marked *mf tenuto* and Vn. 2 is marked *mf*. In measure 24, Va. is marked *mf* and Vc. is marked *mf*. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes with various articulations and slurs.

25

Musical score for measures 25-29. The score is for four staves: Vn. 1, Vn. 2, Va., and Vc. The key signature is two flats. Measure 25 starts with a treble clef and a common time signature. In measure 26, Vn. 1 is marked *dolce*. In measure 27, Vn. 2, Va., and Vc. are all marked *p*. The music consists of eighth and sixteenth notes with various articulations and slurs.

30

Musical score for measures 30-34. The score is for four staves: Vn. 1, Vn. 2, Va., and Vc. The key signature is two flats. Measure 30 starts with a treble clef and a common time signature. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes with various articulations and slurs.

String Quartet No. 2 in F Major

I

Allegro vivace

Violin 1 *p* *dolce*

Violin 2 *p* *pp*

Viola *p* *pp*

Violoncello *p*

5

Vn. 1

Vn. 2

Va.

Vc. *pp*

8

Vn. 1

Vn. 2

Va.

Vc.

Detailed description: This page of a musical score for String Quartet No. 2 in F Major, Part I, contains measures 1 through 8. The score is written for four string instruments: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. The tempo is marked 'Allegro vivace'. The key signature is one flat (F Major). The time signature is common time (C).
Measures 1-4: Violin 1 plays a melodic line starting with a half note F4, followed by eighth notes. Dynamics include *p* and *dolce*. Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello play sustained notes. Violin 2 and Viola have a *p* dynamic. Violoncello has a *p* dynamic.
Measures 5-7: Violin 1 continues its melodic line. Violin 2 and Viola play triplets of eighth notes, marked *pp*. Violoncello plays a simple accompaniment. The *pp* dynamic is also indicated for the Violoncello in measure 5.
Measure 8: Violin 1 plays a melodic phrase. Violin 2 and Viola continue with triplets. Violoncello plays a simple accompaniment.

III

Andante con espressione

Violin 1 *p* sul G

Violin 2 *p* sul G

Viola *p* sul C

Violoncello *p*

5

Vn. 1 *dolce* (1)

Vn. 2

Va.

Vc.

9

Vn. 1 *tr*

Vn. 2

Va.

Vc. *p*

String Quartet No. 3 in A Major

I

Allegro con brio

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

*p*³ *cresc.* *ff*³ *tr*

p *cresc.* *f* *fz*

p *cresc.* *f* *fz*

p *cresc.* *f* *fz*

4

Vn. 1 *fz* *dolce*

Vn. 2 *fz* *p*

Va. *fz* *p*

Vc. *fz* *p*

9

Vn. 1 *cresc.* *ff*

Vn. 2 *cresc.* *ff*

Va. *cresc.* *ff*

Vc. *ff*

Critical Report

Source

The edition aims to reproduce in a clear, modern format the readings of the sole surviving source for Pössinger's opus 8 quartets, a copy of which is held at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, shelfmark 4° Mus.pr.40121.

Op. 8. Set of four printed parts dating from 1804–5. The title page reads: “TROIS | QUATUORS | pour | deux Violons, Alto et | Violoncelle | composés | par | François Alexandre | POESSINGER. | Op. 8. | [left:] 396. [right:] 3/45 x. | À Vienne au Bureau d’Arts et d’Industrie.”¹

Editorial Methods

The title of each quartet has been anglicized and expanded to include the tonic key. Movement numbers have been added tacitly, and the descriptors “menuetto,” “finale,” and “rondo” have been converted to movement titles. The parts have been arranged into modern score order, and instrument names have been translated into English. Original clefs and key signatures have been retained. Tempos and other verbal directives have been regularized throughout and among all parts. The section labels “majore” and “minore” have been omitted.

Editorial slurs, ties, and hairpins are given as dashed lines. Editorial articulations are enclosed in parentheses. Editorial letter dynamics are set in bold-roman rather than bold-italic. Editorial verbal dynamics and trills are placed in square brackets. Accidentals have been tacitly added in places where contemporary practice did not usually require them, such as where an accidental should be canceled after a barline or where an accidental applies to all octaves of a given pitch class within a measure. Other editorially added inflections are supplied in brackets. Accidentals considered redundant by modern standards, including those rendered redundant by the

addition of an editorial accidental earlier in the same bar, have been removed unless deemed useful as cautionary accidentals. Editorial cautionary accidentals have been added sparingly in parentheses.

Beaming and rests have been modernized as needed for consistency and metrical clarity. Similarly, single notes in the source are occasionally converted to a rhythmically equivalent pair of tied notes to avoid obscuring the beat. Shorthand notation for repeated patterns has been realized. Indications for triplets have been added as needed. Where a movement begins with an upbeat, rests and note values in the final measure have been shortened as needed to balance it. Opposing stems are combined throughout. Slurs and ties on multiple stops have been tacitly modernized to include any missing ties and eliminate redundancies.

Source dynamics have been modernized, with the abbreviations “dol:,” “manc:,” and “m. v.” spelled out in full as “dolce,” “mancando,” and “mezza voce,” respectively. The marking “il” that occasionally appears after “cresc.” has been omitted. Redundant dynamic markings have been tacitly deleted unless they are deemed useful reminders of the prevailing dynamic level or if they function as accents. Slight adjustments in the placement of dynamics have been made without comment to match similar material in other parts or parallel passages; more significant changes of position are indicated in the critical notes. Because the placement and length of hairpins in the source is occasionally imprecise, hairpins have been tacitly standardized among parts and between parallel passages.

The presentation of slurs generally follows the source, although many minor discrepancies between parts and parallel passages have been resolved without comment. Where the starting or ending point of a slur is far enough from the nearest notehead to be ambiguous, the extent of the slur has been adjusted according to context and musical logic. Slurs have been drawn to enclose ties, and converging slurs have been combined.

Fingerings, string indications, and *sva* indications have been preserved, standardized, and placed above the staff. Ornaments and ornamental notes are reproduced as in the source unless otherwise mentioned in the critical notes; trills on tied notes are modernized to *tr* and a wavy line. Both staccato dots and strokes are retained, with any changes reported in the critical notes.

1. A notice in the *Intelligenz-Blatt zur allgemeinen musikalischen Zeitung* on 11 September 1805 lists these quartets under “new music from various publishers, which are available from Breitkopf & Härtel” (neue Musikalien von verschiedenen Verlegern, welche bey Breitkopf und Härtel zu haben sind). The source's cover page has a sticker with the details of Breitkopf & Härtel covering the original publisher's name.