

Marlow U3A Music Appreciation Group, Nov 2009

Franz Krommer (1759-1831)



Compositions

- ♪ Not very well-known except to wind players
- ♪ In fact a prolific composer with at least 300 published compositions to his credit including:
 - ♪ at least five symphonies
 - ♪ 70 string quartets and many others for wind and strings
 - ♪ about 15 string quintets, and
 - ♪ much music for wind instruments by themselves.

Early Life

- Born František Vincenc Kramář, in Kamenice in Moravia, son of a Czech innkeeper and his wife.
- Showed unusual early talent and began studying violin and organ with an uncle.
- Served as organist for a number of years, studying music theory and composition on his own.
- Aspiring young musicians were drawn to Vienna, hoping for royal patronage.
- So, aged 26, he moved to Vienna.

Progress and Fame

- Unsuccessful for a year, then obtained post as violinist in Hungarian court.
- Went on to become music director there, then music director at Pecs Cathedral.
- 1795 returned to Vienna. Posts with various noblemen.
- Eventually entered the service of Emperor Franz I, succeeding Leopold Koseleuch as court composer and director of chamber music.
- Held this post until death, aged 72, in 1831.

Progress and Fame

- ♪ His string quartets were held in particularly high esteem by contemporaries. Some compared them with Haydn's.
- ♪ Beethoven regarded him as a compositional rival for a time.
- ♪ While he was a successful composer in Vienna, he adopted the German spelling of his name: Franz Vinzenz Krommer.

Decline and Revival?

- ♪ Following his death in 1831 his reputation faded, largely because of the increasing dominance of Beethoven.
- ♪ Another factor to have hampered popularity over the years is variable name spelling!
- ♪ In 1985 contemporary wind soloists contributed to a revival of forgotten musical treasures for their instruments. Their efforts to rescue him from a posthumous oblivion continue.

Music Today

Three excerpts from two of his bassoon quartets:

- ♪ First movement –
Allegro - Op.46, No.1
- ♪ Second movement –
Adagio – Op.46, No.2
- ♪ Third movement –
Minuetto – Op.46, No.2.

