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COMMUNICATION: REPORT

A New Dittersdorf Symphony Edition

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We are happy to announce The Dittersdorf Symphony Project, an initiative that will see all of Dittersdorf's symphonies published by Artaria Editions. The website www.dittersdorf.info will keep track both of the project and of artistic and scholarly publications associated with it.

Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf (1739–1799) was one of the most important composers working in the Habsburg Monarchy during the second half of the eighteenth century. He is perhaps most famous for his autobiography, which remains one of our most important primary sources about the life of a musician and composer in this era (*Karl von Dittersdorfs Lebensbeschreibung, seinem Sohne in die Feder diktirt* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1801)), for his role in creating a lasting German-speaking operatic tradition through *Singspiele* such as *Der Apotheker und der Doktor* (1786) and for one of his two double-bass concertos (*c*1764–1769), which remains a staple piece for double bassists.

Dittersdorf has also long been recognized as an important composer of symphonies, a field in which he was even more prolific than Joseph Haydn. We now intend to make available the approximately one hundred and fifty works in both critical editions and sound recordings. This project has long been envisioned by Artaria Editions and Naxos Music, but has tarried since the early 2000s owing to their numerous projects involving other composers of the eighteenth century and a lack of dedicated forces working on Dittersdorf. It has now been revived in cooperation with the Senter for tidligmusikk (Centre for Early Music) in Trondheim and the University of Stavanger.

In addition to supplying editions of the highest philological quality, the project both necessitates and is intended as a nexus for further research into Dittersdorf's career as a symphonist, as well as corroborating recent research that has not been widely distributed. Scholarship on the composer's symphonies is still understandably centred on Margaret Grave's seminal work, first in her doctoral dissertation ('First-Movement Form as a Measure of Dittersdorf's Symphonic Development' (New York University, 1977)) and later in one of the Garland symphony editions ('Thematic Index', in *The Symphony 1720–1840*, ed. Barry S. Brook and Barbara B. Heyman, series B, volume 1 (New York: Garland, 1985), xli–lxviii). However, all scholarship ages, and there is now both the opportunity and the need to bring work on Dittersdorf's symphonies up to date.

With regard to the authentication of the symphonies, Grave herself acknowledged that 'some works . . . may indeed prove to be authentic as we gain a more comprehensive knowledge of eighteenth-century symphony sources, especially those residing in less accessible East European archives ('Thematic Index', xli). Indeed, she did not have access to many smaller and larger archives in the former Eastern Bloc, such as the sizeable collections in Kroměříž. This is thoroughly understandable for a doctoral thesis written during the Brezhnev era, but a new attempt to establish a tally of authenticated symphonies is long overdue.

It also seems that Grave was not aware of a particularly important source. Several works in the Saxon State Library in Dresden (today Sächsiche Landesbiblothek – Staats- und

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Universitätsbibliothek Dresden (SLUB)) were heavily damaged when a cellar was flooded during the infamous bombing of the city in 1945. However, copies of some ruined manuscripts survive in the hand of Joseph Liebeskind (1866–1916). Liebeskind was a composer and an early pioneer in Dittersdorf scholarship. For the commemoration of the centenary of the composer's death in 1899 he oversaw the publication of ten symphonies, including the six based on the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, and these have remained Dittersdorf's most famous works in the medium ever since. Liebeskind had also transcribed as many as sixty-four symphonic works by Dittersdorf, largely from the aforementioned collections in Dresden, which since his death have been housed in the Schweizerische Nationalbibliothek in Bern. In this manner, works that had been believed lost actually survive in transcription.

It behoves us to mention that there is little new in this. Liebeskind's Dittersdorf manuscripts, for instance, were catalogued by the Schweizerische Nationalbibliothek as early as in 1944, yet seem to have had little impact in anglophone musicology. It might be correct to say that the most important recent Dittersdorf scholarship has moved from the anglophone to the Central European sphere, where a new generation of scholars either have recently submitted or are currently writing doctoral theses on the composer and his music. Of particular importance to the project is recent research into his career as a symphonist conducted by young scholars in Poland, especially the doctoral dissertation by Miłosz Kula from 2021, which includes an updated version of Grave's catalogue of Dittersdorf's symphonies ('Symfonie Carla Dittersa von Dittersdorfa oraz ich recepcja w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej i na Śląsku' (The Symphonies of Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf and Their Reception in the Former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and in Silesia), Uniwersytet Wrocławski). This has answered the need for a new catalogue of these works and will build a foundation for our future endeavours. Even so, whilst providing opinions on the likely authenticity of some works, Kula does reproduce Grave's list of questionable symphonies, and as the dissertation is written in Polish, wide international dissemination of his ideas might be unlikely.

It will thus also be necessary to adopt ideas from broader symphonic scholarship, and one of the main conclusions from recent research into the genre is that the traditional idea of what constitutes a symphony is overly narrow. In the case of Dittersdorf, there is sufficient evidence that his opera overtures were also performed as separate instrumental works, carrying the name of either overture or symphony. There appear to be no clear criteria for when an opera overture could be adapted as a symphony, and more likely than not it is mere coincidence which overtures survive as free-standing symphonies and which do not. As Mary Sue Morrow emphasized in *The Cambridge Companion to the Symphony*, 'For the eighteenth century, a *sinfonia* was a *sinfonia*' ((Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 29). In this spirit, the edition will also contain the composer's opera overtures. It is a great benefit that many of these works are otherwise likely to have languished in silence, in particular works that only survive in damaged copies in the SLUB collection, such as the short opera *Die befreyten Gwelfen* (1795). In this case, the manuscript is heavily damaged, but it should be feasible to reconstruct at least the overture.

It is not for now possible to give either a full tally of the works that will be included in the edition or a proposed time frame for the project. We intend to publish scores and CDs simultaneously, and this naturally involves far more people than our modest band of editors. Our preliminary contacts with possible partners have, however, been positive so far, and we hope that our first publications will be ready within a few years, and that a steady stream of volumes can be expected thereafter. We plan as our first publication Liebeskind's arrangements of three Ovid symphonies ('Ajax et Ulisse', 'Hercule en Dieu' and 'Jason, qui emporte la Toison d'or') whose orchestral originals are lost, but which survive in reductions for two pianos, and from which Liebeskind made new orchestral versions. The reductions have previously been published by Artaria and Naxos, and we are excited to bring out the Liebeskind orchestral arrangements in their closest possible approximation to Dittersdorf's originals.

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