

NAXOS

Jakub Jan
RYBA

Flute Quartets • String Quartets

Jan Ostrý, Flute • M. Nostitz Quartet



Jakub Jan Ryba (1765–1815)

Flute Quartets • String Quartets

Relatively little survives of the instrumental music of the Czech composer Jakub Jan Ryba. Indeed the present four quartets, two for flute, violin, viola and cello and two for string quartet are the only four quartets remaining out of 72 once listed. Ryba was the son of a cantor, a local schoolmaster, and followed his father's profession, one of continuing traditional importance in the fostering of music in Bohemia and the adjacent regions. Born in Přeštice, near Klatovy, in 1765, he studied in Nepomuk with his father and from 1781 to 1785 was a pupil at the Piarist Gymnasium in Prague, before returning home to work as an assistant to his father. In addition to his abilities as a keyboard player, having studied the piano and the organ with his father, as well as the violin, he also played the cello. In 1786 he became an assistant teacher at Mnišek and two years later took up a similar appointment at Rožmítal, where he served as choirmaster until his death by his own hand in 1815.

Ryba's church music, of which there is a considerable quantity, including some ninety Masses, seven Requiems and a hundred or more graduals, motets and other works, represents the largest body of his surviving compositions. For his earlier compositions he used an imaginative variety of names, Poisson, Peace, Ryballandini, Rybaville, which suggest a certain sense of humour. His ambitious works for the Church of St Bartholomew in Pilsen earned him in 1805 the title of honorary citizen. His secular music includes Czech songs and a very large amount of orchestral and instrumental music, now lost. For the useful compilation on Czech music and musicians of the period by the Bohemian Premonstratensian scholar Bohumir Dlabac, choirmaster and librarian at Strahov, Ryba listed among his instrumental works over 650 dances, 130 variations, 87 sonatas, 38 concertos, 35 symphonies and many other compositions. He holds an important position in the Bohemian musical tradition of schoolmasters of his time, fostering the Czech language in musical settings and in musical terminology, and a supporter of the educational

reforms initiated under Joseph II. His surviving instrumental music shows the influence of his contemporaries, of composers such as Vaňhal and Mysliveček, and of Haydn and Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach.

The two surviving *Flute Quartets* date from 1811 and survived in the collection of the Rožmítal Regens Chori Schmelzer. The *Flute Quartet in C major* starts with a sonata-form movement of transparent texture. After the statement of the main theme the cello has moments of attention, as the key shifts to the dominant for the second subject. Here, in the central development and in the recapitulation, each instrument is allowed its due share of interest. The F major slow movement, marked *Andante poco adagio*, gives the principal theme to the flute, accompanied by the plucked notes of the strings until the short contrasting central section. The quartet ends with a splendidly varied rondo.

The first of the two surviving string quartets, works of equal competence and charm, the *String Quartet in A minor*, dating from 1801, starts with a movement marked *Andante poco adagio*, the parts closely interwoven, with ample use made of sequence and contrapuntal imitation, the opening figure retaining importance throughout. The *Menuetto* that follows, marked *Allegretto* and in the major, indulges in syncopation and has a contrasting minor-key *Trio*. Contrapuntal imitation is a feature of the final *Allegro*.

Ryba's *Flute Quartet in F major* cannot but suggest bird-calls in the hesitant syncopation of the opening *Allegretto* and in the dialogue between the flute and other instruments, scale answering scale and figure figure in the central development. The second movement is in the form of a Hungarian theme and variations. The first variation gives prominence to the violin, the second in syncopation to the flute, the third to the viola, the fourth again to the flute, the fifth to the cello, and the sixth finally once more to the flute. The cheerful main theme of the final *Presto* enjoys continuing importance, providing the source for touches of contrapuntal activity as the move-

ment progresses towards the little surprises of its codetta.

The *String Quartet in D minor* also survives in a copy of the manuscript parts of 1801 in the possession of the Bohuslav von Kolovrat family. It opens with a moving *Adagio*, dominated by its opening figure and closely interwoven in texture, recalling, inevitably, the opening of Mozart's *Dissonance Quartet*. The second movement, a *Minuet*, is a cheerful D major canon, started by the first

violin, followed by the second violin, viola and cello in order and suggesting a Bohemian origin. It frames a D minor *Trio*. The final *Scherzo* presents the main theme in canon, introduced by the second violin, and motivically even suggesting Mendelssohn, although its skilled use of counterpoint is very much of its own place and period.

Keith Anderson

Jan Ostrý

Jan Ostrý was born in Prague, where he studied at the Conservatoire National de Région de Versailles with grants from the Czech Musical Fund and A Dvořák Foundation. In 1995 he was unanimously awarded the First Prize (Gold Medal) and with a French government award studied at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Lyon, where he was unanimously awarded the First Prize. He was also a member of the Atelier of XX. Century at CNSM Lyon. He continued his studies under the direction of H. Schmeiser from the Musikuniversität in Vienna. Prizes include success in the Concertino Praga, the Prague F.X. Dussek Competition, and the Competition of Czech Conservatories. He also participated in a number of distinguished master-classes. As a soloist or a member of chamber ensembles Jan Ostrý has performed in Linz, Lyon, Bonn, Vienna, Paris, Stuttgart, Oslo, and Prague, and in various festivals, including the Lyons Chamber Music Days, Young Prague, Mozartiana Iuventus Prague, Conventus Moraviae, Week of Pierre Boulez in Lyon, West Bohemian Haydn Festival, Czech Season in France 2002, Neuberger Kulturtag, and the Pierre Boulez Festival in St. Etienne. His recordings include works by Anton Reicha, and a prize-winning release of music by Dussek. Since 2001 he has been regularly teaching at master-courses of the European Flute Academy in Fiss and from 2003 at the Kulturtag in Neuberger. In the 1999/2000 season Jan Ostrý served as principal flautist in the Orchestre National de Lyon, and he collaborated as the solo flautist with the Orchestre des Pays de Savoie. In the 2001/2002 season he was the solo flautist in Den Norske Operaen in Oslo. From 2003 he has taught at the State Conservatory in Pilsen and from 2005 at the State Conservatory in Prague.



M. Nostitz Quartet

The M. Nostitz Quartet was founded in October 1994 by students of the Academy of Music in Prague. The current members of the quartet have performed together since 1999, with Petr Bernášek as first violin, Václav Vacek, second violin, Pavel Hořejší, viola, and Petr Šporcl, cello. From the beginning the ensemble has been under the musical guidance of the cellist Vaclav Bernášek, a member of the Kocian Quartet. The M. Nostitz Quartet has been appearing under its name since 1996 with the kind permission of Countess Mathilda Nostitz, whose family has been one of the greatest patrons of the arts since the eighteenth century. After graduating from the Academy of Music, the members participated for three years in master-classes given by the Amadeus and Bartók Quartets and passed a two-year course at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Vienna. In 1997 they took part in a competition in Heerlen, Holland, and obtained first prize. One year later they were awarded second prize at the Prague Spring Competition and in 1998 won a competition in Cremona. These achievements naturally offered opportunities for performing in many European concert halls, and enabled them to participate for the first time in the Days of Czech Culture in Kyoto in 1997. Successful concerts created an opportunity for an initial tour of Japan in 2000. A concert for the Society of Antonín Dvořák in New York in 2001 was a remarkable début in the United States. The M. Nostitz Quartet has established itself especially in Germany, where they perform much more frequently than in their home country, the Czech Republic. Repeated tours of Europe and concerts in China and Oman have further established the position of the ensemble.

After completing his initial studies in Prague, in 1990 **Petr Bernášek** received a one year scholarship at the Yehudi Menuhin International Academy in Switzerland, where he studied with Alberto Lysy. In 1995 he spent three months at the Paris Conservatoire; he won the third prize at the Beethoven Competition in Hradec nad Moravicí and was a finalist at the International Sonata Competition Vierzón 1995.

After completing his studies in Prague, **Václav Vacek** became a member of the Fenix quartet and since the year 1998 he has been performing with the Prague Chamber Orchestra.

Pavel Hořejší, after his studies in Prague, participated in the Beethoven Competition in Hradec nad Moravicí and the Competition of Conservatories where he won the second prize. He performs as a soloist and a chamber musician.

During his studies in Prague the cellist **Petr Šporcl** received first prize at the Beethoven Competition in Hradec nad Moravicí and first prize at the Competition of Conservatories. During two years' study at Southern Methodist University in Dallas he won the first prize at the Meadows School of the Arts' Concerto competition and the third prize at the Corpus Christi International Competition. He was also a finalist at the Imahuc Int. Competition in North Carolina.

Jakub Jan Ryba (1765–1815) Flötenquartette • Streichquartette

Im Gegensatz zu seinem Schaffen in anderen Gattungen sind von Jakub Jan Rybas Instrumentalwerken nur relativ wenige erhalten. So sind die hier eingespielten vier Quartette denn auch die einzigen von ursprünglich 72 Werken dieses Kammermusikgenres aus seiner Feder. Ryba, der Sohn eines Kantors und Schulmeisters, folgte dem Vorbild des Vaters in einem Beruf, dem für den Stellenwert der Musik in der böhmischen Gesellschaft eine wichtige Funktion zukam. Geboren 1765 in Přeštice in der Nähe von Klatovy, erhielt er den ersten Klavier- und Orgelunterricht von seinem Vater und besuchte von 1781 bis 1785 das Prager Piaristen-Gymnasium, bevor er nach Hause zurückkehrte, um dem Vater bei dessen beruflichen Pflichten zu assistieren. Neben den genannten Instrumenten spielte Ryba Violine und Cello und betätigte sich auch in vokaler Hinsicht. 1786 wurde er Hilfslehrer in Mníšek, eine Position, die er zwei Jahre später auch in Rožmitál bekleidete. Dort war er bis zu seinem Freitod am 8. April 1815 auch als Chorleiter tätig.

Rybas fruchtbares Schaffen in der Gattung der geistlichen Musik besteht aus nicht weniger als 90 Messen, sieben Requiem-Vertonungen und ca. 100 Gradualen, Motetten und anderen Werken und bildet damit den größten Teil seiner erhaltenen Kompositionen. Seine frühen Werke pflegte er fantasievoll-humoristische Titel wie *Poisson*, *Peace*, *Ryballandini* oder *Ryba-ville* zu geben. Für seine anspruchsvollen Arbeiten für die Pilsener Bartholomäuskirche wurde ihm 1805 die Ehrenbürgerwürde der Stadt verliehen.

Rybas weltliche Musik besteht aus tschechischen Liedern und zahlreichen, mit wenigen Ausnahmen verschollenen Orchester- und Instrumentalkompositionen. Für das vom böhmischen Prämonstratenser-Gelehrten Bohumir Dlabáč in Prag herausgegebene *Allgemeine historische Künstler-Lexikon* erstellte Ryba ein Verzeichnis seiner Werke, welches im instrumentalen Bereich über 650 Tänze, 130 Variationen, 87 Sonaten, 38 Konzerte, 35 Sinfonien und zahlreiche andere Kompositionen auflistet.

Ryba zählt zu den wichtigsten Vertretern der von Schulmeistern seiner Zeit geprägten böhmischen Musiktradition und als Wegbereiter der tschechischen Sprache als musikalischem Ausdrucksmittel. Er galt als Befürworter der unter Joseph II. initiierten Schulreform. Seine erhaltene Instrumentalmusik zeigt den Einfluss von Zeitgenossen wie Vaňhal und Mysliveček, Joseph Haydn und Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach.

Die beiden hier vorgestellten Flötenquartette datieren aus dem Jahr 1811 und sind in der Rožmitáler Sammlung Regens Chori Schmelzer enthalten. Das *Flötenquartett C-Dur* beginnt mit einem durchsichtig gearbeiteten Sonatensatz. Nach der Vorstellung des Hauptthemas tritt das Violoncello beim Tonartwechsel zur Dominante des Nebenthemas in den Vordergrund. In der zentralen Durchführung und der Reprise treten alle vier Instrumente als gleichberechtigte Partner in Erscheinung. Im langsamen Satz, einem *Andante poco adagio* in F-Dur, übernimmt die Flöte das Hauptthema, begleitet von Pizzicato-Streichern. Es folgt ein kurzer, klanglich kontrastierender Zentralabschnitt. Ein abwechslungsreiches Rondo beschließt das Werk.

Das erste der beiden erhaltenen Streichquartette, das *Streichquartett a-Moll* aus dem Jahr 1801, wird von einem *Andante poco adagio* eröffnet, dessen Stimmen gegeneinander verflochten sind, wobei vielfach Gebrauch von Sequenzierung und kontrapunktischer Imitation gemacht wird. Während des gesamten Satzes bleibt die Eröffnungsfigur von Bedeutung. Das folgende *Menuetto*, ein Dur-*Allegretto*, fällt durch Synkopierungen auf und besitzt ein kontrastierendes Moll-Trio. Wie bereits im ersten Satz bedient sich Ryba im *Allegro*-Finale der kontrapunktischen Imitation.

Mit seinen zögerlichen Synkopierungen im eröffnenden *Allegretto* und dem Dialog zwischen der Flöte und den anderen Instrumenten lässt das *Flötenquartett F-Dur* an Vogellaute denken, wobei in der Durchführung Tonskalen und Figuren einander antworten. Der zweite

Satz bedient sich der Form eines ungarischen Themas mit Variationen. In der ersten Variation dominiert die Violine, in der sykopischen zweiten die Flöte, in der dritten die Viola, wiederum die Flöte in der vierten, das Cello in der fünften und schließlich noch einmal die Flöte in der abschließenden sechsten Variation. Das fröhliche Hauptthema des finalen *Presto* bleibt im Satzverlauf von Bedeutung, indem es den Ausgangspunkt für kontrapunktische Aktivität bildet, während der Satz in die kleinen Überraschungen der Codetta mündet.

Das *Streichquartett d-Moll* ist auch als Kopie der 1801 niedergeschriebenen autographen Stimmen erhalten; sie befindet sich im Besitz der Familie Bohuslav von Kolovrat. Das Werk beginnt mit einem stimmungsvollen *Adagio*,

das von der Eröffnungsfigur dominiert wird und in seinem Stimmengeflecht an Mozarts „Dissonanzenquartett“ denken lässt. Der zweite Satz, ein *Minuet*, kommt als fröhlicher D-Dur-Kanon daher, angestimmt von der ersten Violine, der sich nacheinander die zweite Violine, Viola und Violoncello hinzugesellen. Eingebettet in den Satz ist ein d-Moll-*Trio*. Das abschließende *Scherzo*-Finale stellt das Hauptthema im Kanon vor, eingeführt von der zweiten Violine und in der Motivik an Mendelssohn gemahnend. Die gekonnte kontrapunktische Arbeit legt es hingegen auf den Ort und die Zeit der Entstehung fest.

Keith Anderson

Deutsche Fassung: Bernd Delfs



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Playing Time
50:54

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Jakub Jan Ryba was a prolific composer of both sacred and secular music. The majority of his orchestral and instrumental music has been lost and of his quartets, which numbered 72, only the four on this recording appear to have survived. These are charming and inventive works which show the influence of Ryba's contemporaries, such as Vaňhal and Mysliveček, as well as Haydn and Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. The *String Quartet in D minor* begins with a moving *Adagio* that recalls Mozart's *Dissonance Quartet*, while the final *Scherzo* even suggests Mendelssohn.

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Flute Quartets • String Quartets

Flute Quartet in C major	15:35	Flute Quartet in F major	18:00
① Allegro maestoso	9:21	⑦ Allegretto	7:30
② Andante poco adagio	2:09	⑧ Hongroise avec variations	6:53
③ Finale: Allegro	4:01	⑨ Finale: Presto	3:33
String Quartet in A minor	7:00	String Quartet in D minor	9:56
④ Andante poco adagio	2:43	⑩ Adagio	5:24
⑤ Menuetto: Allegretto	2:32	⑪ Menuetto: Poco allegretto— Canon	2:20
⑥ Allegro	1:43	⑫ Allegro. Scherzo	2:08

Jan Ostrý, Flute

M. Nostitz Quartet: Petr Bernášek and Václav Vacek, Violins
Pavel Hořejší, Viola • Petr Šporcl, Cello

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