

We know very little about Rosetti's early years. He is assumed to have been born in 1750 in Leitmeritz (Litoměřice), Northern Bohemia. Originally destined for the priesthood, he probably received his musical training from the Jesuits. Recent research shows that in the early 1770s he was employed by a Russian Count Orlov.

In November 1773 he joined the court orchestra of Prince Kraft Ernst zu Oettingen-Wallerstein (1748 to 1802). By the late 1770s he had already begun to make a name for himself as a composer. His works became an integral part of the famous *Concert spirituel* in Paris. At the end of October 1781 the prince arranged for him to spend several months in the French metropolis in order to study the concert and opera scene and establish contacts with publishers. Since his return in May 1782, at the latest, he directed the Wallerstein court orchestra along with Joseph Reicha (1752–1795). After Reicha left, he became its sole musical director, and in spring 1786 was appointed court capellmeister. From that year, his symphonies also figured regularly on the programmes of London's foremost concert series.

Despite his international recognition, Rosetti was always short of money. In July 1789 he left Wallerstein to take up the far better remunerated capellmeister post at the court of Duke Friedrich Franz I von Mecklenburg-Schwerin (1756–1837) in Ludwigslust. In December 1791 his Requiem in E flat major (RWV H15) was performed at the Prague memorial service for Mozart. At the beginning of March 1792, King Friedrich Wilhelm II (1744–1797) ordered a performance of Rosetti's oratorio *Jesus in Gethsemane* (RWV G2) and his *Hallelujah*-cantata (RWV G7) to be given in Berlin's City Palace, and invited the composer to take part. By this time Rosetti, who had always suffered from delicate health, was also plagued by a "nasty cough" and already critically ill. He died on 30 June 1792 in Ludwigslust.

For the two princely houses he served, Rosetti created a multitude of symphonies, concertos, wind partitas, chamber and vocal music – more than 400 compositions in all. Over half of them were published in his lifetime. Charles Burney considered him one of the most important composers of his time, and in 1789 mentioned him in the same breath as Haydn and Mozart. His mature works, in particular, are distinguished by a marked penchant for contrapuntal writing, very imaginative instrumentation and a rich tonal and harmonic language that occasionally anticipates Romanticism.

The piano trio as we know it today did not come from the trio sonata, the baroque music's leading genre dominant until the second part of the 18th century, but developed from the solo sonata with basso continuo and – after the decline of basso continuo practice – the accompanied piano sonata. In chamber music – while from the 1760s the harpsichord was increasingly supplanted by the fortepiano – the piano gradually increased in status from a simple continuo instrument

to full compositional equality. At the end of the 18th century, trios for piano, violin and cello (along with the many duos sonatas for piano and violin) were fashionable, especially in aristocratic salons and among the wealthy bourgeoisie. Haydn wrote as many as 45 such trios, although even in the later examples the cello closely follows the piano's bass line. Mozart was the first to let all three trio partners share equally in the musical fabric.

Rosetti's piano trios, usually described in the title pages as Divertimenti, Divertissements or Sonatas, are in the Haydn tradition. During the 1780s he wrote at least 17 of them (RWV D26–D42), usually in three movements; they were popular and widely distributed in his lifetime and beyond. Repeatedly published and extant in numerous contemporary copies, Trios RWV D26–D28 were published in 1799 by Harrison, Cluse & Co. in London as *Three Favourite Divertissements* in a version for solo piano.

Rosetti wrote the piano trios RWV D35–D38 towards the end of his stay in Wallerstein, just before taking up his position under the Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin. Three of them (D35, D36, D38) were probably commissioned by his friend, Speyer music publisher Heinrich Philipp Bossler, who first published them separately between June 1789 and August 1790 in his monthly musical magazine *Bibliothek der Grazien* (Library of the Graces). Shortly afterwards he brought out all three together under opus number IX. In the 18th century publishers often added such numbers without consulting the composer, at best only those works they published themselves. Therefore the numbers are meaningless within the composer's complete catalogue. A further print of the trios appeared around this time – either just before or just after Bossler's group of three – from Schott in Mainz as opus number VII. This includes a fourth trio, in F major, RWV D37, probably contemporary with its sister works. We don't know what prompted the Schott collective edition, the base for our edition. A possible scenario is that Bossler had received three trios, as commissioned, and published them successively in several issues of the *Bibliothek der Grazien*. Rosetti, however, had completed four trios before leaving Wallerstein. He sent the complete group of four – including RWV D37, presumably the most recent – to publisher Bernhard Schott, who agreed to bring out a complete edition, unaware that Bossler planned to do the same thing with the material available to him.

All four trios are ingenious, inspired light music, full of charm and wit. All are in three movements, but constructed differently, and it is obvious "that the violin does not only strive for independence, but at times already takes the thematic lead" (Oskar Kaul). While in D35 and D38 an introductory Allegro in sonata form is followed by a slow movement and a cheerful Rondo-Finale, D36 and D37 begin with a slow movement, followed by a Menuet and a Rondo.

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