



# The Cobbett Association's Chamber Music Journal

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## W.W.Cobbett Turns 150

by Renz Opolis

Would that it weren't so, but Walter Wilson Cobbett, unlike those wizened, yogurt guzzling Azerbaijani peasant lads still alive at 165, (or so we are told by manufacturers of the stuff) is no longer with us. Yet for an Englishman born during the middle of the 19th Century, Mr. Cobbett (1847-1937) enjoyed, as his countrymen would say, good innings. In any event, it is certainly fitting, on this the sesquicentennial anniversary of his birth, that we in The Cobbett Association pause to pay tribute to the man whose work we so appreciate and whose life-long passion we share.

I feel constrained to say that Eugene Goosens' rather smug comments about his evenings at Cobbett's (See: *The Importance of Patronage*, which appeared in the December, 1996 issue of the *Journal*) really presented a rather distorted and unfair picture of the man who almost single-handedly rejuvenated British chamber music at the beginning of this century. In 1905 he began his famous Cobbett Phantasy Composition Competitions in which he awarded prizes for the best work in the form of a fantasy, something 16th Century English composers had pioneered. It is Cobbett we have to thank for so many wonderful chamber music compositions including works by Frank Bridge, William Hurlstone, Ralph Vaughn-Williams, John Ireland, Charles Stanford, York Bowen as well as Goosens, himself.

In London, Cobbett founded a highly successful leather manufacturing company, Scandinavia Belting, Ltd., from which he made a fortune. By the time he was sixty, he had retired from business and devoted the last thirty years of his life and much of his money almost exclusively to the services of chamber music. But even before Cobbett retired, people used to say that he could have been even wealthier than he was except for the fact that he only

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## The String Quartets of George Onslow

By R.H.R. Silvertrust

**Introduction & Acknowledgments**  
*It is with great excitement and pleasure that I begin what is certainly the most ambitious project to date by a writer in the Journal. If a contest were held to determine which unknown or little-known chamber music composer was the most deserving of great recognition, I can think of no other composer more deserving than George Onslow. Certainly, there may be others who are as deserving, but none more so, and I hasten to add that I am hardly alone in this view. Over the years Onslow, with my help, has made scores of admirers. I cannot recall one session in which a work of his I introduced did not receive universal praise from all who had either played it or heard it played. Those who have read the Journal over the past few years have come to understand that*

*his name stands high in the pantheon of honored composers among Cobbett Association members who have had the good fortune to have discovered his music.*

*While here and there, as of late, a few of George Onslow's thirty six string quartets have been recorded and therefore described, albeit briefly, in the accompanying program notes, as far as I know, there has never been any comprehensive, systematic and detailed treatment of these great works in English (or quite possibly in any other language) It had been a long-time goal of mine to attempt such a project and when formally asked back in 1992 to undertake it, I*

**Our Offices will be closed between  
March 20th and April 1st**

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## Grazyna Bacewicz and Her Chamber Music

By Dr. William Horne



Grazyna Bacewicz Poland') Led by Karol Szymanowski, who was described by Stefan Kisielewski as, "...one of the most eminent women composers in the world. No other woman composed so many musical works in so many different genres, and of such high quality." She was born in Lodz (then in Russia) and

encouraged Polish musical students to study abroad embrace international trends and many, including Bacewicz, Andrej Panufnik, and Witold Lutoslawski, did study with Nadia Boulanger in Paris in the 1920s and 1930s, as well as composers such as Dukas, Koechlin, and Roussel. Bacewicz also studied violin with Andre Touret and Carl Flesch. This was probably the most significant music experience of her training, for during World War II, any Polish nationalism, including music, was severely curtailed by the Nazis, and survived only covertly.

began music studies at five. After graduating, she was enrolled in the Conservatory in Warsaw and graduated in 1932 with instruction in violin, piano and composition and as well as philosophy.

Polish music had become a cultural backwater following Chopin, until the beginnings of the 20th century, when a group of young composers started an association called "Mlada Polska" ('Young

After the war, musical organizations sprang to life: The Polish Music Publishers, the

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## Chamber Music Journal

R.H.R. Silvertrust, *Editor*

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## The Sounding Board-Letters to the Editor



### Carnival of Animals *Not* a Septet!

How can I obtain a copy of the Association's chamber music library holdings? I noted the Berkshire String Quartet concert on page one of the December *Journal* which included a piano quintet by Ludwig Thuille, Op.20. I would like to obtain this.

With regard to Saint Saëns's Septet also noted on page one of the *Journal* (December 1996), this is not the same work as the chamber version of the *Carnival of the Animals*.

Allen Balsbaugh  
Mansfield Hills, Massachusetts

*I wish I could truthfully say that I plant these little errors just to see how closely readers are paying attention. You are, of course, quite right, the chamber music (i.e. original) version is not the Septet in E flat for trumpet, piano two violins, viola, cello and bass. Written some seven years later (1886), Carnival of the Animals, depending on whether one or two percussionists are used, is for either 10 or 11 players: two pianos, two violins, viola, cello, bass, flute (and piccolo), clarinet and celesta.*

*A catalogue of the Association's library holdings can be obtained by sending us a check for five dollars. Unfortunately we have no music by Thuille. The program you make reference to was a reproduction from a 1904 concert.*

### More Places To Get That Music

Here are a few possible additions to your list of music shops. (See the December 1996 issue of the *Journal* "A Shopper's Guide to Newly Published Music") In New York, friends of mine speak well of the Frank Music Company at 250 W. 54th St., not far from Patelson's. Here in the Washington D.C. area, our best shop for buying chamber music is the Dale Music Company in suburban Silver Spring, Maryland. Bostonian friends go to a place in Cambridge called Yesterday Service.

Morton Raff  
Chevy Chase, Maryland

### SOS for Missing Measures

Especially enjoyed the December issue of the *Journal*. I have a copy of Saint Saëns' Piano Quintet, Op.14. Recently I discovered that the last page to the piano part did not get copied. I cannot remember my source. Can you help me? I found your comments on the Berens

String Trios, Op.85 worthwhile and have ordered the CD. Are there any recordings for the following string trios? Kodaly *Intermezzo*, Irving Fine *Fantasia*, Bertold Hummel *Capriccio*, and Ernst Toch's *Serenade, Op.25*?

Dorothy Thomas  
Overland Park, Kansas

*Unfortunately we do not have the Saint Saëns Piano Quintet. Would any member who has this work please copy the last page and send it to us to forward to Ms. Thomas. The Fine is recorded on CRI CD 574, I know of no CD of the Kodaly, however it was recorded on a Hungaroton LP #11449, the Toch is recorded on a Protone CD 165, there is, to my knowledge no recording of the Hummel.*

### Florida Feast of Chamber Music

About twenty years ago, the 2 year-old grandson of a violinist we were visiting greeted us exuberantly with the words: "Haydn—Mozart—and everybody like that!" We have just returned from a week in Florida where we enjoyed playing works by everybody nearly, but not quite, like that. We and our friends the Whitbys bring literature that is hard to find without scouring catalogues of antiquarian music dealers, auctions, libraries and second-hand music stores. We may be the only visitors to the environs of Sarasota who are somewhat oblivious to the weather—the pouring rain and pounding waves of January 1996, and the glorious sunshine and blue sky of this year, did not deter us from our exploration of lesser-known composers. Of course this pleasurable pastime is greatly enhanced by additional pursuits: walking on the beach; swimming; eating local seafood; observing exotic birdlife, gorgeous blossoms, and sunsets. Our rented cottage allows us to play—and cook, eat, sleep—to our heart's content. Seven years ago my husband, Bert and I came to Sarasota to meet Robert Maas, who had contacted us to tell us about his collection of copies of neglected chamber music. I remember a memorable afternoon at the home of Betty Martin, the 'cellist of the quartet which met regularly to evaluate the works that he had amassed—now acquired by the Cobbett Association. Betty is a fine cellist with a beautiful tone which blends perfectly with the other instruments without overpowering them. Last year she introduced us to 2 'cello quintets that Robert Maas had quoted: the first was by Wilhelm Berger (1861-1911) The entry in Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey says: "His

## At The Doublebar

As we enter 1997, the fourth year under my stewardship and the eighth of the Association's existence, I am pleased to announce several exciting developments on the horizon.

Perhaps the one of greatest significance is that the Board of Advisors will meet sometime during this year. Such a meeting is bound to give us added direction and focus toward the many objectives which we have set. Subjects to be discussed will include the holding of a Chamber Music Workshop Week during 1998. This will provide an opportunity for Cobbett Members and others who are interested to play and perform 'Cobbett Music'. We are hoping to arrange for a professional string quartet or piano trio to be available for coaching and to give a formal public concert of 'Cobbett Music.' Other subjects on the table will be ways to expand our membership, becoming involved in publishing and recording works, and expanding our library.

I originally planned a short column listing the names of those who generously gave donations to the Association in addition to their annual suggested contribution (dues), but so many have done so, that space did not allow for it. I want to thank those of you who have contributed and assure you that your donations will be put to the uses we specified in our letter. While we only ask for donations once a year (at dues time) certainly they can be made at any time. Your donations are tax deductible in the U.S.

The Miami String Quartet, one of our professional ensemble members, announced that it has recently recorded the two Saint Saëns String Quartets and the Faure Quartet on the BMG label. Look for it soon.

On a sad note, Records International, a wonderful source for unusual chamber music recordings, is ceasing operations in June of this year

**30% of you have not yet made your suggested tax deductible donation (dues) for 1997. Please return it promptly as we cannot operate without it.**

## W.W. Cobbett's Sesquicentennial

(Continued from page 1)

devoted to his business what little time he could spare from his chamber music.

Although Cobbett's professional career was not in music, he could not have been an indifferent fiddler as Mr. Goosens suggests, for in his youth Cobbett had served as concertmaster with several English orchestras and many have written, including R.A. Streatfield and Frank Howes, that Cobbett was indeed a very fine violinist.

Of course, he is best known today for his editorship and compilation of *Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, the first two volumes of which appeared in 1929. A third volume under the editorship of Colin Mason was published in 1963. It is by far and away the foremost reference source on chamber music in English, if not in any language. It is doubtful that we shall see its equal anytime soon. The *Cyclopedia* grew out of his earlier efforts from 1913-1916, during which he funded a publication called *The Music Student*. In the preface to the *Cyclopedia*, he writes he would have preferred men 'more competent than he' to have taken on the monumental task of editing such a work, but alas, none stepped forward as they were too full of engagements. (*sounds familiar to me—ed.*) Amazingly, he was past 70 when he began the project.

In the body of Volume I, an engrossing

article entitled *Chamber Music Life* details his own experiences. He recalls his reaction to hearing chamber music, "It is not an exaggeration to say that there opened before me an enchanted world into which I longed to gain an entrance."

Later on, he wrote, "Since I first began to play chamber music with serious intent I have regarded this branch of the art with a crescendo of interest which has to my amazement gathered in intensity with the flight of time, and even yet may not have reached its culminating point, although I am well aware that, like the typical Beethoven crescendo, it must eventually end in a piano subito... followed by sleep. But if my activities cease tomorrow I have lived long enough to be able to testify... that the will to live is strengthened, and mental juvenescence to some extent retained in advanced age, by a steady continuance of the practice of chamber music.

There are those among my own countrymen who look upon my enthusiasm as exaggerated. It is certainly not an English trait, and unless associated with some form of sport, not considered 'good form' in society. But who would not be enthusiastic, who would not be profoundly grateful, if he felt as I do the happiness which I have enjoyed for so many years?" Amen.

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### Letters to the Editor (continued)

chamber music has permanent value though it will be appreciated only by people of refined judgment who turn to music for enlightenment and edification." Naturally we all enjoyed it! The other quintet was by Franz Gebel (1787-1843) who wrote eight 'cello quintets and a double quintet (which must be an interesting combination). The one we played was quite a curiosity, with the last movement portraying church bells. We also indulged ourselves by playing 2 Krommer quartets a day—one for a.m. the other p.m.—as well as some worthwhile Spohr and Boccherini (incidentally the latter's quartets are less threatening to 'cellists than his quintets.) Cobbett says that Krommer wrote 96 string quartets so there is quite a future for us, I hope, since the exploration of his works is extremely rewarding most of the time. Musically

there is a taste of Haydn and Beethoven but his own style is quite distinctive. He shows a genial nature in general but there are somber, heartfelt moments and his writing can sometimes be technically challenging to all four instruments as well as first violin. For dessert we often enjoyed skillful and witty arrangements of Gershwin melodies by Bill Thorpe.

Veronica Jacobs  
New York

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# The String Quartets of George Onslow

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quickly agreed. Only then, however, did I realize the extent of the difficulty and enormity of the task I had taken on. Not only had there never been a book or detailed article about the string quartets, there

had never been a book about George Onslow to appear in English. It was through Albert Novakoff of the International Onslow Society that I learned of an unpublished doctoral thesis about the composer which had been written in the early 1980s. When it proved impossible to obtain a copy from either the author or University Microfilms Inc., Mr. Novikoff generously made his personal copy of the thesis available to me. The thesis, authored by Richard Franks, is a massive two volume affair, the great bulk of which deals with the composer's ancestors (who are tracked by the author back to 1174), his immediate family and his life. There is also a fair amount of discussion and analysis of certain works, most notably those for piano and opera. The string quartets, are for the most part dealt with rather cursorily. This is, I suppose understandable in view of the fact that Mr. Franks, a pianist, never played any of these works and would not have had much opportunity to hear them. The great value of his thesis, in my view, is twofold: First, it provides a fair amount of detail about the composer's life and circumstances, which heretofore had been unknown. This, in itself, was no mean accomplishment, and Mr. Franks, by his own admission, spent 10 years tracking down living relatives and searching family archives and other files before he was able to tell what little is known of George Onslow's life. Secondly, his thesis examines and attempts to answer the question of why it was that Onslow's reputation suffered so severely after his death. This had always intrigued me especially since, during his lifetime, Onslow was held in the highest regard in Germany, Austria and England, if not

France. No less a discerning critic than Robert Schumann ranked Onslow's chamber music with that of Mozart, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn. I am indebted to and wish to thank Richard Franks for his permission to quote from his thesis and use the fruits of his research in this article.

Beyond learning the details of Onslow's life there was also the problem of obtaining the music. Currently, no string quartet of George Onslow's is in print. To this end, I have been helped greatly by and wish to thank Messrs. James Whitby and Nicholas Cunningham who have provided me with copies of many of the string quartets which I had, on my own, been unable to find.

Lastly, one needs, of course, to play the works. Although it is common place for reviewers of music, many of whom are not even musicians, never to have performed the works they review, I personally believe such stuff to be of limited, and in the case of players themselves, of little value. An evaluation made by merely obtaining the music and studying the cold printed notes, as a musicologist might do, again, in the case of performers, is of questionable value. As most Cobbett members know, it is not always easy to find colleagues who are interested in exploring the wider quartet literature. Far too many players, and especially professionals, will play nothing but the 'big names' disdainfully dismissing, often without a hearing or at least an open-minded one, any composer of whom they have never heard. I have been very fortunate to have been associated over the years with many fine players who patiently, and to their ultimate delight, followed me on the odyssey of exploring the complete set of George Onslow's string quartets. Their kindness and sense of adventure, allowed me to examine this repertoire, often from less than ideal copies, close up and at length. In particular I wish to thank, Morton and Lura Altschuler, Mark Talent, Henry Coretz, Eric Eisenstein, Kathleen Tumminello, Claudia Watson and my daughter, Loren Silvertrust.

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André George (not Georges) Louis Onslow was born in 1784 at Clermont-

Ferrand in France of an English father and a French mother. As was the custom at that time, he was named for his godfather and his godmother (André Jouvenceau d'Alagnac and Louisa d'Espinchal) but also for his very important paternal grandfather (Lord George Onslow). Edward Onslow, the composer's father, was descended from one of the most politically prominent English families of the 18th Century. Edward's grandfather, Arthur Onslow, had served as speaker of the House of Commons from 1727 until 1760. Edward's father, Lord George Onslow, was also an important member of the King's government during the last part of the Century and was made first Earl of Onslow in 1801. In 1780, Edward, who was Lord George's second son, entered Parliament at the age of 22 after coming down from Oxford. But his career was cut short almost immediately by involvement in a public scandal which resulted in the bringing of a charge of homosexual behavior. To avoid prosecution, Edward fled England for France. Two years later, in 1782, he married Marie Bourdeille, a daughter of a noble family from the province of Auvergne. Although he was to become the founder of the French Onslows, throughout Edward's life as well as that of his son George, the tie to the English Onslows remained close. Indeed, Edward took his bride and baby son to visit in 1785. Grandfather Lord George Onslow remained very attached to Edward and in fact was the primary financial support for Edward and his family for the next 15 years.

The composer's early years were uneventful. However the French Revolution was to change all that. By 1789, Edward Onslow had, with his father's financial help purchased property and had made new friends and gained a position of social responsibility. When the revolt spread and the Reign of Terror began, Edward Onslow, now a wealthy property owner in the Auvergn, was threatened, although for nearly eight years, with the exception of one short stay in a local prison, he and his family escaped any harm. This was to change in 1797.

The first information we have about the  
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composer is a letter from 1795 by Edward answering an inquiry from some French authority as to the character and educational background of his sons. He describes George, then 11½, as extraordinarily sweet and docile and one who liked to read. George spoke English fluently, if not entirely grammatically at that point. He was good at drawing but “the talent in which he excels is music.” Edward further states that George played the Forte Piano in a “manner very distinguished for his age.” That this was so was no accident. Edward was determined that his four sons the have social accomplishments which were held in high esteem by people of his class. Music and drawing were among these social skills and one of George’s brothers, Arthur, became a well-known painter in central France around mid-century. It is generally agreed that George Onslow’s most important early teachers included the Alsatian pianist, N. Hüllmandel, the then famous Austro-Czech piano virtuoso, Jan Dussek, and most importantly the German born English pianist, John (Johann) Cramer, one of Clementi’s most famous students. Just where he studied with them has never been resolved. (Most likely in London or Hamburg)

During 1797, Edward’s situation became precarious and he was forced to flee, first to Lyon, then Paris and finally in 1798 when he was denounced by Jacobin police as an enemy sympathizer to Rotterdam. According to Richard Franks, other than Edward’s nationality and the fact that France and England were at war, there were no grounds for the charges. George, then 14, went to Rotterdam to serve as a companion and for moral support. Shortly after arriving, the political situation deteriorated causing Edward to move again, this time to the neutral city of Hamburg. During his sojourn in Hamburg, 1799-1800, Edward hired teachers to continue George’s academic education as well as his instruction in music. In the summer of 1800, Edward was allowed to return to France.

Onslow’s interest in composition, by his own admission dates from just after this period (1801). Despite the fact that he had studied piano off and on for ten years with three well-known piano-virtuosi, it was probably his entree into the world of chamber music that led to this interest. Upon his return to the Auvergne, Onslow became involved with several amateur musical societies and was invited to take part on the condition that he study the cello. This he did, eventually acquiring a virtuosic technique. Subsequently after playing and studying the works of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, he decided that he wished to write such works himself. Recognizing his lack of knowledge of composition, he set out to teach himself and seems to have done this although he may have had some scant instruction in chordal progression and nothing more from an amateur and friend of his who had been a student of Charles Catel (1773-1800) a Parisian composer. Onslow finally began seriously making sketches in either 1804 or 1805. What is truly amazing given their very high quality, is that the first dozen or so works published by Onslow were done without the benefit of instruction from a professional composer. When later these works subsequently achieved great popularity, wild and unsubstantiated claims which have ultimately been shown to be false, were made by the few early biographers Onslow had. Among these claims was that he had visited Vienna sometime between 1799 and 1806 and had studied with Beethoven. Such

spurious propositions were based on the fact that it was known that Onslow had been in Germany around 1800. After Onslow’s death, his wife debunked this stating that he had never been to Vienna and that the only composer with whom he had studied was Anton Reicha and that was in Paris.

But before he was to do this, he had already composed a set of three string quintets, Op.1 Nos.1-3, a piano sonata, Op.2, three piano trios, Op.3 Nos.1-3 and his first three string quartets which were composed in the summer of 1807 and published as his Op.4 Nos.1-3. They were dedicated to Felipe Libon, then violinist to the Empress Josephine. By any standard, these are an extraordinary set of first quartets, especially for a fourth opus.

The first quartet, **Op.4 No.1 in B Flat Major** begins with an *Allegro con brio* in 6/8 time. From the very start we hear a new voice. The melodic language is certainly not that of Haydn or Mozart. It opens in a bravura fashion, full of drama, in many ways



anticipating the spirit one finds in middle Schubert. At once one notices the part writing. The four voices are treated almost as equals. One finds nothing to compare to the treatment of the viola or the cello in all of Haydn with the possible exception of Op.20 No.2, and in Mozart not until the three *King of Prussia Quartets*. (K.575, 589 & 590)

The second movement, *Andante sostenuto* is in 2/4. It sounds like an English or Scottish folk tune and is treated in a fashion which was to become a favorite of Onslow’s; almost, but not quite, like a set of variations. One is reminded of the way Haydn handled his thematic material in the slow movement of the *First Lobkowitz Quartet*, Op.77 No.1

A superb *Minuetto Allegro* follows, no longer the classical minuet but more in the order of scherzo. The part writing leaves nothing to be desired. A contrasting trio in minor, rather than releasing the tension of the minuet, instead is full of fire. It is often said that the Op.18 Quartets of Beethoven were light years ahead of nearly anything being written for the next 20 years. This movement stands out as an exception to that statement.

The *Finale, Allegro* is the kind of moto perpetuo of which Onslow showed himself to be a master. In 4/4, it is a rhythmically interesting movement with a dramatic and military flavor. One is reminded a bit of early Beethoven, but there is a heightened sense of the dramatic and a greater richness of melody.

The opening movement to the second quartet, **Op.4 No.2 in D Major** is in cut time and marked *Allegro vivace*. The main theme is based on the interesting use of a grace note rhythm. Without making concerto-type demands on the first violinist, the part writing here requires a fair amount of agility due to in the passage work of several moto perpetuo sections. In this movement, the first violin carries more of the thematic material than is usually the case with Onslow, who almost always takes care to achieve a great equality and interest in his part writing. However, it would be misleading to think this dominance of the first violin sinks to the

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level of Spohr in his *Quatuors Brillantes* or even of Haydn say in his Op.17. Interestingly, hearing the first movement to this quartet immediately after the last movement to the First, (something I did after my quartet recorded all three in preparation for this article) one is struck by the feeling that Onslow seems to have taken up just where he left off and it may well be that he composed this movement immediately after finishing the finale to the First Quartet. One other thing suggests this: The movement could clearly serve as a finale and is far more suitable than the movement he actually wrote which strangely enough would have been quite serviceable as a first movement. One need only hear the rip-roaring finish to reach this conclusion.

In the following *Adagio sostenuto*, the cello is given a short introductory solo before a lovely duet between it and the first violin is heard. Upon reflection, one realizes that an effect like this was not used by any of the well-known Viennese Classical with the exception of Mozart in the slow movement to K.589. Of great beauty,

the writing is in cantilena style with chromatic episodes of the sort one does not encounter until late Spohr. The short middle section provides a great contrast and is full of drama and operatic passion. It is ironic that one of the criticisms leveled at Onslow is that his music shows little if any passion. (this is only one several stupid remarks H. Woollett makes in his article on Onslow in *Cobbett's Cyclopaedia*, an article which would lead nearly anyone with only a passing acquaintance with Onslow's chamber music to wonder whether Woollett had actually ever played or heard the music about which he was writing)

Minuet is not at all what comes to mind upon hearing the opening to this *Menuetto Allegro*. Powerful, driving triplets together with upward soaring and downward plunging chromatic runs give the main theme quite an original sound and a forward motion which is never relaxed. Although the trio's theme, which is begun by the cello, is somewhat lighter in feel, it nonetheless continues this propulsion and gives a Mendelssohnian flavor to the movement. It is absolutely first rate in conception and effect.

The finale, *Allegretto con moto* in 6/8 is a bit of a let down after all that has come before. This is not to say that it is a bad movement, but it is not, especially for its length, an entirely effective finale. It opens with a pastoral, almost restful subject in stark contrast to the preceding movement. The development finds long running passages given to the first violin and then the cello.

The third quartet, **Op.4 No.3 in a minor** begins *Allegro moderato* but this is somewhat misleading as the stormy and dramatic

opening is full of power and drive. *Allegro fuoco* or *patetico* might have been more fitting and one senses that the 'moderato' may have been used to hold the performers back from playing it overly fast, which would certainly deprive this fine piece of its striking affect. Here Onslow uses triplet rhythms in quite a novel fashion anticipating late Schubert. The closing bars to the movement, though not marked as such, seem clearly to be an exciting *stretto* which leaves the listener gasping for breath.

For the first time, Onslow chooses to put a *Menuetto-Allegretto* (in reality a scherzo) as the second movement. One finds many of Onslow's most striking quartets have this arrangement. The placement seems, for Onslow, to work better because his "Menuettos" or scherzos are usually so compelling and full of excitement that they provide little contrast and, in some cases, actually take away from his finales. Although one is reminded a bit of a Mendelssohn scherzo, the sound and thematic material is pure Onslow. A relaxed and beautifully contrasting trio follows. It is a hunting musette, one hears the call of the horns in the double stops of the viola and cello.

A lovely *Andante sostenuto* which, except for the fact that it was written when Schubert was 10, could be said to be in the tradition of the Schubert chamber-*lied*. Sad and religious in feeling, one hears the resignation of a final leave-taking. The closing bars to the slow movement of D.956 come to mind. It might well have been subtitled it, *Ave Maria*. There is great depth of feeling further accentuated by the chordal sonorities of the lower strings. Excellent in every way.

The very fine *Finale, Allegro* is in 2/4. To the accompaniment of racing 16th notes, an exciting and fast-moving melody is introduced. Light in touch, it is developed, briefly, as a fugue. When critics speak of Onslow's works being influenced by the Viennese classics, the Haydn-esque treatment (for example in Op.76 No.5) of the thematic material here springs to mind. But to this must be added the influence of the Parisian Concerts Spirituel which is evident in the sense of drama and fetching use of chromaticism. This first rate movement is a fitting conclusion to a work that belongs in the concert hall.

In sum, both professional and amateurs alike will be charmed by these works. Of special interest to professionals looking for a striking work from the early 19th Century is the Third Quartet, Op.4, No.3. But it should be said that both Quartet Nos.1 & 2 are certainly as fine if not finer than so many of Haydn's which are brought into the concert hall for no other reason than they are by that very great man.. As such, they too deserve to be heard. With regards to difficulty, it is fair to say, that these quartets are comparable in the technical demands they make on the performers to those presented by Beethoven's Op.18.

The remainder of Onslow's 33 string quartets as well as other related subjects will be dealt with in what is now planned as a 12 part article and to be continued in the next 11 issues.

## Grazyna Bacewicz & Her Chamber Music

(Continued from page 1)

Composer's Union, a magazine, "Musical Movement", and a festival of contemporary music. This was despite Poland finding itself in the Soviet Communist Bloc, but from 1945 to 1949 there was vigorous upwelling of interest in contemporary music. The clash with communist orthodoxy on "social realism" and simple idioms, occurred chiefly from 1950-1954, until after the death of Stalin. The 1956 Hungarian uprisings created a liberalizing process, crystallized by annual fall International Festivals in Warsaw, which by 1960 had provided access to trends in Western European Musical developments, as well as highlighting contemporary Polish composers including Gorecki, Penderecki, and, of course Grazyna Bacewicz.

Bacewicz was a central figure in Polish musical life. She was a professor of composition in the State School of Music in Warsaw in her later years, a was a Vice President of the Composers' Union. She is described as maintaining a stylistic individuality and independence. She was the only composer of the group who studied in Paris who made an effort to modernize her musical language in the 1960s. She despised being known as a woman composer, yet that has helped keep her name alive. Lutoslawski said of her: "Grazyna Bacewicz was probably born with her musical wisdom."

### Chamber Music and Style

The above synopsis, describing the tumultuous events in history swirling around Bacewicz and her country during her lifetime, is useful to understanding the various periods of her development as a composer.

Her **Wind Quintet (1932)** is a good example of the identification with French neo-classicism. It is composed of four movements with bi-tonal melodic patterns, metric displacements, 'Alberti basses a la Poulenc'. The first movement stays with sonata principles in outline, and the finale suggests Baroque traits with a quasi-fugal development of the final Vivo. However the two middle movements, Andante ("Air") and Allegretto use folk themes with simple melodic repetitions, mordents, and sharpened fourths. As a concert violinist she wrote a number of sonata works for violin during this period also. The term 'neo-classicism' is somewhat misleading, for despite a pulling back from the emotionalism of late Romanticism, in German the term is "Neue Sacklichkeit", meaning new objectivity.

The next significant chamber piece is the **Third String Quartet (1947)**, the first of a cycle of five mature quartets which mark her evolution of style over an 18 year period. It was written during a concert tour of Paris, one of her first experiences after the confinement and isolation of the war years. The first movement, *Allegro ma non troppo*, is in sonata form, but introduces a third theme, and although mainly in F major, voyages to keys far out in the circle of fifths, and does not finally resolve into B major until the end. The second movement, *Andante*, exhibits an effortless variety of ideas with new motifs interspersed with recurrences of the main theme. The final movement "Vivo" is a rondo, but in a strong perpetual motion pulse, in which three themes, introduced first by the cello, then viola and violin motifs in lydian mode with the style of a popular song. Again Bacewicz leads the movement through several keys a whole ton apart, F,G,

A major, but then skips to keys more related to F major, e.g. C and Bb, before a confrontation between F and B major, which F major wins.

The **Fourth Quartet (1951)** is more expressive, and won first prize at an international competition in Liege. Each theme or section of the powerful first movement bear a different marking and tempo, and it achieves a high degree of expressiveness, but has a folk theme in canon between the two violins. These sweet interludes are separated by insistently dissonant passages, and the differences do not seem to resolve by development. The slow movement, *Andante*, has a main theme, related to the first subject of the previous movement, but displays a harmonic richness and sensuality. The unrelated middle section attempts two fugal episodes, then abandons them. The final *Allegro giocoso* again uses sonata-rondo framework switching from a Polish folk dance (the oberek again) with meditative sections.

The next interesting chamber work chronologically is the **First Piano Quintet (1952)**. It is composed with a concise and crystalline classical format. The first movement *Moderato molto espressivo*, has a meditative introduction leading into a sonata allegro, using simple resources in a newer harmonic structure to create an interesting mood. The second dance movement *Presto* applies the rhythm of Bacewicz's favorite folk dance, the *oberek*, in 3/8 time, in a witty Scherzo. The final movement *Con passione* which strikes one as emotional and ambivalent, then dissolves into the meditative mood of the introduction.

The **Fifth String Quartet (1955)** "displays a Beethovenian intensity and a motivic concentration that brings it close to the music of Bartok's middle period", says Adrian Thomas, in his book on Bacewicz. Although it represents the start of Grazyna Bacewicz's *later period*, (brought about, he suggests by the spirit of liberalization starting in Poland then), and a considerable technical advances of earlier works, it only won second prize in the Liege Festival of 1956. Nevertheless it may be perhaps the finest of her works. It makes a bold shift from the tonal and harmonic devices used in previous works, but focuses intensely on integration. Her skill as a violinist is displayed in the first movement, *Moderato*, with a folk-style theme colored in artificial harmonics, pedal harmonic, and counterpointed ostinati in pizzicato and arco. It contrasts an energetic first subject and a remote unemotionality of the second. The second movement,

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*Scherzo (Fuga)*, is a double fugue of “great wit and verve”. The first subject ‘*giocososo*’ is in 3/8 meter, with syncopation and dancing counterpoint. This dissolves into trills and glissandi, and the second fugal theme ‘*allegretto*’ in 2/4 meter with less dissonance then leads to a combination of both subjects. The finale, *Variazioni*, has six variations and a coda, but is based on a theme which is already a variation. A minor third from D-F is the connecting link, but the variations utilize such incredible technical reaches...artificial harmonic, rapid quasi glissandi in fifths sul tasto, and syncopated multiple pizzicati, satirical cross-rhythms, figures in search of a fugato. It is an incredibly virtuosic movement and ‘notably avant-garde’. It is one of my favorites, but I would hate to attempt to play it.

The **Sixth Quartet (1960)** I have not had a chance to hear, but it is described as a venture in partial use of twelve-note principles in the first movement. However, the new techniques are subservient to her integrative styles. In the last three movements the twelve-tone abate, and chromatic ‘crab-like’ chromatic passages and rhythmic contours structure the music. The two fast movements *Vivace*, more a series of variations than a scherzo, and the finale is a 6/8 quasi-rondo again. They frame the *Adagio*, which requires the first violin to detune the E string to Eb. Some moments seem created for textural allure. Bacewicz admits that she struggled with this quartet.

By 1965 she had developed confidence in her new harmonic and textural experimentation and had an incredibly productive year, creating many works. The **Seventh Quartet (1965)** follows a very dissonant and abrasive **Quartet for Four Cellos**. The

Seventh Quartet is much more structured in a three-movement format like the earlier quartets described, with *Allegro*, *Grave*, and *Con vivezza, finale*. The finale is described as scintillating, expressing a playful spirit in its hiccupping rhythm. This quartet is again most virtuosic.

The **Second Piano Quintet (1965)** is another interesting product of this fertile year for Bacewicz. The first movement has a gentle introduction which proceeds to an interplay of two intervals, a fifth and a major second. (major and minor). Parallel glissandi effects punctuate the harmony. The second movement, *Larghetto*, has also brief thematic ideas, a rising major, falling minor second, then a fifth. The mood is muffled pessimism. The short motoric finale is brief, but uses the piano and string creatively set against each other.

For amateur groups much of her work is problematically difficult, however the First Piano Quintet and Quartets Nos.3 & 5 are the more accessible.

Much of the chamber music described is featured in Olympia CD Nos 310 and 387 and were performed by the Grazyna Bacewicz and Wilanow Quartets, and the Warsaw Piano Quintet:

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## New Recordings



A listing of recently recorded non-standard chamber music on CD by category.

### String Quartets

Theodor ADORNO (1903-1969) 6 Studies for Qt. & 2 Pieces, Op.2, CPO 999-341 / Franz BERWALD (1796-1868) Qt. Nos.1-3, Bis 759 / Hans EISLER (1898-1962) Op.75, CPO 999-341 / Zdenek FIBICH (1850-1900) Op.8 & Theme & Variations, Arta FI 0072 / Arthur MEULEMANS (1884-1966) String Qts. Nos.2 & 3, Phraeda 9211 / Carl NIELSEN (1865-1931) Qt in d no opus, Kontrapunkt 32231 / Johann RÖSSLER (1771-1813) Op.6 Nos.1-3, Pantan 71-0369 / Bedrich SMETANA (1824-84) No.2

### Strings Only-Not Quartets

Hans EISLER Prelude and Fugue for String Trio, CPO 999-341 / Ignaz PLEYEL (1757-1831) Sextet for 2Vln, 2 Vla, Vc & Kb, Sipario Dischi CS 28C

### Piano Trios

Frank BRIDGE (1879-1941) Phantasy in c, British Music Society 418 / Ernest MOERAN (1894-1950) Trio in d, BMS 418 / James FRISKIN (1886-1967) Phantasy in e, BMS 418 / John IRELAND (1879-1962) Phantasie in a, BMS 418 / Leon KIRCHNER (1919-) Trio No.2, Arabesque Z 6676 / Carl NIELSEN Trio in G, no opus, Kontrapunkt 32231 / Arvo PÄRT (1935-) Adagio, Arabesque Z6676 / Stanley SILVERMAN (1938-) In Celebration, Arabesque Z6676 / Ellen Zwilich (1939-) Trio, Arabesque Z6676

### Piano Quartets & Quintets

Robert CHUMBLEY (1954-) 3 Self Studies for Pno Qt., MMC 2041 / Aaron COPELAND (1900-1990) Piano Quartet, MMC 2041 / William McKinley (1938-) Piano Qt. No.1, MMC 2041 / Arthur MEULEMANS (1884-1966) Piano Quintet Phraeda 92011 / Max REGGER (1873-1916) Piano Quintet Op.113, MDG 336-0715 / Anton RUBINSTEIN (1829-1894) Piano Quintet, Op.99, EDA 010-2 /

Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH Piano Quintet, Op.57, EDA 010-2

### Winds & Strings

David DIAMOND (1915-) Quintet for 2 Vla, 2 Vc & Cln, New World 80508 / Ignaz PLEYEL (1757-1831) Qt. Op. no.1 for Fl, Vln, Vla & Vc & Quintet Op.10 No.3 for Fl, Ob, Vln, Vla & Vc, Sipario Dischi CS 28C

### Winds, Strings & Piano

Felice GIARDINI (1716-1796) 5 Quartets for various comb incl Fl, Ob, Vln, Vla, Vc & Harp, Opus 111 OPS 30-163

### Winds Only

Franz KROMMER (1759-1831) 3 Partitas Op.57, 71 & 78 and March Nos.3-5, Naxos 8.553498

# Original Works for Three & Four Cellos Part One

by Andrew Marshall

"Emanuel Moór has written a quartet for four cellos and is reported to have said that he prefers the combination to the usual one, but he will scarcely find a single musician in a 1000 to agree with him." Thus W W Cobbett himself wrote rather disparagingly about cello quartets in the Cyclopedia Whilst not suggesting that the cello quartet could replace the traditional string quartet, I do believe there are many fine works written and arranged for cellos alone and hope to encourage Cobbett Association members to explore this repertoire. Publishers' names are given in square brackets - [ ]. Regrettably there can be no guarantee that all these works are in print, but often publishing houses have archive copies available. The abbreviations *sc*, *pts* and *p-sc* indicate *score*, *parts* and *playing score* respectively.

By their frequent appearance on concert programmes, we know that cello duets were very popular in the Baroque and Classical eras. It was only natural that composers should expand the available sonorities and write for more than two cellos. Composers did however tend to keep their options open... **Giacobo Cervetto** (1682-1783) scored his *Trios* (sc.pts) [Grancino] for 2 violins or 2 cellos with continuo. This is expressive writing from this popular London-based cellist. Despite the alternative violin parts, they are recommended to be played by 3 cellos and harpsichord, but are quite possible as a cello trio. The same applies to **Benedetto Marcello** (1684-1750), whose *Six Sonatas* for two cellos and continuo (sc.pts) [Editio Musica Budapest] are possible with or without harpsichord. From **Daniel Speer** (1636-1707) we have Two Sonatas from *Vierfaches* (sc.pts) [Nova] which were originally for three bassoons, although quite possible on cellos. *Vierfaches musikalisches Kleeblatt* or *The Musical Cloverleaf* was Speer's 4-volume essay covering all aspects of music. Volume 3 discussed the major instruments of his time, with many examples and samples especially composed. Yet these two one-movement sonatas are not a mere sample - they are substantial pieces in their own right. **Michel Corrette's** Concerto "Le Phenix" (sc.pts) [Nova] was written for four cellos or bassoons, plus or minus harpsichord. The three movements consist of two delightful energetic allegros and a short expressive adagio with top cello embellishments. Recommended.

Next on the historical scene comes **Georg Wagenseil** (1715-1777). His set of six quartets (sc.pts) [Doblinger] broke new ground at the time (1764), being scored for 3 cellos and double bass and written in a four-movement form (fast, slow, minuet/trio, fast). Wagenseil's contemporaries were still writing five-movement works. Perhaps Wagenseil was looking forward to the classical quartet and wanted to use a modern form for this different instrumental line up. As such, they are the earliest such works for cello/bass ensemble without continuo. (Purists may object, but these quartets also work for four cellos. No inverted harmonies occur as cellos 1,2,3 are placed fairly high in their range.) All these Baroque pieces would be rated as moderately difficult.

After Wagenseil, there seems to be a gap of about 100 years. Were there really no cello ensemble pieces written for a century? The cello quartet however became an important expressive tool for the romantic composer. Usually it was the cello player/composer who felt the need to write works for this medium. and as they were writing for their own instrument, the works are often fine. **Julius Klengel** (1859-1933) has written much for cello quartet, often with virtuosic parts. Of moderate difficulty are the *Theme and Variations op 28* and the *Four pieces op 33*, a charming suite made up of *Song without words*, *Gavotte*, *Lullaby* and *March*. In his *Zwei Stücke op 5*, Klengel asks the fourth cello to tune the C to A at the end of the first movement to allow an octave A at the bottom of the final chord. *Variations on an original theme op 15* require an athletic cello 1, but the other parts are of moderate difficulty. The *Impromptu op 30* is full of tempo changes and has a passage of tricky double stopping for cello 1 but the brilliant musical joke at the end makes it all worth while. Advanced, and highly recommended. All the Klengel works are published as sets of parts only by [Breitkopf].

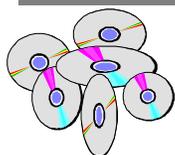
Three classics of the cello quartet literature must be *Ave Maria* (sc.pts) [IMC] by **Wilhelm Fitzenhagen** (1848-90) (advanced), **George Goltermann's** *Romance op 119/1* (pts) [IMC] and *Consecration Hymn* (sc.pts) [IMC] by **Friedrich Grützmacher** (1832-1903) both of moderate difficulty. The latter is expressive and appealing. From Goltermann (1824-89) there is also his *Deux Morceaux de Concert* for four cellos (pts) [Schott] - 2 slow movements in romantic nostalgic style also of moderate difficulty. Another cellist/composer **Josef Werner** (1837-22) provides an *Elegie* (sc.pts) [Amadeus]. Interestingly, there is the option of allowing a viola to take the 2nd cello part. Full sonorous writing of moderate difficulty. I have been unable to discover any details about G Paque 1825-76, but his *Souvenir de Curis* of 1863 (sc.pts) [Schott] is worth a mention. This is a delightful romantic *mélodie* full of diminished 7ths! Advanced.

(Continued from page 9)

*Au Berceau op 4* by **Kousnetzoff** (sc.pts) [Rahter] is an arrangement and strictly ought to be considered in a subsequent article but as it is arranged by the composer from his cello/piano original it is mentioned now. This is a charming lullaby of moderate difficulty. Cello 4 is *scordatura* C to B flat throughout and reads from a part with the C string notes transposed accordingly - *à la* Bach Suite 5. Finally consider the *Nocturne op 90* by **Ludwig Maurer** (1789-1878) (sc.pts) [Amadeus]. Although rated advanced, this is surely a little gem, using the full range of the cello. (Beware of the tricky arpeggio string crossing passages in all parts.)

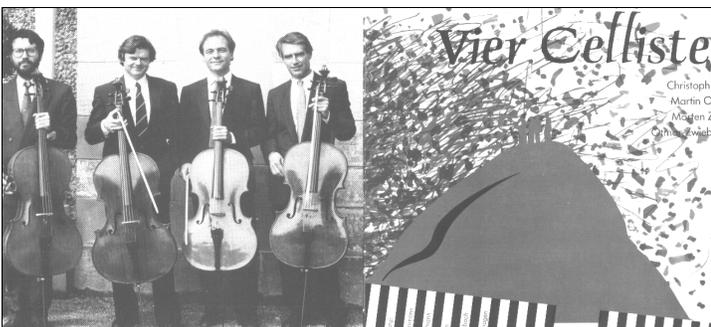


Niso Ticciati's *Divertimento* for cello trio (sc.pts) [Hinrichsen] could be said to bridge the gap to the 20th Century. This is a satisfying 3-movement piece in Haydn-Mozart style written for cellists of varying standards. 20th Century works will be covered in Part Two of this article in the next issue.



## Diskology: Music four 4 Cellos by Danzi, Tansman, Offenbach et.al. Berlin 1930, Music of the Salon

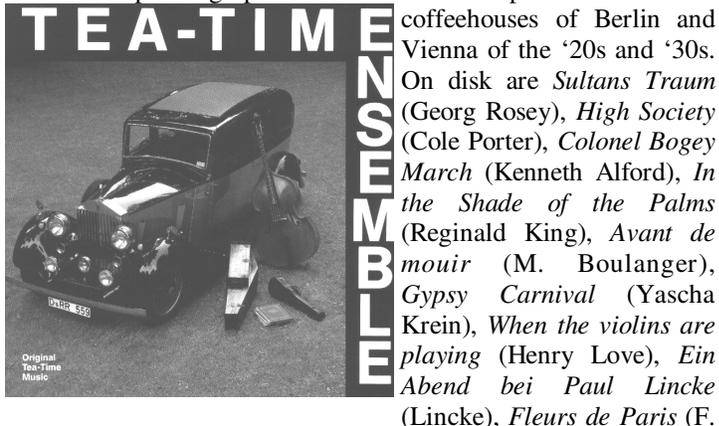
It seems timely to introduce this Bayer CD Br 100069 of music for four cellos in light the preceding article. Those of you who



have never heard a Cello Quartet are missing something. Far be it from me to suggest it is the equal of the regular string quartet, but there surely is a dark richness one does not get with the latter. The longest work on the disk is by **Franz Danzi** (1763-1826) a cello virtuoso who perhaps is better known by wind than string players for his fine woodwind quartets and quintets. And, it turns out that the work recorded here was arranged from a quartet he wrote for Bassoon and strings, Op.40 No.3. There is also another arrangement on disk, this of **Jacques Offenbach's** *Serenade* Op.29 No.2. Offenbach played as principal cellist in several Parisian orchestras before gaining fame as a composer of operettas. **Wilhelm Fitzenhagen's** (1848-1880) *Konzert Walzer*, Op.31 is perhaps the high point. Fitzenhagen was a prominent cellist and teacher in Russia. These lovely waltzes are virtuosic and marvellous to hear. *Deux Mouvements* from the Franco-Polish composer, **Alexander Tansman** (1897-1986) are polytonal in nature, they show the influence of Ravel. Also on disk is a partita dedicated to the artists, who perform in Europe and the Americas as 'The Four Cellists,' by **Wolfgang Hofmann.**

*Partita for 4 Violoncelli* composed in 1985. This work primarily explores the tonal and other possibilities of the instrument and the ensemble.

Berlin 1930. Germany had recovered from the war and Berlin was living in a frenetic twilight of cultural ferment. The idea of this Koch/Schwann CD 310 039 as the jacket cover states is to give the listener the feeling of the time and perfumed atmosphere of the golden age of cafe-society. The extraordinarily fine quality of this disk is without doubt due to the superb performers, a group which has become well-known in Germany and Austria, The Tea-Time-Ensemble. They are a piano quintet (piano, violin, viola, cello and bass); all classically trained players who are clearly virtuosos. Some of these works are famous but, believe me, you have never heard them played like this. They come alive with a sensual sound that I have rarely heard duplicated. Virtually all of the pieces on the disk are arrangements but this was more or less standard operating procedure for works performed in the



coffeehouses of Berlin and Vienna of the '20s and '30s. On disk are *Sultans Traum* (Georg Rosey), *High Society* (Cole Porter), *Colonel Bogey March* (Kenneth Alford), *In the Shade of the Palms* (Reginald King), *Avant de mourir* (M. Boulanger), *Gypsy Carnival* (Yascha Krein), *When the violins are playing* (Henry Love), *Ein Abend bei Paul Lincke* (Lincke), *Fleurs de Paris* (F. Wallner), *Blue Pavillion* (Jose Armandola), *Jalousie* (Jakob Gade), *Moonlight Serenade* (Glenn Miller). You may think I'm