

The present volume is the sixth in a series whose goal is to reissue all of the Léner Quartet's electrical recordings along with the acoustic recordings they never remade, ultimately presenting their complete recorded repertoire. This release contains all the Haydn works they recorded, including two particularly rare acoustics which were never re-done electrically. The set is filled out with the first installment of the group's Mozart recordings.

For the past half century, Haydn's Op. 3 has generally been thought to be the work of Romanus Hoffstetter; but the story is complicated by Haydn's inclusion of these quartets among his own for publication, as well as more recent studies that conclude Hoffstetter may have composed only the first two of the six in the series. Regardless of authorship, Op. 3, No. 5 remains one of the most popular of the string quartet literature, primarily due to its second movement. The Léners present it as though it were an ardent guitar-accompanied serenade from a lover to his lady in a performance which is remarkable in its rhythmic freedom.

The Léners never made a complete recording of Haydn's "Lark" Quartet; but a three-quarters version has been assembled here from two sides of an acoustic single disc made in 1923 and an electric set down five years later. (It must have been a jinx for string quartets of the time, as the Flonzaleys recorded the work complete in the latter year only for it to remain unissued until a 1970s LP release.) The Menuetto was, oddly, issued as the filler side for the Léners' set of the Debussy Quartet, while the acoustic disc is one of their rarest releases.

Electrical recording was already well underway at Columbia's American affiliate when the next quartet on our program was set down; but English Columbia did not begin to record using the new technology until the fall of 1925. As a result, the Léner's Haydn Op. 76, No. 2 was already sonically obsolete when it was released in May 1926. It only remained in the catalog for a year and a half, and became their rarest album. When a chance arose to record a filler side for Haydn's "Emperor" Quartet in 1935, they returned to the Andante of Op. 76, No. 2 in the version heard here after the complete recording.

To fill out our program, it seemed appropriate to include the Léners' recordings of the first two quartets dedicated to Haydn by Mozart. The D minor quartet was one of the ensemble's earliest electrical recordings. Its original release was marred by thin sound, obtrusive swish on several sides and recurrent low frequency resonance from the early carbon microphones, all of which has been addressed in the present restoration. Again, the group had an opportunity to re-record one of the movements years later in better sound (the Andante in 1932, for their entry in the Columbia History of Music series). Timing restrictions have not permitted its inclusion here, but it will appear in a later volume as our coverage of the Léners' Mozart recordings continue.

Mark Obert-Thorn



disc one (76:02)

HAYDN String Quartet No. 5 in F major

Op. 3, No. 5, "Serenade", *Hob III:17*

- 1st mvt. - Presto (4:21)
- 2nd mvt. - Andante cantabile (4:30)
- 3rd mvt. - Menuetto (3:17)
- 4th mvt. - Scherzando (3:01)

Recorded 7 December 1928

Matrix nos.: WAX 4433-2, 4434-1, 4435-2, 4436-3

First issued as Columbia 9658/9

HAYDN String Quartet No. 53 in D major

Op. 64, No. 5, "The Lark", *Hob III:63*

- 2nd mvt. - Adagio cantabile (4:36)
- 3rd mvt. - Menuetto: Allegro (3:31)*
- 4th mvt. - Finale: Vivace (2:07)

Recorded 26 September 1923 and *15 March 1928

Matrix nos.: AX 151-2, *WAX 3385-1 & AX 165-3

First issued as Columbia L 1574 & *L 2144

HAYDN String Quartet No. 61 in D minor

Op. 76, No. 2, "Fifths", *Hob III:76*

- 1st mvt. - Allegro (7:33)
- 2nd mvt. - Andante di molto più tosto allegretto (4:36)
- 3rd mvt. - Menuetto: Allegro non troppo (3:51)
- 4th mvt. - Vivace assai (3:54)

Recorded 9-10 March 1925

Matrix nos.: AX 916-2, 917-1, 918-1, 919-2 & 924-1

First issued as Columbia L 1740/2

- 2nd mvt. - Andante di molto più tosto allegretto (4:50)

Recorded 10 March 1935

Matrix nos.: CAX 7469-1 - First issued as Columbia LX 454

HAYDN String Quartet No. 62 in C major

Op. 76, No. 3, "Emperor", *Hob.III:77*

- 1st mvt. - Allegro (7:00)
- 2nd mvt. - Un poco adagio; cantabile (9:51)
- 3rd mvt. - Menuetto: Allegro (4:47)
- 4th mvt. - Finale: Presto (4:17)

Recorded 10 & 23 March 1935

Matrix nos.: CAX 7462-2, 7463-6, 7464-1, 7465-1, 7466-1, 7467-1 & 7468-1

First issued as Columbia LX 451/4

disc two (69:09)

HAYDN String Quartet No. 64 in D major

Op. 76, No. 5, *Hob.III:79*

- 1st mvt. - Allegretto (5:35)
- 2nd mvt. - Largo. Cantabile e mesto (7:43)
- 3rd mvt. - Menuetto: Allegro (3:17)
- 4th mvt. - Finale: Presto (3:47)

Recorded 7 November 1928

Matrix nos.: WAX 4261-2, 4262-2, 4263-4, 4282-1, 4283-1 & 4288-2

First issued as Columbia L 2257/9

MOZART String Quartet No. 14 in G major, K.387,

"Spring"

- 1st mvt. - Allegro vivace assai (6:11)
- 2nd mvt. - Menuetto: Allegro (7:32)
- 3rd mvt. - Andante cantabile (8:42)
- 4th mvt. - Molto allegro (7:51)

Recorded 20-21 January 1930

Matrix nos.: WAX 4713-3, 4714-4, 4715-3, 4716-3, 4717-3, 4718-3, 4719-4 and 4720-4

First issued as Columbia LX 24/7

MOZART String Quartet No. 15 in D minor, K.421

- 1st mvt. - Allegro moderato (5:22)
- 2nd mvt. - Andante (6:18)
- 3rd mvt. - Menuetto: Allegro (4:06)
- 4th mvt. - Allegretto non troppo - Più allegro (6:48)

Recorded 27 and 29 March 1926

Matrix nos.: WAX 1375-2, 1376-2, 1377-3, 1378-3, 1379-3 and 1380-2

First issued as Columbia L 1965/7

Léner String Quartet

Jenő Léner (violin I)

Josef Smilovits (violin II)

Sándor Róth (viola)

Imre Hartman (cello)

Recording venues (all in London): Clerkenwell Road Studio (1923, 1925); Petty France

Studio (1926, 1928 and 1930); Abbey Road Studio No. 3 (1935)

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn

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Total duration: 2hr 29:13

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