



The Cobbett Association's Chamber Music Journal

Vol.X. No.3 Autumn 1999

The Chamber Music of Alexander Borodin Part I

by Larius J. Ussi

A considerable amount of Borodin's music is known to the general public although they may not know that it is his. Music from his Second Quartet, as well as from his opera *Prince Igor* and certain other pieces, have been used on several occasions in films and Broadway musicals. Even classical music fans know little of the man who composed such beautiful music other than the fact that he was a chemistry professor who dabbled in music. But even this is not entirely accurate.

Born out of wedlock, Borodin (1833-87) was known to be the son of the Georgian Prince Luka Gedeonishvili. The Prince once remarked that while he had meant to marry Borodin's mother, he just never got around to it. Rather than naming the child Alexander Gedeonishvili, the boy was registered in the name of one of his father's serfs, one Porfiry Borodin, in what was then the standard practice. His mother, who was wealthy in her own right, was able to have private tutors educate the boy at home along with a young female cousin. This education was carried out in a rather unusual and apparently idiosyncratic manner and as a result, for rather a long time, Borodin referred to himself as a girl. (He did eventually outgrow this fixation, married, and then even had a mistress to boot. As if proving a point, he wrote long descriptive letters about his mistress to his wife, who undoubtedly did not want to hear about it.) Without question, Borodin, although an eccentric, was a prodigy and a genius. Before he was 10, he had learnt German from the housekeeper, French from his governess, and English from a family retainer. Later he added Italian and was able to write scientific essays in all of these languages in addition to Russian and Latin. At the age of 8, he showed an interest in music, and at one hearing could reproduce on the piano without having had lessons, what he had heard played a few hours before by a military band. His mother immediately engaged one of the band members to give him flute lessons. The

(Continued on page 3)

George Onslow's String Quartets Part XI

by R.H.R. Silvertrust

The first ten parts of this series dealt with the composer's life from 1784 to 1836. The first thirty quartets, Op.4 Nos.1-3, Op.8 Nos.1-3, Op.9 Nos.1-3, Op.10 Nos.1-3, Op.21 Nos.1-3, Op.36 Nos.1-3, Op.46 Nos.1-3, Op.47, Op.48, Op.49, Op.50, Op.52, Op.53, Op.54, Op.55 and Op.56 were presented and analyzed.)

After completing String Quartet No.30, Op.56 in the spring of 1836, Onslow did not return to the genre again for at least three years. During this time, however, he did remain quite busy and his reputation as a composer of chamber music continued to grow. In the summer of 1836, he was named an honorary member of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, without doubt the most celebrated musical institution of its type in Europe. Founded in Vienna in 1813, the Gesellschaft der



Onslow in 1837 (age 53) the year he became a member of the Legion d' Honneur

Musikfreunde (Society of the Friends of Music) supervised a renowned conservatory, owned an extensive music library, and had as its primary

objective the promotion of contemporary music. To this end, it periodically recognized outstanding composers for their contributions. Honored at the same time as Onslow were Ferdinand Ries and the French opera composers, Meyerbeer and Auber. In the spring of 1837, Onslow was admitted to the Legion d'Honneur "in

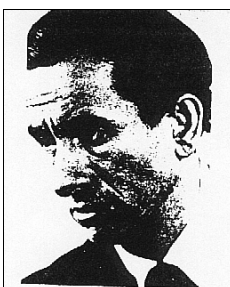
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Three Composers at Terezin Hans Krasa, Viktor Ullmann & Gideon Klein

by Dr. William T. Horne

In two previous articles I have reviewed the lives and chamber music of Pavel Haas and Erwin Schulhoff, Czech composers who lost their lives in Nazi concentration camps. This final article describes three talented composers, whose music seemed to blossom in the adversity of imprisonment.

Hans Krasa (1899-1944) was born in Prague and began piano lessons at age six, soon catching up with his elder sister, Mitzi. His doting father bought him a real Amati violin when he was ten, and even paid for a performance by spa musicians of a string quartet he wrote at age 14 on a family vacation. After graduation from the



German Music Academy, he came under the tutelage of Alexander Zemlinsky (who taught Schoenberg) at the New German Theater in Prague. Modern French

music seeped into Prague after World War I, and Krasa was enthralled with the new sounds of Debussy and "Les Six". He wrote his first string quartet and a symphony which were well received in Paris, and in the mid-twenties, he studied briefly with Roussel, but became homesick for Prague, and returned there after a few months. In Prague he lived a somewhat dissipated life style, teaching a bit, but involving himself with circles of Czech artists, writers, and avant-garde theater. He thus produced little completed musical output during the 1930's. His most successful production was a children's opera, "*Brundibar* (*Bumblebee*)".

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R.H.R. Silvertrust, *Editor*

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The International Cobbett Association for chamber music research is dedicated to the preservation, dissemination, performance, publication and recording of non-standard, rare or unknown chamber music of merit. To this end, The Cobbett Association maintains a copying and lending library for its members. Contributions of rare or non-standard repertoire are warmly appreciated.

Member Seeks Music & Book

Mozart's Divertimenti require two horns, sometimes, two oboes and one time two clarinets. I find it difficult to satisfy these requirements. But I still would like to play them in the future, so here is my call for help: Who knows of (or even has) transcriptions of K.63, 99, 113, 205, 247, 251, 287, 334 and or 522, wherein the second wind instrument of a kind has been replaced by another, e.g. one of the two horns by a bassoon?

Another quite different problem is the disappearance of Distinctive Publishing in Plantation, Florida, where I tried to order a copy of *Chamber Music* by Christensen. Do any of your readers have an idea if this book is still available for purchase somewhere.

Roland Driessen
Valkenburg a/d/ Geul, Netherlands

If any of you reading this can assist Mr. Driessen, please write him at: Euwerem 1 / 6301 PW Valkenburg a/d Geul, The Netherlands. Dr. James Christensen, author of "Chamber Music, is a member of The Cobbett Ass'n. I suggest you write him at: 2635 Woodfield Ln / North Liberty, IA 52317 / USA

Onslow's String Quintets

Thank you so much for your superb series on George Onslow's string quartets. In it, you have from time to time mentioned his string quintets. How many did he write and for what combination of instruments are they? Is it true that Schubert got the idea for writing his 2 cello quintet (D.956) after meeting and talking with Onslow in Vienna? Finally, are any either recorded or in print?

Egon Kartheiser
Dallas, Texas

Onslow wrote 34 string quintets. The first three, Op.1 Nos.1-3 were originally for 2 violins, 2 violas and cello. The next seven or so, were originally for 2 violins, 1 viola and 2 cellos. However, after hearing the famous bassist, Dragonetti, perform the 2nd cello part to one of the quintets at a concert, Onslow decided to issue bass parts for all of the quintets that had originally appeared for two cellos. The next 21 quintets were for either 2 cellos or cello and bass. The last three quintets, Op.78, 80 and 82 were written for 2 violas and one cello. The popularity of his quintets encouraged publishers to issue all of them with 2 viola parts, 2 cello parts and a bass part. Hence several combinations of players could perform the works. If the quintet

consisted of 2 violins, 2 violas and cello, the 2nd viola took the part of the first cello and the lone cello would play the 2nd cello part. If the quintet had only one viola and 2 cellos, it would be played as a normal cello quintet. Where there was a bass, the bass would play the second cello part.

Among the many "facts" circulated about Onslow which are not true is the statement that he visited Vienna and studied with Beethoven besides hobnobbing with other Viennese composers such as Schubert. The fact is that after the French Revolution, Onslow rarely left France. When he did it was almost always to visit his relatives in England. During the Revolution, he accompanied his father into exile first to Holland and later to Hamburg. This was in the late 1790's and early 1800's. Fetis and other biographers speculated that Onslow may have gone to Vienna about this time to study with Beethoven. This is highly unlikely. Beethoven was not known in Germany, let alone France in the 1790's. He was still taking lessons himself. Onslow, did not take lessons from Reicha until 1808 which is the earliest he would have heard about Beethoven. Meanwhile, Schubert who was born in 1797 would have been a mere baby or young boy. He did not write the string quintet D.956 until the mid-1820's. Onslow almost certainly did not leave France during this decade being occupied not only with the production of his first opera, *Le Colporteur*, but also with several other projects. Further after his death, Onslow's wife Delphine categorically stated George had never visited Vienna. He did, however, on one occasion, in 1847, visit Cologne to conduct his own music at a festival. Nonetheless, there is quite a good chance that Schubert may well have chosen to write a quintet for two cellos after hearing one of Onslow's quintets for the same combination which were quite popular and frequently performed in Vienna during the 1820's.

The following quintets have been recorded: Op.38-40 (2 Vc) on a Sony CD#SK 64 308, / Op.68 (2Vc) & Op.80 (2Vla) on Erato 88252 / Op.78 (2Vla) on a Koch CD#3-1623-2. Among the quintets in print are No.11, Op.33 from Wollenweber, No.16, Op.39 from SJ Music, No.26, Op.67 from Phylloscopus and No.30, Op.74 from Doblinger. I understand that others are in preparation.

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.

: | At The Doublebar

Despite the lateness of this issue, we fully expect that our next issue will be posted no later than mid-December. The main reason why this issue has gone to press as late as it has is because the negotiations with Northeastern Illinois University, about The Cobbett Association Library, dragged on far longer than we anticipated and ultimately ended inconclusively. The fact that the Library has been boxed and inaccessible for as long as it has is something which we never expected. It is unacceptable and will not be allowed to continue. The Board of Advisors has now taken up this problem. Several suggested that we include a detailed article in the *Journal* about the problem and ask the general membership for its ideas. This has been done. That article appears in this issue. It is about the status of the Library. This is your chance to have a direct input or help us solve this vexing situation.

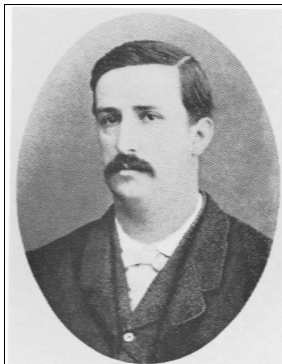
While on the subject of membership participation, I wish to thank Dr. Horne for his excellent article on the Terezin composers and Mr. Ussi for his fine piece on the chamber music of Alexander Borodin. Both are members of The Cobbett Association. Again, as you know, we welcome your articles. Please to not hesitate to submit articles about composers and music you would like to see better known. There can be little doubt that the members of The Cobbett Association probably are the most knowledgeable group in existence with regard to works not in the standard repertoire.

Although we have not had access to our library for the last several months, on the brighter side, much music which has long been out of print is now being made available, especially by Merton Music and Broekmans en Van Poppel. Many of you will certainly be delighted to read in the next issue of the *Journal* our article *Hot off the Press*. Music publishers are not the only ones who are at work though. Recording companies continue to confound those who predicted we would never get to hear new titles on CD because the companies would be too busy transferring everything from LP. I think each new installment of *Diskology* clearly shows that this just did not happen. More new titles dedicated to 'Cobbett' composers continue to appear each month. For this we surely can be grateful.

The Chamber Music of Alexander Borodin

(Continued from page 1)

next year, he fell madly in love with a calf and composed a polka for piano and flute which he entitled *Helene* after the object of his affection. Later his mother took in a boy about Borodin's age as a boarder. The two of them shared a friendship and love of music which led to the boarder teaching himself the violin while Borodin taught himself the cello so that they could play chamber music together. During this time he received some rudimentary composition lessons from local teachers. At the age of 17, his mother sent him to medical school. Although he eventually became a doctor, he realized he was not well suited to this profession, frequently passing out at the sight of blood. During the late 1850's he made two trips to western Europe. During the second of these, from 1859-62, he pursued post doctoral studies in chemistry at Heidelberg and met his future wife, Ekaterina Protopopova. She was said to be a brilliant pianist in her own right.



Rare early Photograph of Borodin dating from from the early 1860's

Upon returning to Petersburg in 1862, he concentrated on chemistry and obtained a position as a teaching assistant at Petersburg University. In St. Petersburg, he met Balakirev and Mussorgsky. Under their guidance, he began composition in earnest. But even though he became friends and remained in close contact from the 1860's on with the major Petersburg composers, and especially Mussorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov (both of whom gave him considerable help), Borodin's output remained very limited. The well-known English critic, Sir Henry Hadlow, was probably correct when he wrote that "*no musician has ever claimed immortality with so slender an offering.*" His works total little more than 50 and many of these are but short songs. The fact that Borodin composed so little was due largely in part to his responsibilities as a teaching professor at several institutions. In addition because he had never had a proper compositional foundation, he did

not find composing particularly easy. Many of his works could not have been completed without the extensive help he always received from his friends.

Though his total output was small, he devoted a great deal of what time he had for composition to chamber music. This was probably due to the fact that during the 1850's, Borodin was part of a circle of chamber music enthusiasts who often got together to listen to and play chamber music at the house of Ivan Gavrushkevitch, a keen amateur cellist. Borodin, when he wasn't listening, often took the part of 2nd cellist in the quintets of Onslow, Gebel, Gade, Spohr and Schubert which were often played. In all, Borodin wrote some 13 works for 3 or more players. Among these are four trios for two violins and cello, a quartet for flute, oboe, viola and cello, two complete string quartets and two occasional pieces for quartet included in *Les Vendredis*, a string quintet for 2 cellos, a string sextet, a piano trio and a piano quintet. With the exception of the music for string quartet, all of the other works were created by Borodin before he returned to Petersburg and fell under the influence of Rimsky-Korsakov and the Mighty Five. Many of these 'earlier' works, which date from the 1850's and early 1860's, were written while he was abroad and show the influence of Mendelssohn and Schumann but sometimes use Russian folk music in the tradition of Glinka.

His earliest chamber work, dating from 1847, was a **String Trio in G** for 2 violins and cello, based on themes of Meyerbeer. It is lost. Next is another **String Trio in G**, also lost, thought to date from around 1850 and perhaps to be fragmentary in nature. His earliest extant work is a **Quartet in D** for flute, oboe, viola and cello, believed to date from 1852. It was printed for the first time in 1949 by the Soviet State Music Publishers. I have not seen an edition of it in the West and I know of no current recordings of the work. His next work, **String Quintet in f minor** for 2 violins, viola and 2 cellos, is thought to date from 1854 although it may not have been finished until around 1860, while he was in Heidelberg studying chemistry. In four movements, this is a substantial work, the most substantial undertaken by him until then. The idea of

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a cello quintet was first suggested to him by his friend, Gavrushevitch. Borodin was said to have told his friend, "It is easier to compose a quartet; a quintet with two cellos is a much more difficult proposition, because two principle instrumental parts have to be dealt with. I am not capable of writing a cello part which both sounds beautiful and also corresponds to the nature of the instrument." Ironically, this quintet proves just the opposite: Borodin had no problem writing a work with a first violin and a first cello and even early on was capable of writing superbly for the cello. His the writing for the second cello is extremely good as well.

The first movement begins with a descending, lyrical theme given to the first violin and the first cello:



A prominent Borodin scholar, Walter Labhart, notes that the use of a descending type of theme to begin a work appeared again and again in his music. It first appeared in the *Helene Polka* (the one for his bovine friend) when he was 9 and was used extensively in *Prince Igor* and his Piano Quintet as well as several other works. The second theme is short and chromatically rising but not particularly well developed. Of the 4 movements, this is the weakest and, like many a youthful piece, overly long. However, the six bar pizzicato ending is effective. Borodin was to use this device again in the scherzo to his 2nd String Quartet.

The second movement, *Andante, ma non troppo*, is a theme and two variations. There is speculation that there may have been a third variation but if there was, it is now lost. The theme, given forth by the first cello, is Russian. It is somber but not tragic. The writing is very effective:



The first variation is a set of light-hearted triplets first stated by the cello and then repeated by the first violin:



Labhart believes earlier quartets by Glinka and Alabiev to have been the inspiration for this particular treatment. By any standard this is an engaging variation. The 2nd variation is also well-

wrought. The 2nd cello is given the lead for 30 measures and allowed to soar high into its tenor register as the other voices weave in and out—all in all, a first rate movement.

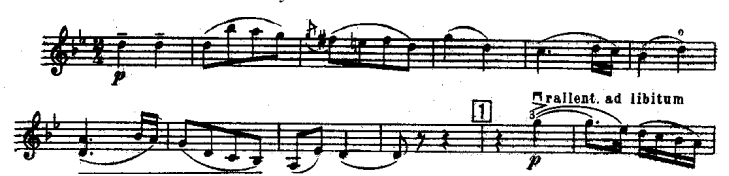
The third movement, *Menuetto*, though not overly original is charming and well-written. The trio section features the first appearance in his music of a kind of arpeggio figure, this time as melody. In the finale, *Prestissimo*, the voice of Mendelssohn speaks to us. The first theme is again descending in nature. The catchy second theme is particularly jaunty:



For the most part this rhythmically rushing movement is full of joy and life. Only very occasionally does Borodin allow a cloud to cross the horizon. When he does, it is in the form of a Mendelssohnian fate motif. (see right) I would not argue that this quintet is an absolute masterwork. On the other hand, it still must be considered a very good work, especially useful in a genre for which far too few were composed. The music was printed for the first time in the early 1970's by Eulenburg (GM35) Several recordings are available.

A **Grand Trio in G** for 2 violins and cello was also composed in the mid 1850's and published for the first time by the Soviet State Music Publishers in 1949. Copies of this edition could from time to time be found in European music stores during the 1970's. Only two of the trio's movements are extant, the finale is lost. There is nothing Russian sounding at all in this work. The listener will find the influence of Hummel or middle-period Schubert. The opening *Allegro* shows competent handling of this format. The part-writing is good with the cello featured prominently in the introduction of the main theme. This is a fairly big movement on a scale with the first movements to Beethoven's Op.9. The 2nd violin part is effectively voiced so that the music is not treble heavy. An *Andante* which follows, though ordinary, is still effective. It is a pity that the work has not been reprinted in the West, it would make a nice addition to this very thin repertory.

Another **String Trio in g minor** for 2 violins and cello is thought to have been composed around the same time as the last work discussed. It is only one movement, *Andantino*, a theme and variations. The theme is taken from the sad Russian folk melody *What have I done to hurt you*



One variation in particular, all in pizzicato, is quite striking. This is a slight, but attractive work, suitable as an encore. Published in the West by Globe Music (No.7) in the late 1960's, it has remained available. Both of these trios were recorded on Harmonia Mundi CD #RUS 2888143. This article will be continued in the next issue of the *Journal*.

Three Composers at Terezin—Hans Krasa, Viktor Ullmann & Gideon Klein

(Continued from page 1)

Although several family members were abroad when the Nazi menace erupted, Krasa could not seem to decide to leave Prague until it was too late. After arriving in Terezin Concentration Camp in April 1942, he became involved in the musical life there, and without the distractions of Prague, was able to produce more works than in the previous decade. A revised version of "Brundibar" was the centerpiece of the Nazi propaganda film showcasing the talent of Terezin for international misinformation.

Krasa's Chamber Music

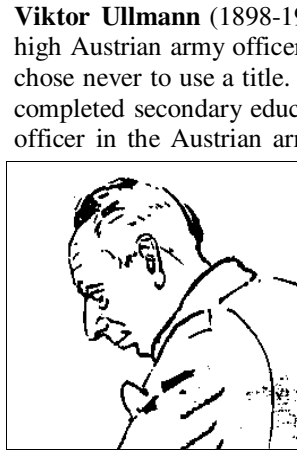
The opening of the Czech Republic to the West in 1989 has allowed publication and performances of music categorized by the Nazis as "Entartete" (Degenerate). Krasa's **String Quartet (1921)** has been recorded by the Hawthorne String Quartet. There are three movements: *Moderato*; *Prestissimo-Molto calmo-Volgare*; *Molto lento e tranquillo*. It is described as a bravura piece with rapidly changing moods and a variety of technical effects such as glissandi, pizzicati, and col legno.

In Terezin, Krasa wrote a piece entitled **Theme and Variations**, using as the theme the "Anna Song", which he had written in Prague, and which had become as popular as Kurt Weill's *The Three Penny Opera*. The music shows bi-tonality, building on successions of fourths and fifths. It goes into a prestissimo fugato of the theme before the viola sings the heroine's tune again. Two works for string trio were composed also. The first **Tanec (Dance)** is a one movement work written in 1943 it has an ostinato figure, melodic and rhythmic, which leads into a wild perpetual motion.

Another piece entitled **Passacaglia and Fugue** was never



performed there, having been completed less than two months, before Krasa was transported to Auschwitz for execution. The Passacaglia has a slow eight-bar theme, contrasted with its own mirror. All these works are now published and recorded.



Viktor Ullmann (1898-1944) was born in Teschen the son of a high Austrian army officer, and was of noble origin, although he chose never to use a title. Little is known of his early life, but he completed secondary education in Vienna, and was the youngest officer in the Austrian army in World War I. He studied piano with Eduard Steuermann and theory and composition with Arnold Schoenberg, who later recommended Ullmann to his brother-in-law, Alexander Zemlinsky, who was teaching and conducting at the New German Theater in Prague when Ullmann returned to Prague in 1919. He had brief stints as a conductor, but produced only seven works up until 1935, when he studied briefly with Alois Haba in quarter-tones. He had not been economically successful and struggled during the decade up to the war.

Ullmann came to Terezin in September 1942 with his third wife. Two former wives and one of his sons were interred there. Two other children were smuggled out to Sweden, then England, but both died in asylums, unable to cope with the loss of their parents. He became an organizer of musical rehearsals and a critic. He had more free time for composition than he seems to have had in Prague and produced sixteen major compositions, many of which have been lost. The most important work was his opera **Der Kaiser von Atlantis**. There is only one chamber work, **String Quartet No. 3**, which survived this period. It is a beautiful work. Although divided into four sections, it is structured to be played as a uninterrupted movement, only about fifteen minutes long. When the announcement of transportation to the East came, Ullmann packed up all his scores, and they were thought to have perished with him as Auschwitz. Only later was it discovered that he had changed his mind at the last minute and gave them all to another for safekeeping, thus salvaging them after all.



Gideon Klein (1919-1945) was a generation younger than the other composers I have detailed, but by no means of lesser significance. In fact, his energy and determination greatly influenced others in Terezin, especially Pavel Haas, whom he persuaded to start composing again after a deep depression.

Klein was born at Prerov in Moravia to a very literary family. He very early showed great musical talent and by age twelve had

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George Onslow String Quartet Nos.31-33 (Continued from page 1)

recognition of his international reputation and achievement in the field of instrumental music.”

Hence, though his reputation continued to grow, it was primarily among chamber music lovers. But the French general musical public and that of Paris in particular, for the most part, had little enthusiasm for this art form and with them, Onslow’s reputation remained muted. For them the theater was of primary interest and the only sure way for a composer to gain their attention and fame was through opera.

Hence, Onslow once again set about to write an opera. The

subject was from a famous episode in French history, the murder of the Duke of Guise in 1588. Entitled *Duc de Guise*, the opera premiered in 1837 with some success. Berlioz, for example, wrote that it was, “one of the most beautiful glories of France,” and went on to describe Onslow as a “rare talent.” Nonetheless, despite some 20 performances within three months of the premiere, it suddenly disappeared and was judged a failure. There were several causes, most beyond Onslow’s control (such as the sudden resignation of important cast members), but there also was the undeniable fact that the opera’s subject matter hardly seemed suitable for the Opera Comique. The overture to *Guise*, as was the case with his other opera, remained popular long after the rest of the music sank to oblivion. Unfortunately *Guise*’s failure came at a bad time and probably cost Onslow a chance at a seat on the prestigious Academie des Beaux-Arts as well as a professorship at the Conservatoire. In both instances, he lost out to the Italian comic opera composer, Michel Carafa, whose music died long before he did and of whom Rossini said, “He made the mistake of being born my contemporary.”

After the failure of *Guise*, Onslow spent more time away from Paris. In 1838, he composed a string quintet, No.25, Op.61. His biographer, Dr Franks, states that there is evidence Onslow also completed a string quartet sometime during the summer of 1839 which would have been Op.60. However this work was never published and may ultimately have been reworked. In July of 1839, Onslow was also elected a member of the Academy of St. Cecilia, the most important musical institution of its type in Italy.

Between 1839 and 1841, Onslow devoted himself and helped to found an orchestra, the Societe Philharmonique de Clermont-

Ferrand, in his local Department. In addition to his involvement with the orchestra, Onslow, at this time, lost ownership to

Chalendras, the family chateau, in a court dispute with his brothers. He then undertook to build a new residence, Bellerive, a few miles away. All of this activity may explain that between 1839 and 1842, Onslow wrote only three works, all of them string quartets.

String Quartet No.31, Op.62 in B flat Major was completed early in the summer of 1841. It was dedicated to M. Beaulieu, a French violinist and composer active in

the French provinces. Published in 1842, it was performed in Vienna and Prague with success but did not seem enter the repertoire. The work features a slow introduction, *Largo*, with a chromatically descending passage first heard in the cello.



Onslow was fond of this device and used it often, invariably with great success, as a means of building tension, suspense or drama for the fast movement to follow. Mozart’s Quartet No.19, *The Dissonant*, K.465 is perhaps the most famous early example of this kind of introduction. Beethoven was also partial to this means of beginning and used it on several occasions, as early as his Op.18 right through to his final quartets. Onslow first used a slow introduction in Quartet No.4, Op.8 No.1 composed around 1810. We hear Beethovenian suspense and uneasiness, but the main theme of the *Allegro grazioso*, while hardly cheerful, is neither tragic nor dramatic, but a near restatement (syncopated and in major) of the *Largo*’s opening bars. The part writing is very good though tricky at times. A martial bridge passage leads to a lovely 2d theme. Written in a large scale, this is a very fine movement.

The second movement, *Allegro moderato*, begins as a charming waltz in 3/4. Syncopated, but quickly transmogrifies into a somewhat Mendelssohnian scherzo. (see next page) In the trio, which provides a fine contrast, the 1st violin and cello sing a calmer, sustained Lied, supported seamlessly by the inner voices. Here is a movement of great artistic merit, sounding as if it just came flowing out from his pen effortlessly.



“The Leading Modern Dramatic Composers of the Day” This lithograph appeared in 1838 and was published in an important French periodical. Standing (from l. to r.) are: Berlioz, Donizetti, Onslow, Auber, Mendelssohn & Berton. Seated (from l. to r.) are: Halevy, Meyerbeer, Spontini and Rossini.

(Continued from page 7)

ALLEGRO
Moderato.

A big *Andante Cantabile*, provides the center of gravity for the Quartet. The very beautiful opening theme is first voiced by the cello high in its tenor octave and then taken up by all.

ANDANTE
Cantabile.

Intricately woven together and spanning the full range of musical emotions, including two stormy episodes, it is one of the finest slow movements Onslow wrote and easily the match of anything written from this period by anyone.

After the *Andante* sweetly dies away *ppp*, Onslow breaks his listeners' reverie as the finale, *Allegro vivace assai*, begins with two powerful chords *ff*, followed by a grand pause. Again two loud chords are sounded followed by a fermata rest. Then again come the crashing chords, which this time usher in a wild chase, played *pp*.

FINALE
ALLEGRO VIVACE.

This ingenious music has a transparent, gauze-like quality to it. Again the part writing is good. Onslow seems to have improved on Mendelssohn in the rapid sections given to the lower voices do not produce the miscalculated growling effect one gets in the last movement of Mendelssohn's Octet or in the Canzonetta section to his Op.12 Quartet. The second theme, lyrical and broad, provides a perfect contrast to what comes before.

The music has a light, heavenly quality. The surprise pizzicato ending is remarkably effective. This is a master quartet. It is only of medium difficulty, from both a technical and ensemble standpoint. It belongs in the concert hall and should seriously be examined by professionals as well as amateurs who also will get great pleasure from it. Unfortunately, it is out of print and has not been recorded.

Onslow completed **String Quartet No.32 in b minor, Opus 63** immediately after Quartet No.31. Dedicated to the famous French violinist, Delphin Alard, this quartet was performed several times in Paris after it was published. The main theme of the opening movement, *Allegro risoluto e maestoso*, is a curious blend; first spacious and broad, then hurried with rushing scale passages. From the recurring last three notes of these, Onslow

ingeniously creates the second theme. Both collide in a dramatic *tutta forza* section toward the close of the movement with the second theme winning out but nonetheless itself dying away *pp*.

A brilliant *Scherzo vivace*, in G Major comes next. Bits of the main theme are tossed about between all of the voices. Hand-offs must be precise for the music to be effective. A brief trio section, *Allegretto semplice e legatissimo*, in 2/4 consisting mainly of half notes provides a good contrast and is used to conclude the movement after the scherzo is reintroduced.

Perhaps the strongest movement of this quartet is the massive *Adagio espressivo*. The lovely opening theme is introduced by the first violin and then given to the cello.

ADAGIO
espressivo. dolce.

As the movement progresses it becomes rhythmically quite intricate with all of the voices given important opportunities. Onslow interrupts the tranquil mood of the *Adagio* twice with very dramatic episodes marked *con energia*.

In the finale, *Allegro moderato*, the cello introduces the march-like main theme. The violin restates it and immediately goes into the second subject, a long triplet passage. It is only later that Onslow returns and fully develops the first theme and then, later yet, blends the two, cleverly using one as a kind of counterpoint to the other. In the exciting concluding bars, played *tutta forza*, the cello and 1st violin echo bits of the first theme back and forth over the pulsing triplet accompaniment of the inner voices. This is also a good quartet, alas out of print and unrecorded.

Onslow began work on **String Quartet No.33, Op.64 in C** in the autumn of 1841, but his mother's death in January 1842 and his candidacy again for a place on the Academie des Beaux Arts following Cherubini's death in March 1842 interrupted his work. Dedicated to Eugene Sauzay, another well-known French violinist, Op.33 remained popular longer, especially in Germany, than Nos.31 and 32. It begins with a foreboding *Preludio, Lento Assai* in minor. However the main section, *Allegro animato*, is sunny and playful:

PRELUDIO.
LENTO ASSAI.

QUARTETTO
No. 33.

ALLEGRO ANIMATO.

(Continued from page 8)

The opening theme is based on a turn. The second theme, consisting of scale passages which fall under the hand comfortably, is a little tricky rhythmically. It requires precise execution, as it is passed from voice to voice, to be effective. Though light in mood, this is a substantial movement.

The following *Andante sostenuto* is an absolute gem. The lovely pastoral main theme in A Flat Major is given entirely to the first violin who is entrusted to spin forth a seamless melody over a subtle accompaniment in the other voices.



A turbulent and dramatic middle section in g# minor follows in which the cello belts out a theme *a la basso*.



A scherzo, *Allegro energico*, in c minor begins with a Halloween-like first theme:



This, without further development, gives way to the second subject which is martial in nature. The trio, in C Major, provides great contrast with a quiet, flowing 8th note melody in the first violin and later the cello. It conjures the image of water flowing lazily through a small channel.

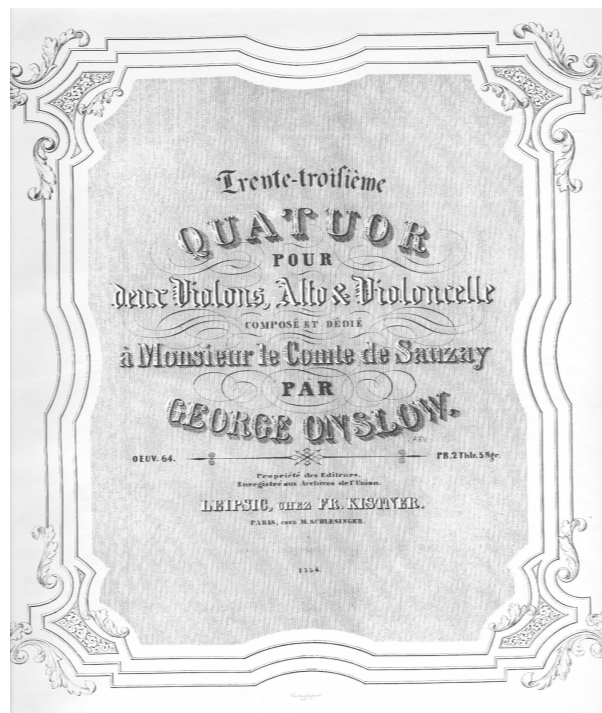
In the finale, *Allegro*, we have one of Onslow's great 'La Chasse' movements. Above the viola's soft 16th note backdrop, the 1st violin sings the dramatic main theme which is finished with a kind of triplet 'cymbal crash' in the cello. One feels forward motion immediately:



Again there is no development but the introduction of a march-like second theme without bridge section. When the first theme is then restated by the cello, the first violin accompanies with 3 octave rising scale passages. Eventually this is made into a third theme. In the cello we again find the soft arpeggio passages which Onslow started to use in his Quartet No.29. But here they remain in the background. As we reach the coda, the first violin begins by softly singing the opening theme against rushing chromatic scale passages played in the bass register by the viola and cello. Except for a brief crescendo, the music keeps getting

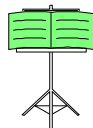
softer and softer appearing to die away before the final triumphant concluding chords.

This is yet another a mature work, satisfying in everyway. It deserves to be in the professional's repertoire but is still accessible to amateurs and belongs in the front rank of the composer's quartets. There is no recording but I picked up a modern reprint made by Rara Avis Reprint Sorozat of the original Kistner edition about 7 years ago in Budapest at Rosavogli's. I have not, however seen it in the West.

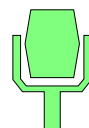


Au Revoir for now, but

This series will continue in the next issue with a discussion of String Quartet Nos.34-36.



New Recordings



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

String Quartets

Benjamin BRITTEN (1913-1976) Quartettino, Alla Marcia & Qt. No.3, Naxos 8.554360 / John CASKEN (1949-) No.2, ASC CS 11, Friedrich CERHA (1926-) Nos.1-3, CPO 999 646 / Chaya CZERNOWIN (1957-) Qt, Mode 77 / Tamar DIESENDRUCK (19??-) Nos.1-2, Centaur 2412 / Daniel ELLIS (1933-) No.2, ASC CS 11 / Anthony GILBERT (1934-) No.3, ASC CS 11 / Jacovos HALIASSAS (1920-) No.1, Agora 144.1 / Yorgos HATZIMICHELAKIS (1959-) No.1, Agora 144.1 / Hanes HEHER (1965-) Qt, Extraplatte 334-2 / Berhanrd HERRMANN (1911-75) Echoes, TROY 301 / Charles JONES (1910-1997) No.6, CRI 819 / Alexander KALOGERAS (1961-) Hieron, Agora 144.1 / Vitezslava KAPRALOVA (1915-1940) Str. Qt., Studio Matous, MK 0049 / Leon KIRCHNER (1919-) Nos.1-3, Music & Arts 1045 / Marek KOPELENT (1932-) No.4, Multisonic 31 0356 / Jan KRZYWICKI (1948-) Qt, TROY 337 / Kevin MALONE (19??-) Fast Forward, ASC CS 11 / Ernest MOERAN (1894-1950) Phantasy Qt., ASC CS 5 / Mark PHILLIPS (1952-) No.2, Capstone 8660 / Geoffrey POOLE (1949-) No.2, ASC CS 11 / Jean ROGER-DUCASSE (1873-1954) No.2 in D, Mandala 4934 / Allessandro ROLLA (1757-1841) 3 Gran Quartetti Op.2 & 3, Symphonia 99167 / Joseph-Guy ROPARTZ (1864-1955) No.4, Timpani 1C1047 / Manuel ROSENTHAL (1904-) Les Soirees du Petit Juas, Calliope 9894 / Philipp SCHARWENKA (1847-1917) Nos. 1-2, MD&G 336 0889 / Thorkell SIGURBJORNSSON (1938-) Hasselby Qt, Copenhagen Qt & Visit Qt, ITM 7-11, Dimitris SYKIAS (19??-) Alnitak-Alnilam, Agora 144.1 / Janos VAJDA (1949-) Nos.1-2, Hungaroton 31797 / Sjtelijs VLAVIANOS (1947-) Traces No.5, Agora 144.1 / Heitor VILLALOBOS (1887-1959) Nos.2, 12 & 16, Dorian 93179 / Robin WALKER (1953-) I Thirst, ASC CS 11 / Michael WHALEN (1965-) Nos.1-2, Arabesque Z6729 / Johan WIKMANSON (1753-1800) Nos.1-3, Proprius 9114 / James WILLEY (1939-) Nos.1,2 & 6, CRI 816

Strings Only-Not Quartets

Hermann BERENS (1826-1880) String Trio, Op.85 No.2, Quantaphon 25.818 / Friedrich CERHA (1926-) Movements for Sextet, CPO 999 646 / Chaya CZERNOWIN (1957-) Sextet, Mode 77 / Ernst von DOHNANYI (1877-1960) String Trio, Op.10 in C, Quantaphon 25.818 / Volker KIRCHNER (1942-) 2 Sextets, MD&G 304 0871 / Allessandro ROLLA (1757-1841) Trii Concertante for Str. Trio, Op.1, Symphonia 99167

Piano Trios

Cesar FRANCK (1822-1890) Nos.2-4, Chandos 9742 / Leon KIRCHNER (1919-) Trio, Music & Arts 1045 / Achille LONGO (1900-54) Trio in Bb, Phoenix Classics 98416 / Otto MALLING (1848-1915) Op.36 in a minor, Marco Polo 8.224114 / Tigran MANSURIAN (1939-) 5 Bagatelles, Megadisc 7839 / Ignaz MOSCHELES (1794-1870) Op.84 in c minor, Signum X98-00 / Mihaly MOSONYI (1815-1870) Op.1 in Bb & Grand Nocturne, Marco Polo 8.225042 / Manuel PONCE (1882-1948) Trio Romantico, ASV DCA 1053 / David RAKOWSKY (1958) Attitude Problem & Hyper Blue, CRI 820 / Joseph-Guy ROPARTZ (1864-1955) Trio in a minor, Timpani 1C1047 / Philipp SCHARWENKA (1847-1917) Op.100 in c#, Olympia OCD 655 / Sigismund THALBERG (1812-1871) Op.69 in A, Signum X98-00 / Leifur THORARINSSON (1934-1998) Trio, GM Recordings 2065 / Robert WARD (1917-) Dialogues, TROY 323

Piano Quartets & Quintets

Tommaso GIORDANI (1710-1806) 3 Quintets for Harpsichord (Pno) & Str. Qt, Op.1 Nos.3,5-6, Opus 111 20-233 / Conradin KREUTZER (1780-1849) Piano Quartet, Orfeo C512-991 A / Elliott SCHWARTZ (1936-) Dream Music with Variations for Pno Qt., Capstone 863330

Winds & Strings

Tommaso GIORDANI (1710-1806) 2 Flute Quartets, Op.2 Nos.5-6, Opus 111 20-233 / Bernard HEIDEN (1910-) Clarinet Quintet, Cadenza 800 920 / Bernard HERRMANN (1911-75) Souvenir de Voyage for Cln Qnt, TROY 301 /

Johann Nepomuk HUMMEL (1778-1837) Clarinet Quartet in Eb, Naxos 8.554280, / Gordon JACOB (1895-1984) Oboe Qt., ASC CS 5 / Conradin KREUTZER (1780-1849) Clarinet Qt. in Eb, Orfeo C512 991A / Jan NOVAK (1921-1984) Balletti a 9 for Fl, Ob, Cln, Bsn, Hrn, Vln, Vla, Vc & Kb, Gallo 906 / Manuel ROSENTHAL (1904-) Junventas for Cln, Str. Qt & Kb, Calliope 9894

Winds, Strings & Piano

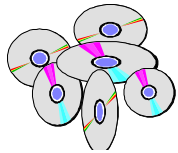
Paul EPSTEIN (1938-) Palindromic Variations for Fl, Vc & Pno, Capstone 8660 / Philipp KAISER (1755-1823) 2 Sonatas for Pno, Vln & 2 Hrn, Guild 7163 / Volker KIRCHNER (1942-) Exil for Cln, Vln, Vc & Pno, MD&G304 0871 / Jan NOVAK (1921-1984) Metamorphoses for Fl, Ob 2Vln, Vc & Pno, Gallo 906 / Alan RAWSTHORNE (1905-71) Quintet for Cln, Hrn, Vln, Vc & Pno, ASV DCA 1061 / Thorkell SIGURBJORNSSON (1938-) Kisum for Cln, Vla & Pno, ITM 7-11, Leifur THORARINSSON (1934-1998) Trio for Fl, Vc & Pno, GM Recordings 2065

Piano & Winds

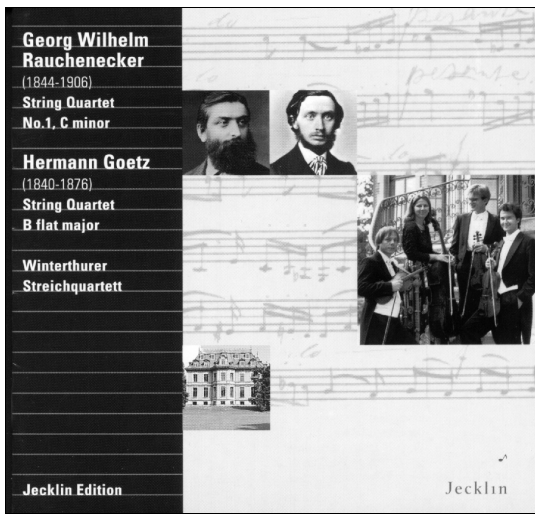
Conradin KREUTZER (1780-1849) Quintet for Pno, Fl, Cln, Vla & Vc, Orfeo C512 991 A / Jan NOVAK (1921-1984) Sonata Tribus for Fl, Vln & Pno, Sonata Phantasia for Vc, Bsn & Pno both on Gallo 938, / Alan RAWSTHORNE (1905-1971) Sonatine for Fl, Ob & Pno also Quintet for Cln, Ob, Hrn, Bsn & Pno ASV DCA 1061 / Robert WARD (1917-) Echoes of America for Cln, Vc & Pno, TROY 323

Winds Only

George AURIC (1899-1983) Trio for Ob, Cln & Bns, REM 311327 / Jacques IBERT (1890-1962) 5 Pieces for Ob, Cln & Bsn, REM 311327 / Johann LICKL (1769-1843) 2 Sextets for 2 Hrn, 2 Cln & 2 Bsn also Op.11 Quintet for 2 Cln, 2 Hrn & Bsn, and Op.21 Cassatione for Ob, Cln, Hrn & Bsn all on MD&G 603 0859 / Darius MIHAUD (189201974) Pastorale for Ob, Cln & Bsn, REM 311327 / Jan NOVAK (1921-1984) Concertino for Wind Qnt, Gallo 906 / Jean-Louis PETIT (1937-) Solipse II for Ob, Cln & Bsn, REM 311327 / Antonin REICHA (1770-1836) 24 Trios for 3 Horns, Op.82 / Robert WARD (1917-) Raleigh Divertimento for Wind Qnt, TROY 323



Diskology: String Quartets by Rauchenecker, Goetz, & Salmanov; Trios for Piano, Clarinet & Cello by Ries & Beethoven



specifically Zurich and Winterthur, and it is for that reason, no doubt, that they have been recorded by the Winterthur String Quartet on a Swiss label. Although contemporaries, the two men were very different in temperament and in musical thought.

The first quartet presented is that of Rauchenecker who today is virtually unknown. Born in Munich, Rauchenecker was trained as a violinist, pianist and composer. He worked in several French towns holding various posts such as concertmaster, conductor and organist until the advent of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870. For the next 15 years, he lived in Switzerland. First in Zurich and later in Winterthur where he eventually became director of its Musikkollegium. While in Switzerland, Rauchenecker was introduced to Wagner who was living close by. Soon after, Rauchenecker became a member of the *Triebtschen Quartet* which performed several concerts devoted to Beethoven's quartets under the general direction of Wagner. This experience left a strong impression on Rauchenecker. The influence of both Wagner and Beethoven can clearly be heard in his **String Quartet No.1 in c minor**, composed during this time, but there are also traces of Mendelssohn and Schubert. In four movements, the quartet begins *Allegro impetuoso*. The main theme bears a clear relationship to that which Wagner used in his *Siegfried Idyll*. Yet the movement is fresh and well-wrought. The cello introduces the lovely melody with which the second movement, *Andante moderato*, begins. The center of gravity for the quartet, the music has an affinity to one of Mendelssohn's songs without words. The writing is really very fine. This is followed by a short but robust *Allegro vivace* complete with a lovely trio section. The quartet concludes with a convincing *Allegro con fuoco* which blends an exciting, galloping first theme with a less-driving but lyrical second subject. This is a very good quartet which I can recommend without reservation. Happily it was recently brought out in modern edition by Amadeus (BP 1015) and is available.

The second work on disk is the **String Quartet in B Flat Major** composed in 1866 by Hermann Goetz. Born in Königsburg in East Prussia, he studied with Hans von Bulow, the great Wagner exponent, in Berlin. Goetz, however, though he admired certain works, never became a whole-hearted or uncritical fan of

This Jecklin CD JD-703-2 presents two mid-late 19th Century German composers, Georg Rauchenecker (1844-1906) and Hermann Goetz (1840-1876). Both men spent much of their creative lives in Switzerland,

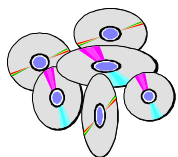
Wagner. Goetz made a name for himself in Berlin and on the strength of this was appointed to succeed Theodor Kirchner as organist at Winterthur's city church and professor at Winterthur's Musikkollegium where Rauchenecker later became director. (The two never met) Goetz gained considerable fame from his opera, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and wrote several chamber works for strings and piano which drew praise from Brahms among others. The opening movement, *Mässig bewegt*, seems to me pedestrian and almost intentionally limp. It is without interest. It might have passed for a slower movement but even here the themes do not seem very memorable—and it is far too long for the meager subject matter. The second movement, *Sehr ausdrucksvoll* is perhaps suitable for background music at a funeral. Though sad and possessing a certain measure of emotion, it neither captivates nor expresses any real sense of tragedy or loss. Lugubrious is the word which comes to mind. Next we have a *Menuet*, this is a subdued affair, pleasant but once again not particularly memorable. The trio is a morose and dismal thing hardly worth hearing. The finale, *Mässig rasch*, has all of the same defects of the first movement. It does not grab one's attention and wanders about ineffectively. The parts to this work are also available from Amadeus. Because I am a fan of Goetz's works for piano and strings: the Trio, the Quartet and the Quintet—I have tried to learn to like this work. I own the parts and have played it many times, but it simply bears no resemblance, in my opinion, to the excellence of these other works.

The trio presented here is Beethoven's own arrangement of his Op.20 Septet composed in 1799. The Septet's tremendous popularity forced Beethoven to produce several versions of this work in an attempt to preempt others from doing the same. This version was brought out in 1803. The

music, of course, is well-known, but it is interesting to see how the Great Man dealt with reducing the work to three voices.

Of more interest to us, is the **Trio for Piano, Clarinet and Cello, Op.28 in B Flat Major** by Ferdinand Ries (1784-1838). Ries, born in Bonn, was the eldest son of one Beethoven's earliest teachers, Franz Ries, a violinist. Ferdinand was taught violin by his father, cello by Bernhard Romberg and later, when he came to Vienna, piano by Beethoven. He gained a considerable reputation as a piano virtuoso and toured widely. From 1813 to 1823 he lived in London and for the rest of his life in Frankfurt. Ries was also a prolific composer of music; although the bulk of it is for piano, there is a considerable amount of chamber music as well. His trio is in four movements and was given a modern





Three String Quartets by Vadim Salmanov and Two Piano Trios by Anton Rubinstein

reprint by Musica Rara No. 1207 some years ago. It was reviewed in an article I wrote in Vol.6 No.3 (Sept. 1995) of the *Journal*. Suffice it to say here that this is an engaging work well worth hearing (on this Naxos CD #8.553389) as well as playing.

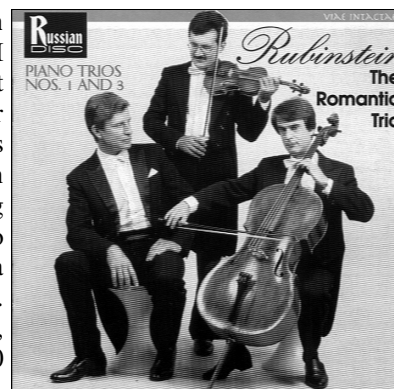


The opening sentence of the jacket notes to this Russian Disc CD #10 048 begins, *The name of the Leningrad composer Vadim Nikolayevitch Salmanov (1912-78) is familiar not only to professionals, but to listeners and music lovers as well.* Even Homer nods, but neither I nor anyone to whom I have spoken lately has heard of Vadim S. Of course, the

writer might well have been referring to the population of Leningrad (now St. Petersburg). Anyway, Salmanov, a contemporary of Shostakovich, was trained as a geologist, a profession he practiced until the end of WWII. He was, however, professionally trained in music as well, studying composition with Gnessin and Shteinberg, Rimsky Korsakov's successors at the Conservatory in Petersburg. We are told he wrote six string quartets, of which three are presented here by the Taneyev Quartet. **String Quartet No.1 in f minor** was composed immediately after WWII and apparently reflects memories of the composer about it. The short first movement, *Grave*, is slow, strident and intense. There is certainly the air of death and resignation about it. The *Allegro molto* which follows has a harsh striving quality of forward motion mitigated by brief gay interludes sounding vaguely of Aram Khatchaturian. Next is an *Andante*, which opens softly and hauntingly, perhaps like the scene of a battlefield after the battle is over. A disembodied melody oozes forth as a eulogy. A turbulent middle section provides a riveting contrast. In the last movement, *Allegro con fuoco, Maestoso*, one hears faint echoes of Shostakovich. The writing and musical thought are both captivating and first rate. This is a quartet which professional groups in the West would do well to investigate. The **String Quartet No.3 in D Major** dates from 1961 and is in two movements. In the 15 intervening years, Salmanov had made an extensive study of 12 tone music and had rejected its tenets. However, he was attracted to serial technique which he found did not limit his means of artistic expression. The opening *Allegro molto* clearly shows this advance over the earlier work. Traditional tonality is far less in evidence though by no means absent. This is an angular, harsh movement. The concluding *Andante—Allegro comodo* begins languidly on a funereal note and is decorated with grotesque pizzicato glissandi. The writing is both atmospheric and effective. Only toward the very end does the *Allegro* section begin, at first gay, but then harsh. Despite this, the closing major chords give the work some sense of affirmation. Again, this is a piece which, though not particularly 'easy listening,' nonetheless merits several hearings. **String Quartet No.4 in G Major** dates from 1964 and displays an even greater use of serialism. In four movements, it certainly is

hard for the listener to hear how the quartet is in the key of G or any key. The opening *Allegro non troppo* is the most accessible movement with a definable, perhaps even elegant melody albeit in a very modern way. The opening trill of the succeeding *Allegro* leads to a harsh and strident series of episodic sound clusters. The last two movements are played *attacca*. A lengthy *Adagio* is polyphonic and meditative. It is followed by an *Allegro molto* which in its ferocity provides a stark contrast. Except for the opening movement, I found this piece less attractive than either Quartet No.1 or No.3.

The 'music' of **Anton Rubinstein** lives on, I suppose, if you consider that most of us at one time or another have heard his *Melody in F*. But Rubinstein (1829-1894), besides being one of the greatest piano virtuosi of all time, wrote a tremendous amount of music. His chamber music output is, in itself, quite substantial: 10 string quartets, 5 piano trios,



a viola quintet, a string sextet, a piano quartet, a quintet for piano and winds, and an octet for piano, strings and winds. Hopefully a survey of this output will appear in the *Journal* in the not too distant future. Although there is much dross amongst these works, there are some works which deserve occasional revival.

On Russian Disk CD#10 041, two piano trios are featured. **Piano Trio No.1 in F, Op.15 No.1** is an early work written when the composer was 22. It begins *Con moto moderato*. The first theme is gentle, although not particularly inspired, but Rubinstein immediately shows he knows how to write for this medium. The second theme, tinged with Mendelssohn's influence, makes a greater impression, but hardly justifies the massive development which he lavishes upon it. This could be said of the entire movement which is simply too long. The second movement, *Moderato*, is a theme and set of variations. It is huge but effective. The finale, *Moderato con moto* is well-done. The melodic material is good, if not great, and Rubinstein handles it convincingly. This is clearly the best movement. Whether this trio deserves to be revived and made part of the repertoire is arguable, but certainly it would give pleasure to amateurs.

Piano Trio No.3 in B Flat, Op.52 was composed some 6 years later in 1856. There is no evidence Rubinstein's conception had advanced. In 4 movements, the opening *Moderato assai* is full of activity but the weakness of the thematic material vitiates all effect; the music is workmanlike and competent but not captivating. The *Andante*, which comes next, makes a more favorable impression. The *Allegro moderato*, a scherzo, is better yet—both effective and original. The inept trio section is mercifully short. The main theme to the finale, *Allegro appassionato* is merely adequate. Again the movement is too long. The whole trio lasts nearly 40 minutes. If only all 4 movements were as good as the scherzo!