

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

***The String Trios of
Adolf Blanc***

***Adolf Barjansky's
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Robert Fuchs String Serenades

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The String Trios of Adolphe Blanc

Deepak Arya



Adolphe Blanc (1828-1885) was born in the French town of Manosque. His musical talent was recognized early and he entered the Paris Conservatory at age 13 first taking a diploma in violin and then studying composition with the then famous composer Fromental Halevy. Although for a time, he served as a music director of a Parisian theater orchestra, he primarily devoted himself to composing and most of his works were for chamber ensembles. During his lifetime, these works were much appreciated by professionals and amateurs alike and in 1862 he won the prestigious

Chartier Chamber Music Prize. Besides the fact that his works are pleasing and deserving of performance, Blanc's historical importance cannot be underestimated. He was one of the very few in France trying to interest the public, then with only ears for opera, in chamber music. He paved the way for the success of the next generation of French composers.

His first string trio, **String Trio No.1 in G Major, Op.25** dates from 1850's and is the first of three such works he would eventually compose. The trio is in four movements and opens with an Allegro with a stately opening theme which harks back to the classical era. The writing is fluent and the melody flows easily. Next comes a Scherzo with trio. The scherzo is

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Brief Survey of the Chamber Music of Georgy Catoire

By Natasha Borisovsky



Georgy Catoire (1861-1926) is generally considered the father of Russian modernism. He was born in Moscow to a French noble family which had emigrated to Russia in the early 19th century. Although fascinated by music, he studied mathematics and science at the University of Moscow, graduating in 1884. After graduation, however, he decided to devote himself to music. His early compositions showed the influence of Tchaikovsky who described Catoire as talented but in need of serious training. Eventually Catoire was to study composition

with Rimsky-Korsakov, Lyadov, Arensky and Taneyev. In 1916, he was appointed Professor of Composition at the Moscow Conservatory, a position he held for the rest of his life. Catoire wrote several treatises on music theory, which became the foundation for the teaching of music theory in Russia. His composition style was a synthesis Russian, German and French influences--Tchaikovsky, Chopin, Cesar Franck, Debussy and Richard Wagner were the chief influences. From them, Catoire developed a highly personal and original idiom. His championing of Wagner is partially responsible for the fact that his works are relatively unknown today. Rimsky-Korsakov's circle disliked Wagner's music intensely and did little to promote it. This resulted in its being barely known in Russia. They also shunned Catoire's music because he was a Wagnerite.

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The Clarinet Quartets Of Bernhard Crusell

by Jaamei Virtanen

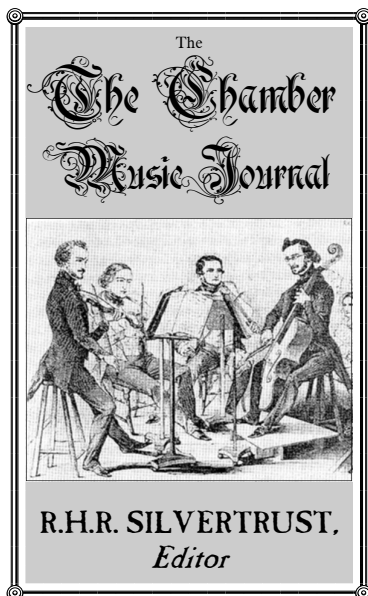


Bernhard Crusell (1775-1838) was born in the Swedish speaking town of Nystad in Finland, today known as Uusikaupunki into a poor family of bookbinders. In the 18th

century, approximately 20% of the population of Finland were ethnic Swedes. Today, he is regarded as the most important composer coming out of Finland before Sibelius.

When Crusell was eight, he began to play the clarinet which he taught himself to do by ear. His first formal instruction came from a member of a regimental band. At the age of 13 on the strength of his playing, he was recruited as a member of military band. In 1791, Crusell went to Stockholm where he spent most of the rest of his life in Sweden. Finnish biographers note that though an ethnic Swede, he always considered himself a Finnish Swede. In Stockholm, Crusell continued his studies and established himself as a clarinet

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quite interesting with its off beat rhythm and use of appoggiaturas. The trio section is a lovely serenade with a strumming pizzicato accompaniment. The third movement, marked Fantasia, starts with a viola solo in which the first half of the theme, a folk melody, is stated. It is finished by the first violin. The entire second phrase is sung by the cello. It is a very loose set of variations, though not so marked. The cello opens the finale, Allegro moderato, with a theme which is subsequently dominated by a triplet figure which eventually plays an important role in the exciting conclusion to the trio

String Trio No.2, Op.41 in A major is in no way difficult to play and effective throughout. Blanc structurally follows the Classical model in this four movement work. But unlike classical era trios, here, each instrument is given its due in a work which is good to hear as well as play. The first movement, Allegro moderato, though simple and straight forward is nonetheless charming and appealing. Even better is the Allegro vivace scherzo with its lyrical trio section, which comes next. Especially beautiful from a tonal standpoint is the third movement, Adagio religioso, with its noble theme. Best of all is the finale, Rondo espagnol, rich in invention and in its Spanish tonal color. It's so well-done, one can imagine a guitar playing. It has traveled under the nickname "Carmen" because it not only recalls the music in Bizet's opera Carmen but also in his suite L'Arlesienne.

String Trio No.3 in f minor, Op.48 was composed around 1850 but was not published until nearly 20 years later. It opens a graceful Allegro moderato and is followed by a stately minuet with contrasting. The third movement is based on a simple but lovely melody. The finale, Allegro vivo, is full of excitement and makes a fitting conclusion to the trio.

Blanc won several prizes for the excellence of his chamber music to which he primarily devoted himself despite the fact that it was not particularly lucrative, especially in France at the time he was writing. He wrote with home music makers in mind and as such all three of these tuneful works can be warmly recommended to amateurs and would also not be amiss in the concert hall.

Last movement of Trio No.2 "Carmen"



The Chamber Music of Georgy Catoire

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His **Piano Trio in f minor, Op.14** dates from 1900 and one can clearly hear how advanced it is for its time. It is the earliest work from his mature period. There were earlier works which were written while he was studying with Klindworth. The opening movement, *Allegro moderato*, begins with a beautiful but dark theme which is quickly soars to a climax before falling back only to build to another climax, this time of great drama. The middle movement, *Allegretto fantastico*, is a scherzo. The main theme is restless, in part because of the unusual meter Catoire uses. The middle section is in five beats and appears based on Russian folk music. The music of the magnificent finale, *Molto allegro agitato*, is highly intense and driven with incredible forward motion, a real tour de force. This trio is unquestionably a first rate work for the concert stage.

The **Violin Sonata No.1 in b minor, Op.15** dates from 1904. The first movement, *Allegro non tanto, ma appassionato*, starts with violent outbursts, which alternate with calmer, introspective episodes. At times the high emotional atmosphere reminds of one of Rachmaninov. But Catoire's sense of structure is very different. The second theme is quiet and more lyrical. One can hear vague echoes of Wagner. The slow second movement, *Barcarolle*, has an elegiac quality and is distinctly Russian. Its somber tone recalls the elegiac piano trios of Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov. But there also very powerful dramatic moments as well. The finale, *Allegro con spirito*, is built on one motif but used in many different creative ways.

His **String Quintet for 2 Violins, Viola & 2 Cellos, Op.16** came in 1909. It is a highly individualistic and original work which sounds like little else being written at the time. The opening movement, *Allegro moderato*, begins in a hesitant fashion but builds in intensity and drama, while weaving a very rich and complex harmonic texture. The second movement, *Allegro molto e agitato*, presents a restless and searching mood in the main theme. Here Catoire gives an excellent illustration of his careful compositional technique as he takes his time in raising the temperature which eventually catches fire. A slow movement, *Andante non troppo*, follows. With its mysterious and gossamer character, it is perhaps the most unusual of movements, as it takes the listener into a quiet, haunted world of shadows. The exciting finale, as its title indicates, *Allegro impet-*

uoso, has an impatience to it which almost rises to the level of violence. From the opening notes, the music dramatically explodes. However, Catoire juxtaposes it with a lovely lyrical second theme. Here is a very profound and major work which every two cello string quintet will certainly enjoy playing and which would triumph in concert.

The **Poem for Violin and Piano, Op.20** was also known as his Sonata No.2 for Violin and Piano. Although it bears a higher opus number than the Quintet, it was actually composed before it in 1906. Like the first sonata, the Poem is highly individualistic. Although it is written in one large movement, fully the length of a regular sonata, there are four subsections which are all closely related to each other. The main feature of this work is its lyricism. It is perhaps the most lyrical of Catoire's chamber works and for much of its duration is truly rhapsodic.

His **String Quartet in f# minor, Op.23** was finished in 1913. He had written an earlier one back in the 1880s which he had shown to Tchaikovsky who, while recognizing it was not a candidate for publication, nonetheless saw that Catoire had talent, and it was on the basis of this that he told Catoire to take lessons from Rimsky Korsakov. His earlier work was never published. The opening *Allegro moderato* begins with a late Russian romantic theme which has a restless and searching quality to it. Catoire quickly brings it to an impressive climax. The riveting second movement, *Allegro fantastico*, is a very original sounding scherzo with some very expressive and unusual tonal effects. The big third movement, *Andante*, is a theme and set of seven variations. The theme is a highly romantic, lyrical melody. Each of the variations shows a different mood, some are extraordinarily powerful. In the brooding finale, *Allegro impetuoso*, echoes of Tchaikovsky can be heard. Almost immediately, Catoire builds dramatic tension and excitement. It is a work worthy of the concert stage but can only be recommended to amateur players of the highest technical accomplishments and great experience in ensemble work.

The **Piano Quintet, Op.28** was completed in 1914 the year after the String Quartet. The opening movement, *Allegro moderato*, begins with a theme which briefly recalls Tchaikovsky's piano trio. It is quite romantic

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and developed in a dramatic fashion. The second theme is more delicate and introspective. The second movement, *Andante*, begins in a somewhat mystical vein. Quiet, the music floats in a gauze-like dream world. The opening to the finale, *Allegro con spirito e capriccioso*, begins with musical images of a fairyland complete with elves dancing and an aura of magic. But as the movement progresses, many dramatic episodes bubble forth. There is nothing like this work in the Piano Quintet literature and it certainly belongs on the concert stage. But at the same time, this is one of Catoire's most approachable works and should not be missed by experienced amateurs.

The **Piano Quartet in a minor, Op.31** was finished in 1916 and is the last of Catoire's major works for chamber ensemble. Much like his other chamber music, it is quite individualistic and original sounding. The opening movement, *Allegro moderato*, begins softly with an attractive melody veiled in the aura of mysticism. The music quickly becomes rather dramatic and creates a sustained sense of tension. The mood of the second movement, *Andante*, is subdued

and dreamy. The finale, *Allegro molto*, **conjures** up a modern vision of elves, sorcerers and fairies. This work too belongs in the concert hall.

As readers will have noticed, I am a fan of Catoire's chamber music. It is true that like the music of Max Reger, Catoire's music is not to everyone's taste. Some might say it is an acquired taste. I for one would not go that far. However, I would warn off amateur players who are not experienced ensemble players. For example, if you have found that Beethoven's Late Quartets are too much for you or your group, you are certainly not going to be able to make sense out of what Catoire has composed. As far as scheduling these works for concert, I think most audiences will appreciate them and certainly they are also historically important as they represent early Russian modernism written before the rise of communism which stifled any further development along these lines for at least five decades.

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The String Quartets of Adolf Barjansky

By Gerion Vainberg

Very little information is available about **Adolf Barjansky** (1850-1900, some sources say 1851-1915). Even his birthplace is in dispute. Some sources state it was Odessa, others Moscow. What musical training he received in Russia is unknown. Most likely it was at the Odessa Conservatory. However, it is known that he studied composition and piano at the Leipzig Conservatory with Carl Reinecke and Salomon Jadassohn. He also briefly studied in Vienna and Paris. Thereafter, he was active in Odessa, where he taught at the conservatory there. He is thought to be the father of the virtuoso cellist Alexandre Barjansky. He has two string quartets to his credit along with a piano trio, a piano quartet and some instrumental sonatas.

The **String Quartet No.1 in F Major, Op.6** dates from 1893 and is in three movements. The opening movement, *Allegro*, is in the form of a lilting *barcarolle*. The middle movement, *Andante affetuoso* and subtitled *Serenata*, is quite striking with its lovely melody and charming *pizzicato* accompaniment. The finale, *Vivace*, is a real "barn burner" full of forward motion and sure to garner great applause from its audience.

String Quartet No.2, Op.8 appeared in 1894. The first movement, *Allegro appassionato*, begins rather like a *preludium*. The first subject is full of energy while a second is more lyrical. A warm deeply felt melody serves as the main theme of the second movement, *Adagio molto*. A rather original sounding and agitated middle section serves as contrast. The *Presto ma deciso* which comes next is fleet and sections of it are rather like an elves dance. The finale, *Allegro assai ed appassionato* is interesting and effective.

Both of these quartets are written in the style of the Austro German Romantic and have nothing of his Russian homeland, probably having been influenced by Reinecke and Jadassohn with whom he was especially close, both being Jewish. All of Barjansky's works, including these two quartets, were published by Breitkopf and Hartel which is certainly a measure of their excellence. And make no mistake, these are very appealing, well-written quartets, not at all hard to play. As such they can certainly be warmly recommended to amateurs, but they are also very original and fresh sounding and I think would do very well if revived and brought into the concert hall.

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soloist. In 1792, at age sixteen, he received an appointment as the director of a regimental band, and in 1793 became principal clarinet with the Royal Court Orchestra., which was directed by the German composer Abbé Vogler, who numbered Carl Maria von Weber among his many students. Crusell took composition lessons from him. In 1798 he received financial assistance which enabled him to live in Berlin for a few months and study with the well-known German clarinetist Franz Tausch who emphasized beauty of tone over technique. Crusell's progress was swift and he quickly embarked on a successful tour. In Stockholm Crusell had become acquainted with the French ambassador to Sweden who enabled him to undertake a trip to Paris in 1803. There he performed and also studied clarinet with Jean-Xavier Lefèvre at the Paris Conservatory. His playing was such that he was offered the position of first clarinet of the prestigious Théâtre-Italien. Crusell was on the verge of accepting when the Swedish king anxious to keep Crusell in the royal orchestra, a position he held until 1833. However, his reputation was such that he made solo tours throughout German and England as well as Sweden, playing music by Beethoven, Hyacinthe Jadin, Franz Krommer, Mozart, and Peter von Winter, among others.

Besides his composition studied with Vogler in the 1790s, while in Paris during 1803 while he took the opportunity to study with Francois Gossec and Henri Berton. He composed pieces, including concertos and chamber works, not only for his own use, but also for other wind players in the court orchestra. In 1811 he travelled to Leipzig where he established a relationship with the music publisher C. F. Peters. He frequently led military bands with arrangements of marches and overtures by Rossini, Spohr, and Weber. among others.

His best known works are probably his three clarinet quartets. Works for clarinet and string trio were popular in Crusell's day for private chamber-music evenings rather than the concert platform. Crusell's three quartets have the usual four movements in traditional classical forms. His first movements are all in sonata form. Whilst the slow movements of Opp 2 and 4 are in ternary form, that of Op 7 is a rondo ('un poco Largo') and the finale of this quartet is in sonata form. The Minuet and Trio of Op 4 is made the second rather than the usual third movement. Crusell changes his key for the slow movements only: subdominant for Op 2, relative major for Op 4 and dominant for Op 7.

Clarinet Quartet No 1 in E flat major Op 2 The first quartet is in pure eighteenth-century style with a strong influence of Mozart. Its publication date was 1804 and was probably composed while he was still in Paris. Its introductory Adagio is for strings only. Three chromatic quarter notes falling from the dominant to a principal theme of the Allegro, being used also for the second subject. The second movement again has a principal theme based tones The return of this after the fermata is heralded with the first movement's three chromatic notes played ad lib. Crusell treats the clarinet as a solo instrument rather than a member of a group and yet at the same time he is concerned with balance and often marks it down a dynamic from the strings. It is said that it was this quartet which, when he heard it in about 1814, inspired Glinka to become a composer.

Clarinet Quartet No 2 in c minor Op 4 followed almost immediately after his first quartet. It is not impossible that they were written one after the other. The famous Allgemeine Muzikalische Zeitung, in reviewing the work, said it was very much a soloist's work with the strings playing a supportive role. It is simpler than the other two quartets, few technical demands being made of any of the players. The clarinetist's lovely chromatic anacrusis falling into the final major section of the Rondo is reminiscent of the first quartet.

Clarinet Quartet No 3 in D major Op 7, the last quartet is the only work of the three in which Crusell used a clarinet in A. His Op 7 is the most positive and advanced of the three quartets. Perhaps this is not surprising given the fact that it was composed some twenty years after his second clarinet quartet. Crusell wrote to his publisher Peters that the famous cellist Bernhard Romberg felt it to be one of his best compositions. The outer movements have a flamboyant and military flavor as befits. A splendid foil is given to this by the elaborate slow movement, with its touchingly beautiful coda. There is a strong influence of Weber's Clarinet Quintet in this work, especially in the first movement's second theme and in the finale. The two composers met at Dresden in 1822 and most likely Crusell had a chance to play Weber's quintet during this time, making it no coincidence that one hears the Weber work in this quartet, which was by far the most popular of the three and often performed throughout the 19th century. It's popularity was such that his publisher asked for a version of the work for flute and strings which Crusell made. It is his Op.8.

THE STRING SERENADES OF ROBERT FUCHS

By Alois Grinklgruber



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 himself was teaching at the Conservatory, eventually rising to the rank of Professor of Composition. He was one of the most famous and revered teachers of his time. Mahler, Sibelius, Hugo Wolf, Franz Schmidt, Alexander Zemlinsky, Erkki Melartin, Franz Schrecker and Richard Heuberger were among his many students. Fuchs was an extremely refined and cultured composer. He stood high in favor with Brahms who continually gave him warm recommendations to publishers. Together with excellent technical equipment, he possessed the gift for writing charming melodies.

At its premiere, Fuchs' **Serenade No.1 in D Major, Op.9** was highly praised and eventually became so popular that he wrote four more. They called him The Serenade Fox (Fuchs is fox in German). Unfortunately, these were virtually the only compositions of his which achieved fame, despite the fact that his music was highly regarded by most of the day's leading musicians, including Brahms who almost never praised the works of other composers. Brahms wrote, "Robert Fuchs is a splendid musician, everything is so fine and so skillful, so charmingly invented, that one is always pleased." The Serenade is for four violins, two violas, two cellos and bass or string orchestra was dedicated to his fellow Schubert admirer, Nicholas Dumba, a Viennes wealthy industrialist, who had provided the funding to publish the first collected edition of Schubert's works. The two dominant features of the work are lyricism and quiet introspection. The first of five movements, the opening Andante, is light, elegant and charming throughout. Next comes a Minuet, rather quiet and subdued, hardly something that could be danced to. It is followed by a fleet-footed Scherzo, bright and cheerful. The Adagio which follows is calm and meditative but without any hint of sadness. The finale, an Allegro, begins in a mischievous fashion dominated by its bumptious rhythm. A second contrasting theme is more lyrical.

His First Serenade for four violins, two violas, two cellos and bass was a tremendous success leading

Fuchs to write a second in 1876. **String Serenade No.2 in C Major, Op.14** which is also for four violins, two violas, two cellos and bass. It was dedicated to Count Tamas Nyary a member of the Austro-Hungarian nobility and a minor composer in his own right. It is in four movements and opens with an Allegretto which begins with a gentle, upbeat march-like theme which dominates the entire movement. The emotional center of the Serenade is an expansive and sweeping Larghetto. The third movement, Allegro risoluto, is a energetic and resolute melody which Fuchs takes through several modulations. The finale, a Presto, is a whirling Italianesque tarantella in the tradition of Mendelssohn.

String Serenade No.3 in e minor, Op.21 was finished the following year in 1877 and was dedicated to the Empress of Austria, Elizabeth Habsburg. The somewhat sad main theme of the opening movement, Andante sostenuto, titled Romanze, is first sung by the violas, cellos and bass. It is valedictory music, tinged with a sense of regret. The second movement, a gently lilting Menuetto, is characterized by a Viennese elegance. The main section of the third movement, Allegretto grazioso, is a bright, light-footed march. The exciting finale, Allegro con fuoco, alla zingarese, as the title suggests has gypsy themes. Perhaps this explains the dedication to Elizabeth, who loved all things Hungarian.

The question arises, were these pieces only intended for orchestra. Well, the answer is not exactly straight forward. Nowadays, these serenades are rarely performed live. The only ones which seem to make it into the concert hall are those of Tchaikovsky and Dvorak and perhaps that of Josef Suk. On recordings, one usually hears the entire string sections of modern symphony orchestras consisting of forty to sixty players. Certainly, this is not how the music was performed in Fuch's day. Instead, it could be heard on bandstands in parks and spas played by a company which rarely if ever exceed twenty players and more often less. But these works were also sold as string nonets and as such they have a marvelous intimacy which is lost when played by big orchestras. Get nine players together and make a night of it. Play all three. You will not be disappointed.