

THE
CHAMBER MUSIC
JOURNAL

*The Essential Guide
For Players & Listeners
To The Wider World
of Chamber Music*

Johan Wikmanson's String Quartets

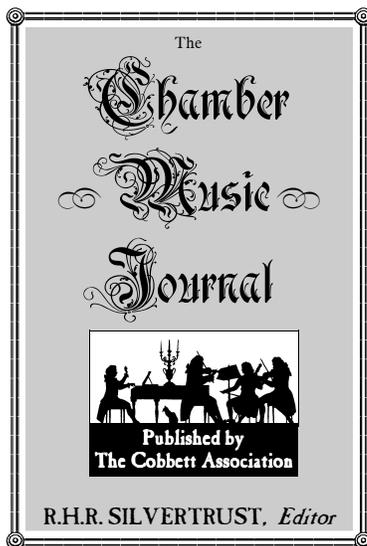
***Max Bruch: Eight Pieces
for Clarinet, Viola & Piano***

Friedrich Kiel: The Piano Quintets

Volume XVII No.4

Winter 2006/2007

ISSN 1535 1726

**Directors**

Dr. Ronald Goldman
Professor Vincent Oddo
R.H.R. Silvertrust, MA (Oxon), JD

Board of Advisors

Dr. Nicholas Cunningham, Sally Didrickson, Dr. Ronald Goldman, Dr. William Horne, Dr. Bertrand Jacobs, Veronica Jacobs, Peter Lang, Andrew Marshall, Professor Vincent Oddo, Professor Keith Robinson, Dr. James Whitby, John Wilcox

The Chamber Music Journal is published quarterly by The Cobbett Association, Incorporated, a Not for Profit Organization. **Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome** and will be handled with all reasonable care but responsibility cannot be assumed for such materials. Return postage must be enclosed to insure any return of same. Subscription is available by joining The Cobbett Association, Inc. Back issues of The Chamber Music Journal are available at a cost of \$6 per issue.

Offices of The Cobbett Association are located at 601 Timber Trail, Riverwoods, IL 60015, USA. www.cobbettassociation.org is our website address. ☎: 847 / 374-1800. Please remember when calling that we are located in the Central Time Zone of the United States, 6 hours earlier than GMT (Greenwich Mean Time, i.e. London) E-mail address: cobbettassociation@sbcbglobal.net

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

The contents of The Chamber Music Journal are under copyright and are not to be reprinted or reproduced without the express written permission of the publisher. All rights reserved. ISSN 1535-1726



The Sounding Board-Letters to the Editor



More Information on Igancy Dobrzynski

I have some additional information about Dobrzynski's string quintets (CD reviews last issue) which players might find interesting. I agree with you that these are wonderful pieces. They can be obtained from Accolade Verlag (<http://www.accolade.de/>), run by Mr. Bodo Koenigsbeck. He is in the process of preparing new editions of both Quintets. Last time I asked about them he said "soon"! I was also able to buy a modern score and set of parts for the first Quintet from Fundacia Pro Musica Camerata at www.wok.pol.pl/fundacja.htm. The web site is in Polish, but they answered my inquiry about the quintets in extremely fluent English.

Paul Schlossman
Amherst, NY

20th Century String Trios

All of the recent discussion of string trios in the last 2 issues of *The Chamber Music Journal* prompts me to add my two-cents worth. Almost 10 years ago I researched the string trio in the 20th century, at the behest of the (alas, no longer in existence) Notre Dame String Trio. To my great surprise, there are well over 1000 trios composed in that century, many of which are only in manuscript, and many of which are probably garbage. Unfortunately I had to stop my work before the century was out, so my list is incomplete. The only substantive thing to emerge from this effort was the discovery of an early trio by David Diamond, which the Notre Dame String Trio was able to get (manuscript) from Diamond, have parts etc. prepared, and then performed it at the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall. I was able to attend, and meet Diamond, who asked my opinion of the work! (I think part of it is good, but some is either uninteresting or not wonderful.) The ND String Trio went on to record it, along with the Hindemith & Villa Lobos trios. Since so many trios were written in the 20th century, I can only surmise that at least that many were written in the 19th. It would be a great project for some young musicology/music history grad student to pursue.

Gunter Fonken
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Peter Flanders

We regret to inform readers that we have learned Peter Flanders has passed away. Mr. Flanders, a cellist who lived in New York City, was a Cobbett Association member for many years.

Report from the Mazer Society

The Mazer String Quartet Society is one of the oldest continuing chamber music organizations in Europe. It is dedicated to the performance of string quartets. Its members (as those of The Cobbett Association) are both amateurs and profes-

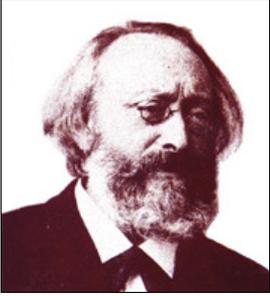
sionals, many of whom are among Sweden's leading chamber musicians. They happily play side by side with amateurs. Informal gatherings are held from September to May. The program committee strives after variation between string quartets, trios, duos and larger ensembles. The majority of performances are given by groups put together for the occasion. These groups are often built by individual initiative, while in some cases the music director and program council help in the organization. The purpose of these informal concerts is to perform chamber music in an intimate environment, with a limited audience and without restrictive quality demands. David William-Olsson, a Cobbett member, and president of the Mazer Society regularly sends us updates of what has recently been played. Space only permits me to list some of the things, —ed.

Albrechtsberger: Sonata I for string trio
Aulin, Valborg: No.1 F major
Bach, J.Chr.: Piano Quartet in G
Boccherini: Quintets c Minor G355, C G298, D G284
Borodin: Str Qt No.2 & Sextet d Minor
Brahms, Johannes: Piano Quartet Op 60, Sextet Op 18
Bruch, Max: Octet with double bass, String quartet Op 9
Börresen, Hakon: Sextet Op 5
Cambini, Giuseppe: Op 1 No.1 in G major
Danzl, Franz: Cello Quartet B major
Dohnányi: Piano Quintet Op 1 C Minor & Sextet (1893)
Dvorak: Opus 96 & Sextet A Opus 48
Elgar, Edward: Piano Quintet Opus 84
Eysler, Eberhard: Consonanza for Cello & Piano Qnt (2004)
Fernström, John: Trio Op 90
Gade, Niels W: Opus 63 & Octet Op 17
Garner, Errol: Misty, The Heaven, The Nearness (arr quartet)
Gabrieli, Andrea: Canzona á quattro no 4 (cello quartet)
Gershwin: Lullaby for String Quartet
Glazunov, Alexander: Quintet (2 Vc) Op 39
Goltermann, Georg: Serenade Op 119 No 2 for cello quartet
Grieg, Edvard: String Quartet in F (unfinished)
Haydn: Opp 20 No 4, 33 No 3, 42, 50 No 6, 64 No 5, 77 No 2
Jacob, Gordon: Oboe Quartet
Klengel, Julius: Cello Quartet Op 33
Kraus, J.M.: 4 String Quartets VB174, 176, 180, & 183
Kuhlau, Friedrich: Flute Quintet Op 51 No 1 D major
Lachner, Franz: Serenade for cello quartet
Lindblad, A.F.: Piano Trio (Vln, Vla & Pno)
Mendelssohn: 4 Str Qts, Opp 44 Nos 1-3, Quintets Op 18, 87
Metzler: Cello Quartet
Mortenson Otto: String Quartet in G major
Mozart: 7 Qts K156,157,387,428,458,499,589, 2 Qnts 515, 593
Nielsen, Carl: String Quintet G major (2Vla)
Norman, Ludvig: Sextet Op 18
Nordström, Erik: "Byssan Lull" (arr. cello quartet)
Ölander, Per August: Sextet
Onslow, George: Quintets (2 vic) Opp 9, 25, 38 "The Bullet"
Pazek, Anton: Cello Quartet Op 35
Pleyel, Ignaz: Trio F Opus 41 No 5
Prince Reuss: Sextet Opus 17
Schubert: Str Qt Nos 3, 8 & 14, Trout Quintet & Octet
Schumann, Robert: Piano Quintet Opus 44
Stamitz, Carl: Flute Quartet in D Op 8 No 1
Stamitz, Johann: String Quartet B major
Shostakovich: String Quartet No 8
Taube, Sigrid: Piano Quintet
Tchaikovsky: Sextet Op 70 (Souvenir de Florence)
Wagenseil: Cello Quartets Nos 2 & 4
Wagner: "Feierliches Stück aus Lohengrin" (cello quartet)
de Wailly, Paul: Serenade Op 25 flute + string trio
Wikmanson, Johan: String Quartet No 1 d minor
Wilm, Nikolai von: Opus 4 in d minor

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.

Max Bruch: 8 Pieces for Clarinet, Viola & Piano

by Armin Hochbauer



Max Bruch (1838-1920) is best known today for two compositions: His First Violin Concerto and his *Scottish Fantasy* for violin and orchestra. However, he composed in many other genres, including chamber music. During his lifetime, he was probably best known for his choral works. Born in Cologne, Bruch studied piano and composition at the conservatory there with the then famous pianist, Ferdinand Hiller. He had a long career as composer and conductor, mostly in Germany, although he did spend three years conducting the Liverpool Philharmonic between 1880-83. As a composer, his roots are to be found in the classical tradition of the early German Romantic composers, especially, Mendelssohn and Schumann. He rejected the “progressive” directions taken by Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner, the leaders of the so-called New German School, and was on friendly terms with Joseph Joachim and Brahms, who held opinions similar to his. Be-

cause his works remained faithful, throughout his long life, to the models of his youth, he was widely regarded as somewhat of an anachronism at the time of his death in 1920.

Most of Bruch’s chamber music dates from his youth. There is a very nice Beethovenian septet for two violins, cello, bass, clarinet, bassoon and horn written in 1849 when he was eleven. This is an accomplishment that really must be considered on a par with Mendelssohn writing his Octet at age 16. Then there is a pleasant, but unsubstantial piano trio, his Op.5, written when he was 16. Two string quartets, Opp.9 and 10, followed not long after. Op.10 is probably deserving of the occasional concert performance. There is also a piano quintet written for a close friend who was an amateur pianist and reflects this fact. It dates from 1886 and was only recently published by Edition Gravis.. Lastly, in addition to the Eight Pieces, there are three “posthumous” works. Wilhelm Altmann, the noted chamber music scholar who knew Bruch personally, has written that Bruch, a few months before his death,

(Continued on page 4)

Friedrich Kiel The Piano Quintets

by R.H.R. Silvertrust

The famous chamber music scholar and connoisseur, Wilhelm Altmann, writing in *Cobbett’s Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, begins his article on Friedrich Kiel (1821-1885) by remarking that because of Kiel’s exceptional modesty, he never achieved the recognition he deserved as a composer. Altmann also notes that Joseph Joachim, the famous violinist and friend of Brahms, failed Kiel. Joachim was well aware of the excellence of Kiel’s compositions—he had hired Kiel as a professor of composition at the Berlin Hochschule für Musik where he was director—and could easily have promoted Kiel’s music as he had Brahms’. That he did not was probably from the fear of harming his friendship with the touchy Brahms, who would probably and unfairly have interpreted any effort on Kiel’s behalf as divided loyalties. But Altmann’s praise of Kiel is unstinting. Of the chamber music, he writes it is distinguished and need fear no comparison. At one time a performer and fine violinist, Altmann further remarks that throughout his long life, he had found Kiel’s chamber music a “never-failing source of delight.” He highly praised Kiel as a melodist and lamented that it was (in 1929) “scandalously unjust” that Kiel’s two string quartets were as good as forgotten.



I have fallen back on Altmann for support because my own praise of Kiel’s two piano quintets, which Altmann himself warmly recommends, will be every bit as lavish, and I do not want it thought that I am a lonely voice in the wilderness with a never before held opinion. The truth is, anyone, who takes the trouble to investigate Kiel’s chamber music, will quickly realize its excellence. The worst that can be said is that some of it is not all that easy to play, but none is beyond the reach of competent amateurs.

(Continued on page 10)

Johan Wikmanson’s String Quartets

by Lars Johansson

In the opinion of many, the three published string quartets by Johan Wikmanson (1753-1800) are the finest 18th century string quartets written by a Swede. Scholars and players, who are familiar with these works, regularly aver that they are as good as Haydn’s Op.64 quartets. This is not faint praise. So, who then was Johan Wikmanson?

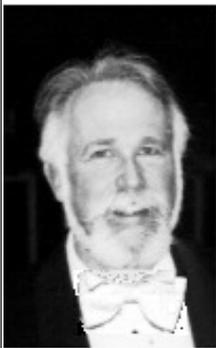
Unfortunately, not a great deal is known about him and this may be an indication that Wikmanson’s personal life was unremarkable, and not out of the ordinary. We do know that he was born in Stockholm, that his father’s family originally came from Gotland and that his mother’s family was from Hamburg. Johan Wikman, the composer’s father, was a dyer by profession and was barely able to eke out a living. Yet, funds were somehow found to send the young boy to a good school where he received the traditional classical education of Latin & Greek. There is record of Wikmanson

(Continued on page 6)

IN THIS ISSUE

Letters to the Editor.....	2
Johan Wikmanson’s String Quartets.....	3
Max Bruch: Eight Pieces for Clarinet, Viola & Piano	3
Friedrich Kiel: The Piano Quintets	3
At the Double Bar	4
New Recordings.....	9
Diskology: Gliere, Still, Kirchner, von Shillings, et al... 13	

At The Doublebar



In November, I had the opportunity to attend an Amateur Chamber Music Players (ACMP) executive board-advisory council retreat. Of course, many Cobbett members are also ACMP members. Our two groups share much in common, first and foremost, our love of chamber music. It was an excellent meeting. Among the many interesting things I learned about was how the ACMP has been helping organizations which want to present workshops. Organizing Cobbett Workshops and or Play-Ins is something our own Advisory Board has visited in the past. The purpose of these would be to play the type of works discussed in *The Journal* and not Beethoven, Brahms *et.al.* for which ample playing opportunities already exist. In fact, such Cobbett Workshops would not be necessary if more people were willing to give works by lesser-known or unknown composers a chance. Unfortunately, judging from the letters I receive, it is often very difficult to get a fair hearing for these composers. The workshops would not only provide the opportunity to get together with like-minded souls, but also serve to introduce many of these works and to give some background about the composers. Should coaching be desired, happily, there are many performing groups, mostly young and European, who are exploring the Cobbett literature and who might well be available. The main problem confronting us has always been funding. The Association really only has the funds necessary to print and post *The Journal*.

I want to thank Armin Hochbauer and Lars Johansson for their excellent articles on Bruch's Eight Pieces and Wikmansson's string quartets.

It's time to renew for 2007. Enclosed, you will find a renewal form. Please return it as soon as possible or better yet, take advantage of our online renewal service on our website at www.cobbettassociation.org. It's fast, safe and easy to do.

I'd like to wish all of you a happy holiday season and New Year.—Ray Silvertrust, Editor

Max Bruch's Eight Pieces, Op.83

told him that he had "completed" two string quintets (2 vlms, 2 vlas and Vc, in e minor and one in a minor) as well as a string octet (4 Vlns, 2 Vlas, Vc and Kb). Only one of the quintets (a minor) and the octet have been published. Judging from the fact they represent no advance in the technique of his youth, nor any difference in his melodic thinking, one would hope Bruch was merely reworking youthful compositions rather than composing *tabula rasa*, because, interesting as these works may be, they are admittedly a big step backward from the **Eight Pieces for Clarinet, Viola and Piano, Op.83**.

The Eight Pieces, composed in 1909 when Bruch was 70 years old, are generally considered his finest effort in the realm of chamber music. They are character pieces and serve as a vehicle which allowed Bruch to explore a variety of moods and emotions. Altmann marveled that Bruch was able to produce such nobly inspired melodies so late in his life and points out the superiority of the Eight Pieces over his earlier efforts with regard to their "masterly development" sections and the handling of each instrument. Altmann further noted that Bruch could just as well have made the eight pieces into two suites of four movements each. As if to buttress this opinion, there are reports that Bruch himself stated not more than four were to be played at any one time. There is some question, however, as to whether he thought they were to be played in opus number order and I have heard from various performers who have researched this point that he did not care, though I myself have not been able to find any specific reference to this.

Perhaps the most extraordinary thing about the Eight Pieces is the instrumental combination: Clarinet, *viola*, and piano. While many works have been written for clarinet, cello and piano, there are only a few for clarinet, viola and piano. Bruch would certainly have been familiar with Mozart's K.498, *The Kegelstatt Trio*, and Schumann's *Märchenerzählungen*, Op.132. He may even have seen the score to Reinecke's superb trio for this combination, Op.264, published in 1903 by Simrock, Bruch's own publisher. Other than these three works, little of any consequence had been composed for such a group. Although Simrock, who always had his eye on the cash register, insisted that Bruch make the Eight Pieces available for clarinet, cello and piano as well as the standard piano trio (violin, cello and piano), these works were clearly intended for the unusual contrast in timbre between the viola and the clarinet. It is Bruch's exploration of this difference in timbre which is, in fact, the outstanding feature of these pieces.

The opening work, Op.83 No.1, is a melancholy and beautiful *Andante*. Here, Bruch, in his search for contrasting instrumental color, writes mirror-image rhythmic passages for each instrument presented one after the other. (see example below) The effect is quite striking and perhaps of all of the eight, this piece best illustrates the contrast in the timbre. The conclusion is highly emotive and very fine.

Andante.

Viola
Klavier
dolce

Clar. in A.
pp p

Bratsche.
pp p

Bratsche.

pp cresc. sfz f

In the second piece, *Allegro con moto*, Op.83 No.2, Bruch seems clearly to be exploring the registers of the viola and the clarinet to determine in which part of these registers they produce their warmest tone. The piano is given a fleet and highly contrasting arpeggio accompaniment. Op.83 No.3 is perhaps the most rhapsodic of the eight. In the opening and most lyrical section, the viola is given a lengthy, dramatic solo. As in most of these works, it alternates with the clarinet, whose subdued, Brahmsian part expresses resignation. The piano part consists of a broken chord accompaniment and again provides a background of total contrast. Op.84 No.4, *Allegro agitato*, is one of two very fast movements. At once, the piano is off to the races in a whirlwind, pulling the staccato accompaniment of the clarinet along with it. Unusual trill passages in the clarinet punctuate the music before a more lyrical middle section briefly appears. The fast opening section returns to close this brilliant work. Just under seven minutes, though it is the longest of the Eight Pieces, it is still short enough to serve on its own as an encore.

Op.83, No.5, *Rumänische Melodie—Andante*, (left) is perhaps the best known of the set and only one of two pieces to which Bruch gave a title. The viola begins with a slow, emotive, moody gypsy-like melody, apparently a Romanian folk tune. The clarinet, in the more dramatic middle section brings forth a similar plaint. Then all three instruments are combined in such masterful fashion, that it seems the most natural combination in the world.

The second longest of the Eight Pieces and the only other one with a title is Op.83 No.6, *Nachtgesang*. After a brief introduction by the piano, the clarinet is given a slow, quiet and peaceful night song, (right) but its vaguely sad and haunting quality prevents it from being a lullaby. The middle section is short and though slightly faster and less subdued, it does not dispel the mood created by the opening theme. The writing throughout is exquisite, perfect in every way.

Of the Eight Pieces, Op.83 No.7 *Allegro vivace*, stands out, not only by virtue of its quick tempo, but also by virtue of its up-beat, and playful mood. It would make a perfect scherzo. The piano and clarinet are primarily entrusted with a quick, staccato eighth note main theme (left) while the viola has a longer-lined part, which nonetheless combines nicely with the others. There is no real middle section, only a few slower pauses which are fashioned

out of the second part of the main theme, which first appears in the clarinet 10 measures after letter "A".

After hearing the last of the Eight Pieces, Op.83 No.8 *Moderato*, one is certainly left with the feeling that Bruch must have intended it to be a kind of finale with its distinct valedictory quality. At first, slow, pensive and above all resigned, it gradually rises to two dramatic climaxes, outcries of protest, before dying away quietly.

Although each of the pieces can be considered individually, only when taken together does the staying power of Bruch's mastery become apparent. It is not a question of just one or two very fine pieces. All eight are marvelous and they, almost certainly, were meant to be performed together. Bruch attains an uncanny sense of unity by the almost exclusive use of the minor (only No.7 is in the major) and by the choice of somber, brooding moods. One must hear all eight, regardless of Bruch's putative instruction that only four were ever to be performed at once. Rather than arguing these are the best works in existence for this combination, I will conclude by saying that one perhaps might find their equal, but will be hard pressed to find anything better. Parts for all three combinations (Vla, Cln & Pno / Vc, Cln & Pno / Vc, Vln & Pno) are in print and available from Simrock.

The Life & Times of Johan Wikmanson

having been a fine singer, so he must have received instruction in singing. There is also some indication that he received clavier and organ lessons from one the most prominent musicians then active in Stockholm. This leads to the inference that Wikmanson's musical talent must have been recognized while he was still a boy. In 1770, upon graduating from school, Wikmanson went to Copenhagen for approximately 18 months. There, he studied watchmaking and mathematics. Upon his return to Stockholm in 1772, he obtained a menial job with the postal service, but within two years, he was able to gain employment at the Royal Swedish Lottery. By 1790, he had risen to the fairly important rank of Accountant, a position he held until his death in 1800.

Having a non-musical job was a necessity for most musicians then living in Stockholm as it was nearly impossible to make ends meet solely from music. Wikmanson provides an excellent example of this situation. Records indicate he was an excellent cellist and an outstanding organist. In fact, for the last 19 years of his life, he served as the organist of Stockholm's principal church, the Storkyrkan, but the salary he received from this prestigious post was insufficient on which to live.

Wikmanson, though by no means among the most prominent, nonetheless, could be considered a fairly important personage among those musicians then active in Stockholm. He received a modicum of recognition during his lifetime for his contributions. He was on friendly terms with Joseph Kraus, Kapellmeister of the Royal Court and with Abbé Vogler, director of the Royal Opera. He was also a member of *Utile Dulce*, one of Stockholm's leading music organizations and a regular performer at its concerts. Beyond this, he was made a member of the Swedish Royal Academy of Music in 1788 and, in 1797, was appointed to the directorship of its instruction program. According to Wikmanson scholar Hans Eppstein, despite all of these accomplishments and the high regard in which he was held, Wikmanson was apparently regarded as an amateur, albeit of the highest caliber. In documents which make mention of him, he is regularly referred to as "Accountant Wikmanson". However, such references may well be nothing more than a reflection of the fact that the position of Accountant of the Royal Lottery held considerably more social prestige than that of a mere professional musician.

There are not a great number of Wikmanson's compositions which have survived, but this is probably nothing more than an indication that, because of his professional responsibilities at the Lottery, he had little time for composing. He wrote several vocal pieces, a few works for orchestra, including a symphony that has been lost, and some sonatas for clavier. But it is the three string quartets—the so-called Op.1—published after his death, which are regarded as his most significant works. To be sure, they are not his Op.1, but certainly among the last, if not *the* last, works he wrote.

It was Gustav Silverstolpe, Wikmanson's close friend, who published these quartets at his own expense a few months after the composer's death, and it is his name that appears as the publisher on the title page of that edition. Silverstolpe, a chamber music

enthusiast, was given access to Wikmanson's papers. Among them, he found five completed string quartets as well as a sixth, upon which the composer had been working at the time of his death. The fact that Silverstolpe only chose to have three published probably was an indication he realized the remaining two were not of the same quality as the others. This supposition was buttressed when a copy of one of the unpublished quartets, long missing, surfaced in 1976. It is clearly inferior to the published works and was probably composed many years prior to them.

The Op.1 string quartets bear a dedication to Haydn signed by Wikmanson's daughter and this has led to the speculation that Wikmanson may have known Haydn. But there is no evidence of this. Wikmanson never traveled to Austria and Haydn never journeyed to Scandinavia, nor is there any known correspondence between the two. There is no question, however, that Wikmanson was very familiar with Haydn's string quartets, judging from his own. It is thought that Wikmanson may even have had access to a copy of Haydn's latest effort, the Op.76 quartets, before they were published in 1799. This would have been highly unusual, given that Haydn's quartets were not yet widely known nor often performed in Sweden. Wikmanson's possible familiarity with Haydn's Op.76 quartets may perhaps be explained by the fact that Silverstolpe's brother was then serving as a diplomat in Vienna. Eppstein speculates that he could have obtained a pre-publication manuscript copy, perhaps directly from the composer, and had it forwarded to Wikmanson. Whatever the case, we know that Haydn was flattered by the dedication and that he did what he could, in the event unsuccessfully, to stimulate interest in Wikmanson's quartets.

For his part, Silverstolpe subsequently sold the rights to the Op.1 to Breitkopf & Härtel in the hopes that republication by this famous firm would lead to their greater circulation. Unfortunately, Breitkopf & Härtel never did publish the quartets. Hence, were it not for Silverstolpe's private edition, it is very likely that these works would have been lost to us forever since the manuscript has vanished.

So it was that for 170 years, Wikmanson's quartets remained neglected and forgotten until Bonnie Hammar and Erling Lomnäs produced a new edition which was distributed by the Swedish firm of Edition Riemers. Unfortunately, after a few years, this edition became very difficult to obtain and now, nearly 40 years later, though supposedly still in print, I have been told it is hard to find outside of Sweden. Late in 2006, Edition Silvertrust produced a new edition of the first of the three of these quartets, Op.1 No.1.

It is not known in which order the three published quartets were composed, but Hans Eppstein and other Wikmanson students seem to agree that the third, Op.1 No.3, was composed first as it is "not as fully perfected" as the other two. Silverstolpe must have felt this way as well. Given his desire to see these works played, he would have followed the time-honored tradition of placing the strongest work first to entice players to examine the others, and the weakest last.

Wikmanson's String Quartets

String Quartet in d minor, Op. No.1 is in four movements, as are the other two. This, in itself, is fairly remarkable if we consider that these works were composed sometime during the mid-late 1790's, when many composers such as Kozeluch, who were living in Vienna and who would have been conversant with what Haydn was doing, still followed the three movement Mannheim pattern established by Stamitz. The opening movement (above example) begins with a straight-forward, chromatic, dance-like theme. The development section is rather lengthy, a common Haydn trait. The unisono coda is unusual sounding and appears to be dying away when the movement is suddenly brought to an end by an abrupt and loud chord.

Adagio

The powerful *Adagio* which follows is the most striking movement of any of his quartets. Its great breadth and grandiose pathos is beyond Haydn and Mozart and only matched by the marvelous *Adagio* of Beethoven's Op.18 No.1. It begins with a grim and unrelenting unison march passage (left), and is unquestionably a funeral march. While there is no evidence that Wikmanson intended it to be played at his own funeral, the *Adagio* was in fact played at a memorial service for him at the Swedish Royal Academy of Music a few months after his death. The slow quality of the march adds solemn dignity to the music which extends to the following movements as well. The feeling of an implacable destiny, established by the powerful opening measures played *ff*, dissolves by the fifth measure, which is softly played *p*, thus creating a sense of melancholy and mourning. These two moods alternate throughout and dominate the entire movement.

Monotonous, sorrowful triplets, in the lower voices, accompany the restatement of the main theme as well as the broader and more lyrical second theme (right). There is a polyphonic development in which fragments from the main theme are repeatedly heard. In the magnificent coda, the pain and grief cannot be restrained, and the first violin is given a short but highly dramatic cadenza, an unfettered outburst of agony and sorrow, after which the movement slowly dies away.

As I noted above, the mood of the *Adagio* spills over beyond its boundaries and also affects the somewhat slow *Minuet* which follows. The main theme (left) is more subdued than normal and is permeated with a vaguely grave undertone. In the trio, the gloom is at last lifted by a pleasantly contrasting country dance. The finale resembles the first movement in mood and in the downward chromatic direction of its main theme, characterized by its use of appoggiaturas (right). Its feverish tempo and the fact there is no positive resolution in the coda, in contrast to what is often the case in Haydn, is a harbinger of the early romantic movement. The movement closes with a soft pizzicato ending in the minor.

As I noted above, the mood of the *Adagio* spills over beyond its boundaries and also affects the somewhat slow *Minuet* which follows. The main theme (left) is more subdued than normal and is permeated with a vaguely grave undertone. In the trio, the gloom is at last lifted by a pleasantly contrasting country dance. The finale resembles the first movement in mood and in the downward chromatic direction of its main theme, characterized by its use of appoggiaturas (right). Its feverish tempo and the fact there is no positive resolution in the coda, in contrast to what is often the case in Haydn, is a harbinger of the early romantic movement. The movement closes with a soft pizzicato ending in the minor.

(continued from page 7)

It must be admitted that **String Quartet in e minor, Op.1 No.2** cannot match the grandeur and scope of Op. No.1, especially because there is no movement as fine as the masterful Adagio previously described. Nonetheless, it is far better than the ordinary fare which was being served up in Scandinavia at this time. The opening movement, Allegro di molto, starts in the minor, giving off an uncertain mood. Opening with off-beat quarter notes, it gives no real indication of the tempo, which because it is in 3/4 initially sounds like a minuet (see above). It is only when this gives way to a long passage in 8th notes does the mood brighten and the actual tempo establish itself. The second subject sounds exactly like an Austrian ländler. Wikmanson clearly must have been fond of these Austrian country dances for they appear in each of the Op.1 quartets. There is also a canonic episode which Eppstein believes was the result of Wikmanson emulating the canonic minuet of Op.76 No.2, The Quinten. Whereas the First Quartet had only a few touches which sounded of Haydn, this movement will fool many a listener and bears considerable affinity with the Opp. 20, 33 and 64 quartets of Haydn. The second movement, *Un poco adagio*, is muted but not elegiac. It consists of a stately but not somber theme and a series of variations. Although the theme is only ordinary—I do not mean bad, simply not above average, just like many of Haydn’s—the variations are handled quite competently. Of particular note is a variation given to the cello (see right) which rises more than two octaves and requires a technique only a fine cellist, such as Wikmanson, would have possessed. Eppstein seems convinced that Wikmanson used the *Gott Erhalte Franz den Kaiser* variations of Op.76 No.3 as his model, but I do not necessarily agree. There is evidence to support another argument. Leaving aside the question that of whether Wikmanson had any familiarity with the Op.76—and there is no concrete evidence that he did—Haydn wrote a similar set of variations in his Op.20 No.4 Quartet. There, the cello is treated in a similar fashion, particularly in that the player must climb well into the tenor clef. The Op.20 No.4 variation stands out from all the others, just like Wikmanson’s does, because of its then uncommon and full use of the cello. By contrast, the cello variation in Op.76 No.3, while giving the cello the melody, is not particularly brilliant, does not require the cellist to leave the bass clef, and is not even really a solo. The filigree parts given to the other voices are more noticeable than the cello. By arguing that Wikmanson took Haydn’s Op.20 quartets, which by the way also have canons and fugues, as his example, I am not devaluing Wikmanson’s quartets in any way. Many would argue that Haydn never surpassed the excellence of the part-writing in Opp.20 No.2 and 4. Certainly, he never used the cello and viola with such prominence again, not even in his Op.76 quartets.

The third movement, a stately *Minuetto*, is quite simple and doesn't look like much on paper (see left), yet this simplicity, coupled with its grave quality, create a certain *je ne sais quoi*. When you hear it, (and you can on the website: www.cobbettassociation.org), you will know what I mean. Of interest is that Wikmanson confusingly calls the very lengthy coda "finale", which it is not. Rather, it is a restatement of the minuet for the third time followed by the slower more song-like trio. The real finale is marked *Prestissimo* and is the most exciting movement of the three quartets.

(left) The music takes off immediately and does not relax until the final measures which end on a calm note. Along the way, as the excitement builds, it becomes almost orchestral in nature because of the use of rapid 16th notes which sound like tremolos.



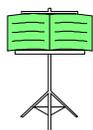
Of the three, **String Quartet in B Flat Major, Op.1 No.3** is perhaps the most Haydnesque. The opening *Allegretto* begins with a very genial theme in 6/8. The development is by way of variation. It is surprisingly long, just slightly less than half the entire length of the remaining three movements. Yet, it holds the listener's interest throughout.

The ending, however, is unaccountably weak and somewhat spoils what has come before. A *Romance* follows the *Allegretto*. The theme is unremarkable. Again, development is by way of variation, each of which is better than the unadorned theme. These variations redeem the movement, although they are not as fine as those of Op.1 No.2. Again, Wikmanson places a *Menuetto* third. It is very ordinary but sounds much like Haydn. Although done in a workman-like fashion and entirely acceptable, it is unmemorable. Haydn, too, wrote many such minuets along with some very fine ones. Here, the word okay really goes a long way in describing the music. The trio, with its running theme is somewhat better than the main section. The finale, *Scherzando poco presto*, is also of a type one comes across fairly often in Haydn's Op.33, 64, 71 and 74 quartets. Along with the opening *Allegretto*, it is the best movement of this quartet. The main theme (right) utilizes the first violin alone for a long time before the other voices are given an equal say.



I can certainly recommend all three of these quartets to amateurs, but do any of them deserve to be heard in concert? To this I would answer an emphatic "yes" to Op.1 No.1 and a "probably" to the Op.1 No.2, but Op.1 No.3, though enjoyable to play, does not leave a strong enough impression to deserve public performance.

©2006 Lars Johansson & The Cobbett Association



New Recordings



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

String Quartets

William ALWYN (1905-85) Nos.1-3, Dutton Epoch 7168 / Chick COREA (1941-) *Adventures of Hippocrates*, Koch 7598 / Ernest van der EYKEN (1913-) No.2, Phaedra 92047 / Pavel HAAS (1899-1944) No.2, Supraphon 3877 / John HARBISON (1938-) No.4, Koch 7598 / John IRELAND (1879-1962) Nos.1-2, Naxos 8.557777 / Leos JANACEK (1854-1928) No.2, Supraphon 3877 / Ivan NARANJO (1977-) *Uno*, Mode 165 / Hilda PAREDES (1957-) *Uy l'tan*, Mode 165 / Peter RE (1927-) Nos.1-3, Albany Troy 853 / Julius RÖNTGEN (1855-1932) 2 Qts in c & g, Cobra 0013 / Sergei TANEYEV (1856-1915) Nos.3, 7-8, Northern Flowers 9935 / Nos.2+5, Northern Flowers 9937 / Hebert VAZQUEZ (1963-) No.1, Mode 165

Strings Only-Not Quartets

Joseph JONGEN (1873-1953) Trio Op.135, Pavane 7502 / Louis de MEESTER (1904-87) Trio, Pavane 7502 /

George ONSLOW (1784-1853) Qnt Op.38 *The Bullet* & Op.67, MD&G 603 1390 / Qnt Op.44, CPO 777 151 / Franz Alexander PÖSSINGER (1767-1827) 3 Trio Concertante Op.10, Op.36 Nos.1-2, Capriccio 67 162 / Eugene YSAYE *Le Chimay* for Trio, Pavane 7502

Piano Trios

Theodore DUBOIS (1837-1924) Nos. 1-2, Alma 2362 / David FROOM (1951-) No.2, Capriccio 71 095 / Arthur de GREEF (1862-1940) Trio in f, Phadera 92046 / Wilhelm KEMPF (1895-1991) Trio in g, Arte Nova 342520 / Guillaume LEKEU (1870-94) Op.70, Phaedra 92046 / Fabian PANISELLO (1963-) *Trio II*, Col Legno 20209 / Peter RE (1927-) *Divertimento*, Albany Troy 853 / Georgy SVIRIDOV (1915-98) Trio in a, Classical Records 064

Piano Quartets, Quintets & Sextets

Grazyna BACEWICZ (1909-69) Qnt No.1, Dux 0530 / Franz BERWALD (1796-1860) 2 Qnts Opp.5 & 6, Explore 0003 / Marc NEIKRUG (1946-) Qnt, Koch 7598 / Julius RÖNTGEN (1855-

1932) Qnt in G, Cobra 0016 / Julius ZAREBGSKI (1854-85) Qnt Op.343, Dux 0530

Winds & Strings

Ernest van der EYKEN (1913-) Trio for Fl, Vln & Vla, Phaedra 92047 / Stefan HUMMEL (1968-) *Behind the Quietness* for Fl, Cln & Str Qt, Musicaphon 55717 / George ONSLOW (1784-1853) Nonet (Fl, Ob, Cln, Bsn, Hn & Str Qt), CPO 777 151 / Alessandro ROLLA (1757-1841) 6 Qts for Fl & Str Trio, Tactus 751805

Winds, Strings & Piano

Wilhelm KEMPF (1895-1991) Qt for Fl, Vln, Vc & Pno, Arte Nova 342520

Piano & Winds

None this Issue

Winds Only

Carl REINECKE (1824-1910) Trio for Cln, Hn & Pno, Op.271 & Sextet for Fl, Cln, Ob, Bsn & 2 Hn, Hungaroton 32777 / Julius RÖNTGEN (1855-1932) *Serenade* for Qnt, Trio for Fl, Ob & Bsn, Cobra 0016

Friedrich Kiel: The Piano Quintets

(Continued from page 3)

Beyond Kiel's extreme modesty, of which Altmann speaks, there were two other factors which resulted in Kiel's lack of fame. The first and probably most important was the fact that Kiel composed neither symphonies nor opera. While there were some large religious works for chorus and orchestra, the bulk of his oeuvre consists of sonatas and chamber music. Few, if any, composers have made much of a name for themselves this way. The other factor was that Kiel, although a firm classicist who took Beethoven and Schubert for his models, remained aloof from the battle being waged between the so-called New German School (the supporters of the progressive ideas of Liszt and Wagner) and the Classicists (the supporters of Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms). Perhaps by choice, Kiel became isolated and largely forgotten, although he certainly had prominent admirers in each camp, such as von Bulow and Brahms.

Kiel was born in Puderbach, Westphalia in 1821 and learned the rudiments of music from his school teacher father. But, for the most part, he must have been self-taught, for by the time he was 13, it was clear that he had a prodigious talent. He came to the attention of the music loving Prince Karl von Sayn-Wittgenstein who paid for Kiel to study violin with the concertmaster of his orchestra and composition from Kaspar Kummer. A few years later, Spohr became interested in him and helped him obtain a scholarship from the Prussian King Wilhelm Friedrich IV. This allowed Kiel to study in Berlin with the famous theorist and teacher of composition, Siegfried Dehn. In Berlin, Kiel slowly gained a reputation as an excellent teacher of piano and composition. In 1866, he obtained a post at the famous Stern Conservatory serving as a professor. In 1870, Joseph Joachim, director of the prestigious Hochschule für Musik offered Kiel a professorship, a position which he held until near the end of his life when he was forced to retire after a traffic accident, the injuries of which eventually led to his death in 1885. (A premature death to be sure as Kiel was amazingly fit and among his hobbies was mountaineering. In 1881 at the age of 60, Kiel scaled Monte Rosa, the second highest peak in Europe) He is remembered as one of the finest teachers of composition then teaching in Germany. Igancy Paderewski, Charles Stanford, Wilhelm Berger, Stanislaus Noskowski, Arnold Krug and Emil Sjogren are among the many who were his students.

A sizeable portion of Kiel's output is chamber music, most of it for piano and strings. When he undertook to write for a particular ensemble, he often would produce two works, one after another, for the same combination. His Op.33 and 65 piano trios, and his Op.53 string quartets, are each examples of this. The same thing occurred when he came to compose his Piano Quintets. Perhaps it was a question of having so many good ideas that one work was not big enough to accommodate them all. The first quintet, **Piano Quintet No.1 in A Major, Op.75**, dates from 1875. The first of its five movements, *Allegro moderato*, opens with a broad theme

given to the viola and cello. (example on left) It is creates a unhurried and expansive mood, despite the quiet rush of running notes in the piano, kept well in the background.

Allegro moderato ma con spirito,

As it turns out, this is a big movement which Kiel is in no hurry to conclude. In the second theme one hears faint echoes of both Mendelssohn and Brahms. The development, which builds tension and speed, is truly masterful, but Kiel keeps this tightly under control, judiciously releasing tension at critical moments by the reintroduction of the more relaxed main theme.

The second movement, marked *Allegro molto*, gets underway sounding more like an intermezzo than an allegro molto. However, this actually is quite deceptive when you examine the notes. It's almost in one rather than 3/4, the printed time signature. In fugal fashion, the viola, the cello and then the second violin enter. However, the theme is never fully stated during the fugue, and only when the first violin and piano enter do we hear it in its entirety. By then the music has morphed from a subtle and elegant intermezzo into a powerful and driving march. The middle section consists of a slower and very lovely lyrical section.

The slow movement, *Adagio con espressione*, by virtue of its coming third occupies the central position in the Quintet. Yet while the main theme, given out by the piano alone (see example on top left next page) is weighty and with much dignity, the movement is surprisingly short, barely five minutes. But in this Kiel shows his mastery as the music is so tightly formatted and well-planned that one realizes there is not an extra note, not a moment's filler, within this highly romantic and expressive music. After the piano, the



strings enter as a body. Then the first violin, and later the cello, are given the chance to develop the music by means of accompanied solos. The middle section, short by virtue of the movement's overall length, is quite chromatic. When the main theme

reappears, this time in the strings, the piano is given a difficult, but effective, running passage which must be executed with a light touch.

The next movement, *Tempo di menuetto*, is not the finale. Why, is the immediate question which comes to mind, did Kiel insert another movement before his finale. I have not come across the answer to this in my research for this article, but having listened,

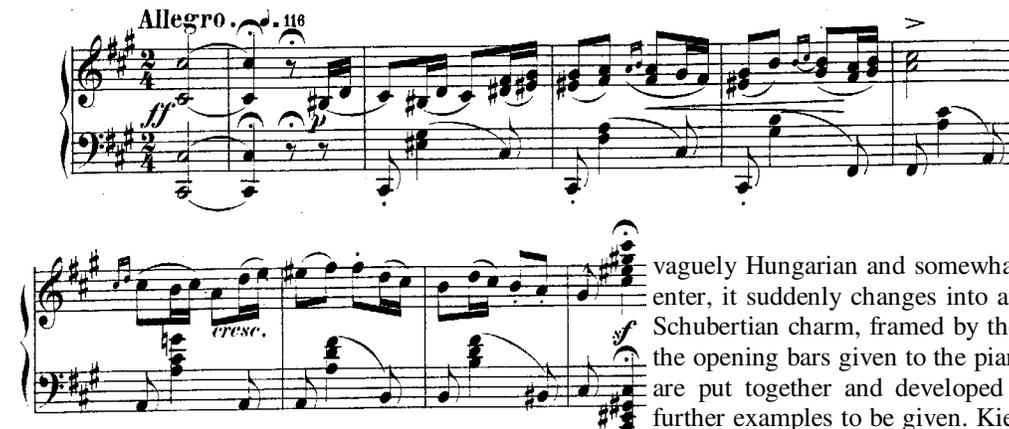
played and lived with this work for a long time, I have come to the conclusion that the answer lies in the architecture that Kiel must have had wished to create for the whole work. The short, but extremely beautiful, Adagio stands out more by being flanked by two less emotive



movements on either side than by having a very powerful movement, which both the first and last movements are, placed along side of it. Both the second movement, *Allegro di molto*, and the fourth movement, *Tempo di menuetto*, are interludes or breathing pauses between the three remaining very dynamic movements. In any event, Kiel's treatment of this movement all but obscures its classical roots. The minuet begins with the piano alone stating the theme (example on left) before the strings are allowed to enter. The theme has an indescribable quality. Neither buoyant nor happy, yet not sad or tragic, it moves along in an aura of uncertainty. There are two trios, rather than the usual one. The first is rhythmically muscular while the second is lyrical. The effect of the arpeggio piano accompaniment

in the second trio is quite stunning.

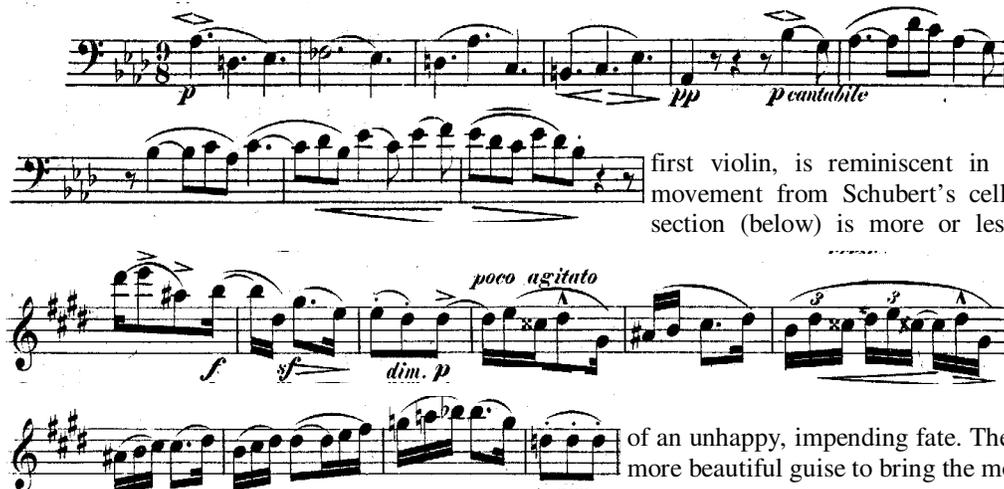
In the same vein, one could also argue Kiel wanted something less attention-grabbing between the gorgeous slow movement and the brilliant finale, *Allegro*, to better set it off. Here, Kiel's classicism is on display. The main theme (on left) is first stated by the piano, sounding vaguely Hungarian and somewhat imposing. But as soon as the strings enter, it suddenly changes into an ebullient and joyous melody, full of Schubertian charm, framed by the masterly use of pizzicato. Outside of the opening bars given to the piano, which I have presented, the themes are put together and developed in such a way that space allows no further examples to be given. Kiel's method of construction can best be likened to an old married couple that complete each other's sentences.



First, one instrument begins a phrase, then another utters a few more notes to move it along, then a third, a fourth and so on until, at last, the whole picture is painted. But one does not become aware of this simply by listening to the music. The brilliant coda is one of the most exciting in the literature, a true *tour d'force*, and a fitting conclusion for this outstanding work. It is certainly well worth listening to the sound-bites on our website. Long unavailable, the parts to Op.75, along with those to the Op.76 piano quintet, were reprinted by Edition Silvertrust in 2006. Photocopies are also available from Merton Music.

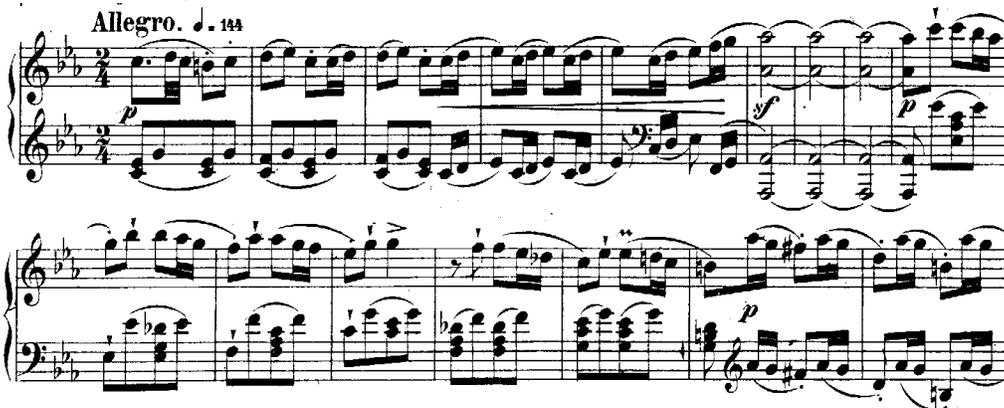
(Continued from page 11)

Piano Quintet No.2 in c minor, Op.76 was also published in 1874, and it is more than likely that Kiel began work on it immediately after finishing Op.75. Kiel was a keen student and admirer of Beethoven and the c minor key he chose for this work cannot be dismissed as insignificant in light of how much meaning it had for Beethoven. The massive first movement, *Allegro maestoso*, begins on a diffident note with a slow introduction which gives way to an episode of stressful conflict but even this only leads to the return of the introduction. The working out of this conflict goes on at great length before we get a proper statement of the main theme. (right) The second subject is more hopeful and at times gives the promise of overpowering the first theme as the movement lumbers along, but in the end the lugubrious theme takes over and leads to a stormy conclusion.



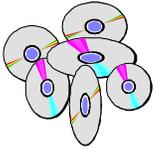
The lyrical second movement, *Arioso, larghetto con moto*, is uncomplicated but very beautiful. Its long-lined main theme (left), developed mainly by the cello and first violin, is reminiscent in mood and style of the lovely slow movement from Schubert's cello quintet, D.956. The darker middle section (below) is more or less the same tempo, but the heavenly innocence of what has come before is shrouded in a mist of uneasiness, much the way brief clouds float over the lovely melodies in Schubert's quintet. This does not last long, but it serves as a reminder of the possibility of an unhappy, impending fate. Then the main theme reappears in an even more beautiful guise to bring the movement to a calm and perfect ending.

It is hard to see why Kiel chose to call the third movement, *Intermezzo*, when quite clearly it is a scherzo and its tempo marking of *Presto assai* says it all. The elfin-like main theme (right), stated by the first violin, finds its roots in Mendelssohn, and perhaps Kiel was thinking of him when he gave it the title. The music moves along at a fast clip throughout, even in the more lyrical middle section where the melody in the lower voices creates a darker mood.



Rather than proceeding directly to the finale, Kiel inserts a slow and somewhat lengthy *Introduzione*, the purpose of which is to build tension, before the spacious concluding *Rondo*. Its whirling opening theme (left) leads to an even more exciting fugal section which is then followed up by a lovely second theme of Schubertian beauty. Kiel tricks us with several thrilling and effective faux endings before the real thing tops off this superb work. In sum, both of these quintets are as fine as

Diskology: Hear Sound-bites to These CD Reviews On Our Website—www.cobbettassociation.org



Reinhold Gliere: A Sextet & An Octet for Strings

Franz Anton Hoffmeister: Five Quintets for Winds & Strings



Reinhold Gliere (1875-1956) The reputation of Reinhold Gliere today rests primarily upon his symphonies, ballets and operas, however, he was also a composer of superb chamber music. Gliere's family were master woodwind makers who had emigrated from Belgium to Kiev where he was born and where he began his first musical studies with the famous violin teacher Otakar Sevcik. He then went to the

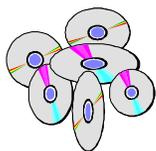
Moscow Conservatory where he studied both violin and composition, the latter with Sergei Taneyev, Anton Arensky and Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov. His superb compositional technique was quickly recognized by his teachers and he won several prizes for his early works, including his First String Sextet which took the prestigious Glinka Prize from a jury consisting of Rimsky-Korsakov, Glazunov and Liadov. Gliere himself taught at the Moscow and Kiev conservatories for nearly 40 years. Among his many successful students were Khachaturian, Prokofiev and Miskovsky. Gliere dedicated his **Third String Sextet, Op.11 in C Major**, composed in 1905, to the memory of Mitrofan Beleviev, the wealthy amateur violist who founded a publishing house just to publish the works of Russian composers and who died in 1904. The joyful themes of the opening *Allegro* are inspired by Russian folk melody and are reminiscent of the tonal coloring of Borodin. The lyrical, elegiac and emotionally charged second movement, *Larghetto*, is a real showcase of Gliere's mastery. Here the singing quality of the strings approaches that of the human voice. The third movement, *Allegro*, is a very Russian scherzo with song-like melodies alternating with dance episodes, which become faster each time they reappear. The superb finale, *Allegro vivace*, begins in a festive fashion. It is here in particular that the brilliance and richness of the tone Gliere elicits approaches the orchestral in its intensity. This work was recognized immediately as a masterpiece of its kind and can stand alongside of Brahms' sextets without fear of comparison. It has recently been republished by Edition Silvertrust. The second work on disk is his **Octet in D Major, Op.5** dating from 1900. Again, this was a work which met with immediate success and ever since its premiere has been recognized as being among the very best octets ever written. It was dedicated to Jan Hrimaly, his violin teacher at the Conservatory. It opens with a full-blooded *Allegro moderato*. Both the energetic and optimistic main theme and the calm but very melodious second theme are unmistakably Russian. The second movement, also an *Allegro*, is an elegant intermezzo with a soulful Russian melody as the middle section. The slow movement, *Andante*, comes third and features a very melodious subject which is first presented in a soft and calm fashion. During the rest of the entire movement, Gliere slowly builds tension along with the dynamic level, reaching a powerful climax just before the movement's close. The finale, another *Allegro*, sports two tonally rich main themes, each distinguished by a very colorful sound palette. The writing verges on the orchestral at many points, perhaps most notably in the powerful conclusion. There are two very fine works of chamber music to be found on this highly recommended **MD&G CD #308-1196**.

Franz Anton Hoffmeister (1754-1812) today is chiefly remembered because of his close friendship with Mozart. But Hoffmeister was, in his time, a well-known and respected composer and an important music publisher. (One of the firms he founded has survived and is known to us today as Edition Peters.) While Mozart lived, Hoffmeister was his main publisher. Hoffmeister wrote in virtually every genre and appears to have been especially fond of chamber music, having written more than 200 chamber works. I have had the opportunity to play and to hear several of his works and I am always been impressed with their quality. I have never really come across anything of his that was bad and many works were absolutely first rate. It's really surprising that more of his works have not found their way back into print.

On **Tudor CD 7124** we are presented with five very engaging quintets for winds and strings. They are without opus number and, at least from the jacket notes, there is no indication as to when they were composed. However from their style, I would guess sometime between the late 1780's and 1800. This based on the fact that these works are not, for the most part, written in



the concertante or gallant style and are the equal of the best writing of Mozart and Haydn. Apparently from a set of six, Hoffmeister styled these **Quintets Nottornos**. The classical era designations of such terms as Cassation, Divertimento, Serenade and Nottorno were not exact or absolute by any means but more an indication for what the composer thought the music might be suitable. In this case, Hoffmeister most likely used the term to suggest that the quintets would be well-suited for evening performance. Certainly they deserve to be concert pieces rather than background music at some fête or dinner party. The instrumentation of the works is very striking and unusual. Three Quintets are for Oboe, Violin, 2 Violas and bassoon. The remaining two are for Oboe, Horn, 2 Violas and Bassoon. Space does not allow me to discuss each work individually, however, several generalizations apply to all of these very charming works. First off, it can be seen that the basic unit from which Hoffmeister built the quintets was a quartet consisting of an Oboe, 2 Violas and a Bassoon. In 3 quintets, a violin is used to make the fifth and in the remaining two a horn. The works with violin adhere to a three movement format: fast—slow—fast. The two quintets with horn use a five movement format with a minuet inserted both before and after the slow movement. Despite the extra movements, these quintets are no longer that the others. Rather, the movements, and in particular the minuets, are much shorter than the three movement quintets. Hoffmeister tends to use the Oboe, Violin and Bassoon for thematic development whilst the violas and the horn provide the harmonic and rhythmic underpinning. The accomplished melodic writing is very representative of the Vienna Classical Period and the works hold the listener's attention. Certainly, this is not your everyday combination, but one which is well worth hearing. A recommended CD.



William Grant Still (1895-1978) was one of the most important African-American composers of the 20th century. Although classical music was his first love, he also wrote for radio and television. Still's orchestral works have been widely performed, at least in the United States, but his chamber music is not well-known. He was sent to college by his mother to study medicine but in the end studied composition with Edgar Varese at Oberlin and later with George Chadwick at the New England Conservatory. **Koch CD 3.7546** presents all of his works for string quartet. The first work on disk is his **Lyric Quartet** which dates from 1960. It was never published and there is some conjecture that Still had doubts about the quality of this three movement work. For one thing, he gave it two very different subtitles—*Three Friends* and *Impressions*. The movements were titled *The Sentimental One*, *The Quiet One* and *The Jovial One* or alternatively *On a Plantation (moderately)*, *In the of Mountains Peru (moderately slow)* and *In a Pioneer Settlement (moderately fast)*. Strangely enough, despite the fact that Still may have had some sort of program in mind for this music, it does not sound like program music. The first movement has a gentle theme for its main subject. For the most part, it is American sounding, occasionally seasoned with vague hints of French impressionism. It is highly romantic throughout. The second movement sounds rather like a continuation of the first, with the themes and tempo being almost identical. This creates a little monotony. The bright finale is much more energetic and angular. There is a very interesting middle section that the jacket notes call a “jazzy romp” but which to my ears sounds like more like a Klezmer interlude. There is no question that this is the most striking of the movements. The second work is his **Danzas de Panama**. In my opinion, this four movement work is the best on this disk, and for what it is, a little masterpiece. Dating from 1948, the Danzas are based on a collection of Panamanian folk tunes which were collected by Elizabeth Waldo in the 1920's. Although there are putatively only four dances presented, each movement has at least two and sometimes three separate dances within it. The opening movement *Tamborito* immediately captures the listener's attention with the instrumentalists percussively striking the sides of their instruments, creating the rhythm for this highly chromatic introduction which immediately leads to to a sadder and slower dance that is also quite chromatic. For the rest of the movement, Still ingeniously juxtaposes these two dances, one after the other seamlessly. When the faster dance returns, it is in two sections, the first fast and up-beat the second more melancholy and sounding like a close relative of the tango. The movement ends surprisingly on a soft glissando. Next comes *Mejorana* which sounds like a carefree Panamanian waltz. The forceful middle section is a somewhat ominous dance in two. The slowish third movement, *Punto*, has a gentle and very familiar Mexican sound to it. It is the kind of thing one hears in the movies when Mexican cowboys return to their hacienda at the end of a day's work. The middle section in 6/8 is in the minor and more robust. The last movement, *Cumbia y Congo* begins again with a percussive hand-pounding to a high-spirited and fast dance. At first it sounds purely African but very quickly a heavy dose of Latin melody is added to the mix. The coda is brilliant and excit-

William Grant Still: Works for String Quartet

Theodor Kirchner: Bunte Blätter, 12 Miniatures for Piano Trio

ing. Any one of these four short movements—the longest is just under four minutes—could serve as a very effective encore. Together, they form an impressive *tour de force*. The parts have been intermittently available from Southern Music Publishers. Next follows the **Prince and the Mermaid Suite**. Dating from 1965, the Suite originally was written for piano and then adapted for quartet and used in Carol Stone's play of the same name. In four movements, the first, entitled *Song of the Sea*, is moderately slow, melancholy and dreamy. The second movement, *Waltz*, sounds like a gentler version of the kind of dances that Copland wrote in *Rodeo*. This is followed by a short *Minuet*, which begins rather discordantly and hardly sounds like that dance. The brighter main section, though a dance, is not really a minuet. The last movement, *Scherzo*, is also a misnomer, although lively and energetic. These are four engaging short movements and though entirely tonal, do not, in my opinion, sound anything like program music. The next work, **Summerland**, composed in 1936 was part of a three movement work for piano but subsequently was arranged for several other combinations by Still. Hard to categorize, it is undoubtedly in the American romantic tradition and very lyrical. In 1968, Still wrote five works for string quartet each consisting of two movements that he called **Little Folk Suites**. The suites utilized folk melodies from around the world. Four movements of the ten are presented here. The first, *Los Indios*, is based on material from Brazil and Peru. It is slow and meandering and does not sound like anything from those countries. The very effective second selection, *Wade in the Water*, is a lively American Negro Spiritual. The title refers to the parting of the Red Sea. The next selection is entitled *Salangadau* and is said to have been based on Creole folk material. It is a slow, sad dance with a Latin flavor. The short and bright last selection, *Tant sirop est Doux*, is based on folk material from Martinique. These suites are very attractive. A recommended CD.



Theodor Kirchner (1823-1903), who studied with Mendelssohn at the Leipzig Conservatory and who knew Schumann, was primarily known as a pianist and teacher during his lifetime. Though most of his 1,000 plus works are for piano, he did write a small amount of very appealing chamber music, primarily for for piano trio, much of which is presented on **Antes CD 07985**. The first work on disk **Bunte Blätter** (colored leaves or pages)

Op.83, is the result of a trip to Northern Italy he made with Brahms and the publisher Simrock. There are 12 miniatures, each with a different mood and feel and each perfect in its own way. In short, these are free form character pieces a genre in which Kirchner was widely considered an undisputed master. One hears echoes of Schumann, Mendelssohn, and Brahms, but, unlike them, Kirchner rarely developed or elaborated his material, and it is this briefness which captivates the listener. The *Bunte Blätter* became an instant bestseller upon publication, often performed by professionals and amateurs alike. They are in print from Amadeus and would make a very effective program choice for any piano trio group. Also on disk is Kirchner's leisurely **Serenade in E Major**. This short, very lovely one movement work without

Kirchner: Serenade, 2 Terzette, 6 Canonic Pieces *et. al* for Piano Trio

Max von Schillings: A String Quartet & String Quintet

opus number was composed in 1879. It is a gorgeous work, perfect as an encore. It was reprinted by Wollenweber. The slow, highly lyrical and extremely romantic **Ein Gedenkblatt Op.15** (a memorial page) dates from 1874. The critical review it received upon publication read: “*One will certainly not set down the lovely Trio-Serenade until one has immediately played it twice.*” Again we have another unquestionable little gem. While most of the preceding movements are little more than two minutes, the two movements that form his **Zwei Terzette Op.97** together last over nine minutes. The first movement is a broad and flowing andante, while the faster second movement is more in the nature of a playful scherzo. One is reminded of Schubert’s *Moments Musicaux*. The parts are available from Amadeus. The slow, one movement **Kleines Trio**, dating from 1891, is an effective arrangement of an earlier piano work. The last work on disk, the 1888 **Sechs Stücke in kanonischer Form**, is an arrangement of Robert Schumann’s 1845 *Studies for the Pedal Piano in Canonic Form*. Schumann composed these for the pedal piano, an instrument which he apparently believed had a bright future, but which was already out of vogue by the time he composed his studies. So here we have a work which would have disappeared but for Kirchner who wrote two arrangements of it, one for piano trio the other for piano solo. Before dismissing this work as a mere arrangement, one ought to consider that Kirchner was regarded by music publishers, as well as nearly everyone else, as the best arranger there was. For example, Brahms entrusted Kirchner to make the arrangement of his string sextets for piano trio so that they might reach a greater audience. (For a number of years, the arrangements widely outsold the originals.) While all six pieces are strictly written in canonic form, one would not be aware of this but for the title because Schumann’s technical mastery hides this fact. Despite this, there is much that is pure Kirchner embedded in this excellent piece. Listen to sound-bites. To be sure, this is a wonderful CD.

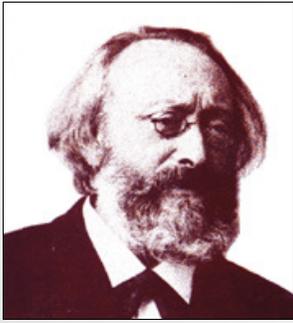


There is one word which can sum up **Max von Schillings** (1868-1933) both musically and politically: Wagnerite. At the age of 14, he was taken to a performance of *Parsifal*. Years later he was to write, “*I was overwhelmed by the dimensions of this work...of its mysteries and lonely grandeur...reverence for its creator was instilled deep within my young soul! No wonder this experience had to guide the whole development of my view of art.*” He took as his motto,

“*What Wagner does, is well done,*” and took as his goal to be a second, and if possible, better Wagner. Schillings (he was allowed to put “von” before his surname after being awarded the *Ehrenkreuz* in 1912), despite being an avowed opponent of the Weimar Republic and an outspoken anti-semitic, should not entirely be written off. But this can only be done if the man’s music is separated from his political opinions. Even today, he is widely viewed, along with Richard Strauss and Engelbert Humperdinck, as playing an important role in the renaissance of German opera during the early 20th century. Schillings studied violin, piano and

theory as well as jurisprudence, philosophy, literature and art history. His opera *Mona Lisa* (1915) was internationally successful and was even performed in New York at the Metropolitan Opera. He also made a name for himself as a teacher and conductor, holding several important posts including that of director of one of Berlin’s leading opera companies. He championed the works of such composers as Pfitzner, Schreker, Busoni and Richard Strauss. Wilhelm Furtwängler numbers among his students. Schillings wrote only two chamber works, both recorded on **CPO CD# 999 608**. The **String Quartet in e minor** is a big work originally composed in 1887, but only published after being reworked in 1906. The lengthy, diffuse opening movement, *Sehr getragen*, begins with a short, slow introduction in a diffident vein. The restless main theme sounds like something from Hugo Wolf’s *Italian Serenade*. One also can also hear strains of Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*. The music, with its constant striving, turmoil and many exciting dramatic climaxes, always sounds like it is going somewhere but, *a la* Bruckner, takes a very long time to arrive. The second movement, *Ruhig fließend*, begins peacefully and is not without suspense, but it would have benefited by several judicious cuts. *Rasch und heiter*, a scherzo, is the only movement that is of normal length. The energetic thematic material sounds rather like a cross between Richard Strauss and Hugo Wolf. However, it is the enchanted and mysterious trio, with its excellent and effective use of pizzicato, that makes the greatest impression. The very powerful, dramatic and engaging finale, *Bewegt und mit Leidenschaft*, has many fine qualities but it, too, perhaps is overly long. At first hearing, I was not convinced this quartet could be called worth-while, but subsequent hearings have led me to conclude it is a good, though certainly not a great, work. While it is not imitative of any of the other composers mentioned, its eclecticism robs it of an original sound. The **String Quintet (2 Violas) in E Flat Major, Op.32**, composed in 1917, was Schillings’ last major work. The first movement, *Mäßig bewegt*, while briefly sounding of Wagner, is, from a tonal standpoint, a considerable advance over the quartet. Schillings, though by no means a proponent of atonal music, clearly was well aware of the advances being made by those still choosing to write tonal music. As a result, while the heroic main theme clearly shows the influence of Wagner, the music itself is no longer of that period and bears all the hallmarks of those pushing tonality to its limits. The same can be said of the highly charged and romantic second movement, *Sehr getragen*. It is the longest of the four movements and serves as the center of gravity for the quintet. Slow, and occasionally with a vague aura of *Tristan*, the music is melancholy and introspective. An appealing, vigorous scherzo, *Schnell un lebendig*, is, on the whole, upbeat and tonally more conservative than the preceding two movements. One even hears some of the traits of the French impressionists. The gentler trio section has an undercurrent of resignation. The finale, *Kräftig bewegt und fest*, begins by flaunting a series of strident chords. It proceeds fitfully, with each section seemingly unrelated. Of the four movements, I found this the least successful, with much thrashing about that did not seem particularly necessary. But by all means, listen to the CD and decide for yourself. The quintet should not be dismissed out of hand but, on the whole, I did not find it as convincing as the string quartet.

FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE



Max Bruch



Friedrich Kiel



Johan Wikmanson



Max v Schillings



Theodor Kirchner



Reinhold Gliere



F.A. Hoffmeister



William Grant Still

ON SLOW, SPOHR, STENHAMMAR, FUCHS, KIEL



HERZOGENBERG, GLIERE, TANEYEV, REINECKE

WRANITZKY, RIES, GOVY, REICHA, TURINA, TOCH, PFITZNER, ROTA

KROMMER, LACHNER, GRANADOS, VAN BREE, GRETCHANINOV