

EDITORIAL NOTES

The second phase of the **Dotzauer Project**, of which this edition represents the cornerstone, covers five chamber music works, starting with the *Two Quartets* for two violins, viola, and violoncello obbligato, Op. 12. These are the first two of the at least twenty-one quartets Justus Johann Friedrich **Dotzauer** (1783–1860) wrote for this instrumentation (at least because a few opus numbers in Dotzauer’s production are still unmatched). He composed them aged 27, two years after marrying Joh. Christiana **Kreße** (1784–1861) and one year before moving permanently from Leipzig to Dresden.

This couplet of works was published by *Plattner*, in the Netherlands, around the year 1810—though a revision from November 1812 is documented—, bearing plate number 40. The publishing house earned its name from its founder, Ludwig **Plattner** (1767–1842), who took over a music store in Rotterdam previously owned by a certain Nicholas **Barth**, in 1805. It survived until its founder died, publishing a little over one thousand titles.

The source used for this edition contains the parts of the four instruments and a cover with the following text in French:

Deux | QUATUORS | pour | deux Violons, Viola et Violoncelle | obligé | composés et dédiés | à Bernhard Romberg | Par | J. J. F. DOTZAUER. | Op. 12

It says: “Two Quartets for two Violins, Viola, and Violoncello obbligato, composed and dedicated to Bernhard Romberg by J. J. F. Dotzauer. Op. 12”.

Let’s start from the word “obbligato”: in instrumental music, this represents a part of prominent importance in the overall texture, and it is often interchanged with the word “concertante”. Then we have the dedication. Dotzauer gifted these two quartets to his teacher, Bernhard Romberg, in a most curious choice. He could have written a Cello Concerto, or a set of virtuosic variations, or a set of Caprices for solo cello. Instead, he decided to compose two somber and intimate chamber music pieces. These two details together are foretelling of what one will find upon opening the score: a dominant cello part throughout the almost seventy pages of the two quartets. Until then, the cello part of string quartets was usually little more than an accompanying bass—though many exceptions exist in the masters’ works (Haydn,

Mozart, and Beethoven). In these two works, the cello is the clear protagonist, but Dotzauer was careful to balance them well enough not to relegate the other three instruments to a mere accompaniment role.

The Two Quartets

The form of these two quartets follows the symphonic tradition of the Late Classical / Early Romantic period, with two fast movements enclosing a slow movement and a *Minuet-Trio*. The chosen keys are surprising and somewhat unusual for pieces where the cello part is supposed to be relevant: the first quartet is set in E-flat major (the same key of Beethoven’s Third Symphony “Eroica”, Op. 55), while the second is in G minor. Thanks to modern software, it has been possible to listen to how these could have sounded and, considering they are Dotzauer’s first attempt at the string quartet’s genre (a notably tricky and uncomfortable field for composers, due to its most delicate balance), they are impressive.

These two works are not small pieces, both of them clocking in at around 25 minutes of music.

Quartet No. 1 in E-flat major

The first quartet starts with a 10-minute-long *Allegro* movement in classical sonata form. Both themes are presented by the cello, and several contrapuntal phrases already hint at what will be Dotzauer’s compositional focus throughout his production. This passionate start is followed by a most-poignant *Larghetto* in A-flat major, written in 3/8 time, and in rounded binary form. Its middle part shifts to D-flat major in a short rhythmical dance before circling back to the previous idea, which will be elaborated further before dying away. A *Menuetto* and *Trio* follow, the first playfully jumping on arpeggio notes, and the second accompanying a lyrical cello solo line, before coming back to the *Menuetto* once more. The closing *Rondo. Allegro* has the first violin propose a simple, almost childish melody, dutifully accompanied by the other instruments. In the middle of the movement, the secondary theme from the first movement comes back on the cello, making the whole piece draw a circle where the return of material from 20 minutes earlier sounds completely natural. More development will bring this movement very far from where it started

off, and only a fermata will force the players to break the spell and close this 7-minutes-long *Rondo* as it started.

Quartet No. 2 in G minor

This piece sounds much more balanced and involved than the first quartet, possibly aided by the minor key, almost as if Dotzauer used that one to warm up. The first movement (*Allegro*) opens—no surprise—with a dramatic, dark theme on the cello, immediately dispelled by the 1st violin's bright and positive line. The secondary theme is simply the sweetest, most-naively melancholic line one could imagine after such a start. A cinematic coda introduces triplets to the mix, and we can almost hear the soft timpani rumble of the orchestral soul of this piece. The development furiously mixes the three thematic elements, in a restless run that keeps the listener gasping for air. The musical fuel completely expended, there is little more energy than what's needed for the recapitulation before the movement comes to a close, after just 7 minutes. The second movement, *Poco Adagio*, is set in the key of E-flat major for its outer sections and in A-flat major for its lyrical middle part. It is characterised by a generous usage of turns as ornaments, immersing the listener in a slightly old-fashioned soundscape. The return of E-flat major is enriched by masking the primary theme under the triplets encountered in the *Allegro*. The *Menuet* wears a tragicomic mask painted by the mix of the G minor key and the carefree attitude imposed by the staccato and trills that dot the score. The *Trio* is, once more, a solo cello line accompanied by the others, but this time it is set in G major. After almost seven minutes of theatre play, we are allowed to enter the final movement (*Allegro*), with a catchy melody that you will find yourself whistling out loud when you least expect it.

It is clear how Dotzauer possessed an impressive compositional technique, allowing him to create his first two entries in the string quartet genre with the confidence of a seasoned master, still not losing the humbleness of the eternal learner.

About this edition

Two hundred and thirteen years after their first publication, these two quartets finally receive their first edition, including a full score. This has allowed me to correct hopefully all clear mistakes that were found during the editing process. In particular, a few notational conventions were different then, compared to today's ones:

- ©: A note with an accidental repeated in the same bar at the octave above didn't show the accidental again. The perfect octave interval has been assumed throughout.
- ©: An altered tied note from a previous bar extended the accidental effect duration to the following bar. This has been modernised.
- ©: Several notes mistakes in the fourth movement have been corrected after a careful harmonic and aural analysis.
- ©: Dotzauer made ample use of wedges articulations. The source, though, is not coherent when using those or staccato dots. This has been rectified where evident, but it has not always been possible. Unfortunately, publishing parts only had the downside of making efficient proofreading impracticable.
- ©: It was seldom clear whether short diminuendo hairpins should have been treated as elongated emphasis or the other way around. When in doubt, the most logical musical choice has been applied.
- ©: The cello part (and one note in the first violin part) has fingering suggestions, but they are in such a tiny typeface to be barely legible. In this edition, they are only shown in parts.

Any evident error has been corrected in square brackets, while editorial suggestions such as slurs and hairpins use a dotted stroke. A complete list of changes and comments can be found at the end of this volume.

It is clear that an *Urtext* of these two works would be of little help for their chances of coming back to the concert stages. This edition is, therefore, a *Critical Performance Edition*, and is offered in a single bundle containing the full score and the set of four parts.

I hope it will be performed and recorded as much as the undeservedly forgotten beauty of its music yearns for.

The Editor,
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