



joins in with a response in the same key, and it seems the way is prepared for a smooth return to tonic, the awkward A major disruption comfortably behind us. However, the music soon ventures back to D minor and takes another crack at achieving the perfect authentic cadence it could not reach before. Dussek makes the event as dramatic as possible, with a grand six-bar cadential gesture featuring repeated semiquavers in the violins, a harmonic rhythm of one chord per bar, a secondary diminished-seventh chord preceding and stoking anticipation for the dominant and a $\frac{6}{4}$ suspension on the dominant's arrival. The Helsinki Orchestra recognizes the humour of the situation, and when they finally attain the long-awaited D minor cadence, they do so with a clear sense of victory.

Given the attractive qualities of Dussek's music and his additional renown as a teacher and performer, it is hard to understand why his music disappeared for so long. Badley speculates that it may have something to do with his aristocratic patrons' contractual restrictions. Nevertheless, this highly engaging performance by the Helsinki Baroque Orchestra, coupled with the recent publication of edited scores by Artaria Editions and Naxos's 2002 release of three Dussek symphonies performed by Helios 18 under Marie-Louise Oschatz (Naxos 8.555878), perhaps signal that Franz Xaver Dussek is making a name for himself once again.

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IGNAZ PLEYEL (1757–1831)
PRUSSIAN QUARTETS 4–6
Pleyel Quartett Köln
cpo 777 551–2, 2012; one disc, 59 minutes

Upon the death of Frederick the Great in 1786, his nephew, Frederick William II, ascended the throne as the new King of Prussia. This occasion prompted Joseph Haydn's Viennese publisher, Artaria, to call on the Prussian ambassador regarding the possibility of a commission. Ultimately, Haydn's eighth set of string quartets, Op. 50 (1787), came to be known as the 'Prussian' quartets, as did Ignaz Pleyel's set of twelve string quartets Ben 331–342 (1787).

Although neither Frederick William nor his uncle was remembered as an impressive military leader, they were both highly regarded as artistic patrons. In the court of Frederick the Great, an accomplished flautist, the knowledgeable visitor might have expected to hear J. J. Quantz playing the flute or C. P. E. Bach at the harpsichord. Frederick William was a talented cellist who received in his court a similarly impressive list of performers and composers. For example, he employed the cellists Jean Pierre Duport and Luigi Boccherini: Duport was the king's private cello teacher and is likely to have given the premiere performances of Beethoven's first two cello sonatas, Op. 5 (1796), with the composer; Boccherini, meanwhile, was retained as a composer in residence, even though he resided in Spain at the time.

The string quartet benefited greatly from Frederick William's patronage. In addition to Haydn and Pleyel, W. A. Mozart also wrote quartets for the king. Mozart began his final three quartets (K575, K589 and K590) on the return leg of a journey north in 1789; although not explicitly commissioned by the king, these quartets were probably inspired by Mozart's visit to Berlin. Unlike Mozart's quartets, Pleyel's bear a dedication to King Frederick. They were ultimately published in four books of three quartets each, and the second book is the focus of this review. But this wealth of material, which was written for one particularly accomplished cellist and king, raises a question: as a cellist, how talented was he?



Judging solely from the various ‘Prussian’ quartets composed by Haydn, Mozart and Pleyel, the king must have been more than a mediocre cellist. The second movement of Haydn’s Op. 50 No. 3 includes the simplest solo: accompanied by a bare viola, the cello climaxes on the pitch g^1 . (This quartet marks Haydn’s notice of the commission, because Op. 50 Nos. 1–2 were already in progress at the time.) The most involved cello solos appear in Mozart’s first ‘Prussian’ quartet, K575. As is widely acknowledged, Mozart appears to enhance the technical difficulty, or rather, the perceived difficulty: he writes exposed melodies in high registers, but rarely taxes the performer in an extreme way.

Pleyel treats the cello as a solo instrument in a manner that is less prominent, but more complex than Mozart’s. In the second movement of the fifth quartet, Ben 335, he sets the cello in dialogue with the first violin; marked ‘dolce’ and accompanied by the inner voices, the cello never truly shines. However, in the first movement of the sixth quartet, Ben 336, the cello receives a more brilliant and virtuosic solo: one that is introduced by a duet between the second violin and viola in the exposition, but which stands alone in the recapitulation. This solo is both lyrical and technical, with passagework that eventually climaxes on the pitch e^b^2 .

The most exposed solo of this set occurs in the second movement of Ben 336. Pleyel designed this theme-and-variations movement so that each variation features a different instrument, and the cello receives the solo in the fourth variation. After the initial phrase, the clef switches from bass to treble and the cellist is tasked with playing difficult sequences in a high register. In the recording, this passage stands out for two reasons. First, a repeat is omitted: the movement’s binary form carries an internal repetition of both parts, but in the fourth variation – the cello’s variation – the ‘B’ section is not repeated. Second, the cellist, Nicholas Selo, misjudges an exposed string crossing in this passage. It is surely no coincidence that the members of the quartet decided to skip the repetition; one wonders how Frederick William might have fared when he played this very same movement.

This conspicuous error notwithstanding, the balance of the recording shows a fair and warm rendering of these works, with an overall quality of playing that mollifies the occasional missteps in pitch (as in the first movement of Ben 335). The recording explicitly adopts a ‘historically informed’ position, with the players using natural gut strings and proper eighteenth-century technique, and consulting the original scores published by Pleyel’s own publishing house in order to reveal ornamentation which is often obfuscated in modern editions. The liner notes, written by Klaus Aringer and translated by Susan Marie Praeder, not only establish a basic picture of Pleyel’s investment in the string quartet but also offer a useful outline of the three individual works.

Pleyel’s ‘Prussian’ quartets were widely disseminated throughout the capitals of Europe, which speaks not only to his business acumen, but also to the popularity of his chamber music. Mozart described Pleyel’s Op. 1 quartets as ‘well written and very pleasing’ in a letter to Leopold Mozart (dated 24 April 1784) (translation from Mark Evan Bonds, ‘Replacing Haydn: Mozart’s “Pleyel” Quartets’, *Music & Letters* 88/2 (2007), 201). But Pleyel’s musical style was quite different from the ‘new and special manner’ of Haydn’s Op. 33 (1781): instead of replicating Haydn’s conversational tone, Pleyel composed in what was considered a concertante style. Such a style often features brilliant and virtuosic material in the violins, and it is quite typical for the two violins to repeat one another in the style of a trio sonata (for example, see the second theme in the first movement of Ben 334, from bar 47). This repetition also guarantees, however, that the movement will unfold at a leisurely pace.

Two standout movements in this collection are the slow movement, ‘Romance’, in the A major quartet, Ben 335, and the first movement in the E flat major quartet, Ben 336. The ‘Romance’ is marked ‘con sordino’ and features a singing first violin that navigates between sections in E major and its parallel minor. The opening movement of Ben 336 features an introductory head motive played in four-voice unison. This sighing motive, which descends a perfect fourth from the tonic pitch, is marked *pianissimo* and functions, for all the difference in dynamic levels, rather like the ‘noise-killer’ that Haydn so often included in his London works in order to focus the attention of a large audience. Whereas Haydn typically abandoned the ‘noise-killer’ later in the work, however, Pleyel returns to this motive throughout the movement, using



it as a fugal transition (bars 13–16), as an accompanying figure (bars 34–38) and at the beginning of the development section (bars 93–95). This unifying device helps to hold together a first movement that comprises 227 bars (in Haydn's roughly contemporaneous Op. 50 works, the average is 184 bars).

This recording from Pleyel Quartett Köln is a sequel to their earlier recording of Pleyel's third book of 'Prussian' quartets, numbers 7–9 (cpo 777 315–2, 2008). Overall, the players acquit themselves quite well; they are especially sensitive in their performances of the slow movements, and the work of first violinist Ingeborg Scheerer is particularly noteworthy in the frequent episodes of virtuosic passagework. Considering the quality on display here, one hopes that these players will go on to complete the entire cycle of twelve quartets.

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GEORG PHILIPP TELEMANN (1681–1767)
COMPLETE VIOLIN CONCERTOS, VOLUME 4
Elizabeth Wallfisch (violin, director) / L'Orfeo Barockorchester
cpo 777 242–2, 2012; one disc, 62 minutes

During the 1720s and 1730s a small number of German composers wrote French-inspired overture-suites that featured solo lines in the style of Italian concertos. By combining these national styles in their works (which have been variously termed *Konzertsuite* and *concert en ouverture*), composers created pieces containing striking contrasts. In the first movements, for instance, the familiar opening of the French *ouverture* – with its stately dotted rhythms, tutti textures and slow tempo – frames a faster Italian concerto-ritornello section. Throughout these opening movements and the works as a whole, the juxtaposition of tutti ensemble and soloist also provides contrast, as does the variety of dance types following the first movement. For many modern listeners, the best-known work of this type is Johann Sebastian Bach's Overture for flute, strings and continuo in B minor, BWV1067; however, the most prolific composer of the *concert en ouverture*, and quite possibly the inventor of this generic hybrid, was Georg Philipp Telemann. The genre itself and Telemann's examples in particular were well regarded by his contemporaries, as is evident in Johann Adolph Scheibe's discussion of the 'Concertouverture' in his *Der critische Musikus* (1740). There he writes that 'Among the Germans, Telemann and [Johann Friedrich] Fasch have distinguished themselves most of all in this type of Overture. The first in particular has made such works best known in Germany, and has thereby so distinguished himself that one may rightly say, without being accused of flattery, that as an emulator of the French he has finally surpassed these foreigners in their own national music'. For those interested in trying their hand at composing similar pieces, Scheibe warned that, as regards the writing for the solo instrument, one must 'avoid proceeding in a manner that is as concerto-like, long-winded, and forceful as would be appropriate in a proper concerto. Here there is a certain balance to maintain, so that one does not overshadow the true disposition and nature of the *Ouverture* and lapse from a French style of writing into an Italian one, and consequently render the style of such a piece confused and disorderly' (translations from Steven Zohn, *Music for a Mixed Taste: Style, Genre, and Meaning in Telemann's Instrumental Works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 43).

Judging from the *concerts en ouverture* already widely available in recordings and familiar to modern-day audiences, including BWV1067 as well as both Telemann's Overture for recorder and strings in A minor, TWV55:a2, and his Overture for viola da gamba and strings in D major, TWV55:D6, one might gather that