

# LIR CLASSICS

## LIR008 - PROGRAMME NOTES

### Views of Vienna

In the late 18th century, Vienna was considered by many to be the musical capital of Europe. Charles Burney, the famous musical biographer, was among those who visited the city in the 1770s, and wrote, 'Vienna is so rich in composers and encloses within its walls such a number of musicians of superior merit that it is the imperial seat of music, as well of power'. Vienna was also noted for its beauty - on his journeys through France, Turkey, Hungary and Austria, the journalist William Hunter wrote in 1792 how Vienna was dazzling and sophisticated and had 'a bright and busy appearance'. Politically, Vienna had experienced some hard times up to and including much of the 18th century. Since the 16th century the city had been under continual threat from the Turks, but on 12th September 1679 Vienna conquered the Turks and drove them back to Hungary. It was from this point on that The House of Hapsburg began to accumulate more territories, and as a consequence Vienna was able to feel a European capital to a greater extent.

Economically, improvements were also apparent. After the strains of the Seven Years War (1756-1763), industrial production began to expand - in particular sugar refining, silk textiles and porcelain manufacturing. More careful control was enabled by the presence of a central government formed during the reign of Maria Theresa (1740-1765). The government greatly encouraged the emerging rise in industry, and by the time Joseph II (Maria Theresa's son) came to power in 1765, the economic state of the empire had improved dramatically. During this period, education spread through all sections of society and many monasteries were dissolved and turned into schools. By 1774 five hundred new schools had been established in the empire, and Jews and other non-Catholics were given equal opportunities (having previously been denied privileges). Since it was common for the aristocracy to live on lower floors, and lower classes on upper floors of the same buildings, different social orders found themselves in close proximity. Varying races and religions mixed freely, resulting in a cosmopolitan air.

In late 18th century Vienna, music was largely supported by the aristocracy (which numbered about 8,000), the court and the Catholic Church. According to a report published in 1784, music was 'the only thing about which the nobility showed taste'. This period also marked an increase in the production of chamber music for the middle classes to play at home. The Viennese salon provided the ideal atmosphere for chamber music, with pleasant company and cultural stimulation. It is undoubtedly with this purpose in mind, that the music on this disc was written. The great demand for music for amateur performance was accompanied by a demand for instruction on how to play. Methods were written by Quantz (1752),

CPE Bach (1753) and Leopold Mozart (1756) for the flute, keyboard and violin respectively. Music in Vienna during the late 18th century consisted of a complex conglomeration of musical styles: Italian melodiousness, spirit and rhythmic vivacity, German *empfindsamer Stil*, contrapuntal technique and use of rigorous structures, together with Mannheim dynamism and drama. This was also given extra flavour by the influence of Czechs, Poles, Slovenes and Hungarians who emigrated there.

Adalbert Gyrowetz was born in Bohemia in 1763 and died in Vienna in 1850. He studied the violin, piano and composition with his father and was something of a child prodigy, writing large-scale choral works and chamber music from a young age. In 1784 he travelled to Vienna to have one of his compositions performed so as to make himself known. He soon met Mozart, who was so impressed that he decided to include one of Gyrowetz's symphonies in a subscription concert that he organised at the *Mehlgrube*, his regular concert venue. Mozart pretended that the work was his own, and only after the symphony had caused a sensation did he tell the public who the real composer was.

In 1789 he went to Paris, but the revolution made it a hazardous place to be, so he soon made his way to London. Here he met Haydn who was enjoying the first of two long visits to the capital. In 1804 Gyrowetz decided to settle in Vienna, where he remained until his death. He was offered a post as *Kapellmeister* to the Vienna Court Theatre. Each year he was expected to write one opera and one ballet. His first major success was the opera *Agnes Sorel* which was performed 124 times in Vienna over the next decade. For the rest of his life he continued to compose in the manner of the Viennese Classical School, which by the mid 19th century had become out-moded. He was always greatly respected though, and was an inspiration to young musicians: the young Chopin made his debut in Vienna playing one of Gyrowetz's piano concertos.

Schubert's string trio movement in Bb major (D471) was composed in Vienna during September 1816. Schubert had recently finished his formal musical education (having taken lessons with Salieri) and rather reluctantly had become a teacher at his father's school. Already to his credit were several items of piano and chamber music. He had been successful with the first four symphonies, and had begun working on the 5th (the much loved Bb symphony D485), but his reputation as a composer of lieder was more compelling. During the autumn of this year, he set to music more than 30 poems by Goethe, which incorporate a staggering variety and range of musical ideas. It was at this time that he composed the *Erlkönig*, an intense setting of the text, a structural tour de force, full of harmonic surprises.

The string trio movement in Bb was probably written as the composer worked on his 5th symphony. Schubert had obviously intended to make the trio a multi-movement work, since 39 bars of the second movement exist. Today it stands as a single movement work in its own right, and it is a perfect complement to the four-movement trio (D581, also in Bb) written exactly a year later. Both trios were written for performance to his intimate circle of friends - recitals that were held at Ignaz von Sonnleithner's home on winter evenings. The single movement trio recorded here is a sumptuous yet delicate work. Most dynamic markings are either piano or pianissimo, and the music seldom reaches forte. There is a wealth of thematic material, and melodies are in the inimitable Schubertian cantabile vein. The harmonic vocabulary is particularly rich, and includes the composer's hallmarks of augmented 6th, Neapolitan 6th, and diminished 7th chords.

Vienna was obviously dear to Mozart's heart - in April 1781, he wrote in a letter to his father 'You are looking forward to my return with great joy my dear father. That is the only thing which can make me decide to leave Vienna'. However it is well documented that Mozart hated the flute, especially when combined with strings - not a particularly good advertisement for the piece on this disc! It was really the prospect of money that 'inspired' Mozart to compose for the flute. Whilst in Mannheim he was introduced to Ferdinand Dejean by his friend, Baptiste Wendling. Dejean was a doctor in the Dutch East India Company, and a keen amateur flautist, and he offered Mozart 200 Dutch gulden to compose 3 concertos and some quartets for the flute. Unfortunately, by the time the doctor had left Mannheim for Paris the commission was incomplete and Mozart only received 96 gulden. He had only written 2 concertos (one being an arrangement of the oboe concerto written a year earlier in Salzburg) and 2 quartets (including this one in G major). In a letter to his mother dated January 31st 1778, Mozart vents out his frustrations in rhyming verse:

Herr Wendling has reason to be angry with me  
For I haven't written any of the quartetti!  
But when I get back to the bridge o'er the Rhine  
I will travel homeward in one straight line!  
And write the four quartetti without any sass  
So he has no reason to call me an ass!  
The concerto I'll write him in Paris, it's fitting  
For there I can dash it off while I'm shitting!

Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf (1739-1799) was a very colourful character in late 18th century Viennese musical life. His family originally came from Bohemia but moved to Vienna, the city of his birth. In the final years of his life he moved to Neuhoft, Bohemia, where he died. Dittersdorf is perhaps best known for his autobiography which he dictated to his son on his deathbed, and which serves as a valuable insight into the musical life of the late 18th century. Dittersdorf's rich and varied musical education contributed to the development of his colourful style. His family's comfortable financial circumstances enabled him to receive a good education at a Jesuit school and private tuition in music, religion and French. From the age of seven he learnt the violin, instantly developing a flair for the instrument. At the age of twelve he moved into the court of the Prince of Saxe Hildburghause, where he trained for ten years. Here he became acquainted with the compositional methods of Fux - the most widely respected methods of the 18th century. Following his service at the court, Dittersdorf held a position as violinist at the Imperial Theatre (1761-1764) where he was exposed to Italian opera. In 1765 he succeeded Michael Haydn as Kapellmeister to the Bishop of Grosswardein. He assembled an orchestra and small choir, and began to write vocal music.

In 1770, Dittersdorf became Kapellmeister to Count Schaffgotsch, Prince-Bishop of Breslau. The prince-bishop built a theatre, where Dittersdorf performed his operas and oratorios. The Empress Maria Theresa was so impressed with the great impresario that she bestowed upon him a certificate of nobility (thus giving him the additional 'von Dittersdorf' to his birth surname 'Ditters'). Dittersdorf met Mozart and Haydn on many occasions, but perhaps the most charming event recorded is that narrated by Michael Kelly in his book *Solo Recital* (1826) - his life-time memoirs of his travels around Europe. He describes an evening of musical entertainment that took place in 1784 in which a celebrated quartet performed to

the assembled company - Haydn and Dittersdorf playing the violin, Mozart the viola and Vanhal the cello.

Franz Anton Hoffmeister was born in Rothenburg in 1754 and died in Vienna in 1812. He went to Vienna at the age of 14, initially to study law, but after qualifying he devoted his time to composing and publishing music. In 1783 he established his own publishing house, where he sold editions of music by Haydn, Mozart, Vanhal, Pleyel and Clementi as well as his own music. He cultivated close relationships with many of these composers. In November 1785, Mozart wrote to him pleading for a loan - it seems as though this was one of several occasions when Hoffmeister gave him advance payment for works that were being published. After 1790, however, Hoffmeister devoted more time to composition than publishing. It was during this decade that he wrote and staged most of his operas. In 1791 he began a new series of subscription concerts where he organised the performances of his symphonies. He was quite admired as a composer and wrote particularly well for the flute. In Gerber's *Neues Lexikon der Tonkünstler*, published in 1812, it said of Hoffmeister that his compositions were 'not only rich in emotional expression, but also distinguished by the interesting and suitable knowledge of instruments'.

The C minor quartet is quite an exceptional work. The first movement shows all the hallmarks of the Sturm und Drang - a minor key, an angular melody, wide leaps, marked dynamic contrasts, driving rhythms and syncopations. It is cast in a succinct sonata form mould, with a dramatic development that incorporates some unexpected shifts of tonality. The second movement in the tonic major is a warm, cantabile andante that exploits the lyrical expressiveness of the flute, whilst the cheeky finale, back in C minor, is full of surprises. Towards the end, Hoffmeister turns to the major key transforming what started out as a somewhat sinister sounding melody into sheer opera buffa.