



# The Cobbett Association's Chamber Music Journal

Vol.X. No.1 Apr. 1999

## George Onslow's String Quartets (Part IX)

by R.H.R. Silvertrust

*The first eight parts of this series dealt with the composer's life from 1784 to 1833. The first twenty four quartets, Op. Nos.1-3, Op.8 Nos.1-3, Op.9 Nos.1-3, Op.10 Nos.1-3, Op.21 Nos.1-3, Op.36 Nos.1-3, Op.46 Nos.1-3, Op.47, Op.48 and Op.49 were presented and analyzed.)*

I wish to first correct a typographical error made in part eight of this series. String Quartet No.24 is Op.49 (and not Op.48 as inadvertently stated in the last issue)

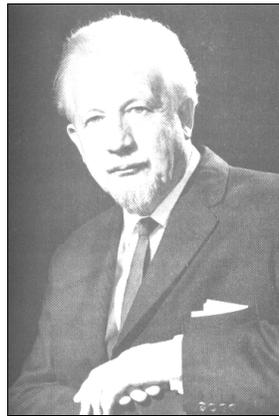
String Quartet Nos.25-27 were composed between 1834 and 1836. Onslow was 50 years old in 1834 and his reputation abroad was well-established. In France, the preceding years had seen his stock rise as well and he was considered either very close to or in the front rank of French composers. In the autumn of 1834, Adrien Boieldieu, one of the creators of what was then modern French comic opera died. Boieldieu had been a member of the Academie des Beaux Arts. Formed in 1795, the Academie was part of the prestigious Institut de France, which itself had been created to improve the arts and sciences. Because of Boieldieu's death, a seat on the Academie then fell vacant. In the weeks that followed, there was a scramble among France's prominent composers to line up support of the membership as they elected new members. Onslow, who had been a friend of Boieldieu, believed his chances were good. He argued his case maintaining that the Academie lacked any true representative of French instrumental music. When Onslow learned that his old teacher, Antonin Reicha, a transplanted Austro-Czech, was also running for the slot, he tried to withdraw his name writing that he only wished to be admitted after his "venerable master and friend."

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## The Chamber Music of Edmund Rubbra Part I

By Alan & Audrey West

When browsing through back numbers of the Newsletter we noticed "The British are coming" in Newsletter No.11 (April 1993) when Robert Maas announced that he would be doing profiles on important, neglected British composers and their chamber music.



The next two news-letters had articles on William Alwyn and Frank Bridge. Unfortunately Mr. Maas was not able to do any more. We have mentioned several British composers of chamber music

in articles about Hurlstone and Stanford but there seem to be lots more worthy of note. We have recently been playing quartets by Rubbra and enjoyed them very much so decided to find out more about his chamber music.

But first a little bit about the man himself as he is not a well-known composer even in Britain, and so, we presume, almost unheard of elsewhere. He was born in Northampton, England. His parents were working class but interested in music, particularly in singing and opera. An uncle was a blind pianist and had composed some pieces. Another uncle had a music shop and often used the Rubbra home for storing pianos when he had no room for them in his shop. So Rubbra had access to music and pianos at an early age and his

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Some Short Notes On the Chamber Music of Sergei Taneyev

by Michael Bryant

### A Little About The Composer

Having stumbled on Taneyev's *Canzona* for clarinet in 1971, I totally failed to recognise anything significant in it. When, in the early 1980's, reviews of Russian recordings of his chamber music and some correspondence appeared in *Fanfare* (Vol 5/1 1981, Vol 5/2 1982, Vol 9/2 1985 and Vol 9/4 1986), it was apparent that Taneyev was undergoing a comprehensive reassessment in the Soviet Union and the United States.

Sergei Taneyev (1856-1915) was born near Moscow and began to study the piano at age five. He entered the Moscow Conservatory at 10. After graduating with two gold medals, he toured Turkey, Greece and Italy with Leopold Auer. Around 1876 he visited Paris where he met Gounod, Saint Saëns, Faure and D'Indy. His first three string quartets (Nos.7-9) were composed during the 1880's. He became a professor and later Director of the Moscow Conservatory, a post he resigned in 1905. He then toured with the Bohemian String

Quartet two seasons. As a result of his association with them, he composed three works for piano and strings.

He was not only a great pianist, a teacher at the Moscow Conservatoire and its director from 1895-9, but also a classical scholar, linguist and the leading authority on counterpoint. The best known of his many students include Scriabin, Rachmaninov, Gliere, Medtner, Juon and Respighi.

His most significant contribution was as a composer of chamber music. There are nine quartets, three incomplete quartets, two string quintets, four string trios and

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R.H.R. Silvertrust, *Editor*

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Subscription is available by joining The Cobbett Association, Incorporated and making a suggested donation of US\$20 (US\$25 outside the United States) per year. Student rates available on request. Back issues of the Chamber Music Journal are available at a cost of \$6 per issue.

Offices of The Cobbett Association, Incorporated are located at 601 Timber Trail, Riverwoods, IL 60015, USA. Our telephone is: 847 / 374-1800. Please remember when calling that we are located in the Central Standard Time Zone of the United States, 6 hours earlier than GMT (Greenwich Mean Time)

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# The Sounding Board-Letters to the Editor



## Of Violones, Arpeggiones & Eybler

I would like to make a correction to Mr. Opolis' review (Vol.IX No.1 Apr 1998) of the quintet by Joseph Eybler (for violin, viola d'amore, viola, cello and violone) (*Ed*— in that review, Mr. Opolis referred to the violone as "the instrument for which Schubert wrote his famous Arpeggione Sonata...")

The violone and arpeggione are two different instruments. The violone was often the bass instrument indicated on title pages for baroque sonatas, e.g. Corelli's Op.5 Sonatas. As time went on 'violone' sometimes meant 'cello' (see: Stephen Bonta's *From Violone to Violoncello: A Question of Strings?* in the *Journal of American Musicological Society*, III, 1977)

The arpeggione, on the other hand, is a six-stringed guitar-like instrument invented by J. G. Staufer in Vienna in 1824. Schubert made it famous, and seems to be the only composer of note who wrote anything for it. There are a few extant instruments. I have seen the one in the Melk Abbey near Vienna.

Sonya Monosoff  
Ithaca, New York

*Mr. Opolis responds: Well, I got the last three letters of the instrument correct and they each have six strings; that must count for something.*

*In all seriousness, thank you for catching my error. The violone was normally a 6-stringed viol and, according to the New Grove, regarded as "the direct ancestor of the double bass." It was not, as you point out, the instrument for which Schubert wrote his sonata. That was, again as you note, the Arpeggione—the 6-stringed guitar shaped cello with fretted fingerboard invented by Staufer and mastered by Vincenz Schuster, an acquaintance of Schubert's for whom the work was written.*

*With regard to Eybler's quintet, this means then that it was intended for violin, viola d'amore, viola, cello and violone, which by Eybler's time would have meant double bass. Interestingly, the editors include a part for Violoncello II rather than for double bass. Yet examination of the violone part seems to indicate the bass could easily handle it, except perhaps for one variation in the last movement. As I wrote, I have been able to play*

*it as both a quintet (violin, 2 violas and 2 cellos) and as a sextet (violin, 3 violas and 2 cellos). Certainly, a bass would give the piece great depth. Whether this would be desirable given the already bottom heavy instrumentation, I cannot say, but sadly, with this kind of instrumentation, the work is not going to get too many outings.*

## Is There More Than The Mendelssohn

I have been fortunate in being able to assemble the personnel necessary to play the Mendelssohn Octet, but we have been unable to find anything else. Surely there must be other composers who have written octets. Are any of these that you know of in print?

H. P. Casperson  
Cleveland, Ohio

*There are several composers who have written octets for strings. The problem is that most of these pieces are not in print. Quite a number can be heard on disk.*

*Of those in print, besides the Mendelssohn, there is one by the Norwegian composer, Johann Svendsen, printed I think by Wollenweber, which is full of Nordic melody and a lot of fun to play. Shostakovich wrote something called 'Prelude & Scherzo.' which Kalmus keeps in print. Simrock has just brought out Max Bruch's Op. Post. Octet.*

*There are also—though strictly speaking not actually octets—Spohr's Double Quartets now available in modern editions, Op.65, 77, 87 & 136. These excellent works, while for eight strings, are meant for two distinct quartet groups rather than one large octet. It is interesting to sit down and play Mendelssohn's Octet and then compare the treatment of the parts to one of Spohr's.*

*On disk one can hear Octets by Woldemar Bargiel, Op.15, Joachim Raff and Rheinhold Gliere all of which are excellent. In addition, there are recordings of octets by Enescu, Gade and Theriot which are also good.*

*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

First I would like to thank Alan and Audrey West for their excellent article on Edmund Rubbra which is appearing in this issue of the *Journal* as well as the next. I would like readers to note that this article was unsolicited and that the Wests have taken to heart our request for articles from the membership. Although there may be more 'academic' articles in existence about Rubbra's chamber music, I doubt that there is anything of more pertinent interest to professionals and amateur players. That is because unlike most authors who pen articles from the cold score of a work—or more likely yet from other secondary sources, the Wests have played these pieces, in some instances many times.

I have said and continue to say that in my opinion there is no greater reservoir of knowledge about non-standard chamber music literature than our membership. I hope that many of you will follow the West's example and send us articles about composers and works with which you are familiar.

I also wish to thank Michael Bryant for his fine piece on the chamber music of Sergei Taneyev, an important Russian composer. Mr. Bryant brings his many years of chamber music experience to bear in creating an enticing introduction to Taneyev's oeuvre.

The Cobbett Library at present is boxed and waiting transport to its new location on Northeastern Illinois University's campus.

In early March, Professor Oddo and I met with the Chairman of the Music Department, Dr. Nelson Mandrell, and the University Librarian, Mr. Bradley Baker to discuss arrangements for storage of the library and for the copying of parts for members.

I also presented a formal agreement to be signed by the University and ourselves which outlines their responsibilities, rights and privileges vis-a-vis the Cobbett Library. The agreement was taken for further study and we are to hear if it satisfactory or requires changes sometime in either May or June.

This is your last issue of the *Journal* if you have not yet paid your 1999 dues.

## The Chamber Music of Edmund Rubbra

(Continued from page 1)

parents encouraged him by enabling him to have piano lessons from local teachers. He left school at 14 and worked first as an office boy in a boot and shoe factory and then as a railway clerk.

While at school he had tried composing but without much success. In 1916 he gave a recital of works by Cyril Scott. A friend of the family sent a programme to Cyril Scott who was so interested that he offered to give Rubbra piano lessons and for a couple of years Rubbra went to London to study with Scott. Rubbra then obtained a composition scholarship to Reading University and a year later a composition scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music in London, where he studied with Gustav Holst and R.O. Morris.

After leaving the Academy he worked as a music journalist and teacher and wrote music for plays for a travelling theatre company. During the war he was conscripted into the army and, as he was a good pianist, served in the Army Music Unit, entertaining the troops as a member of a piano trio consisting of himself as pianist, Joshua Glazier (violin) and William Pleeth (cello). This trio continued after the war until 1956 but the violinist Glazier was replaced first by Norbert Brainin and later by Eric Gruenberg. In 1947 Rubbra was appointed lecturer in music in the Faculty of Music at Oxford University and Fellow of Worcester College, Oxford. Later he was also appointed professor of composition at the Guildhall School of Music in London. In 1955 he was awarded the Cobbett Medal by the Worshipful Company of Musicians for "services to chamber music."

His first teacher Cyril Scott (1879-1970) wrote several quartets and other chamber music. We have tried these but were not attracted to them. Scott was also a poet and writer and interested in the East and Eastern thought. Gustav Holst (1874-1934) is well-known as a composer, mainly because of *The Planets*, but he wrote little chamber music. The only work seems to be *Seven Scottish Airs for Piano Quintet* which is short, only one movement, not difficult and very pleasant. Reginald Owen Morris (1886-1948) also wrote very little chamber music. The only

piece we know is the *Fantasy for String Quartet* (1922), a one movement work, which won a Carnegie Prize. All these teachers were interested in Eastern thought and mysticism and Morris was influenced by Elizabethan counterpoint.

Rubbra's style changed considerably over the years. However, he is always interested in the polyphony constructed by following through lyrical themes for all players. He has a great sense of logical development. In his early works his harmony has a modal flavour but it becomes more chromatic later and in his last works rather astringent.

### Phantasy for 2 Violins & Piano Op.16

Here Rubbra calls himself Edmund Duncan-Rubbra, I don't know why. This is an early work (1925) dedicated to Gerald Finzi. It is in one movement with a contrapuntal flowing style reminiscent of the trio sonatas except that the piano part has much richer chords and a chromatic harmony. It is rather long and would have benefited from having more contrast. Still it is very pleasant to listen to and interesting to play.

### Lyrical movement for Piano Quintet

This is a very attractive work with a hint of the English folksong influence. Composed in 1929, it is varied and well written for all parts. The opening is marked *Moderato assai* but with a metronome mark that we thought was far too slow. This is followed by a flowing *Grazioso* section and then a lively *Allegro*. The higher range of the cello is used very effectively and the movement ends much as it began but with a very attractive last four bars *Lento* for the viola. This is quite a short piece and we strongly recommend it to a piano quintet needing to fill in a ten minute gap in a programme.

### String Quartet No.1 in E minor Op.35

Composed in 1933, this quartet is dedicated to Ralph Vaughan Williams and has something of the folk music influence that Vaughan Williams introduced into his own music. We found this quartet very approachable and well worth trying now and again. The movements are well contrasted. The first movement is in sonata form marked *Alleretto*. The second

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movement is *Lento* with a prominent viola part. The indicated metronome markings seem far too slow. We think it best to ignore them and rely on the *Lento* indication and the feel of the piece. This leads straight into the third and final movement which is a country dance type of movement marked *Vivace* in mixed 6/8 and 3/4 time. This is a nice quartet.

#### Amoretti, 5 Sonnets for Tenor & String Quartet, Op.43

These are five sonnets by Edmund Spencer and take their numbers from his collected works. The music was composed in 1935.

##### 1. Sonnet LXXXVIII

*Lacking my love, I go from place to place.*

When played at the speed indicated by the metronome mark this was rather a gloomy setting of this sonnet but the sonnet itself is not a sad one, so perhaps the indicated speed is too slow. The harmony is interesting with a vaguely Tudor flavour.

##### 2. Sonnet LXX

*Fresh Spring, the herald of love's might king.*

This was quite a lively setting requiring some neat playing from the upper strings. Quite successful.

##### 3. Sonnet LXXXIX

*Like as the culver on the barred rough sits mourning for the absence of her mate.*

This should be slow but the metronome mark was incredibly slow. At this speed it was rather a flat exercise in strange her harmonies. It might have made more sense played faster.

##### 4. Sonnet XXXVII

*What gyle is this, that those her golden tresses she cloth attire under gold.*

A fairly brisk setting although it starts with the voice singing over a pedal note in the cello. The style is polyphonic with the strings playing independently with quite a complicated rhythm. Later the accompanying strings play passages of chromatic scales in double-stopped thirds. These are rather difficult to get in tune.

##### 5. Sonnet XL

*Mark when she smiles with amiable cheer.*

This is quite a fast setting that we found quite difficult to bring off. There is a lot of fast counterpoint with the voice singing mainly in crochets. (quarter notes)

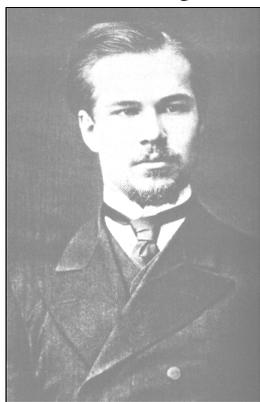
We played each sonnet two or three times. However, we did not work on them long enough to understand them properly. Maybe we did not do them justice. On the other hand we did not feel encouraged to have another attempt at them since the parts were hand-written with no key signatures but accidentals everywhere. It was clear that if the parts had been edited they would have been much easier to read.

The tenor found this work very difficult as lots of the words and expressions are in Old English. Also the music is difficult to pitch and it was hard to read the complicated rhythms. (*The second and concluding part to this article will appear in the next issue of the Journal*)

## Some Short Notes on the Chamber Music of Sergei Taneyev (Continued from page 1)

three major works with piano, trio, quartet and a quintet.

There is no English monograph on Taneyev. Calvocoressi and Abraham devoted a chapter to Taneyev in *Masters of Russian Music* (1936) and Alfred Swan gave him three pages in *Russian Music* (1973). *Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey* has a long article by Belaiev.



Taneyev had a small private income, refused fee for private music lessons and did not take an interest in the publication of his works which were published with the assistance of Belaiev. He was a regular visitor to the Tolstoys. Madame Tolstoy confided to her diary her friendship with Taneyev and also collected photographs of him. Together with Glazunov, who wrote 7 quartets, Taneyev had the distinction among Russian composers of being a professional musician. He was a *zapadnik*, i.e.: western in outlook. He regarded the *Kuchka*, the Russian nationalist composers centered around Rimsky-Korsakov in St Petersburg, with suspicion during the 1880's but came to appreciate Borodin and Rimsky Korsakov a decade later. (*Kuchka* is usually translated as "Big Five," however it literally means "Little Heap.")

For his part, Rimsky Korsakov certainly held Taneyev in the

highest regard. An argument could be settled in a class of Rimsky-Korsakov's by invoking the name of Taneyev, for example, "*Taneyev thinks that this is a *cambiata* and that is sufficient.*" Upon hearing one of Taneyev's string quintets, Rimsky Korsakov remarked "...before such mastery one feels a mere pupil."

Unlike Glinka and Borodin, Taneyev was not an inspirational composer and prepared his compositions with painstaking deliberation, working out many contrapuntal exercises with potential material. Adverse criticism of his music seems to gather around his reputed dryness and a lack of melodic freshness. Abraham and Calvocoressi seemed to agree with this view writing, "*No very powerful creative personality himself, he had the great merit of imposing no marked individual tastes on his students.*" This is a Trojan horse of a compliment. Slonimsky (*Baker's Dictionary*), though aphoristic, gets much nearer the truth, which is borne out by having heard the music, "*Taneyev cherished the dream of reducing music to a pure science, but wrote in an expansive romantic manner.*"

Taneyev studied the works of Palestrina, Lassus and Josquin, and his book on what he called 'movable counterpoint' took twenty years to complete. This profound interest shows another aspect of his interests: mathematics. There was something Lewis Carroll-like about him—part mathematician, part humorist. His humor is reflected in his works list, which includes a *March for 2*

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*Pianos, Horn, 3 Trombones, Cello, Oboe and Glockenspiel*, or a vocal quartet for 'Government Official' that features a chorus which begins, "I want to lie in bed...". He also wrote two comic fugues, one of which he called *A Specialist is like a Gumboil*.

### The String Quartets

Taneyev wrote nine string quartets in all. The earliest **String Quartets, Nos. 7, 8 and 9**, were so numbered as they were published after his last six. Though written in the early 1880's they were only published for the first time in Moscow in 1952. (—and are no longer in print. *Melodya* issued LPs around 1980 of these very interesting and tuneful works, No. C10-12411-2 & C1012333-4. Those interested in obtaining these recordings may wish to check with Cobbett Association member, Dr. David Canfield, owner of *Ars Antiqua*, the largest seller of LPs and old recordings in the world. Tel:812-876-6553—ed). These works show a strong classical influence, nevertheless, they are large scale works of about 35-40 minutes duration. The Finale of the 8th quartet has two exciting fugal episodes. The 9th Quartet has a more Russian flavour. The next quartet to be written appeared after revision in 1886 as **String Quartet No 3** and consists of two movements, one in sonata form, followed by a set of variations. The first numbered quartet, **String Quartet No 1, Opus 4** (1888 dedicated to Tchaikovsky), has five movements The fourth movement is an *Intermezzo*.

There is a marked change of character between these largely optimistic works and **String Quartet No 2, Opus 5**, (1895), written after his musically violent and passionate opera, *Oresteia*. The Second Quartet, played with much success by the Bohemian Quartet, is clouded by a brooding, sinister mood. One of the themes in the first movement is borrowed from the *Canzona* for clarinet. Aulich and Heimeran writing in *The Well-Tempered String Quartet* (1936) comment on the Second Quartet; "Of the quartets by this gifted Russian we think Opus 5 the best one to recommend, a splendid, profound work, though unquestionably long and in some parts quite difficult. Its idiom is transparent despite the exacting style and involved rhythms." They note in the margin: "For advanced players only."

The scale and seriousness of the Second Quartet is matched by the **Fourth Quartet, Op. 11** (1901). It is a work of larger proportions, and was dedicated to Josef Suk and the Bohemian Quartet at the time of their second visit to Russia. The second movement is a lightfooted Mendelssohnian scherzo. This movement was recorded by the Catterall Quartet in the days of acoustic 78rpm records, (before 1924), the sole representative of Taneyev's chamber music in those days. The third movement is an Adagio, in sonata form, without a development section. The slow introduction to the first movement reappears in the finale.

The **Fifth Quartet, Opus 13**, written the same year as the 4th Symphony (1901), is classical in scale and in temperament to a large extent. It is short and simple in outline.

While the Fourth Quartet is by any standard a very fine work, Belaiev in his article in *Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey* states that

**String Quartet No.6, Op.19** (1905 dedicated to J. Comus) is considered the finest of all Taneyev's quartets. The four movements are bound together. (*Taneyev's string quartets, Nos.1-6, are readily available and have all been reprinted by Kunzelmann GM 1344 & 1345. Unfortunately none of them are available on CD—ed*)

### Other Chamber Works for Strings

Taneyev's admiration for Mozart and Haydn is apparent in the first two movements of his **Trio for 2 Violins and Viola, Op.21** (1907). The romanticism of 3rd and 4th movements renders the work stylistically disjointed. (*In 1911, Taneyev wrote a trio for Violin, Viola & Tenor Viola, Op.31 in D. Obviously, this is a combination which guaranteed the work would never get played although it has been recorded on Meridian CD #CDE 84149 along with another very charming string trio for violin, viola and cello dating from 1879-80, in print from International No.2608. I have performed this work in concert several times. It has always been well received—ed.*)

The **String Quintet Op 14** (1903 dedicated to Rimsky Korsakov) is written for two violins, viola and two cellos. It is in three movements, the second of which is a *scherzo*, and the last, a set of variations. The 9th variation is a triple fugue. The 10th and last introduces a theme from Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *Sadko*.

Taneyev wrote a second string quintet but this one is for two violins, two violas and one cello. The **String Quintet Op 16** is reputed to be as successful as the first. Its first movement departs considerably from sonata form, the *Andante* is in ternary form, the *Scherzo* blends in Minuet, Mazurka and Waltz and the finale is in sonata form with a triple fugue at the recapitulation. (*Having played both quintets on several occasions, it is my opinion, that use of the term "successful" is open to question. Though they have some fine qualities, they are both quite difficult to put together because of their exacting intricateness. Certainly neither is anywhere near as effective as his late string quartets—ed.*)

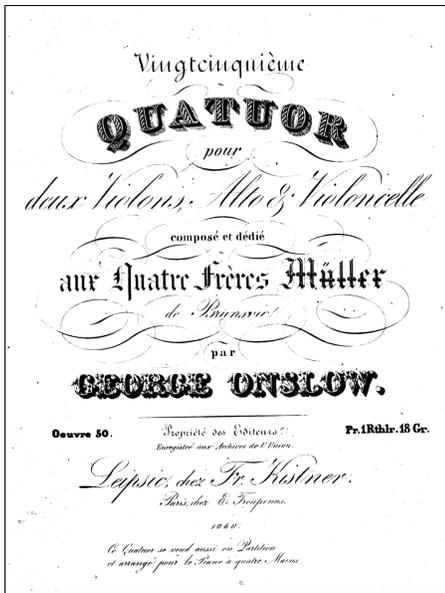
### Works for Piano & Strings

In the revolutionary year of 1905, Taneyev resigned from the Moscow Conservatory and toured with the Bohemian Quartet, who first visited Russia in 1895-6 and whose music-making clearly impressed him. As a result, he composed three major works for piano and strings. The first was a **Piano Quartet, Op.22** which he completed in 1906. A second work, the **Piano Trio, Op.20** dates from 1907. The last of the three, **Quintet for Piano and Strings, Op.30** was composed between 1908-1910. Of these, the Quintet is not quite on the same elevated plain as the other two. Here, my view departs fundamentally from that of Belaiev (writing in the *Cyclopedia*). The tedious ostinato ground bass in the slow movement (*Largo*) quite soon outstays its welcome. On the other hand, both the Piano Trio and Quartet stifle any argument that Taneyev was not a melodist and a romantic.

# George Onslow's String Quartet Nos. 25-27 Part IX (Continued from page 1)

Interestingly, he was not allowed to withdraw. Of the six musicians running, Onslow finished third behind Reicha and Halevy.

Despite this setback, Onslow's popularity within France reached new heights when he became the first of a series of biographical essays on celebrated contemporary composers featured in the new critical journal, *Gazette musicale de Paris*. François Stoepel, the man who conceived and penned the series, wrote of Onslow as "... a man without a living rival in the field of chamber music..." an unquestionable authority on string instruments and upon the quartets and quintets of the Viennese masters. By this time, Onslow's opinions on questions pertaining to chamber music were so respected within France that later when Stoepel and his *Gazette* became involved in an controversy over the worth or legitimacy of Beethoven's Late Quartets, he called upon Onslow for support. Onslow supplied an analysis showing that Beethoven's Op.132 was just as carefully organized as his Op.18 No.4 and was not the product of a "demented mind" but was possessed of the same logic as the earlier work.



Onslow's **String Quartet No.25, Op.50 in Bb** was composed about the same time as Nos.23 & 24. Dr. Franks, Onslow's biographer, dates its composition from August of 1834. It was published the following year and dedicated to the Müller Brothers, who were at the time unquestionably the finest performing quartet before the public. This quartet was performed throughout Germany

and Austria to great acclaim. Extant concert programs and subsequent newspaper reviews of these concerts showed that it was often presented on the same program with what are still today very well-known works, for example: Beethoven's Op.74, *The Harp*, Schubert's Nos.13 & 14 *Death & the Maiden*, Mendelssohn's Op.44 No.1, Spohr's 3rd Double Quartet, Op.87 and the Mendelssohn Octet. Onslow's quartet generally received praise at least as great as that of its program mates.

The opening theme to the first movement, *Allegro moderato*, of



Quartet No.25 is a concerto-like passage in the first violin: Recognizing the difficulty of trying to pass this around from voice to voice, no one else is given it and it does not appear again in its entirety. Rather the accompaniment in the other voices is made into another theme. A second subject, *staccato e marcato*, is a very effective military type march introduced by the cello. A third theme which is developed out of the cello's very short solo opening measure (see prior example) and is effectively used to close out the movement.

A marvellous *Scherzo, vivace assai*, comes next. The wonderful chromatic opening theme played in unison is deftly passed between the voices. This is vintage Onslow, however to be



effective, it must be played at a good clip:

The contrasting trio is a legato horn-like hunt theme, sounded in the distance *à la Schubert*, to pulsating eighth notes in the back ground.

An *Andante grazioso* follows. One might argue that here Onslow writes a textbook example of what an andante grazioso ought to be like. It is gentle, graceful and lovely:



In Onslow's slow movements, one so often encounters a turbulent middle section, frequently of great pathos and depth of feeling, juxtaposed between his opening theme and the recapitulation, that one somehow feels cheated coming across a slow movement without such a section. Here, though, it would be out of place, perhaps even grotesque.

In the finale, *Allegro vivace*, Onslow's sense of the dramatic is at the fore:

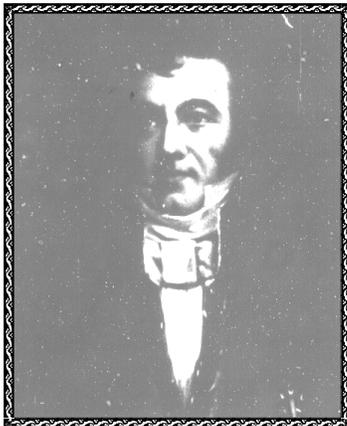


From the very start there are certain rhythmic difficulties. For the most part, the first violin is given the lion's share of the thematic material in what is certainly a very exciting last movement. In sum, this is quite a nice quartet worthy of attention by amateurs and professionals alike, although, in my opinion, it does not rank among his very best.

(Continued on page 7)

# George Onslow's String Quartet Nos. 25-27 Part IX (Continued from page 6)

**String Quartet No.26, Op.52 in C** was composed toward the end of 1834 and beginning of 1835. It dates from the time when Steopel asked for Onslow's help in defending Beethoven's Late Quartets and Onslow's subsequent analysis of Op.18 No.4 and



Oil Painting of Onslow dating from the 1830's

Op. 132. It seems more than likely that Beethoven was on Onslow's mind about the time he composed this work and his treatment of the themes rather than the themes themselves bear witness to this. The Quartet was published in 1836 and dedicated to Charles Cornault, most probably an amateur musician living in Paris. Again judging from extant concert programs, the Twenty Sixth Quartet enjoyed great popularity and remained in the repertoire for quite some time, being performed with such works as Beethoven's Op.133, the quartets of

A mysterious and calmer middle section, marked *con innocenza* provides a superb contrast to the boisterous first theme. This is a very fine movement and is a typical example of Onslow's craft and the sort of music one does not come across in the literature elsewhere. The listener cannot help but be struck by its originality of thought and freshness.

In the first two notes of the finale, *Allegro*, Onslow teasingly holds the players back before letting loose with a rollicking triplet theme full of forward motion and excitement:

The movement races along with all joining in as it moves to a



*tutte forza* close. It's not hard to see why this quartet remained popular and it, along with so many others, deserves to be revived.

**String Quartet No.27, Op.53 in D** was composed in the spring of 1835 and dedicated to Monsieur Paul-Antoine Cap, a French polymath. The opening movement begins with a 24 measure *Preludio Largo*. The introduction in d minor suggests that something tragic is about to occur. But nothing does. Instead we find the succeeding *Allegro Marziale ma moderato* in D Major quite bright. However long scale-like passages in all of the voices with awkward handoffs from voice to voice makes this movement very tricky to put together. Onslow was quite fond of putting martial themes into his music and the effect was usually quite successful. Here, the theme is simply too florid and has neither drama nor military quality to it. A very short middle section in minor is far better shows considerable promise:



But Onslow barely states it once before returning to the first theme. and the difficulty both technically and ensemble-wise of the thematic material is not justified by the ordinariness of the melody.

An *Andante cantabile* follows. Many of Onslow's contemporaries argued that his slow movements was unsurpassed for their beauty and full range of feeling. While this particular movement cannot make that claim, it is not inferior. It is pretty, but lacks the depth of feeling one usually finds. Still, this ought not to be held against him, even Beethoven did not always "plumb the depths."

The most striking and unusual movement of the Quartet is its *Scherzo* in G Major, which bears the title *Il Cicalamento* in the Kistner edition. It is a canon introduced by the cello (see example on next page) The second violin, then the viola and finally the first violin all take up the theme in turn. This is a very clever movement. Though soft and fast, it lacks the lightness of a Mendelssohnian Scherzo, of the sort one finds in Quartet No.18, Op.36 No.3. Instead there is a different sense of energy, equally



Cherubini, Mozart's String Quintet in g minor, K.515, and the Spohr double quartets.

In the opening movement, *Allegro con brio*, the viola introduces the main subject which is of a carefree sort of nature:



In what is a fairly long movement, Onslow takes this four measure theme and explores it exhaustively, much in the manner of Beethoven. A calmer, more lyrical second theme is given to the first violin and cello in turns. The first theme is used to close the movement and though the ending is well-wrought, the theme, a rather jolly motif, lacks sufficient excitement in my opinion to make it as successful as it might otherwise have been.

The second movement, *Adagio Grandioso*, is a long and deeply-felt lied given over almost entirely to the first violin with an effective accompaniment in the inner voices.

The following *Menuetto, vivace assai*, is the most striking of the Quartet's movements. The main theme is dissected with the first beat being given to the three lower voices while the rest of the theme is completed by the first violin on the after beats:





# New Recordings



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

## String Quartets

Benjamin BRITTEN (1913-1976) Nos.1-2 & 3 Divertimenti Op.36, Naxos 8.553883 / also Qt in F (1928), Qt in D (1931) and No.2 Chandos 9664 / Gloria COATES (1938-) No.3, Troubadisc 01418 / Violeta DINESCU (1953-) No.1, Troubadisc 01418 / Zdenek FIBICH (1850-1900) Nos.1-2, Orfeo C 439 981 / Michael FINNISSY (1946-) Plain Harmony Nos.1-3 et.al, Metier 92011 / Paul GLASS (1934-) No.1, Musikszene Schweiz CTS-P43 / Marin GOLEMINOV (1908-) No.3 & No.7, Gega 129 / Karel HUSA (1921-) No.1, Panton 81 9009 / Viktor KALABIS (1923-) Nos.3-6, Panton 71 0440 / Erich KORNGOLD (1897-1957) Nos.1-2, ASV DCA 1035 / Theodor LESCHETITZKY (1896-1948) Variations, CPO 999 588 / Elisabeth LUTYENS (1906-87) No.6, Troubadisc 01418 / Fanny MENDEL-SSOHN HENSEL (1805-1847) Qt in Eb, Troubadisc 01418 / Darius MILHAUD (1892-1974) Nos.6-8, Troubadisc 01411 & Nos.6-7, 13 & 16 Auvidis Valois 4782 / Ernest MOERAN (1894-1950) Nos.1-2, ASV DCA 1045 / George NICHOLSON (1949-) No.3, Metier 92016 / Lorenzo PEROSI (1872-1956) Nos.1-3, Bongiovanni GB 5075 / also No.4, Bongiovanni 5079 / Einojuani RAUTAVAARA (1928-) Nos.1-2, Ondine ODE 909 / Herman ROELSTRAETE (1925-1985) No.1 ind, Eufoda 1233 / Nicholas SACKMAN (1950-) No.2, Metier 92016 / Le Chavalier de SAINT-GEORGES (1739-99) Nos.1-6, Arion 55425 / Peter SCHICKELE (1935-) No.2, Arabesque Z6719 / Peter

SCULTHORPE (1929-) Nos.10-11, Tall Poppies 090 / Ethel SMYTH (1858-1944) Qt in E 4th Mov, Troubadisc 01418 / Richard STRAUSS (1864-1949) Op.2 in A & Qt Movt in Eb, Arts 47264 / Germaine TAILLEFERRE (1892-1983) Qt, Troubadisc 01418 / Dimitri TERZAKIS (1938-) Nos.2-3, CPO 999 572 / Karl-Erik WELIN (1923-92) Nos.1,6-7 & 9, BIS 958

## Strings Only-Not Quartets

Robert FUCHS (1847-1927) Str. Trio in A, Op.94, MD&G 634 0841 / Walther GEISER (1897-1993) Str. Trio, Musikszene Schweiz CTS-M21 / Guuseppe GIORDANI (1751-1798) 4 Nocturnes for Str. Trio, Bongiovanni 5080 / Lorenzo PEROSI (1872-1956) Str. Trio No.1 & Str. Quintet No.1, Bongiovanni 5079 / Einojuani RAUTAVAARA (1928-) Unknown Heavens for Str. Quintet, Ondine ODE 909 / Carl REINECKE (1824-1910) Str. Trio in c Op.249, MD&G 634 0841 / Antonio SACCHINI (1730-1786) 6 Trios for 2 Vln & Bass, Agora AG 034.1 / Peter SCHICKELE (1935-) Sextet, Arabesque Z6719 / Richard STRAUSS (1864-1949) Variations for Str. Trio, Arts 47264

## Piano Trios

Malcolm ARNOLD (1921-) Op.54, Naxos 8.554237 / Carl CZERNY (1791-1857) No.4 in a, Op.289, Signum X94-00 / George ONSLOW (1784-1853) Trio in c, Op.26 / Ernest MOERAN (1894-1950) Trio in D, ASV DCA 1045 / George ROCHBERG (1918-) 3 Trios, Gasparo 289

## Piano Quartets & Quintets

Zdenek FIBICH (1850-1900) Qt in e, Op.11, MD&G 304 0775 / Karel HUSA (1921-) Variations for Pno Qt., Panton 81 9009 /

Peter SCHICKELE (1935-) Quintet, Arabesque Z6719 / Arnold SCHOENBERG (1874-1951) Weihnachts musik for 2Vln, Vc & Pno (Hrm), CPO 999 588

## Winds & Strings

Johann Chr. BACH (1735-1782) 4 Qts for 2 Fl, Vln & Kb, CPO 999 579 / Christian CANNABICH (1731-1798) Quintets for Fl, Str. Qt. Nos.3-6, CPO 999 544 / Ernest MOERAN (1894-1950) Qt for Oboe & Str. Trio, ASV DCA 1045 / Antonin VRANICKY (Wranitzky 1761-1820) Sextet No.7 for Ob, Fl, Vln, 2Vla & Vc, Panton 81 9002 / Pavel VRANICKY (Paul Wranitzky 1756-1808) Sextet Nos.3-4 & 6 for Ob, Fl, Vln, 2Vla & Vc, Panton 81 9002

## Winds, Strings & Piano

Zdenek FIBICH (1850-1900) Quintet in D, Op.42 for Vln, Cln, Hn, Vc & Pno, MD&G 304 0775 / Ignaz HOLZBAUER (1711-1783) Quintets for Fl, Pno & Str. Trio, CPO 999 580 / Johann STRAUSS JR (Arr. A. Schoenberg) Emperor's Waltz, Roses from the South, also Schwtzler (Arr. A. Webern), also Wine, Woman & Song (Arr. A. Berg) all for Str.Qt, Cln, Fl, Pno (Hrm), CPO 999 588

## Piano & Winds

Jindrich FELD (1925-) Trio giocoso for Cln, Bsn & Pno, MMC 2057

## Winds Only

Karel HUSA (1921-) Wind Qnt, Panton 81 9009 / Robert MUCZYNSKI (1929-) Wind Qnt, OP.45, Naxos 8.559001 / George TSONTAKIS (1951-) 3 Sketches for Wind Qnt, CRI 788 / Bruce ADOLPHE (1955-) Chiaroscuro for Dbl Wind Qnt, CRI 788

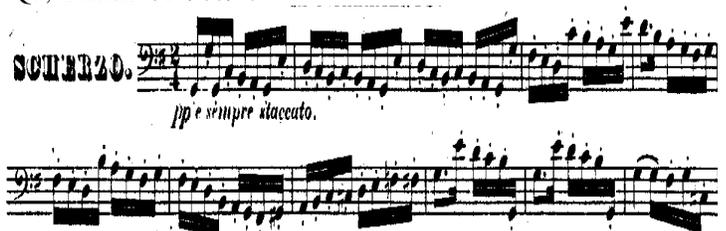
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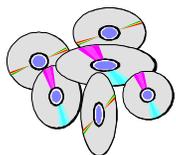
captivating. The short middle section has a sycopated dragging theme which provides an adequate contrast to the main scherzo but it cannot really be counted as a trio section because of its brevity.

The finale, *Allegro grazioso* is a let down after the wonderful third movement. The main theme, (see below) though graceful, is rather ordinary: A triplet motif, quite awkwardly written and

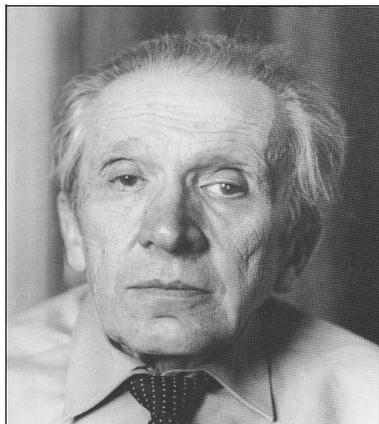


hardly worth the effort to perfect, comes next. The closing has an etude quality to it and is certainly a lot weaker than his usual efforts. This was Onslow's 27th string quartet. Some were bound to be better than others. Some more ordinary than others. In my opinion, this was invariably the case with every composer who produced numerous works in one genre. While I have enjoyed playing this quartet, it certainly would not be among the first I would recommend to someone I wanted to convert to Onslow, nor would I take the effort to work it up for performance. This series will continue in the next issue with a discussion of String Quartet Nos.28-30





## Diskology: 3 Qts by Vainberg, Piano Trios by Kiel, Koch & Pfitzner; String Quartets by the brothers Hyacinthe & Louis Jadin



20 symphonies, some 17 string quartets, concerti and sonatas for several instruments, piano works, orchestral suites, ballets and a number of other chamber works.

He was born in Warsaw in 1919. His father was a violinist and composer for the Jewish Theater in that city. Through his father's auspices, he began his career there as a pianist while only 10. Two years later he enrolled in the Warsaw Conservatory and studied piano. When the Germans attacked Poland in 1939, Vainberg fled to Minsk where he studied composition with Vasily Zolotaryev (Zolotaryov, Zolotarieff etc.) one of Rimsky-Korsakov's students. When the Germans invaded Russia in 1941, Vainberg fled eastward eventually working at the Tashkent Opera in Uzbekistan. In 1943, Vainberg sent the score of his First Symphony to Shostakovich who arranged for it to be performed in Moscow. Thus began a life-long and close friendship between the two men. Vainberg later wrote, "I am a pupil of Shostakovich. Although I never took lessons from him, I count myself as his pupil, his flesh and blood." For his part, Shostakovich dedicated his 10th String Quartet to Vainberg. This Olympia CD #OCD 628, the eleventh in a series of recordings of Vainberg's music, presents three of the composer's 17 string quartets, Nos.1, 10 & 17. They are superbly performed by the Swedish Gothenburg Quartet. (Other than Quartet No.12, and a Piano Quintet, Op.18, no other chamber works have been recorded in this series.)

The first and second movements to **String Quartet No.1, Op.2/141** supposedly written before Vainberg fled Poland in 1939 are fairly modern sounding, full of the influence of the Second Vienna School and beyond. But in the third movement, *Allegro molto*, we hear the idiom and tonalities of Shostakovich in his middle quartets, especially the 8th. The original score to this work was either destroyed or lost and Vainberg did not take it with him when he fled. Vainberg appears to have reconstructed the Quartet some 48 years later in 1987 from memory. Although, the composer was reputed to have an extraordinary memory, it is unlikely that the Quartet was reconstructed entirely as it was without any benefit of the 48 intervening years of experience and the work exhibits certain features which, as Per Skans, the editor to the excellent jacket notes puts it, seem unlikely to have been

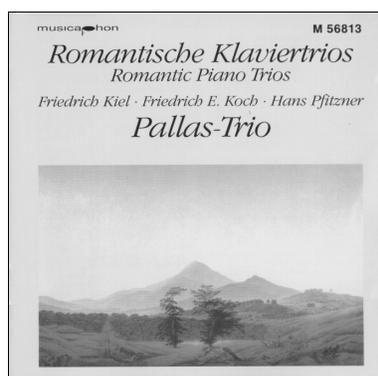
In my opinion, **Mieczyslaw Vainberg** (1919-96), who preferred this non-German spelling to the original 'Weinberg,' is a major composer waiting to be discovered. While not entirely unknown, he is hardly a household name among musicians and his music is rarely if ever heard outside of Russia. Vainberg wrote an incredible amount of music and treated almost every genre. He wrote over

In **String Quartet No.10, Op.85**, we have a work from the composer's middle period. Although in four movements, it is to be played without any pause between them. The opening movement is a big, pensive *Adagio*. Though tonal, there is a feeling of stasis and slackness as the movement dies away *pp*. This is followed by a marvellously restless and haunting *Allegro*. The third movement, another *Adagio*, is a powerful lament wandering on the very borders of tonality. The finale, marked *Allegretto*, is a rather subdued dance with no tonal gaiety.

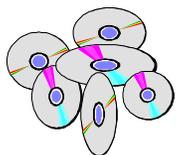
**String Quartet No.17, Op.146** is Vainberg's last, composed in 1987. It was dedicated to the Borodin Quartet on their 40th anniversary. The opening *Allegro* is, for Vainberg, playful and happy in mood, tonally anchored in the key of D. There are still some storm clouds about, notably in a cello recitativo. There are three sections, *Allegro*, *Andantino* and *Allegro* played without pause. The *Andantino* has a pastoral but meandering quality to it, while the concluding *Allegro* is a recapitulation of the opening section.

Vainberg's music—if these 3 quartets are anything to judge by—though at times showing some affinity to that of Shostakovich, for the most part sound rather different. There seems to be less joyfulness, more introspection and sobriety. They are works which deserve to be heard in concert and certainly this CD can be recommended to those interested in 20th Century chamber music which does not abandon tonality in its entirety.

Musicaphon CD# M56813 presents three piano trios by composers whose music is rarely heard in concert: **Friedrich Kiel** (1821-1885), **Friedrich Koch** (1862-1927) and **Hans Pfitzner** (1869-1949).



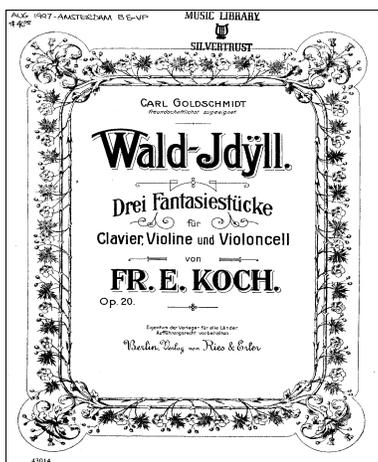
Those who have followed this column should be aware that your editor believes Kiel's chamber music belongs in the front rank along with that of Brahms, Schumann and Mendelssohn. This is a composer whom lovers of romantic chamber music should seek out. Composed in 1871, **Friedrich Kiel's Trio No.6, Op.65 No.1 in A**, like his two piano quintets reviewed here some years ago, is first rate in every way. No less a critic than Wilhelm Altmann has written that Kiel's chamber music would not suffer in comparison to that of any of his contemporaries. Accolades don't come much higher than that. In four movements, the big opening *Allegro con passione* is filled with full-blooded melodies which veer from joy to sadness and back again to sunlight. A short *Intermezzo: Allegro schrezzando* is full of movement, yet gentle and playful in quality. The following



## Piano Trios by Friedrich Kiel, Friedrich Koch & Hans Pfitzner String Quartets by the brothers Hyacinthe & Louis Jadin

*Largo con espressione* provides a great contrast to the preceding movement. Sad and quite slow, it exhibits the tonality of resignation and tiredness rather than that of a painful lament. Though short, Kiel still creates an effect of substantial weight. The finale, *Vivace*, opens with a powerful hunt-like theme followed by a more lyrical subject. It races to a wonderful conclusion. Kiel's understanding of the instruments for this combination is, in my opinion, second to none. Because of the fine part writing, he has obliterated the balance problem between the piano and strings that one often encounters in Brahms sonatas and trios for piano and strings. Unfortunately, this trio is not in print, but Op.3 and Op.33 are available from Wollenweber and Kunzelmann.

Friedrich Koch, born in Berlin, served as a director of the orchestra in Baden-Baden and later as a professor of music. His **Waldidyll Op.30** are three *Fantasiestücke* composed in 1902. The first movement of these Forest Idylls, *Mondandacht* (literally moonlight prayers), is dreamy and meditative, like a forest under still moonlight. An agitated middle section breaks this calm. The second movement, *Nixenspuk*, is as the title suggests a tonal picture of mischievous forest sprites. A great many imaginative effects—such

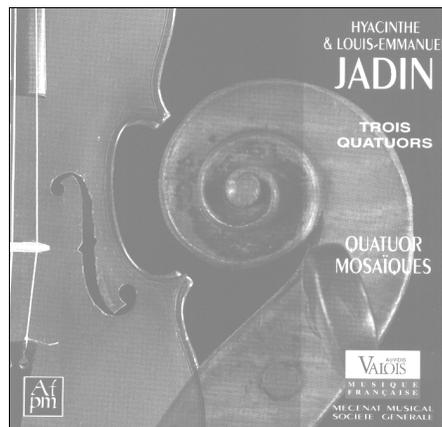


as *col legno* in the cello and pizzicato staccato—are used to create the impression of little animals scurrying across the forest floor. The final movement, *Waldesrauschen* (forest murmurs) is again suggestive rustling woodland sounds. Although there is a brief, violent storm toward toward the end of the movement, it then dies away peacefully. This is a very charming work which deserves to be heard in concert. It has recently been reprinted by Ries & Erler of Berlin and could be ordered from Performers Music in Chicago or Patelson's in N.Y. or Broekmans en Van Poppel in Amsterdam.

**Hans Pfitzner** (1869-1949) is probably the best known of the three composers featured on this CD, at least by name. Greatly influenced by Wagner, his early music, of which the **Trio in B (1886)** is a part, more clearly shows the hand of Schumann. The work is in three movements. An opening *Allegro* begins with turbulent 16th note passages but the overall feel is joyful rather than sad or tragic. It is a massive movement as long as the other two movements together. The second movement, *Romanze*, *Andante* has a rather beautiful if somber duet between the strings after the piano presents, at length the opening theme. The third movement, *Scherzo*, is perhaps the most effective of the three. The scherzo section features a haunting downward plunging subject while the lovely middle section is a very beautiful, but

gentle folk ländler. A coda section ends the movement and the work. One suspects that a fourth movement might have been planned, however the editor to the Schott Edition ED 6963, Hans Rectanus, is of the opinion that none was.

This Auvidis Valois CD V4738 features two quartets by



**Hyacinthe Jadin (1776-1800)** and one by his brother, **Louis-Emmanuel Jadin (1768-1853)**. The family was of Belgian origin. But around 1760 Jadin pere moved to Versailles and was a court musician until the Revolution.

Though charming, **String Quartet, No.2 in f minor** composed in 1816 by Louis-Emmanuel will be of little interest to most players as it is nothing more than a *Quatuor Brillant*, a solo for first violin with string accompaniment.

The two quartets of Hyacinthe, composed sometime between 1797-99 are another matter. Both quartets were reprinted by Musisca Ltd whose edition (MQF5) was used by the *Quatuor Mosaïques* in a rather idiomatic and treble heavy rendition made on period instruments. **Op.3 No.1 in C** shows the unmistakable influence of Haydn. Jadin quite clearly demonstrates in this four movement work that he had assimilated the advances it took Haydn a lifetime to make. While the voices are by no means equal, nonetheless we can see that Jadin understands the second violin, viola and cello can be successfully used for more than just accompaniment. This is a nice work, well written, if not particularly memorable.

Having played both quartets, **Op.2 No.1** seems to me the more advanced and superior of the two works. The chromaticism and style of opening bars to the *Largo-Allegro moderato* is so similar to Mozart's *Dissonant K.465*, one can but wonder if Jadin was paraphrasing. This is not true of the faster section where the writing is assured and more individual sounding. The beautiful second movement, *Adagio*, opens with a lovely chanson given to the cello. The tonalities are very fresh and original throughout this striking movement. (lost on this CD because of the use of period instruments) The concluding *Menuetto* and *Finale allegro* are both good movements. This quartet could certainly be programmed by those groups wishing to present an alternative to a Haydn or Mozart quartet. It is a pity that the other quartets of Hyacinthe are not in print. Certainly they seem more advanced than those of Pierre Vachon of which 12 have already been reprinted.