

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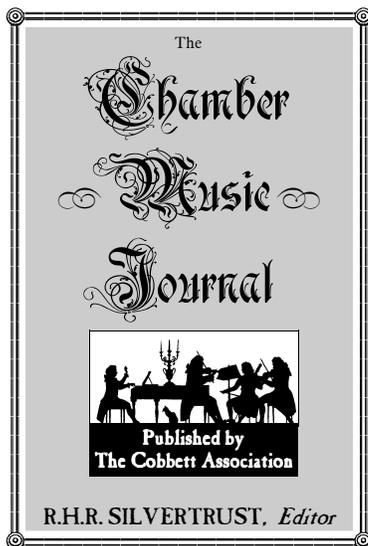
*The Essential Guide
For Players & Listeners
To The Wider World
of Chamber Music*

The Piano Trios of Saint-Saëns
***Robert Kahn's Serenade
for Winds, Strings & Piano***
Carl Nielsen: The String Quartets

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The Sounding Board-Letters to the Editor



A Defense of Raff's Fourth Piano Trio

Chamber music *aficionados* should be grateful to Professor Ussi for sharing his insight and knowledge of Joachim Raff's unjustly neglected piano trios. I recently read the second part of his essay when buying a copy of the manuscript of the Fourth Trio. Despite the considerable depth of his analysis, it is inevitable that when an author makes a value judgment about a piece of music, some listener who thinks highly of it will respond "*waddy mean it's the worst one? I think it's the best of the four!*" and, unlike scientific literature, where there is at least a semblance of objectivity in the process of critiquing research presentations—it becomes hard to distinguish objective analysis from mere personal preference. So I would like to propose an alternative viewpoint.

I may as well declare my bias right away, and state at once that Raff's Trio No.4 is indeed my favorite. Hence it is natural to defend it against the professor's criticisms by pointing out that the defects he identifies are also common features of the music of the acknowledged giants. The development of the first movement is a good case in point. It is simply "too long" says Prof. Ussi. "Too long?" I respond, "haven't you ever heard of Schubert?" Without descending into flippancy, I think we can all agree that some great composers do make their point by expansiveness. For example, in the orchestral repertoire there is Bruckner. And yet, once you get the measure of him, and have patience with the pace of his argument, who would have it any shorter? Nor is Bruckner to be judged as though he were making a tightly woven dense fabric like Brahms. It is in this spirit that I believe Raff should be assessed.

One can similarly dispense with the assertion that the second subject creates monotony because it derives from the first. In the fourth trio Raff avoids the trap of sameness by some rather unusual moves, including the relatively unusual key shift in the exposition for the second subject, and a calculated ambiguity of rhythm by switching from 12/8 to 9/8 at will. He carefully avoids overusing the grand opening theme, which both the professor and I agree has great beauty and nobility.

I could make similar responses to the assessment of the other movements. The scherzo is certainly not a light-footed Mendelssohnian scherzo, but it is none the worse for that. It has a darker, slightly menacing, aspect. However, my basic point is the same. So rather than sim-

ply externalize our disagreements, it may be worth applying the concept expounded by CS Lewis in his book *An Experiment in Criticism*. He proposed that we should judge literary works by their ability to produce the need in the reader to keep coming back for more. On this basis he would allow that if a single intelligent reader returned to a book again and again, even if the literary world judged it as worthless, it would have to be regarded as a good book. I invite our readership to make an experiment. If you will but listen to all four piano trios over the course of a few days, I have a very strong suspicion that the one which will emerge as a source of joy and nourishment will be the first movement of the Fourth Trio. It has such sweetness and nobility it will make you want to play it again and again. I think you will agree with me it is worthy of the concert stage. If anyone arranges a performance within 200 miles of my home, let me know and I'll be there.

Peter Crookes
Los Angeles, California

Professor Ussi Responds: *I enjoyed your spirited defense very much, although I can't say I was persuaded by it. Certainly discussions about music are subjective affairs not exactly like discussing matters of science. In my article, I indicated this was my opinion not fact. I wrote "Of Raff's four piano trios, to my mind, the Fourth is the weakest". But as the famous cigar aficionado Zino Davidoff used to say, "Every man has the right to defend his favorite cigar," which perhaps is more to the point here than C.S. Lewis. I do like the Fourth with its many fine qualities. However, I have made your experiment and my results differ from yours. I think Trio No.4 is worth returning to, worth hearing and playing from time to time, perhaps on the concert stage as well. But I prefer the other three to the Fourth. Such differences of opinion make life interesting.*

A Cobbett Member Says Good-bye.

Recently, I received a poignant and touching letter from Charles Garbett, a long time Cobbett member, who told me he was not renewing his membership. I thought his letter so full of the wonderful experiences of the chamber music life that I wrote to ask him if I could share it. He graciously agreed. His letter follows:

I regret terminating my membership and subscription to *The Chamber Music Journal*; unfortunately, I can no longer play the violin.

(Continued on page 4)

Carl Nielsen: The String Quartets

by Per Larsen



Although Carl Nielsen (1865-1931) as a village musician. Nielsen exhibited a talent for music at an achieved international recognition early age and in his autobiography *My Childhood in Funen*, he as a composer, today his music is rarely performed outside of Scandinavia. Certainly, it is rare indeed to come across a live performance of any of his chamber music. In nearly forty years of concert-going, I have yet to encounter any of his chamber music on a program outside of Denmark. Were it not for the occasional radio performance or the availability of these works on CD, few if any non-Scandinavians would be aware of these fine works.

recalled that, "...by the time I was eight or nine, I had violin lessons from both my father and a local teacher. At a party where I stood in for my father until he was able to come, I palyed a polka that I had just written myself, based on continuous syncopation. It was just as my father was coming into the dance hall that this masterpiece was played for the very first time. I could see from the look on his face that he didn't care much for it. When the dance was over, he said, "You should leave that sort of thing alone, no one can dance to it." His father suggested he study a wind instrument so that he might pursue the career of a musician in a regimental band. In 1879, Nielsen, at the age of 14, won a competition for a vacant place in the Odense Regimental Band and for the next few years occupied himself as a regimental musician. But by 1881, he realized he wanted something else and began to study the violin in earnest. He remembered that during these years, "I got to know the quartets of Haydn, Pleyel and

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Nielsen was born on the island of Fyn (Funen), the seventh of twelve children. His father was a painter by trade, who also played the violin and cornet and as a result was much in demand

The Piano Trios of Camille Saint-Saëns

by Achmede Benzes

In many ways and for many reasons, Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) is widely regarded as the most important 19th century French composer of instrumental music. He was born at a time when the state of French instrumental music was at an all time low. The French attitude toward instrumental music was extraordinarily hostile. Opera, and especially Italian comic opera of the sort Rossini composed, completely dominated the music scene. Rossini, who was director of the Theater Italien, was regarded as Paris' leading composer and the chief arbiter of taste. Young French composers such as Berlioz were stymied at every turn, so much so that Berlioz, at one point, threatened to blow up the Theater Italien. Composers



such as George Onslow and Louise Farrenc, who were primarily composers of instrumental music, were widely ignored in their own country though their music gained renown elsewhere. Because of this, Onslow, who really had no desire to compose operas, nonetheless tried his hand at it in an attempt to become better known. It was in this musical climate that Saint-Saëns began his career.

He started by studying the piano and by age ten had established himself as a prodigy. At the Paris Conservatory, he studied organ and composition. Composing came to him naturally and by 18 his First

Symphony had already premiered to acclaim among those who still were interested in instrumental music. Hailed by Liszt as the greatest organist alive, he was also widely regarded as a pianist of the very first rank. As for his compositions, Berlioz commented enviously, "He knows everything but lacks inexperience." Liszt praised the many works which began to pour forth from his pen and soon he was being called the Vivaldi of France not only because of the number of works he was quickly producing but also because he was composing in every genre.

(Continued on page 11)

Robert Kahn's Serenade for Winds, Strings & Piano

by Larius J. Ussi

Imagine being offered composition lessons by none other than Johannes Brahms because he was impressed by your potential and ability. Robert Kahn (1865-1951) did not have to imagine this because Brahms actually did offer to give him lessons, but Kahn felt too nervous



and insecure to accept the offer. This was probably a good thing as far as the shy Kahn was concerned because, according to Gustav Jenner, the only full-time student Brahms ever had, Brahms' teaching technique involved substantial doses of nastiness.

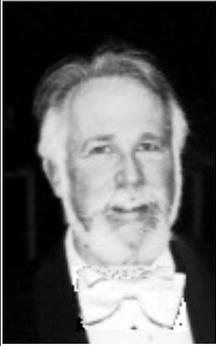
Robert Kahn (1865-1951) was born in Mannheim of a well-to-do banking family. He began his studies at the Hochschule für Musik in Ber-

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:|| At The Doublebar



Summer chamber music workshops, which many of you attend, are now in full swing. These workshops provide an excellent opportunity to introduce fellow chamber music enthusiasts to the wider world of chamber music and to The Cobbett Association as

the place to explore it. As we are always looking for new members to replace those who can no longer play (see Charles Garbett's touching letter in the Letters to the Editor section) or who have passed on, we hope those of you who attend the summer workshops will use the opportunity to introduce the Association to your fellow attendees. In this regard, I want to thank Roger Gray and Ronald Goldman for all of their help. Thanks also to Messrs. Benzes, Larsen and Ussi for their fine articles.

For those of you who have yet to send in your renewals, this will be the last issue of *The Journal* that we will be sending you. As most of you know, we have no outside source of income and rely on your membership subscriptions for our operating expenses. And these expenses do not include either salaries or payments to anyone who writes for *The Journal*. This is because no one, including myself, is paid for any of the work they do on behalf of The Cobbett Association. Our operating expenses consist of equipment to print *The Journal*, supplies and postage. All of those who contribute their time and labor do so on a voluntary basis for which we are grateful.

On the subject of postage, rates were raised substantially this past May. The rate for mailing flats, that is envelopes larger than standard letter size, has gone up by nearly 30%. During the past ten years, our membership/subscription rates have remained the same. Meanwhile, the post office has raised its rates three times. Obviously, we cannot continue to absorb these increases and will soon be forced to increase our rates in order to continue operating. We will not know the full impact of the latest and most substantial rate increase until the end of the year, but it appears certain that we will be forced to raise our rates in either 2008 or the year after. —Ray Silvertrust, Editor

The Sounding Board-Letters to the Editor

Last year I broke my left arm, resulting in extensive reconstructive surgery. All healed except that I can no longer bend my wrist so that my fingers can reach the strings. The surgeon thought that he might correct this with more surgery, but this hardly seemed justified for a 91 year old man who is noticeably losing both mental and physical agility. Expensive too.!

I was delighted with your review of the Arensky Piano Trio No.1 (last issue). Years ago, I played often with a wonderful pianist. She could read anything, played with musical sensitivity, and was careful not to overwhelm the strings. Your review brought back a flood of memories of the great melodies that sing through your brain. It's a great piece of music that no trio should overlook.

Some time ago, you sent a CD disc of the Alberto Nepomuceno String Quartet No.3. I've had a string quartet group that met at my house once a week for years. We played (or I should say struggled, since we were strictly speaking amateur players) through the music several times and enjoyed it thoroughly, and I replay the disc from time to time.

Over the last 50 years or so, I have acquired a large library of chamber music. No longer of use to me, I plan to give it to an organization in Santa Barbara that has no library of its own. It seemed to be inappropriate to give it to a music school, which mostly introduces beginners to Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert etc., and would never touch Gordon Jacob, Carl Nielsen, George Onslow or Jean Sibelius, or the many other wonderful things that are rarely heard in public performances.

We are lucky in the Bay Area that the Chamber Musicians of Northern California and the extensive workshops at Humboldt State and Chico State Universities have introduced many people, including me, to a wide range of chamber music. I have enjoyed and been educated by *The Chamber Music Journal*, and appreciate your work in sponsoring and nurturing it. I hope you continue!

Charles Garbett
Los Altos Hills, California

Unfortunately, the time comes for all of us, if we are lucky enough to enjoy a very long life, when we must grudgingly put down our bows forever. Still, we must admit that we are among the fortunate ones who have banked many happy years. I am reminded of what our namesake, Walter Willson Cobbett himself wrote in the Cyclopedic Survey in his entry, The Chamber Music Life: "Since I first began to play chamber music with serious intent I have regarded this branch of the art with a crescendo of interest which has to my amazement gathered in intensity with the flight of time, and even yet may not have reached its culminating point, although I am well aware that, like the typical Beethoven crescendo, it must eventually end in a piano subito, in the rush of life followed by—sleep. But if my activities cease tomorrow, I have lived long enough to be able to testify, in my own not particularly robust person, that the will to live is strengthened, and mental juvenescence to some extent retained in advanced age, by a steady continuance of the practice of chamber music...Who could not be profoundly grateful, if he felt as I do that the happiness which I have enjoyed for so many years, 'this vision of fulfilled desire', has its source in my addiction to this particular activity of mind and body?"

So it is with sadness that we say good-bye to one of our happy band, knowing as we do that this day, in some form, awaits all of us. In closing, I would draw readers' attention to Mr. Garbett's comments about his chamber music library. Many of you have extensive libraries and at some point the question will arise as to what use those libraries can be put after you are done with them. I would ask you to consider contributing to the Cobbett Association Library which makes copies of its holdings available to its members as well as to scholars and performing groups the world over.

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.

Carl Nielsen: The String Quartets (continued from page 3)

Onslow and was so fascinated by them that I decided to write one myself. A month later it was finished...It had no originality, of course, but is fresh and vivid." The quartet was never published, but nevertheless was important in furthering Nielsen's career in music. Two years after finishing the quartet, Nielsen traveled to Copenhagen and showed it to Niels Gade, then the most prominent composer and teacher in Denmark. Gade recognized Nielsen's potential and recommended he study at the Copenhagen Conservatory. With the financial help of friends, Nielsen was able to do just that for the next three years. His main subject was violin, but he also began taking composition seriously and during this time produced another quartet—again never published. But throughout this period, chamber music was Nielsen's main compositional preoccupation up until around 1900.

Torben Schousboe, describing the style of Nielsen's music in *The New Grove*, writes, "Nielsen's music has often been described as a reaction against the high late Romantic style; but this description is incorrect, since it throws less light on the music than on the fact that later generations adopted the stylistic ideals of Nielsen...It was more in his attitude to music and to musical craftsmanship that he differed from many contemporary composers and became a source of inspiration for posterity...Nielsen started out from Classical harmony of the 18th and 19th centuries...but during the 1890's, he developed his harmony, apparently independently, to what might be called 'extended tonality' where all 12 semitones could be used within a tonally centered scale."

When one hears Nielsen's chamber music, which was for the most part written during this period, it is impossible to not to be impressed at how different, modern and original it sounds. For his own part, Nielsen suspected early on that his music would not be understood and if the entry in *Cobbett's Cyclopedia* is anything to go by, this appears to have been true, at least in England more than thirty years after his string quartets first appeared. Although the entry is not negative, it is terse and rather perfunctory for so important a composer. And it must be admitted, Nielsen's chamber music has never won a permanent place in the international repertoire and even today, one rarely if ever hears his string quartets performed outside of Scandinavia. I have heard people say that they are an acquired taste, that they are austere, bleak and poly-

tonal. While there is some truth to this, by comparison to Bartok's quartets, they are more traditionally tonal and far more approachable. Most importantly, these are trail-blazing works, which long before Bartok began to write his, paved the way for some of the new paths into which chamber music flowed during the 20th century.

Nielsen's first published string quartet, **String Quartet No.1 in g minor, Op.13** was composed during 1887-1888. It received its premiere in 1889 at a concert series held by the Copenhagen Chamber Music Society, after which Nielsen made some small changes. But it did not receive its first public performance until 1898. The Danish firm of Wilhelm Hansen published it in 1900. It was dedicated to Johan Svendsen, the Norwegian composer, who played such an important part in the musical life of Copenhagen. The opening movement, *Allegro energico*, immediately serves notice on the listener that this is not your typical late Romantic string quartet. An examination of the score shows that from the opening notes of the first theme, it boldly bursts forth and assertively displays its tonal newness. (see below)

Carl Nielsen, Op. 13.
(1888)

Allegro energico. M. M. ♩ = 132.

After a nervous development, the unabashedly lush second theme (example below) makes its entrance, announced by the cello.

(continued on page 6)

A pulsating background of 16th notes accompanies this lyrical melody and gives it a surprisingly Italian quality. In any case, the writing at this point becomes tonally far more conventional than the opening measures. This is a big movement, and of course, the main theme and this secondary melody struggle to take center stage. But there is also a very dramatic third theme which makes its appearance in the middle section and is derived from the pulsating 16th notes. The juxtapositioning of the themes and their further development is very imaginative. To me, the music sounds like a combination of Busoni and Bazzini.

The lyrical second movement, *Andante amoroso*, is completely different in style with regard to its very traditional use of melody and harmony. The music is characteristic of many of Nielsen's early slow movements. It begins quite slowly in choral fashion with a highly romantic melody. (see example on the right)

Andante amoroso.

Agitato.

Contrast is provided by an agitated and pulsating middle section in the minor, quicker in tempo. Unlike the main section, here, Nielsen's tonality as shown by his use of chromaticism and semi-tones in the descending passage, toward the end of the example on the left, is more adventurous.

After the music rises to a climax, it slowly dissipates and heralds the return of the opening *Andante* which this time is played somewhat more quickly.

Next comes a thrusting *Scherzo, Allegro molto*. The main theme is stormy and powerful, characterized more by its rhythm than by its melody. It sounds as if it has its antecedents in Schumann, except for the doublet that Nielsen throws, like a wrench, into the middle of the rhythm. Of course, Schumann, most likely, would not have interrupted it in mid-phrase as Nielsen does. The trio section, which is almost as long as the scherzo, has a gentle melody over a rustic drone in the cello, perhaps the very kind of thing he might have played in his father's band at country dances.

Allegro molto.

The finale has the interesting title, *Allegro inquieto* (meaning restless); Nielsen must have been thumbing through a dictionary of Italian musical terms to have found it. True to its title, it starts in an agitated fashion. The first violin is given a highly dramatic subject, accompanied by off-beat pizzicati in the other voices. (see right) The elaboration is rather good with clever use of grace notes and unexpected twists in rhythm. Unfortunately, the development is not as strong and the middle section, though not bad, has a forced quality, and is not as convincing as the opening. Nielsen makes up for it with an exciting coda.

Although there are touches of the mature Nielsen to be found, especially in the first movement, this quartet, fresh and engaging as it is, cannot be said to be representative of his mature style. It deserves to be heard in concert and amateurs ought to find it a playable and attractive work. The parts are in print from Wilhelm Hansen and several recordings are available.

In late 1889, Nielsen obtained a stipendium which allowed him to travel to Germany. While there, he finished work on **String Quartet No.2 in f minor, Op.5.** and was pleased with the result. He later wrote, "*Here I have found my own musical language.*" Its opus number is lower because it was published 6 years before the first quartet. The work was premiered in Berlin with Joseph Joachim in the audience. Nielsen recorded that Joachim thought "*there was much that was frightful but he praised me for those passages displaying fantasy and talent.*"

Nielsen was correct in feeling he had found his own musical language. This work exhibits all of the traits of his later works and, for 1890, it has to be considered far ahead of most everything being written. This fact will be driven home if you listen to the sound-bites on our website and keep in mind that Mahler was 30; Verdi, Bruckner and Brahms were all still alive and composing. Within ten years, in part because of this work, Nielsen's name was internationally known. During his lifetime, it was performed with some regularity in northern Europe.

The opening movement, *Allgro non troppo ma energico*, (example on right) begins with turbulent urgency, created by the main theme's

Allegro. (inquieto.) M. M. ♩ = 120.



syncopated rhythm and the 16th note accompaniment in the middle voices. As the music builds to an early dramatic climax, Nielsen relieves the tension through a highly chromatic downward passage leading to a tonic resolution. One can find this technique in his symphonies as well. The development which consists of a dissection of the rhythm leads to a very romantic second theme, first heard in the cello and then completed by the violin. (above example) The tempo of this more relaxed lyrical melody is gradually cranked up bringing with it renewed emotional energy. Unfortunately, I do not have space here to fully describe this very large and incredible movement which is two thirds as long as the three other movements put together.

The lovely opening theme to the slow movement, *Un poco adagio*, which follows must surely have been something that appealed to Joachim. It is a deeply felt, mildly sad lied. (example on right) The development section, however, may have been too chromatic for Joachim's taste.



It is also hard to see how the very attractive and playful *Allegretto scherzando* had anything in it to disgust Joachim. Not only the opening theme (example on left) but also the second subject and the trio are traditionally tonal, without any harsh chromaticism or polytonality. Of course, this is easier for us to say considering all that has occurred since 1890.

I suppose the same might be said of the finale, *Allegro appassionato*; our modern ears would not find much that could cause offense, but even the brief episodes, of what were surely very adventurous tonality for 1890, could well have shocked the ears of Joachim and his contemporaries, for whom Bruckner was outer tonal limit. The somewhat relentless opening is theme given out by the first violin.



The development is quite exciting, using the same off-beat harmonic accompaniment that is in the first movement. The middle second section, marked *Meno allegro ma energico*, is considerably slower and has an exotic air. With the return of the main theme and its mood of relentlessness, tension is heightened by long rising chromatic passages which are strident despite their traditional tonality. This is a long movement, perhaps a little too long, in view of the fact that during the last half, tension is released infrequently and long stretches are *f* or even *ff*. Further, the dense scoring gives it an almost symphonic quality. The coda is good, but one still feels it could have been better. To sum up, this is a fresh and original work, especially for 1890. And, judging from the first three movements alone, this quartet might qualify for the appellation of masterwork. The fact that it is the finale which is weaker than the rest is more problematic than if it had been a middle movement. So, although the finale is not bad, its flaws are such that I can only call this quartet a very good work, well-deserving of a place in the repertoire, but not a masterwork. It is published by Wilhelm Hansen and not beyond the reach of experienced amateurs. (This article will be concluded in the next issue of *The Journal*.)

In Memoriam Professor Vincent Oddo



It is with deep regret, we inform you that long-time Cobbett Association Director Professor Vincent Oddo passed away in June at the age of 71. He was instrumental in helping the Association find the first home for its library. Vince studied violin with Daniel Guillet and took a doctorate at Indiana University. He was a Professor of Composition at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago, and authored several books on music as well as popular string ensemble arrangements. After leaving Indiana, Vince switched from violin to viola and became a champion of that instrument, playing an active role in the International Viola Society. Besides playing in the Northbrook Symphony and Highland Park Strings, Vince was a sought after chamber music player. Your editor had the privilege of playing with Vince for many years. His experience and judgment were indispensable in the preparation of many articles for *The Journal*. He will be missed by all who knew him.

Robert Kahn's Trio Serenade

lin with Emil Pauer and Vinzenz Lachner. There, he got to know and became friends with Joseph Joachim who was the director. It was through both Joachim and his own family that he had a chance to get to know Brahms, who was so impressed with Kahn that he offered to give him composition lessons. Despite the fact that he refused the offer, Brahms did help Kahn informally, and while Kahn's work does, to some extent, show the influence of Brahms, he is an eclectic and independent composer whose music has its own originality. After finishing his studies in Berlin, Kahn, on Brahms' suggestion, went to Munich to study with Joseph Rheinberger. After completing his own studies, he worked for a while as a free lance composer before obtaining a position at the Hochschule in Berlin where he eventually became a professor of piano and composition. In 1934, he fled Nazi Germany to avoid persecution and lived in England for the rest of his life.

The Trio Serenade, Op.73, has a very interesting history. When Kahn submitted it to his publisher Simrock, it was a trio for Oboe, Horn & Piano. Simrock took one look at it and told Kahn he would never sell more than a few copies if that were the only combination by which the work could be played. Simrock told Kahn point blank that he would not publish the Serenade unless he made a version at least for the standard piano trio. Kahn, who apparently was very fond of this work, did Simrock one better--he wrote the Serenade so that it could be played by 9 different ensembles! In addition to its original instrumentation, it can also be played by oboe, cello and piano; oboe, viola and piano; violin, cello and piano; violin, viola and piano; violin, horn and piano; clarinet, horn and piano, clarinet, cello and piano; and lastly by clarinet, viola and piano.

In a post-Brahmsian idiom, the lovely Trio Serenade is, unlike Brahms' own serenades, in one continuous substantial movement. It does, however, consist of two alternating parts, each with its own middle section or trio.

The musical score for the first part of the Trio Serenade is written in 6/4 time and B-flat major. It begins with a horn introduction (labeled 'Horn') and a piano accompaniment (labeled 'Klav.'). The tempo is 'Andante sostenuto' and the mood is 'espr.' (espressivo). The score shows a long, flowing melody with various dynamics including piano (p) and mezzo-forte (mf).

The first part is a genial and relaxed *Andante sostenuto*. After a short introduction by the horn (viola, cello) and piano, the oboe (clarinet,

violin) lovingly brings forth a languid, sad and reflective melody. The horn (viola, cello) then completes it. The theme is interesting in that it is a very long-lined melody. The second section, *Vivace*, which serves as a trio, begins with a restless, somewhat frantic, introduction of running notes in the piano. (example below)

The musical score for the second part of the Trio Serenade is marked 'Vivace' and is in 2/4 time. It features a piano introduction with running notes, marked 'f non legato'. The score includes various dynamics such as forte (f), mezzo-forte (mf), and sforzando (sf).

However, this unrest is quickly calmed when the oboe (clarinet, violin) brings forth the main theme, which is upbeat, but in no way

hectic. (example below right) In fact, it does not entirely expel the mood of the main section and the vaguest air of uncertainty hangs

This musical score shows the transition from the Vivace section back to the Andante section. It features a piano introduction with triplets and a mezzo-forte (mf) section. The tempo is 'Andante sostenuto' and the mood is 'espr.' (espressivo). The score includes various dynamics such as piano (p) and mezzo-forte (mf).

about in the background. This makes the transition back to the *Andante* appear to be almost seamless. One can hear in these melodies that Brahms was an antecedent but the music does not particularly sound Brahmsian, except perhaps in the very darkest moments of the *Andante*.

(continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

The second part of the Serenade consists of an *Allegretto non troppo e grazioso*, not terribly fast but elegant. It, too, has a faster middle section, *Poco piu animato*.

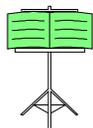
However this is more or less an enlargement in the minor of the Allegretto's main theme rather than a trio section with its own melody.

The musical score consists of two systems of music. The first system is titled "Allegretto non troppo e grazioso" and includes markings for "poco string.", "1", "p grazioso", and "p". The second system includes markings for "poco rallent.", "p", "molto rallent.", "pp", "Vivace", "1", "mf", and "ff".

In the effective coda, Kahn cleverly reintroduces the main theme from the *Andante* with a variant of the main theme from the *Allegretto*.

I play both the violin and the viola and in preparation for this article was able to play the Serenade in five of the possible combinations (Violin, Viola & Piano; Violin, Cello & Piano; Violin, Horn & Piano; Clarinet, Viola & Piano; and Oboe, Viola & Piano). Surprisingly, it sounds excellent, although not entirely the same, in each of these versions. The violin-violin and oboe-violin versions give the work a much brighter sound than Violin-Cello, Violin-Horn and Clarinet-Viola and I would image also the Clarinet-Horn version. In my opinion, this is a superb post-Brahmsian work well worth getting to know. Though lacking in drama and passion, it makes up for this in the elegance and beauty of its themes. It has only been recorded once, in a version for Oboe, Viola & Piano on Chandos CD#9990. The parts for all nine combinations are available from Edition Silvertrust.

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New Recordings



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

String Quartets

Lera AUERBACH (1973-) No.3, Capriccio 71 104 / Martin BRESNICK (1946-) No.2, Cantaloupe 21041 / Georgy CATOIRE (1861-1926) Op.23, Brilliant 93081 / Roland DAHINDEN (1962-) Nos. 2-5, Mode 175 / Jean FRANCAIX (1912-97) Qt, NMC D124 / John HARBISON (1938-) No.3, Musica Omnia 0110 / Oliver MELLANO (1971-) No.1, Naïve 782178 / Hans SCHAEUBLE (1906-88) Music, Op.19, Guild 7303 / Erich SCHMID (1907-2000) Op.4, Guild 7303 / Meinard SCHÜTTER (1910-2006) Qt, Guild 7303 / Carl STAMITZ (1745-1801) Op.14 Nos.1-2 & 4-5, Naxos 8.557671 / Eric TANGUY (1968-) No.2, Transart Live 129

Strings Only-Not Quartets

Luigi BOCCHERINI (1743-1805) 6 Qnts, Op.13 (G.277-82), Brilliant 93076 / Georgy CATOIRE (1861-1926) Qnt (2 Vc) Op.16, Brilliant 93081 / Sergei TANEYEV (1856-1915) Qnt (2Vc), Op.14

Piano Trios

Anton ARENSKY (1861-1906) No.1, Op.32, Brilliant 93081 / Martin BRESNICK (1946-) Trio, Cantaloupe 21041 / Philip GRANGE (1956-) *Homage to Chagall*, Campion Cameo 2053 / Prince Louis Ferd. HOHENZOLLERN (1772-1806) Op.3, MD&G 303 1361 / Besty JOLAS (1926-) *Les heures*, Accord 442 8449 / Herman KOPPEL (1908-98) 9 Variations, Op.80, Dacapo 8.226003 / Paul MEALOR (1975-) *Borderlands*, Campion Cameo 2053 / John PICKARD (1963) Trio, Campion Cameo 2053 / Camden REEVES (1974-) *Starlight Squid*, Campion Cameo 2053

Piano Quartets, Quintets & Sextets

Georgy CATOIRE (1861-1926) Qt, Op.31, Brilliant 93081 / Prince Louis Ferd. HOHENZOLLERN (1772-1806), Qt, Op.6, MD&G 303 1361 / Paul JUON (1872-1940) *Rhapsodie* for Pno Qt, Op.37 & Qt, Op.50, Musiques Suisses 6244 / Herman KOPPEL, Qt, Op.114 & Qnt, Op.57, Dacapo 8.226003 / Wilhelm PE-

TERSEN (1890-1957) Qt in c, Op.42, Edition Hera 02121 / Richard STRAUSS (1864-1949) Qt in c, Op.13, Edition Hera 02121 / Sergei TANEYEV (1856-1915) Qnt, Op.30

Winds & Strings

Jean FRANCAIX (1912-97) Qt for Ob & Str Trio, CPO 999779 / Besty JOLAS (1926-) *Quatuor IV* for Cln & Str Trio, Accord 442 8449 / Franz KROMMER (1759-1831) Qt No.3 for Ob & Str Trio & Qnt Nos.1-2 for Ob & Str Qt

Winds, Strings & Piano

Carl REINECKE (1824-1910) Trio for Cln, Vla & Pno, Op.264, Naxos 8.570181

Piano & Winds

Jean FRANCAIX (1912-97) Trio for Ob, Bsn & Pno, CPO 999779

Winds Only

Peter FRICKER (1920-90) Wind Qnt, BBC Legends 4192 / Darius MILHAUD (1892-1974) *Chasse a Valabre* for Wind Qnt, BBC Legends 4192

The Piano Trios of Camille Saint-Saëns

It must be kept in mind that these early successes were within a limited audience that was devoted to instrumental music and not the general concert-going public who viewed symphonic and chamber music as something intellectual, unnatural, unmusical and German. Indeed, commenting on this sorry state of affairs, Saint Saëns lamented, "The composer who was bold enough to venture out into the field of instrumental music had only one forum for the performance of his works: a concert which he had to organize himself and to which he invited his friends and the press. One could not even think of attracting the public, the general public; the very mention of the name of a French composer on a placard—especially that of a living French composer—was enough to send everyone running." Saint Saëns found himself forced to create an organization, the Société Nationale de Musique, whose sole purpose was to remedy this problem. Unfortunately, it was not until the beginning of the 20th century that the French general public began to regularly frequent the concerts of instrumental music.

Although Saint-Saëns' **Piano Trio No.1 in F Major, Op.18** is a relatively early work—it dates from 1863—it exhibits all of the essential characteristics of his mature style. Upon hearing it, one can understand Berlioz's envious remark because here is a work that is at once elegant and brilliant which show a very skillful use of the instruments and their possibilities. The first of its four movements, *Allegro*,

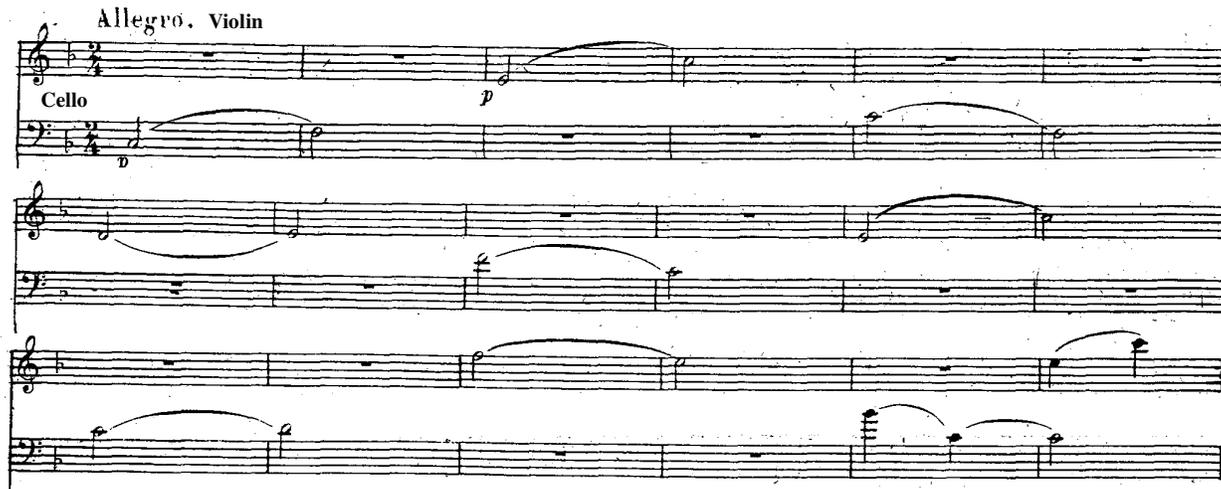
begins with a gay and buoyant theme in the cello. (see left) After a more lyrical second theme, there is a very skillful development section which show the influence of Beethoven.



The second movement, *Andante*, makes a very strong impression, not only because it is so different in mood from the preceding *Allegro vivace*, but also because of the originality of its theme, a melody which gives the impression of being an almost mediaeval folk tune. The piano states the main theme, over a drone in the strings. This effect makes the music sound rather like a folk melody from the mountains of the Auvergne and has led some scholars to conclude it was the result of a vacation Saint-Saëns had taken there not long before. After a complete statement of the theme, the entrance of the violin sends the music toward the first of several climaxes.



The third movement, *Scherzo, presto*, is interesting because of the many cross rhythms which punctuate the music. The the very unusual and lopsided first subject consists entirely of an exchange between the cello, which has a third beat pizzicato, and the piano, which has an accented chord on beat one. The bumptious second subject is less pointedly rhythmic but could not be called lyrical. In the finale, Saint-Saëns seems out to prove that he can create a first rate movement from the meagerest of resources, and he succeeds.



The themes of the final *Allegro*, are light and elegant. The lovely first theme in particular given to the strings alone is a two note response. (example on left). From time to time, the piano loudly interrupts with abrupt chords which signal the

(Continued on page 12)

entrance of the second theme. Thunderous crashes aside, this is a light and graceful finale full of elegance and youthful exuberance.

Nearly thirty years passed before Saint-Saëns chose to write another piano trio. **Piano Trio No.2 in e minor, Op.92** was composed and completed in 1892. While working on it he wrote to a friend, "I am working quietly away at a piano trio which I hope will drive to despair all those unlucky enough to hear it. I shall need the whole summer to perpetuate this atrocity..." It is only the second sentence which reveals just how seriously he regarded this work. Chamber works rarely took him more than a few weeks or a month to complete. He worked long and hard on this trio, even rewriting the last movement, a rarity for him. Composed on a grand scale, it required five movements to hold all of the many ideas he wished to present. The big opening movement, *Allegro non troppo*, (nearly twice as long as all of the other movements) begins with a melancholy theme which bears a striking resemblance to the main theme of Tchaikovsky' Piano Trio Op.50, which was composed some ten years before. Even the treatment of the opening measures is fairly similar. It seems unlikely that this was an accident as Saint-Saëns got to know and befriend Tchaikovsky during an extended visit to Russia. They each admired the other's music and Saint-Saëns must almost certainly have been familiar with Tchaikovsky's piano trio. Against a soft arpeggio figure in the

piano, the violin and cello alternate, each given two measures of the theme. Finally, when it has been completely stated, the two play it in unison in its entirety and then move into the development. (see example above) The development and second theme, of course, are quite different from Tchaikovsky's. Played over a dazzling piano part, the strings embark upon a passionate and more dramatic melody.

1

The main theme of the *Allegretto* which comes next (on left) has neither the power, the drama, nor the huge scope of the first movement.

It is sprightly and light-hearted and clearly intended as a brief, contrasting, palette-cleanser. But when the middle section takes this melody and thrusts it into the minor, it becomes menacing. The opening theme is briefly repeated but interrupted by a virtuosic passage that sounds like it was intended as a brilliant coda, but it has come too early, and the themes are repeated once again before the music softly dies away.

The middle movement, *Andante con moto*, though it is the shortest movement of the trio and not as dramatic as the opening movement, nonetheless, serves as the trio's center of gravity.

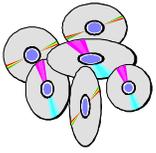
And^{te} con moto 63 = *appassionato*

The somewhat introspective theme (see above) is a highly romantic love song first stated by the piano and then in turn by the strings.

Now again we find the mood is lightened by the fourth movement, *Gracioso, poco allegro*. Some critics have described it as a waltz in the style of Chopin, but I think it comes closer to a sparkling Tchaikovsky waltz.

It moves quickly but elegantly and is full of *joie de vivre*. The finale, *Allegro*, begins in a quiet, but restless and sinister fashion. The main theme dominates but the second theme is the subject of a short, somewhat frantic, marvelous fugue. It is then capped with a short, exciting coda.

Both of these trios, though very different in mood and style are masterpieces of the literature and ought to be heard in concert. There is an excellent recording now available (see page 16 bottom right) and the parts to both are available from a number of publishers including Kalmus, Alfred, Silvertrust and Durand.



Rubinstein: Octet for Piano, Winds & Strings / Quintet for Piano & Winds Joseph-Guy Ropartz: Five String Quartets



Anton Rubinstein (1829-1894) was probably, after Liszt, the greatest pianist of the 19th century. But his lasting importance was in the realm of composition and Russian musical life. In 1862, he founded the St. Petersburg Conservatory and served as its first director. His efforts in developing Russian musical talent were perhaps the greatest of any single individual. Not only did he introduce European educational methods but he also established standards that were as rigorous as

any conservatory in Europe. He hoped to reform Russian musical life but in a way very different from Rimsky Korsakov, Balakirev and the other Russian nationalist composers whose goal was to create a Russian style of composition. They attacked his music as being too European, too German, too eclectic. But this was exactly the point. Rubinstein consciously took Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Schumann as his models. His student, Tchaikovsky, later defended and adopted this position, but neither could entirely escape their Russian roots. Russian melody can be heard in their music, it just is not as prominent as the nationalists would have liked. Outside of Russia, Rubinstein's music was, for a long time, much admired. However, it must be admitted that many of his works do not rise above the commonplace. He was simply too fluent a writer for his own good. (He wrote 10 string quartets, at least 5 piano trios, a string quintet and a string sextet as well as several other chamber works) Worse yet, he lacked the patience to take pencil and eraser to the manuscript page to improve what he had just dashed off. Few composers could have produced anything at all of merit doing this, but Rubinstein, by the sheer prodigious quality of his talent, was able, on occasion, to create works of astonishing beauty and quite good style. The two works on this **Orfeo CD#422041A** illustrate some of his strengths and weaknesses. His **Octet for Piano, Flute, Clarinet, Horn, Violin, Viola, Cello and Bass, Op.9** is a relatively early work dating from 1855. It originally began life as a piano concerto (1849) and this surely accounts for the rather symphonic sound, particularly in the outer movements. Sabaneiev, a composer of the nationalist school and the author of the entry on Rubinstein in Cobbett's *Cyclopedia*, not surprisingly, trashes the Octet, calling it a gray and colorless work. In four movements, the big opening *Allegro non troppo* certainly does sound like a piano concerto. However, the highly romantic and rather dramatic main theme is quite good and the other instruments are effectively treated. A clever *Vivace*, which serves as a scherzo comes next. The piano part features some dazzling runs. The Beethovenian slow movement, *Andante non troppo*, begins sedately with a noble theme, but slowly, dramatic tension is built. However, Rubinstein teases and does not allow the music to reach a dramatic climax until near the end of the movement. The opening measures of the finale, *Allegro moderato*, also have the hallmarks of a concerto. The piano is used in a soloistic way against the rather orchestral grouping of the others. Yet, the thematic material is interesting and has much to recommend it. I cannot agree with Sabaneiev's assessment that

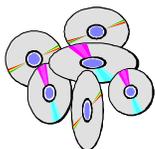
the Octet is colorless, but the writing in the outer movements often is not in true chamber music style. The **Quintet in F Major, Op.55 for Piano, Flute, Clarinet, Horn, & Bassoon** is from 1860. Again, the first movement, *Allegro non troppo* begins as if it were a concerto for piano and wind quintet. Yet as the fine melodies are developed, the ensemble writing improves tremendously and by the time the coda appears, there is no doubt one is hearing a first class piece of chamber music. In the following *Scherzo, allegro assai*, the piano is given a somewhat virtuosic role, but once past the opening measures, one is able to see that it is an integral part of the overall ensemble. There are several original touches, including an excellent contrasting trio. The third movement, *Andante con moto*, is a theme and set of variations given a Schumannesque treatment. In the finale, Rubinstein shows he has taken the measure of the group for which he is writing and the integration of the parts is excellent. While the Octet ought not to be written off, as Sabaneiev suggests, and should be investigated, it is the Quintet for Piano and Winds that illustrates Rubinstein was capable of first rate work. An interesting and worthwhile CD.



The Breton composer **Joseph-Guy Ropartz** (1864-1955) was originally drawn toward writing as well as music but opted for the latter and entered the Paris Conservatory where he studied with Massenet and Franck. For many years he served as director of the conservatories in Nancy and later Strasbourg, while also conducting the orchestras in those cities. Between 1911 and 1948, he composed six string quartets.

Timpany CD#s 1C1099 and 1C1115

present the last five. **String Quartet No.2 in d minor** dates from 1912. In four movements, it is a hard work to describe and, at least at first hearing, to understand. Tonally austere and certainly very modern sounding for the time, its color palette borrows from Debussy and the impressionists but has none of their soft warmth and lyricism. In its place is a harsher angularity with rather complex harmonies. For the most part, there appears to be no melodic line in the traditional sense. He uses several short note sequences which might be styled as cells, several of which appear in each of the four movements. **String Quartet No.3** dates from 1922. The jacket notes state the new style of his writing was due to the fact that he intended the work for amateur ensembles. Also in four movements, the melodic lines can be perceived easier, the harmonies are not as complex, but this is not to say it is simple music. This quartet, which is closer to the style of the impressionists than the Second, features several original effects. The *Scherzo* with its bagpipe drone and lovely trio section is especially noteworthy. Though still tonally advanced, the Third has none of the bitter harshness of the Second and is far more appealing. Shorter than the preceding two works, **String Quartet No.4** was finished in 1934. It is close in mood and style to the Third. Harshness and density of scoring have been banished, and it is easier to comprehend the overall thematic and melodic picture. It is also clear that this quartet has the impressionists as its antecedents. Breton folk



Richard Franck's 2 Piano Trios

Luigi Boccherini's Last String Trios for Two Violins & Cello

melody is readily discernible in the second movement. This is an appealing modern work which I think would do well on the concert stage. **String Quartet No.5**, subtitled *Quasi una fantasia*, was completed in 1940. Though it is not a long work (less than 15 minutes), the fact that its four movements are played without pause gives the work quite a different feel than it might have had if there were pauses between movements. Close in style and mood to Nos. 3 & 4, it is harder to grasp and certainly not immediately as appealing because the lack of pauses creates a certain monotony. Ropartz finished his last, **String Quartet No.6**, in 1948. More substantial than Nos. 3-5, it does not represent any real change of style. Unlike the Fifth, there is a hint, here and there, of folk melody. As in virtually all of these quartets, interest is best maintained in the faster movements. Of the five quartets recorded on these disks, the only one I would want to play or hear with any regularity is the Fourth. Ropartz was often worried that his music might be boring, and I must admit that to a great extent, that was my reaction. However, you may feel otherwise and I recommend you listen to the sound-bites on our website.



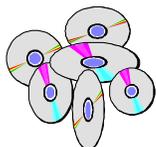
Richard Franck (1858-1938) was the son of the composer, concert pianist and teacher Eduard Franck. Born in Cologne, where his father was then teaching, Richard showed an early talent for the piano. When it became clear he was going to pursue a career in music, Eduard, who had studied with Mendelssohn, saw to it that he received the best training available. Richard was sent to the prestigious Leipzig Conservatory to study with Carl Reinecke and Salomon Jadassohn, both of whom were among the leading composers and teachers of their day. Afterwards, Richard enjoyed a long career as a teacher, composer, and pianist, during the course of which he held several positions in Germany and Switzerland.

While I usually agree with the assessments of the famous chamber music critic Wilhelm Altmann, I found his opinion in the *Cyclopedia* that Franck's two piano trios are nothing more than drawing room music very wide of the mark. The prestigious *Allgemeine Schweizer Zeitung* (Swiss Musical Journal), writing about Richard Franck's Piano Trio No.1, Op.20, had this to say: "Powerful and full-sounding energy is shown in Richard Franck's Op.20 Piano Trio, which is a magnificent, significant composition, fresh in invention, firm and secure in its development, and mature in its expression." Franck's **Piano Trio No.1 in b minor, Op.20** was composed in 1893. The opening *Allegro*, has for its main theme a restless, searching melody followed by a turbulent development section. The gorgeous second theme effectively relieves the tension but it, too, brings a sense of striving. Next is a quiet and reflective *Andante sostenuto*. This is followed by an updated, graceful and light-hearted *Menuetto* which gives no hint at all of the stormy music hidden in the middle section of this very fine movement. The finale, *Prestissimo*, is a whirling tarantella. **Piano Trio No.2 in E flat Major, Op.32** dates from 1900. The two themes of the opening *Allegro moderato* are lyrical and

rather romantic. The lovely *Adagio* which follows, with the exception of brief outburst of passion, is reflective and quiet. Next comes an exciting Brahmsian *Scherzo* quite well done. The joyful finale, is well thought out and even has a brief four part fugue. Both of these trios, presented on **Audite CD #97.487** are excellent standard bearers of the romantic movement and well worth hearing and playing. A recommended CD.



It may be that all of the chamber music of **Luigi Boccherini** (1743-1805) has now been catalogued, though I doubt it. Nonetheless, **Glossa CD #92200** boldly proclaims on its cover that the 4 string trios which are recorded on disk are his last, at least for two violins and cello. This, as opposed to violin, viola & cello, was his preferred combination for string trio and he is thought to have written as many as 48 such works. The fact that the Italian cello virtuoso had spent virtually the whole of his working life in Spain is reflected in much of his music, including these trios which were completed in 1797 and published in 1798. They are now known as **Op.54** (Nos.2, 4-6 were recorded—Nos.1 and 3 were never printed as part of the set because for many years they were lost, although they appeared later under a different opus number). Of the four, only Op.54 No.2 is in three movements and all four end with a fast movement rather than a minuet, showing that Boccherini had moved with the times. As recently as his Op.38 trios, he was still ending works with a minuet. Boccherini is also able to get a surprisingly rich sound from the three instruments, at times approaching the weight of a quartet. The first movement, *Allegro*, of **Op.54 No.2**, replete with appealing melody and Spanish rhythms, provides a good example. The very powerful section of the opening *Allegro con spirito* of **Op.54 No.4**, which alternates with a softer more mysterious melodic theme creates a strong impression. The finale, *Presto*, of **Op.54 No.5** makes the strongest impression of the four movements not only because of some very unusual harmonic progressions but also perhaps because it is in the minor. Each of the trios has a minuet, each pleasant and straight forward and of a rococo nature, while the last three have similar slow movements. Other than Op.54 No.2, there is nothing very Spanish about any of these trios. Stylewise, there are no advances or changes over his earlier works. And, in fact, they are perhaps a step backwards from what he accomplished in his Op.38 trios, certainly as far as complexity of rhythms and the integration of some Spanish melody. Like Op.38, these works are not written in concertante style and the part writing for all three instruments, as well as the harmonic underpinning, is good. I do not own and have not played the Op.54 trios, but it does not sound like they make any virtuosic demands on the cello. This is a CD well-worth having, especially for Boccherini fans and those who enjoy trios, but I think that it is fair to say, while the melodies are pleasant, they are, for the most part, unremarkable. Much earlier works, such as his Op.1 or his Op.14 trios, although they are mostly written in concertante style, have more memorable and better melodic material.



Anton Eberl: Works for Piano, Clarinet and Strings

A String Quartet by Riccardo Zandonai



There is no composer whose works were more frequently passed off as Mozart's than **Anton Eberl** (1765-1807). Even more surprising was the documented fact that there was no protest from Mozart against the use of his name on Eberl's compositions. Eberl, a friend and student of the great man, did mind but was too timid to take action until after Mozart had died. Finally, he published the following notice in a widely read German newspaper, "*However flattering it may be that even connoisseurs were*

capable of judging these works to be the products of Mozart, I can in no way allow the musical public to be left under this dilution." Despite this, his works still continued to be published under Mozart's name. This, in itself, is a reliable indication as to the contemporary opinion of the quality of Eberl's works. Eberl was born in Vienna and studied piano and composition from several teachers, including Mozart. Besides being an outstanding composer (of more than 200 works), he was a pianist of the first rank and toured throughout Europe.

After many years of no recordings, suddenly two have appeared. On **Ramee CD# 0601** his **Grand Trio in E flat Major for Clarinet, Cello & Piano, Op.36**; his **Sonata in B flat Major, Op.10 No.2 for Clarinet (or violin), Cello & Piano** along with his **Quintet for Clarinet, 2 Violas, Cello & Piano, Op.41** are recorded. While on **Christophorus CD 77259**, besides the aforementioned Op.10 No.2, we find **Sonata in a minor, Op.10 No.1** for violin, cello & piano. **The Grand Trio Op.36** is a late work dating from 1806, the year before Eberl's sudden death from scarlet fever. An opus number in the 200's would have been more accurate. Though primarily classical in nature, there are the stirrings of early romanticism in the music. In particular, the treatment of the cello is far in advance of all of Mozart's as well as Beethoven's Op.1 piano trios. A brief *Andante* introduction leads to the *Allegro con spirito* which is the main theme of the first movement. Hearing the lovely melodies and the grace of the writing, it is not hard to see why Eberl's works could so easily be compared to and passed off as Mozart's. The second movement, *Adagio non troppo*, is an excellent theme and set of variations. Next comes a lively Scherzo. The finale, a sprightly *Allegretto*, is also a loose set of variations.

The **Op.10 Sonatas** are considerably earlier works where the cello part mostly doubles the left hand of the piano. Full of lovely melodic writing, they are Mozartian sonatas for piano and violin or clarinet, with the piano having the lion's share of the thematic material. Once again, their quality is such that it is not hard to see how they could have been passed off as Mozart's. In the **Op.41 Quintet**, the piano basically alternates with the others in developing the thematic material. The only exception to this treatment being the clarinet which takes the role of the first violin. Eberl's opus numbers mean nothing, and judging from the writing, I would think the Quintet, rather than being a later work, was writ-

ten much earlier. Perhaps before Mozart's own clarinet quintet, K.581. As chamber music, the quintet is the weakest of these works. Both recordings are made with period instruments and are worth having, but of the two, I would choose the Ramee, not only because it presents three chamber works—the very fine Op.36 being the best of the lot—but also because I feel the recording is better.



Dynamic CD#461 features three works for string quartet. The first is Verdi's string quartet, the second is Puccini's *Crisantemi* (Chrysanthemums) and the third work is the **String Quartet in G Major** by **Riccardo Zandonai** (1883-1944). Zandonai was born in what was, until 1919, the Austrian province of South Tyrol, however, his musical training took place in Italy at the Pesaro Conservatory where he studied with Mascagni among others. Zandonai was drawn toward opera and most of his

compositions are for that medium. Today, if he is known at all, it is for his opera *Francesca da Rimini*.

His String Quartet in G Major is one of the few instrumental works which he composed. It dates from 1904. Neither Cobbett nor Altmann seem to be aware of this substantial and rather engaging work. The opening *Allegro moderato* starts calmly and slowly builds momentum and tension until it finally reaches a powerful climax which is a restatement in the minor of the main theme. In the major, it is quite pleasant, almost inoffensive, but in the minor it has a highly dramatic and almost threatening quality. The instrumental writing is very assured and in fine quartet style with many clever touches, such as the very effective use of pizzicato. The second movement, *Presto*, is a jolly scherzo into which Zandonai periodically throws a tiny bit of dissonance, which he immediately resolves. It is rather like driving quickly over a speed bump. The slower trio section is of considerable weight and has a somewhat threatening and dour quality but makes a greater impression than the scherzo. The slow movement, a big *Adagio*, is clearly the quarter's center of gravity. The work unfolds in a leisurely fashion but the mood is nearly always tense, especially during the densely written dramatic climaxes. The energetic finale, *Allegro*, features thrusting peasant melodies. This is a good work. It is certainly written in what the Germans call *quartettmässig* (real quartet) style. But it is Italian in melos and conception, and does not particularly show the influence of anyone else. Its main weakness is its lack of any particularly memorable melodies. Despite this, it is still worth hearing.

Readers will be interested to know, if they have missed the brief notice in the body of the articles about these works, that there are new recordings of Saint-Saëns' Piano Trio No.1 in F Major, Op.18 and No.2 in e minor, Op.92 on Harmonia Mundi CD#901862 and also of Robert Kahn's Serenade for Winds, Strings and Piano, Op.73 on Chandos CD#9950.

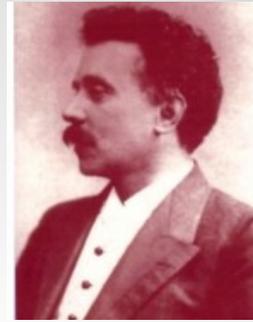
FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE



Camille Saint-Saëns



Carl Nielsen



Robert Kahn



Anton Rubinstein



Joseph-Guy Ropartz



Richard Franck



Luigi Boccherini



Anton Eberl



Riccardo Zandonai

ONSLOW, SPOHR, STENHAMMAR, FUCHS, KIEL



HERZOGENBERG, GLIERE, TANAYEV, REINECKE

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

KROMMER, LACHNER, GRANADOS, VAN BREE, GRETCHANINOV