



## ***The Cobbett Association for Chamber Music Research***

6827 Roxbury Dr. Sarasota, Fl. 34231 Tel. 813-922-6986

### **The Joy of Chamber Music at Interlochen**

"This is like a week in Heaven!" remarked one cellist at the big party on the final night of the conference.

Professional and amateur musicians, 250 strong, attended the annual chamber music conference, Aug. 20-27, at the Interlochen Arts Camp in Michigan. Perfect weather, a beautiful natural setting, and superb concerts by the Manhattan String Quartet and other performing artists on the faculty, all contributed to the success of the conference.

It was spiritual, inspirational, and joyful -- and that's why some have been coming for over 30 years. Many newcomers were welcomed and old friendships renewed. After numerous concerts, master classes, regular assignments, and free lance sessions, a fitting conclusion was a big party on the lakeshore, complete with a full moon, a glowing campfire, and good fellowship for all. Talk about atmosphere! No wonder so many look forward to repeating this experience in August, 1992.

The Cobbett Association was well represented at the conference with the following members in attendance: Herb and Peg Walker, cello and vl, Glastonbury, CT; Dorothy Thomas, vl, Overland Park, KS; Nancy Rude, pf, Walnut Creek, CA; Tim Mooney, cello, Kenner, LA; Vadim Mazo, vl-va (faculty), Milwaukee, WI; Bayla Keyes, vl (faculty), Muir Quartet; Eric Lewis, vl, (faculty), Manhattan S.Q.; John and Bonnie Cataldo, vl & cello (faculty), Atlanta, GA; Naida MacDermid, va, Fort Wayne, IN; Ed Gould, vl, Kent, OH; Betty Gehring, vl, Valparaiso, IN; Alice Neidner, vl-va, Granville, OH; and Robert Maas, vl, Sarasota, FL.

### **Cobbett Association Has Successful First Year**

Your association reports a very successful first year since its organization in September, 1990, and the strong interest shown in its research project by both professional and amateur musicians has been very gratifying.

Its research is uncovering many important chamber music works by neglected composers that are rarely played.

Published and sent to members during the first year, were four quarterly newsletters and four extensive annotated lists of chamber works by neglected composers. This included the evaluation of 187 string quartets, 13 string trios, 10 vl and pf sonatas, 9 piano trios, 10 piano quartets, and 14 piano quintets. (Oct, 1991, distribution not included in these figures.) In addition, a large number of inquiries about rare chamber music were answered by letter or phone.

In 1992, the Association's Palm Strings Quartet will continue its study and evaluation of string quartets. In addition, evaluations and lists of recommended chamber music for piano and strings will be furnished to members as research progresses.

During its first year, the following professional performing groups became members of the Cobbett Association:

Manhattan String Quartet  
Pro-Arte Quartet of U. of Wis.  
The Muir Quartet of Boston U.  
Lark Quartet of New York City  
Chester Quartet of Indiana U.  
Philadelphia Quartet of the Philadelphia Symphony  
Mirecourt Trio of Grinnell Col, Iowa

## **New Catalogue of Unusual Chamber Music Now Available**

The new catalogue of chamber music in the Helen Rice Memorial Collection at the Hartford, CT, Public Library is now available to any borrower in the U.S., through the Inter-Library Loan System. The only requirement is that requests for music be routed through the borrower's own public library.

The catalogue cumulates the original list plus its four supplements and additions made through June, 1991. Its compiling and publication has been a joint project of the Hartford Library and the Amateur Chamber Music Players, Inc.

If you would like a copy, write to Vernon Martin, Art & Music Dept., Hartford Public Library, 500 Main St., Hartford, CT 06103-3003.

## **Advisory Council Members Have Busy and Rewarding Summer**

Several of our Council members traveled widely this past summer and had interesting and varied chamber music activities.

**Mary Sanks** directed the 21st annual Adult Chamber Music Festival the last week in June at Montana State U., Bozeman, MT, a responsibility she has had for all those years.

Cellist **Betty Martin** of the Association's Palm Strings Quartet, spent over two months in exotic Bangkok, Thailand, while her husband was on an assignment there for an organization of retired executives. Varied musical activities kept her very busy.

**Dave Canfield**, violinist and composer, and owner of Ars Antiqua, a large out-of-print classical records facility, moved his operations to larger quarters just west of Bloomington, IN. New address: 6060 McNeely St., Ellettsville, IN 47429. In September he traveled to many European countries to buy rare classical recordings for customers.

**Martha DeYoung**, violin and viola teacher and curator of the Cayvan Chamber Music Library at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI, toured Europe in June with her husband

who directed the college band on the tour. She also served on the faculty of the college's summer music camp in August.

**Helen Blachly**, cellist, attended the chamber music workshop held every June at Converse College, Spartanburg, S.C.

**John and Bonnie Cataldo**, violin and cello, toured the Northwest U.S. and Canadian Rockies in June and served on the faculty at the Interlochen Chamber Music Conference in August.

Cellist **Eleanor Smith** attended the Adult Chamber Music Festival at Montana State U. in June.

**Robert Maas** spent a week of concentrated research in the Cayvan Chamber Music Library at Calvin College before attending the Interlochen Conference.

## **Violin Society of America Introduced to Cobbett Assn.**

The August '91 newsletter of the Violin Society of America featured an article describing the purpose and activities of the Cobbett Association.

Our appreciation is extended to Philip Kass, Associate with William Moennig & Son, LTD, of Philadelphia, and editor of the newsletter, for furnishing this information to the members of the society.

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Please notify the Cobbett Association of any change in your address.

This newsletter is published in January, April, July, and October by the Cobbett Association for Chamber Music Research, 6827 Rosbury Dr., Sarasota, FL 34231  
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# A Guide to Milhaud's 18 String Quartets

Darius Milhaud (1892-1974), the great French composer, had 450 works to his credit and was especially noted for his work in polytonality.

In 1940 he immigrated to New York City and eventually settled in Oakland, CA, where he taught at Mills College for 31 years.

His 18 quartets offer a wealth of invention ranging from a simple, popular style to complex polytonal combinations, but they are rarely played, particularly in America.

Some of them have serious weaknesses and don't reflect Milhaud's best efforts. Others are so valuable they shouldn't be missed. Thus, it is important to sort them out so that time isn't wasted on those that have little value to the performer or listener. In the listing below, the level of difficulty and musical value is indicated.

**No.1** (1912) Very accessible with Debussy influence, but his use of augmented chords and parallel 5ths gives it a Milhaud style. Moderate Very Good

**No.2** (1915) Early modern primitive with strong rhythms, irregular accents, and polychordal dissonance all with folk melodies worked in. Dif. Exclt.

**No.4** (1918) Very concise. First use of polytonality in this experimental work. Features a funeral march, and themes are superimposed in very dense polyphony. Difficult Very Good

**No.6** (1922) Shortest one & very accessible. Uses polyphony and harmonics. Good introduction to 20th Century music. Mod.Good.

**No.7** (1925) Dedicated to Pro-Arte Quartet. Early modern, 4 mvmt, short, light, and transparent. Cleverly emphasizes 7 note melodies, 7 beats, and 7 measure phrases. Moderate Good

**No.8** (1932) Dedicated to E.S. Coolidge. A robust, rhythmic work with sombre 2nd mvmt followed by an animated and passionate finale. Numerous cello solos. Dif. Exclt.

**No.9** (1935) Harmonious, being in 3rds and 6ths most of the time. Lyric and melodious work with mild dissonance. Mod. V.G.

**No.10** (1940) Also dedicated to Mrs. Coolidge, a birthday present to her and first performed by the Coolidge Quartet. Is cheerful & suggests strength and hope. Some Bartok

influence. Difficult Very Good

**No.11** (1942) "American" Dedicated to Budapest Quartet. Has Am. rhythms and Fr. flavor with bucolic charm & dissonance. Difficult Excellent

**No.12** (1945) Dedicated to memory of Faure. Less experimental than earlier ones & was popular due to its beautiful melodies and cheerfulness. More advanced harmonies in slow movement. Mod. Good

**No.13** (1946) Another winner in Neo-classic style illustrating the composer's taste for So. Am. rhythms. Nicknamed Mexican. Difficult Excellent

**No. 16** (1950) Dedicated to his wife, Madeleine, for their 25th wedding anniversary. Very sentimental. Starts with a love song, then a dance, followed by a calm 3rd mvmt. Ends with a cheerful and thankful 4th expressing joy and love. Moderate Excellent

Following are those quartets not recommended since they were only partly successful or did not achieve favorable results:

**No.3** (1916) Being too long is its failure. Uses soprano in 2nd mvmt as does Schoenberg in his 2nd quartet.

**No.5** (1920) Dedicated to Schoenberg and least accessible of all, yet is sometimes featured by quartets looking for avant-garde style. Highly dissonant and polytonal.

**No.14 & 15** Designed to be played together as an octet, but the sound resulting is shocking and presents problems to both performers and listeners. Even played separately, they are weak & barren.

**No.17** (1950) Most complicated & elaborate work in the series, but not well received. Dedicated to his son.

**No.18** (1951) Dedicated to his parents and an unsuccessful epilog to the series. The conclusion quotes themes of No. 1.

Fortunately, all 18 quartets have been recorded by Cybelia Records of France, either on LP or CD, so now they can be heard even if not played. There is music worth hearing in all of them, and even the weakest ones provide a challenge for scholars to consider.

# First Choice Sonatas for Cello and Piano

These sonatas express a variety of national and romantic styles and are often neglected, even though the composers are not obscure by any means. There are many others of great merit, but these stand out as having exceptional music value. They should be played by cellists and pianists who have the opportunity and are blessed with the spirit of adventure. When it isn't practical to play them, one should seek the recordings and at least hear and enjoy their beauty.

**BRIDGE, Frank** (1879-1941) Eng. He was most generous with contributions to chamber music. During his career, his music underwent an amazing development. His 2 mvmt sonata, written 1913-17, is representative of his middle period. A work of eloquent passion, the soaring arch-like melody in the beginning is suited to the cello and is followed by an intense, almost rhapsodic tune. 2nd mvmt exploits an elegaic melody through a sequence of moods, then returns to the opening exposition. Brilliant piano scoring is shared in this late romantic work with Bridge's original stamp on it. Dif. Exclt.

**DELIUS, Frederick** (1862-1934) English. Sonata (1917). Considered his most important chamber work by some critics. It is short, concise, and a fine example of his most highly developed utterance. A seamless work of melodic extension & development with a slow middle section, a recap, and coda. Cello sings almost continuously, and the piano role is mainly that of harmonic support by chords and figuration. Mod. V.G.

**GRIGG, Edvard**, (1843-1907) Norwegian. Op.36 in A minor. Well-written and neglected work by this giant we know so well. Has much depth, & 1st allegro expresses a passionate Nordic mood with a dramatic development and a stormy coda. A serene andante becomes dramatic. In final allegro, the mood changes with an original peasant dance and effective climax in the coda. Difficult Excellent

**KODALY, Zoltan** (1882-1967) Hungarian. Sonata, Op. 4 (1910) Combines his talent as an expert impressionist with pioneer research in Hungar. folk music (shared with Bartok) to produce an original work of much value.

1st mvmt "Fantasia" is pure mystic impressionism -- more passionate than Debussy. No strict classic form used. Brilliant arabesques for piano are prevalent. 2nd allegro con spirito features ethnic song and dance. Difficult Excellent

**MSKOVSKY, Nikolai** (1881-1950) Russian. No.2 Op. 81 in A Minor. Dedicated to Rostropovich. This sonata is a turning point in his career and was written in response to the Communist Party's directive to prominent Russian composers to abandon "formalism" and compose works more accessible to the people. He returns here to the traditional values of Russian romantic style. 1st allegro has beautiful themes. Andante cantabile similar style, then an allegro, moto perpetuo of fast dance tunes with fast passage work for both. Traditional classic form without the minuet. Difficult Excellent

**RACHMANINOFF, Sergei** (1873-1943) Russ. Op.19 in G minor (1901). Composed the same year as his Pf Con No.2 which it resembles. Piano does not dominate. Melodic with big impressive themes of romantic character and development with dramatic pauses. 4 mvmts follow classic sonata form. Very lyric andante. Finale has brilliant rondo in the tonic key of the 1st allegro. Difficult Very Good

**REGER, Max** (1876-1917) German. No.3, Op.78 in F. Despite a narrow life span, this prolific Bach lover and master of counterpoint, created a highly developed chromatic and modulatory technique of composition and gave old forms new creative meaning. Opening allegro is rhapsodical, expressive, and sorrowful, but scherzo is a big contrast with good humor. An andante con var. next, then a lively gigue-like finale. Dif. Exclt.

No.4, Op. 116 in A minor. Equally as good, this sonata features a scherzo (presto) between beginning allegro and largo, 2 mvmts of much contrapuntal complexity and melodic design. The final allegretto expresses much charm. Difficult Excellent

Serious study of Reger's works is needed for understanding them. The results can be very rewarding.

The purpose of this organization is to study, evaluate, and preserve rare and neglected chamber music of special merit, and to share information and encourage the performance of such music.