

The String Quartets of Ottorino Respighi

by Sally Didrickson



Most of Respighi's chamber music was written somewhat early in his career. Seven of his string quartets, the Doppio Quartetto, the Suite for Organ and Strings, and three quintets (one for strings, a Piano Quintet and one for winds) were all written between 1892 and 1910. Thereafter he concentrated on larger works; operas, ballets, symphonic poems, concerti, etc. Only his final quartet, the *Dorico* (1924), was written later.

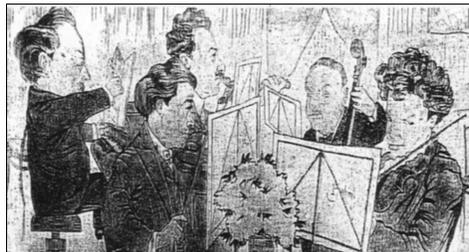
Respighi (1879-1936) was born in Bologna to an artistic family in a richly cultured city. His mother's family, the Puttis, were renowned as sculptors. His father was the son of an organist, and though a postal employee by vocation, was a pianist and lover of Wagnerian opera by avocation. Young Ottorino began piano lessons with his father, and at age eight began violin studies at the local liceo. He excelled at both instruments, and soon began composing.

After graduating from the liceo in 1899, he won the position of principal violist in the St Petersburg Opera Theatre. Rimsky-Korsakov accepted him as a student, and he played at the Les Vendredis, the Friday evening chamber music gatherings hosted by millionaire-publisher, Belaiev. In 1902, he moved to Berlin, where he attended many concerts and lectures by Max Bruch. In 1903 he be-



came one of the violists of the Muggellini Quintet in Bologna. He orbited between Italy, German and Russia as pianist, violinist, and composer before settling in Rome in 1903 to teach at the Lyceum of St Cecilia where he taught for many years. In 1919 he married one of his composition students, Elsa Olivieri-Sangiaco. He undertook several Continental and American tours, both as conductor and performer.

Many of his quartets were probably never published. Only three are known to have been published although they currently are out of print: The D major quartet of 1907, the d minor quartet of 1909 and the *Quartetto Dorico* of 1924. (All three are in the Cobbett Library)



A Caricature of The Muggellini Quintet of Bologna. A young Respighi can be seen at the far right.

The **1907 D Major Quartet** (Respighi had written three previous quartets in the key of D) is the most readily accessible to listener and player alike. The initial theme in the first violin is accompanied by a smoothly athletic, arpeggiated cello line and a triplet subtext:



It is thought to be the inspiration for the Trevi Fountain section in *Fountains of Rome*. The second theme features leaps and interesting silences (♮ ♮ ♮ ♮ ♮) in notable contrast to the legato treatment of the first theme. The second theme also incorporates triplets into the background. Harmonics appear in the first violin part after N° 9, and again in the last movement after N° 34, which are notated rather confusingly in that the lower notes are the fingered harmonics

(Continued on page 4)

TGIF: Thank God It's Friday

Les Vendredis Part I

by Renz Opolis

Out of the West, California to be exact, like so many other things, came TGIF—the expression and the restaurant. Both have spread eastward like influenza. Just how far the expression has spread is not clear. Perhaps our readers in the UK will have come across it, but I doubt it's entered into the lexicon in France where the language police of the Academy Française surely require speakers there to use *Merci à Dieu qu'il est Vendredi*. Nor can I imagine today's Russians blurting out TGIF, as they hurry down Nevsky Prospekt in St. Petersburg, though surely many are thinking *Slava Bogu pyatnitsa!* TGIF as many readers no doubt know means "Thank God It's Friday." And why thank god, well, obviously for most it's *Le Weekend*. For me however, for the past 20 years, it's because Friday night is chamber music night. What better way to end the work week and get ready for the weekend than by having a chamber music session? No, I cannot claim to have come up with this. It's a noble tradition which no doubt has a long history everywhere chamber music is played. And perhaps there is no nobler example than those halcyon days of yore in St. Petersburg when from 1880 to 1900 both amateur and professional musicians alike would gather at the large townhouse mansion of Mitrofan Petrovich Belaiev. (Few Russian names have appeared with so many different spellings as his: Belaiev, Beliaeff, Beleiev, Belyayev, Beliaef, Byelyayeff, *et.al*)

Ah yes, *Les Vendredis!*—those Fridays have become legendary. They had begun in the late 1870's prosaically enough with Belaiev, an amateur violist, putting

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Chamber Music Journal

R.H.R. Silvertrust, *Editor*

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The Sounding Board-Letters to the Editor



Name that Beethoven Tune— Answer to the Borodin Riddle

The Spring 2000 issue was delivered to me in today's mail. It is full of interesting material, as usual. I think I have the answer to Mr. Ussi's question about what Beethoven work Borodin had in mind in subtitled his First String Quartet, *Suggested by a theme of Beethoven*. The repeated two-bar phrase which begins the Allegro to the first movement (musical example No.2 on page 4 of the last issue of the Journal) is the same as that found in the last movement of Beethoven's Op.130 at measure No.109. Though I have sight-read Borodin's String Quartet No.1, I did not recall any subtitle nor do I remember noticing any Beethoven resemblance in the sounds we made.

Morton Raff
Chevy Chase, Maryland

Re: Larius J. Ussi's comment about Borodin's theme not suggesting Beethoven to him. One presumes then that Ussi is a purist—for which I applaud him—and always takes his Op.130 with the original ending of the *Grosse fuge*; the theme in question bears a striking resemblance to the second theme of the alternate finale to Beethoven's Op.130.

Terrie Baume
Redway, California

The theme of Beethoven which "inspired" or "was suggested to", depending on how one translates *angeregt*, Borodin for the main theme in his first string quartet, has always been identified as a theme occurring in one of the episodes in the final rondo movement that Beethoven substituted for the *Grosse Fuge* in Op.130. The relevant episodes in Op.130 are bars 110-160 and 353-400 of that movement. The Beethoven material is not transcribed note for note although the notes are very close. I do agree with Mr. Ussi's comment that there is nothing sounding like Beethoven in this quartet, it all sounds like Borodin. I also admit to having failed to recognize the source until it was pointed out to me, but it is quoted in Altmann, Cobbett and in Gerald Abraham's biography of Borodin to mention sources readily available. Cobbett also mentions the thematic material marked *cantabile espressivo* occurring between bars 23-66 in the 2nd movement, *Andante con moto*, as related to the same Beethoven source.

James Whitby
London, Ontario (Canada)

Full points to all of you—M.D. Calvorcoressi, author of the article on Borodin in Cobbett's *Cyclopedia*, states that the theme is found in the finale to Beethoven's Op.130. While there is no reference in the parts of the modern Breitkopf & Härtel edition to any theme suggested by Beethoven, Mr. Ussi informs me that it is found both in the manuscript and in the Belaiev Edition of 1885, where the words, "Angeregt durch ein Thema von Beethoven" appear. Angerget is usually translated as 'suggested by'.

More Cobbett Friendly Workshops

In reference to a reader's inquiry of 'Cobbett-Friendly' workshops, I would like to draw your attention to the Chamber Music Conference (CMC—most folks know us as "Bennington"). We cover not only the famous composers, but a vast array of works of lesser known composers. Applications can be obtained by writing: Beth Anderson, Administrative Director / Chamber Music Conference / PO Box 1346 / Melville, NY 11747-0422. E-mail: chmusic@tiac.com. We are interested in experienced chamber music players of all levels of ability.

Shem Guibbory, Music Director
Chamber Music Conference
Bennington, Vermont

Re: Cobbett-friendly workshops, may I recommend the Humboldt Chamber Music Workshop? As a regular coach there, I can attest to the fact that anyone who expresses any interest in non-standard repertoire will be happily assigned to such.

Terry Baume
Redway, California

Phylloscopus' Address

Several of you wrote in asking for *Phylloscopus'* address. It was right there on the top of page 6 in the last issue of the Journal. All you needed was either very good eyesight or a magnifying glass. For those of you with neither, it is: *Phylloscopus Publications* / c/o Rachel Malloch / 92 Aldcliffe Road / Lancaster LA1 5BE / U.K.

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

This will be your last issue if you have not renewed. Renewal notices were sent out in December and second notices in May. Most of you have responded. If you receive a "final notice" along with this copy of the *Journal*, it means you have not. We depend on your prompt renewal to continue operating.

On the library front, negotiations with the University of Western Ontario have gone slower than hoped, but continue. I have not personally taken part. However, I am planning to briefly visit London, Ontario next month, where UWO is located, and hope that I will be able to speed things along.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Sally Didrickson for her very excellent article on Respighi's string quartets. To the best of my knowledge, this is probably the most detailed article to appear anywhere on the subject. I should also like to thank Renz Opolis for his article on *Les Vendredis*. Again, I think—at least in English—the most thorough and detailed article to appear.

I would like to continue to encourage members to contribute articles as Ms. Didrickson, a member, has done. She is not a professional musicologist but a violist who very much enjoys Respighi's quartets. It was this passion for the music which helped to produce an article that need fear no competition on the subject.

I would also like to thank Ron Goldman for sending me a copy of the CD reviewed in this issue's *Diskology*. I hope that members will make an attempt to obtain a copy of this disk not only because there are some very worthwhile and interesting pieces on it, but also because we may be able to encourage the *Gennaro Trio* to record some more "Cobbett" music. If you have trouble obtaining the CD, you may e-mail Ron at violinron@aol.com.

Lastly, I would draw readers attention to new releases by Cobbett Members. The Chilingirian Quartet have recorded D'Indy's String Quartet No.1 & Chausson's Quartet in c, on Hyperion CDA 67097 and the Miami String Quartet have recorded String Quartet Nos.1-3 by Robert Starer.



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Ottorino Respighi's String Quartets (continued from page 1)

and the upper ones the sounding pitches. Soft, organ-like chords end the movement.

The second movement is a *Theme And Variations* (score numbers indicate each new variation), and is extremely chromatic both melodically and in the chordal accompaniment. Respighi begins the variations by doubling the speed of the melody or the accompaniment, within a chromatic framework. Then he pits triplet against duplets. A waltz variation comes next with the melody in the first violin sung against a cello drone. The upper three voices rest on the first beat most of the time and enter on the second beat after the reiterated drone chord. This is followed by a Lento variation in contrapuntal (though legato) style, and a peasant-like scherzo. The final variation is a Lento doloroso.. Here the cellist, confined to repeated 8th notes, needs to take the softer dynamics down a level, since Respighi (or his copyist) gave unison dynamics to all parts.

The gorgeous third movement, *Intermezzo*, is densely scored but light. Respighi uses a large asterisk rather than the usual coda sign, which can be confusing. The Finale sounds programmatic, with a Germanic hunting theme against a background of triplets. The excessive number of down-bows in the viola part from N°23 to the 11th measure of N°25 should probably be ignored, as it does not appear in any of the other parts. There are some wonderfully surprising forte cello pizzicati after N°25. The writing is dense and orchestral, but works well for quartet.

The **D Minor Quartet**, *Ernst ist das leben, heiter ist die Kunst*, (1909), was written in Berlin while Respighi supported himself as accompanist in a singing school. It is a lovely and playable work, but even though the original edition was printed with several foldouts (so that 3 pages could appear on the stand at once), nonetheless many of the page turns are next to impossible as there are few rests. This quartet along with the Doppio (1904), and the Dorico (1924) are his only quartets In minor keys.

The first movement begins with a beautiful but tragic Tchaikovskian theme in d minor, introduced by the viola to an accompaniment of recitative-like chords.



Much of the rest the movement is in major with the final statement of the theme in D Major.

Next comes a, *Lentament con tristezza*, which begins chromatically in 12/8. The melody stresses the 3rd eighth note of the beat while a chordal accompaniment falls on the beats.



Spanish rhythms soon take over, and the melodic material alternates between long notes and fast scale flourishes.



The third movement, *Presto*, is in 6/8 and again emphasizes the 3rd eighth note, creating a tarantella effect. Variety provided by pizzicato and ponticello sections disguises the density or the scoring. The Da Capo to the sign for the coda is impossible because or the page turns. An error in the score has been reproduced in the parts (which appear to be sophisticated cut-and-paste versions of the sort Cobbett members desperate to play the music might



make) The second violin and viola parts in bar 328 are notated as single 8ths but obviously should have slashes indicating doubling to 16ths.



The last movement, *Allegro energico*, has a very ballet-like opening theme In d minor, with loud, wild chords, accented leaps, and an underlying triplet motion, sometimes mordanted on the beat. Respighi uses a very dense texture, again with row rests. The 2nd theme is more meditative, chromatic, and somewhat melancholy growing out of the first theme:



Into



(Continued on page 5)



New Recordings



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

String Quartets

Grazyna BACEWICZ (1909-69) Nos.1-7, Acte Preamble AP0019/20 / Willy BURKHARD (1900-55) No.2, Novalis 150-159-2 / Ernest CHAUSSON (1855-99) Qt in c, Hyperion CDS 67097 / Aaron COPELAND (1900-90) Complete works, ASV DCA 1081 / Vincent D'INDY (1851-1931) No.1, Hyperion CDA 67097 / Louis DUREY (1888-1979) 2 Str. Qts, Mandala 4980-81 / Paul LADMIRAULT (1877-1944) Qt., Skar-gbo D SK 4001 / Ingvar LIDHOLM (1921-) 3 Elegies, Caprice CAP 21499 / Bohuslav MARTINU (1890-1959) Nos.1-2, Naxos 8.552782 / Hans Henrik NORDSTRØM (19—) No.3, Classico 287 / Robert STARER (1924-) Nos.1-3, CRI 856 / Ruth Crawford SEEGER (1901-53) String Qt, CPO 999 670 / Boris TCHAIKOVSKY (1925-96) No.6, Boheme 907084 / Peter TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-93) Nos.1-2, Naxos 8.550847 / Peter VASKS (1946-) Nos. 2-3, Caprice 21635 / Louis VIERNE (1870-1937) Op.12, Pierre Verany 700011

Strings Only-Not Quartets

Willy BURKHARD (1900-55) Str. Trio, Op.13 also Divertimento for Str. Trio, Op.95, Novalis 150-159-2 / David DIAMOND (1915-) Str. Trio in G, Centaur CRC 2437

Piano Trios

Aaron COPELAND (1900-90) Vitebsk, ASV DCA 1081 / David DIAMOND (1915-) Piano Trio, Centaur CRC 2437 / Arthur FOOTE (1853-1937) Nos.1-3, Naxos 8.550847 / Hans Henrik (19-) NORDSTRØM Andalusian Reflections, Classico 287 / Hans PFITZNER (1869-1949) Op.8, MD&G 312 0934 / Boris TCHAIKOVSKY (1922-96) Trio in b, Boheme 907084 / Joseph WOERFL (1773-1812) Op.23 Nos.1-3, Mandala MAN 4887 / Hermann ZILCHER (1881-1948) Op.56 in e, Largo 5144

Piano Quartets & Quintets

Grazyna BACEWICZ (1909-69) Pno Qt No.1, Acte Preamble AP0021 / Aaron COPELAND (1900-90) Pno Qt, ASV DCA 1081 / David DIAMOND (1915-) Piano Qt, Centaur, CRC 243 / Alfonso RENDANO (1853-1931) Pno Qt, Aura 415-2 / Louis VIERNE (1870-1937) Pno Qt, Op.42, Pi-

erre Verany 700011 / Hermann ZILCHER (1881-1948) Qtnt in c#, Largo 5144

Winds & Strings

Jan VANHAL (1739-1813) 6 Quartette Concertante for Ob & Str. Trio, Helios 55033

Winds, Strings & Piano

Willy BURKHARD (1900-55) Lyrische Musik for Fl, Vla, Vc & Pno, Novalis 150-159-2 / Aaron COPELAND (1900-90) Sextet for Cln, Pno & Str. Qt., ASV DCA 1081 / Charles KOEHLIN (1867-1950) Works for Fl, Cln & Pno, Koch Schwann Musica Mundi 3-6729-2

Piano & Winds

Sigfrid KARG-ELERT (1877-1933) Jugend for Fl, Cln, Hn & Pno, Hungaroton 31925

Winds Only

Louis DUREY (1888-1979) Wind Qtnt, Mandala 4980-81 / Josef MYSLIVECEK (1737-81) Wind Octets Nos. 1-3 / EMI 7243-5-55512-1-2 / Antonin REICHA (1770-1836) 2 Wind Quintets, Op.88 No.6 & Op.91 No.6, Naxos 8.554228 / Ruth Crawford SEEGER (1901-53) Suite for Wind Quintet, CPO 999 670 /

(Continued from page 4)

The more athletic first theme reappears, as do the ubiquitous background triplets, which eventually combine with the final theme. The development includes a wonderful section of opposing pairs of 3rds. An error in the cello part should be corrected in bar 175: the 5th note should be a B flat not a G. The movement ends with a long D major section.



Respighi married late (at age 40) to a singer 15 years his junior. She had been one of his composition students at the Conservatory and specialized in Gregorian Chant. Elena Respighi later wrote that she had been the inspiration behind her husband's interest in ancient music. However, he had actually long been drawn to earlier sounds and styles, and had written several works based on his interest. For example, his *Quartet in D for Ancient Viols* was written in 1906. His transcription of Monteverdi's *Lamento d'Aianna* in 1908, and his tran-

scription of Vitali's Chaconne in 1909. The first version of his popular *Ancient Airs and Dances* had been composed in 1917. The **Quartetto Dorico**, which is in one movement, appeared in 1924 during this so-called Gregorian period which in addition to the Quartetto Dorico, includes *Concerto Gregoriana* (violin & orchestra, 1921), *Concerto in Modo Misolidia* (piano & orchestra, 1925), *Vetrata de chiesa* (orchestra, 1925), and *Lauda per la Navita del Signore* (chorus & orchestra, 1930).

The word 'Dorico', in the case of this quartet, refers to ancient styles rather than the Dorian mode. In fact, the work begins in Aeolian mode (the equivalent of A-A on the white keys or the piano, or natural minor) The melody is presented in unisons and octaves in all 4 voices, with recitative-like chords interspersed. The octave doublings and 5ths, with only sparing use of 3rds, and imitative (though not fugal) entrances evokes an "ancient" style. Respighi contrasts chains of ♩ rhythms to Scotch snaps ♩. These appear to be suggested by the last two chords of the introduction [♩]. The development includes a challenging section for the first violin at N°3, with octaves in contrary motion to the cello line. The development continues with periodic interruptions of 5/4 time, then segues into a kind of unofficial 2nd movement, *Molto animato*. The first violin states the melody, with support from the cello, and the accompanying voices interpolate pizzicato chords into the dance-like texture. After further development, a short cello solo leads into what might be called a 3rd movement, *Molto lento* in an ancient chant-like style, with a melismatic descant in Violin I and sustained rumblings in the cello. The writing is wonderfully dense and filled with difficult chords (Respighi's pianism overriding his string-player's instincts), bracketed again by contrary motion between Violin I and Cello, sweep us into a recap or the 'first movement theme' now in 7/4 time. It combines the ♩ motive with virtuoso scale segments in the first violin part. The Quartet swells to an orchestral flourish at the end, with double-stops in all four parts, and unison ascending scales.

The most recent, Schwann/Opus only lists *Quartetto Dorico* as being currently available on disk.

Thank God It's Friday—Music of *Les Vendredis* *continued from page 1*

together a group of amateurs with which he could indulge his passion for playing string quartets. But soon these evenings were to become the social center of musical life in St. Petersburg for Belaiev was no ordinary enthusiast. Soon the amateurs of Belaiev's quartet were receiving visits from the likes of Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, Liadov, Glazunov and many others. And before long these erstwhile visitors became regulars. They were to be known as the 'Belaiev Circle.' Over the next 20 years, on many an occasion, each of these composers, most of them at one time or another students of Korsakov, would bring their an a piece composed for string quartet as an offering of appreciation for all of the support and hospitality Belaiev had given and continued to give them.

Interestingly, there are certain parallels, it may be said, between our namesake W.W. Cobbett (see my article on Cobbett which appeared in Volume VIII No.1, March 1997) and Mitrofan Belaiev. They were both wealthy and used their wealth to succor and encourage the creation and popularization of national compositions. Belaiev inherited a successful timber business from his father, but with the help of his brother and his own astute business acumen, he turned the firm into a huge multi million ruble international giant and made a vast fortune for himself along the way.

That he had a passion for playing chamber music which in turn led him to spend a good part of his fortune promoting Russian music and chamber music in particular perhaps seems strange for a timber merchant until one remembers the first class education he, as a typical member of the Russian upper classes, received. It left him fluent in French, German and English, and able to play the piano, violin, viola and flute although one acerbic memoirist noted that he spat on the floor just like his ancestors.

As Belaiev approached 50, he decided to devote all of his time and energy and much of his money to the cause of Russian music. It was his unbounded enthusiasm for Glazunov's chamber works which led him in 1885 to found the publishing firm bearing his name not only in Petersburg but also in Leipzig (then the music-publishing capital of Europe) to insure that the works he published would be given the widest exposure. And in the years which followed, the firm of M.P. Belaiev brought out the first edition of most of the important works coming out of Russia. The next year, 1886, Belaiev founded and funded the Russian Symphony Concerts in order to create a performance venue for the new works of Russian composers, primarily those with whom he was associated. These concerts remained an important part of Petersburg life until the Revolution in 1917.

So then, this was the man who started playing with his friends on Friday evenings. At first, it was, as he put it, just a matter of "sawing away", with his partners. Perhaps a few friends, who were music lovers, might attend. The evening would then conclude with a 'simple' dinner. (Although the personnel of Belaiev's quartet, as is the case with most groups, did over the years go through changes, for much of its existence, its members remained the same. It consisted of Dr. Alexander Gelbcke, a well-known surgeon, on first violin, Nicolai Hesechus, a physics

professor, on second violin, Belaiev on viola and Victor Ewald, a civil engineer and erstwhile composer on cello. Although many contemporary accounts relate that Belaiev and his colleagues were of a rather high standard, Rimsky-Korsakov, in his memoirs, commented that while they read music fluently their playing ranged from "competent" to "bad" depending upon the difficulty of the work)

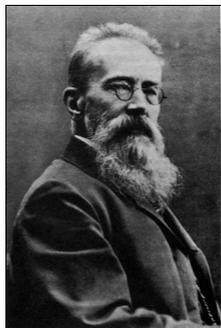
Eventually, Belaiev's activities in support of Russian music, and especially his founding of the Russian Symphony Concerts along with the creation of his publishing firm, led him to seek the counsel of Rimsky-Korsakov, the dean of professors at the Petersburg Conservatory and generally considered, with Tchaikovsky, as one of Russia's two leading composers. From 1885 until his death, Belaiev relied on the recommendations of Rimsky-Korsakov, Glazunov and Liadov, his "three judges", as to what works should be published or featured in concert. Of Belaiev's efforts, Rimsky-Korsakov was to write, "*In 1885, he organized his concert series and publishing house with no consideration for personal profit whatsoever. He spent large sums of money while concealing himself from the public eye. His fortune was, as far as he was concerned, a means to an end and he applied it to lofty and irreproachable aims.*"

Professional acquaintance inevitably led to their all becoming friends and to the composers receiving invitations to Belaiev's house for the impromptu concert and dinner. While it must be remembered that Belaiev's Fridays were originally the result of his passion for playing chamber music (a passion which never decreased or changed as the years went by), the nature of the evenings by the early 1880's had metamorphosized into a weekly social event. The Belaiev Quartet would play at least three works each Friday---in the early years, it would be one each by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, or so we are told by the memoirists. They were always played in chronological order so that if on one week Haydn's Op.76 No.2 had been played or Mozart's K.464, the next week they would perform Op.76 No.3 and Mozart's K.465 and so on. (One must wonder if they ever dared to sight read Beethoven's Late Quartets before an audience, no matter how friendly) The simple suppers which had invariably followed the concert soon changed into a more elaborate meal, usually a sumptuous champagne dinner, generally served shortly after midnight. Belaiev's Maecenas-like hospitality, in no small part, was one of the reasons his Fridays became legendary.

If you have not already guessed, it is not the aim of this article to merely present and discuss those pieces which were composed for Belaiev's Friday evenings, but also to paint a picture (based in large part upon the recollections of the attendees) of what these incomparable evenings were like. What follows is a reconstructive pastiche from various sources.

Belaiev's "town home" consisted of two entire floors in a large private building on Nicolaiev Prospekt. There were more than 15 rooms on each floor. The family and servant's quarters were on the lower of the two floors. Above were the rooms Belaiev used for his timber business, and for formally entertaining, his social rooms. It was here that the Fridays were held.

Les Vendredis—Those Marvellous Evenings and the Music They Inspired



Upon entering the concert room it was hard to miss the tall, gaunt figure of Rimsky-Korsakov, who carried himself erect, like the naval officer he had been, leaning against a wall listening to the music. With his short military style haircut and long patriarchal beard, he stared out intensely from behind his steel framed-glasses.

Often standing nearby would be



Rimsky's prize pupil, Alexander (Sasha) Glazunov, nearly as tall as his teacher, though stocky. His gangly limbs gave the impression he did not know what to do with them. His bloated, pale face would gaze thoughtfully at the Belaievs as they performed.



On the other side of the room, in a soft comfortable chair, was Anatoly Liadov, the third of Belaiev's 'judges.' Liadov, who had also studied with Rimsky, had something of the exotic about him. Rotund, though not greatly obese, he squinted out from behind very thick pince-nez, which magnified his rather heavy-lidded eyes, giving him the appearance of a Mongolian intellectual.

At the Fridays, the views and opinions of these three regulars were always accorded special respect (Glazunov and Liadov were at the time widely regarded as the two most important Petersburg composers after Korsakov) however they were not the only "Aces" (the Russian term for "big shot") who might be in attendance. Then they had to share the limelight. Often Borodin, the



famed chemistry professor and, by his own words, "Sunday-afternoon composer", would put in an appearance. He, too, studied with Rimsky but never formally. He would show Rimsky a few bars and then ask for help with orchestration or some other musical problem. Many a weekend was spent with Rimsky hauling various orchestral instruments (e.g. tubas, trombones, timpani, trumpets) over to Borodin's laboratory where the two of them would try these out

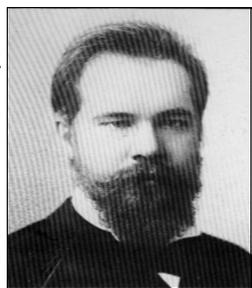
while attempting to orchestrate *Prince Igor*. Now and again, Borodin could be prevailed upon to join the Belaiev Quartet when they read a string quintet for two cellos.

The young and immodest Alexander Scriabin, another of Rimsky's star students, could often be heard pontificating on the new wave of the future and once told a group of beautiful ladies (ladies were rarely invited) "I am the creator of a new universe. I...am God!" Liadov, who overheard him carrying on in this fashion, interrupted to tell Liadov's admirers that the young man was nothing more than a puffed up rooster.



And then, despite the strong and sometimes hostile rivalry between the Petersburg and Moscow composers, there would nevertheless be visits from Moscow's "Aces": Tchaikovsky, Sergei Taneiev, Rachmaninov, Gliere and Arensky, all of whom would receive warm welcomes when they came. Sometimes too warm—once on the occasion of a rare and unexpected visit to the Fridays, Tchaikovsky's entrance created a spontaneous ovation that went on for nearly a minute. The next day, it caused Belaiev to complain that he could not understand how Moscow's Tchaikovsky should deserve such applause, especially in the presence of Rimsky-Korsakov, the man who had single-handedly trained virtually every up and coming young Russian composer. This remark was emblematic of the competition between Russia's two cultural capitals. Belaiev was well aware of the fact that most of the composers in attendance, men such as Scriabin, Zolotarev, Kopylov, Gretchananinov, Nicolai Tcherepnin, Miaskovsky, Ippolitov-Ivanov, Sokolov, and Wihtol had either been or were currently students of Rimsky-Korsakov. The others who were not were students of either Liadov or Glazunov, both of whom themselves were Korsakov students. Though this sentiment was perhaps an exaggeration, it was not so far off the mark when you consider that the composers of the 'Belaiev Circle,' most of whom were Rimsky-Korsakov's students, did become the successors to Balakirev and his "Mighty Five" who had sought to create a Russian national school of composition. While Taneiev and to a lesser extent, Tchaikovsky shunned, or so they said, writing specifically Russian music instead of pure music, the Petersburg composers under the aegis of Korsakov and Borodin, both of whom had been members of the Mighty Five, carried the banner of Russian Nationalism forward and this can clearly be heard in most of their compositions, although not in the occasional pieces which comprise the *Les Vendredis*.

Despite this rivalry, the Moscow "Aces" were usually treated with great deference, although the infrequent appearances of Sergei Taneiev almost always put a damper on spirits. Squat, short and extremely near-sighted, Taneiev, a non-smoker, would rush about the room in which he was, imperiously shouting, in his high pitched and hoarse voice, "No smoking, *no smoking please!*" Then the others, even Rimsky-Korsakov, would reluctantly put out their cigars and pipes though the well-known the Russian proverb held that where tobacco is prohibited, the wine tastes sour and where the wine has gone off, the conversation falls flat.



On any given Friday evening, shortly after eight o'clock, the members of the Belaiev Quartet would arrive. They would be followed soon after by guests and visitors. One entered by means of a long hallway which led to a large room Belaiev called the drawing room. There was an abundance of comfortable chairs and sofas. Taking pride of place on a large mahogany display table was a portrait album of composers from the earliest times to the present. Next to it was an attractively bound, hand tooled leather Commemoration Book in which could be found the names, signatures and addresses of the many eminent guests who had attended

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(Continued from page 7)

the Fridays, along with a listing of programs performed as well many other entries relating to Belaiev's many musical undertakings. A professional calligrapher had been engaged to make most of the entries. After admiring these and other items in the drawing room, guests (by the late 1890's on average there would be around 45 but on special occasions perhaps as many as 70) would head toward the dining room where Belaiev's wife, Maria Adrianovna was usually ensconced next to a giant, gleaming silver samovar dispensing tea to those in need of warmth from the cold Petersburg night air.

In the meantime, Belaiev and his fellow quarteters discuss the evening's program. Whenever a work is performed, Belaiev notes the date on the cover so that it will not be aired again too soon. The next day, he will enter the program along with any surprise offering brought along by one of the composers for a trial run. In this book, Belaiev keeps a complete record of everything ever played at the Fridays.

When Glazunov enters, Belaiev approaches and heartily welcomes him, inquiring, "Sasha, have you brought anything new for us tonight?" Glazunov, Belaiev's favorite, brings new pieces more frequently than the others. The dining room begins to fill with guests, those who come early are the ones who enjoy quartet music even when it is performed by amateurs. Glazunov, perhaps in deference to his friend and host, has coined and often repeats the motto, "only amateurs should be allowed to play...so long as they know *how*." After a while, the musicians and the guests finish their tea and start wandering into the huge, brightly-lit rectangular music room, intimate yet almost the size of a formal chamber music hall. The walls are painted in pastels with ornate friezes and the murals depicting musical scenes. On one wall hang superb oil paintings of Rimsky-Korsakov, Glazunov and Liadov, all of which Belaiev commissioned from the great Ilya Repin, himself a frequent visitor to the Fridays. (*These paintings are still extant and can be seen at the Russian State Art Museum in the Hermitage (Winter) Palace in St. Petersburg—ed*). At the front the room are two magnificent Bekker concert grand pianos. All around the room arm chairs, small sofas, love seats and even some giant and ornate Persian cushions have been scattered rather than the usual rows of uncomfortable straight back concert seats. At the Fridays, no guest is forced to be a member of the audience. Those who wish to hear the music are afforded a comfortable vantage point from which to listen and see the musicians. Those who are not overly fond of music remain in the dining room by the samovar drinking cup after cup of tea and exchanging the latest Petersburg gossip.

In the center of the room, placed upon a rich rosewood platform, are four folding music stands and behind them chairs. Belaiev is particularly proud of the miniature kerosene lamps he has had specially designed and mounted to the music stands in such a manner that, despite any *con fuoco* bowing, the music itself will not catch on fire. At about half past eight, the Belaiev Quartet takes its place on the platform and performs a quartet by one of the "Big Three", i.e., either one by Haydn, Mozart or Beethoven. Next comes something a little more modern such as a quartet by Schubert or Mendelssohn, or perhaps a work by a lesser-known but still played composer such as Onslow, Bruch, Raff or Dittersdorf. Belaiev was quite fond of Onslow's quartets which could

often be found on the program. After this, a Russian work would be played, often times sight read from manuscript. On such occasions the players, those composers in the audience, along with other musicians who were present, would break into discussion between the movements, exchanging opinions or arguing about the relative merit of the music. Often after completion of the third work, Belaiev would suddenly rush off to his study where a small group of composers could be found huddling around his writing desk. As he approaches, he can see that four or five of them are frantically writing down quartet parts on manuscript paper from a manuscript score. "Is it ready?" he asks impatiently. "*Please, give us a moment more Mitrofan Petrovich!*" Korsakov answers. A minute or two later, he is told that the new work is ready. He takes the new work, with the ink still wet and rushes back into the concert room to baptize this new creation with the others in tow behind him. On this occasion, the new work is a polka, a work of collaboration between Glazunov, Liadov and Sokolov, another promising student of Rimsky-Korsakov. Up onto the stands the parts are placed. Even those gossiping in the next room hurry toward the music room when they hear that a new work is being premiered. The Belaievs play it well and the Polka with its prominent viola part is greatly praised. "*What shall we call it then?*" asks Belaiev to which the others answer "*Les Vendredis Polka, we dedicate it to you Mitrofan Petrovich!*" Though it must be classed as a salon piece, the *Les Vendredis Polka* is a marvelous trifle that never fails to please.

With the new work over, the Belaiev Quartet has concluded the evening's program. Guests mill about talking with one another as they wait for the clock bells to chime midnight. Often one of the up and coming composers can be found in front of one of the Bekker pianos, playing either some composition of his own or merely showing off his technique. At midnight, the forty some odd guests are summoned into the dining room where a banquet table has now been set.

At the head of the table sits Belaiev, where one would expect the host to be. His wife (often the only lady present) sits next to him at the head which is wide enough for two. The seating near the head of the table is dictated by tradition and remains the same, week after week. Rimsky-Korsakov takes the seat to Belaiev's immediate right and Glazunov seats himself next to Rimsky. Across from Rimsky-Korsakov and on the left sits the Latvian-Russian composer, Jaseps Wihtol (Vitols). Belaiev teases the handsome young composer, calling him 'Joseph the Beautiful'. Liadov takes the seat next to Wihtol and Borodin, when he attends, usually sits across from him. The rest of the guests, whether regular or visitor, sit where they wish. The commonly accepted wisdom was that the closer you sat to the elders at the head of the table, the drier the conversation. Hence, many of the young blades like Sokolov, Artcibushev, and Kopylov sat well to the other end telling ribald stories and merrily enjoying themselves. The long table would groan from the sheer amount of food served by Belaiev's gourmet chef and there was always plenty of champagne and other wine with which to wash it down.

By 2 o'clock many of the guests have started to leave for home but others return to the music room to hear Glazunov perform some new piano piece he had just composed. His playing, it was said, was generally heavy and plodding, like the man himself, but

(Continued on page 9)

as is generally the case with most first class musicians, even in the most complex of passages, the voicing was impeccable. Usually by 3 a.m., the evening would come to an end and those who had remained behind were given a hot wine drink to fortify them for the trip back to their homes. Those who have written about the Fridays have generally agreed that it is all but impossible to put into words an account which accurately captures the mood and charm of those wonderful nights and the fascination they held for those lucky enough to have attended.

Nicolai Hesechus, Belaiev's long-time second violist, writing from his exile in Paris nearly 20 years after Belaiev's death (1903), recalled that lost world which was swept away by the forces of change and the Russian Revolution:

"The question remains, what explains the strong attractions of these Fridays, why did they enjoy such success, not only among amateurs, but among eminent musicians? Certainly the quartet alone could not have possessed such appeal, despite having been unified by many years of practice together. No, the magnetism of the Fridays derived from a pervasive sense of openness, naturalness, sincerity, and honesty, from mutual love for a noble art which bound everyone in friendship. Here, as in another world, everyone could escape for a few hours from petty, mundane cares and find peace and refreshment. How often we waited impatiently for the Fridays; how often we sighed, "what a pity Mitrofan Petrovich doesn't have 7 Fridays in a week!"

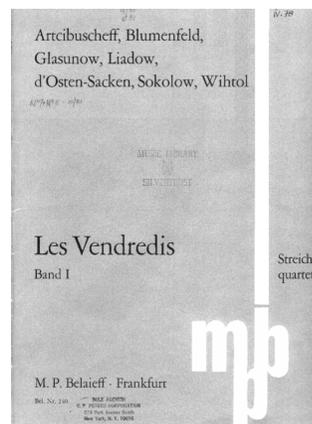
Les Vendredis, 16 works for string quartet, published by Belaiev's firm after his death in 1903, are perhaps the best and most lasting tribute to that lost world of Fridays. They were selected by Rimsky-Korsakov (with some input from Glazunov and Liadov) from among dozens of pieces which were found with Belaiev's papers. Some were written on the fly, right there on Friday in Belaiev's study, while he and his quartet were performing out front. Others were composed ahead of time and presented for a special occasions such as a birthday.

All of the pieces show a technical self-assurance. They exude a gentleness and innocence which indicate no awareness of the turbulent trends of musical modernism (Mahler and post-Wagnerism), just as perhaps Belaiev and his circle of friends were oblivious (or else heedless) to the awful social tensions lying beneath the surface of Imperial Russia—tensions which would briefly erupt in 1905 and culminate in the Russian Revolution. The self-assured obliviousness of the Russian upper classes, might perhaps be put down to arrogance, but the technical self-assurance of these works is the result of Rimsky-Korsakov's commitment to technical mastery. As a young composer, well aware of his own lack of compositional technique, he made an exhaustive study of Bach, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. That he succeeded can in part be measured by the fact that his book on orchestration was immediately considered the foremost on the subject, and his orchestral works, such as *Scheherazade* and *Le Coq d'or* to name just two, stand as unsurpassed examples of orchestral excellence. Hence his own experience led him to conclude that technical mastery was absolutely essential for a successful career as a composer and he insisted his students master the traditional skills of composition. As a

result, nearly all of the works by his students show a remarkable standard of workmanship and a similarity of approach to such things as development and manipulation of thematic material, voice leading and well-developed harmony. As one Soviet music critic later put it, the works of Korsakov's students exhibit "certain symptoms of the Meistersinger guild." This is not really a back handed compliment because examination of the output of the Belaiev Circle reveals a uniformly high quality of composition. Only the fact that tastes changed so rapidly due to the violence of the political situation led to these works being relegated to the rank of 'second class.'

In *Les Vendredis*, the pieces chosen for publication, not surprisingly, all show a certain technical excellence. But they are also very effective as music within the limited scope of their aim. Even those pieces, such as the two polkas, which must be classed as 'salon music', are not only pleasing to hear but also marvelous little gems of their kind.

A large number of the pieces in the collection are what might be called updated examples of historical forms from the classical, baroque and renaissance eras. Therein we find fugues, sarabandes, canons, courantes, minuets, mazurkas, a berceuse and a serenade along with a scherzo and two polkas. This was no accident for Rimsky-Korsakov infected most his students with his love and enthusiasm for the music of these earlier times. Further confirmation can be found by examining Belaiev's master log book, in which he entered everything ever played at the Fridays. Here, one finds a large number of transcriptions (mostly made by Korsakov and Glazunov) for quartet from the works of Corelli, Tartini, Vitali, Handel and Bach. The point here is that for many decades, the composers of the Belaiev Circle have been written off not only as second raters, but as reactionaries. But quite the opposite is true. *Neo-classicism begins with the Belaiev Circle!* Most musicologists treat neo-classicism—that return to the font of the classical era for ideas and inspiration—as a phenomenon that sprung up after the First World War in reaction to the Second Viennese School and post-Wagnerism. Stravinsky usually is the composer whose name is most closely associated with this new trend. And with whom did Stravinsky study as a private student? From 1903 on, the answer is Rimsky-Korsakov.



(In the next two parts of this article, the author will discuss the 16 works for string quartet which make up the two volumes of Les Vendredis.)

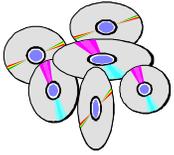
A Practical Listing of Some Quintets For 2 Violins, Viola and 2 Cellos

By Andrew Marshall

I have produced a listing of the quintets from the photocopyier Merton so members can be aware of any practical difficulties that may be present, such as legibility, rehearsal letters or numbers and use of transposing treble clef in cello parts. I have not commented on the musical worthiness of these pieces. It has to be generally acknowledged, that there is not going to be another Schubert Quintet, neither here nor elsewhere. However, generally these pieces are worth exploring, if only to have an extra work or two when the Schubert is scheduled for rehearsal.

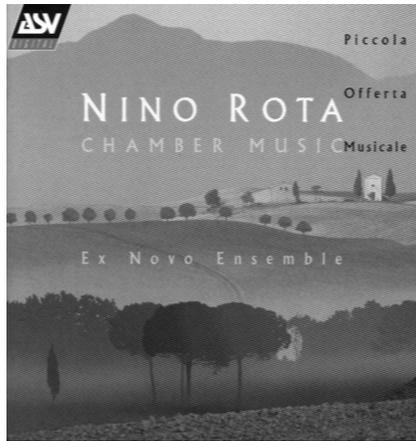
My comments on "printing" in no reflect the quality of the photocopying which is dependent to some extent by the state of the originals from which he has copied. "Rhythm" also implies ease of playing together as an ensemble "Top note in Violin I" refers to notes in the octave above the treble clef; and "Transposing octave treble clef in Cello I" indicates the presence of treble clef which must be read down an octave. Often the use of such a clef is not immediately clear

Composer & Work	Rehearsal Numbers Or letters	Print Quality	Rhythm	Top or Highest Note in Violin I	Transposing Octave Treble in Cello I	Other Coments
C. Barnekow, Op.20	Letters	OK	Fair	B Flat	No	
A. Bazzini, A Major	Letters	Slightly faint	OK	A	No	Over long but enjoyable and easiest for sight reading
W. Berger, Op.75	Letters	Fair	Hard	B	No	
D'Ambrosio Op.8	Numbers	Clear	Fair	C Sharp	No	
Otto Dessoff, Op.8	Numbers	Clear	OK	B	No	
Dobrzyriski, Op.20	None	Cramped	Fair	A	Yes to top G Flat	
J. Dotzauer, Op.134	None	Cramped & Faint	OK	B Flat	No	
F. Draeske, Op.77	Numbers	Clear	Fair	B Flat		A lot of Accidentals
Ellerton, Op.100	None	Small	OK	C	Yes	
F.X. Gebel, Op.24	None	Some Smudges	OK	C	No	
F.X. Gebel, Op.25	None	Some Smudges	Some difficulties	C	No	
C. Goldmark, Op.9	Letters	Clear	OK	B Flat	Yes	Cello II tunes C string down to B in 2nd Movement
T. Gouvy, Op.55	Letters	Clear	Fair	A	No	
A. Klughardt, Op.62	Letters	Clear	Complex	B	No	Difficult
Onslow Op.1 No.3	None	Faint & Cramped	Okay	B Flat	Yes with unnecessary Low writing in $\frac{6}{8}$ Clef	
S. Taneiev, Op.14	Numbers	Clear	Tempo Changes 3d Mov't.	D Sharp	No	3d Movt: Variation 3 has col legno in all parts; Variation 5 harmonics in Violin I



Diskology: Nino Rota's Chamber Music; Piano Trios by Stutschevsky, Sviridov, Smith; A String Qt & String Qnt by Otto Dessoff

On ASV CD#DCA 1072 one will find nearly all of the chamber music penned by the 20th Century Italian composer, **Nino Rota**



(1911-79) (Missing are a nonet and a canzona for 11 instruments) Although known primarily for his film music, Rota wrote in nearly every idiom from opera to wind quintet to ballet. By age 11, Rota was being hailed as the next Mozart while conducting a performance of his own oratorio in his native Milan. The fact that his film music was later so successful (he often

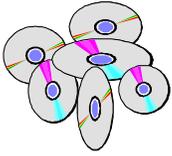
wrote for the likes of Fellini, Zeffirelli, King Vidor, Visconti and Coppola in *The Godfather*) led many to write him off as "just a film composer." But anyone who listens to this disk will come away with a rather different impression. The music to be found here is first rate in every way, all of it tonal, lyrical, and no less deserving of recognition as the music of many of his famous contemporaries such as Stravinsky or Shostakovich, both of whom also wrote on occasion for the stage or cinema. All but one of these pieces is in three movements and none are longer than 15 minutes in length. Taking the works in chronological order, first is a **Quintet for Flute, Oboe, Viola, Cello & Harp** composed in 1935. The *Allegro ben moderato*, is a pastorale, rather dreamy in quality. It shows some similarity to the music of the late French impressionists and also *Les Six*. The second movement, *Adagio*, unfolds slowly. At first meditative, the tone color is highly suggestive of a hot lazy day alongside a still lily pond. The concluding *Allegro vivace*, is not particularly fast, and although a little playful, it is very gentle. The combination of instruments creates a bright and highly original sound. Next, dating from 1943, is the **Piccola Offerta Musicale for Wind Quintet**, a short one movement work full of brilliant brief episodes and as the earlier Quintet. French-sounding. The mood is mostly jocular. This is an engaging little trifle. In 1948 came Rota's only **String Quartet**. In three short movements, the opening *Allegro*, while bearing some relationship to the preceding works, shows a definite modern Italian quality of the sort one finds in Pizzetti. The opening *Allegro moderato* is based on a three-note chord played by all the voices. In the second movement, *Adagio*, the influence of Beethoven can definitely be heard while ingeniously combined with 20th Century melody. There are many different tempi with this movement which is not particularly slow but certainly attractive. The finale, *Allegro robusto*, full of energy, begins in the grand late 19th Century melodic tradition, however a middle interlude introduces some of the searching quality one associates with tonal 20th Century music, especially the neo-classical and romantic. Certainly this is a work which would be an adornment to any professional quartet's repertoire. Just under 15 minutes in length, it would surely find acceptance among audiences. In 1958, Rota composed his **Trio for Flute, Violin and Piano**. In three movements, the opening *Allegro ma non troppo*, starts with a nervous

but attention grabbing theme which is followed up by a powerful outburst and then a very gentle interlude of great contrast. This movement is a marvelous little *tour de force*. The following *Andante sostenuto* is both penetrating and mysterious. The concluding *Allegro vivace con spirito* is full of high spirits. This movement as well as the whole trio is very well written and would make a superb audience piece. The last work is a **Trio for Clarinet, Cello and Piano** composed in 1973. An opening *Allegro* begins with a slinky, catchy melody. The music exhibits the influence of Prokofiev and makes excellent use of its tonal resources. The middle movement, *Andante*, has a moody opening subject which catapults one into the world of Max Bruch's *Eight Pieces, Op.83* also for this combination. The very neo-classical finale, *Allegro*, has antecedents in Shostakovich to Jean Français. Again the trio would be a real audience pleaser. Rota clearly shows his masterful technique and understanding of the capabilities of the instruments he chooses and uses them to create extraordinarily vibrant works. A disk worth owning.



Entitled '**Rarities for Piano Trio**' this Mach 1 01012 CD, features our own Dr. Ronald Goldman, a member of our Board of Directors and violinist of the well-known Gennaro Trio, which for the past 17 years has specialized in presenting rarely played works for piano trio. The first work on disk, **Finale quasi una Fantasia**, is by the Ukrainian-Israeli cellist and composer, **Joachim Stutschevsky (1891-1982)**. It is an independent movement which begins with a long, meditative violin recitative. Clearly based on Eastern Euro-

pean folk melody and perhaps as the notes suggest on Hebrew plaint. Eventually the main theme, a somewhat nervous and energetic melody is stated in full by the piano and taken up by the others. Fully tonal, the music nonetheless is attractively modern-sounding. This would make an effective piece in concert. The next work on disk, **Trio, Op.6**, (1945) is by the Russian composer, **Georgy Sviridov (1915-1998)**. Sviridov's main teacher was Shostakovich and the music at times does show the influence of the master. The first instance is in the first movement, *Elegy*, which is quietly lyrical and not particularly Shostakovich-like until it is interrupted by a violent episode which closes the movement. However even here, Sviridov speaks with his own voice and is not merely an imitative student. The opening theme to the bright *Scherzo* is insistently robust and permeated with Shostakovich, however the brief and very lyrical trio is more reminiscent of the 19th-Century parlor concert. This is followed up by a starkly contrasting *Marche Funebre*. The first part is a restatement of the *Elegy* however the conclusion features a very striking and mournful duet by the strings. The finale, *Idyll*, sounds vaguely like an English shepherd's song. It must be admitted that it appears somewhat out of place. However, the second theme,



Felix Otto Dessoff's String Quartet & String Quintet Franz Waxman: Suites & Variations for Piano Sextet

more energetic and Shostakovich-like is clearly in keeping with what has come before. This is the work of a young composer who is finding his way. The main influence is that of his teacher, but one can hear Vaughn Williams and 19th Century Romantics at times as well. I find it an attractive work which certainly would be enjoyed by amateurs and I think is also deserving of concert performance. I should like to know if the music is available. Next we find a trio, **Trio Cornwall** by the American Texas born composer **Julia Smith (1911-1989)** In three movements, the opening *Allegro giusto* is a bouncy melodic piece that is quite appealing. It has the feel of the New England School. A *Theme and Variations* again has a sort of early American children's melody as its theme. The variations are ingenious with a blues-like episode and rumba interlude of particular note. The boisterous and playful finale, *Allegro quasi rondo*, resembles the first movement in spirit although it is punctuated by an occasional moody interlude before concluding with a catchy hoe-down coda. This is a first rate work rate to which professionals should give serious consideration when searching for an 20th Century American work. And by a woman composer to boot. It is accessible to amateurs as well. Also on disc are to works for piano trio by Beethoven without opus. (WoO. 38 & 39 dating from 1787 and 1812) The WoO.39 is a one movement *Allegretto* thought by some to have been originally intended for the *Archduke Trio*. WoO.38 is in three movements. While it sounds like his other early works, it also shows some rather striking resemblances to Mozart's K.502 which clearly served as a model.



Felix Otto Dessoff (1835-1892) was born in Leipzig and entered the conservatory there where he studied composition, piano and conducting with some of the foremost teachers of the day. It was as a conductor that he primarily established his reputation. By 19, he was theater director in Dusseldorf and a mere 5 years later was offered a guest position with, perhaps the premiere theater, the Vienna Court

Opera House. In Vienna, he became friends with Brahms and later was to premiere several of that composer's orchestral works. Although he had composed some works during the 1850's and early 60', he gave up composing when his career as a conductor blossomed. In 1878, the urge came upon him again to compose and among other things he produced his **String Quartet Op.7 in F**. Though it met with success in its premiere, Dessoff was still not sure it was worth publishing and sent the score to Brahms asking for his candid opinion and offering to dedicate to him. Brahms wrote back praising the work and said, "...you would do me a great honor by writing my name over the quartet title—if need be then, we'll take the blows together should the public find it not to their liking." Much gratified, Dessoff wrote back—and the measure of their friendship can be seen in this free and bantering reply, exactly the sort Brahms himself was fond of writing, "...you will be relieved to see your name on the title page of the quartet preserved for posterity. When people have forgotten your

German Requiem, people will then say, 'Brahms'? Oh yes, he's the one to whom Dessoff's Op.7 is dedicated!" The Op.7 is the first work on this Antes CD #31.9023. In four movements, the opening *Allegro ben moderato* begins with a joyous first theme. The second theme is quite Brahmsian in flavor. A unisono pizzicato introduction begins a somber, almost funeral-like, march *Larghetto*. This is very original in conception. A second subject is both more lyrical and optimistic in mood. The short third movement, *Poco Andante*, is a slow but sunny waltz with a cleverly contrasting scherzando. The finale, *Allegro con brio*, opens with a cascading Brahms-like melody and proceeds jovially to a happy ending. Although this is only an opus 7, Dessoff was close to 40 at the time he composed this piece, and though it is marked by youthful vitality throughout, it is clearly the work of a very mature and accomplished composer. One imagines that this is what one of Brahms' quartets might have sounded like if he had allowed one of the earlier ones to survive. This quartet ought to be played in concert—that it has not been can only be due to the fact that so much of the spirit and sound of Brahms is infused in it. Yet it would be wrong to say this work is mere imitation, it is not. Fresh and original sounding it is certainly rhythmically more straight forward than Brahms. Altmann recommends it to both professionals and amateurs alike. Two years on found Dessoff once again showing Brahms his new **String Quintet (2Vc) Op. 10 in G** and asking whether he should publish it. Again Brahms was enthusiastic. The spacious but not overly long *Allegro con fuoco* is more congenial than fiery. A following *Andante sostenuto* is meditative but not gloomy. A short but very fine *Allegro grazioso* opens with a beautiful and original theme in the minor. It is a kind of 19th Century Gavotte and Musette. The finale, *Allegro con brio*, burst forth with the promised brio soon giving way to a lovely lyrical melody first sung by the cello. In the Quintet we do not hear much of Brahms. If asked to guess what one was hearing, one might think Rheinberger, Reinecke, or even Schumann, i.e., some mid-late 19th Century composer who knew his craft. Certainly this is a worthy addition to the scanty quintet literature for 2 cellos. Parts available from Merton Copying.



When people think of **Franz Waxman, (1906-67)** if they think of him at all, they associate him with movie music. However he was also an accomplished composer of classical music. Heifetz often performed Waxman's *Carmen Fantasie* among other pieces. This Koch CD#3-7398-2 presents a large selection of both genres, all for piano sextet. Included are the *Auld Lang Syne Variations* which Heifetz recorded and performed. It is written as if Mozart, Beethoven, Bach, Shostakovich & Prokofiev had penned it. Also on disk, *Four Scenes from Childhood*, *The Song of Terezin*, *Souvenirs de Paris*, *Hollywood Suite*, *The Spirit of St. Louis* & *The Charm Bracelet*. I whole-heartedly recommend this lighthearted, beautiful and well-written music which will provide the listener with many surprises.