

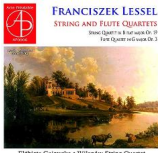
## Lessel - String & Flute Quartets (1998/2005)

Written by bluesever

Sunday, 03 November 2019 16:13 -

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String Quartet in B major op. 19 No. 8 1. *Allegro Assai* 2. *Andante* 3. *Menuetto: Presto* 4. *Finale: Allegro Assai* Flute Quartet in G major op. 3

5. *Allegro* 6. *Adagio* 7. *Minuetto. Allegro* 8. *Allegretto*

Wilanów String Quartet: Gadzina Tadeusz - Ist violin Łosakiewicz Paweł - IIInd violin Duż Ryszard - viola Wasiółka Marian - cello and Gajewska Elżbieta - flute

Acte Préalable continues its long run of world-premiere recordings in this quite enjoyable release.

Those who are Haydn enthusiasts will very likely find this disc of interest, not to mention those who are attracted to performances of newly-discovered period repertoire. Franciszek Lessel, much of whose music has not survived - the flute quartet was considered up until fairly recently the only surviving quartet - studied with Haydn over the years of 1799-1809 and was considered one of Haydn's more talented pupils. Born in Warsaw to a musical family - his father was also a composer - he served as Kapellmeister in Pulawy, but went to Vienna at the age of 19 to study medicine. Little is known about this period of his life, but it is evident that music won out over medicine, in that his studies with Haydn took place very shortly thereafter.

History shows a far greater catalogue of works, sadly, than appear today: three sonatas, two fantasies and polonaises for solo piano, six symphonies, of which only one finale survives, and no less than eleven string quartets, of which only the present works on this recording survive in their entirety. The pieces here show a definite debt to Haydn's style, but they do display evidence of an independent voice working its way from the great shadow that Haydn cast. From the pieces here, Lessel fits in sound-wise between Haydn and Beethoven, with a far more snug fit on the Haydn side.

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The Op. 19 string quartet is greatly enjoyable; its sense of scale and structure is lovely, focusing mainly on the first violin to introduce the thematic material, with the other parts involved more intensely with the development. The Haydn influence is evident from the opening bars to the overall structure of the piece in four movements. The opening movement has tuneful themes, beautifully played by Wilanow quartet. The second movement is a showcase for Gadzina, who presents the beautiful melodic line of this movement with grace and taste. The piece was discovered only ten years ago in the collection of the National Library in Paris and first performed shortly after, in 1996. The piece breaks no great new ground between the grand schemes plotted out by Haydn and Beethoven, but it remains a work of great craftsmanship and balance; a greatly dignified and stately work. The Wilanow quartet performs it beautifully.

The Flute Quartet Op. 3 of 1806 was, up to the point that the Op. 19 was discovered, considered the only surviving quartet of Lessel's eleven. This piece is charming also and the tone of Gajewska's flute here is warm and expressive. It is perhaps a bit too heavy on the reverb, which admittedly helps with integrating the woodwind into the strings, but it sounds a mite artificial in playback. The first theme of the first movement is a syncopated slide down the scale. This isn't quite as appealing as the lovely melodies of the Op. 19 quartet. However the music here is written with a great sense of balance and with the instruments involved; extremely enjoyable. The other movements doff the hat to Polish folk music, but things tend to stay quite civilized and well-trimmed with just a touch of the rustic. Throughout the flute quartet, Gajewska retains a beautifully expressive warm tone working beautifully with the Wilanow throughout.

Though little remains of Lessel's works, it would be a shame if this were all that the public had access to, based on the outgoing charm these pieces hold. This reviewer hopes that more of the surviving works of this Haydn student eventually find their way onto disc in the near future.  
---David Blomenberg, musicweb-international.com

Franciszel Lessel, born in 1780 in WARSAW and living until 1838 was a leading representative of the late Classical style. At 19 he went to Vienna and studied under Joseph Haydn from 1799-1809 where he became Haydn's favorite pupil. And upon returning to Poland for good, Lessel became one of the most prominent composers of his time. Appreciated by critics and audiences, Lessel wrote a number of piano pieces which constituted the core of his own recital programmes as he pursued a career as a concert pianist. Lessel wrote primarily instrumental pieces as a young composer in both Vienna and Poland. His later life found him composing

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mostly religious compositions. This was after 1815. Though lost, he composed 6 Symphonies, now only a finale of his Symphony in G is extant. But what does still exist and been found and today being increasingly recorded are some chamber pieces, piano, and some concertos for wind and orchestra. This CD is 51 minutes of sheer beauty, the first a String Quartet No. 8 in B Flat wonderfully played by Wilanow String Quartet founded in Poland in 1967 and widely toured, and Lessel's Flute Quartet in G Major written in 1809 in Vienna. (While the String Quartet, played first on this CD was written in 1824 long after his return to Poland.) Both are wonderful examples of this composers talents. It may be composers of such great worth were forgotten after their deaths because recordings were not possible. We live in an age when all sorts of artists in music are researching dusty forgotten archives in Libraries and Conservatories, both wonderful repositories of great wealth, and slowly finding and recording the Jewels these two pieces are. If you want to hear the wonderful magic of music of Chopin's world, the 19th. Century, start here with Lessel and then try other works of his, recorded and available. You will not be sorry you listened, bought, collected this amazing Composer! ---G Duncan, amazon.com

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