

THE
CHAMBER MUSIC
JOURNAL

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

***Works for String Quartet
By Hugo Wolf***

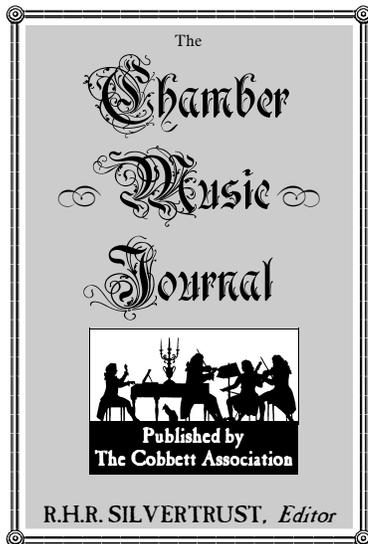
***Adolphe Blanc's Septet
for Winds & Strings***

***Two Romantic Era Polish
Piano Quartets***

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The Sounding Board-Letters to the Editor



Music for Piano Quintet with Bass

Re the last *Journal* (Summer 2009), and Harlon Taylor's letter, there is another work with the same instrumentation as Schubert's Trout Quintet: George Onslow's Quintet in B minor opus 70, published by SJ Music. Judith Rattenbury Cambridge, UK

Glazunov's String Quintet

A while back, you featured an article about Alexander Glazunov's works for String Quartet. (appeared in the Summer 2008 issue—ed) Didn't he also write something for String Quintet? If so, can you give me any information about it, such as whether it has been recorded and if the parts are in print? Jimmy James Riley Nashville, Tennessee

Glazunov did write a String Quintet. It is his Op.39 in A Major and is for two violins, viola and two cellos. It was composed in 1891 when he was still under the influence of Rimsky Korsakov and the Russian nationalist school and is full of Russian folk melody. After Schubert's String Quintet for the same combination, it is probably the most often played. There have been several recordings made of it and the parts are in print and available from several different publishers.

Nikolaus Zmeskall

Recently, I heard a string quartet on the radio by a composer whose last name was Zemeskall. I rather liked it and was wondering if you could tell me anything about him and how to obtain the music to his any of his string quartets. Gunnar Olsen Oslo, Norway

Nikolaus Zmeskall was one of Beethoven's few close personal friends in Vienna. He worked as an official in the Vienna office of the Hungarian Chancellery. To hold such a post, he would have had to have been an aristocrat and most sources list him as being a Prince.

Zmeskall, though not a professional, played the cello at a rather high level. It is generally thought that Beethoven composed his 1797 duet for viola and cello "Obbligato for Two Pairs of Eyeglasses" for himself after he had begun to wear glasses and for Zmeskall, who was short-sighted. Zmeskall often took part in chamber music evenings with Beethoven and the latter also dedicated his Op.95 String

Quartet, "The Serioso" to him. Haydn is said to have dedicated the Op.20 Sun Quartets to Zmeskall, which may explain why the cello part in those works is better than average.

A great number of letters and notes from Beethoven to Zmeskall have survived. They often can be found on the auction block. From them, it is clear that Beethoven considered Zmeskall a good enough friend to make jokes at Zmeskall's expense. He addresses him, among other things, as Baron Muckcart Driver—a pun on the meaning of Zmeskall's name in Hungarian. Many of the notes give a nice insight into Beethoven's life away from music—"Let us meet at 6 o'clock at the Schwann Inn and drink some of their dreadful red wine...." he writes to Zmeskall on one occasion.

Zmeskall often helped Beethoven in practical matters such as finding a servant. By the 1820s Zmeskall, who suffered from severe gout, was confined to a wheelchair, nonetheless, he made the effort to be present, to Beethoven's delight, at the first performance of the Ninth Symphony on 7th May 1824 at the Kärntnertor theatre. Beethoven's final letter to Zmeskall was written only a month before he died. "My very dear friend! A thousand thanks for your sympathy. I do not despair. But what is most painful to me is the complete cessation of my activities. Yet there is no evil which has not something good in it as well—May Heaven grant you too an alleviation of your painful condition. Perhaps we shall both be restored to health and then we shall meet and see one another again as friendly neighbors—Heartfelt greetings from your old friend who sympathizes with you." Five weeks later Beethoven died. Zmeskall outlived him by six years.

Zmeskall 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. Two CDs (on Hungaroton and Opus) have been made of three of his quartets. According to the jewel box notes on one CD, the manuscripts to all of the quartets exist in the library of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna. But, unfortunately, none of them have appear to be in print or to have ever been published.

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.

Works for String Quartet by Hugo Wolf

by Waltraut Hochfilzer



The name of Hugo Wolf (1860-1903) is perhaps not unknown to most music lovers. However, most of those who do know of him are familiar with his lieder, or art songs as they are sometimes called, and not with his instrumental music, and certainly not with his chamber music, with the possible exception of his *Italian Serenade*. And even this, they probably have only heard in its orchestral arrangement rather than the original string quartet setting. Wolf is often considered, after Schubert, as the most important composer of lieder. And it seems highly im-

probable that he would have thought of himself as a composer of chamber music, especially after his string quartet was rejected for performance in 1885 by the famous Rosé String Quartet of Vienna. In fact, not long after this rejection, he seems to have lost all interest in chamber music. But his quartet was eventually per-

formed in 1903, at which time it received widely differing critiques. Some hailed it as a work of great emotion with a wealth of ideas, while others pointed to its lack of quartet style and the awkwardness in the treatment of the various instruments. Ever since, this dichotomy of opinion seems to have persisted: To some, it is a work of genius, to others it is a youthful work with serious flaws. Wolf made two further attempts to compose chamber music, both were for string quartet. The first was his *Intermezzo*, dating from 1886 and the other, the *Italian Serenade*, finished the following year. After this, there is no evidence he ever considered writing any chamber music. Yet, despite the fact he only wrote three works, two of which are but one movement, these works are too interesting and original in conception to assign them to the dustbin of oblivion.

Hugo Wolf was born in the town Windischgrätz, now in the republic of Slovenia and renamed Slovenj Gradec, but then a part of the Habsburg Empire. Windischgrätz was a German-speaking

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Polish Piano Quartets by Wladyslaw Zelenski & Zygmunt Noskowski

By Jerzy Potocki

"Poland has not yet perished, as long as we shall live." These are the stirring opening words to the Polish national anthem, but they make little sense to anyone unfamiliar with the sad history of Poland. During the 15th and 16th centuries, Poland was the most powerful and democratic country in Europe, but in the 18th century, it was torn apart and divided up by Prussia, Austria and Russia. After the third and final partition in 1795, Poland disappeared from the map of Europe and ceased to exist as a country until it was restored in 1919. So, for 124 years, there was no Polish nation, but, of course, there were Poles—however, they were living in the Prussian, Russian and Austrian empires. Never, during this time, was the struggle to restore their homeland to nation status abandoned. The 19th century was one of incessant uprisings and plotting. Against this background, the meaning of the words *Poland has not yet perished, as long as we shall live* become clear.

So, what has this to do with the subject of this article. Simply this: During the period in which Poland ceased to exist, little attention was paid to the accomplishments of its natives. Those who achieved fame, such as Chopin, generally did so by living abroad rather than remaining in occupied Poland.



Throughout most of the 19th century, Germany and to a lesser extent France remained the prime magnets for students wishing to study composition. The likes of such famed teachers as Carl Reinecke, Friedrich Kiel, Joseph Rheinberger and Robert Fuchs drew aspiring composers to Leipzig, Berlin, Munich and Vienna. The two composers who are the subject of this article—Zygmunt Noskowski and Wladyslaw Zelenski—both completed their studies by traveling abroad.

Although he is the younger of the two, we will first turn our attention to **Zygmunt Noskowski** (1846-1909) because his piano quartet was written 30 years

(Continued on page 10)

Adolphe Blanc's Septet for Clarinet, Horn, Basson, String Trio & Bass

by Claudette Regault



Adolphe Blanc (1828-1885) might be called a one piece composer, i.e., a composer known only for one piece, that being his Septet. But on reflection, perhaps even this is not accurate, for how many people have heard of Adolphe Blanc? The answer, of course, is not too many. This is really a pity because Blanc was

quite a good composer. And we, as chamber music enthusiasts, should be particularly keen to make his acquaintance because he wrote a lot of pleasing chamber music.

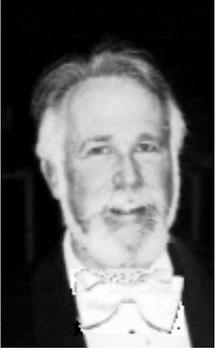
So then, just who was Adolphe Blanc? He was born in the town of Manosque in the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence region. At the age of 13 he was sent to study violin at the Paris Conservatoire and received a diploma. Afterwards, he

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At The Doublebar



As we head into the holiday season, I would remind readers of our new publication schedule. After many years of struggling with my own scheduling conflicts, it became impossible, after Vince Oddo's death, to continue with the April, July, October, December schedule. So, as most of you will have noticed, we have shifted to a April/May, July/August, October/November and late January schedule. Hence this is our Autumn 2009 issue. The Winter 2009 issue will follow in January of next year. Renewals have also, as a result, been shifted from December to the spring issue of each year.

Since the holidays will soon be here, it is worth noting, that against all odds, several CD companies continue to produce releases of little known chamber works and I hope that you will take the opportunity to support their efforts by filling your stockings and gift boxes with them.

This issue highlights several works for piano quartet. And as Professor Potocki notes in his fine article on the piano quartets of Wladyslaw Zelenski and Zygmunt Noskowski, probably hearing these piano quartets on CD, or perhaps playing them ourselves, will be the only way most of us will ever get a chance to hear these works. Of course, this is a great pity considering that there is such a rich literature for piano quartet. Though I have heard the occasional piano quartet played in concert, the only professional touring piano quartet I have ever heard live is The Los Angeles Piano Quartet.

Thanks to Ms Regault for her excellent article on Adolphe Blanc's wonderful Septet and also to Frau Professor Hochfilzer for her detailed and thoroughly interesting article on the quartet works of Hugo Wolf.

We encourage readers to submit articles about their favorite composers and works and hope that you will take up our invitation. Let me wish all of you Seasons Greetings and much chamber music for the coming year—Ray Silvertrust, Editor

Hugo Wolf's Works for String Quartet

(Continued from page 3)

enclave surrounded by a Slovene countryside. Although his father's family was German and had lived in Windischgrätz for several generations, Wolf's mother was of Slovene origin. Wolf was to recall how he was made fun of for speaking German with a Slovene accent when he attended Gymnasium in the Styrian capital of Graz. This is of some importance because Wolf often thought of himself as an outsider and his reactions to many with whom he was to come in contact sometimes reflected this fact. Wolf's father Philipp, a leather merchant, was a self-taught but gifted musician, a fine performer on the piano and the violin, but also able to play several other instruments. Hugo, the fourth of six children, clearly inherited his father's musical talent. His primary and secondary school teachers found him interested in music and little else. This, coupled with a hot temper, little discipline and a lack of respect for authority, resulted in his being ejected from several of the schools he attended. Finally, his father, who had not wanted him to pursue a career in music, gave in and sent Hugo to the Vienna Conservatory. There, he continued his piano studies and began composition lessons with the famed teacher Robert Fuchs. At first, things went well, perhaps because Fuchs was of a gentle and indulgent nature. However, when Wolf began studies with the disciplinarian Franz Krenn, things predictably started to go awry, culminating in his expulsion in 1877. Wolf was later to claim that he quit in frustration over the conservatism then in ascendance at the Conservatory, but the official record reads that he was dismissed for a breach of discipline.

While at the Conservatory, he composed several songs and piano sonatas as well as an unfinished violin concerto. It was during this period that he became a Wagnerite after attending performances of *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser*. While a student, he was able to meet Wagner in Vienna. The great man was generous with praise but little else. Still, this only served to further Wolf's hero worship, the need for which was an important part of his personality. After his expulsion, Wolf stayed on in Vienna, earning his living as a teacher and was able to find patrons who gave him support and encouragement. It was also around this time, 1878, that Wolf contracted syphilis from his brothel visits. Its diagnosis plunged Wolf into a bout of depression. It was also during this period that he had a romantic relationship with Vally Franck, the daughter of one of his most generous benefactors. Her jilting him led to even darker moods.

It was in such a state that he began his **String Quartet in d minor**. The first movement, *Grave-leidenschaftig bewegt*, with its outbursts of declamatory passion, has always attracted the most attention. The movement bears the motto "*Entbehren sollst du, sollst entbehren*", variously translated as "You must renounce, renounce" or "You shall do without, do without". Several hypotheses have been put forward as to why Wolf may have chosen it. First, it is important to know that these were the words spoken by Goethe's Faust when making his deal with the devil. Next, one needs to understand that at this time, it was thought that syphilis could be transmitted by means other than sexual intercourse. And therefore, Wolf avoided traveling in the same railway compartment as his friends or eating at the same table with them. Hence, the most widely accepted theory is that Wolf, after his diagnosis of syphilis, realized he would have to give up the company of those with whom he was fond. However, a second, and in my view more plausible, hypothesis suggests that it was the result of receiving a letter in 1880 from his disappointed father. It reads in part, "*You have already acquired all the caprices and bad habits of Beethoven...If you have any feeling at all for your parents, pull yourself together, work and do without, otherwise you are lost!!!*" Wolf and his father enjoyed a very close relationship and when the latter died in 1887, he was plunged into a deep and lengthy state of depression. Hence, it seems likely that Wolf, in response to his father's heartfelt admonition, chose the Faustian motto. It should be noted that the movements to the quartet were not written in order. The third movement (*Resoluto*) was completed first in 1879, while the first movement, which bears the motto, was being composed in 1880 just at the time he received his father's letter.

Although it is known he began in 1879, it is not known when he completed the first three movements, although some scholars believe it was 1881. What is known is that he did

not begin work on what was to become the final movement until 1884. Some scholars believe that the fourth movement was actually a replacement for earlier movement he ultimately rejected, but there is no hard evidence for this supposition. However, by 1884, Wolf's style of composition and musical expression had radically changed and the fourth movement barely sounds as if it was written by the same composer who had penned the first three movements. In it, one can hear much of the same kind of music he put into the *Italian Serenade* three years later. Certainly, the fact that it is not all of one piece of cloth, so to speak, has had a considerable impact upon the Quartet's reception and the way it was subsequently regarded by those who have come to know it.

Expelled from the Vienna Conservatory before he had finished his course of composition, Wolf was left to teach himself and the considerable technical challenges of the string quartet genre may well have led to the length of time it took him to finally finish the work. Max Reger, a staunch supporter of Wolf's music, was quick to enumerate what he considered the problematic aspects of the Quartet: "First, a lack of knowledge of the technical design of the string quartet can on occasion be observed, and when it exists it cannot be denied that it is very noticeable. Then, in some passages, the melody is somewhat constrained. One senses what the composer wanted to do but did not achieve because he lacked the pure technical ability. Here and there, things are amiss in the tonal purity of the writing style. But certainly, the austere, deeply felt passion and the captivating stormy temperament which bursts forth, especially in the outer movements, makes up for these defects. And everywhere one turns, one finds passages of genuine Wolf, that is to say, music which no one but he could have penned." Wilhelm Altmann, in his *Handbuch für Streichquartettspieler* (Handbook for String Quartet Players) also praises the quartet, despite calling it an orchestral work. He notes that the quartet is violinistic and as such recommends it to amateurs in addition to professionals.

These defects may also explain why Wolf was unable to obtain the services of an ensemble to give a public performance of the work. A terse letter of rejection to Wolf from the then famous Rosé Quartet of Vienna sums up their dismissive reaction quite nicely: "Dear Mr Wolf, We have played through your d minor quartet with attention and have reached the unanimous decision to deposit this work for you with the porter at the Imperial and Royal Opera on Operngasse. Would you please be so kind as to pick it up as soon as possible, for he could easily misplace it—"



As noted above, the quartet was begun in 1879. From the opening measures of the first movement, *Grave-leidenschaftig bewegt*, the mood in which Wolf began this work is quite clear. The Grave serves as a slow introduction, and comes closest in feeling, with its violin recitativo full of pathos, to the motto (Renounce, you shall

renounce). Instantly, a very high emotional pitch is established and continues to be reflected in the descriptive tempo markings, which I have translated from the German since this is an English language publication. We find: "Gradually more animated", fol-

lowed by "With passionate animation", then "raging" followed by "As fast as possible". At points, there is an undeniable similarity between the quicker *Leidenschaftig bewegt*, with its wildly jagged march rhythms, searing dissonances and implacable defiance and Beethoven's *Grosse fuga*. Yet, despite this and whatever other stylistic defects the movement has, it makes a powerful and indelible impression.



The lengthy slow movement, *Langsam*, (nearly 20 minutes) is of extraordinary breadth. To say that the theme only unfolds gradually may perhaps be an under statement. It begins almost inaudibly with a series of ethereal chords in highest *continued on page 6*

register of the violins. There is no denying that this treatment could have existed without the precedent of the Prelude to Lohengrin. At one point the peaceful and heavenly idyll is briefly interrupted by three heavy chords in the cello that bring to mind the opening bars of the fourth movement to Beethoven's Op.135. These chords represented the ominous 'knock on the door' of his landlady demanding the rent. (Shostakovich used it even more tellingly in the fourth movement of his 8th Quartet). These chords also appear much later to create a sense of disturbing unease. The lovely second theme seems to bear some relationship to the slow movement of Bruckner's Third Symphony. It is juxta positioned against a lengthy series of what were for the time surely horrifically dissonant passages. It was if Wolf was trying to create the extremes of great beauty and great ugliness. Or perhaps showing us that the idea of perfect beauty is unattainable. Although he has obviously used the themes of others as the building blocks for his music, again, it is hard to deny that this is magnificent and highly moving music, in many ways unparalleled in the literature. This slow movement is without doubt the high point of the work.

Resolut.

The third movement, *Resolut*, is mercifully short by comparison to the two preceding ones. It serves the purpose of a scherzo. And in fact, it is, with its dotted rhythm, not much more than a paraphrase of the scherzo of Beethoven's Op.95 quartet. While most critics and

scholars have immediately recognized this fact, Wolf does not seem to have received the criticism which I believe he deserves for this unimaginative usage. If you compare Wolf's effort with the third movement, *Allegro vivace*, of Wilhelm Stenhammar's 2nd String Quartet which also quotes the same theme, you can quickly hear how threadbare and lacking in ideas Wolf was. (*you can make this comparison by listening to the soundbites of each work online at www.editionsilvertrust.com—editor*) The rather ordinary trio section is lyrical in a Schumannesque kind of way.

This brings us then to the finale, *Sehr lebhaft*. In no way does it match the psychological depth of the preceding three movements. And this is hardly surprising since it was composed quite a while after them. Wolf was almost certainly in a different frame of mind and certainly, as noted earlier, he no longer was composing in the same style that he had been. This creates a very jarring effect, to say the least. It is as if a movement of another composer had been indiscriminately tacked on to the first three—a composer who sounded nothing like the first composer. Think of it. Normally, when one attempts to complete a

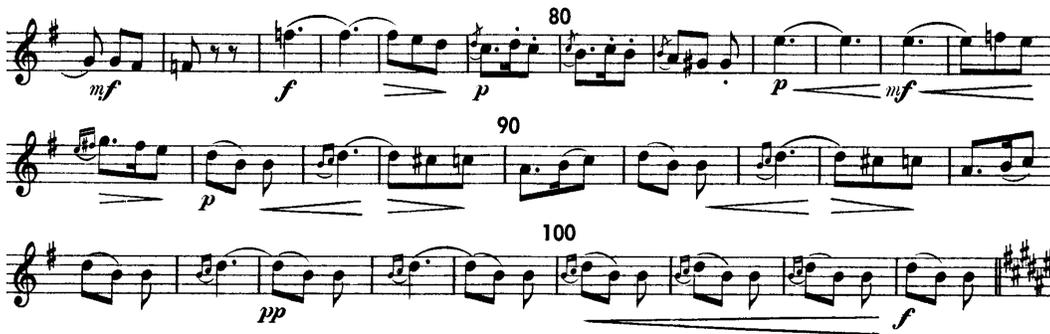
work of another composer, one tries to emulate that composer's style. In the same vein, composers, who return to their own work, after many years, to revise it, though they might write something completely different, almost always attempt to match their earlier style so as to make the work a unified whole. Not Hugo Wolf. It can, of course, be argued, that of the four movements, it is this one

which sounds the most like Hugo Wolf and not someone else. In fact, it sounds very much like the *Italian Serenade*. So much so, that one is forced to conclude Wolf, when he came to write the *Italian Serenade* some three years later, poured over this movement and borrowed heavily. You can clearly hear and see this immediately.

Sometime in 1882, Wolf began work on a scherzo which when it was completed some four years hence in October of 1886, Wolf titled **Intermezzo**. Although there is no hard evidence for or against, the general consensus of Wolf scholars seems to be that originally, Wolf had in mind composing another string quartet. Once again, he was unable to secure a performance of what in his correspondence, he referred to as his "Humorous Intermezzo." In 1904, (the year after Wolf's death), Max Reger, when asked his opinion by Lauterbach & Kuhn, the publishing house which had obtained the rights to much of Wolf's unpublished music, was not as enthusiastic as he had been about the d minor quartet. He wrote back, "Concerning the *Intermezzo*, I



can only reiterate what I have already told you about it. I took another close look at it, and certainly, it contains some genial material, but, as I said, it suffers from an occasional stylistic impurity and also bouts of triviality in its melodic development—these are things which should not occur in Wolf! Hence, my view is that it is not necessary to publish the work alone." Such an evaluation by one of Wolf's staunchest supporters and a composer who was widely respected throughout the German-speaking world led to it being forgotten for many years before it was eventually published some decades later. But, I think Reger may well have got it wrong. Of all of Wolf's works for string quartet, the *Intermezzo* is not only the most forward looking but also the most original. There is very little if anything in the repertoire which sounds like it or is constructed like it. It is a rondo with episodes and varied restatements all so cunningly derived from the main theme as to suggest different aspects of the same characters linked by an ongoing dialogue with a hint of dance. It begins with a gorgeous melody which Wolf interrupts without warning with what must have then seemed like very jarring interludes, both from a rhythmic and tonal standpoint. This writing is far in advance of anything being written at the time. Wolf takes the listener on an incredible journey to unimagined places only in the end to return to the familiar and well-loved. At 505 measures, it is too long for an encore and hence is rarely heard in concert. Technically, it makes no demands which cannot be handled by amateurs, however, a strong sense of rhythm is a must.



The last work Wolf wrote for string quartet is the *Italian Serenade*. It is his best known instrumental work, but ironically few have heard it in its original version for string quartet, or even know that the orchestral version is an arrangement made by the composer. Reger, when writing about it, was one of many, who had no idea. But he was certainly

keen on it, writing: "This appealing work belonging to the most enthralling works that we have in the whole of the serenade literature will soon be a repertoire piece among all of our better orchestras. This one movement is of such enchanting charm, of such a captivating, highly original color that it certainly will inspire the greatest enthusiasm." It seems odd that Reger did not notice the extraordinary similarity between the Serenade and the final movement of the d minor quartet. Wolf composed it in May of 1887. It is a one movement work which was to have been the first of a three movement effort. A couple of pages, with precious little on them, other than the tempo markings, exist. The Serenade is designed as a rondo and certainly does capture a certain Mediterranean quality. It was inspired by a novella *Der Soldat I.* which is about a young violinist who leaves his country home and grumbling father to make his fortune. He soon charms everyone with his gifts but also alienates many with a streak of triviality. Wolf could hardly have found a character who more closely resembled himself. In the novella, there is in fact an Italian Serenade played by a small orchestra and this fact may have led Wolf to arrange it for such an ensemble. The consensus is that the quartet version is more successful. It makes a fine encore and certainly should not be missed. All of the works have been recorded and are in print from various publishers.

continued his studies but in composition with Fromental Halévy, perhaps the foremost French composition teacher at the time. Among his many students were Gounod and Bizet. Halévy had made his name in opera, the only musical form which counted as far as Parisians were concerned. They were enthralled by Meyerbeer and his historical costume operas, and by the fantastic stage works of Berlioz as well as the richly melodic operas of Gounod and Ambroise Thomas. Later it was Offenbach's turn. But chamber music—what was that to the Parisian musical public? Concentrating on chamber music was like trying to run through a brick wall. Take the chamber music specialist George Onslow (1784-1853), virtually unknown in his own country, his chamber music was held to be the equal of that of Mozart and Beethoven and this was not just the opinion of anyone, but the opinion of Mendelssohn and Schumann. In Germany, Austria and England, Onslow was put in the first rank. In Paris, where his operas flopped, he was a nobody. Theodore Gouvy (1819-1898) who wished only to compose instrumental music left Paris for Leipzig. Why? "So that I can get my symphonies and chamber music performed," he answered. As Saint Saens noted: If a composer wanted to get his chamber music performed before an audience in Paris, he had to rent the hall himself, invite his friends and relatives and afterwards provide re-

Example 1



freshments at his own expense..

Example 2



Blanc was not ignorant of this situation and gave opera writing a try, but his operas were not successful. The truth be told, his heart was really not in it. He, too, like Onslow before him, wished primarily to compose chamber music. Hence, he set himself the unenviable task of rekindling French interest in chamber music. To do this, he relied upon famous violinists and wind players

then concertizing before the Parisian public to push his cause by playing his chamber music. His efforts did not go entirely unnoticed. In 1862, he won the prestigious Chartier Prize instituted by the Academie des Beaux Arts. Fetus, perhaps France's most respected

Example 3



"Blanc distinguishes himself by the seriousness of his compositions, a rare exception in France in these times of futile music." As chamber music was his main area of interest, it should not surprise readers to learn that Blanc composed three string trios, four string quartets, seven string quintets of various configurations, 15 piano trios as well as piano quartets and quintets—all waiting to be rediscovered, I might add. I have had the chance to play his string trios as well as one of his quartets, in addition to the Septet under discussion, and I have enjoyed all of these works. In the final analysis, Blanc's importance is as the chamber music link between Onslow and Farcenc and St. Saens, Franck and d'Indy.

The Septet was composed in 1861 and is one of the works for which Blanc was awarded the Chartier

Prize. Discerning readers will note that is for exactly the same instrumentation as Beethoven's Op.20 Septet. It is said that the Op.20 was, during Beethoven's lifetime, his most popular piece of chamber music. Beethoven, so annoyed by this fact, once commented that he wished he had never composed what is, after all, delightful music. And certainly, the Septet remained popular long after his death, especially in French chamber music circles, where chamber music involving wind instruments was regarded as especially chic. These two factors may well have led Blanc to try his hand at work for such a combination. In his Handbook for String Quartet Players, the famous chamber music critique Wilhelm Altmann writes, "The Septet has good parts and solos for each instrument, including even the bass. It is grateful to play and in no way difficult. The wonderful melodies and finely constructed movements reveal the hand of a master. This work is to be strongly recommended to amateurs, and yet, it belongs in the concert hall as well" I could not agree more with the assessment.

The opening movement, Allegro, begins with a genial melody in the strings (see Example 1 above) and then is further developed by the winds. The lovely second theme, (See Example 2 above) introduced by the clarinet, is wistful and somewhat yearning. In the following Andante, Blanc begins by creating a heavy sound palette, reminiscent of the Beethoven, with its warm melody, the first part of which is stated by the cello, while the second part is completed by the violin. (Example 3 above) The treatment of the second sub-

symphonies and chamber music performed," he answered. As Saint Saens noted: If a composer wanted to get his chamber music performed before an audience in Paris, he had to rent the hall himself, invite his friends and relatives and afterwards provide re-

pected 19th century critic wrote, though to little avail,

Ex. 4



Example 5

FINALE. *And: maestoso..* *Solo.* *dolce.* *espressivo*

Introduction

The finale begins with a long, slow and haunting *Andante maestoso* introduction, given out first by the viola alone (Example 5 above). Each voice follows with a solo, concluding with the violin which is given a show-stopping, virtuosic cadenza, leading to the main section, *Allegro moderato*. The main theme is first presented by the clarinet (example on right) before the others join in Blanc caps it all off with rousing coda which brings the septet to a triumphant finish.

There are a several recordings and parts are available from a number of publishers.

All: moderato. *Solo.*

Claudette Regault & The Cobbett Association



New Recordings



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

String Quartets

Judith BAILEY (1941-) Op.31, Metier maved 92101 / Marc BLITZSTEIN (1905-64) Italian Qt & Serenade, Other Minds 1017 / Frank BRIDGE (1879-1941) 3 Idylls & No.4, Hyperion 67726 / Elliott CARTER (1908-) Nos.2-4, Naxos 8.559363 / John CASKIN (1949-) No.2, Metier mav 28507 / Jan DUSSEK (1760-1812) 3 Qts, Op.60, MMB 476 / Glenn GOULD (1932-82) Op.1, Atma 2596 / Imogen HOLST (1907-84) Phantasy Qt, Court Lane 37601 / Ernest MACMILLAN Qt in c, Atma 2596 / Hans ROTT (1858-84) Qt in c, Acousense 20205 / Ernst SCHULHOFF (1894-1942) Op.24 & No.2, VMS 180 / Louis SPOHR (1784-1859) Opp.29 No.3 & 58 No.3, Marco Polo 8.225315 / Boris TCHAIKOVSKY (1925-96) Nos.1-6, Northern Flowers 9964-5 / Michael TIPPETT (1903-98) Nos.1-2 & 4, Naxos 8.570496 / George WALKER (1922-) Nos.1-2, Troy 1082 / Judith WEIR (1954-) Qt, Metier mav 28507 / Joseph WÖLFL (1773-1812) 3 Qts, Op.30, Caro Mitis 32006 / Hugh WOOD (1932-) Nos. 1-2, Lyrita 304

Strings Only-Not Quartets

Luigi BOCCHERINI (1743-1805) 6 Qnts (2Vc) Op.27, Brilliant Classics 93774 / Heinrich von HERZOGENBERG (1843-

1900) 2 String Trios Op.27, CPO 777 438 / Bohuslav MARTINU (1891-1959) Str Trio No.1 & Str Qnt, Alpha 132

Piano Trios

Frank BRIDGE (1879-1941) Phantasy Trio & No.2 Naxos 8.570792 / Hermann FRANKE (1839-1919) Op.27, Corentto 20010 / Joseph ELSNER (1769-1854) Trio in B, Cornetto 20010 / Henri LAZAROF (1932 No.2, Centaur 2948 / Arthur MALAWSKI (1904-57) Trio in c#, Challenge Classics 73210 / Krzysztof MEYER (1943-) Op.50, Challenge Classics 73210 / George ONSLOW (1784-1853) Op.3 No.2 & Op.83, CPO 777231

Piano Quartets, Quintets & Sextets

Frank BRIDGE (1879-1941) Pno Qt in c, Dutton Epoch 7220 / Heinrich von HERZOGENBERG (1843-1900) 2 Piano Qts Opp.75 & 95, CPO 777 438 / Franz LIMMER (1808-57) Piano Qnt Op.13, Brilliant Classics 92200 / Adela MADDISON (1862-1929) Pno Qnt, Dutton Epoch 7220 / Bohuslav MARTINU (1891-1959) Pno Qt, Alpha 143 / Hans PFITZNER (1869-1949) Piano Qnt Op.23, CPO 777 395 / Ferdiand RIES (1794-1838) Piano Qnt Op.74, Brilliant Classics 92200 / Camille SAINT-SAENS (1835-1921) 2 Pno Qts, MD&G 943 1519 / Florent SCHMITT (1870-1958) Hasards for Piano Qt Op.96 & Piano Qnt, Op.71, Timpany 1CH52 / Jan VANHAL (1739-1813) 3 Pi-

ano Quintets, Op.12, Hungaroton 32588

Winds & Strings

Judith BAILEY (1941-) Clarinet Quintet, Op.47, Metier maved 92101 / Johan IRELAND (1879-1962) Sextet for Cln, Hn & Str Qt, Naxos 8.570550 / Franz KROMMER (1759-1831) 2 Qts for Bsn, 2 Vla & Vc, Op.46 ARS 38 040

Winds, Strings & Piano

Lousie FARRENC (1805-74) Trio for Cln, Vc & Pno, Op.33, CPO 777256 / John IRELAND (1879-1962) Trio for Cln, Vc & Pno, Naxos 8.570550 / Hans PFITZNER (1869-1949) Sextet for Pno, Cln, Str Trio & Bass, Op.55, CPO 777 395

Piano & Winds

Jean-Michel DAMASE (1928-) Qt for Ob, Cln, Fl & Pno & Trio for Ob, Fl & Pno, Pierre Verany 705041 / Louise FARRENC (1804-75) Sextet fir Pno & Wnd Qnt, CPO 777 256

Winds Only

Friedrich FESCA (3 Flute Qts Op..37-38 & 40, CPO 777126 / Franz KROMMER (1759-1831) Partita Octets Opp.73, 38 & 83, Accent 24207 / George ONSLOW (1784-1853) Wind Qnt, Op.81, MSR 1250 / Claude-Paul TAFFANEL 1844-1908) Wind Qnt, MSR 1250

Piano Quartets by Zygmunt Noskowski & Wladyslaw Zelinski

before Zelenski's. Noskowski was born in Warsaw which at that time was known as "Congress Poland", as it was established by the Congress of Vienna in 1815 after the Napoleonic wars. It was supposed to be titularly independent under the protective wings of Russia, but for all practical purposes, it was a province of the Russian empire. Between 1864 and 1867, Noskowski studied the violin and composition at the Warsaw Music Institute (later the Warsaw Conservatory). His composition teacher was Moniuszko, generally considered the most prominent Polish composer of his time after Chopin. Noskowski finished second behind Antoni Stolpe (*see diskology p.13—ed.*) in a prize competition and eventually gained a scholarship allowing him to study with Friedrich Kiel in Berlin. Kiel, along with Reinecke and Rheinberger were the most prominent composition teachers of their day. After finishing his studies, he served as a music director in Constance in Switzerland. In 1880, he returned to Warsaw where he remained for the rest of his life.

He worked not only as a composer, but also became a famous teacher, a prominent conductor and a journalist. He was one of the most important figures in Polish music during the late 19th century and the first decade of the 20th. He taught virtually of all the important Polish composers of the next generation, and today is deemed to be the first Polish symphonic composer. He served as head of the Warsaw Music Society from 1880 to 1902 and was considered Poland's leading composer during the last decade of his life. He wrote a considerable amount of music in most genres, but unfortunately, outside Poland, virtually none is ever heard in concert, and not as much as ought to be is heard in Poland.

Allegro con brio. M. M. ♩ = 184.

The first movement, *Allegro con brio*, is in 3/4 time with a tempo of 184 beats per minute. The score shows three staves. The first staff (Violin I) begins with a powerful theme marked *p* (piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The second staff (Violin II) and third staff (Piano) provide accompaniment with various dynamics including *sfz* (sforzando), *f* (forte), and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The music features complex rhythmic patterns and dynamic contrasts.

Noskowski's piano quartet dates from 1879 and definitely shows that he had assimilated all of the recent developments of Central European music. Beyond clearly sounding like it was written during the romantic period by a Central European composer, the Piano Quartet owes nothing, by way of influence, to any of the major composers, such as Brahms

or Liszt, who were then dominating the scene. As such, it brings a special freshness, despite the familiar tonal territory it covers. The opening *Allegro con brio* begins with a powerful, full-blooded theme that conveys a mood of struggle. (example above)

The second movement, *Molto andante cantabile*, has for its main theme an extraordinarily beautiful song-like melody.

Molto Andante cantabile. M. M. ♩ = 69.

The second movement, *Molto Andante cantabile*, is in 3/4 time with a tempo of 69 beats per minute. The score shows a single staff with a *p dolce* (piano dolce) marking, indicating a soft and sweet melody.

The very striking third movement, *Moderato assai energico*, begins with a straight forward, thrusting main theme. But it is the sparkling and quicker middle section, of great originality and freshness, which captures the listener's attention. Against the bright melody in the violin and viola, the piano lightly plays a tinkling fairy's accompaniment.

Allegretto animato. M. M. ♩ = 126.

leggero ma poco marcato

leggero ma poco marcato

Allegretto animato. M. M. ♩ = 126.

p sempre staccato

The third movement, *Allegretto animato*, is in 3/4 time with a tempo of 126 beats per minute. The score shows three staves. The first two staves (Violin I and II) are marked *leggero ma poco marcato* (light but somewhat marked). The third staff (Piano) is marked *p sempre staccato* (piano, always staccato), providing a light, tinkling accompaniment.

The finale, *Adagio quasi recitativo-Allegro*, begins with a lengthy, dramatic recitative section played by the violin and piano. The main part of the movement, *Allegro*, features a joyous and rambunctious first subject followed by a lyrical and yearning theme.

Molto Allegro con anima. M. M. ♩ = 152.

The finale, *Molto Allegro con anima*, is in 2/4 time with a tempo of 152 beats per minute. The score shows two staves. The first staff (Violin I) begins with a theme marked *f poco marcato* (forte, somewhat marked). The second staff (Piano) provides accompaniment.

(Continued from page 10)

In this day and age when the piano quartet seems out of fashion and is almost never heard live, it is perhaps a waste of time to suggest that this work should be heard in concert. But it should because it is first rate. The reality, however, is that, after the piano trio, in our time, the piano quintet has supplanted the piano quartet on the concert stage. This seems strange given the fact that piano quartet literature is far richer than that for piano quintet. Consider this: Mozart wrote piano quartets but no piano quintet, ditto Mendelssohn, Schumann did write a piano quintet but he wrote two piano quartets, Brahms wrote three piano quartets and only one piano quintet—well, you get the point. How many touring piano quartets can you name? If you said three, you beat me by one.



Wladyslaw (sometimes Ladislav) **Zelenski** (1837-1921) was Noskowski's senior by nine years, but he did not finish his piano quartet until 1910. He was born in Grodkowice not far from the city of Cracow. After studying piano locally with several teachers, including the well-known concert pianist Alexander Dreyschock, he went to Prague University where he took a doctorate in philosophy. He also took composition lessons from Josef Krejāi after which he enrolled in the Paris Conservatory where he continued his composition lessons with Henri Reber. Upon his return to Poland he enjoyed

a long career as a concert pianist, teacher and composer. He held several important teaching posts including Director of the Cracow Conservatory which he helped to found. He wrote in most genres and left a number of chamber music works which have received considerable praise from the well-known critic, Wilhelm Altmann.



The big, restless opening movement, *Allegro con brio*, starts somewhat hesitantly. But the skill with which Zelenski handles the ensembles is immediately apparent from the opening measures. (see above right). Tension is quickly built and leads to a powerful dramatic climax which releases the lovely second theme.

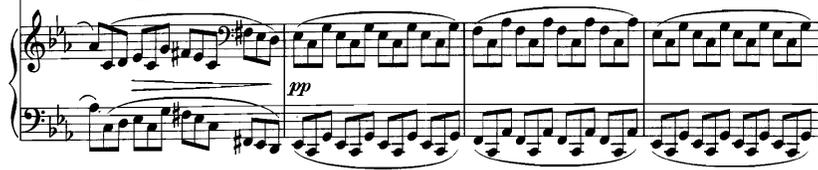
The movement is simply brimming with gorgeous material that is crowned by exquisite part-writing.



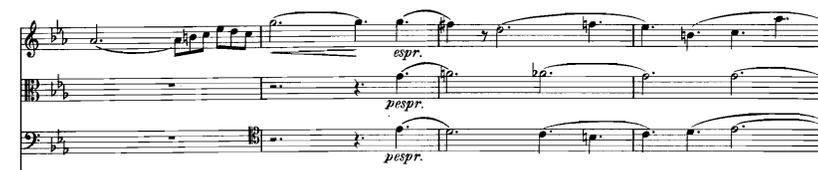
The cello brings forth the long-lined main theme to second movement, *Romanza, andante sostenuto*. One barely notices as the other voices join in this highly romantic song without words.



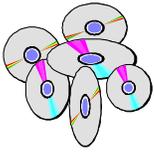
The third movement, *Intermezzo allegretto*, is a dance, full of exotic perfume. There are wafts of French impressionism and then Spanish melody.



In the finale, *Allegro appassionato*, after a brief piano introduction, the strings bring forth the main theme. It is exciting, powerful and thrusting, yet full of yearning.



Here is another piano quartet which is first class from start to finish and which can bear comparison with anything from the late romantic period. Of course, like the Noskowski piano quartet, most of us will never hear Zelenski's piano quartet in concert. Our only alternative is to either listen to it on a recording—there is one: Olympia OCD 381—or to play them ourselves. If you cannot find the recording, you can at least listen to the generous soundbites on the Cobbett website. Fortunately, the parts to both works are in print and available from Edition Silvertrust.



A String Quartet by Hans Rott

Two Piano Quintets by Carl Goldmark



Who was Hans Rott? Here is a question that very few chamber music lovers will be able to answer. One answer, interesting, but hardly the best, might be that Rott was a man who had pulled out a pistol while riding a train to prevent a fellow passenger from lighting a cigar on the ground, he claimed, that Brahms had dynamited the compartment. Another and more germane answer might be that he was Anton Bruckner's favorite student, of whom Bruckner had said "You will hear great things from this man." Equally interesting might be what Gustav Mahler said upon hearing of Rott's death: "It is entirely impossible to estimate what music has lost in him. His genius soars to such heights... It makes him without exaggeration the founder of the new symphony as I understand it." All three of these answers actually tell us a great deal about the tragically short and unhappy life of **Hans Rott** (1858-1884). He was born in a suburb of Vienna and studied at the Vienna Conservatory where he was friendly with Gustav Mahler and Hugo Wolf. He traveled in the same circles as they did and studied with many of the same teachers. As a student of Bruckner, he fell under Wagner's spell. This was to have an unfortunate result when in 1880 he submitted a symphony to Brahms in an effort to get it performed. Not only did Brahms reject it, but he told Rott he had no talent whatsoever and should give up music. Not long after, Rott plunged into depression and tried to commit suicide, ultimately going insane and then dying of tuberculosis at the ripe old age of 26. Mahler believed Rott was on the threshold of greatness when he died, which put paid to Bruckner's prediction that great things would be heard from him. In the event, nothing more was heard of him or his music, which quickly disappeared like a stone thrown into a pond. It was only a century later when the English musicologist Paul Banks was researching Mahler's youth that Rott and his music resurfaced. Since that time, Rott has become a bit of a cult figure and his *Symphony in E Major* has been recorded at least three times. His **String Quartet in c minor**, which was recorded live on Acoustic Records CD 20205, dates from 1879. It is not clear just how many movements the work has because several copies of the manuscript survive but none with all of the movements. One autograph manuscript has the 3rd, 4th and 5th movements while another has the 1st, 2nd and 5th movements. Although the recording presents all five movements, it seems more plausible that Rott himself regarded the minuet he composed as a possible alternative to the extant scherzo. The opening movement is in three parts: *Einleitung, sehr langsam, Schnell und Feurig and Lento*. The slow introduction recalls the opening of Mozart's *Dissonant Quartet*. An inquiring melody, sounding like disembodied late Beethoven played high in the violin register, is brought forth against a continuous pulsing ostinato in the cello's deepest register. Tension and dynamics build and lead to the explosive, frantic, almost over dramatic, quick section. It all sounds tonally very modern for 1879 to say the least. A tamer and more lyrical section then follows before the first two sections are allowed to reappear in various guises. Although there is much here which could not be called unusual for its time, there is also a

great deal that is, in particular there are several prominent instances of dissonance which are very adventurous and which I think would certainly have shocked the likes of Bruckner if he had heard them. The second movement, *Adagio*, has an Brucknerian quality in its introverted character and meditative stillness, but not in its tonal language which is more traditional sounding. It does, however, share Bruckner's expansive style of phrasing. A short *Scherzo, allegro molto* comes next. It has a frantic, updated Mendelssohnian quality about it. However, the tonalities of the brief trio section, if it can be called that, are fairly advanced. Then comes a *Minuet, Allegretto*. It seems horribly out of place, starting out sounding like Haydn and then become Schumannesque. It certainly does not belong with the rest of work and though it might have appeared on one of the manuscripts, I have to believe that Rott would have rejected it. The finale, *Sehr langsam—Lebhaft*, begins with a slow fugue which sounds as if it were composed by a baroque composer. The faster section is also fugal and blends some Romantic tendencies. Yet, overall, it is backward rather than forward looking. Only toward the end does modernity creep into the music. In sum, the first movement, shows unmistakable signs of genius. The second movement is workman-like but not extraordinary. The *Scherzo* is quite well done but in no way remarkable while the *Minuet* is well below par and would be best left alone. Again, the finale is workmanlike, and certainly for a 22 year old, not to be despised. Without question, the powerful and original first movement makes the work worthwhile and historically interesting. Recommended.



Carl Goldmark (1830-1915) today is remembered mainly for his opera *The Queen of Sheba*, his *Rustic Wedding Symphony* and perhaps for his violin concerto. His chamber music is all but forgotten. It must be said that it varies in quality. His Op.8 string quartet and the first piano trio, Op.4, are only average. However, his Op.9 string quintet from roughly the same period is quite good and deserves revival as do his later works, which include the *Second Piano Trio*, Op.33 and his two piano quintets recorded on **CPO CD#777 277. Piano Quintet No.1 in E flat Major, Op.30** dates from 1879 and is a work written on a large scale. The lovely main theme to the opening movement, *Allegro vivace*, sets the tone for the entire work. It is sunny and optimistic. The second theme, to which Goldmark gives considerable attention, is in the minor. Thus it is darker and more reflective, but not really sad. The second movement, *Adagio*, has a gorgeous cello introduction which starts out so softly, it is barely audible. The main theme is a long, highly romantic song without words. As the first violin and then the others make their entry, the music becomes even more exquisite. The *Scherzo* which follows could not be more different. A heavily accented, pounding melody begins the affair. The lighter trio section is no slower but far more lyrical. With the finale, *Allegro vivace*, we return to the jovial and good-humored spirits of the opening movement. The **Op.54 Piano Quintet No.2 in c# minor**, composed in 1915, is one of Goldmark's last if not his last work. It

Martin Joseph Mengel's Collected Wind Quintets Works for Piano Sextet & String Quartet by Antoni Stolpe

reveals that Goldmark, while rejecting the novelty (atonality) of the Second Vienna School, had nonetheless updated his ideas and had incorporated certain elements of French impressionism into his mainstream Central European musical language. The opening movement, *Sehr mäßig-Allegro non troppo*, begins with a dramatic, questioning introduction before the turbulent main section is set forth. Already we can hear new tonalities, particularly in his use of chromaticism. The *Adagio* which follows has a lengthy piano solo before the strings enter. The lovely theme expresses a quiet, yearning quality. The third movement, *Sehr langsam-Allegro moderato*, starts off slowly, almost as a funeral march, but there is also a latent sense of something ominous impending. Goldmark, however, surprises with a bright and lively scherzo. The finale, *Moderato assai*, again presents a fine example of his updated musical thinking, beginning as it does with a highly chromatic and questioning series of phrases. These are followed by a slow, sad lyrical melody, which suddenly gives way to a quick, restless, searching theme. Both these works are excellent and deserve concert performance. Parts to both piano quintets are available from Edition Silvertrust. A highly recommended CD.



Martin Joseph Mengel (1784-1851) was born in Ghent. His father, a professional horn player, arranged for Martin's music lessons. By 13, he was first horn of the Ghent opera. He subsequently attended the Paris Conservatory and served in Napoleon's Grenadier Musical Corps. Returning to Paris, he studied composition with Reicha, while hold the first horn position at the Opera Comique. He returned to his native Flanders in 1824 and in 1830 with the creation of Belgium, he became head of the

new Ghent Conservatory. During his lifetime, he was primarily known as a composer of opera although he did write a fair amount of chamber music for winds. **NCA CD#60138-10** a 2 CD set, presents what they claim are his complete wind quintets, a set of four. The first three are titled **Quintetto Tiré de oeuvres de Haydn**, the second **de Mozart**, the third **de Beethoven**. They date from around 1820. The idea was to take movements from these masters and transform them into wind quintets of which one would neither hear nor suspect this fact Although the First Quintet does sound vaguely of Haydn, it actually sounds more like Reicha. The Second Quintet sounds more like Mozart than the First did of Haydn, but again it sounds more like Reicha than Mozart. As for the Third Quintet, at least to my ear, there is little if anything to suggest Beethoven. The final and Fourth Quintet is entitled **Premier Quintetto de Rossini**. Whereas the others were all in four movements, this is a two movement affair. It is, to my ear, the only quintet which sounds like the composer whose name appears in the title. Certainly these quintets break no new ground, however, they are pleasant enough and certainly warrant a hearing. Recommended.

What? You've never heard of **Antoni Stolpe** (1851-1872) It is both fitting and timely that we review this CD since both Wladyslaw Zelenski and Zygmunt Noskowski—the subject of



one of our lead articles in this issue and two of Poland's leading Romantic era composers—referred to Stolpe as a genius. But thanks to his early death at age 21, followed quickly thereafter by that of his father, many of his works were lost and his name disappeared altogether. Few facts are known about Stolpe's life. What facts there are come from reminiscences of Noskowski, his friend from school days. It was Noskowski who wrote an obituary notice in the year of Stolpe's death. From it we learn Stolpe's

father was a music teacher, who despite Antoni's early and prodigious talent, refused to make a prodigy of him. He entered the Warsaw Institute of Music where in 1867 he won the Grand Prize for Piano and Composition. (Noskowski came second) This led to his concertizing abroad. Noskowski writes of Stolpe's Piano Trio and **Piano Sextet**, the latter of which is recorded on **Pro Musica Camerata CD#039**. In 1869, Stolpe went to Berlin, where he studied composition with Friedrich Kiel and piano with Theodor Kullak. Within few months, he teaching the piano class himself at the Berlin Conservatory. Always in frail health, he succumbed to a repertory ailment. The music aside, the jacket notes to this CD are extraordinarily detailed and quite interesting. The first work on disk is the aforementioned Piano Sextet. Unfortunately, the last two movements have been lost. But what remains, an *Allegro moderato* and an *Andante*, which together last nearly 20 minutes, show that it was a large scale work. Written when Stolpe was 16, it is an extraordinarily mature work. Mendelssohn's Sextet would have been the only example of a piano sextet with which Stolpe would have been familiar. The powerful opening movement is marvelously executed, the tonal language original sounding and the instrumental writing with regards to integration better than the Mendelssohn. The beautiful second movement is in no way inferior to the first. A superb work, what a shame the last two movements are lost. Next on disk are his **Variations for String Quartet**. They are substantial, lasting nearly 18 minutes, and, in my opinion, are the equal of what I heretofore considered the absolute best of this genre, Rheinberger's Op.93 Variations. They bear unqualified witness to the fact that Stolpe was a talent of the first rank. Also on disk is a Romance for piano trio and a quintet, Scene dramatique, for solo cello and string quartet. Both are in the tradition of salon music and of their type very good. A highly recommended CD.

The two Krommer works presented on **Phoenix Edition CD 106**, if the opus numbers are any indication, were written one after the other. Franz Krommer (1759-1831) has appeared often enough on these pages to dispense with any biographical background. He is generally regarded as being at the very front of the second rank of composers of the Viennese Classical Era, coming after Mozart and Haydn. Like most of his contemporaries, who were professional composers, Krommer wrote a huge quantity of music and as might be expected, not all of it was first rate. But, he did write some very good works. One of them is his **Op.96 in F Major for String Trio**, dating from 1818. It has traveled under the name

A String Trio & Piano Qt by Franz Krommer / Six String Qts by Joseph Wöfl Louis Massonneau: 3 Oboe Quartets / 3 Piano Quartets by Louise Heritte-Viardot



Grand Trio as well as Divertimento. Unfortunately, from this recording one would have difficulty deciding its worth because the performers are not up to the considerable technical demands it makes. Were it not for a superb performance on Vars VA 0098, one might think it only average. I myself have played the work and can attest to the fact that it is not easy, but then, I did not record it.

This splendid trio is well worth hearing, but not on this CD. In the second work on disk, **Piano Quartet in E flat Major, Op.95**, the string playing is better, as it is only the piano part which is difficult. The piano is given so much of the thematic material, that the work qualifies as a quatuor brillant. Of its kind, its okay, however, the thematic material is only average. Krommer wrote a great deal of works more deserving of revival than this one. I cannot recommend this CD.

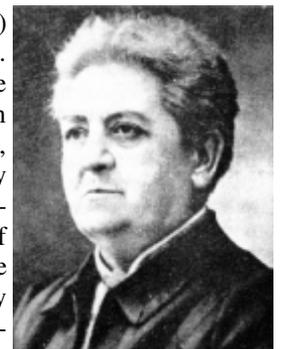


Joseph Wöfl (1773-1812) was certainly in the thick of it when it came to knowing the musical greats of his time. Born in Salzburg, he studied with both Leopold Mozart and Michael Haydn. Like Wolfgang, he first appeared in public as a soloist on the violin at the age of seven. He then switched to the piano and by the time he visited Wolfgang in Vienna in 1790, he was already a virtuoso. Wöfl was very tall (over 6 feet), and had an enormous finger span. He could play 12ths the way others played octaves. He put this skill to good use, especially in his extempore performances. Wolfgang, duly impressed, secured an excellent position for Wöfl in Poland with Count Oginsky. In Warsaw, Wöfl created a sensation as a virtuoso and became a much sought after teacher. But in 1795, because of the 3rd Partition of Poland, he was forced to return to Vienna. There, he befriended Beethoven and used Mozart's librettist Emanuel Schickel for his own operas. Although accounts vary, Beethoven was said to have defeated Wöfl in a piano improvisation duel in 1799, after which Wöfl's local popularity waned. Between 1801 and 1805, he lived Paris and then for the rest of his life in London where he died. **Hungaroton CD 32580** presents his **three Op.4 string quartets**. The quartets were composed around 1798. The jacket notes erroneously claim that these quartets are quatuors brillants. But, they are true products of the Vienna Classical School in the tradition of Franz Josef Haydn. The recording is on period instruments, which while it does not spoil the recording, certainly takes away some of the brilliance of the music. Each of the three quartets has four movements and more or less follows a Fast—Slow—Minuet—Fast pattern. The writing is really quite accomplished, if somewhat dated for 1798—the musical language come close to Haydn's Op.33 or 50 quartets. Each instrument is given thematic material in much the same way Haydn divvies it up. The main difference is that Wöfl's melodies, while not bad, are only average and not particularly memorable. I think this is a quality without which few if any works can hope to survive. These quartets are probably fun to play, but although they were reprinted several times in the early 19th century, there is no

modern edition. Certainly they are worth hearing. Recommended. On **Caro Mitas CD 0032006**, we are presented with Wöfl's **three Op.30 string quartets**. These are his third set of three quartets and date from 1805. I am not sure I can say that they represent much of an advance over the earlier opus 4 quartets. The recording is not on period instruments and this is all to the good, especially since these quartets suffer from the same deficiency as the others, namely, the melodic material is only average at best. The writing, as regards, dividing up the material between the instruments, is quite good, this time on a par with Haydn's Op.76. But without compelling melodies, there is nothing really memorable about the quartets. Of the three, the first, Op.30 No.1, is the strongest. What one comes away with is that Wöfl's string quartets are very accomplished as to style and technique, as one might expect from someone who was a very accomplished musician and who had studied with some of the best teachers of the time. But melody is not something that one can learn. One either has it or not. Still this is a worthwhile CD. Recommended.

Louis Massonneau (1766-1848) was the son of a French chef employed in Germany. He received violin and composition lessons and enjoyed a career as a solo and orchestral violinist. Additionally, he served as court music director in Göttingen, Frankfurt, Dessau and Ludwigslust. **Audite CD#92.563** presents **Three Quartets for Oboe and String Trio**. They are thought to have been composed in 1798. They all have similar style and construction (three movements). The quartets are, as is so often the case from this period, a vehicle for the one wind instrument, in this case the oboe. The strings are treated as a mini orchestra and none of them is given any kind of independent role to play. Essentially, these are quartets for solo oboe with string accompaniment. Having said this, they are, for their type, very well-written. The melodies, while not stunning, are appealing. None of the quartets is a large work. They are relatively short and make for pleasant listening. Recommended.

Louise Heritte-Viardot (1841-1918) was born in Paris into a musical family. Both her mother Pauline Viardot (née Garcia) and her aunt Maria Malibran were world famous vocalists. She, too, became a singer, having been taught by her mother. However her health prevented her from having the same type of career that her mother had. While she continued to sing on occasion, she mostly devoted herself to composing and teaching. Whereas her mother and aunt also composed, but only French art songs with piano accompaniment, Louise wrote in virtually every genre. Among her works are some four string quartets, three piano quartets, two piano trios and several instrumental sonatas. Unfortunately, much of her oeuvre is now lost. Of her chamber music, only the three piano quartets have survived. On **ARS CD 38 468** you will find all three. The 1883 **Piano Quartet in A Major, Op.1** is subtitled "*In Summer.*" Each movement also bears a subtitle. In order, they are *Morning in the forest, Birds and Butterflies, Oppressive Heat,*



Louise Heritte-Viardot's Three Piano Quartets

The Piano Trios of Robert Fuchs

and *Evening under the Oaks*. Each of the movements stays true to its title. The first movement, an *Allegro*, is fresh, the music gains power as it develops, probably to correspond to the end of the dawn and fullness of the day. The *Scherzo* which follows does conjure up things which are flying about, be they birds or insects. A lovely, languid *Lento* comes next. The finale, *Vivo-Allegretto*, despite its tempo marking, is relaxed and genial. Although meant to be a piece of program music, this is a fine work to be taken seriously. It should be noted the tonal language is that of the mid-late German Romantic and not French. A first rate work. **Piano Quartet in D Major, Op.11** was written around the same time as the first. It enjoyed a successful premiere and was one of the few works from the more than 300 she wrote which was published in her lifetime. Since each of its movements bears a Spanish subtitle, it, too, must be considered program music, but in the very best sense of the word. It was quickly given the subtitle "The Spanish" The opening movement, *Allegretto*, is a Paseo, a classical Spanish dance characterized by a walking step. This sparkling music is brisk but not overly fast. It is followed by an *Andantino* entitled *Caña*. This is a sad song first given out by the viola and then taken up by the violin as the cello. The piano provides a strumming background. A more lively *Allegretto con moto* follows. The title, *Serenada*, gives away the mood of the music, which sports a romantic and lovely melody. The finale, *Allegro giocoso*, entitled *Divertimiento*, is a kind of upbeat "traveling music", which takes the listener on exciting, bumptious tour. A fun work and also first rate. Altmann, in his Handbook for Piano Quartet Players, writes that this work demonstrated Viardot's astonishing versatility, passing from a profoundly German Op.9 to an Op.11 filled with brilliantly intricate Spanish rhythms and themes. The parts to both of the above are in print. The third work on disk, **Piano Quartet in d minor**, bears no opus number but is the first that she wrote, dating from the mid 1870's. The first movement, *Allegro*, is powerful but heavy, almost ponderous. The following *Andante* begins with the strings bringing forth an arresting melody over the hushed tremolo accompaniment of the piano. The striking *Scherzo con moto* which comes next has a Halloween-like subject for its main theme. Its syncopated rhythm gives the impression ogres dancing. The whole thing is extraordinarily effective. The rousing finale, *Allegro con brio*, is better yet, full of verve and élan. It is my understanding that the parts to this trio are not available. A pity for it is a fine work. Clearly, Heritte-Viardot could write quite well.



Austrian composer **Robert Fuchs** (1847-1927) was born near the Styrian capital of Graz and attended the University of Vienna Conservatory, studying with Otto Dessoff and Joseph Hellmesberger. By 1875, he was teaching at the Conservatory, eventually becoming one of the most famous and revered teachers of his time. Mahler, Sibelius, Hugo Wolf, Franz Schmidt, Alexander Zemlinsky, Franz

Schrecker and Richard Heuberger were among his many students. That his compositions did not become better known was largely due to the fact that he did little to promote them, living a quiet life in Vienna and refusing to arrange concerts, even when the opportunity arose, in other cities. He certainly had his admirers, among them Brahms, who almost never praised the works of other composers. But with regard to Fuchs, Brahms wrote, "*Fuchs is a splendid musician, everything is so fine and so skillful, so charmingly invented, that one is always pleased.*" Rarely, if ever, did another composer receive this kind of an accolade from Brahms.

Fuchs' **Piano Trio No.1 in C Major, Op.22** dates from 1879 and was dedicated to Brahms. It is said that Brahms was so impressed by it that he decided to try his hand at writing another piano trio after a hiatus of nearly 30 years. Fuchs' trio is the epitome of mid-late Romanticism: full of noble themes, heroic and written on a large scale. The opening *Allegro moderato* exhibits all of these traits. Its gorgeous main theme flows forth as calmly as a majestic river. A slow movement, *Adagio con molto espressione*, has a vaguely funereal quality, while the lovely and finely integrated part-writing reminds one of Schubert. Fuchs follows this up with a lively scherzo, *Allegro presto*. Despite its tempo, there is a hint of captivating darkness flowing beneath the surface. The finale, *Allegro risoluto*, is full of angular energy and ultimately emerges into a heroic mode. No wonder Brahms was impressed.

Robert Fuch's very appealing **Piano Trio No.2 in B flat Major, Op.72** dates from 1903. His earlier works, while clearly retaining their own individuality, often reveal the influence of Brahms. Not so his later works, such as this trio. By the 1890's he had begun to move in a different direction from Brahms. One might say, his goal had become to make more from less. In much the way the painter Frans Hals was able to create intricate detail from only a few brush strokes, Fuchs demonstrates an uncanny ability to create very effective tonalities and, when he needs to, richness, with far fewer notes than most of the late Romantics. The evocative opening notes to the first movement, *Allegro molto moderato ma energico*, begin with a tinkling tremolo, high in the piano before the strings present the winning main theme. After a short development, a more energetic second theme appears. The wonderful second movement, *Allegro scherzando*, begins in a slightly exotic mode but quickly becomes more traditionally romantic and lyrical. In the trio, the exotic reappears, this time more prominently. The *Andante sostenuto* which follows is calm and has for its main theme a very romantic but melancholy melody. The middle section features a pleading tune, which at times becomes quite dramatic. So often composers use the term *giocoso*, which should mean jocular, joking, or with good humor, when the music in question is none of these things. But in this finale, the *Allegro giocoso* is all of these things: playful, joking, teasing and most importantly highly appealing. This is gay, happy music, genial without even the shadow of a cloud. Both of these fine trios are presented on this highly recommended **Quartz CD 2028**. Fortunately, the parts to both of these piano trios are in print and available.

FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE



Hugo Wolf



Zygmunt Noskowski



Adolphe Blanc



Wladyslaw Zelenski



Hans Rott



Carl Goldmark



Martin Mengal



Antoni Stolpe



Louise Heritte-Viardot



Joseph Wölfl

ONSLOW, SPOHR, STENHAMMAR, FUCHS, KIEL



HERZOGENBERG, GLIERE, TANEYEV, REINECKE

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

KROMMER, LACHNER, GRANADOS, VAN BREE, GRETCHANINOV