

THE CHAMBER MUSIC JOURNAL

Schubert's Octet & Friends Some Other Octets to Try

By John Wilcox

Let's assume that you have made the 30 plus phone calls necessary to assemble the forces to play the Schubert *Octet* with seven other chamber music enthusiasts one evening. This work could almost fill an entire evening. However, if the clarinet and horn players have any lip left, the logical question arises: What else is available to play for the combination of two violins, viola, cello, bass, clarinet, horn, and bassoon? In this article I will discuss several of my favorite pieces for that precise instrumentation. From my experience in arranging octet evenings, I would suggest always place the "warm-up" work first, ending the evening with Schubert.

How many octets are there? Eugen Brixel in his *Klarinetten Bibliographie* lists 31 works, ten of which are listed as "manuscript" and one of which I believe is spurious (the Kaun opus 26). Bodo Koenigsbeck in his *Bassoon Bibliography* lists 96. Mr. Michael Bryant, a fellow clarinetist, Cobbett Association member, and chamber music sleuth, sent me his list identifying over 90 octets. I personally have 30. All these numbers do not include compositions for combinations of instruments that are "close to" but not exactly the "standard" Schubert octet.

First just a few words about the Schubert *Octet* Opus 166, a work that one can argue is the greatest chamber composition ever. Schubert lived from 1797 until 1828. The *Octet* was composed in February-March of 1824. Schubert tells us in his letters that he undertook the work basically as an exercise in helping him to develop his technique in writing a full-scale symphony. His model was Beethoven's *Septet*. The *Octet* was offered to two publishing houses—and rejected. It wasn't until 1853 that the work found its way into print. The piece was commissioned by Ferdinand, Count Troyer, a clarinetist and member of the Archduke Rudolph's musical establishment. The

(Continued on page 3)

String Quartets by Women Composers Part I

By Sally Didrickson

(This is the first in a series in which the author intends to present a wide range, though not exhaustive presentation of quartets by women composers)

Maddalena Lombardini (1745-1785) composed in sixes: 6 string trios, Opus 1 (for 2 violins and cello), 6 Sonatas for 2 Violins (Opus 2), 6 String Quartets and 6 Violin Concerti (Opus 3); and 6 Violin Duets (Opus 5). (This composer appears in the *New Grove* and is often listed elsewhere as *Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen*—ed.) She also wrote a Concerto a violino obbligato in Si flat, and 2 Terzetti (Re and Sol). These works are all thought to have been written for her students at the Ospedale of the Mendicanti, an orphanage in Venice for girls which was renowned for musical excellence.

In 1753, at age 8, Lombardini herself had been accepted as a scholarship student at

the Ospedale of the Mendicanti one of five such institutions in Venice. (Vivaldi was maestro di violine at Pio Ospedale della Pietà) In return for their musical training, the girls were expected to perform in the choir and orchestra for a required number of years, and were allowed to leave only to



be married or to become nuns.

Maddalena was an excellent student in many areas: violin, keyboard, voice and composition. She was considered

(Continued on page 4)

The Chamber Music of Joseph Rheinberger Part II

by R.H.R. Silvertrust

(In the first part of this article, the author traced Rheinberger's life from his birth in 1839 thru the mid 1860's and discussed his first piano trio, Op.34)

We left Rheinberger in 1866 having just



performed his First Piano Trio, Op.34, written at the same year, to acclaim. However, Franz Lachner (with whom Rheinberger had been studying privately and to whom the Trio was dedicated) suggested several changes. This led to years of revision before publication in 1870, which was also the year in which Rheinberger completed his next published chamber

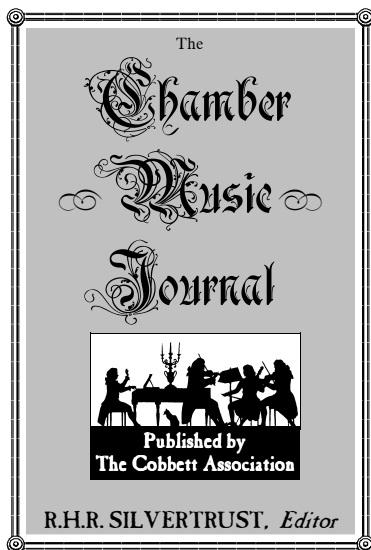
work, the **Piano Quartet in E Flat, Op.38.** (Still unpublished are an Octet, a viola quintet nine or ten string quartets, a piano quartet, and a piano trio)

The four years which passed from the performance of Piano Trio No.1 to the completion of his Piano Quartet were momentous ones. In 1861, Rheinberger who was already teaching piano at the Munich Conservatory (from which he had graduated) was appointed Professor of Composition. He was only 22 years old! However, by 1863, the Conservatory was in a state of serious decline torn by internecine rivalry. But fortune shined on Rheinberger during what otherwise might have been a very difficult time

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The Sounding Board-Letters to the Editor

**Publisher of Suk's Barcarolle**

In his article on Phylloscopus Publications (Spring 2000), Michael Bryant mentioned Josef Suk's *Barcarolle*. This work is not currently published by Phylloscopus. It was performed by the Sorrel Quartet as an encore in a recent concert. Who are the publishers please?

Harold Haynes
Cambridge, England

The Barcarolle and a companion piece "Ballad" were written by Suk (1874-1935) in his youth. Thought to date from 1888, the Barcarolle originally was to be used in his first string quartet. The Ballad dates from 1890 and is one of three, although the only one for string quartet. They were reprinted by Supraphon in 1987 and are currently in print.

Granados Wrote A Piano Trio

In the last issue of the *Journal*, Diskology states that the only chamber music Granados wrote was a piano quintet. We in the Mirecourt Trio performed his piano trio everywhere to acclaim.

Terry King
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts

*Thank you very much for this correction. The New Grove does not list the piano trio, however both the 3rd Edition of Grove's and the jacket notes to the CD reviewed do in fact make reference to the piano trio. (Mr. King is cellist of the Mirecourt Trio) Readers will also be interested to know that **The Mirecourt Trio has just recorded a piano trio commissioned for them by Lou Harrison available on Music & Arts CD#1073.***

Seeks Alternate Parts to Hummel's Cello Sonata

If any reader knows of or has an alternate violin and or clarinet part to Johann Hummel's Cello Sonata, Op.104, I would be grateful if they would contact me.

David Swift
Honolulu, Hawaii

Readers who have this information should either write to Mr Swift at 420 Cao Street / Honolulu, HI 96821, phone him at either 808-956-9722 (also 808-373-4922) or fax him at 808-956-3707

Wants Parts to Bella's String Quartets

Several issues ago, a record review of Jan Bella's string quartets appeared. Do you know

if the CD is still available and where I can get the parts to this music.

Brendan Hilgemeier
Dallas, Texas

*Two Marco Polo CD's (Nos. 8.223658 and 8.223639) were reviewed in Vol.VII No.3 (September 1996). The recordings are still available. Bella produced 4 string quartets of which 3 appeared on the CD's. Your letter reminded me that I also wanted to obtain the parts to these quartets and had been meaning to investigate. I did some research to find the answer to your question and went on the internet. While the Moyzes Quartet, who recorded these works, has no e-mail address, I was able to leave an e-mail with the Slovak Philharmonic (the Moyzes are all members of the Philharmonic) and I eventually was put in contact with **Musica Slovaca**, the Slovak music foundation. I received an e-mail from their editor, Helena Matasova who informed that the parts are available to three of the four quartets. [No.2 in e minor (1871), No.3 in c minor (1880) and No.4 in B Major (1887). There are as yet no parts to No.1 in g minor nor was it recorded by the Moyzes Quartet] My investigations continue. I have been told that the parts to each quartet are 25 Deutsche Marks (c. \$12.50), however, as of this writing I am awaiting further instructions on how to pay in dollars. The e-mail address of Musica Slovaca is hfv@hfv.sk. Inquires should be directed to Ms. Matasova, Editor.*

What about Guillaume Lekeu?

Many moons ago, (*January 1991—ed.*) Mr. Maas did a very brief notice about a violin sonata by the Belgian composer, Guillaume Lekeu. I don't believe I've seen anything about him since. Did he write chamber music. If so, how about a review. Are there parts.

Marc Moskowitz
Tampa, Florida

We aim to please. A CD of Lekeu's piano trio and unfinished piano quartet appear in this issue's diskology section. In addition to these pieces, he is said to have written several movements for string quartet. I do not know if any of his music is in print. If anyone knows, please forward this information.

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

After so many disappointments and delays with regard to trying to get our library situated, I am cautiously optimistic that we will at last have this problem settled no later than the end of summer. (Readers will recall that in early September 2000, Dr. Whitby and I met with Lorraine Busby, head of the University of Western Ontario's Music Library [UWO] and discussed the terms of the transfer of the Library. We submitted terms to the University's lawyers and after some modification received word in December that these appeared acceptable to the lawyers. In late March of 2001, Ms Busby forwarded terms for the transfer proposed by UWO's attorneys. They are essentially the modified terms that we submitted to them which have appeared in this column previously. (See: Vol.11 No.2) As of this writing, the Board of Advisors have approved the proposed terms and I have contacted Ms. Busby and instructed her to have the University's attorneys prepare an agreement for signing. I have also begun discussions with her about the actual transfer of the library to UWO and am very hopeful I will be able to report the conclusion and resolution of this problem by our next issue.

Thanks are certainly in order to Renz Opolis for an excellent four-part series on *Les Vendredis* and to John Wilcox for his interesting article presenting those of us who are lucky enough to attend an octet evening with some options beyond the Schubert. Last but not least, is an exciting series which Sally Didrickson has begun about the string quartets by women composers.

David William-Olson (a Cobbett Member from Sweden and President of the famous Mazer Society) very kindly used his good offices to have Musica Sveciae send us 2 CD's of music for string quartets by several Swedish composers.

Readers should take note that we have a new e-mail address: **Cobbett Assn@cs.com**—e-mail sent to the old address will, however, continue to reach us.

Most of you have responded to the renewal notice and form which came with the last issue. But for those of you who haven't, we have included a second notice. If there is no notice with your copy, it means you have renewed.

Schubert's Octet & Friends Some Other Octets to Try

(Continued from page 1)

Theme and Variations movement calls for horn and clarinet both in C. Several editions provide transposed parts for those instruments.



Jean Françaix (1912-1997)

dedicated his **Octet** to the Paris Octet, "à la mémoire vénérée de Franz Schubert." It was composed in 1972. A short moderato introduction in 4/4 is followed by an

Allegro in which all players have plenty of notes, especially the clarinet and first violin. A light and graceful scherzo movement follows. A final waltz movement, with many shifts in tempi ends the work. Overall, this is a very technical work, which would probably be a sight-reading challenge for most groups, but the piece provides rewards for practice. Arthur Cohn in *The Literature of Chamber Music* says of this work, "... neatly shaped profile of neoclassical creativity. Françaix's music never surprises with a stylistic shift, but nonetheless, it always satisfies. More than once in this piece one hears the formal ingenuity that marked the early compositions of Les Six, since Françaix's Octet never moves away from its hedonistic Gallic simplicity." Parts and score are available from Schott.

Hugo Kaun (1863-1932) was a German composer and choral conductor. He studied in Berlin, and lived in Milwaukee, Wisconsin from 1886 until 1902. Some of his compositions were performed by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Theodore Thomas, who championed Kaun's music. After returning to Germany, Kaun taught composition at the Berlin Conservatory. His **Octet in F, op. 34**, has a dark, brooding, dramatic tenor to it. It is basically in one movement, with many shifts in tempo, and lasts about 12 minutes. Cobbett writes, "To the listener it seems as if the composer had put into it his innermost feelings experienced during a troubled life." Milwaukee is a tough town. I found my copy of this work in a library in Berlin. As the work is out of

copyright and not easily available, I will make a copy for the Cobbett Association Library, and members can borrow it. There are references to a second octet by Kaun, Opus 26, but I am convinced that it is the same piece as Opus 34. It serves as a particularly nice "warm-up" before playing Schubert.

Ferdinand Thieriot (1838-1919) was a German composer. He studied under Brahms and Rheinberger. His **Octet, Opus 62 in Bb** was published by Peters in 1893. This is a full-scale romantic work, consisting of 5 movements of many colors, with memorable melodies. All instruments have quite interesting parts. In my opinion, the work is very skillfully constructed, with excellent balance among the voices. The *Adagio* movement opens with a beautiful cello solo, followed by many intricate variations on the melody. Cues are plentiful in the Peters edition. This piece is probably too long to be played in the same evening as Schubert, if justice is to be done to both works. As is the case with the Kaun Opus 34, I will make a copy of this work available to the Cobbett Association Library.

Finally, I should mention **Friedrich Witt's Septetto** for clarinet, horn, bassoon, 2 violins, viola, cello, and optional bass. The bass part in this work essentially doubles the cello, hence the title. (If one were to convert the original viola part to a cello part, then the piece functions quite well as a standard Beethoven-sized septet.) In all honesty, this work has fairly interesting parts for the 3 winds, but I cannot say the same for the string parts, especially the 2nd violin and viola. Witt lived from 1770 to 1836. From 1789 until 1796, he was a cellist in the orchestra of the Prince of Oettingen-Wallerstein. (As a side note, I believe there is some fine yet-to-be-discovered chamber music in the Oettingen-Wallerstein library.) Witt is the composer of the "Jena" symphony, which for a while at the turn of the century was thought to have been composed by Beethoven. This octet (parts and/or score) may be purchased from Phylloscopus Publications, 92 Aldcliffe Road, Lancaster, United Kingdom LA1 5BE. Phone number (44) 1524 67498.

String Quartets of Women Composers *(continued from page 1)*

so promising that she was sent to Padua in 1760 to study with renowned violinist and composer Giuseppe Tartini (1692-1770). It is for a letter from Tartini to the young Lombardini, outlining the principles of violin-playing, that Lombardini is most remembered today. It was translated into several languages. A translation by Burney was published in London in 1779 and reprinted in 1967; it is available in many libraries to this day.

same time as the early Haydn quartets, during the development of the quartet as an art form. Tartini had written Sonatas a Quattro, and it was his students (among them Luigi Boccherini), who formed a quartet and organized what are thought to be the very first string quartet concerts in Milan in 1765.

Lombardini's quartets are dedicated to an excellent amateur violinist and composer, the

"Illustrissimo Signor Conte Benevento di Sant Raffaele" of Turin. The first published version of the quartets list both Maddalena and her husband as co-composers, probably for political reasons, though it is thought that she wrote them before she even knew him. They were first published in 1769 in Paris by Madame Berault, and were reprinted all over Europe.

SEI
QUARTETTI
A Violino I, e II, Viola, e Violoncello
DEDICATI
Al Illustrissimo Signor Conte
BENEVENTO
Di Sant' Raffaele
E COMPOSTI DA
LODOVICO, E MADALENA SIRMEN
Prix
Opera n.º
A PARIS
Chez Madame Berault M.º de l'Académie des Sciences, des Arts, et des Sciences
Rue de la Comédie Française
Chez Rouboury S.º Germain au Dessus de l'Horloge
Et aux autres Libraires ordinaires

LETTERA
DEL DEFONTO
SIGNOR
GIUSEPPE TARTINI
ALLA SIGNORA
MADDALENA LOMBARDINI
INSERVIENTE
Ad una importante Lezione per i Suonatori
DI VIOLINO
IN LONDRA,
MDCCLXXIX

A LETTER FROM THE LATE
SIGNOR TARTINI
TO
SIGNORA MADDALENA LOMBARDINI
(NOW SIGNORA SIRMEN)
PUBLISHED AS AN IMPORTANT LESSON TO
PERFORMERS ON THE VIOLIN
TRANSLATED BY DR. BURNEY
JOHNSON REPRINT CORPORATION
New York and London

Maddalena developed superlatively as a performer and composer. She probably also taught at the Mendicanti starting in her mid-teens, and performed throughout Italy. She married violinist and composer Lodovico Sirmen in 1767. Maddalena and Lodovico Sirmen toured extensively together, performing in many European capitols. Maddalena was considered the more distinguished performer, reviewed as the "goddess of music" in L'Avant Coureur. There is some scholarly speculation that Maddalena may have been pregnant and thus granted permission to leave the ospedale to get married. Her daughter, Alessandra, was reportedly born in 1769, two years after her marriage. Apparently

Editions Are Femina (of Louisville, Kentucky) republished the sixth quartet, the E major, in 1992. Although this publisher may still be in business, they did not respond to my written inquiries. (They also have a website—ed) I therefore obtained the music through Inter Library Loan. This edition contains so many errors and impossible page turns that it is virtually unplayable. Hildgard Publishing Company hopes to republish all 6 of Lombardini's quartets soon.

Lombardini's **String Quartet #6 in E major** has only 2 movements. The first is a graceful *Andantino*, with a first theme played by the violins in thirds. Several ornaments are used in 2 or 3 instruments simultaneously:

An interesting harmonic progression in bar 11 (below left) was later used by Mozart in his Violin Concerto in A Major, K219 (the *Turkish* example given on the right)



she spent little time with the child or indeed with her husband, after the first few years of marriage. When her popularity as a violinist waned, she had a career as an opera singer, including a 5-year stint as second lead soprano at the Dresden Opera, and later at the St Petersburg Opera. During this period she traveled with a Venetian priest. Her husband, meanwhile, was living in Ravenna with their daughter, working as a violinist, and reportedly keeping company with a certain Countess Zerletta. Maddalena apparently used her influence to get Lodovico invited to lead the orchestra in St Petersburg, but after a short visit he returned to Ravenna, and, presumably, to the Countess.

Lombardini's 6 string quartets (#1 in E-flat, #2 in B-flat, #3 in g, #4 in B-flat again, #5 in f, and #6 in E) were written about the

String Quartets of Women Composers *(continued from page 4)*

The second theme, appearing in bar 15, is also presented in thirds in the violins (Example 8: bar 15



the first violin almost always has the melodic material, and is often shadowed by the second violin and viola, and less often by the cello.

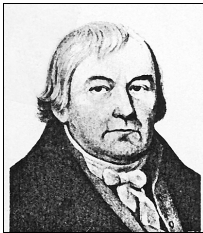
The second movement is in ABA form with a short *Con Brio* (=A) section alternating with a charming *Minuetto* (without trio), and returning to the *Con Brio* section. Lombardini employs lots of parallel thirds and sixths (especially between violins I and II), parallel ornaments, and quite a few double sharps. This quartet is a charming work, easy to sight-read and excellent as a warm-up piece for chamber music lovers and as an introduction to the string quartet for students

A 1994 recording of Lombardini's 6 quartets by the Allegrì Quartet (CACD 10 19, Cala) may still be found in many listening libraries.



Maria Theresia von Paradis (1759-1824) was born in Vienna to the imperial councilor of the court of Empress Maria Theresa, who became her god-mother and patroness. Before the age of three, Maria lost her sight, and suffered

what were then considered hysterical seizures. She was subjected to leeches, purgatives, shock and plasters. Despite her handicap, she studied keyboard, voice, and composition with notable musicians of the period, among them Salieri. She made her concert debut as a singer, accompanying herself on the organ, when she was 11 years old. In her late teens she was treated by an old family friend, Dr. Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815), the well-known hypnotist and mystic. Her 'mesmerization' resulted in a partial restoration of her sight and a diminution of her seizures. She was subsequently exhibited in Mesmer's home as a successful patient of his Animal Magnetism therapy, and was asked by his guests to identify colors and objects. (For a romanticized version of Maria's work with Mesmer and his subsequent career, see *Dr. Mesmer, an Historical Study*, by Nora Wydenbruck; John Westhouse, London 1947.)



She concertized to great acclaim, much as did Mozart, whom she visited in 1783. Both Mozart and Salieri wrote concerti for her; Mozart the piano concerto in B-flat, K456, and Salieri the organ concerto of 1775. She was known for her phenomenal memory, and was said to have 60 concerti committed to memory. Her librettist, Johann Reidinger (who accompanied her and her mother on her 1783 grand tour), devised a "composition board" for her,

to compensate for her blindness.

Like many of the early Haydn quartets (his Op.1 and the Op.9 Divertimenti),

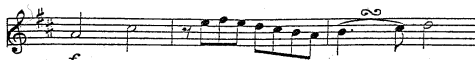
Most of her compositions were for the stage (operas and singspiels) or cantatas, or for piano. She is best known today for the *Sicilienne* for violin or cello and piano, which is most likely not her composition at all, but was probably written by Samuel Dushkin, who claimed to have unearthed it. (A recording is of this piece is available on Koch CD 3-6817—ed) A number of her piano pieces are also thought to be spurious.

The **Quartet in D Major** is thought to have been written in 1795, when Paradis would have been 36 years old, and when Haydn, Lombardini and others had established the form of the string quartet. This quartet is in 4 movements, of the slow-fast-slow-fast alternation. It is sight-readable by most players, and invites the improvised ornamentation typical of the period.



The opening theme of the first movement, *Moderato*, is stated by

the first violin with some shadowing by Violin II a third below, and chordal accompaniment in the viola and cello.



The B theme begins as a retrograde of the first theme and is

developed sequentially.



There is a third theme (see below)

but it does not reappear; the development section uses only the first two themes.



The 2nd movement is a *Menuet* and Trio. The

Menuet begins with a Violin I melody and a little parallel shadowing in Violin II. The Trio is in d minor, with contrapuntal interest in the two lower parts.

The third movement is a lovely G major *Adagio*. The principle theme is stated by the violins in thirds and sixths with more ornamentation that in previous movements, and more imitative contrapuntal writing in the viola part.



The fourth movement (*Presto Finale*) uses a lively D major 6/8 hunt motif, and even the cello is given thematic material.



Schwann lists no current recordings of Paradis' works. Hildegard hopes to republish this quartet also. It is well worth playing.

(Continued from page 1)

for him. In 1864, he was appointed director of the Munich Choral Society, one of the most prestigious musical organizations in the City at that time. It was also during these years that Rheinberger worked as a voice coach for the Court Opera where he was instrumental in preparing a performance of *The Flying Dutchman*. He created a sensation at the first rehearsal, sight-reading and transposing the score at the piano. During the next three years, while Wagner stayed in Munich, Rheinberger got to know the Master first hand as he witnessed all the intrigue, feuds and double-dealing while he helped prepare the premiere of *Tristan and Isolde*. (1867) As the saying goes, familiarity bred contempt and Rheinberger became a staunch Anti-Wagnerian. However, his association with Wagner, and especially with Wagner's servile son-in-law von Bülow, was instrumental in his appointment as Professor of Composition, Organ and Inspector of Theory & Instrumental Classes when in 1867, the Conservatory was reorganized by King Ludwig. 1867 was also the year that Rheinberger married Franziska von Hoffnaass. Seventeen years his senior and a socially influential force in Munich at that time, Hoffnaass, already a widow, was held in high regard both as a singer and a poet. Rheinberger was to set many of her poems to music. Her diary is probably the most important biographical source as to his personal and professional life as well as a chronicle of the many health problems which beset him during the last half of his life.

Although Rheinberger's **Piano Quartet in E Flat Op.38** was published in the same year as his First Piano Trio, it went to a different publisher, E.W. Fritsch. (The trio had been brought out by Siegel—later Kistner, also of Leipzig) Although Carus Verlag of Stuttgart was purportedly planning to reprint all of Rheinberger's published chamber music, I do not know if they reprinted the Piano Quartet. The parts however are in the Cobbett Library.

As previously noted, after the premiere performance in 1866 of Piano Trio No.1, Lachner gently pointed out certain problems which Rheinberger undertook to fix. Atypically, this turned out to be extraordinarily difficult for him and the score underwent several revisions over the next four years before he decided to publish it. At the same time, perhaps to take his mind off the difficulty he was having with the Trio, he plunged into composing a piano quartet. The work on it went smoothly and he published it shortly after completing it. It attained immediate popularity and apparently remained so until the First World War, that cataclysm which destroyed the reputations of so many important 19th Century composers from the Romantic era. Altmann in his inexplicably short article on Rheinberger in Cobbett's *Cyclopedia* primarily devotes himself to how Rheinberger's chamber music was then (late 1920's) being unjustly ignored. He mentions in passing the works for string quartet (Opp.89, 93 & 147) and the Third Piano Trio (Op.121). Only the worthy Viola Quintet (Op.82) receives any ink. However, Cobbett himself relates in an addenda that the Piano Quartet was quite popular in England until 1900 when its popularity started to wane. He then deprecatingly refers to it as a piece which can provide amateurs with a transition stage to greater works and for that reason alone deserves to be ranked highly. What greater works? Taste, of course, is a matter of personal preference, but let us, (for the sake of argument, an argument with which I do not agree) say the Brahms and Dvorak Piano Quartets are superior—what other works from the same time period can Cobbett be talking about? Not many. Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn or Schumann are from a different era and defy meaningful comparison. There are a few other late Romantic

-6-

composers who wrote first class works which are now forgotten and which like the Rheinberger are as good as those of Brahms and Dvorak. But you decide for yourself. The music can be heard to on an excellent Thorofon CD CTH 2108.

The opening movement, a big, spacious, *Allegro non troppo*, is twice as long as any of the other movements. (Over 12 minutes) An introductory theme is brought forth by the strings in unison. It is dark and full of tonal uncertainty as it simultaneously flirts with a troubled E Flat and a solemn c minor. Tension and dynamics build until release comes in the form of an attractive, jovial melody in the dominant key of E flat. A third subject, more sedate and lyrical, is introduced and developed primarily by the strings. The music travels through a series of modulations from D Flat Major to d minor to c minor back to D Flat then on to G Major in a manner reminiscent of Schubert's piano trios. For the most part the strings introduce and develop the rich thematic material while the piano is kept in the background, although there are a few virtuoso bridge passages to challenge the pianist's technique. The coda uses the tonally indecisive first theme but here at last Rheinberger removes the earlier sense of uncertainty and finishes the movement with a great flourish.

An *Adagio* follows. This is a romantic movement *par excellence*, both beautiful and profound. It is a superb example of outstanding writing for piano with string trio. The strings are not grouped together against the piano, as Schumann used to do, but are either integrated into a seamless whole or, even more impressively, used independently of each other yet somehow, at the same time, participate in a dialogue. There are no dark clouds or sad emotions in this music but only optimism and calm contentment.

The third movement *Minuetto: Andantino* is quite short, but nonetheless interesting and clearly a descendant of its older namesake. The first section of the opening theme is in minor, the second in major. A third section of the minuet has the strings continuing on with the melody while the piano, again in the background, races about lightly playing triplets. The trio section has just the slightest hint of Brahms.

The concluding *Finale, Allegro* begins with a buoyant rondo showily introduced by the piano to the pizzicato accompaniment of the strings. The calmer and song-like second theme is first stated by the cello and then taken over by the other strings. It provides very good contrast. This is followed by an incredible fugal section begun by the cello, low on its C string, and in turn by the other strings while the piano plays a variant of the opening rondo against it. This creates an absolutely brilliant effect and is very original. One interesting feature of the recapitulation which eventually follows is that just before the cello reintroduces the lyrical second melody, the first violin brings forth a high B Flat which it holds for 32 measures while the two lower voices take the theme into new harmonic keys. Suddenly, just two bars before the violin finally is to stop playing its B Flat, the piano sounds a wake-up call. In the coda, Rheinberger gradually increases the tempo and then, without warning, brings back the opening theme to the first movement which he uses to dramatically conclude the quartet.

Piano Quartets are not often given in concert nowadays, but for those professional groups presenting them, this work surely deserves serious consideration. It will be an audience pleaser. Amateur groups with a good pianist will get much pleasure from it as well. This series continues in our next issue.

Les Vendredis—The Wonderful Music of Those Magical Nights (Part IV)

By Renz Opolis

In the first part of this article, (Vol.XI. No.2, Summer 2000), a detailed description of Belaiev's Friday night chamber music sessions was given. These would consist of an informal performance or concert by Belaiev's string quartet followed by a sumptuous banquet.

Belaiev, for more than 20 years, hosted the *Les Vendredis*, as these evenings came to be known. In Part II (Vol.XI. No.3 Autumn 2000), the first seven occasional pieces that appeared in Volume I of the two volume *Les Vendredis Set* were discussed. In Part III (Vol. XI. No.4 Winter 2000), an analysis of the remaining nine pieces appeared.



Belaiev's Board of Editors: (from left to right) Rimsky-Korsakov, Glazunov & Liadov—They Wrote *Jour de Fête*

Besides the 16 occasional pieces which Rimsky Korsakov, Glazunov and Liadov (Belaiev's editorial board) selected for publication in the two volume set published by M.P. Belaiev in 1899, there are three other published collaborative works by the composers of the Belaiev Circle and two by Glazunov alone which, while not part of the *Les Vendredis* volumes, nonetheless really were an integral part of the music inspired by Belaiev's Fridays. The two Glazunov works (*Five Novelettes, Op.15* and *Suite, Op.35*) will not be discussed here as they are not really occasional pieces but 'complete works' by one composer. Rather they will be discussed in an up-coming article on Glazunov's complete works for string quartet.

The first, chronologically, of the three collaborative works is the **Quatour B-L-A-F**, Composed in 1886 and published the following year. This four movement work for string quartet was meant as a 50th birthday present for Belaiev, who in 1885 had founded a publishing house, the sole purpose of which was to bring to print the new works of Russian composers. Enthusiastically presented to Belaiev and premiered at one of his Fridays, the Quatour B-L-A-F was the work of the most prominent composers within the Belaiev Circle—Rimsky-Korsakov, Liadov, Borodin and Glazunov. Although each movement was composed by a different man, each restricted himself to the notes Bb (B in German), A (La in French) and F from which to create and develop thematic material. Of course, the notes B-La-F, when said one after another, more or less render Belaiev's name. (In German, the name is almost always spelled Belaieff) The composers must have been proud of their ingenuity and apparently were anxious that no one should miss it for both in the parts and the score, each time the sequence (Bb-A-F) occurs, the corresponding scale names are printed over the notes.



The first movement, by Rimsky-Korsakov, begins with a *Sostenuto assai* introduction in which the viola, alone, first sings the publisher's name. The main part is a lively *Allegro*, the first theme to which is shown in the example at the bottom of the left column. While the writing for all four instruments is grateful and informed, the limiting feature of using three notes to begin his themes seemed to serve as a brake on Korsakov's melodic imagination. Although the opening bars to the *Allegro* are convincing enough, he quickly seems to find himself in a musical straight-jacket. The development and working out of the thematic material is dry and repetitious often with the same type weaknesses to which the reader's attention was drawn in the last issue. The *Sostenuto assai* (which is also used to close the movement) is superior to the allegro, but then it is did not have to serve as the main body of the movement.

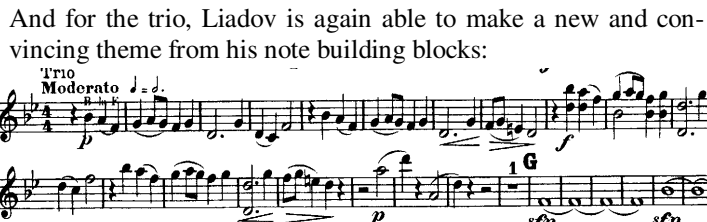
The second movement, *Scherzo vivace*, by Liadov is quite possibly the longest piece of chamber music from his pen ever published. Standing next to the strained and somewhat contrived sounding effort by Rimsky-Korsakov, Liadov's music shows an unforced sparkle. Again the viola is given the honor of introducing the first theme, B-La-F:

The broader second theme does not give off the aura of sameness that Korsakov's did and provides better contrast.

And for the trio, Liadov is again able to make a new and convincing theme from his note building blocks:



This whole movement, from the pulsating opening measures to the exciting coda, is elegantly conceived and sounds effortlessly executed.



This whole movement, from the pulsating opening measures to the exciting coda, is elegantly conceived and sounds effortlessly executed.

Les Vendredis—The Music from those Friday Nights at Belaiev's

The third movement, *Serenata alla Spagnola, Allegretto*, is by Borodin. It is the shortest but also features the most original (in d minor) and ingenious treatment of the thematic material which sounds very Spanish indeed. A brief six measure pizzicato introduction precedes the theme which, of course, is introduced by the viola. The middle section (starting at A) is especially attractive:

The finale, *Allegro*, is by Glazunov, Belaiev's favorite, and one can hear he worked fairly hard to really make it the show piece of the work. But though it is rather a good finale movement—especially for Glazunov—it does not excel either Borodin's or Liadov's efforts. The opening theme is very similar to Rimsky Korsakov's, however, the more relaxed second theme, which sounds a bit like Chopin, is quite good:

Belaiev had to be delighted with such a wonderful present. There is some very good music here. However, based on the inevitable sameness imposed by the limitation of the thematic material (Borodin was the only one who wrote in the relative minor) *Quatour B-La-F* is probably not a candidate for regular performance in the concert hall, although an occasional outing, especially in front of the right audience, is surely warranted. And, amateurs are strongly encouraged to make its acquaintance. Parts are available from M.P. Belaiev (C.F. Peters) Bel. No.233. (There are 2 other works on the B-La-F theme, a *Prelude & Fugue* Op.11 for string quartet by Alexander Kopylov and a *Serenade* Op.3 for Viola Quintet by Nicolai Sokolov. Both were published by Belaiev [1889 & 1887], however I don't think either are in print.

The second collaborative work, *Jour de Fête*, dates from 1887 and was written for the purpose of celebrating Belaiev's name day. It is composed of three movements, all of them based on historical Russian forms. The movements are somewhat shorter than those of *Quatour B-La-F* (save Borodin's) but longer than most which appeared in the *Les Vendredis* volumes. Further, not being restricted as to thematic material,



Last Known Photo of Belaiev (1903)

they provide somewhat more contrast to each other. Finally, while *Quatour B-La-F* was clearly intended to be a full-formed quartet in the classical sense, *Jour de Fête* is a programmatic suite. The parts are in print, the easiest edition to obtain is that of International Music Company of New York No.638. Be forewarned however, International, for reasons known only unto themselves, chose to translate *Jour de Fête* as *Festive Moods!*

The first movement, by Glazunov, is entitled *Le Chanteurs de Noël* which International more accurately renders as *Carolers*. It begins *Andante*, the theme to which sounds as if it were taken directly from the Russian Orthodox Service. The muted cello states it alone initially:

When the other muted voices join in the effect is impressive. Although the *Andante* is too long to be called an introduction it is not the main section. That role is taken by a spirited *Allegro* with the usual Glazunov density of sound, achieved primarily by the liberal use of double stops:

The *Andante* reappears in a truncated form before the coda in which the *Allegro* concludes an effective movement.

A slower middle movement, marked *Moderato* was contributed by Liadov. Its title, *Glorification*, makes clear that this is also Russian church music. The main theme is stated after a loud 2 measure introduction of pizzicato chords in all four voices.

Liadov does not trouble himself to develop the theme but instead introduces other subordinate themes into the music, as if adding potions to brew. In the middle, the tempo is increased and the key goes from d minor to D Major. A slower *Peasante* section leads to the coda, *poco a poco accelerando*. Like most everything else he wrote, this is an accomplished piece.

The concluding movement by Rimsky Korsakov is an *Allegro* entitled *Khorovod*. A Khorovod is a traditional Russian round dance during which the dancers also sing. No good English translation has appeared. When translated for the British market it was called "Choral dance song" while International forgets about the song altogether and simply calls it "Russian Dancers." Korsakov was quite fond of this Dance-Song format. He used it in an earlier set of variations for quartet, in a sinfonietta and a number of operas. Here, it takes on a form that most listeners will recognize as a traditional and familiar Russian folk dance:

Although Korsakov came to realize, as he wrote in his memoirs, (Continued on page 9)



New Recordings



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

String Quartets

Robert FUCHS (1847-1927) Nos. 1 & 2, MD&G 630 1001 / Adalbert GYROWETZ (1763-1850) Op.44 Nos.1-3, Hyperion CDA 67109 / Vagn HOLMBOE (19-9-96) Nos. 17, 19 & 20, Marco Polo 8.224128 / Karl HUSA (1921-) No.1, Suprphn 81 9009 / Rued LANGGAARD (1893-1952) Qt in A, Marco Polo 8.224139 / Emil PETROVICS (1930-) Nos.1 & 2, Budapest Music Center BMC 017 / Max REGER (1873-1916) Op.109, Naxos 8.554510 / Miquel ROGER (1954-) No.2 Metier MSV92026 / Albert SARDA (1943-) Qt, Metier MSV92026 / Josep SOLER (1935-) Nos. 1 & 5, Metier MSV92026 / Marek STACHOWSKI (1936-) Nos.1-3, Dux 0161 / Moisei VAINBERG (1919-1996) Nos. 7-9, Olympia OCD686 / Carl VINE (1954-) No.3, Tall Poppies TP 120 / Karl WEIGL (1881-1949) No.1, Op.20 & No.5, Op.31, Nimbus NI5646 /

Strings Only-Not Quartets

Sergei Taneiev (1856-1915) Str. Trio in Eb Op.31, Str. Trio in b, Str. Trio in D, MD&G 634 1003

Piano Trios

Charles ALKAN (1813-88) Op.30, Naxos 8.555352 / Franz BERWALD (1796-1868) Trio in C, 2 Fragments & No.4, Naxos 8.555002 / Max BRUCH (1838-1920) Op.83 Nos.1,4 & 6, ACA Digital CM-20061 / Robert FUCHS (1847-1927) 3 (of 7) Pieces from Fantasiestucke Op.57, ACA Digital CM20061 / Helene LIEBMANN (1796-18??) Grand Trio Op.11, Stadt Unna UBC 1801 / Edmund RUBBRA (1901-86) Op.68 & Op.138, also Op.16 for 2 Vln & Pno, Dutton Laboratories CDLX 7106 /

Piano Quartets & Quintets

Karel HUSA (1921-) Variations for Pno. Qt, Supraphon 81 9009 / Sigurd von KOCH (1879-1919) Pno Quint, Musica Sveciae PSCD 708 / Ferdinand RIES (1784-1838) Qnt in b for Pno, Vln, Vla, Vc & Kb also Grand Sextour in C for Pno, Str. Qt. & Kb, CPO 999 622

Winds & Strings

Edvin KALLSTENIUS (1881-1967) Cln Qnt Op.17, Musica Sveciae PSCD 708 / Max REGER (1873-1916) Cln Qnt Op.146, Naxos 8.554510 / Antonin REICHA (1770-1836) Qnt for Bsn,2 Vln, Vla & Kb also Oc-

tet Op.97, CPO 999 742 / Edmund RUBBRA (1901-86) Budda Suite Op.64 for Fl, Ob, Vln, Vla & Vc, Dutton Laboratories CDLX 7106 / Carl STAMITZ (1745-1801) Qt in Eb, Op.8 No.2 for Cl, Hn, Vla & Vc, also Qt for Cl & Str. Trio, Op.14, Clarinet Classics CC0030

Winds, Strings & Piano

Cecilie Maria BARTHELEMON (1770-1826) Sonata for Fl, Vc & Hrpch, Stadt Unna UBC 1801 / Anna bon DI VENENEZIA (1738-67) Divertimento for Fl, Vln, Vc & Hrpch, Stadt Unna UBC 1801 / Miss PHILHARMONICA (18th Cent) Divertimento for Fl, Vln & Hrpch, Stadt Unna UBC 1801 /

Piano & Winds

None this issue

Winds Only

John FERNSTROM (1897-1961) Wind Qnt Op.59, Musica Sveciae 708 / Karel HUSA 5 Poems for Wnd Qnt, Supraphon 81 9009 / Rued LANGGAARD (1893-1952) Septet for Fl, Ob, 2 Cln, 2 Hn & Bsn, Marco Polo 8.224139

(Continued from page 8)

that chamber music was not his field, here he succeeded in writing something for quartet which was not only well-written but also full of folk-flavor and very effective.. The second theme provides melodic contrast but bears a rhythmic similarity to the first. A third theme is more lyrical and quite lovely:



Jour de Fête is program music pure and simple. Technically easy, it more suitable for amateurs than the concert hall though the individual movements might be used an encore.

The last collaborative work dates from the end of 1898 and was published around the same time as *Les Vendredis*. Entitled **Variations on a Russian Theme**, (the parts are still available from International) it is based on one of the folk songs collected by Balakirev entitled, *The Nights Have Become Boring*:



Like the other works, it was dedicated to Belaiev and presented as a birthday present. Most of the *Les Vendredis* composers, along with a few other Belaiev regulars, contributed a variation.

Each of the 10 variations are quite short but very well-executed. They serve as a real showcase for the uniformly high level at which Rimsky-Korsakov's students were able to compose. In order of appearance, there is a *Allegretto* by Artcibushev, an *Allegretto* by Scriabin, an *Andantino* by Glazunov, an *Allegro* by Rimsky-Korsakov, an *Adagio* which is a canon by Liadov, an *Allegretto* by the Latvian Jaseps Vitols (Wihtol), an *Allegro* by Felix Blumenfeld, an *Andante cantabile* by Victor Ewald (Belaiev's regular cellist, well-known to Brass players for his quintets, and an engineer by profession) the 9th variation is an *Allegro* by Alexander Winkler and the concluding variation is a rousing *Allegro* by Nicolai Sokolov. These Variations, which are not very difficult, would make an excellent concert encore.

This concludes the series on *Les Vendredis*. As readers will have realized, many of the composers who took part in these collaborative efforts also wrote chamber music on their own, much of which needs to be revisited and revived.

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An Overview of the String Quartets of Joseph Martin Kraus

by R.H.R. Silvertrust

Occasionally, an article which we have planned for the future jumps the queue due to unusual circumstances. The string quartets of **Joseph Martin Kraus (1756-92)** is one such example. The help of David William-Olson of the Mazer Society and the generosity of Musica Sveciae (which recently sent us a CD with 4 of Kraus' quartets) led to this decision. I had planned only to review the CD, but since I have performed some of Kraus' quartets, I have attempted an integrated overview of the music. It must be an overview because I have only played or heard 5 of the 7 published quartets. Moseler Verlag brought out the only modern edition in 1960. (It is thought Kraus wrote at least 10 since three remain in manuscript.) The parts, which as recently as 1995 were available, are probably still in print. Moseler's editor Adolf Hoffmann wrote a detailed article about the works to which he assigned nicknames but no numbers. These names were not used on **Musica Sveciae CD#414** because, Hans Eppstein, editor of the jacket notes, argues they were not original. Be that as it may, it is unfortunately the only way to identify some of these works since just 4 of the 7 appear on disk and no chronology as to any other is given. Therefore I will refer to the works by their nicknames and, where possible, by the number given by Hans Eppstein. The names of the 7 quartets published by Moseler are: Bratschen (No.2), Fugen (No.3) Abschieds (No.4), Fruhlings (No.5), Schottisches (No.6), Jagd and Göttinger.

Kraus, German by birth, went to Sweden to seek his fortune in 1778, found it to his liking, and remained there for a good part of his life. Although he never formally studied with Haydn, that composer clearly served as Kraus' model for the quartets he composed. Kraus, in fact, met Haydn at Esterhazy in 1783 on an extended 5 year "study trip" which he took at the expense of the Swedish King. As a result of this trip, Mozart and Gluck in addition to Haydn became familiar with his music. It was uniformly praised by all. Although Haydn served as Kraus' model, he did not slavishly copy the Master. For example, Kraus rarely adopted the four movement format that Haydn used after finishing his Op.2. And, with the exception of No.6 (the Schottisches) these quartets are all slight works of less than 20 minutes duration.

String Quartet No.2 in B, "Bratschenquartett" is so named for the prominence of the viola part in the slow movement. The opening *Allegro moderato* speaks the music language of early Haydn. It is accomplished but the melodic material is unremarkable. The following *Adagio* is a lovely, Haydnesque serenade in which the viola has the lead part. It is both original and memorable. The opening theme of the finale, *Allegretto*, is a tuneful rondo. Although ordinary, the thematic material is at least superior to the first movement. I do not think this work is suitable for the stage although amateurs will enjoy it.

String Quartet No.4 in D, "Abschiedsquartett" is a more ambitious undertaking than No.2 and at once in the opening *Allegro* one hears the writing is more mature. Rather than early Haydn, we hear melodic material sounding as advanced as the Opp.54/55 quartets. The part-writing is also more accomplished:



Kraus brings the cello to the forefront offering it 3 big solos. In the following *Larghetto*, which is a set of 4 variations, the cello, alone of the three lower voices is given the lead for an entire variation.. The theme is sad and perhaps this is why Hoffmann christened it the 'Farewell' quartet. The closing *Allegro molto* is lively although the thematic material is only average. This quartet could perhaps be played in concert as an alternative to Haydn or for historical purposes and can be recommended to amateurs.

String Quartet No.5 in C "Frühlingsquartett" begins with a lovely melody but Kraus does not seem to know what to do with it and almost at once lapses into pedestrian development and in the end there is nothing to match the opening four measures for beauty or interest. The *Adagio* which comes next again suffers from rather ordinary thematic material. The Quartet closes with a slight *Scherzo, allegro assai* which resembles the kind of scherzo Haydn was writing in his Op.33 quartets. Again we have a work of little technical or ensemble difficulty which many amateurs will enjoy, but it does not belong in the concert hall.

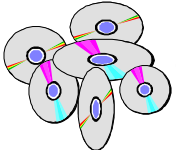
String Quartet No.6 in G, "Schottisches Quartett" is the only published quartet in four movements. The opening *Allegro*, is longer than his others but one hears the opening theme (which is not bad) too often, as Kraus does not seem to know how to deal with the larger format. The development and second theme simply do not match the quality of the first. The 2d movement, *Scossese: Andante maestoso* is again a set of variations, this time on a Scottish theme. It is one of his most original creations:



He follows it up with a *Largo* which is tuneful and well done. The *Largo* leads without pause (and sounding a bit like Beethoven's *La Melanconia*) to the concluding *Allegro assai* which is good if not great. The most advanced of Kraus's quartets, No.6 could perhaps stand an occasional performance in concert.

The **Jagdquartett (Hunt Quartet) in C Major** is not recorded. It is in three movements. The opening *Allegro* sounds like pre-Op.17 Haydn with the 1st violin dominating. The following *Larghetto* has some lovely writing in it including a good interplay between the cello and 1st violin. In the closing *Allegro*, Kraus again gives all of the thematic material to the 1st violin. Hoffmann in his notes claims to hear hunting sounds in some of the chords and hence the name. I would guess, based on the thematic material, that this quartet dates from the same period as No.5. It will give pleasure to some amateurs but has no place in concert.

In judging these quartets, there are two important facts to consider: First, Kraus had the amateur (and home performance market) rather than professional groups in mind when he composed these works. And second, the Quartets were all written before 1784. Haydn had only just published his Op.33 *Russian* Quartets and Mozart had not yet published his ground-breaking *Haydn* Quartets. In this light, Kraus' quartets cannot be dismissed as inferior to other contemporary works. While not all uniformly good, there is much here worth exploring and getting to know.



Diskology: Guillaume Lekeu & Ignaz Pleyel-Works for Piano & Strings String Trios By Reinecke & Fuchs; String Quartets by Braunfels



There are not very many composers who would be remembered had they lived but 24 years. This is almost certainly the main reason why the Belgian composer **Guillaume Lekeu (1870-1894)** is so little known. But not so in his own time. Debussy remarked that Lekeu was, at the very least, as gifted as his teacher Cesar Franck, who himself recognized Lekeu's ex-

traordinary gifts. Lekeu's formal musical education did not begin until he was 18 when he began to study with Franck. When Franck died 18 months later, D'Indy, who regarded Lekeu as a genius, took it upon himself to further the boy's musical education. In the 7 years between 1887 and his death, Lekeu composed over 50 works in virtually every genre, unfortunately many of these have been lost. Beethoven was Lekeu's god and the great man's music had the strongest influence upon him. But the music of Franck as well as Wagner also influenced his ideas. The **Piano Trio in c**, in four movements, was begun while Lekeu studying with Franck. Lekeu wrote program notes for it which are very apt. The first movement consists of an introductory *Lent*, which leads to the main *Allegro*. Lekeu describes this gorgeous and emotionally charged music as follows: "*Grief, a ray of hope, fugitive, too short, brusquely driven off by the somber reverie which, alone, expands and prevails.*" The idiom is late 19th Central European romanticism. This is not French or Gallic sounding music. It is also a massive work on an almost Mahler-like scale lasting over 40 minutes. Lekeu understood and had no difficulty handling the often insuperable problem of balance before which composers of even Brahms' stature sometimes failed. The clarity of the part-writing is very fine. There are no balance problems. The second movement *Tres Lent* begins with a congenial Schumannesque melody. A short but stormy middle section is sandwiched between the charming, calmer music. In the following *Tres animé*, the piano, over the tremolo of strings, introduces the exciting opening theme. Rather than developing it, Lekeu brings this theme to a sudden halt and begins a slower and more reflective section. Franck died between the creation of the 2nd and 3rd movements and Lekeu related how as a result he had been completely disoriented for days after his-beloved teacher's death. The 3rd movement expresses this grief. Then a series Beethovenian passages, reminiscent of the scherzo to the 9th Symphony but here in minor, break the mood. The stunning last movement, *Lent, Animé*, opens with the cello giving forth one of the most doleful, forlorn cries you will ever hear. It is followed by a solo funeral dirge in the piano, and then, the mood lifts to a faster, but very deliberate theme, full of Wagnerian chromaticism. A second more lyrical melody follows this up. Equal to anything being written at the time, this trio deserves to be heard in concert.

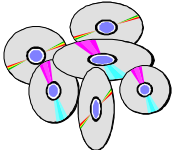
Also on disk is Lekeu's **Piano Quartet** upon which he was still at work at the time of his death. He began it at the behest of Eugene Ysaye, who was one of the composer's strongest admirers. Lekeu completed the first and most of the second movement. Already it was nearly 30 minutes in length. D'Indy completed the second movement only to the extent that it could be performed in concert. One immediately understands the scale upon which Lekeu was planning this work by the length of the opening movement, *Très animé. Dans un emportement douloureux*, which takes more than 16 minutes to play. The highly dramatic opening calls up the image of a ship in the midst of a terrible storm. One imagines movie music, but Gallic movie music. A fair amount of unisono writing along with several other very fine effects give the music a more quality. One hears a clear relationship to the work of the French impressionists and to some of Ysaye's work. The second movement, *Lent et passionné* begins with a subdued and darkish theme sung in part by the viola. Again the music has an affinity with the perfumed air of the French impressionists. These polished and mature works clearly indicate that Lekeu might well have become one of the most important composers of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries had he lived longer. A CD well worth hearing.



Not many people live up to expectations after being called the next Haydn, which is what Mozart called **Ignaz Pleyel (1757-1831)** after hearing a few of his quartets in the mid 1780's. Pleyel's music, in style, falls somewhere between that of Haydn (with whom he studied) and early Beethoven.

Widely recognized for his melodic gifts, Pleyel's music rarely fails to ingratiate itself. Two of the three trios, **Op.16 Nos.1 & 5**, on this Dynamic CD S2017 were written at the same time and date from 1788. Dedicated to the Queen of England, they are tuneful and very similar to those that Haydn was then writing. While the piano is *primus inter pares*, the part writing of Pleyel's trios is a little more advanced than Haydn's in that these works cannot be played as piano sonatas, that is to say, the violin part cannot be dispensed with. Having said this much, they are not as advanced as Beethoven's Op.1. Next to no use is made of the cello, but then no one writing piano trios at this time, Haydn and Mozart included, made much use of the cello. The third trio, **Grand Trio in D, Op.29** dates from 1796 but is not any more advanced. These are pleasant enough works but, unlike some of his string trios and quartets, they seem to lack originality.

Speaking of string trios, this MDG CD #634-0841 puts paid to the old saw that there were no first rate string trios written between the time of Beethoven's Op.9 and Dohnanyi's Op.10. Both of the string trios on this disk are absolutely first rate. **Carl**



String Trios by Carl Reinecke and Robert Fuchs & Two String Quartets by Walter Braunfels



Reinecke's (1824-1910) String Trio Op.249 in c was deservedly singled out for special praise by Altmann in his article for Cobbett's *Cyclopaedia*. Reinecke stands in the front rank of those composers whose music our Association is dedicated to reviving. Composed in 1898 at the age of 74, Reinecke showed he

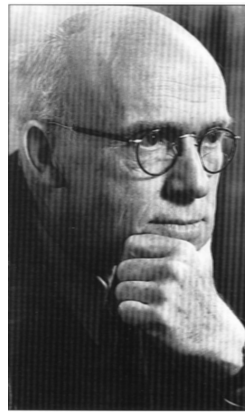
was not only in full command of his compositional powers, but that he had also moved with the times. Unlike many of his contemporaries or even some of those composers who were younger, such as Bruch, Reinecke was able to move beyond the music of Mendelssohn and Schumann, the musical idols of the mid 19 Century. His music is fully informed with the full-bodied flavor of late, in parts even-Post-Brahmsian, romanticism. The writing is very contrapuntal and original. The dark and brooding opening *Allegro moderato* is painted on a large canvas. Showing a wide range of emotion and richness of tonality, Reinecke easily and often makes the three voices sound like four. The thematic material is original and yet, chronologically, can be placed with some degree of accuracy in the late 19th Century. The *Andante* which follows is more intimate and trio-like but there juxtapositioned against traditional tonality, Reinecke shows the new direction in which tonality was heading. The very brief third movement, *Intermezzo, Vivace ma non troppo* is a heavily syncopated scherzo with an interestingly contrasting middle section. The whole thing is over before one has a chance to get used to it. The big finale, *Adagio, ma non troppo lento,—Allegro un poco maestoso* begins as a lyrical and highly romantic lied. It has an *Abschied* or leave-taking quality to it. The thematic material of the *Allegro* is brighter but still densely scored, once again creating a wealth of sound which belies the fact that only a trio is playing. This is a masterpiece. Enough said.



In Austrian composer **Robert Fuchs (1847-1927)** we have yet another whose music is almost always on the very highest level and deserving of performance in concert. It is gratifying to see his chamber music is now being recorded. The **String Trio Op. 94 in A** dates from 1910. This is a modern sounding work, completely tonal but certainly showing that Fuchs, who was 63 at the time he wrote it, was not immune from the advances in tonality that composers such

as Bruckner, Mahler and the post-Brahmsians had made. By and large, this trio sounds no less modern than Dohnanyi's. The first movement, *Allegro moderato*, is a gentler and altogether brighter work than the Reinecke. Fuchs' writing emphasizes clarity of line and does not go for the density of tone that is heard in the Reinecke. As such it has a more "trio-like essence". Rhythmically, the music is quite tricky. The second movement, *Andante espressivo, Schottisches Volkslied "O cruel was my father."* is a set of variations based on one of the Scottish folksongs which Beethoven put to music. These are very interesting variations, often tonally advanced. Next there is a *Menuetto*. It is very re-

laxed, not really a dance at all so much as a conceptual update. In mood it is sad and limpid with much chromaticism. A bright, energetic trio is placed in the middle. It has a bit of the early 20th Century freneticism one later hears in neo-classical music and surely the roots of those who stuck with tonality can be seen here. The last movement, *Adagio sostenuto—Allegro piacevole—Allegro vivace*, is a movement in progress. Starting with a chromatic but relaxed introduction, it gives way to a somewhat faster modern fugue (*allegro piacevole*), very tricky but masterfully written. Fuchs follows this up with an increasingly faster section, a *stretto* which leads to the conclusion. Another first rate work. This CD comes with the highest recommendation. And, good news, the parts are available, the Reinecke from Merton Music and the Fuchs from Wollenweber.



The jacket notes to this CPO CD#999 406 suggest that the German composer **Walter Braunfels (1882-1954)** enjoyed considerable success prior to WWII, however, chamber music players are not likely to have heard of him as his success was primarily with music for the stage. Braunfels, who had converted to Catholicism during WWI, nonetheless was stigmatized and his music banned by the Nazis because he was half Jewish. He left Germany and moved to Switzerland in 1933 where he remained until the end of the War. It was during this period of exile

that he wrote the two string quartets recorded here. (He wrote three in all) **String Quartet No.1 in a minor** dates from 1944. Braunfels who had concentrated on public music, was overwhelmed (much as he had been when he converted to Catholicism) by the possibilities the quartet genre offered him and used a lot of thematic material from his earlier opera, *The Annunciation*. Having studied with Ludwig Thuille and being conservative by nature, Braunfels never abandoned tonality, although nearly all of the music is more modern sounding than either Richard Strauss or all but late Dohnanyi. The opening, *Allegro moderato*, is very dramatic and full of emotion and power, tonally the most conservative movement. *Langsam* is introspective and pushes tonality close to its limits. *Bewegt* at times seems like a scherzo but its mood is pretty repressed. The finale, *Allegro* is nervous but the thematic material is less immediate. **String Quartet No.2 in F** also dates from 1944. The beginning *Allegro* is energetic and the music is not as melancholy as that of the First Quartet, though it could not be called happy. This is followed by a bright *Scherzo, Allegro agitato* which is original and captivating. The themes hold the listener's attention because the direction they are heading is clearer than in most of his other movements. The short trio provides about as big a contrast as you might imagine. It plunges into depression and waywardness. A huge *Adagio* is a powerful and effective piece of writing for all 4 instruments with some extraordinarily lovely episodes. The closing is a short, pulsing and very effective *Vivace*. Certainly this Quartet would be welcome and successful in concert. Many readers will enjoy this CD.