Johann Baptist Vanhal - 3 Late String Quartets (2012)



1.String quartet in E flat 12:20 2.String quartet in E flat 05:59 3.String quartet in E flat 05:25 4.String quartet in F op. 33 No. 3:Allegro moderato 07:39 5.String quartet in F op. 33 No. 3:Arietta I - Arietta II: Tempo Moderato 04:38 6.String quartet in F op. 33 No. 3:Adagio 04:38 7.String quartet in F op. 33 No. 3:Allegro con fuoco 05:01 8.String quartet in a op,. 33 No. 2:Allegro moderato 07:21 9.String quartet in a op. 33 No. 2:Arietta I - Arietta II 05:47 10.String quartet in a op. 33 No. 2:Adagio Sostenuto 05:28 Camesina String Quartet: Johannes Gebauer, Katja Gruttner - violin Irina Alexandrowna - viola Martin Burkhardt - cello

This is some of the most entertaining and ear-pleasing music you could ever want to hear. It's performed with infectious fun and delight by the still young (founded in 2007) Camesina Quartet, named for the Camesina House in Vienna where Mozart resided from 1784 until 1787, and where he played the six string quartets dedicated to Haydn for the first time in the presence of his elder friend. If you didn't know who wrote the three quartets on this disc or when they were written, you wouldn't be far off base if you guessed Haydn, and relatively early Haydn at that. In fact, according to the uncredited program note, the composer of these works, Johann Baptist Vanhal, born Jan K?titel Va?hal (1739–1813)—purposely chose to assign the opus number 33 to a set of quartets he wrote sometime in the 1780s so that they would be associated with Haydn's op. 33 quartets of 1781.

No date is provided for the second of two or more so-called "Hoffmeister" quartets given here, though it's said to be later than the op. 33 quartets. The association now is obviously to the composer and music publisher, Franz Anton Hoffmeister, whose publishing firm issued Mozart's isolated String Quartet in D Major, K 499, nicknamed "Hoffmeister," shortly after it was composed in 1786.

A catalog of Vanhal's works published by Duke University cites 53 string quartets, yet Vanhal

today is remembered almost exclusively for his large output of symphonies and concertos. Shockingly, in fact, this new Musikmanufaktur Berlin (MMB) release is the only recording of the composer's string quartets currently listed by ArkivMusic.

Only in hindsight do we know what was about to happen in the medium of the string quartet thanks to that upstart from Bonn, Ludwig van Beethoven. Haydn's two "Lobkowitz" Quartets of 1799 would be followed just two years later by Beethoven's op. 18 set, which was unleashed on an unsuspecting Viennese public in 1801. In fact, Beethoven had begun work on the set in 1798, a year before Haydn even began to compose his two op. 77 quartets. For Haydn and Vanhal, where the string quartet was concerned, most of the 1770s through the first half of the 1780s was still an age of relative innocence. And that is very much reflected in these works. Like the parallel quartets of this period by Haydn—opus numbers 20 and 33—Vanhal's quartets are filled with high spirits, good-natured fun, and an irrepressible joie-de-vivre.

This is an immensely enjoyable CD, and the Camesina Quartet, an ensemble I've not previously encountered—the group's only other offering is an import disc of quartets by Dussek—is simply amazing. The musicians seem to be as overtaken by joy in playing this music as I was in listening to it. Possible Want List stuff. Very, very strongly recommended. ---FANFARE: Jerry Dubins, arkivmusic.com

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