

“just the right measure of spiritedness...skillful control of tempo and dynamics”

Stephen Smoliar, December 2013

THE NEW ESTERHÁZY QUARTET

Lisa Weiss, violin

Kati Kyme, violin

Anthony Martin, viola

William Skeen, violoncello

present:

A Flight of Fugues

A tasting of different varieties of fugue writing by Froberger, Purcell, Bach, Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven.

Friday, January 2, 2015, at 8pm, Hillside Club, 2286 Cedar Street (at Spruce), Berkeley, 94709 *tickets for this Friday concert are \$20, and sold only at the door*

Saturday, January 3, 2015, at 4pm, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 1111 O'Farrell Street (at Franklin), San Francisco, 94109

Sunday, January 4, 2015, at 4pm, All Saints' Episcopal Church, 555 Waverley Street (at Hamilton), Palo Alto, 94301

Tickets for Saturday & Sunday are \$25 (discounts for seniors and students)

(415) 520-0611

www.newesterhazy.org

San Francisco, December 6, 2014—**The New Esterházy Quartet toast the New Year with a *Flight of Fugues*: a tasting of different varieties of this musical form.** On the program: Purcell's *Fantasia XI*, Mozart's arrangements of unrivaled Bach fugues, Mozart's own striking *Adagio & Fugue*, K. 546, Haydn's wonderful *Divertimento in C*, Op. 20, No. 2, and Beethoven's spectacular *Grosse Fuge* Op. 133. (For a detailed listing of the program, please turn to the next page.)

In musical terms, the word fugue means, broadly, a texture in which each voice in turn offers the same subject, the entries “chasing” or “flying from” one another through the score. It is at once one of the simplest forms to describe and one of the most intricate to construct, or—for that matter—to hear. **With their tasting flight of fugues, the New Esterházy Quartet offers listeners a sense of what happens when fugue meets string quartet. Many and wondrous are the vintages!**

The members of the New Esterházy Quartet—violinists Lisa Weiss and Kati Kyme, violist Anthony Martin, and cellist William Skeen—often occupy the first chairs of Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and American Bach Soloists. 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:

Henry Purcell (1659–1695)	<i>Fantazia XI</i> (1680)
Johann Jacob Froberger (1616–1667)	<i>Phantasia supra Ut, re, me, fa, sol, la</i> (1650) arranged by Mozart (c. 1787)
Johann Sebastian Bach (1680–1750)	<i>Fugue in C minor</i> , from the <i>Well Tempered Clavier</i> , Book 2 (1742) arranged by Mozart, K. 405 (c. 1787)
Wolfgang Mozart (1756–1791)	<i>Adagio & Fugue</i> , K. 546 (1788)
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)	<i>Cavatina & Grosse Fuge</i> , Opp. 130 & 133 (1826)
<i>intermission</i>	
Gregor Joseph Werner (1693–1766)	<i>Grave & Allegro</i> from <i>The Prodigal Son</i> (1747) arranged by Haydn (1804)
Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)	<i>Divertimento in C</i> , Op. 20, No. 2 (1772) <i>Moderato</i> <i>Capriccio: Adagio</i> <i>Menuet: Allegretto</i> <i>Fuga a 4tro soggetti: Allegro, sempre sotto voce</i>

More information about the program:

Before Bach and his contemporaries, much music relied on a looser variety of fugal texture called “imitation,” with a set of entries on one subject, another on another subject, and so on—overlapping—all through the work. The seventeenth century threw this method of making a piece into tumult, and what emerged on the other side was the fugue as Bach and his successors knew it. **Henry Purcell's *Fantazia***, which opens this program, is about the last vestige of the older style.

Mozart transcribed existing compositions for a group of musicians around Baron Gottfried van Swieten. The music left to us through the Van Swieten circle is very nearly the only link we have to Bach between his death in 1750 and the revival of his music by Mendelssohn more than 80 years later. Within Mozart’s **arrangements of Bach’s music**

for string quartet, K. 405, there are only five fugues from the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, but as you would expect, Mozart picked the plums. As a compact demonstration of “how to fugue,” it has few rivals. Also among these arrangements is Mozart’s transcription of **Johann Jakob Froberger’s *Fantasia ut-re-mi-fa-sol-la***.

Mozart’s own *Adagio and Fugue in C Minor, K. 546*, is a striking work, with a grand, tragic *Adagio* setting the stage admirably, followed by the gnarled, dense, and intensely chromatic fugue. It strongly features the *al rovescio* composition technique, which is also present in Bach’s fugues: flipping the subject over so that what was up is now down, and vice versa. Here in Mozart’s *Adagio and Fugue* the *al rovescio* sounds so exactly like the original that by the time you’re halfway through the piece, it is difficult to recall which came first.

Beethoven’s *Grosse Fuge* is a phenomenal work in that it presents extreme physicality for the players. More than a few bowhairs and even strings tend to get broken over the course of a performance. The textures are many-varied and often very complex. Two players may be duking it out on the main theme in alternation, while the other two pursue the jagged countersubject. In a couple of places the music erupts into streams of triplets; in another, suddenly everything dissolves into a buzzing swarm of trills. And then the music turns a corner and all is somberly placid—as in the slow middle section; or abruptly light and carefree—as in much of the large section following it.

In the long tradition of adagios preceding fugues, the NEQ have opted to precede the *Grosse Fuge* with the *Cavatina*, the previous movement of the quartet (Op. 130) for which the *Grosse Fuge* was the original finale. It makes sense of the unison G that starts the fugue and the *Cavatina* is a lovely thing in its own right. It is straightforwardly, if gloriously, sweet at the outset, but then comes a middle section where all the air seems to be sucked out of the room. When the opening music returns, it seems subtly transformed.

Gregor Josef Werner’s chief claim to fame in music history is in being Franz Josef Haydn's predecessor as music director at Esterháza. Though their relations were sometimes strained during the transition, Haydn did Werner the favor, late in his own life, of extracting six adagios and fugues from Werner's choral works and arranging them for string quartet.

Haydn’s Op. 20, No. 2 opens with wonder, the cello’s melody floating serenely above the second violin and viola. (Splendid cello parts are a special feature of the entire Opus 20.) Next comes a *Capriccio*, half-recitative, half-aria, but with the former constantly breaking into the latter; then the gossamer minuet, following without a break. And finally a fugue—with four subjects. Like its siblings in Op. 20, the movement is *sotto voce* until the end, and replete with fugal tricks. Ultimately, the fleeing voices coalesce into unison. The “flight” is at an end.

Press contact: Wieneke Gorter
(650) 387-1708 (press contact only) //wienekgorter@gmail.com
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