



# The Cobbett Association's Chamber Music Journal

Vol.IX, No.3 Autumn 1998

## The String Quartets of George Onslow (Part VII)

by R.H.R. Silvertrust

*(The first six parts of this article dealt with the composer's life from 1784 to 1829. The first eighteen string quartets, Op.4 Nos.1-3, Op.8 Nos.1-3, Op.9 Nos.1-3, Op.10 Nos.1-3, Op.21 Nos.1-3 and Op.36 Nos.1-3 were presented and analyzed.)*

After the Op.36 Quartets, Onslow composed another string quintet, No. 14 in F, Op.37. It was dedicated to his friend, the violin virtuoso, Charles de Beriot. De Beriot, who had come to Paris from Brussels, had studied with Baillot and Viotti but gradually adapted his style of playing to accommodate the dazzling innovations made by Paganini. It was this change which led to his prominence and which also seems to have influenced the violin part to the Quintet. The next work he composed, Quintet No.15 in c, Op.38, called *The Bullet*, is perhaps the one which was best known during the last part of the 19th Century. It is a programmatic account of his terrible hunting accident which took place during the summer of 1829 about 100 miles north of his home.

Onslow, who enjoyed hunting, was not particularly keen on shooting, instead preferring, as he put it, to hunt in the fashion of Pliny. Here Onslow was alluding to Pliny's famous comment to the effect that while he often returned home from the hunt without game, he felt more than compensated when he emptied his game bag with writing tablets full of new and ingenious thoughts. Thus it was that Onslow who often 'hunted' spent the time composing. On the fateful day, Onslow's friends, knowing his proclivities, posted him as a lookout for wild boar by a tree. After a while, his attention waned and he began composing while unconsciously wandering from his post. Suddenly a boar crossed in front of him. Onslow

*(Continued on page 3)*

## The Chamber Music of Pavel Haas

By Dr. William Horne

Another of the generation of talented composers lost in the maelstrom of the army during World War I, but never saw combat, and stayed in Brno.

Holocaust was Pavel Haas of Czechoslovakia. Pavel Haas was born in Brno, the son of a Czech business man and a Russian wife. He was influenced by his uncle, the Viennese actor Michael Epstein. His brother Hugo later became a well-known actor and director, and emigrated to Hollywood.



Pavel interrupted studies in secondary school to enter the music school of the Beseda Philharmonic Society. He was drafted into the Austrian

In 1920-22, Haas had the opportunity to study in the master classes in composition offered by Janacek at the Brno Conservatory where Janacek had lived and studied as a youth. There he mastered the techniques employed so eloquently by Janacek: small cells of melody repeated into a mosaic of sound, often with ostinato technique. He does not copy Janacek's style, but in addition he brings to his music the rhythmic complexity that was so favored

*(Continued on page 8)*

## The String Quartets of Camille Saint Saëns

by Professor Keith Robinson



*(Prof. Robinson is also cellist of the Miami String Quartet. The Miami are Qu-artet in Resid-ence at Flor-ida Internat-ional Univer-sity. They re-cord exclus-ively for BMG)*

writing, combining beautiful thematic material with bravura technical passages, and they have become staples in the concerto repertoire.

It might further surprise you to know that St. Saëns didn't attempt his first string quartet until 1899, at the ripe old age of sixty four. His second effort in the medium didn't materialize until he was eighty four! It very well might have been the daunting shadow of Beethoven that discouraged St. Saëns from writing a string quartet until so late in his career. When asked why he had never written a piano sonata, St. Saëns was said to have replied, "What, after that old boy?"

*(Continued on page 6)*

If it comes as a surprise to you that Camille St. Saëns wrote two string quartets, you are not alone. I had no idea that the French prodigy wrote anything other than symphonies and concertos, and I have made a living playing quartets for fourteen years. Of course, as string players, we are all familiar with the cello concerto Opus 33 and St. Saëns' three violin concertos, the most famous being No.3. In these works, St. Saëns demonstrates a brilliant knack for string

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R.H.R. Silvertrust, *Editor*

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The International Cobbett Association for chamber music research is dedicated to the preservation, dissemination, performance, publication and recording of non-standard, rare or unknown chamber music of merit. To this end, The Cobbett Association maintains a copying and lending library for its members. Contributions of rare or non-standard repertoire are warmly appreciated.

### Wants to Hear Van Bree

What if anything can you tell me about a composer called Van Bree. A friend of mine told me he heard a lovely piece of music for chamber orchestra by Van Bree on the radio that sounded a lot like Mendelssohn. Unfortunately, he didn't know the name of the piece, the performers or anything else about it. Do you know of any recordings of Bree's music. Also, did he write any chamber music?

Peter Patterson  
Los Angeles, California

*The piece of music your friend heard on the radio was almost certainly **Allegro for Four String Quartets** by Johannes Bernardus or or Jan Bernard van Bree who lived from 1801-57. This work was originally recorded by Neville Mariner on Phillips LP 9500 171 several years ago. Two other performances can be found on CDs by NM Classics #NM92034 or Olympia #OCD 502. The Allegro does sound a lot like Mendelssohn and this is probably no accident. Van Bree was a student of Mendelssohn at the Leipzig Conservatory. Subsequently, he returned to The Netherlands where he founded the Concertgebouw Orchestra. As I understand it, the piece was written to help the strings of the fledging orchestra with the job of ensemble. Its actually quite an engaging piece. To the best of my knowledge, he wrote three string quartets. I have played the second and third. They are well-written and very melodic without necessarily being profound. These quartets also show the influence of Mendelssohn right down to a marvelous scherzo movement. Unfortunately, van Bree's quartets are not in print. They were originally published by Theune and copies can very occasionally be had from antiquarian dealers.*

### Looking for Robert Volkmann's Music

I am interested in obtaining some of Robert Volkmann's chamber music. Which works do you recommend? Are any in print?

Max Rose  
Racine, Wisconsin

*I think most, if not all, of Robert Volkmann's chamber music can be recommended. Taste, course is personal. I suggest you look at the two part series which appeared in Vol. VI, No.4 (Dec. 1995) and Vol. VII No. (Mar. 1996). In this article, Volkmann's six string quartets and two piano trios are discussed. At*

*the moment, three of the quartets are in currently in print. No.5 Op.37 is available from Wollenweber and Nos.2-4 Opp.14, 34 & 35 have recently been republished by Merton Music. See the last issue of the Journal for a complete listing of Merton's catalogue. As to the piano trios, both are currently in print.*

### Dvorak's *Other* Quartets

I fully realize that you wrote about this subject a few years ago, however, I seem to have misplaced the copy of the *Journal* with the article I need. My quartet group have played his last three quartets (i.e. *The American* Op.96 and Opp.105 & 106) We would like to try out some of his others. Are they in print? If I remember correctly, there were some which you felt were not worth the effort and if so, which ones would you especially recommend.

James MacDonald  
Montreal, Canada

*First, I would like to remind readers that it is possible to obtain back copies of the Journal at a cost of \$6 per issue. I think all of Dvorak's quartets are currently in print in a complete edition brought out by Supraphon. No.5 can also be had from Breitkopf & Härtel. No.8 from International, No.9 for Lienau & No.10 from Simrock. You might have some difficulty obtaining them and you would be well advised to try to order through a shop such as Performers Music in Chicago, Padelson's in New York or Broekmans en Van Poppel in Amsterdam. In my opinion, Quartet Nos. 2-4 are to be avoided. They sound like what Wagner might have written if he were ill. No. 1 Op.2, while overly long, has many attractive melodies and is worth exploring. The publisher indicates cuts for performance. With No.5 Op.9, we begin to here Czech lyricism. The second movement has become famous. It, too, is overly long but the publisher indicates cuts. Nos.6-7 Opp.12 & 16 are worth investigation. No.8, Op.27, No.9 Op.34, No.10, Op.51, & No.11 Op.61 all qualify as first rate works and should be played. Also of interest are two charming waltzes for quartet, Op.54 and 12 love songs for quartet, *The Cypresses*.*

*We welcome your letters and articles. Letters to the Editor and manuscripts should be addressed to us at 601 Timber Trail, Riverwoods, IL 60015, USA. Letters published may be edited for reasons of space, clarity and grammar.*

## : | At The Doublebar

Once again the *Journal* is late, later than it has ever gone out during my editorship. While I am not happy about this, there is very little that can be done about it given that the editorial and administrative staff of the Association consists of me. Editing the *Journal* and administrating the Association can be quite labor intensive and certainly too much for someone such as myself who is not retired as was Mr. Maas when he ran the Association.

Well before Mr. Maas became ill, at the time he asked me to take over, more than six years ago, I knew that this undertaking was going to be much more work than I had time for. Nevertheless, I agreed to do it when he told me, among other things, that he had been unable to find anyone who would agree to continue on with Association's mission.

When he founded the Association, its goal was to publicize and generate interest in little-known chamber music. This was done by his writing about it in his *Newsletter*. As time passed, he wished to further develop the Association. He and I often discussed the new directions we wanted to see the Association take. He, unfortunately, was not able to begin to work toward these goals because of his illness, but they were set forth in the *Journal* immediately after his death.

The continued publication of the *Journal*, in my opinion, remains the number one priority of the Association. Without it, I do not believe the Association can continue to exist. Therefore, I have made it my top priority. However, the *Journal* ought not, if possible, be the work of one individual. It should be a publication to which authors contribute. I have consistently repeated that our membership knows more about the literature than anyone else. If you do not believe me, ask a professional chamber musician or a professor of musicology. Please consider submitting articles for publication.

I am hopeful that I will have another issue out to you before Christmas. I am very aware that administrative improvements with regard to the Library, copying, correspondence, etc., must be made and these issues will be taken up by the Board of Directors at our meeting this coming year. You can make a difference to its success.

## George Onslow's String Quartets (contintue from page 1)

shot at it and missed. Meanwhile, dogs began barking and hunters shooting. In the confusion he was shot twice in the head., the force of one bullet knocked him off his horse onto the ground. His wounds were quite serious. One bullet pierced his cheek, passed through his inner ear and lodged in the back of his neck. The second bullet also lodged in his neck. He would almost certainly have died on the ground, suffocating in his own blood, had his friends, who were but a few feet away, not come to his help. Somehow, he was taken on horseback to the host's Chateau where he lay delirious with fever and racked with pain. He called out several times in torment, afraid he would be unable to finish the composition he had begun to sketch before being shot. The next day he was transported some 50 miles to be operated on. One bullet was removed but the other could not be extracted and remained in his neck the rest of his life. Despite their efforts, his doctors thought his death was imminent. Nonetheless he survived, but for many months a virulent fever which threatened his life would come and go.

During these trying times, he often composed to ease his pain. After a long period of rest and further medical treatment he made a recuperation but he never really fully recovered his health. Over time, he went deaf in his left ear. This forced him to give up publicly performing the cello in chamber groups. His solo piano playing was less affected but he began to lose interest in the piano. He very occasionally suffered from some sort of nervous disorder after the accident and also developed a slight speech impediment. The accident



Plaster bust of Onslow c. age 60 by Jean-Pierre Dantan. Note indentations on left cheek and to side of left eye.

left him permanently disfigured. (See photograph) Onslow's father Edward, with whom George had had a close relationship, died in October of 1829

while the composer was still convalescing. This did not greatly help his recovery.

Although the story of how Onslow composed Quintet No.15 and its subsequent history are interesting, it is unfortunately beyond the scope of this article but will be treated in a later article about Onslow's string quintets. Immediately after No.15, Onslow wrote yet two more quintets, No.16 in E, Op.39 and No.17 in b. No.16 was to be one of his most popular chamber works.

The late 1820s saw a steady rise in Onslow's reputation in France. By then, in Germany, Austria and England, he was already well-known. Around 1830, we begin to find French critics referring to him as '*le Beethoven français.*' For example, his Paris publisher, Pleyel, brought out a collected edition of Onslow's quartets in 1830 and prefaced the edition with the following endorsement:

*The continuing increasing celebrity of these productions in which are conspicuous originality without caprice, learning without dryness and grace without affectation, renders it desirable that they should be published in a form worthy to rank with the collections of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven— France is proud in having given birth to this distinguished amateur whom she can confidently place in competition with the most able masters of the other nations of Europe. This edition will have...a portrait and...a facsimile of a composition from the pen of our French Beethoven.*

This was an interesting and important development. First, it is worth noting that Pleyel was a transplanted Austrian. He had been a student of Haydn and a respected composer in his own right. He, perhaps better than the native French, could appreciate Beethoven, who did not win quick recognition with the French as he did in the German-speaking world. For a long time, the French never accepted Beethoven's music and did not rank it with that of Mozart or Haydn. His forms were regarded as too complex, his harmony too abstract, mathematical and even barbaric. Onslow had complained during the early 1820s that his countrymen seemed to have excessive difficulty in

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(Continued from page 3)

understanding his musical ideas. Onslow's biographer, Dr. Franks, writes, "Much of the difficulty Onslow confronted in winning early acceptance for his works among his countrymen was related to their reluctance to fit Beethoven's music into the tradition they had come to look upon as their own." Here it is important to remember that we are not talking about the Late or Middle Quartets but Beethoven's Op.18! To the French, Onslow's musical style represented the awkward qualities of 'Germanisms' associated with Beethoven. Whether or not this was an accurate assessment of Onslow's music is beside the point. Thus it was, Dr. Franks theorizes, that it was not until after Berlioz and the famous conductor, François Habeneck, popularized the music of Beethoven that there was any real acceptance of Onslow's chamber music in France.

As he had for Beethoven, Berlioz led the crusade for Onslow, stating that since Beethoven's death, it was Onslow who wielded "the scepter of instrumental music." By 1830, Onslow's music was being performed on a regular basis at the Paris Conservatory's concerts. His rise in popularity probably would not have come solely on the shoulders of chamber music. It must in great part be attributed to the fact that he started composing larger scale compositions for the public concert hall. As noted in Part VI of this article, his opera *L'Colporteur* enjoyed considerable success in Paris. In 1830, at the age of 46, Onslow at last turned his attention to the Symphony. His First Symphony, Op.41 in A met with considerable acclaim. No less an authority than Cherubini, the dictator of French musical taste, gave it his stamp of approval. It soon became very popular throughout Germany and Austria as well. The next year he followed this up with a Second Symphony, Op.42 dedicated to the Philharmonic Society of London.

As a result, Onslow became the second honorary member of the Society. (The first was Mendelssohn.) Symphony No.2 was followed by three more quintets, Nos.18-20, Opp.43-45.

The Op.46 Quartets, Nos.19-21 were composed during the summer of 1831. They were dedicated to Monsieur Habeneck, in all likelihood the

famous conductor who had done so much to popularize his work, although it is possible that the dedication was to his son a well-known violinist. These works, which as one might expect of works written some years apart, represent an important advance in Onslow's style. The Op.46 Quartets enjoyed considerable popularity and there are several extant records of their being performed in such premier places as Vienna, Berlin, Leipzig and Dresden.

The opening movement to **String Quartet No.19, Op.46 No.1 in F# minor, Allegro espressivo e non troppo presto**, begins with a tragic and emotionally charged outcry of great power. It is played in unison and one of the most striking openings of any Onslow quartet:



It is then given to the cello to introduce the chromatic and somewhat sinister, main theme which rises quickly but then collapses downward slowly, almost as if melting away. There is a rhythmic relationship between this theme and the opening outcry:



Long stretches of thematic material presented in this 16th—8th, 16th—8th rhythm infuses the movement with a sense of space and galloping forward motion while the melodic material creates a feeling of urgency. This is an exciting movement in which all four voices contribute throughout.

The second movement, *Menuetto-Allegro*, has a genial feel to it, not quite a scherzo though too quick for an old-fashioned minuet it is nonetheless an impetuous dance.



The beautifully contrasting trio, marked *dolce*, is based on a dreamy hunt-like theme.



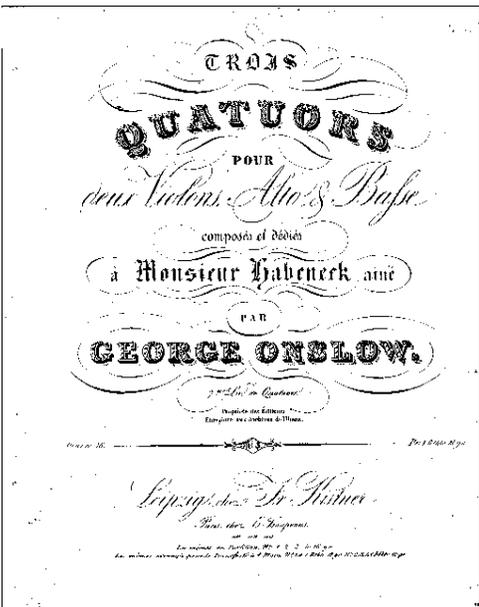
The following *Andante* is a typical example of Onslow's compositional brilliance. Taking what is a very gentle and pastoral theme, (see left) he writes a set of variations which explore every possible mood including a military setting which is a *tour de force*. Few composers have composed as many fine theme and variation movements as Onslow.



The superb finale, *Allegro moderato*, is quintessential Onslow: Drama, excitement, tuneful melodies, toe-tapping rhythms—it's all there. As the cello quietly beckons with half of the main theme



The violin interrupts with great urgency:



The cello then states the second half of the theme:



With no less urgency, the violin replies:



This a very exciting movement throughout, right up to and including the surprise ending in which the cello sneaks away *pp* *pp* *ritardando poco.* with the movement.

First rate, masterpiece, these are but mere words to describe a quartet which can stand comparison with works of any composer writing at this time. It deserves to be performed regularly and would be an ornament in any professional ensemble's repertoire. There is a marvelous recording of it by the Coull Quartet on ASV CD# DCA808. Buy it.

The main theme of the opening movement, *Allegro*, to the second quartet in this set of three, **String Quartet No.20 in F, Op.46 No.2**, is given to the cello as a brief solo:



It is a genial movement but with none of tension, drama or excitement one so often encounters in the opening movements to Onslow's quartets. In the second movement, *Andante sostenuto e semplice*, Onslow's use of pizzicato to present the melody against long sustained chords in the other voices is conceived and executed masterfully:



First the cello is given the theme against the upper three voices, then the first violin against the lower three voices with the cello playing in its treble register. The *Menuetto vivace* which follows is certainly nothing that could be danced to, but it is a captivating *moto perpetuo*:



The charming contrasting trio is reminiscent of the hunting theme from Rossini's *William Tell*. In the finale, *Allegro vivace e scherzo*, the drum-like rhythm of the opening theme serves to propel the music forward from start to rousing finish:



This is another fine quartet which should be of interest to both amateurs and professionals. Like most of Onslow's quartets, the

music is out of print and not in the Cobbett Association's library. And unfortunately, there is not even a recording of it.

The dramatic opening to the first movement, *Allegro non troppo vivo*, of **String Quartet No.21, Op.46 in g minor** immediately grabs the listener's attention. A series of powerful chords gives way to a low-pitched, soft, sinister, somewhat syncopated theme in the viola and cello, which reminds me a bit of the scherzo to Dohnanyi's Second Quartet, Op.15.



Throughout this movement, rhythmic syncopation plays an important role in the thematic material.

There is a surviving account by one of Onslow's friends about the fact that the composer was particularly proud of the *Adagio religioso* to this quartet, especially as to its expressiveness. It is a good movement but I am not sure it deserves to be singled out, as Dr. Franks does, for special praise. Again the device of using the cello to give forth the melody with pizzicato triplets to long chords in the other voices is used, but to an even greater degree than in Op.46 No.2.

The sunny, carefree *Menuetto allegretto* is a curious mix. It sounds, at times, almost Haydnesque and yet there is a certain something to it which places it later than the Vienna Classics:



There is a very short trio in which one can hear storm clouds gathering from a distance but nothing comes of it and the sunny mood of the trio quickly breaks forth again.

As in the prior two quartets, we have yet another very strong finale. Marked *Presto*, there is incredible forward drive and excitement to this movement as the main theme clearly illustrates:



This excellent quartet surely belongs in the concert hall. It has been recorded recently by the Mandelring Quartet CPO CD 999 329 and readers are encouraged at least to hear it if they cannot play it.

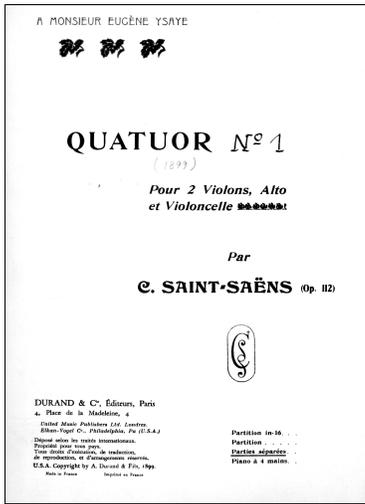
This series will continue in the next issue with a discussion of String Quartets Nos.22-24.

# The String Quartets of Camille Saint Saëns (continued from page 1)

When BMG Conifer first approached the Miami Quartet about a series of recording projects, those of St. Saëns were on the top of their list. Record companies today are reluctant to put out the ninety first version of a Beethoven or Mozart quartet, and are therefore always looking for new and interesting repertoire. At the time, the quartets had not been released as a pair, and it seemed like an interesting project, so we agreed to take it on. The pleasure turned out to be all ours!

Once again, a fugato is introduced by the cello and this one is quite boisterous and fun to play. After a very beautiful and harmonically adventurous coda, the movement scurries away the way it began, but this time only softer.

I discovered that St. Saëns was a frequent traveler, and one of his favorite vacations was to Algiers in North Africa (in fact St. Saëns died there). In both of the slow movements of his string quartets, I pick up a definite Mediterranean flavor.

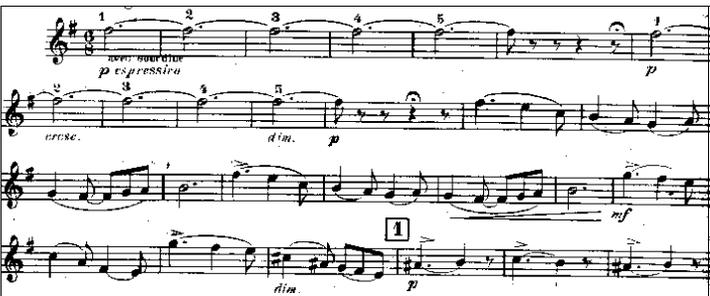


The First String Quartet dates from 1899 and is dedicated to Eugene Ysaye, the famous Belgian violinist who championed contemporary music. In my opinion, of the two quartets, this is the meat and potatoes for chamber music lovers. It is written in a very grand scale and is easily thirty minutes long. In this quartet and the second as well, the first violin part is worthy of a virtuoso technique, though it might sound harder than it actually is. (I'm just the cellist)



The Quartet opens with a muted cantabile played by the first violin alone:

The first violin again is featured with the majority of thematic material.



The Quartet finishes with a last movement that is both energetic and exciting, full of varying rhythms and contrapuntal devices. Just before the molto allegro that so brilliantly finishes off the movement, St. Saëns reintroduces material from the first movement, using the cyclical technique so loved by Cesar Franck. Such a comparison would not have sat well with St. Saëns as he despised Franck and disdained him as a composer. The First Quartet of St. Saëns is one which fits nicely at the end of a program because it finishes so vigorously, or could close out a first half.

This dissolves into a piu allegro bustling with complex figurations. The cello introduces the lyrical second theme which fades into some fugato and contrapuntal writing. St. Saëns puts everything including the kitchen sink into this movement, which could prove a distraction for the listener. Someone once told me that St. Saëns would write a fugue every morning for breakfast. If that's the case, then I think at least part of this movement was composed before noon!

The Second Quartet Opus 153, written in 1919, is on a smaller scale (it has only three movements) and in general is a lighter piece. The first movement is entitled *Allegro animato* and is my favorite movement of the seven. In it I hear a little Beethoven (St. Saëns was often called the French Beethoven) and it is pure in nature and beautiful to listen to. Opening Theme 1st Movement:

The second movement is the most successful of the four. It's main characteristic is a syncopated theme in the first violin that is accompanied by pizzicati in the other instruments.



The second movement is a molto adagio that again harkens back to Northern Africa in it's veiled melodies and harmonic motion. The last movement is very frilly and difficult to pull off, and in it's light hearted manner almost takes on a silly feeling. It has

(Continued on page 7)



# New Recordings



A listing of recently recorded non standardchamber music on CD by category.

## String Quartets

John Maxwell ANDERSON (19??-) Qt. (1997), Private Label / Frank BRIDGE (1879-1941) No.1 in e & No.4, Meridian CDE 84369 / Arthur FOOTE (1853-1937) No.2 in E, Op.32 & No.3 in D, Op.70, Marco Polo 8.223875 / Theodore GOUVY (1819-1898) No.5 Op.68, K617 085-3 / Alf HURUM (1882-1972) Qt. in a, Op.6, Simax PCV 3110 / Guus JANSSEN (1951-) No.2 'Streepjes', Donemus CV 61 / Carl Nielsen (1865-1931) No.1 in g, Op.13 & No.4 in F, Op.44, Chandos 9635 / Boris PARSADANIAN (1925-1997) Str. Qt, Antes BM-CD31.9118 / Jean PERRIN (1920-1989) Qt., Musikszene Schweiz CTS-M 45 / James PRIMOSCH (1956-) No.2, New World 80523 / Isang YUN (1917-1995) No.5, Camerata 30CM-363 / Robert SIMPSON (1921-1998) Nos.1-3, Pearl GEM 0023 / Alexander von ZEMLINSKY (1871-1942) No.1 in A, Op.4 & No.4, Op.25, Praga 250

## Strings Only-Not Quartets

Wolfgang LUDEWIG (1926-)Trio Nos.1-2 for Vln, Vla & Vc, Pro Viva ISVP 183 / Ermanno WOLF-FERRARI (1876-1948) Quintet in C, Op.24, MD&G 308 0310 / Emanuel Aloys FÖRSTER (1748-1823) Quintet in c, Op.19, Quintet in a, Op.20, Quintet in Eb, Op.26 & Fantasie & Sonata for Quintet, New Classical Adventure, MA97 10 831 / Xaver THOMA (1953-) String Trio, Antes 31.9074

## Piano Trios

John Maxwell Anderson, Trio (1997) Private Label / Woldemar BARGIEL (1828-1897) No.2 in Eb, Op.20 & No.3 in Bb, Op.37, MD&G 303 0805 / Muzio CLEMENTI (1751-1832) Trio in F, Op.27 No.1, Music & Arts CD 1034 / Morton FELDMAN (1926-1987) Trio (1980), New Classical Adventure MA96 12 824 / Theodore GOUVY (1819-1898) No. 2 in a, Op.18 & & No.3 in B, Op.19, Orfeo C444971 / Bohuslav MARTINU (1890-1959) No.2 in d & No.3 (1951), Chandos 9632 / Darius MIHAUD (1892-1974) Suite, Op.157b for Pno, Vln & Vla, ADV DCA 1039 / James PRIMOSCH (1956-) Fantasy-Variations, New World 80523 / Jaan RÄÄTS (1932-) No.6 Op.81, Antes BM-CD31.9065 / Ermanno WOLF-FERRARI (1876-1948) No.1 in D, Op.5 & No.2 in F#, Op.7, MD&G 308 0310

## Piano Quartets & Quintets

Arthur FOOTE (1853-1937) Quintet in a, Op.38, Marco Polo 8.223875 / Theodore GOUVY (1819-1898) Quintet Op.24, K617 085-3 / James PRIMOSCH (1956-) Quintet, New World 80523 / Jaan RÄÄTS (1932-) Piano Qnt No.3, Op.38, Antes BM-CD31.9065 / Max REGER (1873-1916) Quartet in a, Op.133, MD&G 336 0714 / Ermanno WOLF-FERRARI (1876-1948) Piano Qnt in Db, Op.6, MD&G 308 0310

## Winds & Strings

Jean DAETWYLER (1907-1994) Divertimento for Fl, Vln & Vc, Musikszene Schweiz CTS-M 15 / Jean FRANÇAIX (1912-1997) A Huit (Octet) for Str. Qt, Kb, Cln, Hn, & Bsn, Clarinet

Quintet, Divertissement for Str. Qt. & Bsn, Hyperion CDA67036 / Ester MÄGI (1922-) Serenade for Fl, Vln & Vla, Antes BM-CD 31.91110 Sigismund NEUKOMM (1788-1858) Clarinet Quintet, New Classical Adventure MA 95 03 804 / Carl Maria von WEBER (1786-1826) Clarinet Quintet, New Classical Adventure MA 95 03 804 / Isang YUN (1917-1995) Oboe Quartet, Camerata & Clarinet Quintet, 30CM-363 also Trio for Fl, Ob & Vln, Jecklin JD718

## Winds, Strings & Piano

Ludwig BEETHOVEN (1770-1827) Trio for Cl, Vc & Pno, Op.20 after the Septet, Naxos 8.553389 / Toshio KOSOKAWA (1955-) Vertical Time Studies for Cln, Vc & Pno, Col Legno 20016 / Bohuslav MARTINU (1890-1959) Trio for Fl, Vc & Pno, Antes BM\_CD 31.9045 / Ferdinand RIES (1784-1838) Trio for Cl, Vc & Pno, Naxos 8.553389 / Ned ROREM (1923-) Trio for Fl, Vc & Pno, Antes BM-CD 31.9045 /

## Piano & Winds

Jean FRANÇAIX (1912-1997) L'heure du berger for Fl, Ob, Cln, Bsn, Hn & Pno, Hyperion CDA 67036 / Franco MARGOLA (1908-1992) Sonate a tre for Ob, Cln & Bsn, Rainbow Classics RW 98106

## Winds Only

François René GEBAUER (1773-1845) Quintet No.3, New Classical Adventure MA95 03 805 / Guus JANSSEN (1951-) Octet, Donemus CV 61 / Antonin REICHA (1770-1836) Quintet in C, Op.91 No.1, New Classical Adventure MA95 03 805

(Continued from page 6)

several fugatos with scurrying sixteenth note passages that require a deft touch. St. Saëns all of a sudden pulls the rug out from under the players with three final chords that bring an end to the movement.

In the finale, the composer begins with an introduction, marked *Andantino*, and only executed by the lower three voices. The main theme is classical in nature and simplicity itself:



Camille St. Saëns was writing in a style he had grown comfortable with and certainly was not inventing anything new in these quartets. When one stops to think that Bartok had written his first string quartet twelve years earlier than the Opus 153, it puts in perspective why some of St. Saëns colleagues called him old fashioned. It is none the less beautiful music and worthy of a listen and fun to try and figure out. Chamber music audiences who have grown accustomed to seeing the same Brahms and Mendelssohn quartets presented on their series always welcomed this refreshing change of pace from the French master. If my memory serves me correctly, the parts are published by Durand and for the most part error free.

## Chamber Music of Pavel Haas

(Continued from page 1)

by Moravian folk songs. He was briefly interested in the music of the French "Les Six", and was also well acquainted with jazz.

He married a Soviet doctor in 1935 and by the beginning of the war had several works published, including an opera, **Charlatan**, and several movie scores, and produced several chamber works. Unfortunately, he had to supplement his income at times working in his father's shoe store, and had many unfinished works.

The **String Quartet No. 1, Op. 3 c# minor** is a one movement piece in which he depicts several different moods in a connected piece. It was probably written around 1922.

The **String Quartet No. 2, Op. 7, Zopicich hor** (From the Monkey Mountains) is a suite of four movements inspired by a visit to the Czech-Moravian Highlands in 1925. Haas described it himself: "*The whole of this carefree piece is dominated by movement—whether the rhythm of the open countryside and birdsong, or the irregular motion of village carts, or the warm song of the human heart and the cool quiet play of moonbeams, or the wild abandon of a night of revelry.*" The first and third movements are lyrical. The second movement, entitled "*Cart, Horse, and Driver*" depicts the conflict in motion between man and beast. The fourth movement is in rumba rhythm and once specified a percussion part later withdrawn by the composer.

The **Wind Quintet, Op. 10** was composed in 1929, shortly after Janacek's death. In the first movement poignant chromatic motifs repeat, announced by the oboe, then the clarinet. They are based on a song, "*The Blackbird*," Haas had written in Janacek's class. The second movement is lyrical, starting with a flute solo, then ever-increasing momentum. The third movement, *Ballo Eccentrico*, is a dance with, at times, all five instruments having concomitant, contrapuntal, independent melodies. Epilogue, the final movement, is in 5/4 time.

The **String Quartet No. 3, Op. 15** was written in 1938, when Nazi Germany was threatening and occupied the Sudetenland. In this piece Haas is clearly responding to the increasing tensions. The first movement is based on motifs from his opera *Charlatan*. The slow movement quotes the St. Wencelaus Chorale, (see below), and the third movement is a set of variations, giving rise to a great fugue and chorale-like conclusion. It was apparently inspired by a 1938 gymnastic rally which provided an opportunity for protest against the Nazis.

The **Suite for Oboe and Piano (1939)** was written at a most poignant time for Haas. He had been trying to leave Czechoslovakia with his wife and year-old child when the Nazis suddenly occupied Bohemia and Moravia, trapping them. The *Suite*, originally with words for voice that have been lost, is a patriotic cry for himself and his country, which incorporates antifascist quotes of Czech nationalistic music. In the first movement the oboe's strident voice cries out in protest initially, then the movement ends with a whimpering, despairing, repeated phrase in the piano. The second movement is wilder in rhythm but incorporates the Hussite song *Ye Warriors of God*

rhythm. The final movement begins very poignantly, grieving, but ends in a stirring cacophony of bell-like repetitions of the St. Wencelaus Chorale.

After war broke out, conditions deteriorated rapidly for the Jews of Czechoslovakia. Haas worked for two years on a symphony but never completed it. Haas decided to divorce his wife, a desperate ploy, which was successful in saving his non-Jewish wife and daughter from the roundup and internment he suffered. In December, 1941 he arrived at Terezin or Theresienstadt. For the first year, music and instruments were forbidden and smuggled into the camp, but then the Nazis realized they had a propaganda opportunity to encourage such artistic endeavors. Haas, however, was devastated psychologically by depression and was indifferent to the musical activities of the camp.

Finally a younger internee, Gideon Klein, another gifted composer, thrust handmade manuscript paper at him and begged him to compose again. Of the three pieces that survived from Haas' three years at Terezin, the most famous is another chamber work, the *Study for String Orchestra*, featured in the Nazi propaganda film on June 1944, with Karel Ancerl conducting and shows Haas himself. The complex but brief score shows no compromise from the composer under such adverse conditions. It has difficult rhythmical patterns and syncopation, and frequent time signature and tempo changes. Within a few months of this performance, all the musicians of Terezin, including Haas and orchestra were transported to Auschwitz and died in the gas chambers in October 1944.

After the war the music of Pavel Haas lay dormant until his biographer (and former student), Professor Lubomir Peduzzi, carefully reassembled and annotated it. The communist governments of the Eastern bloc had little interest in nationalistic composers and it was not until 1989 and the collapse of the Iron Curtain that much of this music was published.

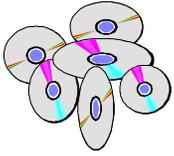
### Discology of Pavel Haas' Music:

Orfeo C386 961 A MUSICA REDIVIVA  
Wind Quintet op. 10  
Suite for Oboe and Klavier, op. 17

London 440-853-2  
String Quartet No. 2, op. 7  
String Quartet No. 3, op. 15

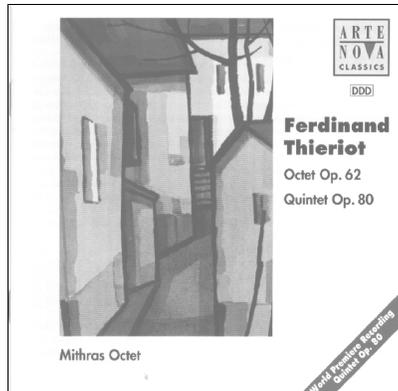
Koch/Schwann: 3-1371-2H1  
Study for String Orchestra

Bibliography: Program Notes from all above CD's and others. Also a book entitled *Music at Terezin*, but I have misplaced the name of the author.



## Diskology: Ferdinand Thieriot's Octet & Quintet for Piano & Winds, Rudolf Tobias: String Quartets; Works by Triebensee & Paër

The very sparse jacket notes to this Arte Nova CD #74321 49689 casually begin with the statement, "One no longer knows his



name: Ferdinand Thieriot (1838-1919) emerged from the circle around Johannes Brahms..." If so, his emergence was brief and unnoticed, at least by English-speaking musicians and listeners. He is unknown to either the *Groves* or *New Grove*, and not to be found in *Baker's Dictionary*. Cobbett's *Cyclopedic Survey*, while producing a list of his

chamber works, enlightens us as to Thieriot with only one sentence which is in part misinformation: "German composer, pupil of Brahms and Rheinberger." Though he was an admirer and friend of Brahms, he not was a student of the great man. They did, however, study with the same teacher while in Hamburg, E. Marxen. Thieriot eventually followed Brahms to Austria where he first gained a reputation as a cellist. (Billroth, the famous surgeon and a close friend of Brahms, wrote that he had publicly performed Brahms' Op.36 Sextet with Thieriot) Subsequently, on Brahms recommendation, Thieriot was appointed Music Director of Music Society of Steiermark in Graz. He left Austria for good and returned to Hamburg sometime before 1890.

Thieriot wrote a considerable amount of chamber music including an octet for piano, winds and bass, a string octet, two string quartets, a quintet for piano and string quartet, four piano trios, two piano quartets, a quartet for flute and string trio, and a quintet for piano and winds.

The **Octet in Bb, Op.62 for string quartet, bass, clarinet, horn and basson** was published by Peters in 1893 and is in five movements. The clear influence of Beethoven's Op.20 *Septet*, and of Mendelssohn can be heard in this work. The first movement, *Allegro non troppo* is preceded by a short *Poco adagio* in which the beautiful main theme is presented. There is also a lyrical second theme which is deftly spread among the voices. This is a big, but satisfying movement. Next comes a Schumannesque *Intermezzo*. In the middle section, the horn is given a striking chance to shine. Perhaps the center of gravity is the third movement, *Adagio molto mesto*. The cello is given the job of introducing the lament-like opening theme and is soon joined by the clarinet in a lovely episode. A second equally fetching melody is later brought forth by the first violin and horn. The instrumentation is excellent. The following *Scherzo-Allegro vivace* is energetic and robust while the trio section again shows the influence of Schumann. In the finale, *Allegro moderato*, again we encounter appealing melodies and good part-writing. Those who have organized a group to play Schubert's Octet would certainly enjoy playing this work if they could find the parts.

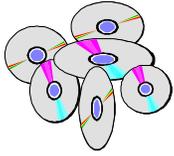
The other work on this disk is the **Quintet in a, Op.80 for piano, oboe, clarinet, horn and bassoon**. There do not appear to be a great many works for this combination and I certainly am not aware of any major mid or late 19th Century composer writing such a quintet. Thieriot, then on this account, must serve as their proxy. As such, he has nothing to be ashamed of. In four movements, *Allegro non troppo*, *Intermezzo*, *Adagio* and *Allegro vivace*, the listener is treated to tuneful melodies, many moods and true chamber music. Here the piano is not a solo instrument, nor is it used much as a counterweight to the massed winds, a situation one so often encounters in quintets for piano and strings. The writing for winds shows experience and familiarity with their possibilities. This too is a good work.



In Rudolf Tobias (1873-1918), we have yet another composer of whom few if any of us have heard. Born to an Estonian churchman, Tobias began composing at an early age and was eventually sent to the St. Petersburg Conservatory where he studied with Rimsky-Korsakov. After graduating, he briefly worked in St. Petersburg before returning to Estonia. As a dearth of music life there made prospects for a professional career rather grim, he decided to emigrate, travelling first to France and then Germany.

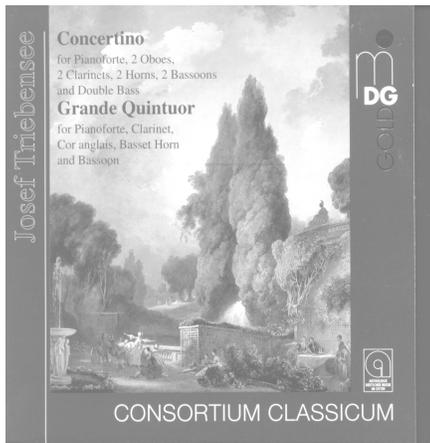
Settling in Berlin, Tobias was eventually appointed to a lectureship at the Royal Academy of Music where he replaced Engelbert Humperdinck. Having taken out German citizenship, he served briefly in the army during the First World War. Poor health led to his discharge and eventual death. Today, he is widely regarded by Estonians as their first professional composer. He composed two quartets, recorded here on this BIS CD#704, and was at work on a third at the time of his death.

**String Quartet No 1 in d minor** was composed in 1899 for a chamber music competition sponsored by the famous Russian music publisher, Beleiev. The first movement to the Quartet, *Allegro con moto*, begins with an heroic theme introduced by the viola and cello. There is much agitation. The music sounds more Nordic than Russian. One might have thought that Svendsen or perhaps Grieg had been the teacher. The second movement, *Andante mesto*, is in the form of a dirge. One hears the influence of Taneiev, and in a fugal section, of late Beethoven. The scherzo, *Allegro grazioso*, is well-written and very exciting with hints of modernism. The trio is a wonderfully contrasting melancholy episode. The finale, *Allegro*, is perhaps the weakest of the four movements. Surrounded by much tremolo, the themes do not seem quite up to all the tension that is created. While not strikingly original, this quartet is quite interesting, enjoyable to hear and shows considerable craftsmanship on the composer's part.



## Triebensee: Concertino Decet; Quintet for Winds & Piano Ferdinando Paër: 3 Grand Sonatas for Piano Trio

**String Quartet No.2 in c minor** was composed in 1902. It's first movement, *Allegro moderato e maestoso*, seems to me to indicate that this composer had encountered Wilhelm Stenhammar's string quartets. The music shows a very definite Beethovenian influence, updated in much the same way the Swedish composer worked. There are many fertile ideas presented here. This movement makes a strong impression. The second movement is a furious scherzo, *Allegro vivace*, with a trio featuring the viola in a syncopated melancholy dance that provides a superb contrast—very good writing indeed. This is followed by a *Nachtstück*, gauze-like and haunting night music. It begins darkly in the cello and rises imperceptibly to ethereal heights in the violin. One hears very faint echoes of late Beethoven in this finely wrought music. Outstanding. The finale, *Allegro con brio*, has a Nordic-sounding theme for its first subject and is full of energy with an excellent ending. This work is a considerable advance over his first. It deserves to be heard in concert as well as on disk.



The Austrian composer Josef Triebensee (1772-1846) was born in the Bohemian town of Wittingau. Shortly thereafter his family moved to Vienna where he was to study composition with Albrechtsberger and Salieri. His father was a solo oboist and taught the boy who became a soloist as well. According to Dieter

Klöcker, founder of the Consortium Classicum, Triebensee achieved fame as an arranger of Beethoven and Schubert for winds. Subsequently, he succeeded Carl Maria von Weber as director of the Prague Opera.

The first work on this MDG disk #301 0626 is Triebensee's **Concertino for Piano, 2 Oboes, 2 Clarinets, 2 Horns, 2 Bassoons & Bass**. An unusual combination to say the least. Klöcker states that there are, in fact, few works of any kind from this period for winds and piano because of the gap in social status between pianists and wind players, the latter were lowest on the musical social scale, and were often menial servants. Pianists were usually the highest and would rarely consent to play with mere wind players. The Concertino, so called because of the *concertante*-style part writing, is in five movements. In the opening *Adagio-Allegro*, the winds serve as a mini-orchestra for the piano. The succeeding Mozartean *Menuetto* is a wind octet sans piano, but the first trio is given over it



entirely. A second trio features the horns. This is followed by an *Andante con variazioni*. The theme is stated by the winds and each variation features different voices or combinations thereof. A second short *Menuetto*, is played exclusively by the winds. The finale, *Rondo moderato*, his lovely concertante writing gives many of the instruments a chance to shine, with the piano getting the lion's share. This charming music is in tone and language Mozartean and in form a divertimento.

Triebensee penned his **Grande Quintour for Piano, Clarinet, English Horn, Basset Horn & Bassoon** in Vienna around 1820. It is in four movements and dedicated to Prince Lobkowitz. Here the style is that of true chamber music and not that of *Gesellschafts Musik* which one hears in the Concertino. The first movement, *Andante sostenuto-Allegro* does not have a very imaginative first theme but the writing makes very good use of this ensemble. A genial and gentle *Andante* comes next. The writing here is assured. In the *Menuetto con moto*, the piano breaks loose with all sorts of running soloistic passages. The finale, *Allegro*, is perhaps the strongest movement. Certainly the opening theme is memorable. Triebensee, in the Quintet, exhibits some early Romantic tendencies and the music often sounds like Hummel or even at times like Schubert. What is best about this work is how Triebensee is able, for great stretches, to blend the piano into the wind ensemble to create a true chamber work.

Ferdinando Paër (1771-1839) is not a name with which chamber music players are familiar. During his lifetime, he was known, both in France and Italy, as a prominent opera composer, but he is also said to have penned a considerable amount of chamber music. Although a contemporary of Beethoven, if these **Tre Grandi Sonate** for piano trio on this Bongiovanni CD #GB5538 are anything to go by, his



music shows neither the influence of Beethoven nor even of the advances made by Haydn and Mozart during the last 20 years of the 18th Century. Referring to then prevalent 18th Century Italian tradition of writing for piano and strings, one commentator remarked that when a string instrument was given the melody, the piano still assumed the rôle of continuo as one found in the music of Corelli. But when the piano was to have the melody, it was as solist and the strings were to bother it as little as possible, they were 'ad libitum.' This is exactly what one finds here. While the music is elegant and the melodies charming, there is no give and take between the voices. Nor can the style be called *concertante* in that the violin rarely and the cello never are given any kind of solo passages. In fairness to Paër, neither the piano trios of Haydn's nor the early ones of Mozart sound very much more advanced in that the works could be performed without the strings. The difference is that Paër's trios were composed not only after the innovations of the Viennese Classics but during the beginning Romantic Movement and are as such archaic.