

“they presented the music in such a way that the audience could share the journey with them”

Stephen Smoliar for *The Rehearsal Studio*, January 2017

THE NEW ESTERHÁZY QUARTET

Lisa Weiss, violin

Kati Kyme, violin

Anthony Martin, viola

William Skeen, violoncello

present:

At the Opera III

François-André Danican Philidor (1726–1795):

highlights from *Les Femmes Vengées*
arranged for string quartet by
William Skeen

Wolfgang Mozart (1756–1791):

highlights from *Così fan tutte*
arranged for string quartet
in the late 18th century

Friday, February 17, 2017, at 8pm, Hillside Club,
2286 Cedar Street (at Arch), Berkeley, 94709

tickets for this Friday concert are \$25, and are sold only at the door

Saturday, February 18, 2017, at 4pm, St. Mark’s Lutheran Church,
1111 O’Farrell (at Franklin), San Francisco, 94109

Sunday, February 19, 2017, at 4pm, All Saints’ Episcopal Church,
555 Waverley Street (at Hamilton), Palo Alto, 94301

Tickets for Saturday & Sunday are \$30 (discounts for seniors and students)
(415) 520-0611 // www.newesterhazy.org

San Francisco, January 25, 2017: You have just seen a magnificent opera on the big stage, and can’t wait to hear that one aria again, or share it with your friend who couldn’t go. In this day and age, YouTube and Spotify are never far away, or you could play an MP3 or CD, and you’re set. But in the 18th century, the only way to re-live the music at home was by playing it on the piano (four-hands) or with a string quartet of friends and family.

The New Esterházy Quartet, voted “Best Chamber Music Performers” by San Francisco Classical Voice in 2015, started showing Bay Area audiences this popular 18th

century home entertainment two years ago, with highlights from Mozart's operas *The Marriage of Figaro* and *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. Last season they presented two versions of *Don Giovanni*, one by Mozart and one by Gazzaniga. This year, the quartet presents overtures and arias from Mozart's *Così fan tutte* and Philidor's *Les Femmes Vengées* (Avenged Women). The *Così fan tutte* arrangements are from the 18th century, the arrangements of the Philidor opera are by the quartet's cellist William Skeen.

The pairing of these two operas is inspired by a 2014 production of Opera Lafayette of Washington, D.C., whose founder and artistic director Ryan Brown also wrote the program notes (please scroll down) for this program by the New Esterházy Quartet.

The members of the New Esterházy Quartet, –Lisa Weiss and Kati Kyme, violin; Anthony Martin, viola; William Skeen, cello—often occupy the first chairs of Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and other period music ensembles. With Haydn's 68 quartets as their core repertoire, the New Esterházy Quartet is increasingly recognized as one of the world's top period-instrument string quartets. The quartet has been praised for their "sumptuous sound with beautifully controlled dynamics" and recently received accolades in *Early Music America Magazine* for their *Haydn in America* CD.

Program notes by Ryan Brown, founder and artistic director of Opera Lafayette (Washington, D.C.):

Watching from the East Coast, and listening whenever possible, I've greatly enjoyed the New Esterházy Quartet's exploration of late 18th century quartets. It often complements Opera Lafayette's own inquiries. "Who inspired Mozart and Beethoven?" is a question that has fascinated many of us, and both the string quartet and opera repertory give clues to some of the knowable answers. Opera Lafayette has explored, in particular, many of the overlooked French precedents for these monumental composers' works. In the process, of course, we've found many works that inspire us whether or not they are considered in the light of Mozart and Beethoven. Nonetheless, it remains tempting to present these works of the *petits maîtres* in the context of *les grands*. OL did so in 2014 when it paired Philidor & Sedaine's *Les Femmes Vengées* with Mozart & Da Ponte's *Così fan tutte*. The NEQ does so again for these performances, but using the string quartet to illuminate opera's vocal world.

The pairing was inspired by the plot of *Les Femmes Vengées*; as in *Così*, two men must witness and endure their female loves being wooed by others, coming to a more mature understanding of their relations in the process. Since *Les Femmes Vengées* was performed several times in Paris while Mozart was visiting there, it is entirely possible that Mozart saw and heard it and that it may have influenced *Così*, though this has not been definitively established. One of the most interesting stage constructs which no doubt had an influence on the structure of the music was Sedaine's specification for the set itself—two private rooms on either side of a central dining room, set up in such a way that the audience can see and hear the characters in all the rooms, but the characters in the central room do not know who is listening in on them from the side. This makes for some very interesting ensembles with four or six characters divided into groups of two.

Philidor, applying his boyhood musical training in counterpoint at the *Chapelle Royale* to the new popular genre of *opéra-comique*, responded brilliantly and thus may have offered Mozart a precedent for his own masterful operatic ensembles.

That said, arias are the bread and butter of opera, and William Skeen of the NEQ has transcribed the Overture and three beautiful and varied numbers from *Les Femmes Vengées* to precede *Così*. In the first, *Un petit coup d'oeil* ("a little glance"), the Despina-like character, Madame Riss, looks in the mirror to make sure she is irresistibly attractive as she prepares to receive Monsieur Le Président and Monsieur Lek, two married men she knows to be interested in an evening's dalliance while her husband is away. In the second, *Quand Paris sur le Mont Ida* ("when Paris on Mount Ida"), Monsieur Riss flatters and woos Madame La Présidente and Madame Lek in an agreed upon ploy to enrage their guilty husbands hiding in the next room, comparing himself to Paris having to choose between three goddesses, but more favorably, as he is loved by all three. In the third aria, *De la coquette volage* ("of the flighty coquette"), the apparent moral hold-out, or Fiordiligi-like character, Madame La Présidente, suggests she is not as easily seduced as her companion, Madame Lek (only, of course, to give in during the next scene, making sure to teach her own smug husband a lesson). Whether writing a coy, lyric, or virtuoso melody, Philidor proves himself a *maître, petit ou grand*, who provides ingenious musical and theatrical pleasure.

Press contact: Wieneke Gorter(650) 387-1708 (press contact only) // wieneke.gorter at gmail.com

Hi-res photos available at: <http://newesterhazy.org/press.htm>

=END=