

THE CHAMBER MUSIC JOURNAL

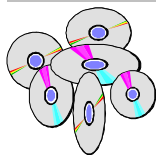
The String Quartets of Ferruccio Busoni

by Larius J. Ussi

Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924) is still remembered but few remember exactly for what. Those who know something about him usually recall that he was regarded as a great pianist, and this is true. Busoni was among the first rank of virtuosi during his lifetime, but what generally is no longer remembered is that he was an important composer. In what is a rather dismissive article on Busoni's chamber works, Cecil Gray, writing in *Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, nonetheless admits, "The popular notion that his creative efforts were simply the outcome of a virtuoso's ultimate ambition, when no further laurels remained to be conquered in his own sphere, is wholly erroneous. There can be little doubt that if he had been a less brilliant executant, his music would have received a greater meed of attention. This is the great tragedy of Busoni's career...Busoni's significance as a composer has often been grievously under-estimated. In natural talents he was richly endowed, and in technical command and versatility of achievement possessed phenomenal powers." It's too bad that Gray contributes to the under estimation of which he speaks by dismissing all of Busoni's chamber works save one, a violin sonata. The quartets which are the subject of this article are dismissed by him in two sentences. One finds this same dismissive attitude in the 3rd *Grove* as well, but the *New Grove* refers to Busoni's quartets as "important works". This upward revision may be due to the fact that musicologists of first half of the 20th century recognized and were only im-



(continued on page 11)



Diskology Mega Installment: Vierne, Gyrowetz, Lachner, Rendano, Weill, Ries, Küffner, Röntgen, Ippolotov-Ivanov, Rubenstein, Tcherepnin & More

Before a Diskology installment of this size, I think it is important to remind readers that the record reviews which appear in *The Chamber Music Journal* are very different from those which appear in other publications. Our purpose is *not* to evaluate the performances or to compare them to others which might be available and to make recommendations based on these performances. In most cases, there are no other performances for comparison! Our purpose is to give some sense of what the music sounds like and to present some information about the composers who are usually little known if they are known at all. Therefore, our reviews give biographical information and discuss the nature of the compositions: The melodic writing, the part writing, the general effect and so on. In most cases, we are introducing rediscovered composers and music of merit which we believe deserves to be heard and enjoyed again. (In a very few cases, we will note a resuscitation was perhaps unwarranted.) Most readers of the *Journal* are either professional or amateur performers and hearing a CD is often an excellent way of deciding whether pur-

chasing the parts to a work is a worthwhile investment. Lastly, in cases where the parts are unavailable, a CD may be the only way to hear the delightful music of an unjustly ignored composer.



The music on this Pierre Verany CD #700011 presents the entire chamber music of **Louis Vierne (1870-1937)** Vierne, who was born virtually blind, made his reputation as an organist of the highest caliber. While his compositions for organ remain in that instrument's repertoire, what is not well known is that he was a composer of considerable merit who wrote for virtually every genre save opera. Vierne began his studies in 1890 with Charles-Marie Widor, perhaps France's greatest organist, eventually becoming his assistant at the Paris Conservatoire. He held many other positions and in 1900 won a competition to become organist at Notre

(Continued on page 5)

Schubert's Octet & Friends, Other Works to Try on a "Schubert Octet Evening"

Part II

by John Wilcox

In an earlier article, I discussed several companion pieces to the Schubert *Octet*: Thieriot, Kaun, Françaix, and Witt. In this article, I will discuss one more companion piece for Schubert-size forces, and then 3 recommended pieces that vary slightly from the Schubert setting of 2 violins, viola, cello, bass, clarinet, horn, and bassoon.

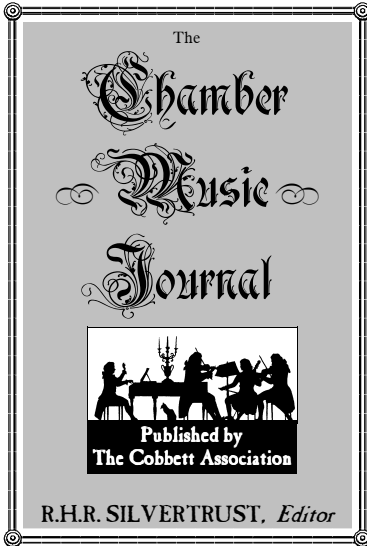
Badings Octet (For 2 violins, viola, cello, bass, clarinet, horn, and bassoon)

Henk Badings (1907-87) was born in Indonesia of Dutch parents and died in The Netherlands. He studied non-musical topics at the Delft Polytechnic University, and he worked after graduation in paleontology and histori-

(Continued on page 3)

IN THIS ISSUE

Ferruccio Busoni's String Quartets	1
Companion Pieces for Schubert's Octet, Part II	1
Diskology: Vierne, Gyrowetz, Rendano, Weill et.al.	2
Letters to the Editor	2
At the Double Bar	3
New Recordings	10



Directors

Dr. Ronald Goldman
Professor Vincent Oddo
R.H.R. Silvertrust, MA (Oxon), JD

Board of Advisors

Michael Bryant, Dr. Nicholas Cunningham, Sally Didrickson, Dr. Ronald Goldman, Dr. William Horne, Dr. Bertrand Jacobs, Veronica Jacobs, Peter Lang, Andrew Marshall, Professor Vincent Oddo, Professor Keith Robinson, Dr. James Whitby, John Wilcox

The Chamber Music Journal is published quarterly by The Cobbett Association, Incorporated, a Not for Profit Corporation. **Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome** and will be handled with all reasonable care but responsibility cannot be assumed for such materials. Return postage must be enclosed to insure any return of same. Subscription is available by joining The Cobbett Association, Inc., and making a donation of US\$20 (US\$25 outside the United States) per year. Student rates available on request. Back issues of the Chamber Music Journal are available at a cost of \$6 per issue.

Offices of The Cobbett Association are located at 601 Timber Trail, Riverwoods, IL 60015, USA. ☎: 847 / 374-1800. Please remember when calling that we are located in the Central Time Zone of the United States, 6 hours earlier than GMT (Greenwich Mean Time) E-mail address: CobbettAssn@cs.com

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

The contents of The Chamber Music Journal are under copyright and are not to be reprinted or reproduced without the express written permission of the publisher. All rights reserved. ISSN 1535-1726



The Sounding Board-Letters to the Editor



Parts to Gretry Quartets Available

In the last issue of *The Chamber Music Journal*, there was an inquiry about the chamber music of Gretry and you informed the reader about a CD of Gretry's six string quartets, the Op.3. The score as well as the parts to all six quartets are available, the score in one volume, the parts in a separate volume. Readers will find reference to these works in our catalogue on the internet. We also have the score of Arriaga's three string quartets. Also of interest to your readers will be that many chamber works of Ferdinand Ries have recently been published, specifically: Two string trios, WOo.70 Nos. 1 & 2, Six String Quartets, Op.70 Nos.1-3, Op.126 Nos.1-3 and Six Quartets for Flute and String Trio, Op.145 Nos.1-3, WoO.35 Nos.1-3.

Piet Ganzinotti / Broekmans & Van Poppel
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Thanks for this information. Readers who are interested in this music are encouraged to contact Broekmans & Van Poppel on the internet at Broekmans.com or write them at Van Baerlestratt 92-94 / Postbus 75228 / 1070 AE Amsterdam. They are members of The Cobbett Association and their courteous staff speaks excellent English. ☎ 31 20 6796575. Other works by Ferdinand Ries are available from Merton Music at 8 Wilton Grove / London SW19 3QX ☎ 44 20 8540 2708, E-Mail: mertonmusic@argonet.co.uk. These include five string quartets: Op.70 Nos.1-3, Op.126 No.1 & Op.150 No.1, and a string quintet (2Vla) Op.68

York Bowen's Quintet Op.93

On page four of the last issue (Vol.XIII No.2, Summer 2002) in the New Recordings section, you have listed York Bowen's Phantasy Quintet Op.93 under "Strings Only." But it is for Bass Clarinet and String Quartet. It is the first commercial recording. The parts remain in manuscript at the publishers: de Wolfe.

Michael Bryant
Surbiton, England

Did Bargiel Write String Quartets

I very much enjoyed Mr. Opolis's article on Woldemar Bargiel's piano trios (Vol.XIII No.2). As a string player, I am wondering if he also wrote any string quartets?

John Palmquist
Chicago, Illinois

Yes, Bargiel wrote string quartets. While all the standard reference sources state that he wrote 4 string quartets only Op.15b and Op.47 are ever mentioned. These are String Quartet Nos.3 & 4 respectively. I have been unable to find any information at all on his first two quartets. Actually, Wilhelm Altmann, in his article on Bargiel in Cobbett's Cyclopaedia, refers to Op.15b as No.1, but this must be an error because Breitkopf and Härtel, who published Op.15b, list the it as No.3. I am happy to say that the parts to both of these quartets are available. No.3, Op.15b is published by Amadeus BP 1003. It is also available from Merton Music #4106 as is No.4, Op.47, Merton #4107)

Franz Schubert's Other String Quartets

I have read that Franz Schubert wrote 15 string quartets. I've been playing chamber music for thirty years and all I have ever seen are the nine quartets to be found in the two volumes of the Peters Edition. Which ones are in the Edition Peters and what happened to the other quartets. Can the parts to them be obtained?

Frank Marshall
Los Angeles, CA

Actually Schubert wrote 14 complete string quartets. No.12, known as "Quartettsatz"—that is quartet movement—is only one movement long, Except for a 41 measure fragment of the 2nd movement, the rest was either lost or not completed. This fragment is in the possession of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna and has even been publicly performed. There are other quartettsatzes, but none have been assigned a quartet number. The most significant is D.103. The quartets in the 2 Peters volumes are Nos.7-15. Why they did not publish all 15 is probably because they never acquired the rights to the first 6. Breitkopf & Härtel was the original publisher of these, whereas Cranz, Eulenberg & Leuckart brought out the last 9. Peters must have acquired the rights from these houses for the latter works. The first 6 are still published by B & H (also by Doblinger) and can be ordered from Cobbett Association member shops, Broekmans en Van Poppel (address above) or Performers Music, 410 S Michigan, Ste 904, Chicago, IL 60605 ☎: 312-987-1196.

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

Although listed in the New Recordings section in the this issue of the *Journal*, I should like to draw readers attention to the fact that the Chilingirian Quartet (Cobbett Association Members for many years) have recently released a recording of four string quartets of Sir John Blackwood McEwen on Chandos, CD#9925. On disk are Quartet Nos. 4, 7, 16 & 17. Judging from the fact the words "Volume I" appear on the jacket, we can perhaps expect, if not the entire set, then at least several more to come. Readers are encouraged to obtain this CD. A review will appear in a later issue of the *Journal*.

To the best of my knowledge, it appears that most of the wrinkles that were associated with the copying program have been ironed out. If there are problems, we can only solve them if you let us know.

Our membership level has remained stable in that while we have gained several new members, we have also lost several old members. Our losses have mostly been due to old age or death. Nonetheless, we are hoping to increase membership as this will allow us the opportunity to accomplish some of the other goals of which I have often spoken in this column: Making CDs of "Cobbett" chamber music and publishing or helping publishers to bring out music which is of interest to us.

In an effort to increase our membership, we did send information about the Association to a few chamber music workshops this past summer with some results. Had it been possible to send to more, I feel the results would have been better yet. Additionally, our recent campaign to add institutional members netted several university libraries. We plan to repeat it, but only after a campaign to reach out directly to chamber music players. This effort is about to begin. More details in the next issue.

We are also looking into ways to improve how the *Journal* is bound. Plans are underway to obtain a booklet making machine and we are hopeful that in 2003, the *Journal* will arrive at your door bound in a more professional manner than we have been able to do up until now.

Finally, many thanks to Mr. Wilcox and Mr. Ussi for their fine articles which appear in this issue of the *Journal*.

Quintets for Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Horn & Piano

cal geology. He taught himself composition and musical theory, later studying in composition with Pijper. In 1934 Badings was appointed as lecturer in composition and theory at the Rotterdam Conservatory. Later he taught at the Amsterdam Music Lyceum, the State Conservatory in The Hague, Utrecht University, and the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Stuttgart. Badings has composed for numerous types of ensembles.

The *New Grove* mentions 13 symphonies, and his entire list of compositions covers almost a full page. *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Music and Musicians* states, "His style of composition may be described as romantic modernism marked by intense dynamism. In melodic progressions he often employs the scale of alternating major and minor seconds known in Holland as the "Pijper scale." In later years, Badings became very involved with electronic music and microtonal divisions.

Badings composed his Octet in 1952, and there are no electronic or microtonal elements to this work. The structure of the work is quite interesting. The first movement is in sonata form, with strings and winds often answering each other. The second movement is a scherzo in 15/8 time, with a prominent, beautiful horn part. The last movement is a theme with 14 variations: each instrument gets its chance to shine, with the last variation being a fugue. The work requires a little work to put together, but it is entire accessible by strong amateurs, and the rewards of playing it are well worth the effort, in my opinion.

Donemus in Amsterdam publishes parts and score. Their website is www.muziekgroep.nl. After consulting with Michael Bryant, I am convinced there is no commercially available CD of the *Octet*. The Vienna Octet recorded it with the *Octet* by Wellesz Op 67 (1948-9) for a Decca LP in 1972, SDD 316.

Charles Stanford: Nonet

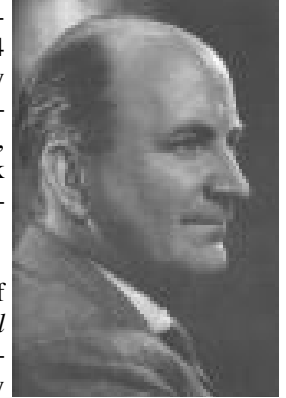
(2 violins, viola, cello, bass, flute, clarinet, horn, and bassoon)



Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) was an important British composer. He was born in Dublin. He studied organ, piano, and composition in Cambridge, Leipzig and Berlin. He was made a professor of composition and orchestral playing at the opening of the Royal College of Music in London in 1883. He was also a professor of music at Cambridge beginning in 1887, and he held both posts until his death. He was conductor of the London Bach Choir and was associated with many British festivals of music, both as composer and conductor. He was knighted in 1902. As a teacher, Stanford influenced Frank Bridge, Gustav Holst, Charles Wood, John Ireland, Ernest John Moeran, Eugene Goossens, Herbert Howells, and Ralph Vaughan Williams. Stanford is buried in Westminster Abbey, next to Purcell.

Arthur Cohn, in *The Literature of Chamber Music* writes, "The elements of Stanford's music are the solid rhythms that form the background for warm melodic lines with defined harmonies that cause no complexities whatsoever.... That many dismiss him from consideration because his music sounds like Schumann and Brahms is not the worst stigma that can be borne by a composer of the late 19th century. If Stanford is judged

(Continued on page 4)



(Continued from page 3)

without prejudice and objectively, it will be realized that he commanded complete technical mastery plus good musical powers.” *Cobbett’s Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music* similarly praises Stanford: “In the large amount of instrumental chamber music that Sir Charles Stanford wrote, there is full evidence of the more serious aspects of his genius.” *Baker’s* does not disagree: “He was an extremely able and industrious composer in a distinctly Romantic style, yet unmistakably national in musical materials both Irish and English.”

The **Serenade Op. 95** was written in the summer of 1905. However, according to program notes examined by Michael Bryant, the first public performance of the work was in Sheffield, UK in 1937. It calls for 2 violins, viola, cello, bass, flute, clarinet, horn, and bassoon. Hence, it is essentially a work of Schubert-forces plus flute. The first movement is in sonata form, with lovely melodies and some Brahms-like rhythmic surprises. The second movement brilliantly changes tempi several times in unique ways. The third movement, *Andante*, is lush and lyrical. The final allegro comodo reminds me in some ways of old British marches, which most Cobbett Association wind players probably have played and enjoyed many times. The main melody of the last movement is guaranteed to stay with you.

Parts and score to the *Serenade* may be purchased from Phylloscopus Publications in the UK. Website: <http://www.phylloscopus.co.uk>. The performing ensemble 'Capricorn' recorded the *Serenade* for Hyperion CDA66291 in 1987 along with the *Nonet* for wind by Parry

Ernst Naumann: Serenade

(2 violins, viola, cello, bass, flute, oboe, horn, and bassoon)

Ernst Naumann (1832-1910) came from a musical family. His grandfather was Johann Gottlieb Naumann, one of the most esteemed musicians of his time. Ernst’s cousin, Emil Naumann, was also a noted composer and musical scholar. Ernst studied music as well as science in Leipzig, and his dissertation was on “the various definitions of pitch proportions and the meaning of the Pythagorean perfect fifths system for music today.”

Naumann’s compositions were highly praised by Robert Schumann. In 1860, Naumann was appointed music director and city organist in Jena, where he remained until his death. He created many arrangements, including piano duet arrangements of Mozart and Beethoven trios, quartets, and quintets, as well as 2-piano arrangements of Beethoven symphonies, Handel concerti, and works of Mendelssohn and Schumann. He edited many editions of Bach’s works and was engaged in preparing all of Haydn’s string quartets for publication when he died.

The **Serenade, Op. 10**, is for 2 violins, viola, cello, bass, flute, oboe, horn and bassoon. The work is in 4 movements. The opening *Allegro con brio* is quite energetic, with very straightforward, melodic writing. This is followed by a *Romanze* containing

lovely duets in octaves by the oboe and bassoon. The *Menuett* is a bouncy movement, with lighter scoring. The exciting Finale contains some technical staccato sections for most players, and the work ends with great excitement for all. Cobbett wrote, “*His compositions, which are lengthy and tinged with Mendelssohnian influence, have been favourably spoken of in the German press.*” The *Serenade* is not excessively lengthy, and one does hear the Mendelssohnian influences. Amadeus publishes the parts. I know of no recording.

Some readers may remember that I play the clarinet. The Naumann *Serenade* unfortunately contains no clarinet part. However, to correct that horrible oversight, I have taken the oboe part and rewritten it for clarinet in A, thus making the *Serenade* a closer companion piece for the other works discussed here.

I would gladly send a copy of the clarinet version to any member who wishes one. My email address is: jwilcox@mn.rr.com.

Heinrich Hofmann: Octet

(2 violins, viola, cello, flute, clarinet, horn, and bassoon)

Heinrich Karl Johann Hofmann (1842-1902) was a German composer and pianist. He studied in Berlin. Hofmann wrote several operas, symphonies, and choral works that were extremely well received. His star shined brightly but then faded.

Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians (1926) states, “from [1875] onwards, he held a position equaled, in respect of immediate popularity, by scarcely any living composer. As in many other cases, this ephemeral popularity led to almost complete oblivion on the part of the musical public of Germany, even before his death.”

With a bit more perspective, the *New Grove (1980)* summarizes “the mere fashionable eclecticism of his work did not ensure continuing success; he absorbed the various current trends without being able to enrich them.”

Baker’s states, “His style reflected Wagnerian procedures, particularly in heroic moods; he possessed complete mastery of technique, but his music lacked originality or distinction.”

The critic Hanslick wrote, “*Heinrich Hofmann is not a highly gifted composer, but a reliable, skilled practical musician, able to present commonplace ideas in a tastefully refined form.*”

Those comments are not far off the mark regarding the Octet. The work is well structured, but on the light side. By far the most interesting part belongs to the flute. This work, while cheerful enough, is certainly not of the same caliber as the other compositions described in this article. However, if your bass player is late, it’s nice to have the work in your library.

McGinnis & Marx publishes the parts. I know of no recording of the work.

Diskology: Louis Vierne: A Piano Quintet & Piano Quartet Adalbert Gyrowetz: Three String Quartets, (continued from page 1)

Dame, the most prestigious post an organist could hold in France. The first work on disk is his **Piano Quintet, Op.42** completed in 1918. The year before, Vierne had lost his 17 year old son in the First World War. He had allowed the boy, who was under age, to volunteer and was devastated by his death. He wrote that he intended the Quintet to serve as a votive offering of vast proportions to convey the sadness and grief he felt. He wrote, "...as my grief is terrible, I shall make something that is powerful, imposing and strong, which will stir in the depths of every father's breast the deepest feelings of love for a dead son." The massive first movement, *Poco-lento-Moderato*, begins quietly with a short, slow introduction which is full of despair. It quickly gives way to the *Moderato* which consists of two quite intense themes, one highly poignant, especially when given to the strings. The music builds to a rather dramatic climax before dying away calmly. There is the unmistakable influence of César Franck and to a lesser extent Fauré. The tonalities are more wayward or modern though in no way showing any influence of atonalism. In the middle movement, *Larghetto sostenuto*, the viola gives forth, in its darkest register, a drooping and wounded melody. For the most part the movement appears calm but the unusual use of tremolo creates a sense of apprehension lurking beneath the surface. The music briefly explodes but dies away without any real resolution. The final movement, *Allegro molto risoluto*, begins with the piano playing a series of harsh chords before the main theme of the *Larghetto* appears, *a la Franck*, but it is quickly transmogrified into a truly powerful and dramatic subject. The music is full of restless energy created by several martial cross rhythms. Perhaps this is a tonal picture conveying the excitement and danger of life in battle. Suddenly, the power vanishes, replaced by a disemboweled and spooky atmosphere. The coda, however, ends on a more positive, though not triumphant note. This is a fine work, well-written, original sounding and deserving of concert performance. French-sounding, it contrasts nicely with the many quintets by Vierne's Central European contemporaries.

The second work, and Vierne's only other piece of chamber music, is his **String Quartet, Op.12**. It was completed in 1894 as Vierne was finishing his studies with Widor and is dedicated to him. In four movements, it begins *Introduction, Lent—Allegro agitato*. Surprisingly, the opening bars include a rather harsh dissonance for the time, brief though it is. The tonalities of the two genial melodic subjects are almost Schubertian as heard through the filter of Widor and Franck. This is lovely music, with several original touches. It is syncopated but not particularly agitated. The very short *Intermezzo; Leggiero non troppo vivo* is a wonderful scherzo. The interest created by its lively rhythms and wayward tonalities are heightened by the effect of muting the strings. The following *Andante quasi adagio* is a highly romantic lied. The instrumental writing throughout, and especially here, is very fine. The finale, *Allegro vivace*, begins with a unison, French-sounding *moto perpetuo*, the second theme is a very lyrical and much slower, almost languid, melody. This too is a very polished work and would be successful in performance and could be recommended to amateurs. I doubt the music is in print (it was originally published by Peregally & Parry, the quintet by Senart) but perhaps this CD signals that we may soon have the parts.

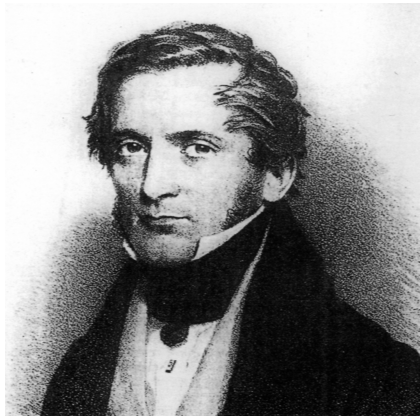


In his memoirs, **Adalbert Gyrowetz** (1763-1850) wrote that it was a peculiar feeling to remain alive and realize that one is already spiritually dead. He was referring to the fact that his music, once highly praised, had fallen into oblivion within his own lifetime. Gyrowetz was, to say the least, a very talented all-rounder. He was a musical prodigy, writing full scale works while a mere schoolboy, in addition to being a highly talented pianist and violinist. He took a degree in philosophy and law and was a linguist of the first order, being fluent in German, French, Italian, Czech and lastly, quite unusual for the time, English. After university, he briefly moved to Vienna to pursue a musical career. In the mid 1780's, Mozart performed at least one of Gyrowetz's symphonies during a public series of subscription concerts. After leaving Vienna, Gyrowetz travelled widely, meeting Nardini in Italy and then becoming very good friends with Haydn during his London years. Gyrowetz had used Haydn as his model for chamber music compositions prior to ever meeting him. Their time together in England only strengthened this influence. After spending several years in France, Belgium and Germany, Gyrowetz eventually settled in Vienna, becoming director of the Court Theater, and thereafter was primarily concerned with writing operas. He became a very close friend of Beethoven and even incorporated the technical and compositional advances found in Beethoven's early music but Haydn continued to serve as his chief model throughout his life. Gyrowetz retired from active musical life in 1831 after enjoying a public career, highly esteemed by his contemporaries. He was a prolific composer, writing in nearly every genre. Virtually all of his chamber music was composed before 1810, most before 1800. It is important to keep this fact in mind in evaluating the three **String Quartets, Op.44 Nos.1-3** on this Hyperion CD#67109. The Op.44 date from 1804 and as such are late quartets for Gyrowetz, but they predate Beethoven's Op.18. Perhaps the best description of the music might be to say that it is like discovering three new Haydn quartets from the Master's middle-late period. In fact, Haydn's Op.77 quartets, which appeared in 1800, seem to have served as a model for the Op.44 although they sound more like the Op.71 and Op.74. While the style and structure of the music is extraordinarily similar to Haydn's, the melodies are still fresh and convincing. Op.44 No.1 in G Major is in four movements, *Allegro, Adagio, Menuetto Allegro and Presto*, all of them are pleasing and well-written. Op.44 No.2 in B Flat only has three movements, an *Allegro moderato*, an *Adagio non tanto* which is quite fine, and an *Allegretto* which has a very fetching main theme. Op.44 No.3 in A Flat begins with an *Allegretto moderato*, followed by an exquisite *Adagio*, and a *Menuetto*, before concluding with a bumptious *Allegro*. It is important to emphasize these works do not sound inferior to those of Haydn's and unlike most of the works which date from this period, these quartets are not in concertante style but show a true understanding of the advances made by Haydn and Mozart. The Op.44 quartets are charming works which could easily serve as an interesting and worthwhile

Franz Lachner's Nonet & Octet / Alfonso Rendano's Piano Quintet

Kurt Weill: Two String Quartets

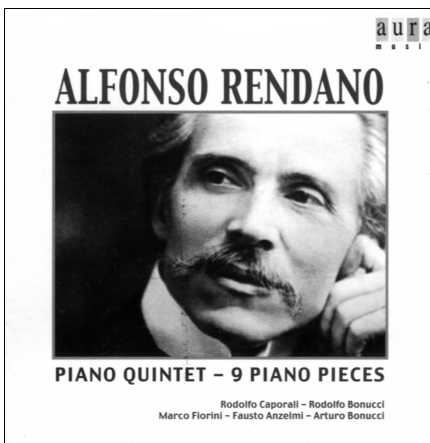
replacement on any concert program for the inevitable Haydn. This CD is highly recommended to fans of the Viennese Classics.



Franz Lachner (1803-90) was born in Rain am Lech, a small Bavarian town and trained in Munich. In 1823, by winning a musical competition, he was awarded a position as an organist in a church in Vienna. There he met Schubert. "We two, Schubert and I, spent most of our time together sketching new songs. How quickly the

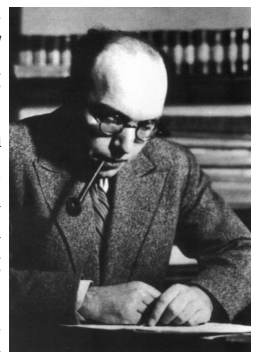
hours seemed to pass, days, months, exchanging ideas and thoughts. [It was] a wonderful experience for us both. We were the closest of friends, mornings performing for each other and discussing in depth every imaginable topic with the greatest of candor." It should come as no surprise then that Schubert influenced Lachner's musical compositions more than anyone else. But the **Nonet in F** for standard wind quintet, string trio and bass—the first work on CPO CD#999 803-2—shows a greater affinity to the work of early Beethoven, especially the Op.20 Septet. Published in 1875 without opus, the Nonet must have been written many years before this. The relaxed and genial atmosphere is right out of the Septet. The catchy finale, *Allegro ma non troppo*, is the most original and memorable movement of this fine work. Anyone scheduling a nonet evening should consider this work. The parts are in print from Phylloscopus. Also on disk is the wind **Octet in B Flat, Op.156** for Flute, Oboe, 2 Clarinets, 2 Horns, 2 Bassoons (Double Bass ad libitum). Composed in 1850, the Octet is in some ways more advanced than the Nonet, especially its themes and harmonic writing which are clearly in the Romantic mainstream. But in other ways, it is a throwback to the late classical period. There is a definite symphonic quality to the impressive *Adagio*, which, according to the jacket notes, was to be part of a Romantic Symphony for winds. An extraordinarily clever and fresh Scherzo is also featured. Two lovely works.

his background. Rendano (1853-1931), born in the south of Italy, entered the Conservatory at Naples where his pianistic talent was recognized immediately by the great virtuoso Sigismund Thalberg. After studying with Thalberg, Rendano went to Paris where he impressed Rossini as a genius of the first rank. Rossini gave him a scholarship which allowed Rendano to remain in Paris studying with one of Chopin's best students. Not long after, he entered the Leipzig Conservatory where he studied with Reinecke and Richter. Everyone who met the young Rendano was struck by his extraordinary talent, not just as a virtuoso, but a musician of great taste. Anton Rubenstein insisted on bringing him to Russia after Rendano finished in Leipzig. Later, Liszt insisted on taking him back to Weimar where the two played for several weeks together. In 1874, Rendano returned to Italy. Five years later (1879), he wrote his quintet, a work to which Liszt gave his highest praise. Joachim was so impressed that his quartet studied the work under Rendano's guidance. In four movements, the Quintet begins with the aforementioned *Largo—Allegro mosso*. A brief, pensive theme is introduced by the piano and is answered with a prayer-like response by the strings before the music is swept away by the nervous energy of a full-blooded *allegro*. This is mainstream late Romantic European music. The learning and polish of that greatest of 19th century conservatories is everywhere evident; From the huge architecture, to the superb part-writing. The music all but shouts "masterwork". The second movement, *Sérénade*, begins with the piano singing the long melodic line of the lovely theme to the pizzicati of the strings. A clever reversal of what these instruments do best. The effect is striking. In this movement, we hear the influence of Rendano's south Italian roots more clearly, namely the influence of opera. It is not that the music is operatic, rather, it is the very vocal quality of the thematic material. The highly-charged *Scherzo* is filled with plunging and soaring chromatic scale passages. The trio section, *alla Calabrese* is a dolorous, melodramatic chant of almost oriental quality. A more telling contrast to the Scherzo would be hard to imagine. In the finale, *Allegro con fuoco*, we hear Mendelssohn, filtered through Reinecke and Liszt. The powerful writing clearly shows Rendano had a first hand knowledge of the piano quintet literature from Schumann through Brahms. His work is not imitative. It is an effort by a cultured musician of the first rank to rekindle the interest of his fellow Italians in instrumental music. It is depressing in the extreme to see that music of this quality can fall into oblivion. It belongs on the stage and should be republished. Highly recommended.



Wow! Who is this guy? That was my reaction after hearing the opening movement, *Largo Allegro mosso*, to **Alfonso Rendano's Piano Quintet**. I raced to my *Cobbett's Cyclopedia* where in a very short, terse paragraph, I learned he was the inventor of the independent pedal for piano. The *New Grove* was somewhat more informative at least as to

Associative Game: **Kurt Weill** (1900-50)—*Three Penny Opera* and *Mahogony*, but decidedly not string quartets. Yet this MDG CD# 307-1071 brings us two. The first, **String Quartet in b minor (1918)**, dates from a time when Weill was searching for a musical and aesthetic credo. He had by then studied with Friedrich Koch and Engelberg Humperdinck in Berlin at the Royal College of Music. He was said to be a Wagnerite at that time but the music here



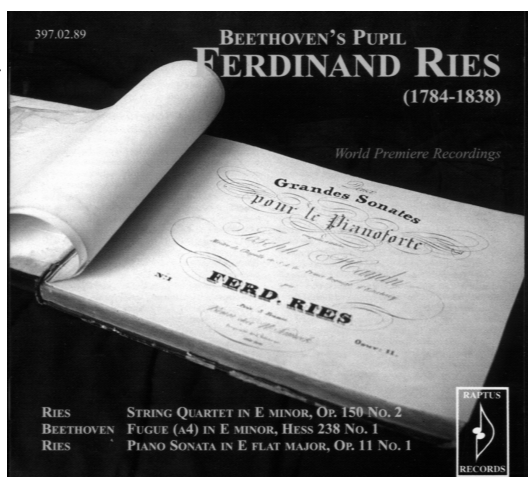
String Quartets by Kurt Weill and Ferdinand Ries (continued from page 1)

bears none of that stamp. Rather, we find a mix of late Romantic and early modern trends that so many young Austrian and German composers, active in the first part of the 20th century, were writing as they struggled to find a path from the past into the future. In the first movement, *Maßig*, we hear thematic strains of Mozart mixed with the harmonies of Richard Strauss. The composition shows a mastery of technique, but the music seems to wander, at times, lacking focus. There is none of this in the extremely clever and well-wrought *Allegro ma non troppo*, *In heimlich erzählendem Ton*, which is a scherzo of goblins and ghosts. This is a highly original movement which for its time is as good as anything Weill's contemporaries were producing. The tonality of the deeply felt third movement, *Langsam und innig*, begins with Bruckner but advances beyond this to far more searching tonalities. It is actually an introduction to the finale, *Durchweg lustig, aber nicht zu schnell*. Here, we have a bright appealing theme which Weill presents in a fugal style worthy of Reger. In fact, it is the influence of Reger but through the lense of post-Brahmsian romanticism which infuses this work more than that of anyone else. But Weill's writing is far more focused and, except for a few brief moments in the first movement, has none of the extreme difuseness one often encounters in Reger's chamber works. Although the author of the jacket notes speaks dismissively of this quartet as juvenile, I cannot agree. To be sure, it was written when Weill was 18, but any listener cannot help but notice the great maturity of execution and fecundity of ideas. It is, in my opinion, entirely successful and deserving of public performance. I do not think that the parts have ever been published. The autograph was lost until the early 1990's.

Weill's **Second String Quartet, Op.8** was composed five years later while he was completing his studies with Busoni. At this time (1923) Busoni was busy teaching his students the tenets of his so-called *Junge Klassizität* (New Classicism), the premise of which was that romantic feeling and subjective entanglement with the musical material should be replaced by objectivity and a cooler tonal language. This was to be accomplished by using forms which predated the classical era. The Quartet was originally in four movements, but Weill upon Busoni's suggestion removed two and wrote a one movement replacement. The work was published by Universal Editions in this form and is currently in print. Its opening movement, *Introduktion, sostenuto con molta espressione*, is quiet and rambles along in a polytonal fashion very close to that of Bartok. The following *Scherzo, vivace*; *Choralphantasie* is characterized by sharp, angular rhythms. Again, there is the Bartok polytonality, but Weill cannot bear to rid himself entirely of conventional tonality and, as the movement proceeds, we find it. This is the most immediately accessible part of the work. The Quartet's center of gravity, however, is in the final *Andante non troppo*, which is longer than the two preceding movements together. It must be admitted, it is hard, at first hearing, to glean the direction the music is traveling as it wavers between polytonality, free atonality and traditional tonality. But here, more than elsewhere, Weill appears to be searching for some kind of amalgamation that he can make from the three. The solution he reached in 1923 certainly placed him, for that time, in the vanguard. These two quartets are important because they show his deep affection for absolute music. A very worthwhile CD. Also on disk is Paul Hindemith's *Minimax*,

military music for string quartet. As I reviewed another recording of this fine comedic work in Volume VII No.4, (December 1996), I will not speak of it here.

It is gratifying to see that some of the music of **Ferdinand Ries** (1784-1838) is at last being republished and recorded. As the jacket notes to this Raptus CD# 397.02.89 correctly observe: "*Ries is mainly known today as an intimate friend and early biographer of Beethoven. [This] proved more effective than his musical legacy in preventing his name from falling into oblivion.*" After hearing Ries' **String Quartet No.8 in e, Op.150 No.2**, (1826), one cannot but feel the unfairness of this. If this quartet is any indication, at least some of Ries' music deserves public performance and ought to be explored by amateurs and professionals alike. We are hoping to present a series on Ries' chamber music at some point in the not too distant future. Ries, like Beethoven, was born in Bonn. His father, like Beethoven's, was a musician who served the Elector of Cologne. Ries came to Vienna in 1801 where Beethoven, having known Ferdinand's father from his Bonn days, offered to help the 17 year old make his way. He gave Ries piano lessons for several years and in 1804, allowed Ries (the first of his students to be so honored) to title himself "student of Ludwig Beethoven" on his concert programs. The two were to remain life-long friends although Beethoven caused several temporary rifts by his frequent thoughtless and even rude behavior. After leaving Vienna, Ries toured throughout much of Europe concertizing with mixed success. Finally in 1813, he settled in England and lived there for 11 years where he made a considerable name for himself. Eventually in 1824, he returned to the Rheinland where he continued to live until his death in 1837. Ironically, he never lived to see the publication of his short biography on Beethoven. The opening *Allegro* of Quartet No.8 begins with a descending rhythmic fate motif, ♩ ♩, ♩ ♩, ♩ ♩, which though rhythmically different from the last movement of Mozart's K.421, nevertheless bears a similarity in feeling to it. Subsequently, the first violin is given a marvellous melody which sounds, as does the rest of this movement, as if had been written by Spohr. The following *Andante* consists of a theme and set of 4 variations. The use of the cello, in the variation where the viola is featured, resembles Beethoven's treatment in Op.18 No.5, but this not to suggest that it sounds anything like that work. An *Allegro Vivace* is an engaging scherzo. The opening to the Beethovenian finale, *Allegro agitato*, is quite exciting and well conceived. The second theme, a lovely and sycopated melody, has a brief but electrifying violin duet in their highest register. This is a satisfying work, entirely



(Continued on page 8)

Joseph Küffner's Chamber Music with Clarinet Röntgen—A Piano Trio / Rubenstein's Quintet for Winds & Piano

worthy of performance. Though it requires a strong 1st violinist, the Quartet is not a virtuoso piece for that instrument. A fugue by Beethoven for string quartet and a Ries piano sonata are also on this recommended CD.



You won't find **Joseph Küffner** (1776-1856) listed in the *New Grove*, nor in the Oxford, Harvard or Baker's music dictionaries. From *Cobbett's Cyclopedia*, a 21 word entry informs us that Küffner was "An enormously fertile composer, whose published

works with opus number amount some 350, most of which were published by Schott". But the author of the jacket notes to this 2 CD Bayer set# 100 330/31, clarinetist Luigi Magistrelli, tells us that there are at least 410 published works. Küffner, who was primarily active in Würzburg, was a talented performer on harpsichord, organ, violin, clarinet, basset horn and guitar. I have come across Herr Küffner's arrangement for string quartet of Rossini's *William Tell*, among others. I can say without hesitation that Küffner's efforts put those by our contemporary William Zinn to shame. Küffner knew what he was about. This CD set contains several works for clarinet and other instruments including: **Quintet, Op.33** for clarinet and string quartet, **Introduction, Thema & Variations, Op.32** also for clarinet and string quartet. These are two very tuneful pieces which are basically a vehicle for the clarinet with string accompaniment. In his excellent **Quintet Op.40 No.3** for flute, clarinet, basset horn, horn and bass (ad libitum), the part writing is more even, but the clarinet is still *primus inter pares*. Particularly attractive is the **Harmoniemusik Op.138** which is an arrangement of music from *Der Freischütz* and the *Barber of Seville* for flute, clarinet, basset horn, 2 bassoons, 2 horns and bass. Here the writing is suite-like and the clarinet is just a member of this unusual octet. Very effective. There are also 2 lovely **Serenades Op.21 & Op.45** for clarinet, viola and guitar. Here, the guitar takes the role of piano left hand, the clarinet is clearly the featured soloist but the viola does get a few worthwhile innings. Another interesting work is the **Potpurri Op.198** for piano, basset horn, and guitar on themes from the *Barber of Seville*. While it must be admitted that most of these works are nothing more than showcases for the clarinet, nonetheless the writing is so accomplished and the tunes so lovely that I hope non-clarinetists will seriously consider adding this charming music to their collections.

We last mentioned **Julius Röntgen** (1855-1932) when we reviewed a string quarter of his in Vol. VII No.4 (Dec. 1996) issue of the *Journal*. Since then, I have had the pleasure of playing two of his string quartets and a string trio. Each work was of a very high quality. This has led me to conclude, albeit on the

basis of five chamber works, that Röntgen is a late romantic composer of the first rank. I am in good company in that Brahms, Clara Schumann and Edvard Grieg all shared the same opinion. Röntgen knew and was on friendly terms with them all. From a family of musicians, Röntgen was trained at the Leipzig Conservatory and spent most of his musical life in Amsterdam where he was a co-founder of the Amsterdam Conservatory. He composed some 600 works in most genres. NM Classics CD#92089 presents Röntgen's 1904 prize winning **Piano Trio in c minor, Op.50** (It won at the Concours International de Musique in Paris and was dedicated to Carl Nielsen with whom he was quite friendly). Of it, Nielsen wrote to Röntgen, "[T]he new trio is the most characteristic of the works of yours I learned when you were in Denmark. It is carried along by an extremely individual and compelling musical current, which despite its modern content seems to have its roots in the vicinity of Schubert." In three movements, the opening *Allegro non troppo e serioso* begins with a short, dramatic piano introduction which gives way to a very lyrical theme in the strings. The second subject has the character of mystery and shows some influence of Brahms. The very original-sounding main theme to the *Andante* which follows sounds like Grieg but clearly tinted by German Romanticism. This is not an accident. Röntgen was very fond of Scandinavian folk melody. It is here that we can hear what Nielsen meant by "modern content". While the opening is very Nordic, the development takes the thematic material into Brahmsian, as well as post-Brahmsian, tonalities. This is a movement of great charm. The finale, *Allegro non troppo*, begins in a soft but agitated manner before exploding into a rich and dramatic exposition of the melodic material. For the superb coda, Röntgen takes a page from Brahms. It is not hard to see why this work won a prize, although it is hard to understand how it could disappear. It is a masterpiece, should be in the repertoire, hopefully will be republished, and should be explored by professionals and amateurs alike. Highly recommended.



Dynamic CD#S296 presents four unknown works for winds by composers who themselves are little known. The first work is a **Quintet in F, Op.55** for piano, flute, clarinet, horn and bassoon by **Anton Rubenstein** (1829-1894). One of the greatest virtuoso pianists of the 19th Century, if not of all time, Rubenstein wrote an incredible amount of chamber music. I have been unable to determine the occasion for which this work

was written. It is in four movements and clearly is composed on a grand scale, lasting nearly 40 minutes. The thematic material of the opening *Allegro non troppo* is (for Rubenstein) unusually good. The piano is generally juxta-positioned against the winds as a band, but each individual player is given grateful solos. The

(Continued on page 9)

Wind Music of Alexander Tcherepnin, Ippolitov-Ivanov & Tansman String Trios by Manuel Ponce, Samuel Pascoe & Alejandro Velaco

piano has a few florid passages (this *is* Rubenstein after all) but they do not harm the music. The *Scherzo, Allegro*, is also quite unusual and well-written. The very lyrical trio provides a fine contrast to the scherzo. The part-writing is first rate. In the following *Andante con moto*, the lovely main theme is entrusted entirely to the horn which is given a long solo introduction before the others take it up. Again, this writing is original and well-executed. In the finale, *Allegro appassionato*, the piano has a short introduction before we are treated to a playful, but hardly passionate, rondo. It is entirely successful. The misleading movement title aside, this quintet is Rubenstein at his best. The usual rap against Anton is that he sounds like watered-down Mendelssohn or Schumann. Not here. This music deserves public performance and should be sought out by amateurs.



The rest of the works on disk are quite short compared to the Rubenstein, but still worthwhile. Next is a **Wind Quintet Op.107** by **Alexander Tcherepnin** (1899-1977). Born in St. Petersburg, he fled with his family during the Revolution in 1918, first to Tbilisi and then to Paris from whence he launched an international career as a pianist and composer. The Quintet, which dates from 1927, is a slight work of less than 10 minutes duration and is in three short movements: *Allegro marciale*, *Langsam*, and *Feierlich*. The music shows considerable affinity to Stravinsky's neo-classical writing from the same period. One can hear some similarity between this piece and *L'histoire du Soldat*. A charming morsel.

Next is the short, one movement **An Evening in Georgia, Op.71**, a quintet for piano, flute, oboe, clarinet and bassoon by **Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov** (1859-1935). It was Ippolitov-Ivanov's fate to be remembered for only one work, his captivating *Caucasian Sketches*. To be sure, this is better than not being remembered at all, but hardly satisfactory for a composer of I-I's caliber. Trained at the St. Petersburg Conservatory under Rimsky Korsakov, I-I was director of the Moscow Conservatory for nearly 20 years and helped to organize the Conservatory in Tbilisi where he lived for many years immediately after his own graduation. I-I's musical tastes were formed in the 1880's and the predominant influence one hears is that of Rimsky. The opus number of this work would lead one to believe it was written in the 1930's but I-I's opus numbers don't mean a lot. In any event, what we have is a highly evocative Notturmo with the orientale hues of the Caucasus.



The last piece on disk, also a short one movement work, is **La Danse de la Sorcière** for piano and wind quintet by **Alexandre Tansman** (1897-1986). Tansman was born and educated in Poland but in 1919 moved to Paris where he lived for the rest of his life after winning a composition competition. The jacket notes explain that this piece is a fragment from a larger choreographed work.

Though tonally more advanced than the Tcherepnin, there is still the aura of neo-classicism to this pleasant music.

Urtext CD#JBCC0035 presents four works, three by Mexican composers. Three are string trios, one is for string trio and harp and is entitled *Para los kioscos, fuentes, globos y arboledas* (For the kiosks, fountains, balloons and groves) This is a very striking work by the Mexican composer, Eduardo Angulo. It is in three movements, *Noblemente alegre*, *Amoroso* & *Como vals* and uses traditional tonality. Obviously, it is not likely to be played much because of the addition of the harp which really does not add a whole lot. Still, it is a charming piece to hear.

Manuel Ponce's String Trio dates from 1943. Ponce who studied piano and composition in Mexico as well as in Bologna and Berlin, has written a number of chamber works. The trio was composed for a family trio in which the cellist was only 6 years old. Ponce therefore made the cello part quite easy, essentially played on open strings. Later he wrote a more difficult cello part, but it is still possible to hear the extensive musical dialogues between the violin and viola. The first and largest of the four movements, *Allegro non troppo, espressivo*, although written in a contrapuntal style, is suffused with Mexican and Spanish melodic themes. In the following short *Moderato, Tempo di minuetto*, one can at first plainly hear a traditional minuet, but the diffuse contrapuntal writing washes it away. There is a very lyrical trio section. The *Canción, Andante cantabile* which comes next is a dirge sung much of the time over a kind of pedal part in the cello. The lively and excellent finale, *Rondo-scherzo, Allegro giocoso*, is in a pure neo-classical style. This is a fine work, Unfortunately, it is not in print, but it should be because it could be recommended both for public performance and to amateurs alike.



The second **String Trio** is by **Samuel Pascoe**. Unfortunately neither the jacket notes nor my research turned up any information about this composer other than the fact that he is alive and active as a conductor in the Boston area. This work was composed in 1999 for the Trio Coughlan, three Mexican string players. In three movements, it begins with a *Danza, Allegro energico* which has three parts, a dance, a pizzicato section and a maestoso part. These are combined and mixed together as the music goes on. This is mostly traditional tonal music. It is modal, built on chords in fourths. The second movement, *Canción, Andante cantabile*, begins with all three voices playing pizzicato before the viola is given a long lyrical solo. This is followed by a chorale. The finale, *Lento maestoso, Allegro*, after a brief slow, march-like introduction, becomes a fugue a tre. This work would make an excellent modern addition to any string trio's repertoire. Unlike some modern writing, it is music which is meant to be played, and which is not beyond the ability of good amateurs, nor the palate of today's audiences.

The last piece on disk, **Trio for Strings**, is by **Alejandro Velaco**. Again, I could find no information about him. But the jacket notes for this trio, which were penned by him, state the Trio Coughlan commissioned it. So he is probably still living. In 2 movements, the opening *Allegro*, is full of rhythmic, drum-like tension but is short on melodic content and rather monotonous. The concluding *A la manera de un coral* shares this monotony and also has a dearth of melody. It has little to recommend it.

Edward Manning's Piano Trio *(continued from page 9)*

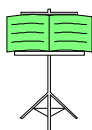
The last CD to be reviewed in this issue is Carlton Sound CD#CSCD-1009. It was sent to us by pianist Dr. Elaine Keillor, who is at Carlton University in Ottawa, Canada. Entitled *Romance: Early Canadian Chamber Music*, the CD has several works by various Canadian composers, most are duos for violin or cello and piano. However, of particular interest to us is the **Piano Trio, Op.11** by **Edward Manning** (1874-1948). Born in New Brunswick, Manning was an accomplished performer on the piano and violin. He studied with Humperdinck in Berlin, Vidal in Paris and Edward MacDowell in New York. During his career, he taught at the Oberlin Conservatory and at Columbia University. The only information as to the date of the composition was provided by the jacket notes which state it is one of three Canadian piano trios composed before 1922. Regardless of when it was composed (and my guess would be the first decade of the 20th Century about the time Manning studied with Humperdinck), the music is clearly written in a Central European late romantic idiom.

The first of the Trio's three movements, *Allegro agitato*, begins with the piano giving forth the exciting and dramatic main theme

which is quickly taken up by the others. The lyrical second subject provides excellent contrast. The coda begins with the strings in their highest registers and is both original and effective. The following *Andante cantabile* is a lovely song without words *a la* Mendelssohn. First the cello and then the violin present this long-lined lyrical melody before the piano takes a more active role in the tenser middle section. The finale, *Allegro vivace*, begins with the strings bringing forth a rollicking hornpipe over the rapid, cascading passages in the piano. A second theme is less dramatic, perhaps limp, but tonally is very rich.

I found this piano trio really first rate throughout. The thematic material is excellent and the melodies lovely. There is no surplusage. Of its kind, this trio is in the first rank. The only knock against it is that the writing looks back to Mendelssohn, Reinecke and Rheinberger. It was perhaps already old-fashioned by the time it was written. Nonetheless, I would encourage Dr. Keillor to make an effort to have the parts published so that professionals can present it and amateurs can enjoy it. A recommended CD.

© 2002 R.H.R. Silvertrust & The Cobbett Association



New Recordings



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

String Quartets

Grazyna BACEWICZ (1909-69) No.4, Dux 0142 / Tadeusz BAIRD (1938-81) No.1, Dux 0374 / Henriette BOSMANS (1895-1952) Qt., NM Classics 98020 / Zbigniew BUJARSKI (1933-) Qt for a House Warming, Dux 0142 / Rebecca CLARKE (1886-1979) Poem, CBC Records MVCD 1149 / Bernard van DIJREN (1887-1936) No.6 NM Classics 98020 / Jenryk GORECKI (1933-) No.1, Dux 0142 / Piers HELLAWELL (1956-) The Still Dancers, Metronome 1059 / Fanny Mendelssohn HENSEL (1805-47) Qt in Eb, CBC Records MDCD 1149 / Gustav JENNER (1865-1920) Nos.1-2, CPO 999 699 / Eugeniusz KNAPIK (1951-) No.1, Dux 0374 / Aleksander LASON (1951-) Relief for Andrzej, Dux 0142 / Pawel LUKASZEWSKI (1968-) Qt, Dux 0142 / Charles LOEFFLER (1861-1935) Qt in a, Music for 4 Strings, Naxos 8.559077 / Bruno MADERNA (1920-1973) Quartetto, Quartetto in due tempi, Maive Montaigne MO 782158 / John McEWEN (1868-1948) Nos.4,7, 16-17, Chandos 9926 / Krzysztof MEYER (1943) No.8, Dux 0374 / Darius MILHAUD (1892-1974) Nos.1-18, Naïve V 4900 / Alexander MOSOLOV (1900-73) No.1, NM Classics 98020 / Krzysztof PENDERECKI (1933-)

No.1, Dux 0374 / Giacinto SCELSE (1915-1988) Nos.1-5, Naïve Montaigne MO 782156 / Anton SCHOENDLINGER (1919-1983) Nos.2-3, Real Sound #051-0034 / Alexander ZEMLINSKY (1871-1942) Complete Wks 4 Qts etc., Chandos 9772 / Maciej ZIELINSKI (1931-) No.1, Dux 0374

Strings Only-Not Quartets

Johann Georg ALBRECHTSBERGER (1736-1809) 3 Str Trios, Op.9, Hungaroton 32109 / Jan CARLSTEDT (1926-) Str Trio Op.5, Phono Suecia 101 / Charles LOEFFLER (1861-1935) Qt for 3 Vln, Vla & Vc, Naxos 8.559077 / Darius MILHAUD (1892-1974) Octet, Naïve V 4900 / Mattias SPERGER (1750-1812) 3 Str Trios, Hungaroton 32109 / Giacinto SCELSE Str Trio, Naïve Montaigne MO 782156 / Ludwig SPOHR (1784-1859) Vla Qt Nos.1-2, Naxos 8.555965

Piano Trios

Sergei TANEIEV (1856-1915) Trio in DE Op.22, Centaur CRC 2571

Piano Quartets & Quintets

Adolphe BIARENT (1871-1916) Qt in b, Cypres 4611 / Arthur BLISS (1891-1975) Qt in a, ASV DCA 1128 / Ernest BLOCH (1880-1959) Qt No.2, Cascavelle VEL 3040 / Marc BRIQUET (1896-1979) Qt, Cascavelle VEL 3040 / Sofia

GUBAIDULINA (1931-) Qnt, BIS 898 / Gustav JENNER (1865-1920) Qt in F, CPO 999 699 / Frank MARTIN (1890-1974) Qnt, Cascavelle VEL 3040 / Sergei TANEIEV (1856-1915) Qt in E, Op.20, Centaur CRC 2571

Winds & Strings

Luigi BOCCHERINI (1732-1805) Op.16 Nos. 2,3, & 5 for Fl, 2 Vln, Vla, 2Vc & Kb, Symphonia SY 01188 / Jan CARLSTEDT, (1926-) Qt for Ob & Str Trio, Phono Suecia 101 / Antonio CARTELLIERI (1772-1807) 3 Qts for Cln & Str Trio, MD&G 301 1097 / Franz Anton HOFFMEISTER (1754-1812) 3 Qts for Cln & Str Trio, CPO 999 812 / Jeronimas KACINSKAS (1907-) Nonet for Wind Qt, Str Trio & Kb, LMIPC#004 / Benoit MERCIER (1964) Qt for Cln & Str Qt, Cypres 4613 / Carl STAMITZ (1746-1801) Qt for Fl, Vln, Vla & Kb, Qt for Fl, Vln, Hn & Vc, Qt for Fl Hn, 2Vla & Kb, CPO 999 737 /

Winds, Strings & Piano

None this issue

Piano & Winds

Gustav JENNER (1865-1920) Trio for Cln, Hn & Pno, CPO 999 699

Winds Only

None this Issue

The String Quartets of Ferruccio Busoni (continued from page one)

pressed by the fact that Busoni, during the last part of his life, like Schönberg, attempted to pioneer a new path for music. But because Busoni's quartets date from the first part of his life, these critics, at least in the English-speaking world, dismissed the quartets as works from before the time when the composer had "found his voice". This is a strange criticism when one considers that while Beethoven set off on a new path in his Late Quartets, no one dismisses his earlier works, even his Op.18 which owe so much to Haydn, as derivative or without merit. In Germany, on the other hand, Wilhelm Altmann (one of the greatest savants and connoisseurs of chamber music) recognized the merits of Busoni's quartets immediately. This is something that has taken the English-speaking world nearly a century to do.

Born in Tuscany, Busoni's parents were both musical. His Italian father Fernando was a clarinet virtuoso. His mother, of German-Italian parentage, was an excellent pianist. Busoni's musical talent showed itself early and by the age of 8 he was performing before the public. The family then moved from Trieste to Graz and eventually to Vienna, so that Ferruccio might have better opportunities and so that he might study composition, but not piano, with fine teachers. His mother is said to have been his only piano teacher. In Vienna, he befriended Karl Goldmark and got to know Brahms. In 1886, upon Brahms' recommendation, Busoni was sent to the Leipzig Conservatory where he studied composition with Carl Reinecke. There he had the chance to meet and get to know Tchaikovsky, Mahler, Sinding, Grieg and Delius. While he only spent a year at the Conservatory, he remained in Leipzig for three. His two string quartets date from this period. In 1890, Busoni received an appointment to teach at the Helsinki Conservatory where he met Sibelius. In this same year, his *Concertino for Piano & Orchestra Op.31a* won the Rubenstein Prize which brought a professorship at the Moscow Conservatory which he turned down to pursue a concert career in America. He concertized in the States for three years while teaching at the New England Conservatory in Boston. In 1894, he settled in Berlin where, except during WWI, he remained based for the rest of his life when not touring. In 1907 he published *Entwurf einer neuen Ästhetik der Tonkunst* (Plan for a New Musical Aesthetic) which began to lay out the new path Busoni wished to travel. Although this book received considerable attention, it was not until after the War when he was made a professor at the Berlin Academy of the Arts and began to hold master classes that his new theories began to influence a younger generation of composers such as Kurt



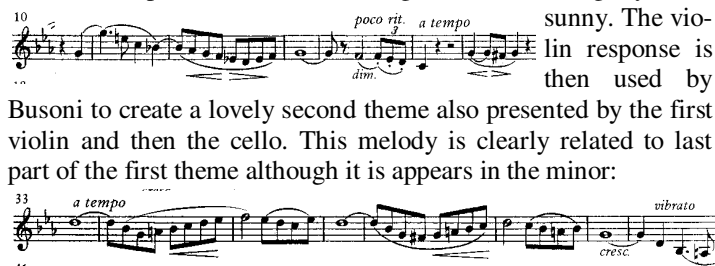
Weill and Philipp Jarnach. These ideas eventually came to be known as the *Junge Klassizität*. While no adherent of the Schönbergian 12 tone school, Busoni did believe that, "Everything experimental from the beginning of the 20th century should be used, incorporated in the coming finality." He opposed the late 19th century trend to programmatic music and urged his students to restudy Bach and Mozart, the greatest exponents of absolute music. Although he did not live long enough to teach more than a few up and coming com-

posers, the ideas expressed by him have become important to succeeding generations of composers who were also looking for new paths.

String Quartet No.1 in c minor, Op.19 was composed during Busoni's first year in Leipzig while he studied with Reinecke. It cannot, however, be classed as a student work. The opening theme to the 1st movement, *Allegro moderato, pathetico*, is set against a background of pulsing 8th notes in the inner voices:



Immediately one senses, just as at the beginning of a Bruckner Symphony, not only the brooding quality of the music but also that this is to be a movement of great breadth. The final part of the melodic phrase has a heroic tinge to it and is slightly more sunny. The violin response is then used by Busoni to create a lovely second theme also presented by the first violin and then the cello. This melody is clearly related to last part of the first theme although it is appears in the minor:



Everything up to this point is all typical late romantic writing. But then with no bridge passage and no connection to what has come before, a highly rhythmic motif of etude quality is begun:



This is developed into what might be described as a Beethovenian-Bach-like fugue. It is very interesting and quite well done and reminds me a bit of Stenhammar's writing in both his 3rd and 4th quartets. (These were written a decade later) Already, we hear some very advanced chromaticism for 1886.

Busoni uses the viola to introduce the lovely folk tune upon which the second movement is based:



The viola gives the music a darker and less tragic flavor than it might have had in the 1st violin. Altmann was reminded of the second movement to Beethoven's Op.18 No.4. There are some similarities, e.g.: Both use running 16th notes which serve mostly as a background. There is also the fugal treatment of the main theme in the middle section. Beethoven does this as well. But here the similarity ends. Busoni's melody is richer and the mood although gentle is heavier than the 2nd movement of Op.18 No.4.

A *Minuet* is the surprising choice for the third movement. But this is not the classical minuet of Haydn or Mozart but the earlier baroque French minuet. Busoni might just as well have titled it



Gavotte and Musette. The trio acts as the (Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 11)

musette with the first violin playing an almost too serene melody against the bagpipe drone of the lower strings.

The introduction to the finale, *Andante con moto, alla Marcia*, begins in a somber, but not foreboding, fashion in g minor. It ends happily, however, on a major chord. The cut time *Allegro molto e con brio* in C Major begins with a cheerful and syncopated main theme which is more rhythmic than melodic:



The lyrical theme of the middle section is taken from the *Andante* introduction. After only a few measures, it dissolves into a fugue.

To sum up, this is certainly a well-written quartet with no glaring weaknesses. It could be argued that to have fugal sections in three of four movements is too much but neither the player nor I think the listener would come away with this opinion. The first two movements are the most convincing and the first is clearly the most striking with many original touches. While this work is not a masterpiece, it is solid enough to receive an occasional public performance. Amateurs will certainly enjoy it. It has recently been republished by Amadeus #BP1005. A recording of it can be found on CPO CD# 999 264-2.

String Quartet No.2 in d, Op.26 dates from 1889, Busoni's last year spent in Leipzig at which point he was no longer studying at the Conservatory. The Quartet begins with a massive and very powerful *Allegro energico*. After 3 unison chords, the cello brings forth an ominous theme which is sounded over a low, lengthy pedal note in the 2nd violin and a series of hurried 8th notes of the same pitch in the viola. There is an instant sense of urgency.



Tension grows as this theme is developed. Suddenly, a furious and heroic second theme of powerful 8th notes bursts forth as the viola and 2nd violin each present a measure and a half of it in a virtuosic hand-off. After the return and further development of the first theme another subject is introduced by the first violin:



There follows a fabulous chromatic development which leads to a very short fugue that is nothing more than a bridge section to a further explosion of the heroic theme which is immediately transmogrified into fragmentary snippets of the first theme. It is almost impossible to describe the tremendous variety of this extraordinary movement. Traditional tonality is cleverly interspersed with modernity and the music virtually bristles with original and unusual ideas; a *tour de force* from start to finish.

In the second movement Busoni returns to earth, so to speak, and writes in a much more traditional spirit. The lovely, melancholy main theme to the *Andante con moto*, begins as a resposion duet

between the cello and first violin. It is infused with the spirit of late Beethoven. A second melody has some Brahmsian perfume to it but is interrupted by the appearance of the ominous main theme from the first movement. Tension disrupts the sad calm. The subsequent development is highly chromatic and leaves an under current of unrest. A brief quote from late Beethoven in a major cadence brings this fine movement to a close.

Next comes a *Vivace assai*. It is a scherzo that might make perfect music for a frenzied chase down a torch lit but dark passage way beneath a mediaeval castle. It is the complete opposite of the fairy music for a Midsummer's Night Dream. Writing of this movement, Eckhardt van den Hoogen cites Busoni's thoughts on neoexpressionism found in Busoni's book *On Harmony* (published in 1922). "There are three grounds for neoexpressionism: *Harmony, hysteria, and temperamental behavior...Hysteria is based on short unconnected formulas of sighing, run-taking, stubborn repetition of one or more tones, fading away, intoning of the highest high and lowest low, pauses for air, and the accumulation of different rhythms within a measure; all useful means of expression insofar as they are used properly within a phrase.*" The 2nd violin presents the main theme that is quickly taken up by the others



The trio section is a lyrical *pastorale* which provides a great contrast to the *Vivace assai*. Another very extraordinary and very fine movement.

Busoni, as he had in the First Quartet, begins the finale with an introduction, *Andantino*. It, too, is pensive though not ominous. Again there is no relationship between the mood of the introduction and that the main movement, *Allegro con brio (mit Humor)*. The first subject is given to the cello alone:



The development begins as a short fugue which is gradually torn apart by a process of chromatic disintegration. The second theme, a long time in coming, is slower and very chromatic. It flirts with the minor. The coda is very well done and quite satisfying. For 1889, there are a lot of advanced tonalities and fresh rhythmic ideas to be found here.

This Quartet belongs in the front rank. It is a masterpiece, very original and entirely successful. It should be in the repertoire and is highly recommended to professional quartets looking for an accessible modern work by an accomplished composer. Although it is technically not beyond amateurs, there is no getting around its rhythmic difficulties. A recording of this Quartet can also be found on CPO 999 264 2. Originally published by Breitkopf & Härtel as #5557, I think the parts are no longer in print, but the Cobbett Association Library has them.