

THE
CHAMBER MUSIC
JOURNAL

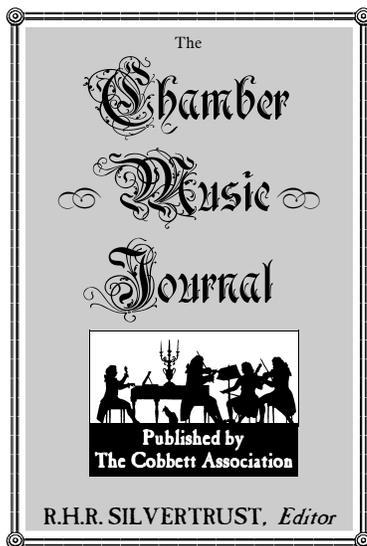
*The Essential Guide
For Players & Listeners
To The Wider World
of Chamber Music*

Anton Arensky: The Piano Trios
Alberto Nepomuceno's
String Quartets
Francis Poulenc
Works for Winds & Piano

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The Sounding Board-Letters to the Editor



Music Workshop Encourages Cobbett Music

I have to comment on your observation which appeared in *At the Doublebar* (Vol.XVII No.4, Winter 2006) regarding the difficulty some amateurs experience in getting a group to play lesser known works. I am a regular participant in the Chamber Music Workshop put on by New Jersey Symphony Orchestra Members in Maplewood, NJ. It is headed by Joseph Gluck, a professional violinist. I am pleased to report that Mr. Gluck programs works, which would surely appeal to Cobbett Members. Recently programmed were works by Onslow, Boccherini, Jadin, Fuchs, Stanford, Villa-Lobos, Glazunov and Reicha. Derek Maishan
Mt. Tabor, NJ

Thank you for this information. It is always heartening to hear of workshops which take a more open-minded approach to the literature.

The Excellence of Belaiev Editions

The last issue of *The Journal* has a splendid article on Gliere and two of his works—the String Sextet No.3, Op.11 and the String Octet, Op.5. I have the original edition of one of these works as well as works of the composers whose music was published by Belaiev (Ed.—also Beleiev, Belaieff, Beleieff *et. al.*) The works I have are Gliere's String Sextet No.1, Op.1 (1902), Ewald's String Quartet No.1 (1884), Gretchaninov's String Quartet No.1, Op.2 (1884), Glazunov's Quartet Slav Op.26 (1890) & Suite for Quartet, Op.35 (1892) and Sergei Taneiev's String Quartet No.2, Op.5 (1896). These are printed on 13½ x 11 inch paper, which is often referred to as the finest ever musical printing.

Leonard Levin
Tacoma, Washington

That is quite a nice collection. As a music publisher, I have to agree with you. The quality of the Belaiev editions is absolutely first rate. In fact, I have used them to reprint and reissue some of the above works to which you have referred. The motto "Seldom equaled, never bettered" certainly could be applied to his superb editions.

Disagrees with Wilhelm Altmann About Raff Piano Trios

I very much enjoyed the article by Larius Ussi on Joachim Raff's piano trios but was shocked to read Wilhelm Altmann's opinion of them in *Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey*. He dismisses them as the least attractive of Raff's works for piano and strings. This assessment seems to me to be very wide of the mark. I have played them for years and consider them in the front rank of such works.
Wilhelm Klinghofer
Frankfurt, Germany

Larius Ussi Replies: Well, as you know from my article, I agree with you. You may be interested to know that Altmann, years later, wrote rather more positively about Raff's piano trios in his Handbuch für Klaviertriospieler. (Handbook for Piano Trio Players)

Was Brahms Accused?

Poor Brahms; not only is he blamed for somehow limiting the success of Heinrich von Herzogenberg's music, now the onus for Friedrich Kiel's muted career is-also laid on him. How nice it would be if people checked their facts before saying things! The summer of 1883, when he lived in Wiesbaden, Brahms made it a point to see Kiel every day and promoted performances of his violin music. The touchy one was not Brahms, but Joachim, who was preternaturally jealous, to say the least.

Styra Avins
Asbury, New Jersey

*Armin Hochbauer has already responded to you regarding his article on Herzogenberg. (Vol.XVII No.3) As for Wilhelm Altmann or myself somehow impugning or blaming Brahms for Kiel's muted career, I believe what I wrote in my article (Vol.XVII No.4) best responds to your concerns: "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 (Joachim) did not was probably from 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." Neither Altmann nor I claimed that Brahms was responsible for what you style Kiel's "muted career", but that Joachim was. To state that Joachim probably feared how Brahms might react to his championing Kiel is only to ascribe to Joachim the motive for why he did not promote Kiel's music. It is a statement as to Joachim's state of mind, not Brahms'. More importantly, vis a vis your concerns, the article does not blame Brahms for anything and certainly does not suggest in any way that Brahms, unlike Joachim, was responsible for failing Kiel.*

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.

Anton Arensky: The Piano Trios

by Larius J. Ussi



Though relatively well-known inside of Russia, both at the time he was alive and thereafter, Anton Arensky's music has never achieved the fame it deserves abroad. In fact, today, his chamber music is virtually unknown to audiences outside of Russia.

surprisingly, Arensky's early music was heavily influenced by his teacher.

However, later, when he went to teach at the Moscow Conservatory (1888-1895) and came to know Tchaikovsky and Sergei Taneyev, he altered his ideas. Some critics have argued that Arensky's chamber music only shows the influence of Tchaikovsky and not of Korsakov. They point out that Arensky's works show none of the mechanical uniformity one finds in the music of most of Korsakov's students, such as Sokolov, Kopylov, and Blumenthal, and even occasionally, in the music of Glazunov and Borodin. But others reject this position and see in Arensky's chamber music a combination of all that was best in both Rimsky-Korsakov and Tchaikovsky. Certainly in form, his music bears a closer affinity to Tchaikovsky, but he also exhibits a lyricism which is more typical of music of the Petersburg composers and the Russian National School than that of Tchaikovsky and his followers.

Arensky (1861-1906) was born in Novgorod but his family moved to St. Petersburg while he was still relatively young. His first piano lessons were from his mother. He entered the Petersburg Conservatory in 1879 and three years later graduated with high honors. Among his principal teachers was Rimsky-Korsakov, probably the most influential teacher of his time and the most important member of the so-called "Mighty Five," a group of composers who believed it was the duty of Russian composers to create a body of Russian music, free from internationalist influences. As such, they opposed the "international" sounding music of Tchaikovsky. Not

(Continued on page 4)

Alberto Nepomuceno's String Quartets

by R.H.R. Silvertrust



I would not have been in a position to write this article had I not flown to Rio de Janeiro in the Spring of 1980. But it all started sometime before that in 1975 when I purchased an LP (Odyssey 32 16 0176) to find out what Villa Lobos' String Quartet No.17 sounded like. On the flip side was a string quartet by a composer I had never heard of, Alberto Nepomuceno (1864-1920). As it turned out, the Villa Lobos did not, at the time, appeal to me, but I found Nepomuceno's String Quartet No.3, subtitled *Brasileiro*, quite striking. After hearing it, the first thoughts I had were: I would like to play this and how can I get the music. From

reading the rather scanty jacket cover notes, I learned that Quartet No.3, as well as Nos.2 and 4, were not discovered until 1956. The manuscripts were found by Sergio Alvim Nepomuceno Correa, Nepomuceno's grandson. They had been deposited in the Biblioteca da Escola Nacional de Musica (the library of the National School of Music) in Rio de Janeiro. I tried hard to learn more about Nepomuceno, but in those pre-internet days, this was immeasurably harder than it is today. *Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey* did not know him, nor did my 1944 Groves 3rd edition with supplement. (He makes his first appearance in the 1980 *New Grove* which was then unavailable.) Nor did any of the other standard reference books have anything to say. I called the Brazilian Consulate and asked for help but received none. I can no longer remember how, as it is over 30 years ago, but I did eventually learn that the performers of the recording had played off of hand-written copies of the manuscript. I also learned that a cellist at the University of Missouri purportedly had copies of the manuscript to Quartet No.3. So I wrote to him, but heard nothing back. Finally, I gave up and concluded it was unlikely I would ever get the music or a chance to play it. Then, a few years after this, my wife got a desk job working for Varig Brazilian Airlines in Chicago. I asked a Brazilian colleague of hers to write a letter in Portuguese for me, addressed to the performers of the recording. They were said to teach at the Escola Nacional de Musica. They did not write back.

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Francis Poulenc Works for Winds & Piano

by Rene Sartine



Francis Poulenc (1899-1963) first made his name as a member of the early 20th century French group known as *Les Six*. These young composers were out to shock the bourgeoisie. Although they initially succeeded in shocking, surprisingly, they were

accepted as mainstream composers within a decade of their formation.

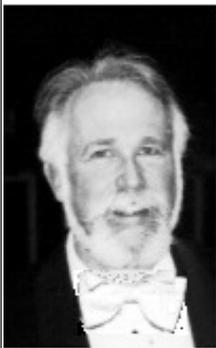
Poulenc, who was born in Paris, began to study piano as a child, receiving his first music lessons from his mother, who was an accomplished amateur pianist. Poulenc related how during these early years he became quite fond of Schubert's vocal works and Stravinsky's instrumental music, but it was only upon hearing Chabrier's *Dix Pièces pittoresques* for piano that he knew he wanted to become a com-

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At The Doublebar



Recently, a long-running, major chamber music series, here in the Chicago area, decided to throw in the towel. It was disheartening that no effort was made to keep the series going by seeking new management. I received several telephone calls from angry

professional ensembles around the country asking me what had happened and what could be done to either save it or start a new one in its place. Disturbing as this was, there are other chamber music venues in the Chicago area. However, I did call several regular subscribers to get their opinions and ideas. Two very different pictures emerged from my interviews. One distinct group, the larger of the two, was opposed to hearing "new" music or even older music if it were unknown to them. The other group expressed the opposite opinion: "I don't want to hear Op.18 or Dvorak's *American* anymore". This result should not entirely come as a surprise. Anyone who has gone to a chamber music concert recently knows that much of the audience is, "a few months away from either the nursing home or the grave" as my teen-aged violinist daughter sarcastically put it some years ago. Yes, chamber music audiences are older audiences and tend not to be very adventurous. But, like it or not, our audiences are dying off and younger people, whom I regularly talk to about these things, tell me they want to hear something different at concerts. And even more heartening, many young performing groups are searching for something different to put on their programs. This is where we can help. We must expose our younger players to more than just the 10 or 12 big box office names of today. No one denies the importance of the "greats", but the Brahms Quartets, for example, have been recorded dozens of times. How many more do we need? By contrast, how many times have Gernsheim's 5 wonderful quartets been recorded? So, be sure to approach the professional groups you know with worthwhile works for recording, and play some of the fine, lesser known works with younger players when you can. In so doing, we can make a difference to the future of chamber music.—Ray Silvertrust, Editor

Anton Arensky's Piano Trios

Arensky wrote two piano trios, but only the first, Op.32, published in 1894, ever achieved any popularity. A second trio, Op.73, written a year before his death in 1905, has all but vanished.

Piano Trio No. 1 in d minor, Op.32 was dedicated to the memory of the legendary Russian cellist, Karl Davidoff, director of the Petersburg conservatory during Arensky's time there as a student. Later the two became friends. The trio is in four movements and of substantial, though not mammoth, size.

The opening, *Allegro moderato*, is a big movement and perhaps the center of gravity for this work. It is built around three themes and opens with a very dramatic subject, clearly influenced by Tchaikovsky, featuring triplets in the piano to a singing melody in the violin, which immediately captivates the listener. It appears throughout the movement including in the coda at the end when it is played *adagio* as a valedictory.

The second subject, presented first by the cello, has the quiet, yet effective elegance of a simple song and a mood of hope.

The development section comes after the introduction of the third

subject and uses the first two themes. It is masterfully done and the reappearance of each theme always comes as an unexpected but pleasant surprise.

The third subject is somewhat faster, but only, as the composer indicates—*piu mosso*. What it has, that the other two themes lack, is a deliberate quality which conveys a sense of forcefulness. It makes the best impression played in a rubato fashion.

Third Theme
First Movement
Arensky Piano Trio No.1

The heavily accented piano part is meant to drag slightly whilst the running 16th notes in the strings serves as a release of tension

In the second movement, *Scherzo-Allegro molto*, the strings are given a sparse, though telling, theme which is played against a rather florid and running part approaching virtuoso proportions in the piano.

Scherzo
Second Movement
Arensky Piano Trio No.1

The violin is called upon to execute a ricochet bowing, which creates a percussive effect. However because it is not in the violin's lower registers, it lacks any real weight. Hence, it creates a playful "toy soldier" effect rather than any real martial quality. The piano is given quick scale passages which provide an excellent contrast whilst the pizzicati of the strings complete the picture adding a touch of elegance.

The contrasting trio features a superb waltz, slavonic in nature, and one of many which this composer wrote. It became known as a typical example of "The Arensky Waltz."

The cello is allowed the opening phrases before the violin joins in. Here, the piano is kept in the background and provides the underpinning of the final two beats of each measure.

Elegia
Adagio

It is in the third movement, *Elegia-Adagio*, that Arensky reaches the heights of lyricism. The lovely sad opening melody is passed from the muted cello, to the muted violin and then to the piano and back again. It is a personal and intimate dialogue between the instruments, evocative of the composer's friendship with Davidoff.

The explosive and dramatic finale, *Allegro non troppo*, makes brilliant use of themes from the preceding *Elegia* as well as those of the first movement. The rhythms here are the most decisive and help to build the dramatic climax which is reached toward the end of the movement. This climax is interrupted by the main theme of the first movement and the *Elegia*—sad memories from the past—each played adagio. Not wishing to end the work on a somber note, Arensky returns to the faster and more

energetic main theme of the fourth movement, ending in a triumphant mood. There is no denying this is a very great piano trio which ought to be heard in concert far more often than it is. Parts are available from many different publishers.

Piano Trio No.2 in f minor, Op.73 was composed in 1905, the year before Arensky died. Even within Russia, it has remained virtually unknown. Many critics seem highly puzzled by this fact. But since it is virtually never performed, it is unlikely that they have actually heard the music

and have only looked at the cold, dead page on their desks. Certainly, either playing or hearing the trio would probably put an end to their puzzlement. The melodies are not as attractive and the thematic material is not as rich or varied as those of the first trio. No better example can be given than the first movement which is the longest and the weakest by far. The main theme to the massive *Allegro moderato* (above right) is dark and brooding but not particularly tuneful. Here, the influence of Tchaikovsky makes itself felt in the constant repetition of the theme, almost *ad nauseum*. And like Tchaikovsky's own piano trio, this movement is far too long for the quality of the thematic material. Worse yet, Arensky repeats the pickup and first measure of the trio dozens upon dozens of times—this is no exaggeration. It becomes extremely annoying. The second movement is a *Romance*. After a short introduction in the strings, the piano proceeds alone, playing what sounds rather like a Chopin nocturne. When the strings are finally brought into the mix, the writing becomes very beautiful. However, there is no real dramatic climax, no tension, just a gentle, warm breeze against the face, which brings the bouquet of perfumed flowers on its breath. The third movement, *Scherzo, presto*, is quite fine. Against the spiccato in the violin and the guitar-like strumming pizzicato in the cello, the piano is given rippling arpeggio passages,

Allegro moderato

which, it must be pointed out, are none too easy. There is a marked similarity between this scherzo and that of the first trio, although the material, tonally, sounds a little more modern. In style, it is closer to Korsakov than Tchaikovsky. The theme of the trio section, (on left) is first given out by

the cello. Like the trio to the scherzo of Op.32, it is gorgeously lyrical, but perhaps near the borderline of excess. The finale is a *Tema con variazioni*. It is rare indeed that this form ever provides a truly successful finale. Even Beethoven has failed trying it. The theme (on right) is not particularly inspired. Six variations follow, and while they are competently handled, there is nothing very unusual about them. Then at the very end, we hear the first few notes of the oft repeated opening theme yet again. Once more, they are repeated several times as if to engrave them upon the memory. Though better than the first movement, the finale is not particularly distinguished. Although two middle movements are good, especially the *Scherzo*, it is not enough to suggest that this work ought to be heard in concert. And as for amateurs, it may well be beyond the range of all but the very best of amateur pianists. The parts are available from Wollenweber.

Francis Poulenc: Works for Piano & Winds

poser. He was 14 years old. The next year, he began serious piano lessons and the following year (1916) got to know Darius Milhaud, Georges Auric and Erik Satie. It was at the end of 1917 that a composition of his—*Rapsodie nègre* for baritone and chamber ensemble—received a public performance. Both Stravinsky and Diaghilev took notice. Within two years, his name was known by composers as important as Bartok and Ravel.

In January of 1920, the critic Henri Collet named Poulenc, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, Georges Auric, Louis Durey and Germaine Tailleferre 'Le Groupe des Six', by analogy with the Mighty Five of Russia, who were the founders of the Russian nationalist school of composition. It was a convenient label for publicity purposes and Jean Cocteau, their self-appointed publicist, quickly capitalized on the name. But each of *Les Six* always insisted the group was just a collection of friends with no shared musical aims. They had been meeting socially throughout the war years, but did not think of themselves as a school. Although they opposed the vagueness of Impressionism, the style typified by Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*, and although they advocated simplicity and clarity, they issued no joint artistic manifesto. The group quickly disintegrated, drifting apart as soon as some of them began to make a name for themselves. Only Poulenc took the early style which characterized *Les Six*, expanded it and made it a major part of his life's oeuvre. Honegger became a serious composer of symphonies and biblical oratorios. Milhaud ventured into polytonality, and the others never really established themselves or made an international reputation.

As a composer, Poulenc had been largely self-taught, and one method of self-education is imitation. Many of Poulenc's early works, including a sonata for two clarinets and a brass trio, mimic the ironic Neoclassicism of Stravinsky. But by 1921, Poulenc recognized that he needed formal composition instruction and began taking lessons from Charles Koechlin. Koechlin recognized Poulenc's gifts were harmonic rather than contrapuntal and therefore set Poulenc to harmonizing Bach chorales instead of working on fugues or canons.

At the same time he was dabbling in Neoclassicism, Poulenc was also following Satie into Dadaism through the use of monotony and dance hall melodies. Musical Dadaism held that poetic delicacy and sentiment characterized the works of the old guard, (read Fauré and Debussy) and were to be avoided at all costs. Thus, at this time, Poulenc decided vulgarity was preferable to sentiment, as long as it was charming vulgarity. He was guided by Cocteau's famous maxim, "Tact is the art of knowing how far to go too far."

Most of Poulenc's compositions combine satirical wit and natural, fluent melody. A beautiful melody, usually accompanied by a rather pedestrian harmony will proceed nicely for a few measures when suddenly, it is interrupted by a sharply unpleasant wrong-note chord. Poulenc retained his taste for tart harmonies and unexpected turns of phrase throughout his life. But he also developed a fondness for the traditional French qualities of grace, charm and light-hearted melodies.

A brief glance at Poulenc's output shows that he clearly favored wind instruments over strings. In part, this can be explained by his attraction to the tone color and character of the individual instruments he used. Wind instruments have highly differentiated personalities and made an obvious choice over string instruments which have a certain uniformity of character to them. Additionally, as a composer who was deeply attracted to the human voice, the phrasing of music for winds was far easier for him, dependent as it is on breathing. Hence, Poulenc produced a large number of works for woodwinds. Perhaps the two best are those for piano and winds. Most critics number among his best chamber music compositions.

The **Trio for Piano, Oboe and Bassoon** dates from 1926. This was perhaps at the height of Poulenc's fascination with the Neoclassicism of Stravinsky. Poulenc builds on the Stravinsky model of studied dissonance, spry rhythms, and the use of accents where there should be none, and to it adds a certain sentimental gentleness which softens the harshness of the dissonances.

The opening movement, *Lent-Presto-Le double plus lent-Presto*, begins in a somber fashion with a slow introduction which is reminiscent of the formality of the classical French overture, a form of which Stravinsky was quite fond. The piano issues a call to attention which, though subdued, is serious. The bassoon and oboe are then allowed to enter in a respectful fashion. Though relatively short, the introduction shows a certain depth which Poulenc's earlier works do not. The charming main section, *Presto*, has a brilliant effervescence to it. The music quickly becomes bravura in nature with the writing rising to a virtuosic level as the oboe and bassoon race forward in parallel tenths. The main theme has a Haydnesque quality to it and could easily be the poster child example of French Neoclassicism at its best. With the exception of the lyrical and sentimental second theme, which is presented first by the oboe and then elaborated by the bassoon, the movement is characterized by episodes of perky melodies, spry rhythms, colorful harmonies and nimble passage work. It must be said, this is a real tour d'force, not exactly easy to put together and play, but extraordinarily effective when you do so.

The second movement, *Andante con moto*, is a very different affair, relaxed and reflective in mood. There is no sense of sadness or drama but rather of day-dreaming. The melody unfolds as one unending ribbon, seamless, moving ahead without any notion that change is taking place. The oboe and bassoon have almost the entire responsibility of presenting the thematic material whilst the piano plays an unobtrusive and repetitious accompaniment throughout.

The delightful finale, *Très vif*, begins with a brief quote, or perhaps paraphrase is more accurate, from the scherzo to Beethoven's Third Symphony. Again we are presented with a progression of short, attractive themes which divert attention from the fact that this movement is an updated version of the baroque gigue. A short, somewhat more lyrical section, pokes its head in for a moment, before it is rudely interrupted by a loud chord in

Poulenc: Works for Piano & Winds

the piano which signals the coda and return of the original theme. This is a spectacular work. Happily, the parts are readily available and published by Wilhelm Hansen.

The only other work that Poulenc wrote for piano and winds is his **Sextet (Sextour) for Piano, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon & Horn**. The Sextet, though completed 13 years later in 1939, basically continues the same approach that Poulenc took in his Trio. He called it "a homage to the wind instruments which I have loved from the moment I began composing". The Sextet was written in 1932, but Poulenc was dissatisfied with it and spent the next seven years, off and on, revising it before he sent it for publication. Certainly, it is a more ambitious work than the Trio. But to some extent, all of this revision gives the Sextet a more studied quality when compared to the total spontaneity one experiences in the Trio. Perhaps this is inevitable of any work which has undergone several revisions. Like the Trio, the Sextet is full of effective melodies and original use of rhythm. While the tonalities are diatonic, the key changes are sudden. And there is no getting away from the fact that technically, this is a very demanding piece, primarily because of the complex rhythmic motifs, mainly comprised of chromatic sixteenth note passages that end abruptly as they are handed off to other instruments.

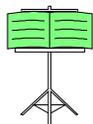
The first movement, *Allegro vivace*, opens with a twice enunciated flourish before the main theme is given out by the winds. This flourish is literally an explosion which tests both the players' dynamic abilities as well as their sense of rhythm with many accents in totally unexpected places. This theme appears in many different guises and often with heavy syncopation throughout. This *Allegro vivace* is, for the most part, energetic and bustling. However, balance is a constant problem of which the players must be aware. The surprising long, slower middle section is in-

troduced by a chromatic passage in the bassoon. This lyrical and peaceful melody is presented for several bars by the piano alone before the flute and then the oboe, followed by the others chime in. Although Poulenc uses much exotic melody, there is a bit of the dignified processional about it. One passage in particular, an interplay between the oboe and bassoon, recalls Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*. The harmonies are not easy to fit in because they are so unstable. There is a passionate climax in the central section before the opening theme returns and leads to a rhythmically driving coda.

The outer sections to the second movement, *Divertissement*, are calm and serene with the melody being passed around the winds over a flowing piano accompaniment. This theme recalls Mozart's Piano Sonata K.545 in C Major. The jaunty middle section, which presents bits and pieces of some of thematic material in the finale, provides a very nice contrast to the outer sections. There is considerable use of parallel 4ths and 5ths.

The finale, *Prestissimo*, has two contrasting themes. The first is lively and characterized by an angular rhythm, while in the second, a lush melody dominates. After a brutal climax, a warmer, and slower coda in a major key follows. It is devoid of any real drama and peters out as if Poulenc had run out of steam. Although this ending is disappointing after what has come before, it still must be said that the Sextet is a compelling work. And, the fact that it is for an ensemble for which little has been written only increases its importance. It will appeal to professionals and is clearly a concert work. Beginning amateurs need not apply, however, experienced and rhythmically secure players should definitely have a go. The parts are also available from Wilhelm Hansen. There are several recordings currently available.

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

String Quartets

Carlos CHAVEZ (1899-1978) Nos.1-3, Urtext JBCC 109 / Peter Maxwell DAVIES (1934-) Nos.1-2, Genuin 86065 / Edward ELGAR (1857-1934) Op.83, Genuin 86065 / Charles IVES (1874-1954) Nos.1-2, Naxos 8.559178 / Ernst DOHNANYI (1877-1960) Nos.1-3, Aulos 66145 / Paul JUON (1972-1940) Nos.1-4, Musiques Suisses 6242 / Joseph Martin KRAUS (1756-92) 9 Qts, Carus 83.194 / Joseph MARX (1882-1964) 3 Qts in Modo Classico, Antico & Chromatico, CPO 777 066 / Alan RAWSTHORNE (1905-1971) Nos.1-3, Naxos 8.570136 / Jan RYBA (1765-1815) 2 Qts in a & d, Naxos 8.557729 / Sergei TANEYEV (1856-1915) Nos. 6 & 9, Northern Flowers 9936 / Judith WEIR (1954-) Qt, Genuin 86065

New Recordings

Strings Only-Not Quartets

None this issue

Piano Trios

George ONSLOW (1784-1853) Nos.7-8, Musicaphon 56888

Piano Quartets, Quintets & Sextets

William ALYWN (1905-85) Rhapsody for Pno Qt, Meridian 84547 / Luigi BOCCHERINI (1743-1805) 6 Qnts, G.407-12, Brilliant 92890 / Herbert HOWELLS (1892-1983) Pno Qt, Op. 21, Meridian 84547 / Cyril SCOTT (1879-1940) Pno Qt, Op.16, Meridian 84547

Winds & Strings

Georges BARBOTEU (1924-) Triptyque for Hn & Str Qt, Pavane 7503 / Giovanni BOTTESINI (1821-59) Grand Duo for Cln, Kb & Pno, Talen 124 / Pietro BOTTESINI (1792-1874) Qnt for Cln & Str Qt, Variations for



Fl, Cln & Str Qt, Talent 124 / Jan RYBA (1765-1815) 2 Qts for Fl & Str Trio, Naxos 8.557729

Winds, Strings & Piano

Anton EBERL (1765-1807) Trio for Cln, Vc & Pno, Op.36, Qnt for Cln & Str Qt, Op.41, Ramee 0601 / Christoph SCHAFFRATH (1709-63) Trio for Ob, Vln & Pno, CPO 777 116

Piano & Winds

Carl REINECKE (1824-1910) Trio for Cln, Hn & Pno, Op.274, Etcetera 1294 / Ludwig THUILLE (1865-1907) Sextet for Pno & Wind Qnt, Op.6, Etcetera 1295

Winds Only

Carlo BESOZZI (1738-81) Sonata Nos.1,2,10,12-14,21 & 22 for Ob, 2Hn & Bsn, Tactus 730201 / August KLUGHARDT (1847-1902) Qnt, Op.79

Alberto Nepomuceno's String Quartets

Then, in the spring of 1980, my wife was required to take a special week-long training course at Varig's headquarters in Rio de Janeiro, and she could get me a free ticket if I wished to come along. At the time, I was quite busy at my own job and I must admit, had it only been a question of finding the Nepomuceno, I probably would not have chosen to go along. But I also had nascent plans to become a string instrument dealer, and as I had recently seen an advertisement in *The Strad* magazine by a Brazilian collector who was disposing of what he called "one of the most important collections of Italian and other master instruments in all of South America", I decided to go. He was selling the instruments from his home in a small Brazilian town on the border with Uruguay, some 1000 miles away from Rio. I wondered why this collector, who knew to advertise his collection in *The Strad*, wasn't auctioning it off at Sotheby's or Christie's. Perhaps he was one of those Nazis, who had stolen well-known Jewish instruments during the Second World War and was lying low in South America, fearing to expose them to the public scrutiny of a London auction house. It was an adventure I could not pass up.

With great haste, I obtained a letter of credit from a skeptical and disdainful loan officer at my father's bank, packed my suitcase full of violin reference books, leaving little room for clothes, and headed for the airport. While I spent most of my week in Brazil far away from Rio, where this mysterious collector lived, I did have two whole days there which I used to track down the music to Nepomuceno's quartets. I first went to the Escola Nacional and was told the manuscript was at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. I went there and asked if copies could be made. After receiving a yes and then a no, I was told it all depended on whether Señor Correa (Nepomuceno's grandson) would give his permission. He was telephoned but refused to give his permission until he met me and found out why I wanted the copies. I had to wait a day for the meeting which took place at the library of the university. It was very brief. Señor Correa appeared to be in his forties and either could not or did not want to speak English. In a mix of French and German, I told him I wanted copies of the manuscripts to all of Nepomuceno's string quartets so that my quartet could play and perform them in concert back in the United States. At this, he agreed to have copies made for me. But I was not allowed to make the copies myself. Instead, a decrepit 80 year old man, whose title was Library Copier, made me copies of the score and parts to the First and Third String Quartets. I asked after the Second and Fourth, but only received a shrug. Thus it was that I obtained the first and last of Nepomuceno's three string quartets. There is no No.4, although according to Correa's catalogue of Nepomuceno's compositions, there is a fourth work for string quartet, a serenade.

The copies were none too good since the library had a very ancient photocopy machine. When I got home, I made more copies trying to darken some of the fainter pages. While the scores were relatively neat and readable, the parts were a nightmare. Measures were crossed out, sometimes added by means of arrows pointing to the bottom or top of the page, several inches away from the gap. Repeats and endings were sometimes missing. No normal group, even if they had been bribed, would have willingly played from these parts. Fortunately for me, one of the groups I

was then playing with was not normal, but extremely adventurous. They were ready to try anything. Had they been mountain climbers, they would gladly have scaled the north face of the Eiger. Anyway, we played it and they liked it, so every now and then, I pulled it out for another play through. But no other group, after one look at the parts, would ever agree to try it. Eventually, I thought I would hire a professional copyist and have decent parts made, but I found the cost to be more than I wanted to pay. So I just left things as they were. In 1995, the work came out of copyright and still remained languishing and unpublished. I tried to interest a friend in London, who had a business selling copies of old chamber music, to make parts using his computer notation software, but he turned me down. In the end, I decided to start my own chamber music publishing house. In 2004, the world premiere edition of Alberto Nepomuceno's String Quartet No.3, *Brasileiro*, became the first work that Edition Silvertrust published. In 2005, we brought out the world premiere edition of Nepomuceno's First String Quartet. Both works have been popular with those who have heard them. Sound-bites are available on our website (www.editionsilvertrust.com) and two professional quartets have added them to their concert repertoires. I am hoping that good modern recording will soon be made.

In 2004, I renewed my efforts and tried hard to get a copy of the manuscript to String Quartet No.2, but my Brazilian contacts had by then long since dried up. Varig no longer flew to the United States and my wife had not worked for them for many years. Friends of friends wrote to Brazilians they knew but nothing ever came of this. I also tried, with no success, to find a recording of it but only the First and Third Quartets had been recorded and this was only on LP recordings made in the 1960's and 1970's. I began to think that perhaps the manuscript to the Second Quartet had been lost or destroyed. After all, at the Federal Library, I had asked for copies of *all* of Nepomuceno's string quartets, but had only received copies of Nos.1 and 3. Then in 2005, I learned of a Brazilian CD, made in the late 1990's, of all *three* quartets. Reasoning that a manuscript to Quartet No.2 had to exist, I continued my search and finally learned the Library of Congress had photocopies of the manuscript scores to all three of Nepomuceno's quartets. I ordered a copy of the manuscript to No.2 and received it not longer afterwards. With excitement, I examined it. Surprisingly, the copy was just as poor as those I had received in Brazil. But worse yet was the fact that some 60 measures were missing from the first movement. Additionally, measures were missing from the finale. I immediately notified the Library of Congress and after much calling back and forth, I was finally told they did not have the pages with the missing measures. Actually, I doubt they know what they have. To put it mildly, I was very disappointed and decided to see if I could obtain the above-mentioned CD and somehow reconstruct the missing measures. After several months and a bit of luck, I was able to get a copy of it. It was a revelation—not the playing, which was poor—but the music itself. By comparison to the First and Third Quartets, String Quartet No.2 is, for the most part, rather ordinary. This discovery has certainly colored my feelings as to whether I want to publish it, assuming I am ever able to put it together. But more on this later. Now to the subject at hand.

(Continued on page 10)

Alberto Nepomuceno (1864-1920) was born in the Brazilian city of Fortaleza. He received his first music lessons from his father who was a violin teacher and also the cathedral organist of Fortaleza. He began serious study of both the violin and piano in 1872 at the age of eight. When his father died in 1880, Nepomuceno was forced to drop out of university and give music lessons to support his mother and younger sister. His brief experience at university had kindled interests in philosophy, Brazilian literature and the Portuguese language. He also was exposed to the progressive political ideas then current and became active in the movement to abolish slavery and to create a republic. It was because of his political activities, that the Imperial Government of Brazil (Brazil was then governed by an Emperor) denied him a grant to study music in Europe.

In 1885, Nepomuceno moved to Rio de Janeiro, where he continued to study the piano and also took some lessons in composition. There, he became active in the Beethoven Club, the leading Brazilian musical society of the day. In 1887, the year before the abolition of slavery in Brazil, Nepomuceno composed *Dança de Negros*, one of the first compositions to use Brazilian ethnic motifs. This work resulted in his widely being regarded as one of the up and coming young men of Brazilian music. The grant he had been denied was finally approved. He left for Italy in 1888 to study piano with Giovanni Sgambatti and composition with Eugenio Terziani at the Santa Cecilia Music Academy in Rome. In 1890, Nepomuceno moved to Berlin where he began composition lessons with Heinrich von Herzogenberg, while at the same time frequently traveling to Vienna to study with the world famous piano teacher Theodor Lechetitzky and to attend concerts given by Brahms and Hans von Bülow. It was in Lechetitzky's class that he met the Norwegian pianist Walborg Bang, whom he later married. She was a friend and prize student of Edvard Grieg's. Sometime in 1891, he enrolled in Berlin's Stern Conservatory to take a degree in composition. In 1893, just before graduating, he interrupted his studies to marry Walborg and went to live at Grieg's house in Bergen. His friendship with Grieg was instrumental in strengthening his desire to create a Brazilian nationalist school of composition as well as his commitment to writing music which utilized Brazilian folk melody.

In 1894, Nepomuceno returned to Berlin where he took his degree and conducted the Berlin Philharmonic in a performance of two of his compositions. (*Scherzo für grosses Orchester* and *Suite Antiga*). Next, he enrolled at the Schola Cantorum, in Paris, in order to improve his mastery of the organ and studied with Professor Alexandre Guilmant. Here, he met and became good friends with Camille Saint Saëns, Vincent D'Indy and Claude Debussy among others. He was present at the World première of Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, and was the first to present it in Brazil. While in Paris, Nepomuceno was invited by Charles Chabault, Professor of Greek at the Sorbonne, to write the incidental music for the tragedy *Electra*.

In 1895, Nepomuceno returned to Brazil to take up an appointment at the National School of Music. Two years later he was appointed Professor of composition. Seven years after that, he served as its director. During these years, Nepomuceno set about achieving his goal of encouraging young composers to write music utilizing the melodies and dances of Brazil. Among his many students was Heitor Villa Lobos. He not only championed and

also performed the controversial works of the new generation of Brazilian composers such as the works of the young Villa Lobos. He also wrote all of his many vocal works in Portuguese. As Brazil's leading composer, he was severely criticized. His critics maintained that the Portuguese language was inappropriate to the *bel canto*. The dispute became so vitriolic that it was fought in the newspapers. The traditionalists defended the Italian vocal tradition. In answer to them, Nepomuceno coined the retort for which he has often been quoted. "*A people who does not sing in its language is a countryless people.*"

In 1900, Nepomuceno returned to Europe to concertize and visit friends. It was at this time that he received an invitation from Gustav Mahler, who wished to perform Nepomuceno's opera *Artemis* at the Vienna Court Opera. Mahler proposed that they would share the conducting responsibilities. However, before he could accept, Nepomuceno became quite ill and was forced to spend many months convalescing in Norway at Grieg's home in Bergen. Back in Brazil, Nepomuceno continued his long fight championing Brazilian music and the use of Portuguese therein. He made two more trips to Europe where he conducted and performed. It was during one of these trips that Richard Strauss conducted one of Nepomuceno's operas.

Nepomuceno's importance to the development of classical music in Brazil cannot be overstated. As noted, he was the leading composer as well as teacher of his day. His many contacts and close friendships with the leading composers and conductors in Europe proved to be invaluable to the young men he sent abroad to study.

The bulk of Nepomuceno's work is, in one form or another, for voice. He also wrote a considerable amount of piano music. His chamber music, including his three string quartets, was almost entirely written during his prolonged first stay in Europe and while he was still studying. Although these works have no opus numbers, Nepomuceno did not by any means regard them as juvenilia. Not only were they performed from manuscript both in Germany and France during the years of his first European sojourn, but also many time since in Brazil. It is also important to consider that Nepomuceno, shortly before his death, took care to see that the manuscripts were safely deposited in the archives of the National School of Music.

Although the First Quartet has not specifically been subtitled "Brazilian" as was the Third Quartet, nevertheless, the music is suffused with lovely Brazilian melodies and unusual rhythms which are expressed in the romantic idiom he mastered during his studies in Europe. The manuscript to **String Quartet No.1 in b minor** bears the inscription "Rome 1889". The first movement, has for its opening theme an unusual syncopated melody introduced by the first violin.

Violin I

Allegro Agitato

Alberto Nepomuceno (1864=1920)
Edited by Loren Silvertrust

6

11

cresc. f

The gentler and more lyrical second theme is folkloric in nature, but I cannot say for sure that it is a Brazilian folk tune.



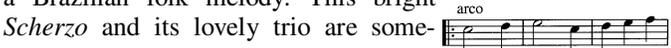
Most of the thematic material is in the first violin part, however there are some good episodes of rhythmic interplay between the first violin and the cello as the syncopated first theme is extensively and competently developed. One can see from the working out that Nepomuceno followed German models rather than then current Italian practices.

The second movement is marked *Andante*, however, numerous play-throughs lead me to think that *Un poco adagio* might have been a more accurate tempo marking. While there are no metronome indications on the manuscript, I do think that the performance on the sound-bite is too slow and belabored. The main theme is very romantic, perhaps it could be styled a song without words. In this movement, Nepomuceno makes much better use of the inner voices, giving them important, and sometimes quite involved running lines against the long cantabile of the first violin.

While the preceding two movements are competently handled, there is nothing which really strikes the listener or player as being a cut above average. True, the main theme to the first movement has a fresh and original quality to it, but at the same time, it appears to be the product of hard work and somewhat labored. It is the *Scherzo*, which comes next, that serves notice we are dealing with a talented composer. Here, there is the happy marriage between an appealing melody and the lively, toe-tapping rhythm to which it is set.



The slower and more lyrical trio (below) maintains the sunny mood found in the *Scherzo*. Nepomuceno uses what could well be a Brazilian folk melody. This bright *Scherzo* and its lovely trio are some-



thing special and begin to make the case for saving this work from being consigned to oblivion.

Following the *Scherzo* is a compelling finale. I would not argue that it is spectacular or superb, but it is very good and certainly effective. Marked *Allegro spirituosissimo*, it is certainly that. Nepomuceno, who clearly had a gift for unusual rhythms, begins his theme on the last 16th of the first beat. The bright spirited theme (top next column) is perfectly set to a rhythm of running 16ths, at first heard only in the 1st violin, but soon in all of the voices.



The second theme (below) seems to literally come out of nowhere. The first violin pauses for the briefest of moments after a long downward running passage of 16ths. Then, the jaunty second subject, literally leaps out. Though jolly and seemingly quite



simple, the melody nevertheless has a nobility about it. As the other voices are brought in, a telling, but high speed dialogue develops. To top it off, there is a well-done, satisfying coda, which in the final measures sounds a little like the closing to a Dvorak quartet. In sum, this is a quartet which gets stronger as it goes along, certainly to be preferred as opposed to the opposite. It is fun to play, with reasonably good part writing and presents no technical difficulty for the players. Unfortunately, the sound-bites I have do not do justice to the music, but there have only been two recordings and neither was particularly good. The ones I have used are from a 30 year old Brazilian LP.

String Quartet No.2 in g minor was composed in 1890 during Nepomuceno's last year in Rome. Before I begin my discussion, I wish to make clear that I do have copies of the manuscript which I could use for illustrative purposes. However, the manuscript is a mess and the copies are of poor quality and not at all easy to read. Reproducing them here would serve no purpose. Again, the sound-bites I have put on the website make the music appear worse than it is because the performance is terrible.

There are at least three very *different* versions of this quartet, and this, at one time, led to speculation that there was a fourth quartet. There isn't. The quartet was extensively revised, with whole sections being replaced with entirely different music. As such, there can never be a definitive edition. The fact that Nepomuceno made three very different revisions is a good indication he was not satisfied with this work. I would not say it is a bad work but it is certainly the least original sounding of the three quartets. The opening *Allegro con fuoco* has an attractive and well handled main theme, but it must be said that it resembles so many others from the pens of Central European romantic composers. Further on, we find that the style becomes orchestral rather than intimate. The second movement, *Andante*, begins with a sweet lied, but it could never be mistaken for any kind of folk song, be it Brazilian or Austrian. Again, the treatment resembles typical competent German writing. There are, however, two very interesting, dramatic

(Continued on page 12)

episodes in which lengthy tremolo passages are quite effectively used. The short *Intermezzo* which comes next is more like a scherzo. Not at all bad, but it does not rise to the level of the scherzo in the First Quartet. The finale, also *Allegro con fuoco*, begins with a theme that sounds oriental, Turkish or Egyptian. The middle section is comprised of a lyrical melody effectively treated in the manner of the Italian opera composers who wrote quartets. (e.g. Donizetti and Verdi). In writing this, I thought about American and English composers, such as George Chadwick, Arthur Foote and Charles Villiers Stanford. They were all strongly influenced by the German romantic style (and attacked for it), but somehow they seemed to pull it off better. Take Stanford's First Piano Quartet or Foote's First Piano Trio, influenced by Brahms and Mendelssohn respectively. Their treatment is fresh and original in feel, despite the influence. This quartet does not convince in the same way.

String Quartet No.3 in b minor has been given the subtitle *Brasileiro*, i.e. Brazilian. In it, Nepomuceno used well-known Brazilian folk melodies. It is said to be the first instance of a Brazilian composer writing in a nationalist style. It was written in 1891 while he was studying with Herzogenberg in Berlin and more importantly, by which time he had met and befriended Grieg. The opening movement *Allegro moderato* begins with a sad, pleading theme in the first violin, which immediately captures the listener's attention.



As the violin soars into its highest registers, the other three voices are given very dramatic rhythmic figures which accentuate the violin's almost desperate plaint. When the violin melody slowly begins to lower in pitch, the cello, in a less urgent voice, is allowed to take it further. Skies brighten with the entrance of the sunny second theme, which is unmistakably of Brazilian origin



This is a very long distance indeed from the kind of thematic material which appears in the Second Quartet. There is a very good likelihood that Grieg's encouragement to use Brazilian melodies in his composition was in large part responsible for this change. The dramatic climax is reached in a wild, stormy section of great originality. A short, but effective, coda brings the movement to a

close. The main theme to the second movement, *Andante*, begins as a melancholy funeral dirge. In structure, it is a theme and set of very clever variations. The mood is immediately brightened by the first variation. One can imagine a Brazilian wake at which the participants, after a bit of mourning, break open the bottles and begin to celebrate. Perhaps the most striking variation is given to the viola who brings forth a dramatic aria.



After many different mood swings, the mournful dirge at last returns to end the movement. An *Intermezzo* follows, but, as in the First Quartet, it is really a brilliant scherzo. The cello brings forth the carefree main theme set to a Brazilian dance rhythm known as the *Lundu*. The melodic motifs which accompany it resemble another Brazilian traditional rhythm, the *Fadinho*.

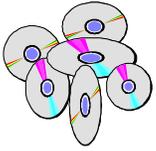


The rhythms become even more unusual as the movement progresses. Then, suddenly, it morphs into an authentic Mendelssohnian scherzo so successfully executed one might well conclude Felix had visited Brazil as well as Italy and Scotland. Space does not allow me to include all of the examples I would wish, so I encourage you to listen to the sound-bite of this spectacular movement. Nepomuceno recognized its excellence, orchestrated it and conducted its premiere in 1897 at the Concertos Populares. The finale, marked *Allegretto*, should have been marked *Allegro*. It begins with a drum rhythm of the Amazonian natives in the cello. After two measures the theme is given out and the others then enter in canonic fashion.



It almost sounds like another scherzo, with the four voices happily racing around after each other, making effective, but technically difficult hand-offs. Then, in the midst of this celebratory mood, a jarring, dissonant chord is sounded. It announces the melodramatic reprise of the funeral dirge from the second movement. The coda has a surprise ending. With this quartet, Nepomuceno has given us a work of first quality which unquestionably deserves to take its place in the concert repertoire.

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



Piano Trios by Henry Holden Huss, Mortimer Wilson & Adolph Foerster Two String Quartets by Carl Loewe



Albany Troy CD#692, entitled “American Romance” presents us with the piano trios of three American composers who are not, to put it mildly, household names. The first, **Henry Holden Huss** (1862-1953), perhaps has the most immediate claim for our attention. Certainly his piano trio is the most substantial and the best of the three. Huss grew up in New York City, the son of German immigrant parents. His father was an organist who en-

gaged a graduate of the Leipzig Conservatory to teach his son piano and organ, and then when the boy was old enough, sent him to the Royal Conservatory in Munich where he studied with Josef Rheinberger, among others. Upon his return to the States, Huss embarked on a moderately successful career as a touring piano virtuoso. As a composer, he was regarded as one of the best of his generation by those who counted, but unfortunately, it was at a time when American composers could rarely get a hearing for their works. His **Piano Trio in d minor, Op.23, The Munich**, was composed in 1886 and dedicated to Rheinberger. Although it was given perhaps a dozen performances, all on the East Coast, and all off manuscript copy, some by quite well-known performers such as Franz Kneisel, sadly, the trio was never published. Its last recorded public performance was said to have occurred 1892—truly incredible because it is an extraordinarily good work, in my opinion, a masterpiece which would certainly have seen the light of day had Huss been living in Europe. It might even have entered the front rank of the romantic trio literature. In four movements, the massive opening *Allegro molto appassionata* has for its main subject a theme of destiny which carries everything before it in a dramatic and tempestuous fashion. The beautiful second theme is quite lyrical, while the passionate coda is one of the most thrilling you will find anywhere. The second movement, *Intermezzo, romance*, has an exceptionally beautiful melody for its first subject, originally presented by the cello. Full of calm tranquility, there seems to me to be an undeniable American quality to this melody, having as it does, a sense of optimism and bounty. It is harmonized wonderfully. In the middle section, the opening theme to the first movement returns in the guise of a dramatically toned-down march. It lends an aura of yearning and tension which is dissipated by the peaceful ending. The third movement, marked *Scherzo*, is more of a cross between an upbeat march and an intermezzo. Only of moderate tempo, the trio section is a bit slower and creates a valedictory mood. The huge last movement, simply marked *Finale*, opens with an introduction in which the main theme from the second movement reappears. It gives way to a buoyant allegro, full of the spirit of 19th century American “can do” sentiment. But gradually we hear many of the other themes from the earlier movements. The finale, in fact, is a very fine example of cyclicism which was then popular, especially among composers such as Wagner and Cesar Franck and their followers. The exciting and grandiose conclusion to the trio is entirely fitting for a work of this magnitude. And there is another

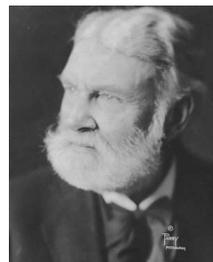
happy ending. I have been able, with a bit of luck, to obtain a copy of the manuscript, which was used by the performers on this CD. If all goes according to plan, the parts to this trio will be available from Edition Silvertrust either in late 2007 or in 2008. In conclusion, this is a massive (almost 40 minutes in length), wonderful work which by itself justifies buying this CD.

The remaining works on disk are short, together not even half



the length of the Huss. The first is by **Mortimer Wilson** (1876-1932) who was born in Chariton, Iowa and first studied organ, violin and composition at the Chicago Musical College before attending the Leipzig Conservatory where he studied with Hans Sitt and Max Reger. Upon returning to the U.S., he taught at the Atlanta Conservatory and conducted the Atlanta Philharmonic before taking a job

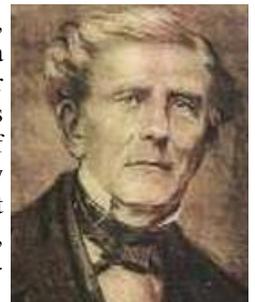
as a consulting editor for the National Academy of Music in New York. Most of his works remain in manuscript, however, his **Suite for Piano Trio, From My Youth, Op.5** was published in 1911. It consists of eight very short movements. Only the final four are performed on this CD. The first, entitled *Funeral of a Calico Cat*, reminded me of Charles Alkan’s *Marcia Funebre sulla Morte d’un Pappagallo*, with its somber but mawkish mood. At the end, the violin gives out a few sad meows. This is followed by *Love Song of an Alpine Doll*, a lovely 19th century, Central European lovers’ duet, played by the strings. Next is *Tin Soldier Dress Parade* which starts with a bugle call played by the violin on harmonics. The piano enters and we are treated to a playful toy march, expertly handled. The last piece, *Over the Little Blue Tea Set*, has, for its time, a rather modern, urban, socialite sound to it. The little trio is quite attractive and clever.

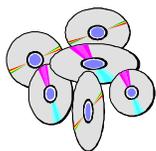


The last work, **Serenade for Piano Trio, Op.61** is by **Adolph Foerster** (1854-1927), who was born in Pittsburgh but who also studied at the Leipzig Conservatory. He returned to his native city and spent his life teaching and composing. The Serenade, which dates from 1907, is in three modest size movements: *Tempo rubato*, *Andante sostenuto* and *Allegro molto*. This is an appealing, lush and very romantic work, but I think strong enough

for the concert hall. I do not know if it was published. Well-worth hearing. Verdict: this is a highly recommended CD.

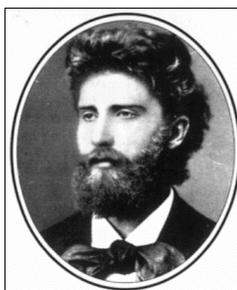
Carl Loewe (generally Löwe in German, 1796-1869) was primarily known as a song writer. During his lifetime, and for some time thereafter, his reputation was such that he was called “The Schubert of North Germany.” Songwriters are usually melodists and thus I expected that Loewe’s string quartets, at the very least, would feature some very pleasing melo-





Carl Loewe: String Quartet Nos. 1 & 2 and Wilhelm Kienzl Nos.1-3 Carl Reinecke: An Octet and a Sextet for Winds

dies, but surprisingly, this was not the case. Loewe, who wrote four string quartets, is totally ignored by Wilhelm Altmann in his *Handbuch für Streichquartettspieler*, and only rates a short, uninformative paragraph in *Cobbett's Cyclopaedia*. **Musicaphon CD 56840** gives us the reason why this is. It purports to be Vol.I of Loewe's Complete String Quartets and presents the first two: **Op.24 Nos 1 & 2**. Although a Vol.2 was apparently made, it was never released, most likely because of what is on Vol.I, i.e., the material and not the performance which is excellent. Sadly the material is very threadbare, but, it must be admitted, not entirely without interest. What interest there is comes from a few unusual and original rhythmic effects rather than from any melodic or thematic excellence. Most of the movements are larded with endless repetitions of the same phrase before the music moves ahead to the next phrase, which is then repeated in the same fashion. It is almost as if Loewe had been locked up in a detention room after school and told he must write an essay of so many words. Being without much to say, he repeats and repeats the few things he has come up with. Sorry if this sounds harsh, but I think the sound-bites will bear me out. The music is not in print and, in my opinion, does not deserve to be. Surprisingly, in 1993, Wollenweber published a new edition of Loewe's Fourth Quartet (*Quatuor Spirituel*) dating from 1832. Its name derives from the fact that it quotes settings of the Psalms from the Bible. I paid Doblinger's \$51.00 for it in October of 1993 and believe me, I have wasted fifty dollars on quite a number of more worthwhile things. I cannot recommend this CD.



Wilhelm Kienzl (1857-1941), like Loewe, made his name as a composer for voice, in Kienzl's case, opera rather than lieder. However, Kienzl, unlike Loewe, had a far better sense of how to write a string quartet and as a result, his quartets, which are interesting though of varying quality, do deserve to be heard. Kienzl, who was born in the small Austrian town of Waizenkirchen studied music at Prague University

and later in Leipzig with Liszt. Although opera drew most of his attention, he did write three string quartets and a piano trio. The quartets are presented on **CPO CD#999 805**. **String Quartet No.1 in b flat minor, Op.22** dates from the time when he had just completed his studies. (1880) As one might expect, it is full of youthful exuberance, turmoil and tumult. Kienzl wrote, that at the time, the music of Schumann and especially Schubert was most on his mind. The opening movement, *Largo-Allegro moderato*, begins with a brief, but highly-charged slow introduction. There is the sense of impending tragedy. And, in fact, the lovely main theme to the *Allegro* has a sad, pleading quality to it. Kienzl follows this with a graceful, old-fashioned minuet and trio. The melancholy slow movement, *Adagio ma non troppo*, clearly has the aura of Schubert about it. In the striking finale, *Allegro energico e molto vivace*, Kienzl replaces the dark mood of the *Adagio* with one of hope. This boisterous music, which is in the major, is full of optimism and youthful excitement. The writing provides a good example of the brilliance Kienzl could achieve. In sum, this is a fairly good quartet, though it is not without some blemishes.

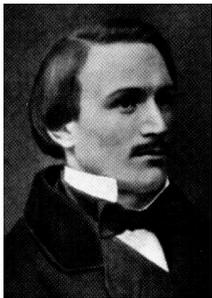
There are several florid passages which would have been best omitted. Mendelssohn, of course, was guilty of the same sin, and so perhaps it is best not to criticize too harshly, given its many appealing qualities. **String Quartet No.2 in c minor, Op.99** was written forty years later, the inspiration being the death of his wife in 1919 and the disastrous end of WWI for his beloved Austria, stripped of its imperial grandeur and charm. In its place was a drab, down at the heels Republic, the sad torso, whose splendid appendages had been brutally amputated. This is a powerful and very substantial work. It is also autobiographical program music in the tradition of Smetana's *From My Life*. Kienzl inscribed the top of the quartet with words expressing the pain he felt over his losses. The short but slow introduction of the big opening *Adagio-Allegro energico* immediately makes it clear that something like a death has occurred. Tension then builds as an angry *Allegro* is called forth. Though the tempo is quick, there is a strange lugubrious feel to it. One hears cries of anguish, moments of hope, followed by moments of despair. The coda is particularly melodramatic. The lovely second movement, *Adagio*, though not shot through with the pain of the first movement, nonetheless, has a sad and mournful quality. It brings to mind images of days past and things of beauty which have perished. An effective *Scherzo* follows this. It is certainly not joyful music, but neither is it sad. It has a mild, playful quality, but one with a cutting edge somewhere in the background. Above the finale, *Moderato, Allegro commodo e leggiero*, Kienzl inscribed words of tribute to Vienna, the City of Mirth and Brilliance. Here, the music is at its gayest, full of Viennese color and dance rhythms. This is a first rate quartet, mature with the ripeness of human experience, devoid of the errors found in his first quartet. **String Quartet No.3 in E Flat Major, Op.113** was composed in 1928. Of the three, it is the most concise. Though not an overtly happy work, it has none of the anguish of No.2. The opening movement, *Allegro con fuoco*, reminds one, tonally speaking, of Hugo Wolf and Richard Strauss. It is optimistic, yet with a sense of destiny. An emotionally low-keyed but very romantic *Andante* in the form of a lied follows. Next comes a quasi lyrical *Scherzo*. The short finale, *Vivacissimo*, is full of high spirits. Its rollicking horse ride rhythm, full of bustle, is a direct descendant of the finale from the First Quartet. Though hardly *au courant* for 1928, this is a richly romantic work of very high quality. Certainly, the last two quartets deserve to be heard in concert, amateurs would find the first of value. The parts to No.1 are available from Edition Silvertrust, those to Nos. 2 & 3 are not in print. A recommended CD.



Carl Reinecke (1824-1910), in his time, was one of the most important men of music: A top concert pianist for many years, the director and esteemed professor at the prestigious Leipzig Conservatory, as well as the conductor of the renowned Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. He wrote a fair amount of music in nearly every genre, which garnered praise and performances while he lived. In his youth, he was under the influence of Mendelssohn and Schumann and his works from this period, as well as from his middle age, seem rather insipid and lacking in inspi-

Carl Reinecke's Wind Octet and Sextet / Edward Bache's Piano Trio 2 String Quartets by Nikolaus Zmeskáll

ration. Yet in his old age, he composed a series of compositions whose consistent high quality is nothing short of miraculous. His **Octet in B Flat Major for Flute, Oboe, 2 Clarinets, 2 Horns & 2 Bassoons, Op.216** is one such work. I am a string player and this music I will never have a chance to play, but I am certainly glad that I can hear it because it is very enjoyable. I have heard my share of wind octets and have found most of them boring, good background music for a wine and cheese party—but not this work. Dating from 1892, the Octet has four movements. An attractive *Allegro moderato*, full of ingratiating themes, leads to an original and ingenious *Scherzo-vivace*. In the following *Adagio ma non troppo*, Reinecke demonstrates his deft touch, producing noble sonorities which are both rich and well-balanced. The gay, sprightly finale, *Allegro molto e grazioso* strikes just the right touch and concludes a work which is really perfect in every way. Much the same can be said for the **Sextet in B Flat Major for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, 2 Horns & Bassoon, Op.271** which Reinecke penned at the age of 81 in 1905. In three movements, the opening *Allegro moderato* is leisurely and genial. In the middle movement, *Adagio molto*, Reinecke uses the 2 horns tellingly, at times achieving a sense of weight very hard to create with winds alone. The appealing, march-like finale, *Allegro moderato ma con spirito*, has several modern moments which can only make one marvel, coming as they did from an octogenarian. Both of these works are in print (International & Masters Music) and were recorded on **Etcetera CD 1155**. Briefly released in the 1990's, it was released again recently. Highly recommended.



Francis Edward Bache (1833-1858), though vouchsafed very little time on earth, made good use of what time he had. He composed a fair number of works, including a string quartet and the **Piano Trio in D Major, Op.25**, published in 1865 by Kistner in Leipzig, seven years after Bache's death. Bache began by studying violin, organ and piano in his native Birmingham where he made a name for himself as a flashy piano player. In 1849, Bache went to London to study with William Sterndale Bennett. His talent was such that Bennett suggested Bache attend the Leipzig Conservatory. Bache did so in 1853 studying with Moritz Hauptmann, a former student of Spohr who had been personally appointed by Mendelssohn to a professorship at the Conservatory. But Bache, who had contracted tuberculosis, could not complete his studies, being forced to seek a warmer climate. When he died a few years later, he was widely regarded as England's most promising composer. The Trio, which is recorded on **Dutton CD 7145**, was composed in 1852, while he was still studying with Bennett in London. It might be said at the outset, that Mendelssohn must be considered the godfather of this charming work. That this is so should be no surprise as Mendelssohn was Bennett's ideal composer, as well as his personal friend. The Trio is in three movements, the first, *Allegro*, being the longest. It is dominated by two themes both characterized by long lyrical lines in the strings over running passages in the piano. Surprisingly, the coda concludes softly in the minor. The outer sections of the *Andante espressivo*, which serves as the

slow movement, are gentle, a veritable song without words. They are punctuated by more a dramatic middle section, which while not exactly stormy, nonetheless, presents a contrasting mood. The finale, *Allegro molto ed appassionata—un poco piu lento*, begins with a theme extraordinarily close to that used in 1876 by Friedrich Kiel in the last movement of his Second Piano Quintet. (see last issue for discussion). Could Kiel, who penned his quintets some ten years after Bache's work was published, have been familiar with it? This is a happy, dance-like theme, which kicks up its heels, and which, for a few moments, sounds rather Hungarian. Later, a slower and more lyrical section appears, but gradually the faster tempo reasserts itself and leads to a satisfying ending. Virtually everyone who hears this work, including Kistner who thought it worth publishing, has concluded it is a pretty good work. There is a Romance for cello & piano and a Duo Brilliant for violin and piano also on this worthwhile CD.



Nikolaus Zmeskáll (1759-1833—his name is spelled several different ways) came from a Hungarian noble family. He is was a good friend of Beethoven and the dedicatee the Op.95 String Quartet, as well as the Op.80 Choral Fantasy. Haydn dedicated the second edition of his Op.20 Sun Quartets to him. Not a lot is known about Zmeskáll's youth or musical training other than the fact that he was a cellist of some ability, though not a professional musician. He worked in the Hungarian Chancellery in Vienna but was said to have often taken part in private performances of Beethoven's chamber music. He was also a composer, but neither *Cobbett* nor *Altmann* make reference to him. *Baker's* and *The New Grove* each treat him to a short paragraph. *Baker's* says he wrote 14 string quartets. *New Grove* says 16. However, the jacket notes to **Hungaroton CD# 32332**, state he wrote 15, all of which are unpublished and in the library of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna. Thirteen years ago, I wrote a short notice in Vol. V No.2 about two of his quartets, recorded by the Travnicek Quartet on Opus CD#9151 143. The two quartets recorded were in the keys of g minor and G Major. There are no opus numbers. Now, along comes the Authentic Quartet of Hungary. The field is open to them, they can choose from 13 unrecorded string quartets. But do they? No. They rerecord the g minor, a nice work, but their rendering is not as good as the Travnicek. To their credit, they do record one previously unrecorded quartet, this in D Major. So then, what do these unpublished string quartets, which few if any of us will probably ever play, sound like? They tend to be in the style of Haydn, which in itself is saying something, since they are thought to date from the late 1790's and show that Zmeskáll had moved beyond the old-style concertante writing. But the works do not sound like Haydn, Mozart, or his friend Beethoven, from whom Zmeskáll may have taken some lessons. You can decide for yourself by listening to the sound-bites and letting me know what you think. I will say this much, though the thematic material is not particularly inspired, it is well handled and presented in an interesting way. I think these quartets, though certainly not great, are worthwhile and, as such, I don't see why they couldn't be published. A lot worse works have been.

FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE



Anton Arensky



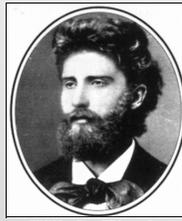
Alberto Nepomuceno



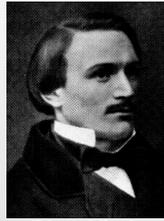
Francis Poulenc



Henry H. Huss



Wilhelm Kienzl



Edward Bache



Carl Reinecke



Nikolaus Zmeskall

ON SLOW, SPOHR, STENHAMMAR, FUCHS, KIEL



HERZOGENBERG, GLIERE, TANAYEV, REINECKE

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

KROMMER, LACHNER, GRANADOS, VAN BREE, GRETCHANINOV