



The Cobbett Association for Chamber Music Research

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Portland Quartet Celebrates 25th Anniversary

A Maine Force in Chamber Music

The Portland String Quartet, one of the newest members of the Cobbett Association, is celebrating its 25th Anniversary during the 1993-94 season. The quartet has been performing, teaching, and recording since 1969 with the original personnel. It requires a high level of mutual trust and understanding for four sensitive musicians to remain together for 25 years. This accomplishment alone should earn them a special place in "Chamber Music Heaven".

Maine Treasures

In 1986 Colby College called the foursome "Maine Treasures" and awarded each member an Honorary Doctor of Music Degree. They became Artists in Residence at Colby that same year, a post they have held with pride ever since. Prior to this, they were Artists in Residence at the U. of Southern Maine for eight years. Teaching has always been a very important part of their combined and separate professional lives. In Maine, their members teach at such institutions of higher education as Colby College, Bates College, Bowdoin College, and the U. of Southern Maine.

Chamber Music Workshops

The quartet's chamber music workshops gained international acclaim when the United Nations educational division sponsored their String Quartet Workshops in Caracas, Venezuela, back in the '70's. Since then, several dozen Latin American musicians have traveled to Maine on their own resources or through the Organization of American States to study with the Portland String Quartet. Music students from Japan and Italy have also added to the international flavor at this annual summer String Quartet Workshop at Colby.



Pictured from left are Ronald Lantz, violin; Paul Ross, cello; Stephen Kecskemethy, violin; and Julia Adams, viola.

International Tours

Through the years, the quartet has toured in more than two dozen countries. Their 1992-93 tour took them to Japan for the third time, and in the winter of 1991-92 they visited Russia where they represented their home city of Portland, Maine, in their Sister City of Archangel. On this same tour they also initiated a concert series for B'nai B'rith in St. Petersburg. Tully Hall, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie, Tokyo's Suntory Hall and the Herodus Atticus at the foot of the Acropolis are among some of their more outstanding venues. Concert tours to four Hawaiian Islands, a summer solstice festival in Harstadt, Norway, concerts from Belem on the mouth of the

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Adventures in String Quintets Featuring two Cellos

Our listing and evaluations of non-standard string quintets for 2 violins, viola, and 2 cellos is enclosed with this Newsletter No. 13.

Members of the Cobbett Association's Palm Strings Quartet have played most of these over the years, either at chamber music workshops or with visiting musicians. Our Advisory Council member, Raymond Silvertrust, also contributed to the research involved.

The great C major string quintet with two cellos by Schubert always comes to mind when we consider two cello quintets. Most of us have had the pleasure of playing this interesting work. Few chamber music players, however, are familiar with other works in this category. There are many others, most of which are sadly neglected. It is well worth one's time to find and play some of them.

And then there is Boccherini, of course, who is credited with inventing the two cello quintet! He produced 113 quintets with 2 cellos and 12 with 2 violas. Although he is a standard composer, we are including a few of his best works in our evaluations.

Piano Quartets -- A Storehouse of Riches Often Overlooked

Both pianists and string players can look forward to an annotated listing and evaluation of non-standard quartets for piano, violin, viola, and cello. This report is planned for January, 1994.

You'll be happily surprised because our research has uncovered a wealth of neglected masterpieces in this category.

Played Any Unusual Chamber Music Lately?

Cobbett Association members are invited to send us a brief report on any non-standard chamber music they have played recently. Please comment on the work's musical value, level of difficulty, and why it was liked or disliked. We can in turn report this in a future newsletter, thus sharing your experiences with other interested members.

Miami String Quartet Joins Cobbett Association

We are pleased to welcome the prominent Miami String Quartet into our membership. The quartet's cellist, Keith Robinson, wrote us recently as follows: "I read with great interest your sample newsletter and evaluation report of April, 1993 and found it fascinating. Our quartet would be delighted to be members of the Cobbett Association. Back copies of all string quartet evaluations would be greatly appreciated"

Our next newsletter, January, 1994, will feature a profile of the Miami String Quartet whose members are music faculty at the New World School of the Arts in Miami, Florida.

Kozeluh's String Quartets

Our member, Dr. Zsigmund Toth of Baltimore, Md., wrote us recently calling attention to Kozeluh's quartets. He said ". . . I have recently heard and played the string quartets of a Bohemian composer named Leopold Kozeluh. These are to be treasured. . . ."

Dr. Toth is right. These quartets, especially Opus 33, Nos. 1-3, are the best of his chamber works and should not be forgotten. Kozeluh (1747-1818), who was popular in his day, composed in the Viennese classical tradition of the period and was a prolific composer. We recently heard the Opus 33 played by the Stamic Quartet on the Supraphon label (CD 1115282131).

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Chamber Music of Frank Bridge



Frank Bridge (1879-1941) occupies a very prominent place in 20th Century English music. He wrote chamber music all his productive life, unlike his contemporaries, Delius, Vaughan Williams, and Holst.

Prior to World War I, he followed the safe path of a late romantic style, but during his 40 creative years, his music showed a remarkable development. Unfortunately, it was unjustly neglected until 25 years after his death.

Bridge attended the Royal College of Music and studied with Charles Stanford. In addition to composing, he also conducted and played violin or viola in prominent British string quartets. His first significant development was noted in his chamber music when he wrote a string quartet, a piano quartet, and a piano trio which were classed as "Phantasies".

His orchestral music was influenced by impressionists like Delius. After World War I, his compositions became abstract and experimental, and in his later chamber works he exhibited a type of chromaticism related to Scriabin and approached atonalism. However, he did not follow the Schoenberg school of serialism.

The young Benjamin Britten became a pupil of Bridge in 1924. Britten greatly admired his teacher's music and later recommended it. This accounts for the fact that most of Bridge's orchestral and chamber music, which was suffering from neglect, is now played and recorded.

String Quartets

No. 1 in E Minor (1906) One of his best works, this won an international prize at Bologna. It represents his early style in a late romantic idiom. It has a rewarding viola and cello part, and features in the first movement a tragic theme in the chromatic scale by the cello. The deeply expressive and poetic adagio shows his maturity and is followed by an appealing scherzo. In the 3rd and 4th mvmts, themes of the first are recalled. Moderate difficulty — Excellent musical value

No. 2 in G Minor (1915). Won a W. W.

Cobbett Prize in 1915. This quartet from Bridge's middle period is more mature and difficult than No. 1, but is still within the scope of advanced amateurs if parts are studied. There are three fast mvmts, but slower elements appear in mvmts 2 and 3, and there is a close relationship between all themes of the work. Mvmt 1 — Sonata form but not strictly adhered to. Main theme is developed, making it rhapsodic in nature. 2 — A scherzo with a brief andante for contrast. 3 — Finale begins with an adagio based on the second theme of the first mvmt and ends in joy. Difficult — Excellent musical value

No. 3 (1926) Dedicated to Mrs. E. S. Coolidge and first played by the Kolisch Quartet in 1927. A new world of sound is introduced with this quartet which has a high level of dissonance suggesting expressionism. Modern ears still detect the presence of an English element in the music. Mvmt 1 — Andante-allegro in sonata form. Unorthodox in its chromatic harmonies and structure. 2 — Andante con moto. A type of intermezzo in ternary form with development and recap. It is poetic and elegaic. Popular with audiences. 3 — Allegro-energico. A rondo which recalls the themes of previous mvmts and features bitonal chords and biting dissonance. The two allegros provide the big strength for which this quartet is known. Very difficult — Very good value

No. 4 (1937) Like No. 3, this quartet is also very energetic with much chromatic expression within a neo-classic outlook. Mvmt 1 — Allegro energico in sonata form. 2 — Quasi minuetto — an intermezzo expressing sadness in a minuetto tempo. 3 — Adagio-allegro con brio in rondo form with a simple structure. Main themes of the 1st mvmt are again stated before the final rondo subject. Very difficult — Very good.

Three Novelletten (1904) These very playable and contrasted encore pieces comprise his first chamber work for string quartet. The andante moderato is tranquil and romantic. The presto is very lively, and the allegro vivo has a march-like subject followed by a viola solo and ending with a cannon. Moderate — Very good

Three Idylls (1906) There is much harmonic texture and light romantic

(cont. next page)

expression in these pieces. Benjamin Britton, in writing his brilliant Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge, chose the theme of the second idyll. This brought Bridges name to the forefront, and thus more musicians began to explore his chamber music. The mvmts are adagio molto espressivo, allegro poco lento, and allegro con moto. Moderate — Very good

Phantasy Quartet in F Minor (1905)

This very popular and thoroughly tonal work won a Cobbett Prize. Its three mvmt structure, with a pause between each, has a distinct English flavor. The first section is in brief sonata form with a vigorous and rhythmic motto theme followed by a sustained subject, then a brief development. The second, an andante in ternary form, has outstanding enharmonic modulation and features a theme of rare beauty expressing love and admiration. The third section, an exuberant finale in sonata form, refers to the motto theme. Moderate — Excellent

The Sextet

String Sextet for 2 violins, 2 violas, and 2 cellos (1912) An early work in Bridge's late romantic style and a worthwhile addition to the limited repertoire. Written in chamber music style with a clear texture and rich string color, it features effective contrast in timbre with lyric beauty. More than one reading is needed to appreciate its value.

Allegro moderato — a fully developed arch-like sonata mvmt with a soaring melody. Then a pleasant second subject followed by the main theme with recap and coda. Andante con moto — an expressive intermezzo type slow mvmt which casts a spell by its sadness and mystery. The contrasting allegro guisto in A minor is followed by the original melody. Allegro ben moderato — begins with chromatic passages and introduces material from other mvmts in skilled contrapuntal treatment. Moderate - V. G.

String Trio

String Trio (Rhapsody) for 2 violins and viola (1928) This was published 25 years after Bridge's death and was composed in his late creative period, so expect many changes in tempo and mood connected in a one mvmt phantasy. For such a small combination, this trio shows remarkable sonority with much inventiveness. In spite

of its strong dissonance, harmony is not forsaken. Nevertheless, it will appeal mainly to modern ears. Difficult - V.G.

Chamber Works with Piano

Quintet in D Minor for piano, 2 violins, viola, and cello (1905 rev. 1912) A masterwork strongly recommended for public performance or house music. Its harmony is conventional compared to later works. Adagio-allegro moderato — Bold and dramatic with lyric melodies. Driving configurations followed by dynamic contrasts. Adagio ma non troppo-allegro-adagio — A real inspiration with beautiful melodies and unusual chromatic treatment, then a short scherzo section with much staccato, ending with a cello solo and returning to the original melody. Finale, allegro energico — strong rhythms in first subject with a contrast in second, then a cyclic close by stating the quintet's opening theme. Difficult - Excellent

Phantasy Quartet in F# Minor for piano, violin, viola, and cello (1910)

Commissioned by W. W. Cobbett, this is another successful work in one mvmt form from Bridge's middle period. Begins with an andante con moto in a lyric and meditative mood. The middle section is a sprightly allegro vivace for contrast. The lovely work concludes with a tranquil andante con moto in the major key. The serenity and emotion expressed in this quartet makes it very satisfying. Difficult — Excellent

Phantasy Trio in C Minor for piano, violin, and cello (1907) Awarded first prize in a Cobbett competition, this is an excellent example of the phantasy form. A concise one-mvmt work with contrasting tempos, in late romantic style. The andante section features one of Bridges most charming melodies started by the cello and continued by the violin. The work ends in an impressive, triumphant C major. Moderate — Excellent

Sonata for Violin and Piano (1932)

Dedicated to Mrs. E. S. Coolidge, the wonderful American patroness of chamber music who became a close friend of Bridge and a great admirer of his music. Since this is from his late period, be prepared for a feat of exceptional virtuosity and ingenuity. The work is restless and very energetic with the use of complex and aggressive dissonances and chromatic

BRIDGE (cont. from page 4)

harmonies which are used with much skill. Though it is in one mvmt, the work is comprised of four sections — allegro energico, a mysterious andante, a fast march-like scherzo, and an expressive finale. Only virtuoso players can do justice to this sonata. Very Difficult—Excellent

Sonata for Cello & Piano in D Minor

(1917) This late romantic work in 2 mvmts has new textures with the use of 4ths and 5ths. It opens with a broad lyric passage, then a contrasting melody and recap. Second mvmt is in episodes with frequent breaks and features an elegaic tune before returning to the opening subject. Mod. - V.G.

All the above works were published by Augener, except "S.Q. No. 2" and "Sonata for Piano and Cello" which were published by Winthrop Rogers, and the "String Trio" which was published by Fabor Music.

Considering the high standards of Bridge's chamber music with its emotional and intellectual appeal, it is surprising that more of it isn't featured on concert programs. However, there is an awakening, and he is receiving more and more recognition.

23rd Annual Chamber Music Festival at Montana State U.

The 23rd Adult Chamber Music Festival at Montana State University in Bozeman was held June 23 July 1, 1993. Our Advisory Council member, Mary Sanks, who directs the festival, reports a very successful and well attended festival. The Da Vinci Quartet (Cobbett members), were among the faculty members who performed and coached at the conference.

Mary is already planning next year's conference and has set the dates for the week of June 19-27, 1994. Those interested may write her for an application. (Music Dept., Montana State U., Bozeman, MT 59717-0008.)



The purpose of this organization is to study, evaluate, and preserve rare and neglected chamber music of special merit, and to share information and encourage the performance of such music.

PORTLAND QUARTET (Cont. from page 1)

Amazon River to the beaches of Copacabana, and a performance in the Marble Palace (Lenin's former office in St. Petersburg) — their career is full of stunning reviews, unbelievable experiences, and a network of fans and devoted students around the world.

Outstanding Recordings

The quartet's recording of "Bloch: The Five String Quartets (Arabesque 6511-3)" was named outstanding chamber music release in 1983/84 by both *The Washington Post* and *The Boston Globe*. It's recording of the complete cycle of string quartets and the "Piano Quintet" of George Chadwick (Northeastern Records 234-6-CD) was named among the best chamber releases of 1988 by *The N.Y. Times*.

Unusual Repertoire

The Portland String Quartet's repertoire covers the widest expanse of the string quartet literature. This is reflected, too, in their recordings which include the works of Bach, Schubert, Dvorak, Strauss, Kreisler, Bloch, Piston and Chadwick. Their latest recording features works that bridge the cultures of East and West — Allen Levine's "Travel Journal" (interpreting the haiku of Matsuo Basho, Pat Morita, narrator) and Dorothy Britton's "Chinoisserie" with mezzo-soprano Rita Noel.

Critics Praise

The New York Times has described the PSQ as "a model of experienced ensemble playing", and of their Alice Tully Hall performance in New York City, critic Tim Page of that newspaper wrote: "One couldn't have asked for more persuasive, more unified and more yearningly lyrical playing."

1993-94 Season

During their anniversary season of 1993-94, the Portland String Quartet will perform recitals across the U.S., including several presentations of their program, "A Century of Music in America," and will appear with the Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra among others.

For additional information about the quartet and booking details, contact Joanne Rile Management, 100 Old York Road, Benson East, Suite 1206, Jenkintown, PA, 19046-3613. Tel: 215-885-6400; Fax 215-885-9929.

Cobbett Assn. Well Represented at Interlochen

Sixteen Cobbett Association members attended the 43rd Annual Chamber Music Conference held August 24-31 at the Interlochen Center for the Arts in Michigan.

This popular conference is an inspiring experience in a beautiful setting. It is a splendid opportunity for amateur and professional adult musicians to spend an enjoyable week playing chamber music and attending master classes featuring keyboard, wind, and string instruments. Featured are nightly concerts by renowned artists, and the playing of chamber music in both coached and informal ensembles.

Manhattan String Quartet



Pictured left to right are John Dexter, viola; Roy Lewis, violin; Christopher Finckel, cello; and Eric Lewis, 1st violin.

The Manhattan String Quartet, a member of the Cobbett Association, spent its 14th season as quartet-in-residence at the conference and gave three evening concerts. Praised as one of our major American string ensembles, it has earned particular commendation for its complete Shostakovich, Schoenberg, and Bartok cycles. The cycle of 15 Shostakovich quartets has been performed in Paris, at the "Great Performers" series at Lincoln Center in N.Y., and on ESS A Y discs. The quartet's 1992-93 season included performances throughout the U.S., France, Germany, and Holland.

Other Members Attending

In addition to the MSQ, other Cobbett Association members on the conference faculty were Bayla Keyes, violin; John and Bonnie Cataldo, violin & cello; and Vadim Mazo, violin & viola.

Other Cobbett members attending were Dr. James Christensen, cello; Helen Stepanek, cello; Herb Walker, cello; Naida Mac Dermid, viola; Edwin Gould, violin; Dorothy Thomas, violin; Betty Gehring, violin; and Peg Walker, violin.

Violinist Bayla Keyes performed with ensembles in two evening concerts. She is best known to audiences as a member of the internationally famous Muir String Quartet, a winner of the Nevian and Naumburg Competitions. This quartet is in residence at Boston U. and tours the U.S. and Europe.



Bayla Keyes



Pictured above are John and Bonnie Cataldo, members of the Cobbett Association Advisory Council since it was organized in September, 1990. They have served as coaches at the Interlochen Chamber Music Conference — John for 17 years and Bonnie for 8 years.