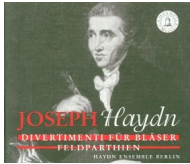


Joseph Haydn - Divertimenti for Winds (1999)

Written by bluesever

Thursday, 22 October 2009 20:48 - Last Updated Wednesday, 01 January 2014 22:06

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1. Divert in F, Hob II:15: Presto 2. Divert in F, Hob II:15: Minuet 3. Divert in F, Hob II:15: Adagio 4. Divert in F, Hob II:15: Minuet 5. Divert in F, Hob II:15: Finale - Presto 6. Divert in F, Hob II:23: Allegro 7. Divert in F, Hob II:23: Menuet 8. Divert in F, Hob II:23: Adagio 9. Divert in F, Hob II:23: Menuet 10. Divert in F, Hob II:23: Finale - Presto 11. Divert in C, Hob II:7: Allegro 12. Divert in C, Hob II:7: Menuet 13. Divert in C, Hob II:7: Adagio 14. Divert in C, Hob II:7: Menuet 15. Divert in C, Hob II:7: Presto 16. Divert in C, Hob II:14: Allegro 17. Divert in C, Hob II:14: Menuetto 18. Divert in C, Hob II:14: Adagio 19. Divert in C, Hob II:14: Menuetto 20. Divert in C, Hob II:14: Finale - Presto 21. Divert in D, Hob II:18: Allegro 22. Divert in D, Hob II:18: Scherzo 23. Divert in D, Hob II:18: Menuet 24. Divert in D, Hob II:18: Adagio 25. Divert in D, Hob II:18: Menuet 26. Divert in D, Hob II:18: Finale - Allegro 27. Divert in G, Hob II:3: Allegro 28. Divert in G, Hob II:3: Menuet 29. Divert in G, Hob II:3: Andante 30. Divert in G, Hob II:3: Menuet 31. Divert in G, Hob II:3: Presto 32. Divert in G, Hob Deest: Allegro 33. Divert in G, Hob Deest: Menuet 34. Divert in G, Hob Deest: Andante 35. Divert in G, Hob Deest: Menuet 36. Divert in G, Hob Deest: Presto 37. Divert in D, Hob Deest: Allegro Di Molto 38. Divert in D, Hob Deest: Menuet 39. Divert in D, Hob Deest: Poloneso - Adagio 40. Divert in D, Hob Deest: Presto

Haydn Ensemble Berlin: Hansjörg Schellenberger, Christoph Hartmann (oboes) Stefan de Levla Jezierski, Georg Schreckenberger (horns) Daniele Damiano, Catherine Maquire (bassoons) Hans Dietrich Klaus, Bettina Faiss (clarinets in C) Martin Heinze (double bass)

Much is known of Haydn's time at Esterházy, rather less of his tenure as music director of Count Morzin's private orchestra in Bohemia. Haydn was already 27 when he took up the post, based at Lukavice Castle. It must have been a relief to finally earn a full-time salary and as a bonus it seems the Morzin band was an accomplished one. The wind divertimenti come from this period of the composer's life, although dates of composition are sometimes approximate. Suffice to say they were all written between 1760 and 1766.

Haydn's manuscript term 'divertimento' is supplanted in copies by the appellation 'Parthia', the

latter a development of the old dance suite. Now out of favour the suite had given rise to 'Parthie/Parthia/Partita', with an Allegro, Andante or Presto added to the usual dance movements. But that too became unfashionable and was replaced by works that only retained one dance form – the minuet.

The additional terms 'Feld-Parthie' and 'Kammer-Parthie' indicate whether these works are to be played inside or out. Of the works recorded here the term 'Parthia' applies to Hob. II:7, 14, 15 and 23 but we have no way of knowing where they were intended to be played.

It's clear from the first notes of Hob. II:15 that this recording is very up front. There's nothing wrong with that of course, especially as detail and timbre are nicely projected. Some listeners may find this a little too bracing and decide to sample the disc rather than hear it all in one sitting. As expected the members of the Haydn Ensemble Berlin – drawn from the Berliner Philharmoniker, Berliner Staatsoper and Deutsches Sinfonie-Orchester – play with considerable polish and refinement.

The two minuets of Hob. II:15 are delightful, the Presto full of zing and zest. Articulation is impressive and rhythms are nicely sprung. The Adagio of Hob. II:23, also in F major, is particularly fine, the second minuet on the fast side but always well pointed and lucid.

At times I might have preferred a bit more warmth and bloom but the advantage of this dryish acoustic is that every tiny detail registers with startling clarity. In Hob II:14 for instance the clarinets bring a degree of astringency to the proceedings without ever sounding over bright or overbearing. In fact the instrumental blend here and throughout is exemplary.

As sprightly as much of this music is it's often the elegant minuets that bring out the best in these players. That said the more bravura finales – that of Hob. II:14 in particular – are full of high spirits. One could easily imagine these pieces being played to great effect in the castle grounds.

Haydn can make these scores sound surprisingly orchestral at times, as in the Allegro of the D major divertimento (Hob. II:D18). This movement is astonishingly weighty and sonorous, the horn calls surely an echo of the composer's Symphony No. 31 in D major 'Hornsignal', written at about the same time. And the witty instrumental 'dialogue' of the Scherzo is well done, too. The

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sudden crescendos of the Adagio come as something of a surprise, though, and would certainly silence idle chatter or rouse the inattentive listener.

The Allegro of the G major divertimento (Hob. deest) seems almost Mozartian in its general airiness and joie de vivre, the Andante notable for some surprisingly piquant harmonies. As always the ensemble work in the fast-moving Presto is crisp and clean.

The final piece on the disc, in D major, has an imperious Allegro but it's the minuet that gives the most pleasure. Here it's much perkier than usual, the horns particularly thrilling in their unison playing. And surprise and japery seem to be an intrinsic part of Haydn's musical make-up, the Presto ending unexpectedly after just half a minute.

This is a thoroughly enjoyable disc and a reminder, if it were needed, of Haydn's mastery of just about every musical genre of his time. The Berlin wind players are an exceptional group and while this isn't enough to guarantee success in these works it certainly pays off here. The CD comes in a handsome matt gatefold box but I seriously question the wisdom of storing the disc in a cardboard 'corner' and not a conventional spindle. I ended up touching the playing surface and nearly dropping the CD in my efforts to extract it. And, oh, those pasted-in liner-notes really are very cumbersome.

But I can't possibly end this review on a sour note. This is a most engaging collection, guaranteed to gladden the hearts of all who hear it. ---Dan Morgan, musicweb-international.com

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