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JOHANN MATTHIAS SPERGER



Double bass Concertos

Ján Krigovský | Collegium Wartberg 430



SUPER AUDIO CD

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JOHANN MATTHIAS SPERGER (1750-1812)

Double Bass Concerto No.2 in D Major (Pressburg 1778)

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| [1] Allegro moderato | 8:28 |
| [2] Cantabile | 7:31 |
| [3] Rondo. Tempo giusto | 5:38 |

Double Bass Concerto No.3 in B-flat Major* (Pressburg 1778)

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------|
| [4] Allegro moderato | 9:48 |
| [5] Adagio | 6:24 |
| [6] Allegro | 6:33 |

Double Bass Concerto No.4 in F Major* (Pressburg 1779)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|
| [7] Allegro moderato | 10:20 |
| [8] Adagio cantabile | 6:50 |
| [9] Rondo. Allegro moderato | 7:45 |

Total time 69:22

*World premiere recording

The Early Double Bass Concertos of J.M. Sperger

The first question to ask must be: how could it possibly come about that certain essential works by a composer which display no flaw or failure in musical conception or compositional execution stayed dormant in libraries for well over two hundred years and had to wait so long for publication and audience attention?

With the present recordings, initiated by the Slovakian double bass soloist Ján Krigovský, works are finally coming to light which are bound to cause a small sensation in the musical world! Three concertos for double bass and orchestra by Johann Matthias Sperger, who was not just a composer but also the most renowned double bassist of the 18th century, performed and recorded here by orchestra and soloist according to their original scores. The decision was taken here to select, from Sperger's vast legacy of compositions – which includes no less than eighteen double bass concertos (all fully preserved as regards both score and individual parts) – just those early works called No. 2, No. 3 and No. 4. These works are all products of the years of Sperger's first employment as a double bassist, between 1777 and 1783, in the court orchestra of the archbishop of Hungary, the duke Joseph Graf von Batthyány in Pressburg. They date specifically from the years 1778 and 1779.

The first-time presentation here of Concertos Nos. 3 and 4 (No. 2 was made known to music-lovers two years ago in the modern solo tuning by Roman Patkoló) allow us a glimpse into the compositional world of the universal double bassist Johann Matthias Sperger. Sperger's treatment of the solo double bass

in a way quite new in his day as well as the execution of the orchestral part recall the Cello Concertos of no less a figure than Joseph Haydn. Already just the tonal range demanded here, spanning four and a half octaves, shatters all previous conceptions and lets the double bass enter those *cantabile* spheres once peculiar to the cello or violin. Melody and virtuosity leave nothing to be desired and demand of the soloist true mastery of his instrument.

The harmony and interesting orchestral accompaniment found in the preludes and intermezzos of these pieces show a composer of full maturity, despite Sperger's relative youth at the time. Noteworthy here too is his symphonic approach to the composition of his orchestra: the wind instruments scored for Concerto No. 3 include not only the two oboes and two horns usual in classical pieces but also two trumpets and kettledrums (not found even in Haydn's Cello Concertos!).

Both fast and slow movements display a veritable cosmos of melodic inspirations, no less in the handling of the many double stops than in that of the arpeggio and flageolet techniques. It should be noted here that Sperger had already at this time established his own method of fingering for the playing of such difficult passages. The thumb-position specified here helped him to provide, through this system, a secure orientation.

Sperger's younger years were a period of overflowing musical inspiration finding expression in a veritable flood of compositions. The six years of his first professional employment in Pressburg yield no less than eighteen symphonies and seven double bass concertos, plus concertos for other

instruments. Of his ninety-eight chamber-music works in total, Pressburg saw the birth of around forty, involving various numbers of string and wind instruments from duos up to nonets, both with and without piano accompaniment. He achieved all this as a composer even though his main work was as a double bass player. Notable also is the fact that all his scores are so perfectly notated that one feels almost bound to use original manuscript copies when performing these pieces.

All three double bass concertos on this CD are three-movement concertos. In all of them the first and third movements are spirited, each with its respectively striking theme, and virtuosically constructed, the outer movements in all cases employing wind instruments: 2 oboes and 2 horns, and in Concerto No. 3 also kettledrums and trumpets. The great soloist's idea of enriching the orchestral colours of Concerto No. 4 with a dulcimer must be seen to be born out of the partly folkloric quality of this music. The various movements' cadenzas are all his own compositions, excepting the cadenza in the rondo of Concerto No. 4, which is the work of Daniel Rumler. Sperger has the slow second movements accompanied by strings alone, so as to allow the solo double bass room to develop its melodies. These movements emanate a sense of placid contemplation, forming a counterpoint to the forward-pressing vigour of the outer movements.

Especially masterful is Sperger's consummate treatment of the orchestral accompaniment. Reduced numbers of strings, and pauses imposed on the wind instruments, mean that acoustic pre-eminence is ceded always to the solo double bass. But he allows the full orchestra, wind instruments and all, to sound

out in all *intermezzi*, so that his treatment of the orchestra testifies, in the end, to an extremely intelligent approach.

Sperger shows genius in the way he exploits, for his own melodic invention, the so-called “Viennese Tuning”, with the open strings A - D - F-Sharp - A (originating from the tuning with a third and fourth for viola da gamba) prescribed at that time for double basses, always intent as he was on winning the best possible variant from the prescribed instrumental proportions and associated fingering limitations.

The soloist in these recordings succeeds in creating a brilliant interpretation of all these facets. He uses gut strings, as was common practice at the time of the works’ composition well over two hundred years ago, bringing out the warm sound of the instruments. Used in this recording were: for Concerto No. 2 an Anton Posch double bass (1736, Vienna); for Concerto No. 3 one by Johann Jacobus Ertl (1789, Pressburg) and for Concerto No. 4 one of an unnamed manufacturer (ca. 1810, Vienna).

The chamber orchestra Collegium Wartberg 430, led by the soloist Ján Krigovský, provides highly authentic accompaniment.

To do justice to history and for the pleasure of today’s audience the present recordings were made in the same auditorium as Johann Matthias Sperger first presented these concertos in: the “Hall of Mirrors” in the Primate’s Palace of Bratislava (formerly Pressburg).

Johann Matthias Sperger was born the 23rd of March 1750 in the Lower Austrian town of Feldsberg, today Valtice in the Czech Republic. Close to Vienna, it was the ancestral seat of the princely Liechtenstein family. Open to the arts the prince of the day recognized Sperger’s special talent. It was likely him who sent the 17-year-old to study in Vienna. There, he acquired a deep musical training from Johann Georg Albrechtsberger in music theory and from Friedrich Pischelberger as instrumentalist.

After employment (1777-1783) in Joseph Graf von Batthyány’s Pressburg court orchestra and then, up to 1786, in the orchestra of the Duke of Erdödy in Fidsch bei Eberau in the Burgenland, he spent three years as a freelance musician in Vienna.

He dedicated many works to influential personalities such as the cello-playing king Frederick William II of Prussia or the Russian Tsar.

He owed to the seven solo performances we know him to have given before the King in Berlin in 1789 contacts established with the court orchestra of the Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, a leading and respected member of which he stayed until his death on 13th of May 1812.

Klaus Trumpf

Translation: Alexander Reynolds/Muse Translations

Die frühen Kontrabasskonzerte von J.M.Sperger

Als erstes muss diese Frage gestellt werden: wie kann es sein, dass fundamentale Werke eines Komponisten, die weder in der musikalischen Idee noch in der kompositorischen Ausführung irgendetwas vermissen lassen, weit über 200 Jahre in der Bibliothek schlummerten und überhaupt auf Wahrnehmung und Veröffentlichung warten mussten?

Mit diesen vorliegenden Aufnahmen, initiiert vom slowakischen Kontrabass-Solisten *Ján Krigovský*, kommen Werke ans Licht, die eine kleine musikalische Sensation heraufbeschwören! Drei Konzerte für Kontrabass und Orchester vom Komponisten und gleichzeitig bedeutendsten Kontrabassisten des 18. Jahrhunderts *Johann Matthias Sperger* - hier in der originalen Urfassungsversion von Solist und Orchester eingespielt. Aus dem umfangreichen kompositorischen Nachlass *Spergers*, der alleine 18 Kontrabasskonzerte aufweist (vollständig in Partitur und Stimmenmaterial erhalten), entschied man sich für die frühen Werke Nr.2, Nr.3 und Nr.4. Entstanden alle während der Zeit während seiner ersten Anstellung als Kontrabassist zwischen 1777 und 1783 in der Kapelle des Erzbischofs von Ungarn *Jóseph Graf von Batthyány* in Preßburg in den Jahren 1778 und 1779.

Diese Erstveröffentlichungen hier der Konzerte Nr.3 und Nr.4 (Nr.2 wurde zwei Jahre zuvor in der modernen Solostimmung von *Roman Patkoló* bekannt gemacht) eröffnen uns einen Einblick in die Kompositionswelt des universalen Kontrabassisten *Johann Matthias Sperger*. Eine bis dahin nie vorgefundene Behandlung des Solokontrabasses und die Ausführung des Orchesterparts

erinnern an die Violoncellokonzerte keines Geringeren als *Joseph Haydn*. Allein der geforderte Tonumfang über vier und eine halbe Oktave sprengt die bisherige Vorstellung und lässt den Kontrabass in die sangbare Lage des Cellos, teilweise der Violine vordringen. Melodik und Virtuosität lassen keine Wünsche offen und verlangen vom Solisten wahre Meisterschaft.

Harmonik und interessante Orchesterbegleitung lassen in den Vor- und Zwischenspielen bereits in jungen Jahren den schon reifen Komponisten erkennen. Bemerkenswert auch schon hier seine sinfonische Behandlung der Orchesterbesetzung: Konzert Nr. 3 weist bei den Bläsern nicht nur die üblichen klassischen zwei Oboen und zwei Hörner auf, sondern zusätzlich zwei Trompeten und Pauken (nicht einmal bei den Violoncellokonzerten von Haydn vorhanden!).

Ein wahrer Kosmos an Melodieeffekten, ebenso in der Behandlung der zahlreichen Doppelgriffe, des Arpeggiospiels, so wie der Flageolettechnik breitet sich in den schnellen wie langsamen Sätzen aus.

Es sei hier vermerkt, dass schon zu dieser Zeit *Sperger* eine eigene Methode seines Fingersatzes für die schwierigen Passagen etablierte, die ihm in der Daumenlage halfen, mit diesem System eine Sicherheit der Orientierung zu geben.

In diesen jungen Jahren sprüht *Spergers* Einfallsreichtum und kommt geradezu in einer Flut von Kompositionen zum Ausdruck. In diesen 6 Jahren der Erstanstellung in Preßburg entstehen nicht weniger als 18 Sinfonien,

7 Konzerte für den Kontrabass, einige andere Instrumentalkonzerte.
Von seinen insgesamt 98 Kammermusikwerken erblicken hier in Preßburg etwa 40 Werke verschiedenster Streicher- und Bläser-Besetzungen vom Duo bis zum Nonett mit und ohne Klavier das Licht der Welt.

Dies alles als Komponist – obwohl er ja in erster Funktion als Kontrabassist tätig ist. Nebenbei erwähnt sei auch die Tatsache, dass alle seine Manuskripte mit vorbildlichem Notenbild noch heute das Abspielen aus dem Autograph geradezu provoziert.

Alle 3 Kontrabasskonzerte dieser CD sind dreisätzig. Temperamentvoll mit jeweils markanten Themen, virtuos in den Anlagen stellen sich die ersten und dritten Sätze vor – alle drei in den Ecksätzen im Orchester mit Bläsern besetzt – 2 Oboen, 2 Hörner - und im Konzert Nr. 3 zusätzlich mit Pauken und Trompeten. Die Idee des Solisten im 4. Konzert die Orchesterfarbe mit einem Hackbrett zu bereichern, rührt aus zum Teil folkloristischen Motiven dieser Musik her. Die Kadenz der verschiedenen Sätze stammen alle aus der Feder des Solisten bis auf die Kadenz des Rondos aus dem Konzert Nr. 4 – diese stammt von Daniel Rumler.

Die langsamen zweiten Sätze lässt *Sperger* immer nur mit Streichern begleiten, um dem Solokontrabass Platz zur melodischen Entfaltung zu bieten. Diese Sätze strömen eine Ruhe der Besinnlichkeit aus und stellen einen Gegenpol zu den vorwärtsdrängenden Ecksätzen.

Meisterhaft ist seine vollkommen beherrschte Behandlung der orchestralen Begleitung. Reduzierte Streicher-Besetzungen und teilweise pausierende Bläser lassen dem Solokontrabass immer den klanglichen Vorrang. Den vollen Orchestereinsatz, einschließlich der Bläser, lässt *Sperger* bei allen Zwischenspielen zur Geltung kommen. Seine Orchesterbehandlung beweist eine äußerst intelligente Herangehensweise.

Die vorgegebene sogenannte „Wiener Stimmung“ mit den leeren Saiten ,A-D-Fis-A (herrührend von der Gamben-Terz-Quart-Stimmung) nutzt *Sperger* geradezu genial

in seiner Melodiefindung aus: immer bedacht der großen Mensur und damit verbundenen Weitriffigkeit spieltechnisch die beste Variante abzutrotzen.

Dem Solisten dieser Aufnahmen gelingt es, in allen Facetten eine glänzende Interpretation zu kreieren: er benutzt, wie zur Entstehungszeit vor reichlich 200 Jahren, Darmsaiten - und zeigt damit den warmen Klang der Instrumente.

Diese waren für diese Aufnahme Konzert Nr.2: ein Kontrabass von *Anton Posch* 1736 Wien; für Konzert Nr.3 *Johann Jacobus Ertl* ca. 1789 Pressburg und für Konzert Nr.4 *Anonymus* ca. 1810 Wien.

Sehr authentisch begleitet vom Kammerorchester *Collegium Wartberg 430* unter der Leitung des Solisten *Ján Krigovský*.

Der Historie gerecht zu werden und zur Freude für den Hörer von heute, entstanden diese Aufnahmen in dem gleichen Saal, in dem *Johann Matthias Sperger* zu seiner Zeit diese Konzerte uraufführte: im Spiegelsaal des Primatialpalastes im heutigen Bratislava, dem damaligen Preßburg.

Johann Matthias Sperger wurde am 23.3.1750 im damaligen niederösterreichischen Feldsberg, dem heutigen tschechischen Valtice, geboren. Nicht weit von Wien entfernt, war es der Ort, in dem das Fürstengeschlecht der Liechtensteiner seinen Stammsitz hatte. Aufgeschlossen allen Künsten gegenüber, erkannte der damalige Fürst das besondere Talent *Spergers* und vermutlich war er es, der ihn 17-jährig zur Ausbildung nach Wien schickte. Seine profunde Ausbildung verdankt er seinen Lehrern *Johann Georg Albrechtsberger* in Theorie und *Friedrich Pischelberger* als Instrumentalist.

Nach Anstellungen in der Preßburger Hofkapelle des Erzbischofs *Joseph Graf von Batthyany* 1777-1783 und danach bis 1786 in der Kapelle des *Grafen von Erdödy* in Fidsch bei Eberau im Burgenland, verbrachte er 3 Jahre als freischaffender Musiker in Wien.

Er dedizierte zahlreiche Werke an einflussreiche Persönlichkeiten wie z.B. dem cellospielenden *König Friedrich Wilhelm II.* in Preußen oder dem *Zaren von Russland.*

Seine nachweislichen sieben Soloauftritte vor dem Koenig verdankt er den Kontakten zur Hofkapelle des Mecklenburg-Schweriner Herzogs, wo er bis zu seinem Tode am 13.Mai 1812 ein hochangesehenes und führendes Mitglied war.

Klaus Trumpf

Jan Krigovsky is a double-bass player, multi-instrumentalist, musical events organiser, promoter, art director, manager, producer, publisher, dramaturge and poet. He is well known and sought after interpreter of various musical styles. As a soloist Krigovsky expresses himself with noble, temperamental and technically perfect performance. As a soloist and chamber double bass, G-violone and Wiener Violine player Krigovsky collaborates with numerous ensembles specialising in historically – developed/learned interpretation of old music. He also performs in the ensembles for contemporary music like Catalá Ensemble Trio, Alea and Collegium Wartberg. As a concert master of double bass group he performed with several orchestras such as the London Symphony Orchestra, Moderntimes 1800 and Wiener Akademie. As a soloist, he also worked with orchestras under the baton of Yuri Bashmeta, Leoš Svárovský, Martin Haselböck, Jordi Savall and Ewald Danel.

Jan presented/introduced himself as a soloist, but also as a member of chamber ensembles performing at some of the leading festivals like Bratislava Music Festival, Melos-Étos, Prague Spring International Music Festival, Wiener Festspele, Salzburger Festspiele, Festspielwochen Munchen, Dresdener gen Festspiele, Jehudi Menuhin Festival Gstaad, Boston Early Music Festival, Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival and others.

He has recorded over 250 CD_DVD titles for companies such as Decca, SDBS production, Supraphon, CPO, WDR, NDR, ZDF, Winter&Winter, ORF, Challenge records, Institut für Tyroler, Musikforschung Innsbruck, Pan Classics, Arcana Records, Symfonia as well as for radio and television. Among his artistic partners



were for example Cecilia Bartoli, Sol Gabetta, Riccardo Minasi, Steven Isserlis, Maurice Steger, Nuria Rial, Avi Avital, Gunar Letzbor, Elizabeth Wallfisch, Jürger Essl, Helene Schmidt, Dalibor Karvay, Stano Palúch, Daniel Buranovský, Martin Babjak.

Jan worked as a teacher at the Conservatory in Žilina, the Conservatory of Dezidor Kardos in Topoľčany, the Church Conservatory in Bratislava, the Masaryk University in Brno and the Janacek Academy in Brno. Since 2002 he has been working at the Academy of Arts in Banská Bystrica. He has built wide base/foundation of amazing/outstanding double bass players in Slovakia, including Roman Patkoló, Vlado Žatko, Ján Prievozník, Filip Jaro, Romana Uhlíková and others. Krigovsky regularly teaches master classes in Russia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Switzerland, Brazil, Argentina, USA, Canada and Mexico.

In 2010, he founded together with his students the Slovak Double Bass Club within which were organised master courses called BassFest+ Banská Bystrica, International Double Bass Competition of Carl Ditters Von Dittersdorf and hundreds of concerts. In 2013, on his initiative, the double bass quartet named Bass Band was created. In 2012 he founded Musica Perennis Iuventutis, music festival held in Senec and Musica Perennis Sancti Benedicti in Hronský Beňadik. Festivals are dedicated to helping and supporting children in material need and children with disabilities in Slovakia and abroad. At his instigation, dozens of musical works were created for solo double bass and chamber ensembles. In 2012 he established his own ensemble known as Collegium Wartberg.

Collegium Wartberg is a NGO civic association of professional solo players, musicians, singers, dancers and members of Slovak and foreign orchestras and other musical bodies. It also includes enthusiasts and propagators interested in jazz, folk and other musical genres. The founder of Collegium Wartberg, Jan Krigovský, is internationally recognized artist and double-bass player.

The idea of founding Collegium Wartberg originated long time ago, but it actually came into existence on May 5th, 2012 with the concert "Music and dancing in the style of Luis XIV. In Versailles" with barocco instruments, which was also accompanied by dancing workshop. This concert was held within international whole-year benefit music festival Musica Perennis Iuventutis in Senec, Musica Perennis Sancti Benedicti, Festival Móric Beňovský a Grassalkovich Musik Festival, BassFest+, which was organized, too, by Collegium Wartberg. Collegium Wartberg collaborates with many internationally recognized Slovak and foreign artists and bodies, such as: Ars Antiqua Austria, Neukirchen Kammerorchester, Bella Musique Orchestra New York, Ilja Korol, Dalibor Karvay, Jeremy Joseph, Marian Gašpar, Fritz Kirchner, Gunar Letzbor. Collegium Wartberg can offer art and music of various styles ranging from Barocco and classicist music played on original instruments to romantic and contemporary modern music, jazz, folk and ethnic music in the highest quality.

Among very successful projects counts "Winterreise" (Ján Krigovský, Jeremy Joseph) free jazz, melodrama for organum, harpsichord, piano, 8-track violon, double-bass and reciters, which was dedicated to 185th anniversary of death of Franz Schubert and was recorded on DVD by famous director of photography Ján Ďuriš and director Jozef Slovák (2013).

Approximately 200 musicians have already collaborated with Collegium Wartberg.

The another successful projects: The Trout (Krigovský, Karvay, Bouřová, Cáhová, Podhoranský), Vivaldi bluegrass super star (sólisti Karvay, Palúch, Vavro, Krigovský).

1st violin

Daniel Rumler - concertmaster
Júlia Roshko (member of the SYO)
Terézia Popadáková (member of the SYO)

2nd violin

Eva Telepčáková
Jolanta Sosnowská
Zsofi Bréda

Viola

Martin Ruman
Jonathan Ponet

Cello

Peter Királ

Double Bass

Metod Podolský

Harpichord

Marek Čermák

Oboe

Stefano Vazzani
Marcello Rizzello

Horn

Juraj Ofúkaný
Erwin Hoschwengerer

Trumpets

Petr Jurášek
Marian Magiera

Tympan

Vladimír Třebický

Hackbrett

Marcel Comendant

This High Definition Surround Recording was Produced, Engineered and Edited by Bert van der Wolf of NorthStar Recording Services, using the 'High Quality Musical Surround Mastering' principle. The basis of this recording principle is a realistic and holographic 3 dimensional representation of the musical instruments, voices and recording venue, according to traditional concert practice. For most older music this means a frontal representation of the musical performance, but such that width and depth of the ensemble and acoustic characteristics of the hall do resemble 'real life' as much as possible. Some older compositions, and many contemporary works do specifically ask for placement of musical instruments and voices over the full 360 degrees sound scape, and in these cases the recording is as realistic as possible, within the limits of the 5.1 Surround Sound standard. This requires a very innovative use of all 6 loudspeakers and the use of completely matched, full frequency range loudspeakers for all 5 discrete channels. A complementary sub-woofer, for the ultra low frequencies under 40Hz, is highly recommended to maximally benefit from the sound quality of this recording.

This recording was produced with the use of Sonodore microphones, Avalon Acoustic & Musikelectronic Geithain monitoring, Siltech Mono-Crystal cabling and dCS - & Merging Technologies converters.



NORTHSTAR
RECORDING
by **BERT VAN DER WOLF**



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BRATISLAVSKÝ KRAJ

SENEC



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