

A RE-DISCOVERED SYMPHONY BY HAYDN

BY HANS GÁL

The history of Breitkopf & Härtel's Haydn edition and its unsatisfactory progress is rather complicated. This matter, which was entrusted to my beloved master, Mandyczewski, always remained a source of great uneasiness to him: he knew better than any one how insufficient the bibliographical preparations had been, and he did not feel young and strong enough to undertake the thorny preparatory work. This was the only reason for the hitch in the publication. The position of this unfortunate edition is still the same today: a large part of Haydn's works is practically unknown to the world, and a complete and reliable list of his works is even yet not obtainable.

When I found in the Reid Library in Edinburgh a set of parts of an unknown symphony in B flat, bearing the name of G. Haydn and printed by Bremner in London, my curiosity was aroused by a few bars that bore familiar and unmistakable features of Haydn's invention. After having scored the first movement, I no longer had any doubt about the authenticity of the music. My diagnosis was confirmed by external evidence, for I found this symphony mentioned as number two in a set of 'Three symphonies by Giuseppe Haydn, Opus 10', printed in Amsterdam (by J. J. Hummel, according to Gerber) in a Breitkopf thematic catalogue of 1772. Numbers one and three of this set are included as Nos. 20 and 41 in the list of the complete edition, whereas number two is missing. A curious fact is worth mentioning: Pohl, who recognized the Breitkopf catalogues as the most important source of his knowledge, obviously did not know the catalogues of 1770, 1771 and 1772, since he did not refer to them. Now Pohl's list was the main basis of Mandyczewski's catalogue of Haydn's symphonies. To the best of my knowledge no one has yet traced the Amsterdam edition of Op. 10, nor yet the Bremner edition. Gerber, the first zealous Haydn bibliographer, who was in correspondence with the composer, mentions this work in a critical catalogue published in his dictionary of music (second edition, 1812). He also mentions a third edition, printed in Paris, which, like the other, has remained in obscurity. That the work was printed on those three occasions proves that it enjoyed unusual success.

When Mandyczewski made his list of symphonies he must have been unaware of these facts, since he does not mention the printed editions of numbers 20 and 41. And as regards this symphony in B flat, he relied on an erroneous statement of L. H. Perger, who in his list of symphonies by Michael Haydn ('Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich', XIV, 2 attributed it to Haydn's brother. Perger, also unaware of the above facts, based his belief on a manuscript score in the Esterházy archives (now in Budapest) written by Michael, which includes the first two movements of the symphony, dated June 15, 1772. This is the only circumstantial evidence of Michael's reputed authorship, and, as we shall see, it is a doubtful one. The date itself is almost evidence that Michael was merely the copyist, not the composer. That a new symphony of a young and by no means famous composer should have been published abroad and listed by a music-seller within the space of half a year is extremely unlikely at a time when the output of printed orchestral music was comparatively small. The Op. 10 are the first printed symphonies of Haydn's to be mentioned in the Breitkopf catalogues. At that time no publisher could have had any interest in counterfeiting Haydn's name. The music itself betrays not the slightest sign of Michael's authorship. His merits lay in the realm of church music; not one of his instrumental compositions was more than workmanlike, and none of them attained any fame or popularity at the time. It is rather far-fetched to assume that his only work that succeeded so far as to run into three contemporary editions should have been just this one.

It is, by the way, not the first time that a mistake concerning the authorship of a work has been caused by a manuscript. I do not mean the deliberate plagiarisms committed even by a giant like Handel, e.g. in 'Israel in Egypt'. I think rather of cases like the 'St. Luke Passion' by an unknown author, which has long been attributed to J. S. Bach only because of a manuscript in his handwriting, or of a piece from Gluck's 'Alceste' which found its way into Köchel's Mozart catalogue as an Andantino for piano, in consequence of a manuscript in Mozart's writing. A well-known and beautiful organ concerto in D minor would still be looked on today as the most important work of Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, were it not that the original of this composition had been found in a printed Concerto Grosso by Vivaldi. It is irrelevant to question why Bach or Mozart took the trouble of copying music, for at that time handwriting was still the usual way of reproduction and performing music was a much more private affair than now. Bach often copied music for his own use, and so did every working musician of that time. It is equally irrelevant to ask why Michael Haydn copied a symphony or half a symphony of his brother's. The manuscript that misled Perger proves only by whose hand it was written, not in whose head it was composed. All the further misstatements were caused by the fact that bibliographical details are generally quoted and trusted without further investigation.

To me as a musician the main proof of Haydn's authorship lies in the music itself, and I should advise those in doubt to look at the score (Universal Edition, London). Features like the second theme of the first movement, the lovely, slender quartet setting of the Andantino, the sparkling skill in developing a whole movement out of a small motif of three notes in the finale—these are unmistakable fingerprints.

Recently, as a new argument against its authenticity, a thematic catalogue in the Esterházy archives has been produced, in which Haydn himself is said to have crossed out the works falsely ascribed to him. Apart from the uncertainty of this assumption, we cannot accept as evidence the fact that items were deleted in a list which afterwards may have passed through hundreds of hands unknown to us. In any case it would not have been justifiable to suppress a lovely piece of music like this, merely in order to maintain the authority of authorities who reposed too much confidence in the mistake of another authority. This in brief is the whole story.

A new chance discovery makes me add a postscript. Let those who will not believe in unmistakable marks of a master's style and form compare the first movement of the symphony with the first movement of Haydn's string quartet, Op. 3, No. 4, also in B flat, published three years before the symphony. They will find, notwithstanding a difference in measure, a curious similarity from the very beginning; and they will find moreover that the second subject which I pointed out to be a fingerprint of Haydn's style, is almost identical in both pieces throughout its whole extension of about twenty bars. So the whole mystery of doubtful facts is cleared finally by Haydn himself.

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