



Smithsonian
National Museum of American History
Behring Center

The Smithsonian Chamber Music Society

4 June 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

The activities of Professor José Vazquez have been known to me for over three decades. His accomplishments on the baroque violin and viola da gamba are internationally renowned, and need no further commendation.

The Orpheon Foundation Museum of Musical Instruments, which Professor Vazquez has painstakingly assembled over many years, is an extraordinary cultural resource. The collection is remarkable not only for its sheer size, but also for its breadth, with each family of instruments represented by numerous makers, including not only famous names, but many other important regional craftsmen of manifest talent. The Hapsburg Empire is particularly well documented in this regard, with the magnificence of Stainer complemented by examples by first-rank makers such as Stadlmann, Albanus, Jais, Klotz, Widhalm, Maussicell, Eberle, and Secloss. The presence in the collection of instruments by Posch, Schorn, Leidolf, Fichtl, Horil, Alletsee, Hulinsky, and others completes the picture, and in fact offers a far more realistic portrayal of the organological output of Mozart's geographic and chronological setting than do many ostensibly more select museum collections which, in their concentration on a few makers, present a rather skewed impression.

But what is perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the Orpheon Collection is Professor Vazquez's insistence that all of the instruments be restored to playable condition, and that, so restored, they be put to their original use: making music. The zeal with which this goal has been pursued is rivaled only by the single-mindedness with which Professor Vazquez labors in the pedagogical field. His devotion to his students is exemplary, and his generosity in making his instruments available to both his own students and to many worthy professionals is unprecedented. There is to my knowledge no other collection of this size in the world which strives to make itself truly "open" to players, builders, and the interested public. The series of exhibitions (with collateral concerts, masterclasses, and courses) Professor Vazquez has arranged throughout Europe speaks to his ability to deal with the myriad and complex organizational issues on which the success of such enterprises rests.

I urge you to accept the Orpheon Foundation proposal. It would, I am certain, provide one of the most fitting tributes to that great Austrian composer we have experienced in this anniversary year, one which would bring its audiences into direct contact with the Mozartean *Klangwelt*.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kenneth Slowik

Curator of Musical Instruments and Artistic Director, Smithsonian Chamber Music Society

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