

HAYDN AND THE LUTE, OR, WHO IS THE THEORBO PLAYER IN THE COPPERPLATE ENGRAVING BY MICHELE BENEDETTI?

By Han Jonkers

Joseph Haydn's so-called early string quartets were written in the years after 1755, but before he entered the services of the Esterházy family in 1761. It was with these works that Haydn attained international renown around 1760. In his *Lexicon der Tonkünstler*, published in 1790, Ernst Ludwig Gerber referred to a "general sensation" in this context. Nevertheless, Haydn was later to dissociate himself from these early quartets, coming to regard the Quartets Op. 9 as the first fully adequate compositions of this genre.

The early quartets exhibit decisive differences vis-à-vis his later quartets. In contrast to the subsequent four-movement string quartets, the quartets from Op. 1 and 2 are in five movements. In most of these, the two fast outer movements form the framework; the slow middle movement is in turn framed by two minuets. Unlike the later quartets, in which all four parts are nearly on an equal footing, the first violin clearly dominates in the early works.

Versions with Lute

Three of Haydn's early quartets also appeared in versions with lute, preserved in two principal collections of 18th-century manuscripts of music for lute in chamber settings: one at the Staats- und Stadtbibliothek in Augsburg, and another at the Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier (KBR) in Brussels, part of the Fétis collection.

Among the Augsburg holdings is a contemporary arrangement in D major for lute, violin, viola, and cello of the String Quartet, Op. 2, No. 2 (Hob. III:8). The collection also contains a Sonata à 3 in F major for lute, violin, and bass (Hob. IV:F2), attributed to Haydn by his cataloger Anthony van Hoboken, though without conclusive proof. Given that the Augsburg archive contains a preponderance of music arranged for lute from other media, the original instrumentation of this F-major trio was likely different.

The Brussels collection contains two cassations for lute, violin, and cello. Cassation in B \flat major represents an earlier version of the String Quartet in B \flat , Op. 1, No. 1 (Hob. III:1), while Cassation in C major is a version of Haydn's String Quartet in C, Op. 1, No. 6 (Hob. III:6). In neither case, however, is there evidence that the quartet preceded the lute trio.¹

Important biographical studies on Haydn provide no information about whether he actually played the lute. The strongest evidence suggesting he might have is that Haydn knew lutenist David Kellner's (1670–1748) theoretical treatise *Unterricht im Generalbass* (1732) and referred to it as a notable work.²

The Engraving

In 2009, the two-hundredth anniversary of Haydn's death, the International Mozart Foundation in Salzburg exhibited the copperplate engraving reproduced below with the following short description:



¹ Tim Crawford, "Haydn's Music for the Lute," in *Le Luth et sa musique II*, ed. Jean Michel Vaccaro (Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1984), 69–85.

² Karl Geiringer, *Haydn: A Creative Life in Music*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 14.

Willoughby Bertie, 4th Earl of Abingdon (1740–1799)
& Joseph Haydn (London 1796)
Engraving by Michele Benedetti (1745–1810) after a
painting by Jean François Rigaud (John Francis Rigaud)
(1742–1810). (© Internationale Stiftung Mozarteum)

Abingdon was a good amateur musician, and also tried his hand at composition. Many of Haydn's social contacts with the English aristocracy and with the educated class came about through Haydn's friendship with Lord Abingdon. He was the main initiator of the Professional Concerts, and attempted to entice Haydn away from Salomon.

This picture, which also appears on the title page of Karl Scheit's guitar edition of Haydn's D-Major Quartet,³ raises the questions of whether Haydn played lute himself and whether the theorbo player is really Haydn.

There are many theories concerning the identities of the persons in this engraving. The wildest speculation is that it shows Haydn (with the theorbo) and Mozart (seated).⁴ Some reproductions of this engraving identify the seated figure as Willoughby, Earl of Abingdon, but make no mention of Haydn.⁵ It seems certain—based on other publications as well—that the seated person is indeed Lord Abingdon. The theorbo player bears a close resemblance to Haydn, and Haydn's friendship with Lord Abingdon, who invited him to London in 1783, is well documented.⁶

As mentioned above, the engraving is based on a painting by John Francis Rigaud. The only documented and reliable information about the picture—in which the theorbo player is also named—comes from Rigaud's son Stephan Francis Duthil Rigaud (1777–1861). A manuscript essay by Rigaud Jr., based on his father's memoirs, provides the following information: "In the autumn of this year [1792] my Father received an invitation from the Earl of Abingdon to visit him at his seat at Rycott, where he commenced two portraits of his Lordship, one in a large family picture; the other in which he is represented in the act of composing a piece of music; with his Uncle Mr. Collins, trying the effect of it upon the Lute."⁷

Thus, although the engraving reproduced above has repeatedly been cited as an indication of Haydn's relationship to the lute, Stephan Francis Duthil Rigaud's manuscript allows us to state with reasonable certainty that the theorbo player is not Haydn, but a Mr. Collins. And the question of whether or not Haydn played the lute still remains unanswered.



Dutch guitarist Han Jonkers studied at the conservatory in Maastricht and afterward with Oscar Ghiglia and Konrad Ragossnig. He won third prize in Viña del Mar (1983) and second Prize at the Casals competition in Barcelona (1985). Concert tours took him through South America (Brazil, Peru, and Bolivia), South Africa, Asia, New Zealand, and Belarus. He published a series of guitar music and seven CDs. He has published articles in *Gitarre & Laute*, *Classical Guitar*, *Soundboard*, and other periodicals. Visit www.hanjonkers.com.

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³ Quartet in D major, Hob. III:8, for guitar, violin, viola, and cello, ed. Karl Scheit (Vienna: Doblinger [GKM 32], 2008).

⁴ Otto Erich Deutsch, *Mozart und seine Welt in zeitgenössischen Bildern* (Kassel, 1961), 287.

⁵ David van Edwards, "Lute of the Month" (Dec 1998), www.vanedwards.co.uk/month/dec98/month.htm.

⁶ Derek McCulloch, "The Musical 'Oeuvre' of Willoughby Bertie, 4th Earl of Abingdon (1740–99)," *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle* 33 (2000): 6; Internationale

Stiftung Mozarteum, Salzburg.

⁷ Stephen Francis Duthil Rigaud, *Facts and Recollections of the XVIIIth Century in a Memoir of John Francis Rigaud*, ed. W. L. Pressly (London: Walpole Society, 1984), 86–87.

Manuscript dated 1854.