

FOLKWAYS FH 5109

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FH 5109

AMERICAN COLONIAL INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

J. C. MOLLER: QUARTET IN E FLAT / J. GEHOT: QUARTET IN D MAJOR / The New Music Quartet
J. F. PETER: QUINTET NO. 1 IN D MAJOR / QUINTET NO. 6 IN E FLAT / The Moravian Quintet



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| THE MORAVIAN QUINTET | | THE NEW MUSIC QUARTET | |

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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FOLKWAYS FH 5109

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AMERICAN COLONIAL INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

John Christopher Moller ∞ *Joseph Gehot*
Johann Friedrich Peter

SIDE ONE

THE MORAVIAN BRETHREN,
Johann Friedrich Peter (1746-1813)

Quintet No. 1 in D Major -
Quintet No. 6 in E-Flat Major

The Moravian Brethren were undoubtedly the most musical settlers in colonial America. This sect, originally known as the *Unitas Fratrum* (or United Brethren), was founded by the followers of the Bohemian martyr John Hus, who lost his life at the Council of Constance in 1415. For several centuries its members were not very numerous, yet they brought out the first European collection of Hymns in the vernacular in 1501, and Luther wrote a preface to one of their doctrinal confessions in 1533, publishing it on his own press.

Besides hymns the brethren also sang anthems for voices and instruments and paid particular attention to secular music. Within a few years they established a *Collegium Musicum* for the purpose of developing instrumental performances. Farmers, craftsmen and ministers all took part, and, though amateurs, they were by no means dillitantes.

A trombone choir was used at church or community functions, weddings, christenings, pageants and banquets — and deaths were announced by musicians who frequently played from the tower of the church. The passion chorale of Hassler's (*O Haupt voll blut*), which Bach employed so effectively in the *St. Matthew Passion*, became permanently associated with the latter ceremony. Benjamin Franklin, Samuel Adams and others were impressed with the musicianship of the Moravians:

"I was at their Church where I was entertained with good music, the organ being accompanied with violins, hautboys, flutes, clarinets, etc."

wrote the Philadelphia printer in 1756.

Perhaps the most distinguished composer-minister was Johann Friedrich Peter, born at Herrendijk, Holland, in 1746, of German parents. Peter was educated abroad, and although he had talent, discipline was required to bring it out: "I learned music with much trouble and through many floggings," he informs us. It was while studying at the seminary at Barby in Saxony that he copied out dozens of instrumental compositions by the later 18th century German composers: C. F. Abel, J. C. Bach, Johann Stamitz, and Joseph Haydn.

Coming to the colonies at the age of 24, he was made secretary of the Brethren's House and director of music at Bethlehem, and for the next forty-three years, was the leading Moravian musical personality in the new world. So successful was Peter in his efforts that he was transferred for seven years (between 1786 and 1793) to Lititz, Pennsylvania, Graceham, Maryland, and Salem, North Carolina to revive and stimulate music activity in those centers. The last years of his life were spent in Bethlehem where he died in 1813.

Most of his compositions were for voices and orchestra, but at Salem Peter wrote Six Quintets for two violins, two violas and 'cello, the score being dated 9. Jan. 1789; the first violin part 28. Febr. 1789. They were probably the first quintets written in this country and Folkways Records takes

great pleasure in bringing them out.

Peter uses the sonata form throughout his first movements though he tends to shorten the recapitulations by repeating only part of the initial theme and cutting the transitional passages. His development is quite free, and he uses ideas from his own expositions. Binary and three-part song forms are found in the slow movements and minuets, while the fast finales are rather like the opening movements in character.

The Bethlehem Music Director was fond of trills, appoggiaturas, triplets, broken chord figures, rapidly repeated staccatos and 16th notes. His music is idiomatic, lying well for strings and full of dynamic contrast. While the over-all style is European, the Quintets have a certain Colonial home-spun quality which lends a peculiar grace. The contrasting key relationships are interesting, the works being in D, A, G, C, Bb Major and Eb Major. The music of the Moravians, while simple fundamentally, also was ornamented and this musical provincialism, which "sounds" is an essential part of its charm.

SIDE TWO

John Christopher Moller (C. 1750-1803)

QUARTET IN E-FLAT,

John Christopher Moller's early life is unknown to us; we do not even know where he was born but presume somewhere in Germany or Central Europe. He apparently lived in England for a decade before coming to this country in 1790. Moller, like many of his contemporaries, was versatile, for he played the harpsichord, piano and organ and was active as composer and manager until his death in New York, September 21, 1803.

Moller's style echoes the age and the models were good. This quartet is the last of his SIX QUARTETTES FOR TWO VIOLINS, TENOR AND VIOLONCELLO. The bass part, like some of Haydn's early quartets, is figured but this is due rather to the custom of the time than to any intrinsic need for it. Moller has a charming sense of form and a marked understanding of contrasting dynamics. His melodic line is lyric and he was fond of syncopation in his rhythmic patterns. Like Haydn he understood the value of unison writing as well as richer harmonic design. This is music which illustrates the high standard possessed by the "eminent and versatile professors" who were active in this country at the end of the 18th century.

Joseph Gehot (1756-18..?)

QUARTET IN D-MAJOR, Op. 7, No. 6,

Joseph Baudoin Gehot was born at Brussels, Belgium, April 8, 1756 and arrived in London for the first time about 1777. Becoming active

in the musical life of the English capital, he published a book of string quartets and a set of trios (opus one and two) which were well received. Fetis states that he travelled in France and Germany — some manuscript quartets are in Berlin — but he apparently kept returning to England for he not only brought out much chamber music but was featured as a violin virtuoso (1781). Gehot was further responsible for a Treatise on the theory and practice of music (1784) and The Complete Instructor for Every Instrument (1790). He even tried his hand at martial music writing: Twenty-four military pieces consisting of Marches, Minuets, Quick-Movements, etc. for two Clarinets, two Horns and a Bassoon. For a number of years he was a member of the "Professional Concerts" and played in the orchestra which Salomon organized when Haydn visited London in 1791. Gehot went to America the next year, together with three orchestral companions, B. Bergman, James Hewitt and William Young.

Either on the way over or shortly after his arrival, he wrote an overture expressive of his voyage, which unfortunately, has not survived. The titles of the twelve movements, however, are intriguing: "1. Introduction. 2. Meeting of the adventurers, consultation and their determination on departure. 3. March from London to Gravesend. 4. Affectionate separation from their friends. 5. Going on board, and pleasure at recollecting the encouragement they hope to meet with in a land where merit is sure to gain reward. 6. Preparation for sailing, carpenter's hammering, crowing of the cock, weighing anchor, etc. 7. A Storm. 8. A Calm. 9. Dance on the deck by the passengers. 10. Universal joy on seeing land. 11. Thanksgiving for safe arrival. 12. Finale"... a program piece for fair! Despite his pictorial style, Gehot composed many more non-descriptive than descriptive works.

This piece by Joseph Gehot is Number 6 of Opus 7, Six Quartettes for Two Violins, Tenor and Cello, published about 1780.

The opening Presto in 3/8 follows the conventional eight measure phrase scheme; passages of piano and forte are used contrastingly, and one seems to sense a Gallic clarity and wit. The minuet, slow rather than spritely, has a charming trio in which the solo violin is heard to advantage. A Rondo andante with an almost Celtic flavor concludes the work, and Gehot must have been influenced by the folk music of Great Britain. This movement flows from major to minor and back again, the final phrase having a somewhat martial character.

Unfortunately, according to J. R. Parker, Gehot died in obscurity and indigent circumstances; we do not know where or when.

NUMERICAL LIST AND ORDER FORM

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