

Bertold Hummel - In Print

This department lists string music and books recently printed or reissued. Publications of interest are reviewed briefly. In each issue, a particular composer is featured with some biographical details and information about works of interest to string players.

It is no surprise to discover that composer Bertold Hummel trained as a cellist as well as a composer. He writes with an intimate knowledge of strings, and seems to favor the lower sound of viola and cello. His special talent is for composing pieces which are full of variety and vitality, but technically easy enough for capable students. These pieces will delight teachers and students who are looking for accessible contemporary music.

Born in 1925 in Hüfingen, Germany, Hummel has written close to 100 works, including orchestral music, chamber music, sacred works, and a chamber opera, *The Emperor's New Clothes*. Early in his career he toured as a cellist and composer, then served as cantor in Freiburg. From 1979-87 he was President of the Academy of Music in Würzburg.

Works such as the *Suite, Op. 78* for violin solo, reveal a complicated side to Hummel's nature. But he is at his best in pieces such as the *Sonatina No. 1, Op. 35*, originally written in 1969 for violin and piano, and also available in arrangements for viola and piano, and cello and piano. The strong rhythms and bold harmonies of the first movement contrast with the second movement, an elegy played *con Sordino*. The lively last movement alternates an *alla breve* time signature with $3/4$ time. The piano part supplies a good deal of musical interest, and the piece is always musically gratifying.

The *Sonatina No. 2* for cello and piano is another piece in Hummel's varied, economical style. Like the *Sonatina No. 1*, this piece is made up of three contrasting movements, with a slow middle movement. The entire cello part can be played in the first position. However, the piano part, although well-balanced with the cello part, is far from easy, and the effect is somewhat reminiscent of the *Three Easy Pieces* by Hindemith. The *Little Suite*, for cello and piano, and the short but effective *Arioso* for cello and piano, from 1986, round out Hummel's significant contribution to the literature for cello and piano.

His *Sonatina Op. 69b* for double bass and piano will be welcomed by teachers and young bass players. Hummel works with uncomplicated musical material, and yet he manages continually to surprise and delight with his harmonic and rhythmic contrasts.

Although many of Hummel's pieces for solo stringed instrument and piano are clearly intended for students, I would not hesitate to place them on a recital program. Their beauty and excitement could not fail to please an audience.

(D.M.R) Strings/USA Feb. 1991