

when the occasion demanded. Indeed, a likely explanation for the origin of these so-called "Quartet Divertimentos" is to be found in the facts of Mozart's life at the time of composition, early in 1772. Mozart was then just 16 years of age, and already held the post of Court Concertmaster to Hieronymus Colredo, Prince Archbishop of Salzburg. This period fell between Mozart's second and third visits to Italy, where he may well have found the impulse to compose works in the style of the three-movement Sinfonias and Concerti Grossi which had been popular since the times of Corelli. This, however, is still a matter of considerable conjecture, and besides, had these been pieces to be played exclusively by solo instrumentalists, Mozart surely would have considered them as true string quartets.

Mozart's Divertimento (125a) seems indeed to closely mirror the style of the Italian concertos for strings, which he must certainly have encountered during his several visits to Italy. The work consists of a lively opening Allegro, in simple sonata form; a charming central Andante; and a brilliant concluding Presto. It is interesting to compare this work with its close companion in B flat, K. 137, which follows a slightly different general scheme, in which the main Allegro is placed second, and follows (unusually) a first movement headed "Andante." The brilliant inventiveness and virtuosity of the D major Divertimento is, to echo the words of Alfred Einstein (writing about another closely related work, Mozart's perennial Eine kleine nachtmusik, the Serenade in G, K. 525) "a masterpiece of masterpieces, on the smallest possible scale."

MOZART

DIVERTIMENTO No.17 IN D MAJOR, K.334

DIVERTIMENTO No.1 IN D MAJOR, K.136

MEMBERS OF THE

VIENNA OCTET



Rudolph Johann Joseph Rainer
Archduke of Austria
8 January 1788 – 24 July 1831

Scored for a very small group of players, Divertimento No. 17 for 2 horns & strings in D major, K. 334 was probably written to commemorate the graduation of a close friend of Mozart's, Sigmund Robinig, from his law studies at the University of Salzburg in 1780. It also seems that Sigmund was a fairly decent violinist -- he is thus described in a surviving letter from Leopold Mozart -- and the first violin part is somewhat ambitious and may have been crafted with him in mind. This was a particularly turbulent period in Mozart's life; his mother had died during his recent trip to Paris, and he had both found and lost his first love, the fickle soprano Aloysia Weber. He also battled more or less constantly with his father during this time and his child-like innocence had given way to a sort of randy adolescence filled with ribald humor and dissolute partying. Still in the employ of Archbishop Hieronymous but becoming increasingly dissatisfied there, Mozart nonetheless continued to compose fine works and this piece testifies to that fact. The work is also longer -- at forty-five minutes -- and contains somewhat more structure and sophistication than a more typical divertimento, which was usually written as background or dinner music. In six movements, the work is scored for two violins, a viola, bass, and the two horns. The first movement allegro is almost quartet-like, although both horns are subtly and expertly integrated and the bass provides a firmer footing than would otherwise be present in so small an ensemble. The second movement, an extended theme and variations, is a stately andante. In lesser hands, the form is frequently an exercise in tedium; in Mozart's, it becomes a stately procession of finely turned-out divergences on a poignant subject. Particularly effective is a horn duet at about the midway point. There follows a couple of variants later an aggressive descant in the first violin to a gentle, thumping undercurrent. A

surprisingly timid minuet follows so seamlessly it seems to be another variation, and the six-minute adagio is almost a gentle song without words but at several points becomes too harmonically challenging for voice. A more extended minuet follows and it is rather more upbeat and buoyant than the earlier one, although it seems to pause, as if briefly in contemplation, part way through. The nine and one half minute rondo allegro which concludes the work is nearly symphonic in scope and the listener may forget that the piece is actually of chamber proportions, scored for only six players. Once again, the first violin is featured in several extended passages with the horns and bass used most effectively to sustain the full bodied sound. The piece is among the best of Mozart's works in the divertimento genre and could serve as a textbook in how to make such slight resources take on such grand proportions.

Mozart's Divertimento in D major, K. 136 (K.125a) is the first of a group of works collectively known as the "Salzburg" symphonies. These works stand apart from Mozart's remaining symphonies, in that they are set for strings alone, rather than for the otherwise customary mixed instrumentation including winds. A further point which separates these compositions from Mozart's others in the symphonic genre, is that they are comprised of just three, rather than four individual movements, each lacking the usual Minuet. And lastly, the compact three-movement form further distinguishes the "Salzburg" symphonies from Mozart's true Divertimentos and Serenades, which were multi-movement creations on a large scale, regularly spanning six movements and sometimes even more.

In keeping with Classical conventions, works such as these for string orchestra could also be played by the four voices of the string quartet

Mozart Divertimenti K.334 K.136

Members Of The Vienna Octet

Divertimento In D Major, No. 17 K.334 (42:02)

1. Allegro 7:01
2. Tema Con Variazioni - Andante 8:41
3. Menuetto 4:30
4. Adagio 6:02
5. Menuetto 7:00
6. Rondo Allegro 8:36

Divertimento In D Major, No. 1 K.136 (10:29)

7. Allegro 3:55
8. Andante 3:59
9. Presto 2:35

Producer: Erik Smith Engineer: James Brown

Recorded by Decca at 6-7 Apr 1961 Sofiensaal, Vienna



For more info e-mail us:
admin@highdeftapetransfers.com
or visit our website:
www.highdeftapetransfers.com